Essential Question: In your opinion, which of Napoleon’s mistakes was the most serious? Justify your answer.

- Napoleon’s Three Costly Mistakes
- Napoleon’s Downfall
Napoleon’s Three Costly Mistakes

- Napoleon’s own personality proved to be the greatest danger to his empire and his love of power led to his doom.

- In his effort to extent the French Empire and crush Britain he made three costly mistakes.
Napoleon's First Mistake

- Napoleon’s 1st mistake was an unsuccessful attempt to cut off trade with a forcible closing of ports (blockade) in 1806 with Great Britain and other European countries.
  - He called this policy the **Continental System**, because it was supposed to make continental Europe more self-sufficient.
  - Because Britain had the better navy it didn’t work, and Britain blocked France instead.
  - As a result the **Continental System** hurt Napoleon more than his enemies, and weakened the economy of France.
Napoleon's Second Mistakes

- Napoleon's 2nd costly mistake occurred in 1808 when he sent an army through Spain to invade Portugal because it was ignoring the Continental System.
  - When Spanish towns rioted in protest, Napoleon got mad and disposed the Spanish King and put his brother Joseph on the throne.
  - This further outraged the Spanish and enflamed their nationalist feelings, feared the French would undermine the authority of the Catholic Church.
  - For 6 years the Spanish peasant fighters known as guerillas would strike at French troops by ambushing them then fleeing into hiding.
  - The Peninsular War in Spain inflames Spanish nationalism and weakens France.
  - Napoleon lost about 300,000 troops during the Peninsular War, which weakened the French Empire.

- Elsewhere in Europe nationalism (loyalty to one's own country) was becoming a powerful weapon against Napoleon,
In June of 1812 Napoleon's thirst for power led to his 3rd and most disastrous mistake of all when he marched into Russia.

Even though Russian Czar Alexander I had become Napoleon's ally, Napoleon decided to invade when the ruler refused to stop selling grain to Britain and thought he might have designs on Poland.

Alexander I ordered this army to retreat by using a scorched-earth policy of destroying everything and leaving nothing behind for the enemy.

Napoleon took Moscow but the Russians just kept retreating but didn’t surrender.

With winter approaching Napoleon was forced to order his men to retreat, and a terrible loss of life occurred between Russian raiders, hunger and cold.

Of the over 400,000 men the French invaded Russia with in June, only 10,000 made it back from Russia alive in December
Napoleon’s Downfall

- All of the remaining powers of Europe were quick to unite against a weakened Napoleon.
- **Coalition army** defeats Napoleon’s inexperienced forces in the Battle of Leipzig in October of 1813, and marching to Paris by March of 1814.
- Napoleon surrendered his throne and accepted terms of surrender drawn up by Alexander I, which included his banishment to Elba, a tiny island off the Italian coast.
- Louis XVIII, brother of the guillotined king, was appointed to rule France, but he quickly became unpopular among the peasants who suspected him of wanting to undo the revolution’s land reforms.
Napoleon’s Downfall

- This was all the incentive Napoleon needed and he escapes and briefly regains power (*Hundred Days*) when thousands welcome him back and volunteer to join the army.

- European allies quickly gathered their armies and Napoleon is defeated by British and Prussian troops at *Waterloo*.

- British take no chances and Napoleon is exiled to *St. Helena*, a remote island in the South Atlantic, where he dies of a stomach ailment 6 years later.
Napoleon’s Legacy

- Napoleon was a military genius and brilliant administrator, but all of his victories must be measured against the millions of lives that were lost in his wars.

- Of all his achievements, only his law codes and some government reforms proved lasting.