



Directions

Napoleon was one of the most important figures in modern Europe. As leader of France he conquered or controlled most of Europe in the early 19th Century. His ideas had a strong influence on the formation of modern European countries.

Born of Corsican parents of a poor family, his rise to power was not easy. He had to make many difficult decisions along the way. Below are some of the decisions that Napoleon faced. How would you have decided if you were Napoleon?

Decision 1

After education in a military academy, Napoleon joined the French army. During the meantime, the French Revolution took place and Napoleon continued service in the army. The new French Republic was struggling for survival. Napoleon, stationed in southern France, went to Genoa, Italy, to inspect their

fortifications. Genoa was opposed to France. Napoleon was also friendly with Robespierre, one of the Committee of Safety that ruled France at the time. Robespierre was arrested and executed.

When he returned from Genoa, Napoleon was also arrested on his 25th birthday for plotting with Robespierre to establish a dictatorship. Napoleon's friends advised him to escape because they thought he would be executed as had Robespierre. This was the time of the "Reign of Terror" when many were sent to the guillotine.

What would you do? Escape, or stand trial and risk having your head cut off?

Decision 2

Napoleon was soon assigned to the War Office in Paris. Because he was a very good artillery officer his superiors wanted to send him to command one of the armies fighting to protect France. Napoleon asked to be sent to Turkey. He was denied this request.

What would you do? Accept the assignment to one of the armies fighting to protect France, or resign the post in the army?

Decision 3

The government was threatened by several groups in Paris who wished to overthrow the government. They had control of the National Guard of Paris which was four times larger than the army.

Napoleon was asked to take command of the army in Paris and defend the government. Some of his friends advised against it. He would probably have to use his artillery to kill French citizens to protect the government. He would become unpopular. On the other hand, if he saved the government, he would become its protector and he would have immense power over it. What would you do?

Decision 4

Napoleon, at the head of France's army, invaded the Italian peninsula. He won victory over the Kingdom of Sardinia. When Sardinia offered a peace treaty, Napoleon signed it without asking the French government.

The government did not like Napoleon's action. They thought only the government should sign a peace treaty. They decided that Napoleon was exercising too much power. They decided to appoint a second general to share command with Napoleon.

When Napoleon heard of the plan, he had to make a decision. Should he agree to sharing his power with another general or say no and threaten to resign? What would you do?

Decision 5

Napoleon went on to invade and conquer Egypt. While in Egypt, he received a letter about his wife. His wife, Josephine, had taken up with another man.

Napoleon was very upset. What should he do? Should he divorce his wife immediately or take up with other women? What would you do?

Decision 6

Napoleon became trapped in Egypt. The English cut him off with their naval control of the Mediterranean. He decided to march north to capture Damascus.

On the way he captured 3,000 Turkish soldiers. His soldiers were on short rations. What should he do with the prisoners? Some advised that he let them go. Others said they should be killed. What would you do?

Decision 7

Napoleon returned to France from Egypt. He faced a difficult political situation at home. France had lost Italy which he conquered. He also had to face his wife.

Josephine visited Napoleon. She begged him to talk to her. She cried. Napoleon stayed locked in his room. She told him she was two million francs in debt.

What would you do? Divorce her or pay off her debt?

Decision 8

The French government was incapable of running the country. The government was corrupt and inefficient. One member of the Directory, the ruling body, asked Napoleon to participate in the overthrow of the Directory. Should he support those trying to overthrow the government? What would you do?

Decision 9

Napoleon, after becoming First Consul, appointed his brothers ministers. Lucien married a woman with a bad reputation. In addition, she was not of royal blood. Napoleon was furious. He asked Lucien to divorce the woman. Lucien refused. Napoleon had to decide what to do with Lucien. Fire him or overlook his marriage. What would you do?

Decision 10

Other European countries ruled by kings wanted to overthrow the French Republic. French aristocrats also wanted the French king restored. One of these was the duke of Enghien who lived across the border from France. It was reported to Napoleon that the duke was involved in a plan to overthrow the government of France. The evidence, however, was weak.

Napoleon sent his troops across the border to capture the duke. He was arrested

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and returned to France where he was put on trial. It was left to Napoleon about what his punishment should be, prison or death. What would you decide?

Decision 11

Napoleon ruled France for several years as First Consul. He was the virtual dictator of France. It was suggested by some of his advisors that he become king. Napoleon did not like the idea of being a king, but he did feel that he was the best one to rule France. It was suggested that, instead of being a king, that he become emperor of France. Should he declare himself emperor?

Decision 12

During the first four years of his rule as First Consul, there was peace in Europe. Napoleon wanted peace. England, which was opposed to Napoleon's rule, broke the peace. She had agreed to withdraw from a Mediterranean island, then refused to do so. What would you do if you were Napoleon? Attack England, attempt to shut England out of trade on the continent of Europe, or do nothing.

Decision 13

Napoleon's naval force was weak. He needed a strong navy to fight England, the strongest naval power in the world. An American inventor offered two new inventions, a boat powered by steam and a submarine. He wanted support to develop his inventions. Would you provide financial support? What would you do?

Decision 14

Napoleon wanted a son to take his place as emperor. He and his wife, Josephine, were not able to have children. Napoleon thought for many years that it was his fault. Josephine had children by a previ-

ous marriage. Finally, Napoleon had a child by one of his mistresses. He realized that he could produce children. Josephine, who was older than Napoleon, was over forty. Should Napoleon divorce his wife and marry a younger woman who could have children?

Decision 15

Napoleon wanted all of the countries on the continent to not buy goods from England. Russia agreed not to buy goods from England at Tilsit in 1809. This hurt Russia and the Russians continued to trade with England and ignored Napoleon's orders not to do so. Most of his advisors suggested a compromise with Russia; nearly all felt that an invasion would be a mistake. A few thought that military force would bring the Russians into line. Should Napoleon compromise or invade Russia? What would you do?

Decision 16

Napoleon invaded Russia with a large army of four hundred thousand soldiers. The Russians retreated. There were a few minor battles which the French won. French generals urged Napoleon not to go any further. The French were having trouble supplying their large army. Would you stop or continue to invade Russia?

Decision 17

Napoleon was forced to retreat from Moscow. The Russian armies hounded him. The lack of food and the freezing cold of the Russian winter decimated his army. His army was trapped at the Berezina River. His engineers attempted to build bridges across the freezing river. Should you jump in the freezing water to help the engineers?

Decision 18

By 1814, the Prussians and Austrians had invaded France. Napoleon still had some military forces left. However, the French Senate and his generals urged him to resign in favor of his son. Napoleon still felt that he could pull out a victory if he had the support of the French people. What would you do?

Decision 19

Napoleon was exiled to the island of Elba near Italy. He was allowed to keep 1200 of his guards and was promised a pension from the French government. He was allowed to rule the island and his only guard was a handful of English soldiers. It was a comfortable existence.

Some French visitors urged him to return to France. The new French king was unpopular and the foreign armies had left the country. They thought he could regain control of the government. Would you return?

Decision 20

Napoleon returned when his English guards left for a short trip. With his 1200 soldiers he landed in southern France and marched through the Alps. When he reached the town of Grenoble, the soldiers were sent out to arrest him. Napoleon's small army was outnumbered. Napoleon could have turned and retreated, or he could have gone forward and asked the soldiers to join him and risk being shot. What would you do?