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Patriots - The Vietnam War Remembered From All Sides by Christian Appy

In this powerful collection of stories of participants in the Vietnam War, you will complete three written assignments on a number of topics. Before you begin, be sure to read the handout How assignments are graded .

If you glance at the first page of the Acknowledgments that appears at the end of the book, you will find that this book contains only one-third of the 350 interviews he conducted. I often wonder how Appy arrived at which choices he decided to include and not to include in this book.

VERY IMPORTANT POINT

This book contains accounts from 135 individuals and you are responsible for reading the entire book over the course of the term. This book gives you a personal connection to the war, something that the more "academic" and narrative Herring book and PBS DVD series do not. It would be unreasonable for me to expect that you memorize and/or take notes on all of these accounts and be able to answer midterm and final exam questions on the wide variety of stories presented in this book.

More importantly, you will soon discover that in the class assignments, I let YOU CHOOSE to write on the stories that have the greatest impact on or interest to you. Therefore, this book will serve as the main source of information for the written assignments this term, but you will not be expected to answer exam questions on the facts or opinions expressed by the speakers and their specific stories.

Of course, when I use a story in the Appy book as an example, as I did in the case of the Jo Collins Video Clip which I required all students to watch, then that information is "fair game" for the midterm and final exams. Speaking of Jo Collins, were you aware of her Oregon roots? Talk about a connection to the war that is "close to home". [CLICK HERE](#)

ASSIGNMENT 1

This is a two-part assignment:

Part 1

Which single story, other than that of Jo Collins, in Part 1 of the Patriots book caught your attention? Why? How reliable, trustworthy, believable do you believe that speaker to be? After all, unlike you or me, they were there, at that specific point in time. Does that give them more or less credibility? Are they objective and factual or do they suffer from too much subjectivity, too much time having passed, too much forgotten? (These are not easy questions... please take some time to analyze what I'm asking for here.)

WARNING: Some of these stories are very powerful, and will have a great effect on you. But do not make the common mistake that just because you read a single, firsthand account about someone's experience in the war, that you can then generalize and make that account the "norm" or the "common" way things were for everyone else, everywhere. For example, all soldiers were not pot smokers, just because you saw some soldiers obviously smoking pot in the DVD video series introduction in Episode 1. The accounts in Appy provide a very small snapshot of one person's experience, often shared with at least a few other people mentioned specifically in the story. Be sure to take that into consideration when you write all of your assignment papers. Regardless, the war WAS a human event, and we will use the text to hear from the humans who were most directly involved in it.

Part 2

In Part 2 of the book, the stories get a bit longer than in part one. They also get a bit more "official", with stories by official participants, such as journalists, governmental officials, and even the leader of the eventually victorious North Vietnamese Army.

Of the 15 stories you've read, you will comment on the following questions.

Which story or stories (definitely one, but not more than two) were the most disappointing for you to read and why? You may have been disappointed with the speaker him/herself (with their attitude, for example) or disappointed by the events in their story (with the frustrating way in which they were treated or in the negative situations in which they had to interact with others). Start your answer to Part 2 with this negative, critical point of view first.

NOTE: I am NOT asking you which story you think was boring. Disappointment and boredom are two very different things. Unfortunately, some students in the past have misinterpreted the instructions this way.

In the second half of Part 2, address any positive lesson(s) you may have learned from one or more of the accounts in Part 2 of the book. Is there any "hope", "compassion", "goodness" or the "potential for good" that comes out of any of these stories?

NOTE: I am not forcing you to find good where you might believe none exists, but if you've read the accounts carefully and analytically, you will probably will find something positive.

You have until the deadline to complete this assignment.

FINAL THOUGHTS ON YOUR FIRST ASSIGNMENT

In this assignment, Parts 1 and 2 should be given equal time. I envision Part 1 as consisting of one long paragraph, while Part 2 definitely requires two paragraphs.

Click the Edit My Submission link below to turn in your paper.

Due date: Sunday, 10 April 2011, 11:55 PM

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