

Activity B

8. The Age of Enlightenment (chapter 24)

Have students look at the four paintings portraying Bonaparte and encourage them to provide an oral description. You can focus their thinking by asking questions as **What do you think Napoleon looks like? Does he appear to be impulsive, tolerant, heroic, cool, dignified, a military leader, a powerful ruler? What visual clues does the artists provide that indicate the emperor's might and importance? What can you say about his pose and clothing or about the setting?** Then ask them to read the following paragraphs and match them to the right portrait.

Portraying Napoleon

Match each description to the right painting.

GENRES

1.



Jacques-Louis David, *Napoleon Crossing the Alps*, 1801. Oil on canvas. Malmaison, Paris.

2.



Jean Antoine Gros, *Napoleon at Arcole*, 1797. Oil on canvas. The Ermitage Museum, St. Petersburg

3.



Jacques-Louis David, *Napoleon in his Study*, 1812. Oil on canvas. National Gallery of Art, Washington.

4.



J. A. Dominique Ingres, *Portrait of Napoleon on the Imperial Throne*, 1806. Oil on canvas. The Army Museum, Paris

A. After Napoleon was crowned emperor in 1804 French artists were encouraged to glorify their emperor. In this portrait the artist, a pupil of Jacques-Louis David, instead of respecting the Baroque tradition of royal portraiture, revived ancient typologies of imperial representation. Here Bonaparte appears on a magnificent throne, holding a sceptre, and a sword, all references to the great Charlemagne. As in other portraits, these historical quotations were used by Napoleon to associate himself with glorious French leaders of the past.

B. After Napoleon proclaimed himself Emperor, he commissioned several paintings to celebrate his personal power. In this work the emperor dominates the canvas surrounded by significant details intended to reveal details of his personality to the French people. A burnt-down candle and a clock set at an early hour indicate that Bonaparte had been working all night for the prosperity of the country. He appears solid and immobile as a statue and his vivid eyes meet those of the viewer.

C. Here Napoleon is immortalized while crossing a bridge at the lead of his army challenging enemy fire. Unfortunately the general never actually crossed that bridge leading his troops, his feat being contrasted by his opponents who had him thrown into a marsh together with his horse. Nevertheless, Napoleon wanted his bravery to emerge as a means of personal propaganda.

D. This painting is an allegory of heroism. The general is now at the Great Saint Bernard ready to undertake the military campaign which resulted in the defeat of the Austrian army at Marengo. Once more the course of events was rather different from their painted version. At any rate, although instead of a horse, Napoleon actually rode a mule, the work has been conceived after the equestrian format generally reserved to sovereigns. Furthermore, this model is confirmed by the First Consul's name carved into the rock clearly visible on the left foreground alongside those of Hannibal and Charle Magne, glorious monarchs who had conquered that inaccessible path before him.

Activity C

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As usual, here comes an activity aimed at increasing students' vocabulary. This time they have to find the English equivalents from the text to the Italian words provided below. Then invite them to compose a written summary of the text.

Read the text and write a summary.

Robert Adam

ARTISTS

The most important British architect of this age was Robert Adam. At an early age, Robert left on an extensive *grand tour* of France and Italy, where he studied classical Roman ruins and learned drafting and drawing skills. He became acquainted with Piranesi in Rome, who further stimulated his study of the antique.

When he returned, he moved to London where he resumed practicing as an architect. Aware of the surge of interest in classical architecture aimed at recreating the style and proportions of buildings of ancient Rome, Adam evolved a style of his own.

His faith in the principle of imitating the antique, instead of copying it, find its finest expression in the interiors he designed in the 1760s for aristocratic mansions. Adam created a wider syntax that always enabled him to formulate always new designs and atmospheres. This is what happens in the Etruscan Room at Osterley Park, or in the Great Hall at Kedleston House or, again, in the Hall at Syon House where stylistic cohesion is matched by the rigorous blend of structure, function and decoration.

Here the balanced combination of arches, Ionic columns, niches, half-domes, stuccoes and quotations from Roman painting offered its proprietor the chance to plunge into the finest selection of classical elements.

Part of the reason for Adam's overwhelming success resides in the insistence on designing everything himself down to the tiniest detail which evoked a sense of unity and flow in his works.



Robert Adam, Etruscan Room, 1761-1772. Osterley Park.

Provide the English equivalents from the text to these words.

- | | |
|------------------------------|---|
| 1. l'occasione | = |
| 2. di immergersi a capofitto | = |
| 3. abilità | = |
| 4. risiede | = |
| 5. egli sviluppò | = |
| 6. rovine | = |
| 7. citazioni | = |
| 8. che gli permise | = |
| 9. consapevole | = |
| 10. egli riprese | = |
| 11. fece la conoscenza di | = |
| 12. interni | = |