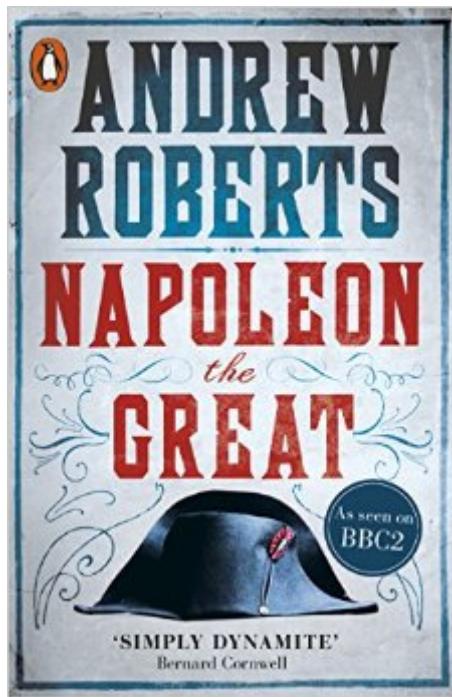


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Napoleon The Great



Synopsis

NOW A MAJOR BBC2 TV SERIES AWARDED THE PRIX DU JURY DES GRANDS PRIX DE LA FONDATION NAPOLÉON 2014 From Andrew Roberts, author of the Sunday Times bestseller *The Storm of War*, this is the definitive modern biography of Napoleon. Napoleon Bonaparte lived one of the most extraordinary of all human lives. In the space of just twenty years, from October 1795 when as a young artillery captain he cleared the streets of Paris of insurrectionists, to his final defeat at the (horribly mismanaged) battle of Waterloo in June 1815, Napoleon transformed France and Europe. After seizing power in a coup d'état he ended the corruption and incompetence into which the Revolution had descended. In a series of dazzling battles he reinvented the art of warfare; in peace, he completely remade the laws of France, modernised her systems of education and administration, and presided over a flourishing of the beautiful 'Empire style' in the arts. The impossibility of defeating his most persistent enemy, Great Britain, led him to make draining and ultimately fatal expeditions into Spain and Russia, where half a million Frenchmen died and his Empire began to unravel. More than any other modern biographer, Andrew Roberts conveys Napoleon's tremendous energy, both physical and intellectual, and the attractiveness of his personality, even to his enemies. He has walked 53 of Napoleon's 60 battlefields, and has absorbed the gigantic new French edition of Napoleon's letters, which allows a complete re-evaluation of this exceptional man. He overturns many received opinions, including the myth of a great romance with Josephine: she took a lover immediately after their marriage, and, as Roberts shows, he had three times as many mistresses as he acknowledged. Of the climactic Battle of Leipzig in 1813, as the fighting closed around them, a French sergeant-major wrote, 'No-one who has not experienced it can have any idea of the enthusiasm that burst forth among the half-starved, exhausted soldiers when the Emperor was there in person. If all were demoralised and he appeared, his presence was like an electric shock. All shouted "Vive l'Empereur!" and everyone charged blindly into the fire.' The reader of this biography will understand why this was so.

Book Information

Paperback: 976 pages

Publisher: Penguin UK (October 15, 2015)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0141032014

ISBN-13: 978-0141032016

Product Dimensions: 5 x 1.8 x 7.8 inches

Shipping Weight: 1.5 pounds

Average Customer Review: 4.5 out of 5 stars See all reviews (24 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #273,029 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #45 in Books > History > Military > Napoleonic Wars #200 in Books > Biographies & Memoirs > Historical > Europe > France #561 in Books > History > Europe > France

Customer Reviews

To some Napoleon is considered a despot, in certain quarters the Antichrist and supplanter. His detractors charge that he when faced with the prospect of war and the death for thousands he was nonplussed. That he turned his search for unquestionable rule into a series of conflicts throughout Europe and flouted accords and agreements alike. There was his role in the Haitian Revolution and the use of force - as he sent a large expeditionary force of French soldiers and warships to the island, to restore French rule. There was also his instruction to reinstate slavery in France's oversea colonies, which are controversial and has had an impact on his reputation. However, there is another side to Napoleon as he commented, "I will never accept any proposals that will obligate the Jewish people to leave France, because to me the Jews are the same as any other citizen in our country. It takes weakness to chase them out of the country, but it takes strength to assimilate them." Napoleon did much to improve the rights of Jews in Europe, as well as giving greater freedoms to Protestants in Catholic countries and Catholics in Protestant countries, from laws, which restricted them to controlled areas. For the author walked almost every one of his subject's 60 battlefields. He also makes full use of the new academic edition of Napoleon's 33,000 letters, which was first published in Paris only in 2004. This seminal work took seven years to bring to the fore. This work has the result of being rich, profound, humorous, compassionate and unashamedly appreciative. A book that illustrates the life history of Napoleon that stretches to 900 pages. The author paints a vivid picture of the cult of Napoleon that was born while the man himself was barely out of his twenties.

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