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part one, assignment three.

A turning point in the Vietnam war is found in Douglas Kinnard's story featured in part four of the Patriot's book. A quote from Kinnard that starts the piece off summarizes the reason behind the change in tide perfectly: "While we had the power, it turned out they had the will". This story represents a turning point because it captures the period of time when both the troops, and the population watching the war from home, began to realize that the Vietcong had a reason to fight; they had a reason to win. The Vietnamese were defending the home of their ancestors and their way of life, while our troops were fighting for a cause they had no passion for. Without passion, without a heart for the cause, defeat is inevitable. Mr. Kinnard sent questionnaires to past army generals; the reason for our overall failure is encompassed well when one of the generals says "The announced reasons by president Johnson didn't wash. What were we really trying to do, whose bacon were we really trying to save?" When the population and the soldiers began to realize that lives were being sacrificed for a relatively unknown reason, any hope for victory was lost. From Kinnard's personal standpoint, he went through his own transformation. He said that he was "gung ho"(pg.322) when he arrived for his first tour, but once he realized that the body count meant nothing when it came to defining who won or lost, he began to question the U.S.'s true motives for being in Vietnam. By the end of the tour he had reached the conclusion that the war was a "losing proposition", which is the same realization that thousands of civilians and soldiers has also reached by that point. After those on the fields of war realized they were fighting an endless battle, they lost any hope for a happy ending. To be trapped in a place of death, fighting for a reason you didn't understand, or perhaps a reason that did not exist, would be truly horrific. Once the gumption is gone, so is the chance of success.

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