



Reading Guide:

***The Caesar of Paris* by Susan Jaques**

1. Much has been written about Napoleon Bonaparte; what aspect of Susan Jaques's book surprised you most?
2. How would you define your feelings after reading the magnitude of the plunder of Italy?
3. Did you like the structure of the book? Did you enjoy the interweaving of the two narratives of ancient Rome and Napoleon's Paris? Compare Napoleon to his Roman predecessors.
4. Discuss Napoleon as a master of propaganda and marketing. How did he manipulate images and imagery to suit his needs? What are some of the most potent symbols of his reign?
5. How did the imagery Napoleon employ affect his soldiers and the people of France? His family?
6. Did Napoleon achieve his quest for legitimacy through his plunder and building campaigns?
7. How has reading this book changed your opinion of Napoleon, or has it? Are there questions you wish you could ask him?
8. Susan Jaques has also written about Empress Catherine the Great's collecting flair. How do the two rulers compare in their ambitions for building an empire-worthy art collection?
9. What art lover would you like to see Jaques tackle next?

Author Biography

Susan Jaques is the author of *The Caesar of Paris* and *The Empress of Art*. She graduated from Stanford University with a major in history and earned an MBA from the University of California, Los Angeles. A member of the Napoleonic Historical Society and Historians of Eighteenth-Century Art & Architecture, Jaques lives in Los Angeles where she's a gallery docent at the J. Paul Getty Museum.

Books to Explore

Susan Jaques, *The Empress of Art: Catherine the Great and the Transformation of Russia*, 2016

Intelligent and determined, Catherine modeled herself off of her grandfather-in-law, Peter the Great, and sought to further modernize and westernize Russia. She believed that the best way to do this was through a ravenous acquisition of art, which Catherine often used as a form of diplomacy with other powers throughout Europe. She was a self-proclaimed “glutton for art” and she would be responsible for the creation of the Hermitage, one of the largest museums in the world, second only to the Louvre.

Andrew Roberts, *Napoleon: A Life*, 2015

Andrew Roberts’s *Napoleon* is the first one-volume biography to take advantage of the recent publication of Napoleon’s 33,000 letters, which radically transforms our understanding of Napoleon’s character and motivation. At last we see him as he was: protean multitasker, decisive, and surprisingly willing to forgive his enemies and his errant wife, Josephine. Like Churchill, he understood the strategic importance of telling his own story, and his memoirs, dictated from exile on St. Helena, became the single bestselling book of the nineteenth century.

Bayou Bend/Rienzi Book Club

Bayou Bend and Rienzi take a summer break from book club and return in September to read and discuss *Mexican Odyssey: Felix Tijerina, Entrepreneur and Civic Leader 1905–1965* by Thomas H. Kreneck. Rienzi continues its annual tradition of celebrating Hispanic Heritage Month by honoring this Houston businessman and community mentor. For more information, visit mfah.org/historybookclub.

MFAH Book Club

Art and literature meet here! Designed for both established book clubs and individuals interested in creating connections between literary and visual arts, the MFAH Book Club links works of literature to works of art from the collections of the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston. The MFAH Book Club presents three selections per year. Each book is accompanied by a downloadable discussion guide and is featured on the MFAH Goodreads group: mfah.org/goodreads. For more information and resources, visit mfah.org/bookclub.

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Education programs at Rienzi receive generous funding from the Sterling-Turner Foundation; Alkek and Williams Foundation; Carroll Sterling and Harris Masterson III Endowment; and the Caroline Wiess Law Endowment for Rienzi.