

**“The Revolution is over. I am the revolution” Napoleon Bonaparte 1799**

Stories about Napoleon’s life and actions sold newspapers. These stories both fascinated and scandalised the English public. Britons of all political parties and persuasions were outraged after Napoleon took over the French government and crowned himself emperor. For the English authors Byron, Wordsworth and Coleridge and many others on that second of December 1804, the date on which Napoleon reinstated the Monarchy, he changed in their minds from a Romantic revolutionary and military genius, into a power-crazed French dictator. The young radical poet William Wordsworth, a fiery partisan of new political ideals, compared the French population’s acceptance of Napoleon’s coronation and new emperor status (1804 referendum), after the traumatic upheavals of the Revolution, “to a dog licking up his vomit ”.<sup>1</sup>

Napoleon’s imitation of royal dynastic forms drove away many of his early admirers as well. Not only did he marry the Austrian princess Maria Louise of the House of Habsburg - one of the oldest ruling families of Europe - but he placed members of his family and other allies on thrones throughout Europe. These controversies raised basic questions about what made a ruler lawful. In addition, the nature of political rule, the constitution and political legitimacy in general were hotly debated topics. British discussions of Napoleon’s legitimacy - was he a usurper? - reflected back to England and raised uncomfortable questions about the British royal family and the shallow roots of the British dynasty.

- **Take turns and read the poem below twice out loud slowly. Look up the pronunciation of any words you are not sure of.**
- **How is the rhyme organised?**
- **Can you figure out the meaning of words that are unfamiliar?**
- **What role should the genealogist play?**
- **Which royal families is Napoleon’s blood line compared to? Ironically?**
- **What does the author indicate about Napoleon’s claim to the royal crown?**
- **Who is the author calling a hypocrite and why?**
- **Why is the poem entitled “The Anti-Corsican”?**
- **Practice presenting the poem dramatically and with appropriate gestures.**

**The Anti-Corsican <sup>2</sup>**

**Learn’d Genealogists, declare who can  
From what imperial stock proceeds this Man?  
Time-honour’d Charlemagne, does thy rich blood  
Pour thro’ his veins its pure unsullied flood?  
Ye Bourbons can Napoleon’s annals trace  
Their course illust’rous thro’ your royal Race?  
Ah no! Mother was Ambition dire,  
And black Hypocrisy his Hell-born Sire!**

**Matthew Rolleston, 1805**

### **Vocabulary and more:**

*reinstated* - wiedereinzusetzen, *coronation* - Krönung, *upheavals* - Umbrüche, *vomit* - Erbrechen, *lawful* - rechtmäßig, *usurper* - Thronräuber, *shallow* - seicht, *hypocrite* - Heuchler *genealogists* - Genealogen, Experte der Ahnenforschung betreibt, *stock* - Abstammung, *to proceed* - fortfahren, *Charlemagne* - Karl der Große, *unsullied* - unberührt, *Bourbons* - Bourbonen - Das Haus Bourbon oder die Bourbonen ist der Name eines französischen Adelsgeschlechts, das acht französische Könige sowie diverse Monarchen anderer europäischer Staaten stellte, *dire* (*pronunciation; daɪ ə (r)*) - grässlich, schrecklich, *hypocrisy* - Heuchelei, *sire* (*rhymes with dire*) - Vater

1 „Paris Fashions (orig. London Chronicle, 24. Aug. 1802) in Semmel, Stuart (2004): *Napoleon and the British*. Yale University Press: New Haven. 109.

<sup>2</sup>Rolleston, Matthew, *The Anti-Corsican*, a Poem, in Three Cantos (Exeter, 1805), 8.

### **More about changes in the perception of Napoleon:**

Napoleon was such an ambiguous character that political commentators in Britain, depending on whether they were radicals or loyalists, could see in him either tyrant or liberal, either legitimate or illegitimate ruler, either sans-culotte or destroyer of the Revolution. Napoleon's regime offered distinctly new challenges to the integrity and reshaping of English national character and he was ultimately a yardstick against which the British could measure their own political agendas.

**Explain how Napoleon could be used as a "yardstick" for British political agendas? If possible, give examples.**

**Vocabulary:** *ambiguous* - vieldeutig, *sans-culotte* - term used to designate those without breeches, often working class and petit bourgeois who supported the Revolution, *yardstick* - Maßstab



*TIDDY-DOLL, the great French-Gingerbread-Baker, drawing out a new Batch of Kings. — his Man, Hopping Talley, mixing up the Dough.*

Published by Hannah Humphrey: January 23, 1806. Etching, hand-colored

- **Take some time to examine the satirical caricature by James Gillray <sup>1</sup> Describe in detail; the main characters, the bird and the other objects in the room.**
- **Explain the action in light of what you know about Bonaparte's background and his expansionistic policies.**
- **What is the connection between the "new Batch of Kings" being pulled out of the oven and the German electors that they represent? How can you interpret this?**
- **Notice the cannon balls next to the oven. What is Gillray's message here?**
- **The inscription on the basket in the very left corner reads, "True Corsican Kinglets for Home Consumption & Exportion", what does this mean? Can you compare the figures in the basket with the heap of "crumbs" under the oven?**
- **Write a short dialogue between two of the freshly baked German Electors "kings"(Bavaria, Württemberg or Baden). What good things to do you have to say about Napoleon? What might you complain about?**
- **If you were asked to make a new title for this cartoon, what would it be?**

**Vocabulary:** *Talley* – Talleyrand –French diplomat, minister, *dough* – Teig, *etching* – Radierung, *electors* –Kurfürsten

<sup>1</sup>James Gillray (1756-1815) was the leading caricaturist of the late eighteenth century, and is generally recognised as the father of the satirical cartoon. His superb draughtsmanship coupled with a biting wit has rarely been equalled.

### Teacher information:

For more information on Gillray's etching. Below a text from the New York Public library.

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Although the Battle of Trafalgar (October 21, 1805) ended British fears of invasion, Gillray portrays Napoleon as master of Europe, approaching the peak of his powers on the Continent, in the guise of a famous Mayfair street peddler, Tiddy-Dol Ford, who hawked gingerbread. The French victory at the Battle of Austerlitz the previous December had brought Bavaria, Württemberg, and Baden into the fold of satellite monarchies, and in this satire Gillray shows Napoleon, the baker, pulling their Electors out of the oven, now as freshly baked kings. At that same time he was preparing to replace existing crowned heads of Europe with his relatives and supporters, represented by the "True Corsican Kinglings" in his basket. His brother Joseph was made King of Naples, and later, when Joseph became King of Spain, he was succeeded by Napoleon's brother-in-law, Murat. His sister Elisa became Princess of Piombino. His brother Louis was proclaimed King of Holland, and Napoleon took the title King of Italy for himself. The shattered "crumbs" of those conquered lands were swept into the ash heap under the oven, fueled by cannonballs. His foreign minister, Talleyrand, busies himself with Hungary, Poland, and Turkey, while the "Little Dough Viceroy" on the dresser (members of the Opposition, including Sheridan, Fox, Burdett, Moira, Tierney, and Lord Derby) await the Imperial Baker's attention. This print was published on the day that William Pitt died.

<http://legacy.www.nypl.org/research/chss/spe/art/print/exhibits/gillray/part5.html>  
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