

why did william win the battle of hastings? essay sample

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Hastings is possible one of the most important battle in English history and as a result has generated much discussion as to why William was able to win. The answer is not simple as not all the facts were true but also because you must take on a whole different range of factors to find out just why and how William won the battle. There are many reasons for William's victory but major reasons were William's skill as a military leader and his ability to be well prepared for the battle. William persuaded many powerful French nobles to join him by promising them land in England, this helped by letting William gain men for his army and the nobles would give him good financial aid. When William landed on the south coast he burned his boats so that his solders knew they had to win the battle.

This made William not only a good leader who was intelligent when planning the battle, but it was a way of motivating and threatening the men as well, by putting them in a win or die situation and making sure they would try to fight harder and stronger as the boats were their only way home and if they lost the battle they wouldn't be able to retreat or go home. It also inspired fear into the men which made the army quicker to respond as they all feared him. William took Harold by surprise by launching an early attack, at 9: 30am on the morning of the battle. This meant that even before the battle started, the fight was already in his favour because it forced Harold to fight when the battle was not to his advantage. It shows William's skill as an organiser and his knowledge of the types of elements needed to win the battle. William's men thought he was dead in the middle of the battle and started to run away. William removed his helmet to show them that he was still alive.

The ability he had to have, to be able to show he was there to make his army carry on fighting would be vital as a commander. It shows that he struck so much fear in his men that they would immediately respond to his every command; this made his army much more effective as William knew they would obey his order promptly. William was a strong leader who organised his soldiers very effectively. The trick of pretending to retreat worked very well. This made the Norman army very effective and was a major reason why they won the battle. The effect of William's skill in addition to the corresponding mistakes made by Harold made William's victory even more possible. After the battle of Stamford Bridge Harold refused to share his booty with his men. This meant the English nobles were half-hearted in their support of Harold G, decreasing chances. Harold's selfishness had caused the nobles to distrust him, this may have caused problems as if he did win the battle the nobles might not want him on the throne so already Harold had caused a rift between him and victory.

Harold decided not to rest his army after heading south. They had marched over 200 miles in a matter of days before arriving at Hastings to fight William. His choice made his army weary even before they had fought William and in addition they had to fight an extra battle before and they were already tired. Harold left part of his army in the north. Many of the soldiers he left behind were archers. He marched to Hastings without waiting for reinforcements. This meant Harold was at a disadvantage because his army was smaller, untrained and they were tired from fighting and Harold was at a very large risk of losing the battle. Many of the reasons for Harold's

defeat were because of the nature of the two battles. Harold had around 7000 soldiers but only 2000 of them were highly trained housecarls. The rest were only peasants. This shows that Harold had not only a smaller army but also that most of his army was untrained and inexperienced it would mean that before the battle started Harold was already at a disadvantage. Harold's men were tightly packed together on the battlefield.

This meant that it was hard for them to move quickly when the battle started. This is a part of their downfall as the soldiers couldn't move properly and in addition to the fact that their army had less soldiers and that the majority were untrained, it would be hard for them to get a good advantage over William's army. Many of Harold's men were foolish enough to think William's men were running away and they chased them down a hill. The Normans turned around and killed them. It was a trick. This fact is definitely a major point as it was mainly the reason as to why the army was so dramatically decreased during the battle and then went on to losing the overall war. William's knights were heavily armoured and some of them rode on horses. Harold had no soldiers on horseback. William had a large advantage as the horses could split up large gatherings, so it made it easier to kill Harold's army and then go on to defeating Harold.

Harold Godwineson was killed in the middle of the battle and many of his men did not want to carry on fighting. This promptly ended the battle because the men would not want to be fighting for the losing side. Now that they no longer had a leader or person to represent them, (in addition to the fact that they had the lesser number of soldiers) Harold's army quickly got

eliminated. Although Harold was not necessarily a poor leader he was very unlucky. Luck played a large part in William's success as many of Harold's so called mistakes were often forced on him by an unlucky development of events, like him having to fight not only one battle but two. The wind changed allowing William to arrive in England more quickly than he had expected. This gave him time to prepare for the battle. Along with William being able to prepare more, it caught Harold unaware and unprepared. Harold was unlucky because he had to fight Harold Hardrada and then try and defeat William of Normandy.

William was again very lucky because unprepared this caught Harold at a disadvantage, because after fighting in the battle of Stamford Bridge he is unable to rest and gain energy. It made Harold leave part of his army in the north, therefore making his army smaller. Harold also had to force march his army down which made them weary; he then refused to rest at London and instead carried on down to Hastings to again fight. Harold's army would be exhausted after marching and fighting and being an untrained army would put them at such an extreme disadvantage that they had already practically lost the battle. The reasons for Norman victory were many and varied; however many elements were that William's skill and training as a leader made him deadly and the precision of his battle plans made him an excellent commander. Luck also made it possible for William's victory and the fact that Harold's mistakes were forced on him by luck made it possible. Although Harold was a talented opponent, luck was not on Harold's side therefore making it unlikely he would win.