***Four Ways Napoleon Helped Change the World***

**Napoleon was one of the most influential people in all of history. The passages below discuss four ways that Napoleon changed the world.**

***The Napoleonic Code:***

“One of Napoleon’s reforms…was destined to have an impact far beyond the borders of France. That was the creation of the French civil code, the [Napoleonic Code]. In many ways the code embodied the ideals of the French Revolution. For example, under the code there were no privileges of birth, and all men were equal under law [although women lost some privileges gained]… the code was sufficiently close to the older French laws and customs to be acceptable to the French public and the legal profession. On the whole, the code was moderate, well organized, and written with commendable brevity and outstanding lucidity. As a result, the code has not only endured in France…but has been adopted, with local modifications, in many other countries.”

***The Invasion of Spain:***

“Napoleon also had a large, though indirect, effect on the history of Latin America. His invasion of Spain so weakened the Spanish government that for a period of several years it lost effective control of its colonies in Latin America. It was during this period of *de facto* autonomy that the Latin American independence movements commenced.”

***The Louisiana Purchase:***

“Of all Napoleon’s actions…the one that has perhaps had the most enduring and significant consequences was one that was almost irrelevant to his main plans. In 1803, Napoleon sold a vast tract of land to the United States. He realized that the French possessions in North America might be difficult to protect from British conquest, and besides he was short of cash. The Louisiana Purchase, perhaps the largest peaceful transfer of land in all of history, transformed the United States into a nation of near-continental size. It is difficult to say what the United States would have been like without the Louisiana Purchase; certainly it would have been a vastly different country than it is today. Indeed, it is doubtful whether the United States would have become a great power without the Louisiana Purchase.

“Napoleon, of course was not solely responsible for the Louisiana Purchase. The American government clearly played a role as well. But the French offer was such a bargain that it seems likely that any American government would have accepted it, while the decision of the French government to sell the Louisiana territory came about through the arbitrary judgment of a single individual, Napoleon Bonaparte.”

***Independence in Haiti:***

“Inspired by events in France, a number of Haitian-born revolutionary movements emerged simultaneously.  They used as their inspiration the French Revolution’s ‘Declaration of the Rights of Man.’  …Led by former slave Toussaint l’Overture, the enslaved… rebelled against the planters on August 21, 1791. By 1792 they controlled a third of the island...  By 1801… the Haitian Revolution had outlasted the French Revolution which had been its inspiration.  Napoleon Bonaparte, now the ruler of France, dispatched General Charles Leclerc… to capture L’Overture and restore both French rule and slavery.  L’Overture was taken and sent to France where he died in prison in 1803.  Jean-Jacques Dessalines, one of l’Overture’s generals and himself a former slave, led the revolutionaries at the Battle of Vertieres on November 18, 1803 where the French forces were defeated.  On January 1, 1804, Dessalines declared the nation independent and renamed it Haiti.  France (with Napoleon at its helm) became the first nation to recognize its independence.  Haiti thus emerged as the first black republic in the world, and the second nation in the western hemisphere (after the United States) to win its independence from a European power.”

~From: *The 100: A Ranking of the Most Influential Persons in History* by: Michael H. Hart, and BlackPast.org.

***Directions:*** *Answer the following questions based on inferences from the reading.*

1. Which change has affected the most people? Explain your answer.
2. Which change was the most significant one for your ancestors? Explain your answer.
3. Which has had the most significant effect on your life? Explain your answer.
4. Which change do you think is the most significant overall? Why?