Able Was I Ere I Saw Elba

About the Show

Fred finds out firsthand what it means to have a "Napoleon Complex" when he and Joe warp back to 1815 Paris and meet Napoleon Bonaparte. Luckily, Samantha is also there with pioneering aeronaut Sophie Blanchard, and the three of them experience the ride of their lives.

Introduction

Students' knowledge of Napoleon may be limited to the image of him standing with his hand inside his coat. This lesson plan will help students learn more about Napoleon and what happened to him after he ruled France.

Historical Background

Napoleon Bonaparte was a masterful soldier, a brilliant tactician, and an able administrator. He was also a dictator who believed he could do no wrong.

Napoleon—benefiting perhaps by the new belief in equality after the French Revolution—rose very quickly from obscurity to brigadier general to become commander of the Army of Italy. He took over France, and proclaimed himself emperor in 1804. For the next eight years his armies marched through Europe, from Portugal in the west and as far as the Russian border in the east. But after a disastrous attack on Moscow, which cost hundreds of thousands of lives, Napoleon was forced to abdicate in 1814 and was exiled to the island of Elba, just off the coast of Tuscany.

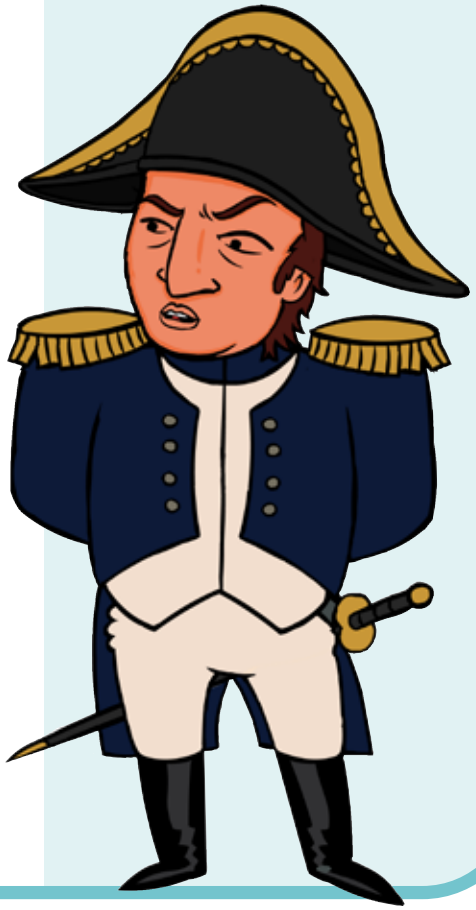
Napoleon arrived on Elba on May 4, 1814, as "Emperor and Ruler of Elba," a position he appears to have taken quite seriously. Once on the island, he began making improvements. He built a residence for himself out of a mill; reformed the government; and improved the roads, bridges, iron mines, and harbors.

Curriculum Connections

- biography
- France
- emperors
- military leaders
- Napoleon
- revolution
- world history

Subject Areas

- language arts
- social studies



Historical Background *continued*

These changes were viewed by Napoleon's contemporaries (and later historians) as somewhat of a joke, because Elba was a small, remote, and primitive place—16 miles long and never more than seven miles wide. Portoferraio, the island's main town, was a small and seedy port.

Napoleon's "coronation" consisted of the mayor of Portoferraio handing him the keys to the city, as the mayor's hands shook with fear at the sight of the great general. This was a far cry from Napoleon crowning himself emperor in Paris at Notre Dame in 1804 in front of the Pope and dozens of other European leaders. To make matters worse, aristocratic Europeans visited the island to gawk at Napoleon in his greatly reduced circumstances.

In 1815 Napoleon left the island to reclaim his throne with 700 men, a million francs, four guns, three generals, and a supply of ammunition. When he reached the town of Laffrey, he was blocked by an infantry battalion. According to accounts of the time, he approached the opposing infantry, alone and unarmed, and shouted, "It is I, Napoleon. Kill your emperor if you wish." There was silence, and then a shout of "Vive l'Empreur!" Many of the soldiers abandoned their posts and joined him. After his opponents in Paris fled, Napoleon returned to the city for his coronation.

Although he returned triumphantly, the French people never fully embraced him a second time, and European powers moved quickly to crush him. Defeated at Waterloo in June 1815, Napoleon abdicated soon after. The British sent him to St. Helena, where he spent the last six years of his life in a more distant and restrictive exile than he had experienced on Elba.

Want students to get even more excited about history?



Check out the Napoleon adventure for kids at

www.timewarptrio.com/adventures/napoleon/

Put It Back, Jack! and other interactive games to play.

Plentifax 487—the ultimate time traveler's guide—gives facts about Napoleon, the French Revolution, and more!

Cool Books that kids will love.

Activity 1



Be a Pal—Write a Palindrome

A palindrome is a sentence or phrase or word that reads the same way backwards and forwards. The word *palindrome* comes from the Greek *palindromus* (running back again) from *palin* (back again) and *dromos* (running). Perhaps the most famous palindromes are "Able was I ere I saw Elba" and "Madam I'm Adam." In this activity, students explore palindromes and also build their understanding and appreciation for how words work.

Instructions

1. Introduce palindromes to your class. Do any of the students have names that are palindromes, such as Bob, Anna, or Lil?
2. Distribute the "Palindromes" handout. Have pairs of students come up to the board. Have one student write the palindrome one way and have the other students write it the opposite way to test whether or not each phrase or sentence is truly a palindrome.
3. Working in pairs, have students discover more palindrome words, phrases, or sentences. They can create their own or consult Web sites such as fun-with-words.com/palindromes.html.
4. Have students who speak other languages contribute palindromes (if they exist) in their native language.
5. Each morning, ask students to write their latest palindromes on sentence strips so they can display their discoveries. After a week or two, have students vote for their favorite palindromes. Display the top five palindromes in class.

Take It Further

- Have students write palindrome word quizzes on index cards. Have them write the clue (for instance, *a young dog is a palindrome*) on one side and the palindrome answer (*pup*) on the other side. Hold a "Guess My Palindrome" game session.
- Distribute a sample Word Square, in which every row and column reads the same way in both directions. Distribute graph paper and challenge students, in pairs or small groups, to create their own Word Square. Put the student-created Word Squares in the class newsletter, on your Web page, or post them in class.

Objectives

- to play with language
- to work cooperatively

Materials

- graph paper
- "Palindromes" handouts
- "Word Square" handout

Curriculum Standards

- **NCTE/IRA**
  Students apply knowledge of language structure, language conventions (e.g. spelling and punctuation), media techniques, figurative language, and genre to create, critique, and discuss print and non-print texts.

Palindromes

Anita got a toga, Tina

A Santa at NASA

Cigar: Tragic

Detach cat, Ed

Go deliver a dare, vile dog

A man, a plan, a canal . . . Panama

Rise to vote, sir

Too bad I hid a boot

Oozy rat in a sanitary zoo

Never odd or even

Straw warts

© 2006 WGBH Educational Foundation.

Word Square

S	T	E	P
T	I	M	E
E	M	I	T
P	E	T	S

© 2006 WGBH Educational Foundation.

Activity 2



Vive La Cuisine!

Students will learn about French food and restaurants as they create a business plan and menu for an imaginary French restaurant.

Instructions

1. In order to get a sense of the flavor of French life and culture, have students work together to make plans for a French café, bistro, or restaurant.
2. As a class, develop a simple business plan for the restaurant. Discuss the customers, size, location, hours, and atmosphere. Decide what the name will be. Students may want to choose an actual locale in the community where they think the restaurant could be.
3. Encourage students to bring in sample menus from local restaurants. Discuss the different features, such as how the menu is organized, how long it is, whether or not the dishes are described.
4. Divide the class into groups. Have each group work on a different aspect of the plan. One group could create the menu, in French and English, with an explanation of what each dish is. Another group could research sample recipes. Another group could create signage for the restaurant in French (the name, "open," "closed," "bathroom," etc.).
5. If possible, choose one or more items from the menu, such as hors d'oevres, to make in class. Discuss with students how much of French cuisine is already familiar to them (e.g., mayonnaise, pommes frites).
6. Plan a "Grand Opening" for the restaurant. If any students, family members, or teachers are of French heritage, invite them to talk about their experiences and share a croissant, café au lait, or other dish. *Bon appetit!*

Objectives

- to learn about French language and culture
- to work cooperatively
- to plan a business venture

Materials

- art and writing supplies
- French/English dictionary

Curriculum Standards

- **NCSS**
  Individuals, Groups, & Institutions: The students will have the opportunity to compare similarities and differences in the ways groups, societies, and cultures meet human needs and concerns.
- **NCTE/IRA**
  Students develop an understanding of and respect for diversity in language use, patterns, and dialects across cultures, ethnic groups, geographic regions, and social roles.

Resources

Recommended Books

For Teachers

1815: The Return of Napoleon by Paul Britton Austin. (Greenhill Books, 2002) The dramatic story of Napoleon's escape from Elba and march on Paris, as told by eyewitnesses and participants.

The Age of Napoleon by J. Christopher Herold. (Mariner Books, 2002) A biography of the leader examines the influences he had on Europe and the world.

Napoleon Bonaparte by Alan Schom. (HarperCollins, 1997) This book uses maps, photos, and illustrations to follow Napoleon's rise and fall.

The Reign of Napoleon Bonaparte by Robert Asprey. (Basic Books, 2002) The second of a two-volume biography focuses on his military strategies. See also *The Rise of Napoleon Bonaparte* by the same author.

For Students

Fiction

Betsy and the Emperor by Staton Rabin. (McElderry, 2004) Young Betsy Balcombe befriends the exiled Napoleon, the most feared man in the world. For older readers. See also *My Napoleon* by Catherine Brighton (Millbrook, 1997), a version for younger readers.

Dear Napoleon, I Know You're Dead, But... by Elvira Woodroff. (Holiday House, 1992) When Marty's teacher assigns her class a letter-writing project, Marty writes to Napoleon Bonaparte and is astonished to receive a reply—from Napoleon!

I, Crocodile by Fred Marcellino. (HarperCollins, 1999) What would have happened if Napoleon brought a crocodile home from his Egyptian campaign? A resourceful croc relates his experiences in France.

Nonfiction

The Battle of Waterloo by David Pietrusza. (Lucent, 1996) A chronology of events, including an hour-to-hour account of the famous battle, begins this account of Napoleon's rise and fall.

Daily Life in Ancient and Modern Paris by Sarah Hoban. (Runestone, 2001) In Paris, Napoleon constructed roads, built monuments, such as the Arc de Triomphe, and transformed the Louvre into a museum.

Go Hang a Salami! I'm a Lasagna Hog! And Other Palindromes by Jon Agee. (Sagebrush, 1991) One in a series of humorous books about palindromes by the same author. Other titles include *Sit on a Potato Pan, Otis* and *Palindromania!*

Napoleon Bonaparte by Bob Carroll. (Lucent, 1994) As the French people struggled after the Revolution, Napoleon rose to power, promising law and order.

Waterloo by Samuel Willard Compton. (Chelsea House, 2002) Beginning with Napoleon's daring escape from Elba, this is the story of one of the most famous battles.

What's the Big Deal? Jefferson, Napoleon, and the Louisiana Purchase by Rhoda Blumberg. (National Geographic, 1998) A detailed history, with maps, photographs, and a timeline, about the Louisiana Purchase.

Resources

Web sites

NAPOLEON
school.discovery.com/lessonplans/programs/napoleon
Offers lesson plans, extension activities, suggested reading, and links to other sites about Napoleon Bonaparte.

NAPOLEON
www.pbs.org/empires/napoleon/flash/fl_home.html
This companion site to the PBS program contains background, a timeline, and classroom materials.

THE NAPOLEON SERIES
www.napoleon-series.org
Dedicated to the study of Napoleon and the era in which he lived, this site features articles from amateur and professional historians on a wide range of Napoleonic topics.

TIME WARP TRIO
www.timewarptrio.com
This site for kids includes interactive games, fascinating facts, and booklists that help make the past come alive.

Please note:
Although these sites were verified at the time of publication, Web site addresses and content are frequently subject to change.

©2006 WGBH Educational Foundation. All rights reserved. Time Warp Trio™ is produced by WGBH in association with Soup2Nuts for Discovery Kids. Major funding was provided by a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities. Any views, findings, conclusions, or recommendations expressed in these classroom materials do not necessarily represent those of the National Endowment for the Humanities. Based on THE TIME WARP TRIO book series written by Jon Scieszka and illustrated by Lane Smith. Time Warp Trio is a registered trademark of Chucklebait, LLC. Used with permission. Third party trademarks are the property of their respective owners. Used with permission.