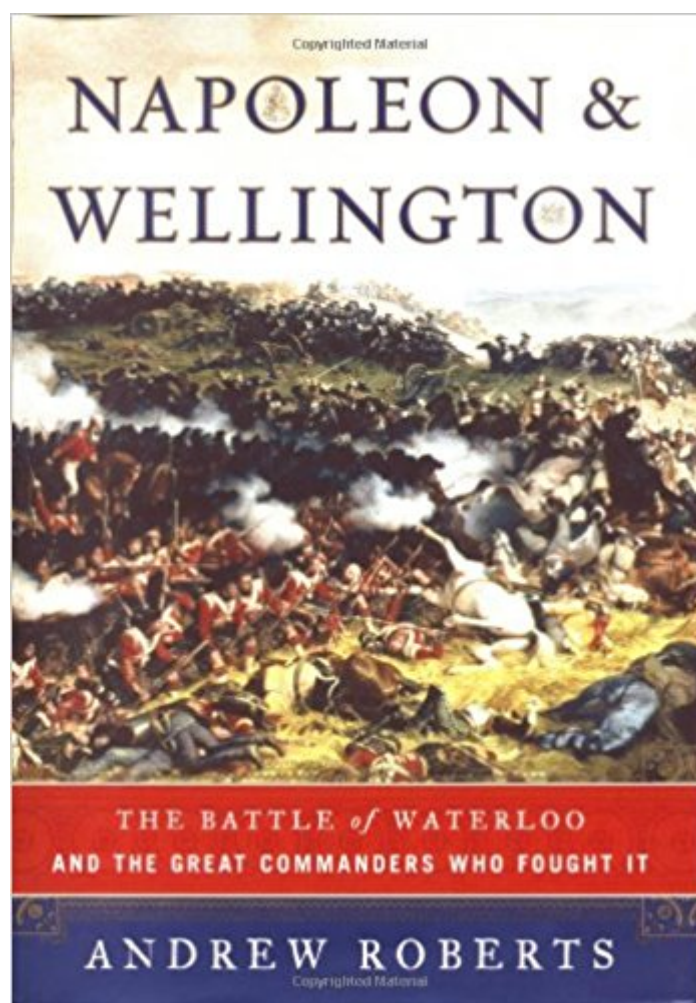


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Napoleon And Wellington: The Battle Of Waterloo--and The Great Commanders Who Fought It



Synopsis

"An award-winning historian offers an eye-opening view of the relationship between Napoleon Bonaparte and the Duke of Wellington, whose lives moved inexorably to their meeting at Waterloo, one of the most famous battles of all time." At breakfast on the morning of the battle of Waterloo, the Emperor Napoleon declared that the Duke of Wellington was a bad general, the British were bad soldiers and that France could not fail to win an easy victory. Forever afterwards, historians have accused him of gross overconfidence and massively underestimating the caliber of the British commander opposite him. Now Andrew Roberts presents an original, highly revisionist view of the relationship between the two greatest captains of their age and of the great battle that determined European history in the nineteenth century. Napoleon, who was born in the same year as Wellington -- 1769 -- fought Wellington by proxy years earlier in the Peninsular War, praising his ruthlessness in private while publicly deriding him as a mere "general of sepoy." In contrast, Wellington publicly lauded Napoleon, saying that his presence on a battlefield was worth forty thousand men, but privately he wrote long memoranda lambasting Napoleon's campaigning techniques. Although Wellington saved Napoleon from execution after Waterloo, the emperor left money in his will to the man who had tried to assassinate the duke. Wellington in turn amassed a series of Napoleonic trophies of his great victory, even sleeping with two of the emperor's mistresses. The fascinating, constantly changing relationship between these two historical giants forms the basis of Andrew Roberts's compelling study in pride, rivalry, propaganda, nostalgia and posthumous revenge. It is at once a brilliant work of military history and a triumphant biography. Featuring a cast of fascinating supporting characters -- including the empress Josephine, the Prince Regent and Talleyrand -- "Napoleon and Wellington" provides the definitive account of the most decisive battle of the nineteenth century.

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Customer Reviews

Arthur Wellesley, the Duke of Wellington, spent a lot of time worrying about whether Napoleon Bonaparte, the emperor of France, was a gentleman. Napoleon accused his English foe of being a coward. Yet, Andrew Roberts shows in this dual biography, each accorded the other an odd respect, and, like wrestlers in a ring, studied his foe's moves intently all the way to their fateful encounter at Waterloo. Publicly, Bonaparte and Wellington professed to despise each other. "Even in the boldest things he did there was always a measure of ... meanness," said Wellington of the French emperor, adding later, "Bonaparte's whole life, civil, political, and military, was a fraud." Napoleon said that Wellington "has no courage. He acted out of fear. He had one stroke of fortune, and he knows that such fortune never comes twice." Yet the two, writes Roberts, were very much alike: social outsiders who found their greatness in the army, scholars of a sort, who brought scientific rigor to the study of topography and logistics, and men capable of inspiring great heroism in their soldiers. In the end, Roberts suggests, Wellington won his battle, but Napoleon won the war. This intriguing study shows how, and it affords much insight into the workings of these great rivals' minds. --Gregory McNamee

Gossipy and anecdotal, at times amusing and at other times enlightening, this book meanders across an era looking for connections between its two greatest generals. British Sunday Telegraph contributor Roberts (Eminent Churchillians) concentrates not on the respective merits of Napoleon and Wellington, but on what they thought, wrote, and said about each other. He spices his text with vignettes such as an extensive description of Napoleon's hemorrhoid problem on the eve of Waterloo, and its successful treatment by the famous surgeon Baron Larrey. Then he demonstrates the relevance of his stories in this case by showing that Napoleon was by no means as debilitated on the day of battle as popular myth accepts. Wellington and Napoleon did not face each other until Waterloo in 1815. Napoleon, who first heard of Wellington in 1808, never showed his great rival quite the respect he deserved, let alone the respect Wellington considered his due, Roberts shows. Though partisans and critics of both men stress their differences, Roberts's text makes a convincing case that Napoleon and Wellington were more alike than either of them would have conceded. Both

considered Hannibal their military hero; both carried Julius Caesar's Commentaries in the field. They even shared a couple of mistresses Wellington was at pains to show his post-Waterloo triumph in every way possible. Both were self-confident to the point of arrogance, consciously unemotional and obsessively focused on success. And they spent increasing amounts of time, particularly after 1815, blackguarding each other in the fashion of contemporary professional wrestlers. This history presumes a high level of background knowledge, but readers interested in the rivalries of the period will find it thoroughly absorbing. Copyright 2002 Cahners Business Information, Inc.

First and foremost this is not an analysis of the many battles each man fought. Rather, it is a study of the relationship between the two men, and their different styles. Wellington was an aristocrat, Napoleon certainly was not. Napoleon was a head of state, Wellington was a servant of the British crown. The differences between their respective positions had an enormous effect on their activities. Wellington almost always faced opposition on the home front, Napoleon practically never until near the end. Napoleon commanded huge armies, more than 600,000 in his invasion of Russia. Until Europe finally coalesced against Napoleon, Wellington rarely commanded more than 40,000 troops. The Peninsular Campaign taught the Duke many things that Napoleon never fully learned, viz., logistics and the command of small bodies of men. Napoleon never commanded a company or even a regiment. When the two finally met at Waterloo, Wellington proved to be much the better tactician. Unlike Napoleon, Wellington was everywhere on the battle field and was lucky not to have lost his life - no less than five senior officers were killed while standing beside him. To the victor belonged the spoils, In Wellington's case this meant "inheriting" two of Napoleon's mistresses. The book's principal failure is that after Napoleon's death in 1821 further comparisons between the two men become relatively meaningless.

Anrew Roberts focuses on his two men, Napoleon and Wellington, and what each knew and thought about the other, He traces their careers, campaigns and battles well but lightly, as he leads to Waterloo. And there, he keeps his focus, on the two, and how Napoleon seems to have lost his grip, with incidents that might have won for him that he failed to exploit. Regarding the timely arrival of Marshal Blucher and his Prussians on the field of Waterloo, Roberts stresses that it had always been part of the plan. Roberts concludes with Napoleon musing bitterly on St. Helena as he dictates his thoughts and recollections, and Wellington's many assessments in conversations recalled by others, in his long life. Wellington outlived Napoleon for over thirty years, and had a significant

career as a statesman, including two years as Prime Minister.

Roberts succeeds in writing a readable and engaging comparison of the perceptions each leader possessed toward the other. The history is not a portrait of each commander separately, but rather shows the relationship between the two men in terms of conduct and word. While the history gives more or less equal time to both commanders, what emerges, at least in my view, is a decidedly surprising and uncommonly jaundiced portrayal of Wellington. For example, Wellington pursued and seduced no less than two of Napoleon's mistresses. He filled his mansion with copious quantities of "Napoleona" -- statues, paintings, memorabilia. Indeed, for a man of Wellington's supposedly Victorian understatement, he talked of his victory over Napoleon incessantly. It is typically understood that Napoleon was an egomaniacal, self-obsessed dictator. What is less well known is that Wellington was much less the reserved, stoic gentleman his reputation would lead one to believe. I would not consider this history to be essential reading except for buffs of the Napoleonic wars, and it gets a one-point deduction for its somewhat sordid, "tabloid-ish" quality. Still, I won't doubt the veracity of its content nor is it dry, so pick this one up if the focus is your cup of tea.

Napoleon And Wellington by Andrew Roberts is very interesting especially since 2015 marks the 200 anniversary of the battle of Waterloo which changed the course of History. Andrew Roberts' analysis of the two of the greatest military genius is very well documented and reads like a novel. This book is a must for anyone interested in the nineteenth century history.

An interesting insight on their personalities.

Napoleon and Wellington had much in common. Both men were born in 1769 on islands (Corsica and Ireland) under the thumb of their more powerful imperial neighbors (France and England). Both pursued highly successful military careers which culminated in political power. Both very were voraciously heterosexual and neither man enjoyed a happy marriage. They even shared two mistresses -- the Italian singer Grassini and Mademoiselle George. The later judged that, "Monsieur le duc etait de beaucoup le plus fort" (The duke was much the stronger). Wellington, on the other hand, returned to England where he later became Prime Minister. In 1829 he fought a duel at Battersea park against the Earl of Winchelsea who opposed Wellington's support of Catholic emancipation. No one was injured. Wellington's older brother helped him advance early in his career. Andrew Roberts writes that, "A combination, therefore, of nepotism, racism and

snobbishness - all anathema to twenty-first century liberal society -- saved Europe from despotism."
(Source: Napoleon and Wellington). If you enjoyed Napoleon and Wellington you will also like
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