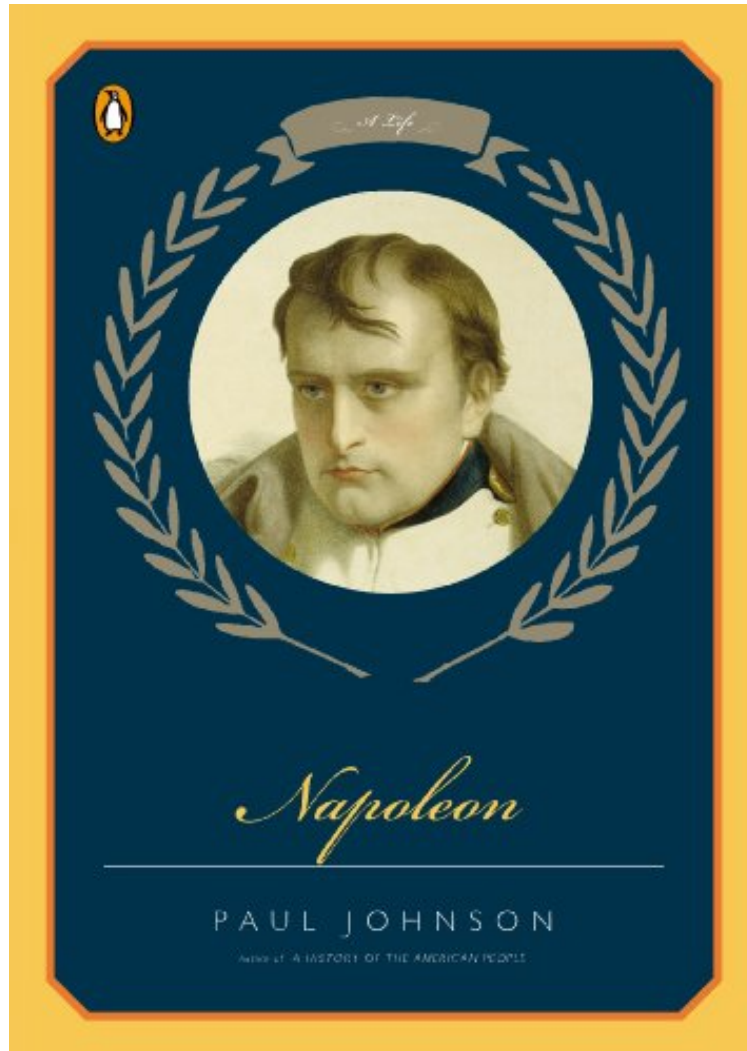


## Napoleon: A Life

*Paul Johnson*

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#341876 in Books Paul Johnson 2006-05-02 2006-05-02 Original language: English PDF # 1 7.14 x .57 x 5.10l, .34 #File Name: 0143037455208 pages Napoleon A Life | File size: 55.Mb

**Paul Johnson : Napoleon: A Life** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Napoleon: A Life:

3 of 3 people found the following review helpful. Don't Do it...By Nicholas Roberts This book was short, expensive and highly inaccurate. It is just not possible to cover Napoleon's life in 100 pages, but if you make the attempt make sure you got your facts straight and your figures correct. Just isn't worth it. 3 of 3 people found the following review helpful. Another sloppy job by a British historian who dislikes the ...By M. Belman Another sloppy job by a British historian who dislikes the French. According to his Wikipedia bio, Johnson is a supporter of Pinochet and Franco, so one must ask why he dislikes Napoleon so fiercely. Other reviewers have listed the many factual errors that Johnson makes in this book; for me the silliest was his contention that Napoleon invented the secret police. As for his opinions,

his equating Denon to Goebbels and Speer takes the cake.<sup>4</sup> of 5 people found the following review helpful. Well-written, but the author clearly harbors an anti-Napoleon grudge. By Mike Victor. Excellent. I love Paul Johnson's plain, direct writing style. Napoleon is a complex character who continues to evoke passionate feelings of admiration or hatred (few are lukewarm about him). The line drawn from Napoleon to the events of 1917 and the mass murders of the 20th century seemed a bit tenuous, but Johnson makes the point well. Napoleon managed to tap, manipulate, and ride a lethal combination of transnational Utopian ideology and national self-determination, and once released, it was impossible to put back into the bottle. Johnson makes the point that nationalism, once unleashed, was the undoing of Napoleon ironically enough, and that it led to the collapse of empires and over the next century or two to the Europe we know today. Johnson clearly does not like Napoleon and this cheapens the writing a bit. He even gives us an image of his small genitalia from the autopsy performed by a British surgeon which I think was a bit gratuitous. Johnson repeatedly makes the point - valid in my opinion - that Napoleon's ambition led to the deaths of millions and the suffering of many more, but this point does not need the sniping comments of Napoleon's pathetic final days to make valid. The other difficulty with Napoleon is that English language histories, I have noticed, tend to have an Anglo-Saxon bias as he is seen through the spy glass of Wellington at Waterloo. French ones are more nuanced and emphasize his legal and administrative exploits (which although less remembered, displayed remarkable genius). Napoleon was a strange mix of revolutionary and latent monarch. Here was a man who began his career as a Jacobin but was deeply appalled at the excesses of an unrestrained mob as he witnessed them butcher the Swiss guards protecting Louis XVI. He would not forget that day as he opened up with artillery at point blank range on a Paris crowd when he next had the opportunity, ending the power of the sans culottes once and for all. Here was a man who approved of regicide who declared himself emperor, then, when that was not enough, married a teenage princess in an unsuccessful attempt to join the club of blue bloods. Johnson covers all this ground, all the complexity of the man, but yields to the temptation to resolve the complexity by explaining it too much. Napoleon was Napoleon. He was a unique man in history, and yes, if history had been a bit different one way or the other, if Napoleon had been born in a different time or place, we might not have heard of him, but he was more than the label we put on a historical wave as Tolstoy argued in *War and Peace* or a stage setter for Hitler and Stalin as Johnson seems to argue. I think we should let him be just who he was, a brilliant, troubling, and troubled man, who managed to lead a country - and Europe - kicking and screaming into the modern era. France would have a restoration, and his own behavior seems to undermine his republican values, but Napoleon not only rescued the revolution, but exported it, for better or worse, to the rest of Europe. All monarchs would be fighting a rear guard action for the next 100 years. Most would disappear. Those who survived would be constitutionally limited, in most cases titular. Napoleon did that. And he gave us Louisiana.

From New York Times bestselling author Paul Johnson, "a very readable and entertaining biography" (The Washington Post) about one of the most important figures in modern European history: Napoleon Bonaparte. In an ideal pairing of author and subject, the magisterial historian Paul Johnson offers a vivid look at the life of the strategist, general, and dictator who conquered much of Europe. Following Napoleon from the barren island of Corsica to his early training in Paris, from his meteoric victories and military dictatorship to his exile and death, Johnson examines the origins of his ferocious ambition. In Napoleon's quest for power, Johnson sees a realist unfettered by patriotism or ideology. And he recognizes Bonaparte's violent legacy in the totalitarian regimes of the twentieth century. Napoleon is a magnificent work that bears witness to one individual's ability to work his will on history.

From Publishers Weekly. The career of a different kind of celebrity hound is examined in historian Paul Johnson's *Napoleon*. Johnson (A History of the American People) contends that Bonaparte sowed the seeds of the devastating warfare and totalitarian regimes of the 20th century. Stressing that the Corsican general was motivated by opportunism alone, Johnson traces his rise to power and expansionist bids, arguing that the most important legacies of his rule were the eclipse of France as the leading European power and the introduction of such enduring institutions as the secret police and government propaganda operations. (on sale May 13) Copyright 2002 Cahners Business Information, Inc. From Library Journal. In this newest addition to the "Penguin Life" series, Johnson (The Birth of the Modern) produces an "unromantic," "skeptical," and "searching" study of a person who exercised power "only for a decade and a half" but whose "impact on the future lasted until nearly the end of the twentieth century." Characterizing Bonaparte primarily as an opportunist "trained by his own ambitions and experiences to take the fullest advantage of the power the Revolution had created," Johnson suggests that, by 1813, the emperor "did not understand that all had changed ... and events were about to deposit him ... on history's smoldering rubbish dump." Why another biography of Napoleon now? Johnson's answer is that the great evils of "Bonapartism" "the deification of force and war, the all-powerful centralized state, the use of cultural propaganda..., the marshaling of entire peoples in the pursuit of personal and ideological power came to hateful maturity only in the twentieth century." Thus, Napoleon's is a grandly cautionary life. Readers might wish to counterbalance Johnson's deliberately sparse outline of Bonaparte's amazing career by examining James M. Thompson's *Napoleon Bonaparte: His Rise and Fall*. But Johnson's antiromantic treatment brings

into sharp focus the ills he identifies with "Bonapartism," and that focus certainly justifies this new look at the much-studied old general. Recommended for larger public libraries. Robert C. Jones, Warrensburg, MO Copyright 2002 Cahners Business Information, Inc. From Booklist ed with Frank McLynn's Napoleon. Two new books, each one different in scope and audience, profile the French emperor who gave his name to an era. A prolific and popular historian, Johnson provides an excellent overview. In what amounts to an extended essay, this volume in the Penguin Lives series presents a concise appraisal of Napoleon's career and a precise understanding of his enigmatic character. The author views Napoleon, not as an "idea man" whose ideology was the ladder by which he propelled himself to heights of power, but as an opportunist who took advantage of a series of events and situations he could manipulate into achieving supreme control. From the island of Corsica, which only recently had come under French rule, Napoleon saw France's raw, revolutionary condition as the perfect playing field for an "ambitious, politically conscious, and energetic soldier" such as himself. But, in the long run, he failed as a politician, which eventually caused his failure as a general as well. If Johnson's book is an outstanding introduction, McLynn's study is for readers wanting a more in-depth analysis. At more than 700 pages, this journey through Napoleon's life, with its emphasis on detail, whether about military maneuvers or Napoleon's quasineroses, certainly demands an investment in terms of time and undivided attention. Written with great stylistic flourish, McLynn's full embrace of his subject's life, which benefits from exhaustive research resulting in a comprehensive picture of the Napoleonic era, is a rich reading experience. These two biographies are not mutually exclusive. They can comfortably sit side by side on the shelf, each one filling a different need. Brad Hooper Copyright © American Library Association. All rights reserved