

# Rifleman dodd essay sample

[Literature](#), [Novel](#)



Rifleman Dodd is a novel by C. S. Forester. It takes place in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century right after Napoleon has come to power in France. He is determined to conquer as much of the world as he can and the rest of Europe is determined to stop him from doing it.

The French sent an army to their south into the Iberian Peninsula that is the part of Europe where Spain and Portugal happen to be. Portugal is an ally of England and so England sends a force of roughly 10, 000 men into the peninsula to come to the aid of Portugal. The action of the novel takes place when one English rifleman is stranded behind the French lines and has to live off the land and try to get back to his regiment.

When the British Army's 95<sup>th</sup> Regiment of Foot found the French force was a lot larger than they had thought it was going to be they realized they had no chance against it and decided to pull back away from them. As they started to withdraw, the hero of the novel, Rifleman Dodd, was cut off and not able to get back.

There is a brutality to the book and in an odd way it tells the same stories twice at times, once from Dodd's view and again from the view of the French soldiers as well. The reader gets to know the French squad leader, Godinot, and his small group of young men, but of course Dodd never knows them. One by one he kills them while doing his duty and never even thinking that these young men are just like him and at any time other than war they would all be good friends.

The book is not very long but a lot of action is packed into it. During this period in history the British Army was composed mostly of *red coats*. These were men who wore the bright red that Americans saw during the American Revolution. But a rifle is different from a musket and they were not common yet in the British Army of the time, so a rifleman, wearing a green coat was a novelty.

Dodd has to live off the land of course, and by his wits. He was just a rifleman and not used to making up his own orders or having to decide what was the best action to take, but he does remember he is a British soldier first and his duty is to cause as much troubles for the French army as he can while he is trying to get back to his regiment. When he finds the French trying to build a bridge across the Tagus River he begins to harass them and snipe with his rifle to prevent them from completing it. The war uses starvation as a weapon. Food is scarce and the soldiers are not fed with any regularity. Dodd slowly learns to do the things that a soldier should do and learns leadership when he finds the citizens who want to fight the French, too.

Dodd meets a young retarded man who follows him like a little kid. The young guy catches a fever after being left wet and cold. He is near to starving and Dodd finally decides to leave him behind and go on without him, knowing it is condemning him to death. He is out of his head and won't last long as Dodd walks away. The horror of war is told graphically in this book.

All the details are here of the brutality and cruelty that it takes to fight a war. Men must change and become hard. There can't be any sentiment or any regard for how things used to be or how they should be. There is only the understanding of how they are at the moment. It is *kill or be killed* every day. Dodd is joined by a group of Portuguese partisans. They do not survive long. The French kill every single one of them, men, women and children.

Dodd wins and the Frenchman, Godinot loses, but in reality it more that Dodd survives and Godinot does not that determines the outcome. Dodd gets back to his regiment and when asked what he has been doing he is reluctant to discuss it because he does not see anything special in what he did. He only did his duty, the same as any man.

#### Bibliography

Forester, C. *Rifleman Dodd* Nautical and Aviation Pub. Co. Reissue 1990