



Waterloo: June 18, 1815: The Battle For Modern Europe

Andrew Roberts

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June 18, 1815, was one of the most momentous days in world history, marking the end of twenty-two years of French Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars. On the bloody battlefield of Waterloo, the Emperor Napoleon and his hastily formed legions clashed with the Anglo-Allied armies led by the Duke of Wellington -- the only time the two greatest military strategists of their age faced each other in combat.

With precision and elegance, Andrew Roberts sets the political, strategic, and historical scene, providing a breathtaking account of each successive stage of the battle while also examining new evidence that reveals exactly how Napoleon was defeated. Illuminating, authoritative, and engrossing, *Waterloo* is a masterful work of history.

Waterloo: June 18, 1815: The Battle For Modern Europe Details

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Chad says

A wonderful and concise account of one of the most important battles in the history of mankind. Roberts delivers in an entertaining way, filling the book with interesting tidbits of information such as the fact that Blucher believed himself to have been impregnated by Elephants. The only real complaint is that the book has several instances where Roberts uses french terms without explanation in English and thus the reader is forced to find the meanings on their own. Otherwise, this is a great book to read for those interested in military history

Christy Schaefer says

This was informative, if a bit technical-heavy. I learned more about Waterloo than I'd known before (considering most of my knowledge depended heavily upon ABBA). It was a quick read, and if nothing else, left me wanting to dive into other books to get more detail beyond the play-by-play of each step of the attacks.

Ryan Lockwood says

Quick and dirty... Where historical events are concerned, this series could turnout to be great. While concise, the book was fairly informative and an excelent refresher on the battle. I tend to prefer meatier books on events but Roberts does a decent job of covering the basics and creating interest for further reading. I'll definately look to this series as an introduction to further topics I'm considering.

Gerry Germond says

Splendid little play-by-play on the battle of Waterloo. Author Roberts identifies more French than British mistakes, but then, who lost, um? Having read it, I have a better appreciation of what happened when and where, and just how close run the thing was. My only quibble is that the map doesn't align with the narrative and a few key places (the Ohain road, Papelotte, Frisiermont) are omitted, but one can properly follow the action regardless.

Paul says

The battle at Waterloo marked the final end of Napoleon's reign in France and, according to Andrew Roberts, the logical end of the eighteenth century. Wellington's victory effectively signaled the end of France as a first-rank military power and the beginning of England's imperial rise.

Roberts sets three goals for himself in this little volume: to explain the importance of the battle by setting it in its historical context, to narrate the action in and around the battle, and to survey some of the larger historiographic questions posed by the battle's participants and researchers.

Setting the battle in its context is a tricky task. How much eighteenth-century political and military history needs to be retold for the average intended reader? Given the small size of his work, his outline of the political context is respectable; the salient facts are all presented. It seems to me, however, that the volume would benefit from a few extra pages outlining military tactics, weapons, and terminology. Roberts uses terminology likely to be unfamiliar to the average reader: *chasseurs*, heavy and light cavalry, *grenadier*. A brief explanation would have been helpful to me! On the other hand, Roberts does a great job explaining the military square and some of the complexities of getting infantry, cavalry, and artillery to work together. He also provides helpful reminders about the state of communications, the speed of travel, and some of the difficulties the British commands experienced trying to communicate with their Prussian allies.

Roberts' battle narratives are quite thrilling. Following previous accounts, he divides the battle into five phases, each of which is well distinguished from the others. He provides a nice mix of first-hand memories from the soldiers themselves with his own narrative. He describes in brief but essential detail the topography of the battlefield, the few crucial buildings involved, the mud resulting from the torrents of June 17, and the corn that impeded travel and provided hiding spots. There are inevitably a lot names—people, places, military divisions—but Roberts' narrative seems to handle them all with a certain ease.

Concerning the historiographic questions, Roberts seems fairly objective when there are well supported arguments on either side of a question. I'm not well versed in the literature, but I got the impression that he tended to take the British side in those cases where the French and British historiographies are at odds. Nonetheless, I got some inkling of the open or divisive questions concerning Waterloo.

Finally, I think the editors could have done a better job providing maps appropriate to the text. Roberts makes repeated mention of some places like Mons that do not show up on either of the included maps. At the same time, the appendices include a few letters by Wellington and others that provide interesting first-hand accounts of the day.

In all, this is well paced and easy-to-read account of a crucial turning point in European history.

John-Paul says

Probably the shortest book I've read all year, this well-researched and enlightening little work is an excellent primer to one of the most pivotal battles the world has ever seen. At first I thought Roberts' assertion that Waterloo was such a battle, that it signaled the end of the "long" 18th Century and ushered in the new 19th Century was more than a bit hyperbolic. But, after reading this book and understand what this battle meant for all of Europe (and the world, for that matter), it appears to be a perfectly valid statement.

One of the things I love about this author (besides his inclusion of battle maps and visuals) is that his works ooze scholarship and credulity. He simply knows what he's talking about but he delivers it without pomp and pedantry. In this work, he sets up the Battle of Waterloo in the tradition that it could be broken down into four phases, and I can say that to this day, it absolutely works as an easy-to-understand technique for comprehending the decisions made. Roberts deals with both the Coalition and French sides in an even and unbiased manner and examines both their successes and missteps. Clearly, Napoleon had more of the latter

and Wellington more of the former, but there were dim and clear moments for both sides throughout the battle. It appears that the French emperor had clearly run out of luck but also no longer had the support staff he once had (one has to wonder what would have been the result had Berthier had still been Chief of Staff and Davout been in the field instead of back in Paris) but ultimately, he had to make due with what he had. In Wellington he found an adversary who was a tactical genius defensively (as evidenced by the Peninsular War years prior) and one who was not going to underestimate the ever-resourceful Napoleon (something the Emperor had relied on for victory for years).

The book was a quick but enlightening read and now the perfect follow-up (as Roberts himself suggests) would be to hop a plane and tour the battlefield itself!

Hugo Magnusson says

För min del för detaljerad kring slagfältet och olika individuella enheters rörelse. Belyser väl den imponerade principfastheten man hade under denna tid och hur svårt det var att kontrollera slagfält.

Doug says

Nice quick introduction. I haven't read much about the Napoleonic Wars, except all the Bernard Cornwell books.

Martinxo says

Good overview of a BIG battle.

Jacob Mcconnell says

In its writing, it has a definite anglo-centric view, but that's because it has to. The English kicked ass in this battle and Napoleon did things in a cocky manner. He should have checked himself a bit more; he was out of practice I guess. That being said, some spots of bias shine through here and there in the author's use of words like "fortunately" when describing British accomplishments and not endowing the same honorific adverbial on matchable accomplishments from the French side (at least not to the same degree). Honestly though, who cares: It outlines the battle clearly and I can assure you, you'll want to visit the battleground once you've read it, just so you can point out a missing ridge or altered surfaces. Good stuff.

Kim says

En stark 3:a! Intressant sammanfattning om slaget vid Waterloo. Det roligaste var att läsa delar av brev från de som var närvarande vid slaget. Det som drar ner mest är alla de uppräknings av soldater, hästar och kanoner varje regemente och bataljon hade. Säkert många som finner det väldigt intressant men tycker man

hade kunnat skippa sådan detaljrikedom då boken redan är väldigt kort. Roberts håller ändå ett bra tempo och tror aldrig jag kände att boken blev tråkig förutom vid dessa uppräknings.

Nicholas Whyte says

<http://nhw.livejournal.com/1113743.html>[return][return]A very short but very detailed account of the June 1815 campaign which sealed Napoleon's fate. The carnage was brutal and vicious; the battle of Waterloo took place over a very small area, four kilometres by two, with the focus of the fighting being two building complexes which Wellington needed to hold long enough for the Prussians under Bl

Jessica says

This book is for people who are smarter than me. It is a literal play by play of the Battle of Waterloo. I think this battle is often overlooked, but one that changed the course of history---if Napoleon had won America would have spoken French and a good chance of Napoleon fighting us to retrieve the Louisiana Purchase. I had a difficult time following it and staying with it. I learned the most from this book in the neat little conclusion at the very end (which by the way was very succinct and understandable).

Daniel Kukwa says

Reading military battle history, no matter how clear it might be, tends to make me go cross-eyed from all the shifting details. Even in this concise little volume, I suffered the same effect...so I admire anyone who can take relaxing pleasure from such writing. That said, it's certainly an effective little one-stop-shop for information on the Battle of Waterloo. I can easily admire it as a research tool.

Zack says

Roberts' book offers much to satisfy the heart of an Anglophile. He seeks to dispatch the notion that the battle was lost by a decrepit Napoleon, opting for the interpretation that Waterloo was Wellington's victory above all else. Like his other biographical approaches, Roberts meets with success despite some unabashedly flippant castigation of Britain's foes. *Waterloo* is the classic story we have come to know so well, but it also entertains some hints of revisionism that make it an important contribution to the battle's historiography.
