



# Soissons 1918

*Douglas V. Johnson II, Rolfe L. Hillman Jr.*

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"It is the last five percent of possible exertion that often wins the battle." Brigadier Gen. Hanson Ely's statement best exemplifies the efforts of his troops as part of the allied contingent at the Battle of Soissons, July 18–22, 1918. At a cost of more than twelve thousand soldiers and marines dead, wounded, and missing, American troops struck the Germans with such force that the Germans lost the initiative for the remainder of the war.

*Soissons, 1918* provides an intricately detailed account of this pivotal battle in which partly trained, inexperienced American soldiers and marines literally turned the tide of the war. Despite strange French command methods, alien equipment (such as masses of tanks), immature American staff work, and difficulties in communicating with advancing troops, American enthusiasm and willingness "to finish the job" briefly shattered German defenses, caused panic, and ultimately unhinged the Germans' carefully prepared strategic plans.

Authors Douglas V. Johnson II and Rolfe L. Hillman, Jr., provide a strategic overview of the war to the point of American involvement in combat operations. Following the long accepted Leavenworth method of analyzing operations, they thoroughly describe the enemy situation, the terrain, and the friendly situation. Subsequent chapters describe in detail each of the four days of intense combat using French, German, and American sources and American personal accounts.

The depth of the authors' coverage spans not only technical aspects of the battle but human dimensions as well. Plans matter, and so too do personalities, from sergeants and lieutenants to commanding generals. Diagrams of attack plans, maps, and photographs effectively illustrate both the intent and reality of the battle, beneath which runs a bloody narrative.

A captivating account of real-life triumph in the face of adversity, at a time when triumph was worth the cost, *Soissons, 1918* is a valuable addition to the library of anyone interested in the history and strategy of this awful war.

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