

# NAPOLÉON

## An Intimate Portrait



February 1-April 22, 2007

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- Dates:** February 1 – April 22, 2007
- Organizer:** Russell Etling Co., Florida
- Source:** Pierre-Jean Chalençon  
Private Parisian Collector
- Objects:** Over 250 objects
- Media:** Painting, sculpture, drawings, prints, maps, journals,  
furniture, decorative arts, textiles, swords, documents,  
personal/household effects, and military memorabilia
- Objective:** The exhibit is a comprehensive, chronological portrayal of  
the life and career of the legendary Napoléon Bonaparte  
(1769-1821), Emperor of France from 1804-1815.
- Exhibition**
- Structure:** Twelve sections

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## **NAPOLÉON An Intimate Portrait**

*NAPOLÉON An Intimate Portrait* offers visitors an opportunity to see beyond the “legend” of Napoléon Bonaparte to gain an understanding of this complex figure as a man. The exhibition was created from the collection of Pierre-Jean Chalençon and showcases more than 250 objects, including rare, personal belongings of Napoléon I as well as some of the most famous depictions of him by the greatest artists of the time.

### **Napoléon, The Man**

Born on the island of Corsica in 1769, Napoléon worked his way up in the French military and was a triumphant general by the age of 26. His lightening-fast campaigns permanently transformed the way battles were fought and changed the political face of Europe. At 35, he crowned himself emperor of France and set about ruling 70 million people. In this period following the French Revolution, he became an emperor without the benefit of being part of the French royal lineage—a truly “self-made” man.

Napoléon’s accomplishments off the battlefield were many; he ended feudalism, brought equality to Jews and Arabs, and was a patron of the arts. He also reorganized the outdated governments of France and her empire into streamlined, efficient administrations that rewarded talent and hard work, instead of status and privilege, and instituted a system of civil law known as the Napoleonic Code, which is still the basis for French law. Among its provisions, the Code allows for equality under the law, protects the right of private property, assures freedom of religion, and provides for the separation of church and state.

However, by age 52, Napoléon was dead, having successfully fought an alliance of European powers almost continuously for nearly 20 years, until the cost in lives and disrupted commerce became too much. In 1814, he abdicated and was sent into exile on the island of Elba, but in 1815, he escaped, rallied his old armies, and ruled again for a period known as the “Hundred Days.” He met his final defeat at the battle of Waterloo in June, 1815 and was sent into his second and final exile on the remote and desolate island of St. Helena in the south Atlantic, where he died on May 5, 1821.

#### **Some Words of Wisdom from Napoléon**

- A picture is worth a thousand words.
- A true man hates no one.
- If you want a thing well done, do it yourself.
- Imagination rules the world.
- Impossible is a word to be found only in the dictionary of fools.

To discover more of Napoléon’s notable comments, go to: [www.brainyquote.com/quotes/authors/n/napoleon\\_bonaparte.html](http://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/authors/n/napoleon_bonaparte.html)

## The Collector -- Pierre-Jean Chalençon

Chalençon's interest in Napoléon began at age seven when he saw an educational cartoon book about the Emperor. He liked the book so much that he pestered his father to take him to visit various palaces, homes, and museums with connections to Napoléon. These early experiences led to the development of his life-long interest in and passion for collecting objects related to the Emperor.

He received his first piece of Napoleona at age fourteen, a gift from his mother. It was a proclamation announcing the return of Napoléon from Elba in 1815. At seventeen, Chalençon sold his motor scooter to buy a letter from Napoléon announcing victory at the battle of Jena in 1806. At \$2,000, this was his first important purchase. Today, his collection totals more than 500 pieces, 250 of which are included in this exhibition, *NAPOLÉON An Intimate Portrait*.



Chalençon has devoted his life to the Emperor and is a noted expert who admits his obsession with the showman-general whom he regards as one of history's great civilizing forces. It is the private man, however, that fascinates him the most, and, as a result, he has collected many of Napoléon's personal items, such as clothing, locks of hair, furnishings, and letters.

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•Think of all the places where you can find collections of different types—libraries, museums, etc. What types of objects are found in these collections and how are they important to you and others?

•Do you have a collection of your own or a collection in your classroom? What do you collect? Why?

\*\*\*Catalog Project: Create a catalog for your collection with illustrations, photos, and descriptions of the collection. You can keep adding to it as your collection grows!

## 1. Rise to Power

- Outlines Napoléon's Corsican roots, French schooling, first military victories, which brought him notoriety.
- Major victories: Siege of Toulon and the Italian Campaigns
- Established military prowess and developed ambitions that would lead to his rapid rise to power.
- Paul Barras (early mentor) introduced Napoléon to Josephine (Rose de Beauharnis), who he would soon marry.

### Key Work



*Portrait of Napoléon*

c. 1810

Sèvres porcelain bust after  
Chaudet with laurel crown  
by Thomire.

Porcelain from Manufacture  
Imperiale de Sévres

Crown – Gilded bronze

- Antoine-Denis Chaudet ( 1763 - 1810 ) was a French sculptor who worked in the preferred Neo-Classical or Antique style of the period, which drew its inspiration from classical Roman sculpture.
- Chaudet's portrait busts showed vigorous characterization, as well as idealization of his subjects. His bust of Napoléon was widely-copied in various mediums—in this case, in porcelain.
- Napoleon understood the propaganda value of promoting his public image through art. His portraits by famous artists were seen by a great number of people in various cities and towns across France and other European countries.
- Both Napoléon and Josephine were patrons of Chaudet.

## 2. The Egyptian Campaign

- Napoléon's campaign in Egypt was designed as a means of blocking British trade routes and diverting English military interest to the east and away from France.
- The campaign began well, but ended in calamity, with British Admiral Nelson's destruction of the French fleet at Aboukir.
- The French troops ultimately suffered 50% casualties due to combat and disease.
- Learning of dire events in France, Napoléon set sail for Europe to rescue a French government in disarray and left General Kléber in command.
- Although the Egyptian campaign was a military disaster, there were positive long-term effects resulting from the work of the team of artists, scientists, and writers that Napoléon brought with him.
  - They were the first to catalogue the wonders of the historic region.
  - Began an ongoing fascination with ancient Egyptian civilization that has continued to this day.
  - Discovery of the Rosetta Stone; beginnings of Egyptology as a formal field of study

### Key Works



*Portrait of Jean-Baptiste Kléber,*  
miniature on ivory by  
Baron Pierre-Narcisse Guérine  
(c. 1798) that belonged to Bonaparte

Map of the city and harbors  
of Alexandria, 1798.



- Napoléon left Egypt fourteen months into the campaign and left in command a capable, courageous, but frustrated General Kléber, who was furious at being left in an impossible situation.
- The map of the city and harbors of Alexandria was painted by cartographers attached to the Egyptian campaign and shows the disposition of the French fleet in the harbor in July, 1798 when Napoléon landed there.

## **Napoléon and the Egyptian Campaign**

In 1798, Napoléon set out to conquer Egypt. Besides his army and navy, he brought with him historians, artists and poets, a chemist, botanists, zoologists, a mathematician, a physicist, surveyors, and a biologist. This military expedition, which also included scientists, reflected the unprecedented advances and interest in the sciences that France saw during the time of Napoléon.

The Rosetta Stone, which had been first created in 196 B.C., was found in 1799 by French soldiers while they were rebuilding a fort. After its discovery near the Egyptian village of Rosetta, it was then taken back to France and eventually translated by the Frenchman Jean-François Champollion in 1822.



The Rosetta Stone or stele is inscribed with the same passage of writing in two ancient Egyptian language scripts and also in classical Greek, which provided the key in translating the two ancient scripts. The translation of the scripts, completed nearly two decades later, led to an understanding of hieroglyphic writing and to a fuller understanding of ancient Egyptian history.

Napoléon's French campaign in Egypt was a military disaster, but it opened Europe's eyes to the mysteries and exoticism of the Near East. The scholars Napoléon brought along with him helped to create an eleven volume set--Description de l'Égypte-- that became the encyclopedia of knowledge about ancient and contemporary Egypt. The publication of these volumes would spark the birth of the science of Egyptology.

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•To learn more about the Rosetta Stone go to:

[www.ancientegypt.co.uk/writing/rosetta.html](http://www.ancientegypt.co.uk/writing/rosetta.html) or [www.kidskonnnect.com/AncientEgypt/RosettaStone.html](http://www.kidskonnnect.com/AncientEgypt/RosettaStone.html)

\*\*\*Search the web for sites featuring Egyptian hieroglyphics—try writing your name or creating simple phrases using hieroglyphs.

## 3. First Consul

- Due to a successful self-promotional campaign, Napoléon was greeted as a hero on his return to France from Egypt in October, 1799.
- On the 18th Brumaire (November 9th), he seized power over the French government in a bloodless coup, became First Consul, and effectively ended the French Revolution.
- He quickly began a series of sweeping initiatives that restored political stability to the country, created a visionary Civil Code for governing (still used in France and other nations to this day), patronized the arts, and built a physical and economic infrastructure that changed the face of France and Europe itself.

## Key Works



*Study for 18th Brumaire*, Françoise Bouçhot, c. 1840, India ink and sepia on paper.

*Bonaparte Visiting the Silk Manufacturers of Rouen*, Jean-Baptiste Isabey, 1802, India ink and sepia on paper.



Snuff Box of First Consul Napoléon Bonaparte, Silversmith by the name of Marguerite, c. 1800-02, gold and enamel.

- The ink drawing by Bouçhot shows Napoléon in the meeting of the Council of Five Hundred where it was still unclear whether his attempt to take over the government would succeed.
- Passionate about encouraging French industry, Napoléon frequently visited factories, showing an interest in their products and manufacturing techniques, giving prizes and purchasing goods for his palaces.
- Napoléon was an active man who constantly fiddled with personal possessions. One of his principal stress relievers was inhaling pinches of snuff (tobacco powder) or sucking on anise flavored licorice. This box was probably a gift from Josephine.

## 4. The Coronation

- On December 2, 1804, Napoléon and Josephine were crowned Emperor and Empress of the French by Pope Pius VII in a ceremony in Notre Dame Cathedral.
- One purpose of this move was to legitimize his government and to elevate himself to the same level as other European sovereigns.
- The title of Emperor reflected his and his nation's esteem for the Roman Republic, as well as France's growth in size through the wars that had created an empire across Europe.
- The coronation featured lavish decorative elements, elaborate fashions, and imposing architectural elements all created by exceptional artists and designers of the time.

## Key Work

*Portrait of Napoléon in Coronation Robe*, Baron François Gérard (French, 1770 -1837), c. 1805-1810, oil on canvas, gold frame sculpted by Ménan.



- Gérard's portrait records the 35-year-old ruler's supreme confidence.
- The portrait also includes symbols reminiscent of a Roman emperor—the laurel wreath crown and the elaborate necklace of imperial eagles, which also appear in the four corners of the gold frame.
- In the lower right appears the top of his ceremonial sword, set with two large diamonds.
- Standing out against the dark background is the rich, white ermine fur of the Emperor's robe—adding light, texture, and added richness to the portrait.
- Napoléon gave this portrait to his devious Minister of Foreign Affairs, Talleyrand.

## 5. The Emperor's Family

- The second of eight children, Napoléon was close to his mother and siblings, who played a key role in his life and in the governance of his vast Empire.
- His brothers and sisters received royal titles and frequently were entrusted with regions of the Empire to rule, though none were to match his genius as an administrator.
- His beloved first wife, Joséphine, and her two children by her first husband, forever shared a place in his heart.
- Out of the necessity to produce an heir, he divorced Joséphine in 1809 after fourteen years of marriage and married the Austrian Archduchess Marie-Louise, who gave him a son in 1811—crowned the King of Rome.

### Key Work



Imperial Bed of Jérôme, the King Jérôme of Westphalia, (Napoléon's Brother), Jacob, c. 1810.

- Jérôme was known for his taste for luxury, and this bed, from his castle at Kassel, attests to his taste for splendor.
- The bed celebrates Napoléon's military conquests with Egyptian figures and stars, and honors his victories with oak and laurel branches.
- The bed's fabric has been recreated by the House of Prelle, which was established in Lyon in 1752 and furnished the Emperor's palaces.
- Prelle often uses period looms to create its silk and brocades.
- This is the only royal bed of the First Empire in a private collection.

## **Emperor Napoléon's Family**

### **The Royal Line:**

Napoléon was from a family of eight; he had four brothers and three sisters. He was very generous with titles for his family, granting them kingdoms of their own to rule in various parts of Europe. His own son, titled the King of Rome, died young, leaving no heir of his own.

**Joseph (1768 -1844)**  
**King of Naples in 1806, King of Spain in 1808**

**Napoléon I (1769 – 1821)**  
**Emperor of France, 1804-1815**

**Lucien (1775 – 1840)**  
**1st Prince in Canino in 1804, Prince of France in 1815**

**Elisa (1777 – 1820)**  
**Princess of Piombino in 1805; and Lucca in 1806;**  
**Grand Duchess of Tuscany in 1809**

**Louis (1778 – 1846)**  
**King of Holland in 1806**  
**Pauline (1780 – 1825)**  
**Princess Borghese and Duchess of Guastalla, 1803**

**Caroline (1782 – 1839)**  
**Grand Duchess of Berg and Cleves in 1806, Queen of Naples in 1808**

**Jérôme (1784 – 1860)**  
**King of Westphalia in 1807**

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**•Mapping out Napoléon's Family:**

- >By either searching the internet or referring to maps of this period in Europe, look for the places—countries, city-states--where Napoléon's family members ruled.
- >Start with Napoléon in Paris, France, and go from there to find out where his family members were located—good luck!

**•Mapping Out Your Family:**

- On either a city map, Oklahoma state map, or a map of the United States, find all the places where your family members—parents, grandparents, and other family—have lived or live now.

## 6. The Imperial Court

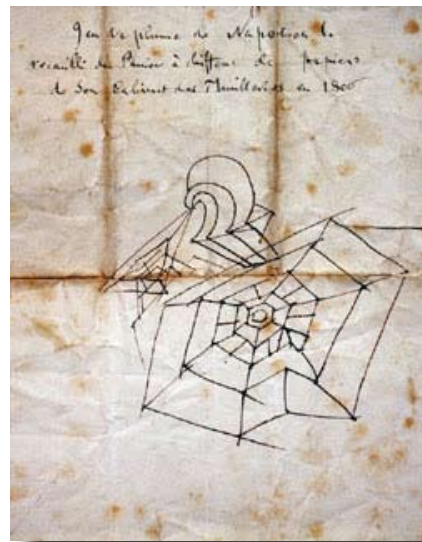
- Napoléon created the Empire with the help of military colleagues and supporters, and he depended on them to help rule it.
- Some of his early circle of generals, whom he made Marshals of the Empire, were at his side from his early years to the final battle at Waterloo.
- Most of Napoléon's friends remained loyal to the end, but some became notorious for their treachery and betrayal like Foreign Minister Talleyrand and General Bernadotte.
- The Emperor lived in surroundings befitting his title, however, he maintained many of his Spartan, soldier-like ways.
- He drove himself tirelessly, accomplishing a tremendous amount during a relatively brief span of time.

## Key Works



Door Latches from the Emperor's personal Tuileries apartment, Gilded bronze

Doodle drawn by Napoléon, c. 1806, India ink on paper



- The door latches from Napoléon's personal Tuileries apartment bear the Emperor's monogram and give a hint at the splendor of the apartment behind the doors they secured.
- The abstract ink drawing resembling a spider web was created by the Emperor on a letter from the Tuileries.
- It is rare that any personal doodles such as this survived, as most were disposed of at the time. Looking at the fold marks, it may have been folded away in a book or other document and discovered much later.

## 7. Art & the Emperor

- Napoléon believed in the power of the arts as a propaganda tool and supported them as a vehicle to glorify his reign and his new Empire.
- He used the arts to promote the view that France was carrying on the traditions of the Roman Republic, and the Holy Roman Empire, and that he was the new Julius Caesar or Charlemagne.
- In his ambition to give France the greatest museum in the world, he raided the great collections of Europe and monuments of Egypt.
- Napoléon also encouraged the industrial arts as a means for building a new business infrastructure for France—silk production, furniture manufacturing, silversmithing.
- During his reign, he commissioned many of the grand boulevards and monuments that make Paris the city it is today.
- However, Napoléon's need for strict controls and fear of dissent, along with censorship on some art forms, had the effect of stifling potential creativity.

## Key Works



*Fight Scene in the Classical style,*  
Horace Vernet, c. 1810, India ink  
and gouache on paper

Fabric sample from Versailles,  
Grand-Frères (silk manufacturer of  
Lyons), c. 1810-1812



- Horace Vernet (1789 – 1863) was a French painter of battle panoramas, sporting, and Orientalist themes. He was the grandson of the artist, Claude Vernet, son of Carle Vernet, also an artist, and was born in the Paris Louvre while his parents were staying there during the French Revolution. He ended up rejecting the classical style in his work and turned to realism.
- In honor of his marriage to the Archduchess Marie-Louise of Austria in 1810, Napoléon redecorated Versailles, placing numerous orders with Grand-Frères for silk fabrics. This sample from the great living room includes his personal emblem, the bee, and other symbols relating to the Empire.

## 8. Napoléon at War

- Napoléon Bonaparte ranks among the greatest military strategists and field commanders who ever lived.
- His structure for the Grand Army facilitated the command and movement of vast forces and is used to this day.
- Because of his successes and his ability to appeal to their honor, Napoléon evoked fierce loyalty from his troops, in spite of persistent attacks from his enemies, combined with his own ambition, causing the sacrifice of the lives of hundreds of thousands of French fighting men during his years of power.

### Key Work

*Bonaparte Crossing the Alps  
by the Great Saint Bernard  
Pass, Jean-Baptiste Mauzaisse  
(French, 1784-1844) after  
Jacques-Louis David, c. 1807.  
Oil on canvas.*



- “Bonaparte Crossing the Alps” is the most famous depiction of Napoléon’s military career, capturing the energy and excitement of his Italian campaigns and rise to power.
- Like Hannibal and Charlemagne, whose names appear at the painting’s bottom, Bonaparte courageously took his forces over the Alps in order to surprise his enemy.
- The strategy ultimately secured him victory at the Battle of Marengo.
- This painting also demonstrates David’s talent as a propagandist for Napoléon, who actually crossed the mountains on a mule.

## 9. The Road to Defeat

- Although Napoléon's army celebrated great victories and his Empire grew to govern more than 80 million people, these gains proved to be short-lived.
- The fierce resistance in Spain to French rule, a series of international coalitions formed to defeat the "upstart" French Emperor, a disastrous decision to invade Russia, the war weariness of his generals, and his inability to rally Paris occupied by his enemies to his cause, led to his abdication in 1814.
- He was exiled to Elba and Bourbon rule was restored under King Louis XVIII.
- Within less than a year, he returned from exile, rallying the French people to his side in yet another bloodless coup.
- For what was known as the "Hundred Days", Napoléon continued to wage war with his enemies, but his final defeat came at the hands of the generals Wellington and Blücher on the battlefield at Waterloo.

### Key Pieces



*Napoléon's Farewell to Pierre de Montesquiou, Emperor Napoléon I, 1814, ink on paper.*



Armchair from Fontainebleau Palace, Pierre-Benoit Marcion; Gilding by Chatard (the Emperor's gilder), 1809, Gilded wood and lacquer.

- Napoléon's letter of farewell to Pierre de Montesquiou, Grand Chamberlain of France, was written before he signed his abdication and departed for Elba.
- He wrote the letter on April 14, 1814, the morning after he had attempted suicide.
- Fontainebleau was one of Napoléon's favorite residences.
- Although he was not given to pomp and ceremony, he knew the value of impressing his subjects.
- "A newly established government must dazzle and astonish."
- No grandeur could ever ease the crushing blow of losing his empire.

## 10. The Final Exile

- Following his second abdication, Napoléon's English captors took no chances that he would once again return to his throne.
- He was exiled to St. Helena, a remote and barren island in the South Atlantic.
- A small party of the most loyal members of his staff and of the Imperial Court accompanied him in exile.
- Napoléon was under the authority of the English Governor Hudson Lowe, which was unpleasant, due to their mutual dislike for each other.
- Napoléon spent his time reading, gardening, dictating his memoirs, and ruminating on the remarkable events that had led him to St. Helena.

### Key Work



Napoléon's monogrammed shirt and longjohns worn on St. Helena

- This shirt, stained with blood, was one of the last shirts worn by the Emperor on St. Helena.
- Due to the high humidity of the island, he wore a Madras kerchief rather than a felt hat when he was out gardening. He started his garden in 1819, and rose each day to 5:30 a.m. to tend to it.
- Included in this section are prints and drawings which show his residence, Longwood, views of the island, and a map of St. Helena.

## 11. Death of the Emperor

- Napoléon died in Longwood, his St. Helena home, on May 5, 1821, presumably of stomach cancer, although some have suggested that he was assassinated by poison mixed into his wine.
- He was interred on the island until 1840, when the English government allowed his remains to be returned to Paris and placed in the chapel of Les Invalides, a hospital and home for war veterans.
- In 1861, the Emperor's majestic tomb under the dome of Les Invalides was completed and he came, at long last, to his final resting place next to the Seine, as he had requested.

### Key Works



*Remains of Napoléon  
Leaving St. Helena*, Louis  
Gabriel Eugène Isabey  
(French 1803 – 1886),  
c. 1840, Gouache on  
paper

Fragment of Napoléon's  
Original coffin, 1821,  
Mahogany



- On October 15, 1840, at 5:30 p.m., Napoléon's coffin was carried aboard La Belle Poule, anchored in Jamestown harbor on St. Helena.. A single, brilliant star was said to have shown above the boat.
- The artist, Isabey, later received a request from King Louis-Phillipe to draw the scene, following the return of Napoléon's remains.
- Isabey studied and worked at the Louvre Museum. His early paintings consisted of mostly watercolor landscapes, and then later on, land and seascapes in Normandy and Britain. (One of these seascapes was here at the Museum in the Storm exhibition.)
- Later in his career he switched to narrative and historical paintings and was selected to become one of King Louis-Phillipe's court painters.

## 12. The Legend—Napoléon Lives On

- Napoléon has remained the object of intense fascination since his rise to power. He ranks, in fact, second only to Jesus as the subject of published biographies and historical studies.
- He was conscious of the impression he made and sought to control his image from the earliest days of his career until his imprisonment on St. Helena.
- He burnished his image even further while at St. Helena, as he dictated his memoirs and read with interest materials about himself that made their way to his island exile.
- This shy and withdrawn boy who went from humble Corsican roots to rule an empire, ultimately distinguished himself amongst the great leaders of history..

### Key Work



The Emperor's Hat,  
summer model, Poupard  
Chapelier, c.1805, felt

- There is no greater icon of the Napoléon legend than his hat.
- This one was worn at the 1809 Battle of Essling.
- He preferred wearing the hat “broadside on,” with the sides parallel to his shoulders, so that in battle, he could be distinguished from his officers who wore their hats “fore-and-aft.”
- The style and shape of his famous hat changed with the times, and several examples, both of summer and winter weight, have survived.

## **NAPOLÉON An Intimate Portrait Web Lesson Plan and Resources**

The Web site for the NAPOLÉON An Intimate Portrait exhibition is: [www.napoleonexhibit.com](http://www.napoleonexhibit.com). This site features information on the exhibition content areas, educational materials, and an exhibition walk-thru, showing how it was installed at the National Geographic Museum, a previous venue. [The walk-thru can be accessed under “Press Room.”]

One of the most comprehensive Web sites on the Napoleonic period is the site of the Foundation Napoléon. [www.napoleon.org](http://www.napoleon.org). Within this site, the tabs “Essential Napoleon” and the “Reading Room” provide a great deal of resource material. See <http://napoleon.org/en/readingroom/timelines/files/chrononapoleon.asp> for a timeline of Napoleon’s life. <http://www.napoleon.org/en/collectorscorner/object/files/necessairejan05.a>

From the National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C., NGA Kids Art Zone, Adventures with Art—Activities and Programs at: [www.nga.gov/kids/napoleon/nap1.htm](http://www.nga.gov/kids/napoleon/nap1.htm) [Then click on the portrait of Napoléon.]

•This lesson plan uses the portrait *The Emperor in His Study at the Tuileries* by Jacques-Louis David to focus on how artists use symbols and imagery to guide a viewer’s impression of a subject. Students can compare how David portrays Napoléon to other artist’s portraits in the exhibition or in other sources.

The Discovery Channel has some comprehensive lesson plans on world history, including Napoléon and the French Revolution. <http://school.discovery.com/lessonplans/programs/napoleon>

PBS Teacher Source, <http://www.pbs.org/teachersource>, contains over 3,000 free lesson plans and activities, including three Napoléon related lesson plans:  
“Napoleon Becomes a Man of Destiny”  
“Napoleon: Hero or Tyrant”  
“The Laws Live On”