

Ridley Scott, director. *Napoleon*. Apple Studios, 2023.

The historical drama *Napoleon*, details twenty-five years about the most controversial French military leader turned dictator. The film richly endorses a static tale of Napoleon Bonaparte's life, combining elements of his military career and unstable personal life. Director Ridley Scott's film acts as a historical survey, but many historians have found inaccuracies that have warranted their stern feedback. The movie prioritizes glorifying fiction over historical accuracy, especially in military campaigns.

*Napoleon* depicts several milestone battles that shaped Bonaparte's military career and France's national destiny in Europe. Specifically the 13 Vendémiaire insurrection in October of 1795 includes graphic details, illustrating the brutality of late eighteenth century warfare. Napoleon Bonaparte, the military leader who reunited France after years of revolution, cared little about how many soldiers sacrificed their lives for his success. Once Bonaparte suppressed the chaos consuming France in the late eighteenth century, the French general became emperor, and the imperial Napoleonic government began. Many scenes employ graphic and gory details to underscore a central theme: the rise of an ambitious conqueror. He emerges as the paramount military leader who reunites France, demonstrating ruthlessness over the soldiers sacrificed for his success, all for the sake of gaining power.

*Napoleon's* total cinematic length is approximately two and a half hours. While that alone is not necessarily an issue, the attempt to include twenty-five years of Bonaparte's life does present problems. While the film shows different battles in short sequence, some battles left many historians desiring the storytelling to be more accurate. According to scholars, Napoleon never shot cannon fire at the Egyptian pyramids. They also deny that he led a charge at the Battle of Waterloo. Fascinated by the construction of the Pyramids and holding the structures in high esteem, Napoleon Bonaparte and the French army left such them alone.

The other half of the movie focuses on Bonaparte's personal life. Josephine Beauharnais, the daughter of a French aristocratic family married the military leader in 1796. Their thirteen-year long marriage, as portrayed in the film, ended in divorce because Josephine could not produce an heir for her husband. After the split, the French emperor's relationship with Archduchess Ma-

rie-Louise of Austria, resulted in their son Napoleon II. Following the consummation scene, the Archduchess does not appear again, obscuring the fact that she served as France's empress for four years and became the Duchess of Parma after the Napoleonic wars.

In the end, France banished Bonaparte to the island of Saint Helena. Bonaparte's accomplishments as a conqueror are listed before the film's credits begin. The three million soldiers who died under his command attest to Napoleon's tendencies as an ambitious general. Unfortunately, the film leaves out the fates of the European elite involved in Napoleon's life. French politician Paul Barras, Tsar Alexander of Russia, and even Duke of Wellington (the victorious military officials at the Battle of Waterloo) were essential figures in Bonaparte's life; Leaving out how these figures helped restabilize Europe after the Napoleonic wars is a missed opportunity to teach European history.

The main takeaway from this movie, and the main lesson from all cinematic war stories, is a focus on the loss of life of the many who follow the ambitions of a few who sought power for their selfish desires. The visual storytelling makes for an action-packed film that a general audience will enjoy. On the macro scale, *Napoleon* is another addition to the large collection of films depicting Bonaparte's life.

*Lachlan Streeter*

Andy Webb, director. *Chernobyl: Secrets, Lies, and the Untold Stories*, Science Channel. 2022

Despite the film's negative reviews, the documentary offers insight into the mistakes that led to the nuclear explosion at Chernobyl and its effects throughout Europe. The film introduces previously unknown KGB files, combining historical photos of the disaster and first-hand accounts to detail how the KGB saw themselves omnipotent, visitors spied on, and the critical Soviet government was kept in the dark as to the extent of the disaster.

The film opens with the historical background of the disaster, as it occurred at the height of the Cold War. Human error,