

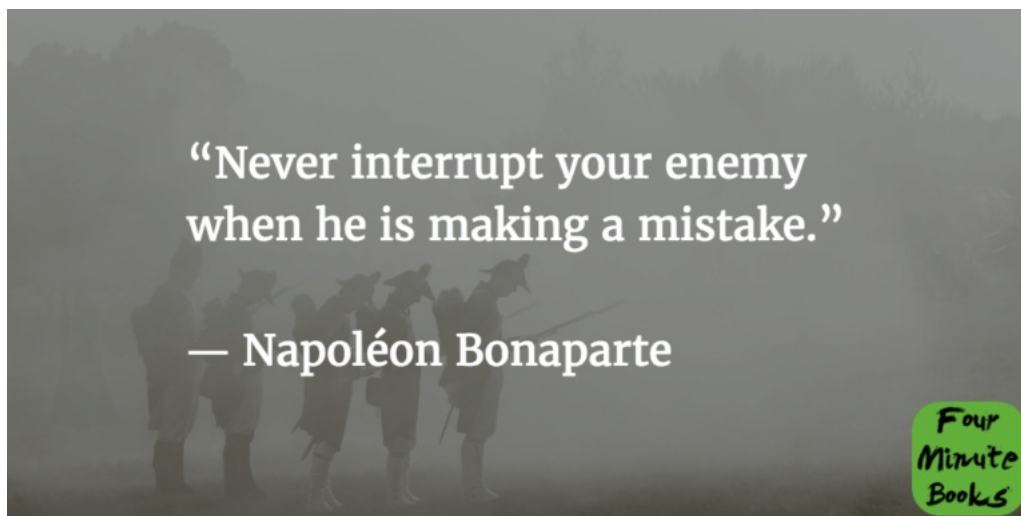
# Napoleon The Great Summary

 [fourminutebooks.com/napoleon-the-great-summary](https://fourminutebooks.com/napoleon-the-great-summary)

**1-Sentence-Summary:** *Napoleon The Great is the definitive, modern biography of legendary leader, French idol and European visionary Napoleon Bonaparte, detailing his life from his early years as an immigrant, over his rise through the military ranks, all the way to his greatest battles, political achievements and ultimate exile.*

**Read in:** 4 minutes

**Favorite quote from the author:**



The last time I learned something about Napoleon was in London in May 2016. Me and my then-girlfriend took the Sandeman's Free London Tour, which is an entirely free, 1-2 hour sightseeing tour (highly recommended!).

Of course, whatever you learn about Napoleon in England will be very different from what you learn about him in France – that day we were told about how the Brits kicked his ass back to St. Helena in the Battle of Waterloo. While this was his biggest loss, it was also one of only few.

*Napoleon The Great* recounts his life objectively, but I'm not going to bore you with historic facts. Instead, let's look at what you can learn from Napoleon to become a better person!

Here are my 3 lessons from his life:

1. Napoleon was (almost) an immigrant, which turned out to be a huge advantage.
2. He had a truly Stoic philosophy about life.
3. Like all great leaders, Napoleon was ahead of his time.

Angry, neurotic little man or courageous, visionary leader? Let's look at what *you* can learn from Napoleon, regardless of the answer!

## Lesson 1: Napoleon was of Italian descent, which gave him a competitive edge.

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Napoleon was born in 1769, but not, as you might expect, in France. He was born on the island of Corsica, halfway between France and Italy, next to Sardinia. His full name at birth? Napoleone di Buonaparte. Yes, Napoleon was of Italian descent.

Corsica had been under Italian control until 1755 and only integrated into France one year before he was born. Luckily, one month after his birth, his father Carlo secured himself a job with the new French government, which further elevated their societal status, though they had been in good standing before. In 1771, Carlo successfully managed to apply for the newly minted Corsican Order of Nobility, which made the family aristocrats.

Only thanks to his dad's hard work was it possible for Napoleon to get into the Royal Military School of Brienne-le-Château, located in mainland France, at ten years old.

So technically, Napoleon was an immigrant, and he got a lot of flack for it: the other students teased him about being the first Corsican in the school, being of fake nobility and made fun of his Corsican accent (which he'd keep for the rest of his life).

**As often happens to immigrants, this early adversity only made him tougher, stronger and work harder than all of his peers.** The result? At 16 years, he became one of the youngest officers in the French army, and the only Corsican to be in charge of artillery.

## Lesson 2: His philosophy about life was a truly Stoic one, focused on interdisciplinarity and what he could control.

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We talk a lot about Stoicism on Four Minute Books, and I think Napoleon is a good example of one. In particular, he did two things very characteristic of this ancient, Greek philosophy:

1. **He believed in an interdisciplinary education.**
2. **He only focused on the things he could control.**

The first one becomes clear when you look at his letters, which were very prolific, the craft of a good writer, and often full of ideas from the Enlightenment movement. He tried to spread this new era of knowledge as much as possible, bringing with him hundreds of scientists, artists, botanists, zoologists and geographers on his military campaigns. In 1798, he even established an institute of science and art while fighting in Egypt – which would go on to discover the world-famous Rosetta stone a year later.

Sadly, on that same campaign, he also found out his wife Josephine had been cheating on him for years. She'd married him more out of practicality, rather than love. Having been really in love with her, he didn't let the news deter his focus though: he was in Egypt, so what could he have done anyway? Instead, he did what he could: trying to make the campaign a success.

When lived consistently, these two traits have a huge potential to make you happier (and probably also more successful) in life.

## Lesson 3: Napoleon's vision was too early for his time, but that's a price all great leaders pay.

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One of Napoleon's biggest goals was to beat the British by getting most of the other European states to cooperate and shut them off economically. This kept backfiring however, and instead he saw himself faced with the "Coalition Forces" in 1813, which consisted of the united armies of the United Kingdom, Austria, Spain, Italy, Prussia, Russia, Portugal, Sweden and a few others.

Even the gigantic French army didn't stand a chance and so, when they marched on Paris, Napoleon was forced to surrender, and thus sent into his first exile on the island of Elba in 1814. Cunning as he was though, he escaped a year later, rounded up a few soldiers, and made his way towards Paris via the Route Napoléon – a 190 mile distance he covered in just six days.

Upon his arrival, the reinstated monarch Louis XVIII showed zero resistance and fled in his carriage (after his servants carried him to it, because he was too fat to walk). The very next day, Napoleon took the lead of the nation again, and instantly drafted **a new constitution, which abolished slavery in all forms, forbade censorship, split the power between the emperor and legislature and ruled out all desires of France to build an empire.**

Sadly, this visionary reign was short-lived and only lasted about 100 days, after which Napoleon lost the Battle of Waterloo and was exiled to St. Helena. I say sadly, because the new constitution was truly visionary for its time, and when Louis XVIII returned, it was back to square one.

Being alone with your vision is the price all great leaders must pay, but if the world eventually catches up, it'll still be worth it!

## Napoleon The Great Review

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Wow, what a comprehensive summary! Very detailed, I really enjoyed *Napoleon The Great*. Learned more from this than all of French history we had in school, which is a good sign you'll enjoy it too.

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## What else can you learn from the blinks?

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- At what age Napoleon became a general and how

- How much preparation went into the campaign that would eventually make him a French national hero
- What his biggest loss was prior to Waterloo
- Why he had his brother point his sword at Napoleon's heart
- The reason the peace deals he negotiated were important, in spite of never lasting long
- Which mistake by the Russian tsar made them lose a huge battle
- The only time Napoleon cried about a battle
- How Napoleon failed at uniting European nations
- What Napoleon did during the last years of his life

## **Who would I recommend the Napoleon The Great summary to?**

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The 12 year old immigrant girl, who's bullied in school, the 47 year old CFO of a medium-sized business, who's frustrated with his marriage, and anyone who sometimes feels lonely, because they seem to be the only one with big plans.