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Patriots & PBS

by Joe Escobar - Saturday, October 1, 2016, 10:29 AM

This thread is for discussions on the Patriots & PBS topic.
To make your POSTS, click the reply link in this, MY post. To reply to another student's post, be sure to click the reply link within in THEIR post.

IMPORTANT - SUBJECT LINES

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Vietnam Refugees

by Trevor Neal - Wednesday, October 5, 2016, 3:07 PM

In Appy's Patriots, on page 48, Daniel Redmond describes the relocation of Vietnamese citizens from the north to the south. I found the connection in the second PBS film near the seven minute mark. Many of the refugees were reluctant to move. At the nine minute mark of the film, it is stated that the United States used the fear of the spread of communism through propaganda to urge people to move. This evacuation of people was important because nearly a million people were relocated. They saw it as an anti communist base for Diem. It was also United States', "first commitment to the disaster that happened in the sixties" -(Redmond P 48).

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"Deliver Us From Evil" and Episode 1

by Treva Thompson-Moore - Wednesday, October 5, 2016, 3:25 PM

The story I found most important that connected to the documentary was in Part 2 of the Patriots book. It was on page 44 named, "Deliver us from Evil". This story connects the american involvement to their support of the french that was emphasized in Episode 1 of the documentary series.

In the first episode the beginning focuses heavily on the early wars of vietnam leading up to the american involvement. At that time I had believed the american involvement was to rescue the vietnam nation from the invading french and japanese. Especially at the 18 minute mark into the first episode where Premier Pham Von Dong explains why the vietnam continued to fight the Japanese even though others were collaborating with the Japanese after the french forces had left. This resistance caused an extreme famine where over 2 million vietnamese people died as a result. It sparked such a personal concern hearing about this I was sure our american involvement was to help them from France and Japan's neglect. Soon after, it showed Ho Chi Minh's involvement with french deals to recognize the free nation of the DRV and I realized that the french really didn't want to give up all involvement and control of Vietnam. Even considering Ho Chi Minh was first a nationalist and then a communist his communist involvement was not something French generals wanted in control of the whole nation. This is when I wondered why we were helping vietnam from the japanese when the french was still involved in controlling their destiny and had troops there.

However, after reading in Part 2 on page 44 of the Patriots novel that says, " By 1954, America was paying almost 80% of its ally's war expenses." my eyes opened to the exact reasoning. The book continues to point out exactly how heavily the french were depending on us and why that caused the vietnam men to view america as an enemy. When watching the episode of the documentary I do have notes about how america funded most of the war. I did not know that the "funds" were in full support of the french but moreso believed it was just a direct investment in saving the vietnam from the Japanese communists. The Novel also pointed out that the france surrendered at Dien Bien Phu on May 7th, 1954 and how that battle led to the

compromise of dividing Vietnam at the 17th parallel with the DRV only controlling the north to avoid having a fully communist nation. Further supporting the obvious factor that France strongly felt that Vietnam should not be a communist country.

This connection is important to me because it brought to light that the french had a larger concern over what vietnam man was controlling the nation and what that person would teach to his people, rather than just saying they own the land. I now have a better understanding of how the american government got involved and exactly why we stayed involved. Knowing this is giving me a clearer perspective to each additional thing I continue to learn about this war.

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Re: "Deliver Us From Evil" and Episode 1

by Jennifer Wilson - Friday, October 7, 2016, 11:46 PM

One of the things that I found surprising was how the US was financially supporting a war that was essentially unknown to most Americans at the time. It is hard to fathom that so few knew about the turmoil in Indochina, let alone the US involvement. Media coverage today is much more vast and reaching than it was back then, so it is hard to say why it took so long for Americans to learn of our involvement. I am sure we will touch on this topic in future chapters/episodes. The \$3.5 billion spent did nothing to help bring the war any closer to peace.

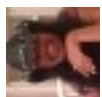
"I am frankly of the belief that no amount of American military assistance in Indo-China can conquer an enemy which is everywhere, and at the same time nowhere, and which has the sympathy and covert support of the people."

-John Kennedy, Senator of Massachusetts

I find his words were an accurate prediction of how things turned out.

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Re: "Deliver Us From Evil" and Episode 1

by Sohni Maan-Davie - Sunday, October 9, 2016, 7:01 PM

Jennifer,

I agree with your post and there are other chapters where civilians don't know where Vietnam War is. In the chapter called "Where is Vietnam?". On page 28, Jo Collins said, "I had no clue where Vietnam was or what I would find there. I mean, I just thought I was going to Europe". In the first chapter Commanders, Bernard Trainor said that people in America thought the soldiers, "were taking terrible casualties and the there weren't any benefits"(8). So the American

people decided to protest. One of the Americans that protested was Deirdre English. English also didn't know where Vietnam was. The first time English learned about Vietnam was when she was a senior in high school, and she went to the Museum of Science and Industry. After getting inside a helicopter showing images of Vietnam, English left with questions about where Vietnam was, why is America at war and why do the American people not know about, and why the teachers aren't talking about it.(30-31). English then went on to protest the war when she was in college, by barging into different classes, to kind of educate the people at her college about what's going on in Vietnam.

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Sahni.

by Treva Thompson-Moore - Sunday, October 9, 2016, 10:45 PM

Hello,

I was unsure if you were responding to my original post or Jennifer's response, but I appreciated the references you made and I wanted to respond. "Where is Vietnam?" and "Commanders" were a part of the stories that contributed to my confusion over exactly why Americans were involved in this war. The Jo Collins story reminded me of her video from week one where she discusses her trip to Vietnam. It really amazed me that she mentioned shopping for clothes before flying over. As if preparing for the danger, violence, and combat she would witness was of no concern. Yet, by the end of her trip she connected that feeling of unknown to the very soldiers that were there fighting this war.

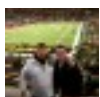
It added to the tragedy that even the generals, like Bernard from "Commanders", were aware of how opposed Americans were to this war. It must have been tough to do a job well that most Americans didn't understand and definitely didn't support.

Great references.

-Treva Thompson-Moore

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Innocent Deaths

by Mason Fisher - Wednesday, October 5, 2016, 10:36 PM

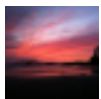
There are many similarities between the first two episodes of the Vietnam war series and excerpts from the first two sections of the Appy book. Although there are many similarities, one thing that struck me was in the beginning of the first episode of the “Vietnam: A television history” a camera man is interviewing a Vietnamese woman and she proceeds to explain how she and other Vietnamese were afraid of Americans because they were seen killing innocent people. She explains how “everywhere the Americans go they kill and burn everything”, the film then cuts to video of American troops burning things in Vietnam. This caught my interest because then I began to wonder about war time crimes in Vietnam and if American troops were doing illegal things over there at the time.

In the Appy book, the first story of the first section talks about instances where American troops killed innocent people and how some of them felt about it. The narrator of the story, Lieutenant General Bernard Trainor, explains how they were instructed to “search and destroy” which resulted in many North Vietnamese troops being killed but with that came innocent casualties. He specifically recounts a time where they were instructed to raid a building and kill everyone inside, the building turned out to be a hospital.

Overall, I think people did what they had to do at the time, although I say that, I also am not condoning senseless killing of innocent people. Soldiers did as they were instructed to do, this was war and they were being attacked, or attacking every day for years.

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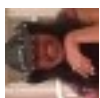
Re: Innocent Deaths

by Jennifer Wilson - Sunday, October 9, 2016, 2:16 PM

It is hard for me to believe that the only atrocities came from Americans. I am sure it was from all sides. There is almost a sense of completely unfeeling and indifference when the Vietnamese talk about killing. Whereas Americans speak of things that were heartbreaking and tragic. I look forward to reading more stories and hope things become a little "human" in the way stories are told. I know that it is WAR and I cannot fathom what that had to be like, but I am assuming you are never the same after an experience like that.

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Re: Patriots & PBS: Trainor's story

by Sohni Maan-Davie - Wednesday, October 5, 2016, 11:01 PM

The story I chose from the book Patriots is the story told by Bernard Trainor. At first, Trainor compares how the Vietnamese won't give up their independence, a lot of how the Americans were during the Revolutionary War and that the war was just a "peripheral exercise"(7) . Then Trainor said that Westmoreland is a bit like Ulysses Grant, in the fact that Westmoreland is trying to wear down the North Vietnamese, a bit like how Grant wore down the Confederates(7-8). The one section I chose from the story is when Trainor talks about how the North Vietnamese troops, turned the tables on Westmoreland's plan and tiring out the soldiers in Vietnam, which eventually affected the people here in America(8). In the overview of the first episode, "Roots of War", where there was a mass protest against the war. It's significant because according to Trainor, "People thought, we kept taking terrible casualties and we're not seeing any benefit". Some people thought that the war was pointless because we lost so many men for a cause that wasn't really worth it, others thought that we were saving Vietnam from communism. One of the reasons why we most likely lost so many troops in Vietnam was because Trainor and the rest of the Marines think that Westmoreland's attrition warfare plan was a stupid plan overall. The best plan might have been living in the villages and learn the custom of the Vietnamese people(8). The overall point is that the American people were tired of the Vietnam war.

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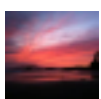
Re: Patriots & PBS: Trainor's story

by Trever Neal - Thursday, October 6, 2016, 12:16 PM

Hey Sohni, when you talked about about how Trainor compares the Vietnamese people to the Americans during the Revolutionary War, and how the Americans were tired of the Vietnam War, I thought about Vo Nguyen Giap's story in Appy's book. Giap talks about how the Vietnamese won the war. He says, "We won the war because we would rather die than live in slavery. Our history proves this. Our deepest aspiration has always been self-determination. That spirit provided us with stamina, courage, and creativity in the face of a powerful enemy." (p. 42). Uncle Ho said the American's war of attrition would not work on the people of Vietnam because they were determined to gain their independence. The Vietnamese were not going to give up, much like the Americans during the Revolutionary War. Giap later refers to the American War as, "The most atrocious conflict in human history." (p. 42).

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Re: Patriots & PBS: Trainor's story

by Jennifer Wilson - Sunday, October 9, 2016, 2:00 PM

This also drew my mind to Vo Nguyen Giap's story. His belief that the war was not in Americas best interest, and that the war could've been spared. I wonder how much credence that statement holds? Can this war really be our fault? It is true that the Vietnamese were underestimated, as Ho predicted, "...our people will keep fighting until they win." There were mass casualties for all, and I can't help but wonder what would have happened had we not been involved.

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what if US didn't fight in Vietnam

by Trevor Neal - Sunday, October 9, 2016, 8:13 PM

I generally believe the United States shouldn't get involved with as many foreign matters as we do. Your point makes me wonder was as well what would have happened had we not been involved in the Vietnam War. Was it in our best interest? Would communism have spread?

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Honor and Sacrifice

by Jennifer Wilson - Wednesday, October 5, 2016, 11:03 PM

"...never again must this country ever ask young men to fight and die in a war we're afraid to let them win." -Ronald Reagan

Ronald Reagan's words remained with me after the reading and viewing of these stories. I felt his words were an excellent inclination toward the inability to give up and walk away. I still have much to learn, having never been exposed to the raw facts, but even in just one week, I can sense the follies from all sides.

While reading the incredible stories, both unbelievable and so very heartbreaking, one thing was very clear. All involved parties suffered tremendously. Death, dismemberment, and the guarantee of nightmares that never go away. I am profoundly shaken, reading of the stories of how men would watch their friends die right in front of them, or wake up having lost their legs, arms or both. To relive these experiences, cannot be an easy thing. I am honored that these men and women, from all sides of the story, are willing to share their stories for those, like me, who have not had the historical education of the Vietnam War.

In the *Patriots* book, Tran Thi Gung, described scenes where they would shoot Americans, and when one would fall they would run to them. These actions made them easier targets, and when they would run for cover, she would run forward and

take as many weapons she could hold. This point was also made in the first episode. They would capture the enemy's guns and use them against them. Tran shows little regret, if any, over the lives she took.

I certainly understand, at this point in my education, why the United States wanted to help in Vietnam. The manner in which these people were starved and forced out of their homes, how could we not? But it came with enormous cost, 58,000 dead Americans, and hundreds of thousands of opposition lives gone.

Regardless of why, that is a tragedy.

Appy, Christian G. "Part One." *Patriots: The Vietnam War Remembered From All Sides*. New York: Viking, 2003. 15-19. Print.

Vietnam--A Television History. Episode 1 & 2. 1983.

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High Point of my life

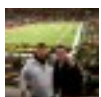
by Andrew Kilmer - Thursday, October 6, 2016, 11:01 AM

The story I have found most profound in the Patriots book, is one sentence by Dang Vu Heip on page 11. In his last sentence he states, "I'm seventy-two now, but I think those years in the Central Highlands were the high point of my life."

In all the videos I have watched and in the American stories I have read to this point in the class, no US soldiers recall their time in Vietnam as the high point in their lives. To the contrary most find it hard to even recall the painful memories of that time. While most Vietnamese didn't like the war, they were proud of the part they played. Most Americans didn't even understand what they were there for. I think these mindsets are telling of the landscape and motivations that battles possessed during the war.

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Re: High Point of my life

by Mason Fisher - Sunday, October 9, 2016, 9:30 AM

Andrew, that was a huge thing that I also noticed in that story and a big difference between US and Vietnam troops. Those men embraced the war and made it their whole lives even after it was over. It is truly fascinating how each side perceived the war and how their troops responded to fighting each other. For Dang Vu Heip to call being involved in the war “some of the best years of his life” is mind boggling to me but just goes to show how much he cared.

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Re: High Point of my life

by Jennifer Wilson - Sunday, October 9, 2016, 2:09 PM

The heartbreaking stories told by the Americans are vastly different than those of others. Watching friends get their legs blown off and running away on his bloody stumps and dying within 30 seconds are not stories that are easy to tell. And a witness to how Americans felt when losing comrades, Tran Thi Gung, told of when they shot Americans, their friends would rush to them, hold their bodies and cry. It was surely devastating for all, but so far the stories I have read, Americans have portrayed a bit more heartbreak and regret than some.

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My interpretation

by Treva Thompson-Moore - Sunday, October 9, 2016, 7:55 PM

Hello Andrew,

When I came to the "Dang Vu Hiep" story my interpretation of the conflict with Vietnam became very hostile. I became so irritated when the Plieku battle was being explained by Hiep himself. It was incredibly frustrating to hear a general admit, "...at the time we didn't even know for sure whether Americans were stationed there."(Patriots, pg. 10). To me this story emphasized how quickly one act of violence can create such a drastic chain of attacks so quickly. So, when reading your response I was urged to re-read the story but this time pay attention to Hieps personal connection despise the frustration I feel about the exact details.

Great job.

-Treva

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Re: High Point of my life

by Trever Neal - Sunday, October 9, 2016, 8:20 PM

It definitely seemed like the US troops didn't want to be in Vietnam, whereas to the Vietnamese troops, the war meant a lot more. It was their home. I believe that is why they remember those moments and are so proud of what they fought for.

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