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DISCUSSION & REVIEW QUESTIONS:

- Towards the beginning of the video, Professor Roberts contends that, “At the peak of his power, he [Napoleon] personally controlled more of the European continent than anyone since the great emperors of Rome. Today, most people see him as an ambitious little man with an outsized ego. Others see him as a forerunner of the great aggressor of the twentieth century, Adolph Hitler. This portrait is as flawed as it is unfair.” Why do you think that some people judge Napoleon so negatively? Why do you think that Professor Roberts characterizes an exclusively negative view of Napoleon as ‘flawed’ and ‘unfair’? Explain.
- After sharing Napoleon’s early history with us, Professor Roberts points out that, “As shrewd a politician as he was a general, by the first month of the new century, at the tender age of 30, Napoleon was the undisputed leader of France. He crowned himself Emperor on December 2, 1804, turning the French Republic into the French Empire, with a Bonaparte line of succession.” What factors do you think contributed to Napoleon rising to power at such a relatively young age? Explain. Why do you think that Napoleon so drastically and fundamentally changed the way the French government worked? Do you think that Napoleon should have crowned himself an emperor? Why or why not?
- Professor Roberts notes that, “To Europe, Napoleon brought the best fruits of the French Revolution: concepts of equality and meritocracy. He liberated the Jews from the ghettos to which they had been confined for centuries, leading to an explosion of artistic, scientific and economic innovation from this long-oppressed minority.” Why do you think that Napoleon freed the Jewish people in France? What, specifically, do you think accounts for and explains the correlation between liberating the Jewish people and the ‘explosion of artistic, scientific and economic innovation’ that occurred as a result? Explain.
- Later in the video, Professor Roberts explains that, “It’s hard to assess Napoleon because he was responsible for all these good things while also being responsible for much that was bad. But we can say this with certainty: to compare him to the murderous, oppressive dictators of the 20th century like Hitler and Stalin, or their tin-pot versions like Saddam Hussein or Colonel Gaddafi, is a gross injustice.” Why would it be such a gross injustice to compare Napoleon to more modern-day dictators? Explain.
- At the end of the video, Professor Roberts concludes that, “Napoleon was sui generis, unique unto himself, and proof positive that one man, given the right circumstances, can change history.” Do you agree with Professor Roberts’ conclusion here? Why or why not? Do you think that the ‘right circumstances’ could happen again and lead to one person having as much of a significant impact on world history as Napoleon did? Why or why not?

EXTEND THE LEARNING:

CASE STUDY: The Sorbonne

INSTRUCTIONS: Read the article “The Sorbonne in the 19th century,” and “The Sorbonne in the 20th century,” then answer the questions that follow.

- What did Napoleon create the five faculties to do, primarily? How many students attended during the restoration period? Under what important condition did the Sorbonne become the heart of the Parisian and French university system? How was the University of Paris recreated? How many professorships did the Sorbonne have around the year 1900? In 1906, by what percentage had female matriculation increased? Why was the first half of the 20th century so outstanding for the Sorbonne? Why were so many Sorbonne students killed in World War I, but not many faculty were killed? What was the result of the ‘laws of exclusion?’ What happened during the ‘Thirty Glorious Years?’ Where in France had always been a particularly active center of student politics? What exactly ‘guarantees the academic prestige of the reputation that the Sorbonne has earned for itself over many centuries?’ What does Chavannes’ fresco depict?
- Why do you think that Napoleon took such an interest in French higher education? In what ways has Napoleon’s contribution to France’s higher education structure benefitted the French? Explain.
- How do you think that one should go about judging historical figures? Do you think that history has to necessarily assign a value judgment (the person is good or bad) to all historical figures? Why or why not? What do you think that value is in learning the full story about Napoleon? Explain.



QUIZ

@REALNAPOLEONBONAPARTE

1. Napoleon was the most famous man of the _____ century.
 - a. 17th
 - b. 18th
 - c. 19th
 - d. 20th

2. By what age had Napoleon become a general?
 - a. 24 years old
 - b. 34 years old
 - c. 44 years old
 - d. 54 years old

3. The French people loved Napoleon so much that they crowned him emperor on December 2, 1804.
 - a. True
 - b. False

4. In all, Napoleon won _____ of the 60 battles he fought, drawing seven and losing seven.
 - a. 26
 - b. 36
 - c. 46
 - d. 56

5. What was the *Code Napoleon*?
 - a. A signal for men of various villages across France to join the French military
 - b. A merging of 42 legal different sources of code into a single body of French law
 - c. A restructuring of the French tax system into tiers based on an individual's total wealth
 - d. None of the above.



QUIZ - ANSWER KEY

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<https://www.sorbonne.fr/en/the-sorbonne/history-of-the-sorbonne/la-sorbonne-au-xixe-siecle-le-temps-des-grands-travaux-sous-la-troisieme-republique/>

The Sorbonne in the 19th century

From 1806, Napoleon overhauled the whole of the French system of higher education, which was now called the *Université impériale*, and created five faculties in Paris whose aim was to train secondary school and seminary teachers: the faculties of science, arts, theology, law and medicine. It was in the Sorbonne that the first three of these faculties were based, as were the offices of the Rector of the Academy of Paris to which the specifically Parisian function of Grand Master of the University was adjoined. Initially, these three faculties were located in the *Collège du Plessis* and it was not until 1821 that they were moved to the old Sorbonne, which had been abandoned thirty years earlier.

The Faculty of Arts was very soon a success. People came to study Greek, Latin, literary history, French literature, philosophy, ancient and modern history and geography. In the Restoration period (1814-1830), the faculty was home to between 1,000 and 1,500 students per year on average and later 2,000 under the July Monarchy (1830-1848). However, the number of teachers remained limited – only 51 between 1809 and 1878 at the Faculty of Arts.

As a centre of political liberalism, the Faculty of Arts benefited from its closeness to the ruling regime under the July Monarchy. Guizot, Cousin and Villemain each held in turn the position of Minister of Public Instruction. It was at this period that the Sorbonne became the heart of the Parisian and French university system.

After the failure of many projects of reform and reconstruction during the Second Republic (1848-1852) and the Second Empire (1852-1870), the advent of the Third Republic (1870-1940) was a major turning point in the history of the Sorbonne. From the point of view of the university, the defeat to Germany in 1870 revived projects of reform supported by renowned professors such as Duruy, Taine, Renan, Monod, Boutmy, Bréal and Berthelot. Teaching then became more specialised with the creation of lectureships. While the Faculty of Theology was closed in 1885, new institutions were added to the old faculties: the *Ecole Pratique des Hautes Etudes* in 1868 and the *Ecole des Chartes* in 1897.

The University of Paris, which had no longer been a constitutional body since the Revolution, was finally recreated in 1896 with the grouping together of the five faculties, administered from the Sorbonne.

The reconstruction of the cramped, uncomfortable 17th century buildings was finally carried out at the instigation of the Minister of Public Instruction, Jules Ferry. This task was given to the architect Henri-Paul Nénot and the foundation stone of the new building was laid in 1885. Besides the construction of an Academic Palace where meetings of the education administration were held, the old 17th century buildings were replaced by the main courtyard and the only thing that was kept was the chapel. A vast, 300-seat library was built and it contained more than 600,000 volumes in 1913.

The work was not totally completed until 1901, but the first part of the building was inaugurated in 1889, as part of the centenary celebrations of the French Revolution. From that moment, the new Sorbonne became, all over the world, the symbol of science and culture of the young French republic.

In around 1900, the university had more than one hundred professorships and as many courses taught by lecturers. The number of students fluctuated between around 3,000 (which was 42% of all those registered in the whole of France) and 4,500 just before the Great War. There were still few foreigners, but the number of young women increased from 11% in 1897 to 22% in 1906.

The Sorbonne in the 20th century

For the Sorbonne, the first half of the 20th century was an outstanding period of revival. Its researchers and teachers were in the frontline of the major scientific developments in many different fields: in history with the *Ecole des Annales*, in literature with the development of the science of language and comparative literature, in science with the first research in nuclear physics. Proof of the Sorbonne's international renown and prestige can be seen with its many Nobel Prize winners (Pierre and Marie Curie, Jean Perrin, Louis de Broglie, Irène and Frédérique Joliot-Curie). Paradoxically, there were hardly any changes made to the buildings or to the administrative and teaching structures.

While World War I led to the death of a huge proportion of the student population (the extent of which is expressed by the war memorial situated in the hall of the library), it did not have much of an impact on the teaching staff whose average age meant that they were not mobilised.

After slumping during the war, the number of students started to rise again during the interwar years. It doubled between 1921 and 1926, then tripled in the 1930s, reaching a peak of 14,500 enrolled students. Two thirds of these were studying literature and there were more and more females (41%) and foreign students (30%) whose stay was made easier thanks to the opening in 1925 of the *Cité Internationale Universitaire de Paris* student residence in the 14th arrondissement.

World War II provoked a lasting trauma. The laws of exclusion promulgated by the Vichy Regime hit Jewish students and teachers hard. Many professors died tragically, shot or as deportees. This was the case for Marc Bloch, Georges Ascoli, Victor Basch and Louis Halbwachs in literature and also for the physicians Henri Abraham, Eugène Bloch and Georges Bruhar.

Nevertheless, the Sorbonne resumed its growth just after the war. During the “Thirty Glorious Years” (*les “Trente Glorieuses”*) period, in the immediate aftermath of the world conflict, the number of students rose sharply to reach 61,400 in 1965. This success did, however, have a downside. By the late 1950s, the number of students enrolled at the Sorbonne was already ten times greater than the number it had been built for a century earlier. With the democratisation of higher education, which made the influx of young people from less privileged backgrounds possible, the teaching structures and the facilities were increasingly outdated and had to be changed to adapt to the new demands of mass education. New buildings were erected in the 1950s and 1960s with, notably, the creation of the Jussieu Campus, which became home to the Science Faculty.

With these different factors, the seeds were sown for the student protest at the end of the 1960s. Since the 19th century, the Sorbonne, and notably the Arts Faculty, had always been a particularly active centre of student politics. For example, the Boulangism movement, the Dreyfus Affair and the Algerian War were all events that enabled generations of “Sorbonnards” to take up causes and helped to develop solid student associations.

And yet, the events of May 1968 did not start in the Sorbonne but rather in one of the new universities that had just been built for the very reason of responding to the boom in higher education – the University of Nanterre (just west of Paris). When the protest movement reached the Latin Quarter, the Sorbonne was itself occupied many times during the month of May and soon became an international symbol of student protest until it was evacuated for good between the 14th and the 16th of June. The reform process that was put in place just after the protest movement led to the splintering of the University of Paris into nine – later thirteen – universities. At the instigation of the Minister of Education, Edgar Faure, the blueprint law for higher education voted on the 12th of November 1968 granted limited autonomy to these new universities. Each of these institutions would now have at its head a president who was a professor elected by a board of governors.

However, this law stipulated that the administration of all of the old University of Paris's buildings and joint property was to be the responsibility of a public institution placed under the authority of the Rector of the Academy. This institution – the *Chancellerie des Universités* – was given legal status and financial autonomy. It was created in 1971 and is also the owner of the *Cité Internationale Universitaire de Paris* student residence on the Boulevard Jourdan and of the Jacques-Doucet literary library on the Place du Panthéon. As the inheritor of property (notably from the Richelieu family) and of a tradition of excellence for which it rewards prizes and scholarships every year, the *Chancellerie des Universités* guarantees the academic prestige of the reputation that the Sorbonne has earned for itself over many centuries.

Great universities and prestigious schools count on this almost thousand-year-old tradition, making the Sorbonne one of the principle centres of scientific creativity and intellectual revival in the 21st century.

A temple of knowledge



Construction of the current Sorbonne building started in 1885 and lasted until 1901. It was carried out at the instigation of Jules Ferry, Minister of Public Instruction, and under the permanent supervision of Octave Gréard, Vice-Rector of the Academy of Paris from 1879 to 1902. It is the work of the architect Henri-Paul Nénot, who succeeded in giving overall unity to this complex, eclectically-inspired construction, with its neo-Renaissance facades and classic peristyles and courtyard. Decorated with plaques bearing the names of all of the Academies in France and shields with the coats of arms of all the towns with a *lycée* (high school) in them, it is a veritable temple of knowledge built in the glory of the new national education system.

The Academic Palace is located to the north. This part of the building, which has housed the offices of the *Rectorat* (education authority) of the Academy of Paris since the 19th century, was the first to be constructed. Completed in 1889 for the centenary of the French Revolution, it is a prestige building with a grand staircase, ceremonial reception rooms, its main lecture theatre (1,700 seats initially) that is lavishly decorated with statues by Brias and Dalou and especially with the fresco by Puvis de Chavannes, *Le Bois Sacré*, depicting a lay virgin who embodies the Sorbonne around whom are crowding the allegorical figures

of Eloquence, Science, Philosophy and History. From here, two monumental galleries lead southward. These are also decorated with evocative frescoes. One of them leads to what was the Science Faculty and the other to what was the Arts Faculty. It was not until the 1890s that the buildings dating back to Richelieu's time were replaced with new ones. These were built around a redesigned main courtyard facing the chapel, which is all that is left of the former Sorbonne.

In the quadrangle, which is now fully occupied, there is a vast 300-seat library. There is also a lavish *Salle des Doctorats* (room for doctorates) which is called after Louis Liard, Jules Ferry's Director of Higher Education at the time of the construction and who later became Vice-Rector. Finally, there is a whole series of lecture theatres that were decorated to illustrate what they were to be used for, like for archaeology or geology, which is the largest one of all and is dedicated to Richelieu, the university's 17th century benefactor whose tomb lies in the neighbouring chapel.