

Does good writing really make a difference?

Please prepare for our class exercises on Wednesday, August 19th, by reading through the passages below (all written on the same topic) with your partners from today's class. Suppose that each passage is a portion of a student's response to the prompt indicated below, taken from a fictitious European history exam.

Work with your partners to *rank* the passages from worst to best (I hope this won't be too hard!), and provide feedback indicating both what each passage does well, and what each does poorly. At last, come up with a letter grade for each passage, and be prepared to defend your choice of grade to the class. You will not have to turn in any of your writing at this point, but it will likely be very helpful for you to write some notes on the passages to which you can refer when you come to class.

Prompt: Briefly discuss the historical significance of the Battle of Waterloo.

- **Passage 1.** Waterloo, Belgium was the site of a horrible battle fought by the English and Dutch, who allied themselves with the Prussians, in order to defeat the presumptive imperial army of the French Commander, Napoleon Bonaparte. Bonaparte had massed his army in Paris in the months following his return from exile in Elba, and in early June of 1815 he crossed the border from France into Belgium. After manoeuvring for several days and taking various strategic positions away from the British and their allies, Napoleon struck, attempting to take Brussels, the Belgian capital, from the south. His thrust was parried by the Allied forces, and they clashed outside of the small town of Waterloo. The British forces under Wellington and the Prussian forces under Blücher proved themselves victorious, and Bonaparte was vanquished.
- **Passage 2.** The Battle of Waterloo was one of the battles waged in the nationalist wars of nineteenth century Europe as the various countries fought each other over their patriotically defined identities. It was Napoleon's final defeat, and a resounding one that marked the end of his French imperial fantasy. Though France would remain a power afterwards, it would never again dominate the continent like before, and the nineteenth century from then on would see more balance of power. The battle was also significant for its number of casualties, with about 50,000 dying between the two sides. Before this time battles had never been so bloody. This battle showed that some older methods of waging war were on their way out.
- **Passage 3.** It was Waterloo, Belgium, June, 1815. Napoleon with Marshal Ney, Generals Grouchy, Reille, d'Erlon, Lobau, vs. the Duke of Wellington and Generals Blücher, Uxbridge, Picton, and others. They fought for three days, and when it was over the English and Dutch won. Their infantry formations proved really good at facing French calvary. Napoleon was sent to Saint Helena, an island in the south of the Pacific, where he died later.