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Part 1, the turning point:

The best example of a turning point in part four of the Appy text is the story of Vincent Okamoto. Vincent Okamoto like many Americans seems to have started out with un-questioning faith that the United States of America was doing the right thing. Since Okamoto was the son of Japanese American family that was locked up in a "Relocation" camp during world war two, Okamoto and all his older brothers served in the American armed forces as a way of affirming their status as "Americans". All of Okamoto's older brothers had already served by the time he went into the military and to Vietnam. Okamoto started out eager to fight for his country for many reasons. By the end of his time in Vietnam, his attitude had clearly changed drastically. Although Okamoto mentioned briefly that his attitude started going downhill after he started seeing a few napalmed villages, it's clear that the biggest turning point for him was the night of August 24, which he stated was "the single worst night" of his life. On that night Okamoto came very close to death, and many of the people he was serving with were killed. His description of the events that night are very moving, and it's not hard to see how they along with the dubious nature of the entire war would change anyone's attitude from one of gung-ho certainty to one of this sucks I shouldn't be here.

This new attitude of Okamoto's seems to have become more and more the most common attitude among all combat GI's in Vietnam as the war went on. Gun shy and disillusioned with any "cause" the United States might have to

be fighting for, Okamoto could hardly wait for his tour to be over.

Part 2, endings:

The best story that illustrates an “ending” of the war is the story of Frank Maguire. He ended up serving three tours in Vietnam, and his description of his last tour conveys a strong sense of the end of something in Vietnam. On page 443 Maguire describes Saigon as “dead”, and says that he “felt defeat and loss everywhere”. Maguire admits that he enjoyed his time serving in Vietnam, and volunteered to serve multiple tours. By the time he served his final tour in 1970 the United States had drastically reduced its presence in Vietnam. This means that one of the things that were missing from his previous tours was a large chunk of the American presence that was there when he was previously in Vietnam. The thing that seems to have been missing the most though, was the sense that something good was going to come out of the conflict. Certainly for Maguire, and also for many others, 1970 was a time when the futility of the Vietnam War was becoming obvious to most people. It was becoming increasingly obvious that much of American policy up to that point had been based on illusions and misconceptions, and those illusions were breaking down. The war was widely thought to be a mistake by then, and as John Kerry said, “how do you ask a man to be the last man to die for a mistake?” Many people by then didn’t care at all what happened in Vietnam, they only wanted to survive long enough to get out of there. Maguire’s story illustrates not so much the end of the war, but more the end of belief in the war. The end of belief in the war was the beginning of de-escalation, and as such the start of the end.

These were the best two examples of a “turning point” and an “ending” that occurred to me. The reason that I choose them out of all the others was

largely for their emotional content. Both are accounts from the perspective of American Veterans who started out strongly supporting America's role in the war. Each account could be taken as representative of more than just the attitude of the person narrating. They could be seen as what happened to the whole nation. Both are stark, harsh, and obvious examples of either a "turning point" or an "ending".

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