

Name: _____

Period: _____

Date: _____

French Revolution: LEQ Writing Practice

Prompt: *Write an essay that assesses the extent to which Napoleon was either the “heir” or “undertaker” of the Enlightenment and the French Revolution. Define the most important Enlightenment and revolutionary values and analyze the ways in which Napoleon both perpetuated and violated them.*

Napoleon is one of the most important figures in European history, and claimed to be the “heir” of the French Revolution. Napoleon did follow some of the Enlightenment and French Revolution’s values, but was ultimately the “undertaker.” Napoleon’s lust for power and his hubris on the battlefield conflicted with the values of a representative democracy and stability. Napoleon’s coup d’état brought initial stability to France in a time when no changes were being made, but he brought the country into constant warfare and never dealt with many economic issues in France. His creation of the Napoleonic Code was supposed to follow the Enlightenment value of bringing reason into government, but the laws were not strictly or fairly enforced across all conquered lands. It is because of these reasons that Napoleon should be considered the “undertaker” of the French Revolution.

Napoleon’s coup d’état in 1799 brought initial stability to a country that had gone through a lot of death and confusion over the decade. His rise to power due to his military accomplishments was admired by many, and the fact that he gave jobs to those who had done well in war followed the Enlightenment idea of merit over tradition. However, Napoleon often contradicted himself, and gave power to some of his relatives. He eventually declared himself emperor of France, which gave little room for opinions within the government, especially because he was so stubborn. He constantly brought France into war and was often victorious, but neglected to take care of his citizens and their needs. His lack of knowledge of economics also led to the fall of Saint-Domingue. He went against the Enlightenment idea of universal human rights and reinstated slavery, which eventually led to the slave revolts and the loss of the colony.

Napoleon should also be considered the “undertaker” of the French Revolution because of his Napoleonic Code in 1804. Although he tried to bring order to a government that was a mess due to the revolution, he failed to enforce his laws properly, and they did not perform the way he would have liked. He did little to follow the Enlightenment value of universal and human rights, and slaves as well as women were still not considered the same as white males. The Napoleonic Code looks as though it follows Enlightenment values such as bringing reason into the government, but it was not enforced in all of the conquered lands.

Napoleon is often remembered for his lust for power. By declaring himself emperor, he did little to allow dissent within the government. Enlightenment ideals called for applying reason to government, but Napoleon cared more about conquering other nations than governing his people in France. While his military was out fighting wars, the people of France were suffering economically. He did little to listen to the voices of the people of France and their complaints.

Napoleon considered himself the “heir” of the French Revolution because of his Napoleonic Code and for bringing stability to a country that was in turmoil, but more evidence shows he was an “undertaker” rather than an “heir.” His power over France was essentially the same as the monarchy of King Louis XVI before the revolution began. Napoleon did not follow the Enlightenment value of universal human rights, and actually reinstated slavery in Saint Domingue. Napoleon’s hubris on the battlefield led to his demise, and the people of France suffered because of it. Napoleon’s stubbornness and lack of knowledge led him to mismanage the economy of France, and did not hear the problems that the people of France had. Although he attempted to follow some Enlightenment ideas, such as replacing tradition and privilege with merit and trying to create a successful code of law, he should ultimately be considered an “undertaker” of the French Revolution.

Date: _____

- 1. Evaluate the thesis statement of this paper. Does the paper have a thesis? Is the thesis clear and concise? Does the thesis take a stand on a debatable issue? Is it specific about what it will argue?**
- 2. Assess the argument of the paper. Is it well-organized? Does it use evidence that supports the thesis? Does the argument draw on a variety of sources? Is the argument logical and convincing? Does the author use counterargument to include multiple perspectives?**
- 3. Assess the grammar and style of the paper. Are there any grammar mistakes or awkward sentences? Does the grammar and style inhibit the effectiveness of the argument?**