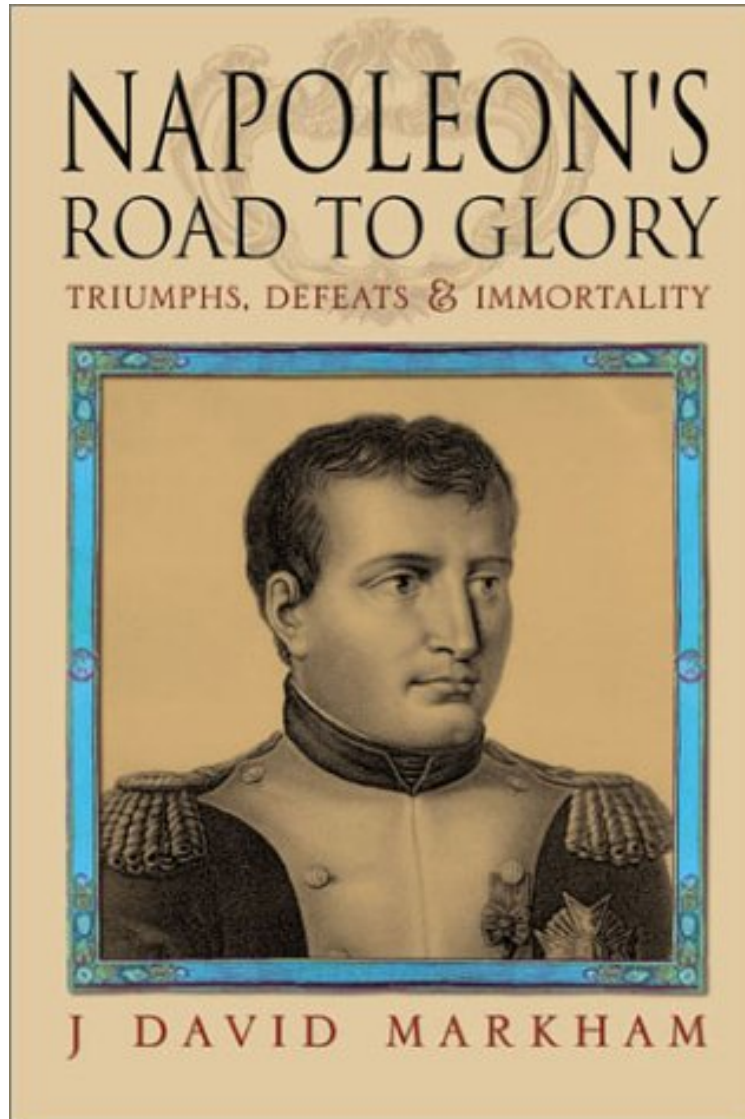


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Napoleon's Road to Glory

J. David Markham

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J. David Markham : Napoleon's Road to Glory before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Napoleon's Road to Glory:

6 of 14 people found the following review helpful. Cheerleading as HistoryBy THSFirst let me concede some of the compliments other readers have paid this book. It is easy to read, concise, and thoroughly researched. Three stars: C level work. It is not, however, very strong history. That is not to say that I picked out anything that was incorrect or even misleading, but instead it seems that Markham's obvious infatuation with Napoleon leads him to be unable to ask hard questions about his hero. More demanding readers, much less those who are critical of Napoleon's legacy, will

walk away from this book unsatisfied. This is a book written by a "Napoleonic Society of America" member for others of that same group. Napoleon was of course subject to horrible and fictitious slander. His position and long sustained success bred bitter enemies, and we shouldn't fall into the trap of believing their deionizations. Still, Markham comes dangerously close to going to the opposite extreme. He uniformly portrays Napoleon as peace loving and well intentioned. Criticisms of Napoleon are raised in as little as a sentence and dismissed just as quickly. The book never asks hard questions. Take, for example, Markham's explanation of why peace never managed to break out during Napoleon's time. It was always England that "wanted war." Wanting war! After WWI the terms of peace laid blame for the war at Germany's doorstep. These days we are more likely to say the great tragedy of that same war is that it seems none of Europe's leaders truly wanted it. Or how about the Cuban missile crisis? Over 13 days the world's greatest powers almost destroyed themselves. Which side wanted war? The US? The Soviets? Reducing wars of this magnitude to simple desire on the part of one side or the other is facile. There are deep personal, political, and strategic issues at work that must be understood. Markham makes little effort to contribute to that understanding. Instead he simply says that the English could not tolerate French possession of Antwerp. Very well, then if Napoleon is as committed to peace as Markham would have us believe, why did he not surrender the city or come to some other accord? Markham simply states that the French would not tolerate that. Little more is offered. "Why" plays a small part in the analysis. Still, it seems that Napoleon's ultimate downfall in great part hinged on this decision from both sides of the channel. Delving into this issue and others, at least for a page or two, would have been worth while. That lack of analysis makes Markham more of a reporter of old news than a historian. Moreover, his presentation of the facts becomes suspect because he is so clearly enamored with his subject. Read this book if you want to feel good about Napoleon, but go elsewhere if you want to probe below the surface.

14 of 15 people found the following review helpful. Napoleon's Road to Glory By Robert Burnham When I received a review copy of David Markham's new book, I was reluctant to read it. My first thoughts were with over 250,000 books on the man and the era, what could justify spending my time reading a book that so many others have covered so well already? I then thought about what I really wanted in a book about Napoleon - something that would be easy to read, covers all the important facts, and so well organized I could use it as a general reference book. I am happy to report that Mr. Markham delivers all of these and more! "Napoleon's Road to Glory" is organized chronologically into six parts, plus a prologue and an epilogue. Each part covers a different period of Napoleon's life: the Revolution, the Consulate, his glory years (1805 - 1809), his years of missteps (the Continental Blockade, Spain, and Russia), his downfall (1813 - 1815), and exile. Each section consists of several chapters that cover a different topic. For example in the section titled "A Republican Emperor," there are chapters on why Napoleon declared himself emperor; on his victories over the Austrians, Russians, and Prussians; the domestic reforms he made at home (such as education and religion); his love life; and his need to set up a dynasty so that his accomplishments would be carried on after his death. Although the chapters are relatively short and can easily be read in a 15 minute sitting, each is packed with relevant information and provides a superb summary of the salient points. Those looking for a quick reference book will be pleased by its logical organization and detailed index - both of which permits the reader to find information quickly. "Napoleon's Road to Glory" is written from a decidedly pro-Napoleon perspective. Mr. Markham promotes the idea that Napoleon was a man of peace and was forced by his enemies into the many wars. This is, however, not a military history of Napoleon. Napoleon's campaigns and battles are covered only briefly. The book's focus is on how Napoleon came to power, how he ruled, and his long term, non-military achievements - such as the Code Napoleon, re-forming the education system, and re-building the French economic infrastructure. Yet the author does not avoid the many controversies that have surrounded the man, including among others, the massacre of the Turkish prisoners-of-war and the execution of the Duke d'Enghien. Nor does Mr. Markham gloss over Napoleon's blunders. One section is devoted to his three major mistakes: the Continental System (i.e., the closing of the European markets to Great Britain), the invasion and subsequent quagmire in Spain, and the disastrous invasion of Russia in 1812. He also turns a very critical eye towards the errors Napoleon made during the Waterloo Campaign. The book ends with a brief look at Napoleon's exile on Saint Helena. It addresses his treatment by the British and provides updated information on whether or not he was murdered. "Napoleon's Road to Glory" is fast paced and a great read. Mr. Markham has the ability to take dry facts and spin a tale that will hold the interest of the most jaded reader. It is a welcomed balance to what seems to be an increasing number of anti-Napoleon biographies being published.

8 of 9 people found the following review helpful. THE bio on Napoleon! By Matthew D. Zarzeczny Napoleon's Road to Glory is a well-written and well-researched biography that could easily replace Felix Markham's classic biography of the French emperor to become the new standard biography of Napoleon I. One important way that David Markham, unlike the earlier Markham, improves upon the presentation of the older biography is by supplying numerous endnotes that provide readers with reference points for future research into certain key and fascinating aspects of Napoleon's compelling life. Moreover, David Markham's book does not suffer from the problems of obvious authorial bias that plague books such as Alan Schom's Napoleon Bonaparte. I am especially pleased to see that he included sections on Napoleon's religious policies and vision of European unity (highlighted even more in his Napoleon for Dummies), as well as comparisons of Napoleon to earlier leaders like Alexander the Great. David Markham provides an overview of Napoleon's settlement with the Catholic Church,

including an overview of the background of the situation inherited by Napoleon before Markham addresses how Napoleon sought to resolve the religious divisions of the French Revolution. Moreover, Markham, who bases most of his material on Napoleon and the Jews from Ben Weider's work, explains that Napoleon's proclamation declaring Palestine an independent Jewish state even served as part of David Ben Gurion's argument that the United Nations should recognize Israel in 1947, roughly one hundred and fifty years after Napoleon planned to issue his proclamation! Markham reminds us that Napoleon was after many kinds of peace: domestic, foreign, and religious. Napoleon reopened the University of Pavia and granted its professors liberal stipends. In 1808, he created the Academic Palms as a reward for excellence in teaching. In Napoleon's Road to Glory, Markham describes Napoleon's improvements to Paris and other cities in France, Italy, and Switzerland as a parallel to the public works projects initiated by Julius Caesar. David Markham seconds Geoffrey Ellis's designation as the consular period as a Pax Napoleonica. As Markham puts it, if Napoleon "were Caesar, then the Consulate was his Pax Romana even in the years when there was no actual peace." Markham adds that some "consider the Consulate to have been something of a golden age of French culture . . ." The what if?'s of history also abound in this book, as does the logic behind Napoleon's foreign policy. Readers learn, for example, that a report published "by Colonel Sébastiani . . . suggested that France could easily retake Egypt" and Markham explains Napoleon's desire to keep the Belgian departments, because much "of Belgium is French-speaking and had always been seen as a potential part of France." And imagine the consequences had Napoleon married a Russian bride and managed to avoid invading the Russian Empire in the year following the appearance of the above quotation! Instead, the Franco-Russian alliance rapidly collapsed in such an extreme fashion that in a proclamation to his troops in 1812, Tsar Alexander cited "difference of religion" as one of the reasons why Russian peasants now consider themselves as Napoleon's "irreconcilable enemies." What is more, the king of Naples turned on Napoleon following Napoleon's defeat at Leipzig in 1813, because Marshal Murat "feared that Napoleon had expressed a resolution to . . . incorporate Naples with the kingdom of Italy." I have graded many history assignments in my academic career at two universities and were I to assign a grade to this impressive volume, I would overwhelmingly give the book a solid A+!

A stunning new biography that will put previous and current Napoleonic biographies in the shade. It is the single-volume account of Napoleon's whole career. Puts to rest some of the myths surrounding Napoleon. His research is sound, his scholarship outstanding and his historical analysis well thought out; his account is a fine blend of scholarship and story telling. Ben Weider, President, International Napoleonic Society; author, Assassination at St. Helena Revisited. J. David Markham, a leading Napoleonic expert and an international writer and lecturer, brings the Emperor to life in an accurate, well-researched text that will be accessible to all, with extensive footnotes to aid further study. Markham's insight makes this book very enjoyable reading. John G. Gallaher, President, Napoleonic Alliance; author, The Iron Marshal. Far more than a simple recitation of facts, Markham provides excellent historical analysis, explaining why Napoleon made his decisions, and what their consequences were. David Markham has given the man and the events a totally original and new spin that is a veritable tour de force. Prince Gregory Troubetzkoy, International Napoleonic Society; author, In the Service of the Tsar: The Memoirs of Denis Davidov, 1806-1814. If you read only one book on Napoleon, Napoleon's Road to Glory should be that book.

From School Library Journal Adult/High School-This easy read is fast paced, covers all the important facts, and is so well organized that it could be used as a general reference book. It is not a military history-campaigns and battles are covered only briefly. The focus is on how Napoleon came to power; how he ruled; and his long-term, nonmilitary achievements, such as the Code Napoleon, reforming the education system, and rebuilding the French economic infrastructure. The author does not avoid the many controversies that have surrounded the man, nor does he gloss over Napoleon's blunders. One section is devoted to his three major mistakes: the closing of the European markets to Great Britain, the invasion and subsequent quagmire in Spain, and the disastrous 1812 invasion of Russia. Markham also turns a critical eye toward the errors made during the Waterloo campaign. The book ends with a brief look at Napoleon's exile on Saint Helena that addresses his treatment by the British and provides updated information on whether or not he was murdered. The chapters are relatively short and packed with relevant information, and each one provides a superb summary of salient points. Those looking for a quick reference book will be pleased by the logical organization and detailed index, both of which permit readers to find information quickly. Robert Burnham, R. E. Lee High School, Springfield, VA. Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. A fast moving account that Napoleonic buffs will enjoy. -- Donald Howard, Institute on Napoleon and the French Revolution. A fine blend of scholarship and story telling. This book puts to rest some of the myths surrounding Napoleon. -- Ben Weider, President, International Napoleonic Society. Well-researched and well-written account incorporating much new evidence. A great addition to any enthusiast's library. -- Peter Holmes, Napoleonic Alliance. From the Author. Napoleon's Road to Glory was awarded the Napoleonic Society of America 2004 Literary Award, presented in Washington, D.C. September 11, 2004.