

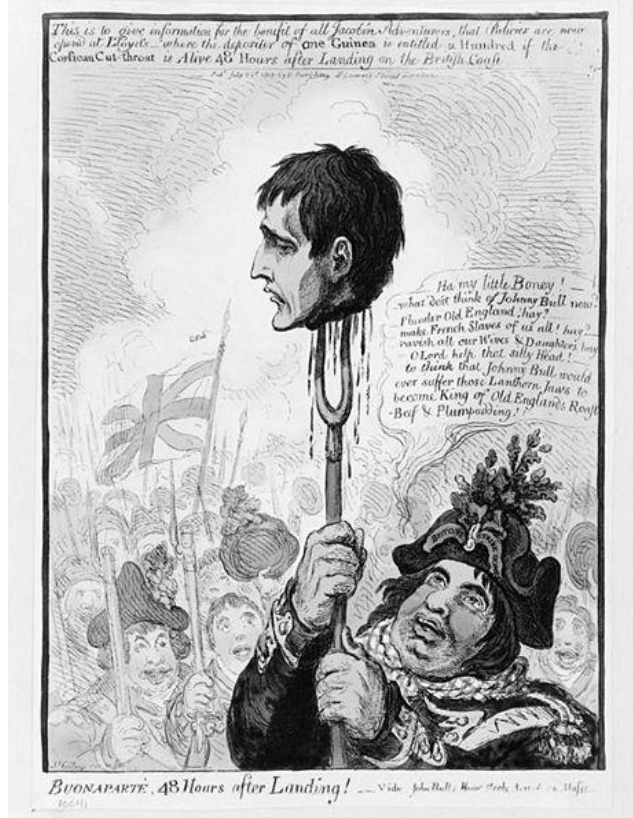
## How did the English see Napoleon Bonaparte?

In England in early 1800s, the main of political news for “all ranks” of people was a printed text or poster, often with a picture, called a *broadside*. These broadsides were easy to find and read – hung up in public places, put on walls and in pubs. In them we find an expression of popular opinion and fears. The writers stirred up emotions about the threat of a possible French invasion since England and Russia were the only large European countries not yet under Napoleon Bonaparte’s control.

Napoleon was slurred in broadsides as a “Little insignificant Man, not more than fifty inches<sup>1</sup> high (127 centimetres) and branded “the most despotic, incestuous, bloody-minded Tyrant that ever disgraced Human Nature”. It was claimed that all English children would be forced to learn and speak only French, if he conquered England.

This and other propaganda helped start the mobilization of the largest people’s army in English history and strengthened national solidarity. Many broadsides were full of loud claims, like: Napoleon should come “and by British hand... die” or Napoleon, “would turn tail” at “the very sight of our village boys”<sup>3</sup>. Napoleon Bonaparte was made into a figure of ridicule but some worried that this over confidence could weaken the defence of the country, if he invaded. Why?

### • What do you know – did Napoleon invade England?



“Ha my little Boney, what do you think of Johnny Bull\* now?” <sup>2</sup>

### TASK: Describe and interpret the caricature above

- Can you explain the caption written under the picture? (It is the first line of the speech bubble). Who is *little Boney*? How is Johnny Bull presented? Who are the people in the background? What emotions are shown here and for what purpose?

**Vocabulary:** *main* - Haupt, *rank* - Rang, *popular* - weit verbreitet, *threat* - Bedrohung, *invasion* - Invasion, Überfall, *slurred* - verächtlich gemacht, *insignificant* - unbedeutend, *branded* - gebrandmarkt, *despotic* - despotisch, tyrannisch, *incestuous* - inzestuös, *tyrant* - Tyrann, *disgraced* - blamiert, *to claim* - behaupten, *conquered* - besiegen, *mobilization* - Mobilisierung, *strengthen* - verstärken, *solidarity* - Zusammenhalt, „*turn tail*“ - sich geschlagen geben, *ridicule* - Spott, *over confidence* - Vermessenheit, *defense* - Verteidigung.

\*John or Johnny Bull: symbol and personification of Great Britain.

All quotes from the broadsides are taken from Stuart Semmel's book, *Napoleon and the British* (2004): Yale University Press: New Haven: London. (47 - 50).

<sup>3</sup>Quotes on Napoleon: Semmel, Chapter 2: "National Character and National Anxiety" pp. 38 - 71.

Background information: Linda Colley, *Britons, Forging the Nation 1707 - 1837* (2005): Yale University Press: New Haven.

<sup>1</sup> Englische Maßeinheit: inch x 2.54 = 1 cm <sup>2</sup>James Gillray, "Buonaparté, 48 Hours after Landing," 1803 (John Hay Library, Brown University).