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Soldier Perspectives on Wartime

by Joe Escobar - Saturday, May 11, 2013, 10:06 PM

After studying the required materials, address the two questions in SEPARATE posts.

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

Since there are multiple questions, BE SURE to use an informative subject line for your post. Don't simply leave it RE: Soldier Perspectives on Wartime

Sum of ratings: -

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Question 1

by Georgia Haskell - Wednesday, May 15, 2013, 12:21 AM

Appy said in the preface of Patriots, "When I had serious doubts about the accuracy or plausibility of an account, I did not include it". Holding to this standard I would not use Michael **Rooke-Ley** letter, since at least one point is directly refuted in the letters following it. When deciding which stories to choose Appy said "...every individual I was able to include makes us aware of other experiences we might not have imagined and shows how the war's impact rippled from one person and event to another, all worthy of attention". If I was Appy I would use ROBERT L. SHAW's letter titled; "Returning from Vietnam easy". I think it shows a side of the treatment of Vietnam vets that we should all be aware of. I would include a "note to the reader" giving specific dates of his service, his rank, and his college achievements with specifics to give credibility to the account so it could be verified if someone wanted to. I would also include THOMAS W. POSTELLE's letter titled "Spitting incidences did occur". To make it historically accurate I would include a note to the reader with Potelle's specifics and a brief life and military history along with actual dates of his flights. I think these two letters give personal accounts that make us aware of two

different individual experiences and the impact it had on them. I'm not saying I didn't believe the other stories of getting spit on; I just liked the way these letters read better.

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

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Question 2

by Georgia Haskell - Wednesday, May 15, 2013, 12:52 AM

The compilation of letters to the editor tells us first that there are people spreading rumor as truth and if we do not question that our information is truthful then we are part of the problem. Like **Michael Rooke-Ley's** letter; sounded like he really believed that no veteran was ever spit on, he just didn't question his information. While studying events of the war from the perspective of the soldiers we need to remember that two people can have totally different experiences of the same thing. One soldier can know he is fighting the war to stop communism and protect our freedom and another soldier could have no idea why he is fighting; just that it is his job and he was trained to do it. Just like Robert Shaw said, unlike lots of Vietnam veterans, that coming home was easy; that it was later in his professional life that he felt the effects of the negative treatment and feelings toward veterans. As in a lot of the other letters the Veterans immediately got treated badly even on the plane ride home and getting off the plane. It is difficult to tell if an account of how things went was actual or exaggerated to fit an agenda or not. I think that if multiple soldiers' accounts are similar then I believe it, or an account can be factually backed up.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

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Re: Question 2

by Maraya Maxson - Sunday, May 19, 2013, 9:08 PM

I think this same theory should be used in all aspects of life. It seems like all too often people put too much trust into other peoples accounts of what happened. I think as with anything you have to use discretion when studying history regardless of where the information is coming from. Putting too much trust in one source and gathering all your information from one place is an easy way to let someone else shape your opinion, for example if you only watch fox news eventually it will have an effect on the way you see current events and issues.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

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Re: Question 2

by Jacob Hutchins - Sunday, May 19, 2013, 11:20 PM

The impression I got from Rooke-Ley's letter was less that he simply believed it

and more that he couldn't *conceive* of it. It seemed like he was suggesting the idea of spitting on vets was so far fetched and absurd it *had* to be made up. This is clearly not the case; vets were definitely spat upon. But there are layers to even a letter such as this.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

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Question 1

by Skyla Brocksmit - Wednesday, May 15, 2013, 3:50 PM

I wouldn't include the letters from Bob Thompson and Michael Rooke-Ley. In Patriots, Appy had said that he doesn't use accounts that are doubtful in accuracy. Rooke-Ley's commentary seems to be fueled by hatred and biases. Thompson's letter doesn't seem to have any solid evidence to support his claims. He repeatedly says that there have never been any media reports of veterans being spat upon which he tries to back by using Google searches. I would include all the remaining letters because they are accounts from people who actually lived it. Though the authors of the letters may have had different experiences than one another, some had easier homecomings than others, all acknowledged what kind of abuse veterans underwent. Together, these letters provide a better image of what coming home from Vietnam would have been like.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

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Question 2

by Skyla Brocksmit - Wednesday, May 15, 2013, 4:26 PM

This compilation of letters shows us the importance of doing proper research before making statements about things we think we may know; that we can't just search Google for a quick truth. The best way to get the truth of the occurrences of the Vietnam War is by talking to those who experienced it firsthand. When studying the events of the war from the perspectives of our own soldiers, we have to remember that even though the soldiers were fighting in the same war, some may have had similar experiences compared to others and some might have had completely different experiences. Such as those from the American POW video, who had been captured and held for five years. The experiences of those men are much different from those who never experienced a day of captivity by the North Vietnamese. We need to view the information from all sides and take all the difference stories into account.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

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Re: Question 2

by Melissa Booth - Wednesday, May 15, 2013, 10:59 PM



I think that it is great to hear experiences from soldiers. In fact, I rather enjoy reading and listening to their experiences. Although, I think that it is important to keep in mind that even though it is interesting and holds a lot of facts that they may lean towards a certain opinion when it begins to get personal. I'm not saying that that is a bad thing. What I am saying is that we should be careful. Just for an example, if one soldier said that Vietnamese were all horrible, you cannot assume that every Vietnamese person you meet from here on out is horrible. That is just what they experienced at the time and how they felt. You can actually learn a lot about their emotion and feelings during the way when learning about these personal experiences. I think that it is interesting how you mentioned that there are different experiences that the soldiers go through. I did not think about that much until you mentioned how the soldiers who were POW and those who were not had different experiences. This could all affect how they may feel about different topics later on.

Sum of ratings: 2 (1)

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Question 1

by Jon-wesley McLeod - Wednesday, May 15, 2013, 5:33 PM

If I had to decide on what to put in Appy's *Patriots*, I would include the POW's stories first, the Black Lions second, and the Register Guard letters last; if I put them in at all. The POW stories are powerful, and very critical part of the war, propagandized by both sides and even documented by the North Vietnamese. Accounts of Geneva Accord laws being broken need to be brought to light and responsible parties held accountable. Seven and a half years under these conditions would drive anyone absolutely insane. 1st Lt. Leroy Stutz said "I was the toughest fighter pilot in the World...I found out real fast how weak I was." The poise that the POW's have after an ordeal like that is incredible. Appy's short chapter on POWs is not enough. One real American Soldier POW, a North Vietnamese female POW, and an American protester are the only stories included. I think the he should have left the protesters in another chapter and included more soldier POW accounts as well as visuals to emphasize the important roles the two played, and the effects on the masses here and in Communist ruled North Vietnam. It could be a whole book by itself.

The Black Lions are another example of extraordinary first-hand accounts of direct combat in Vietnam through the perspective of American soldiers. I would only include "notes to the reader" about the logistics of their missions but other than that, I would leave it up to the reader to develop their own thoughts. Most of Appy's notes are helpful, especially when he puts the statement in context, but some of the introductions are a bit winded.

I think the Register Guard letters are very relevant to Americans polarized feelings on soldier treatment but I see them as more of a Newspaper Op-ed and rebuttal. If

they were conducted in an interview matter, rather than an inflamed retort to an ignorant statement (shoulda looked on Google), I would try to include both sides of view on the treatment of soldiers returning from Vietnam, soldiers and civilians. The whole "spitting on solders" to me is representative of a much larger picture. The symbolism that is evoked with this image is greater than the despicable act. I think the spectrum of American ideologies has broadened quite a bit during Vietnam and there were extremes on both sides. Spin was coming from everywhere and a few bad people can ruin it for everyone and give the opposition the ammunition it needs for more spin. From saying that American war protesters were equivalent to NVA soldiers torturing POWs to American soldiers being imperialist baby killers, hyperbole seemed to be the name of the game for hawks and doves. Everyone is entitled to their opinion but anyone that literally spits on a soldier should be arrested for assault. I assume that confrontations happened when soldiers returned to the United States, but I would try to try to gather evidence of V.A. statistics and improper military operations by "armchair politicians" to show whether or not our country figuratively spat on our soldiers, then interview the solders that were spit on and ask their thoughts and feelings on the subject and comparison of the two.

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

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Regarding Question 2

by Andrew Lavengood - Wednesday, May 15, 2013, 6:46 PM

The letters from the Register Guard illustrate just how difficult it can be to determine the accuracy of even the smallest of historical events. Something as small and obscure (though not unimportant) as spitting can be as complex and difficult to pin down as political relations between the United States and the South Vietnamese government of the 60s. Perhaps I exaggerate a little, but the idea is still there: history is a collection of perspectives, and the truth is subject to interpretation. On the one hand, I have no reason to not believe the veterans that told their stories of being spat on. On the other hand, however, I have reason to believe that this was not as widespread as others would have us believe. Herman Isaacs made a good point that "those... who came back home through California experienced a lot of hostility in varying degrees." I'm sure that those who went home to the more liberal states of the time experienced harsher backlash, though I haven't found anything to support this idea. It also could have something to do with the proximity of airports to colleges, since university campuses were major focal points for anti-war protestors. These are just a couple of ideas I've come up with, however, while writing this post.

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

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Re: Regarding Question 2

by Georgia Haskell - Thursday, May 16, 2013, 10:45 PM

That is a good point about the colleges being close to the airport; I'm glad you

threw that in there. I had not thought of that, but the colleges in California had been the center of some serious anti-war protesting (Berkeley). I think you might be on to something here.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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Re: Regarding Question 2

by Andrew Lavengood - Saturday, May 18, 2013, 11:15 PM

I'm sure there's some validity to it. College students made up a large proportion of anti-war protestors, and they were well known for their large and (sometimes) disruptive or disrespectful demonstrations. I'm sure there were many incidents in which they protested at airports and spit on the veterans that were coming back from the war. At the time, they were just a target for their hostility, a face to put to a war that they couldn't comprehend.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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Re: Regarding Question 2

by Georgia Haskell - Sunday, May 19, 2013, 12:16 AM

I personally hope that the disrespect that the anti-war protesting gave to the returning veterans is something we learn from and don't repeat. I understand the anger and confusion over the war and believe in a little healthy protesting, but I feel the treatment of our soldiers was horribly misplaced.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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Re: Regarding Question 2

by Elizabeth Gambee - Sunday, May 19, 2013, 11:40 AM

I agree. I too understand the angry emotions associated with the war, but I think you said it very well when you stated that you felt that the treatment of our soldiers was horribly misplaced. Regardless of whether or not the spitting did occur, I think that it is smart to assume that it did in fact happen just to err on the side of caution and to raise awareness of the importance of treating our soldiers with honor and respect.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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Re: Regarding Question 2

by Jacob Hutchins - Sunday, May 19, 2013, 11:26 PM

"The letters from the Register Guard illustrate just how difficult it can be to determine the accuracy of even the smallest of historical events. Something as small and obscure (though not unimportant) as spitting can be as complex and difficult to pin down as political relations between the United States and the South Vietnamese government of the 60s."

Not only that, but once you DO start delving into these things you find out how much of an emotional hot-button they can be. As for the point Isaacs made, the personal experience I have with this issue comes from a Vietnam Vet step father that returned to a small, conservative town in northern California as was completely ostracized for being a "loser". Vets definitely got it from both "sides", although I would agree that those on the liberal end of the spectrum were probably more likely to be hostile toward vets. That being said, I think most that protested the war were probably *not* supportive of spitting on vets. We sure remember the ones that did, though.

Sum of ratings: 3 (1)

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Question 1

by Elizabeth Gambee - Wednesday, May 15, 2013, 7:00 PM

I believe that when considering which accounts to use from the presented compilation of letters concerning the Veterans' treatment upon returning home, it is important to evaluate the various authors' potential biases that could taint their particular accounts. Personally, when I attempt to do this, I tend to avoid pieces that appear to be overwhelmed with emotion and obvious prejudice because such components, in my opinion, lessen the credibility and accuracy of that particular piece. That being said, after reading the Spitting on returning Vietnam Vets letters, I would be less inclined to select the pieces by Michael Rook-Ley and Tom Preuss because they both seem to be fairly emotionally charged. I would also be less inclined to select Bob Thompson's piece because he takes a pretty extreme position insisting that absolutely nobody spat on returning Vietnam Vets. On another note, I thought that Rodney Gordon provided a decent account, especially when he made it a point to state that while most vets did not have to endure this abuse, that does not mean it did not occur as it did happen to a few. I also thought that H. Hilliard Gastfriend provided a credible piece in which he politely pointed out the lack of verifiable data existing in the book *The Spitting Image: Myth, Memory, and the Legacy of Vietnam*. He explained its flaws and provided the reader with his source of information. Finally, I thought that Robert L. Shaw produced a worthy piece that came across for the most part as being biased free. He explained that while he and some of his Vietnam companions never experienced the spitting component of abuse upon return, he did endure some prejudice when attempting to re-enter the workforce.

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

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Re: Question 1

by David Hartness - Sunday, May 19, 2013, 10:04 PM

Emotional feeling's in a subject certainly do affect ones own opinion on events that individuals took place in. Emotions towards events can severely change ones judgement on events compared to someone who saw them third person. If someone can feel emotional towards an event, no clear evidence towards it, it becomes hard to accept their feelings from a historical standpoint.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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Question #1

by Brendan MacDonald - Wednesday, May 15, 2013, 8:31 PM

If the decision were left up to me as to which letters/articles were to be included in *Patriots*, I would be most inclined to choose those written by the actual accounts of the veterans themselves sooner than I would the ones written by someone who has extracted their information primarily from the internet and media. For example Bob Thompson's claim was that the spitting and insulting treatment of the returning Vietnam vets never took place and uses "exhausting" research from websites on Google that he has conducted to prove that such a thing is false. For one thing, I believe that you can't trust with 100% everything you read off the internet as some information can be biased and twisted to support a particular point of view. I think it is pretty safe to assume that what an actual war veteran states is true, can be believed because they have experienced it personally. That being said, I would probably choose the letters from Rodney Gordon, and Herman Isaacs to put into the book. Because both of these are actual recounts from two war vets who were subject to aggression from war protestors and explain their situations in quite a bit of detail. I don't know as if it would be necessary to include a "note to reader" unless I included a letter written by someone who was not a war vet, and then I probably would to confirm what their occupation was.

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

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Re: Question #1

by Andrew Lavengood - Saturday, May 18, 2013, 2:16 PM

I, of course, agree with you that Bob Thompson's letter should not be included in a book such as "Patriots." He writes purely from the perspective of someone that has Google'd a few key terms and read a handful of articles - "exhausting research," to be sure. However, I'm not sure that it's right to say that just because a veteran told you a story that it must be true. Their stories could be obscured by cloudy memories, deep-set guilt, or some other reason. I think that,

with veteran's stories, it ultimately becomes a judgment call. You have to look at the many different sources of information about the events that he/she spoke of and make a reasonable judgment as to whether the story is reliable.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

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Re: Question #1

by Skylia Brocksmith - Saturday, May 18, 2013, 6:36 PM

You make a good point. Having a veteran tell you a story doesn't mean it's absolutely true. Checking sources and finding information that supports the claims are both very important when deciding the reliability of a story.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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Re: Question #1

by Andrew Lavengood - Saturday, May 18, 2013, 11:12 PM

It's true. Sometimes people tell you stories that directly contradict something that can (reasonably) be trusted to be factual. For example, a soldier might tell a story of when the Vietcong nearly took the U.S. embassy during the Tet offensive. Despite evidence to the contrary, he is convinced that they almost lost the embassy. It could be that he is not purposefully or maliciously attempting to mislead you by lying; after all, he might just be conveying an opinion that he formed from his experience or he might have perceived the problem as being far worse than it actually was. Whatever the case, you still have to conclude that his story isn't entirely valid.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

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Re: Question #1

by Elizabeth Gambee - Sunday, May 19, 2013, 11:42 AM

Good point. Soldiers' memories and accounts of particular events are likely to be tainted by extreme emotion or cloudy memories as you had mentioned. It really does ultimately become a judgement call.

Sum of ratings: (1)

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Re: Question #1

by Cameron Cole - Sunday, May 19, 2013, 11:14 PM

Soldiers mindsets during war can be completely altered due to extensive stress, loss of friends, and sleep deprivation, which sometimes can effect the accuracy of their stories. I wouldn't necessarily call it a judgment call, there stories do have a lot of accuracy towards them, they just forget a few details here or there "in my opinion"

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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question 2

by Jon-wesley McLeod - Wednesday, May 15, 2013, 8:48 PM

The letters to the editor show us that no amount of research can be conducted to account for the personal experiences and all occurrences, large and small, of over two and a half million American soldiers in Vietnam. To garishly say that no soldiers were spat on because of Google surfing and no records from 495 media sources is conjecture and should be treated as such. There's no possible way to know that information, with the sheer amount of accounts not recorded or mediacized. Saying such absolutes is narrow-minded, especially when there are many local veterans, probably more than willing to share their story which can personally refute his statement with numerous individual first-hand accounts. As students, we should be as ambivalent as we can, and know that we don't have all the facts.

One thing we have to consider when studying American soldiers perspectives on the war is the automatic empathy or disdain that we feel from their accounts given. It's hard to say what we would have done in the same situation even though we theorize about it. Soldiers are human too and can manipulate and fabricate stories as well as memories distorting and fading over time. Documented accounts of heroism on the battlefield and the treatment of POWs have various credible sources so we can put more value upon them but what happened to a soldier coming home and a random heated encounter is harder to verify, but important nonetheless. Different interpretations of the same event by numerous perspectives can shape that event in our minds based on the re-telling of what happened, even with people from the "same side".

The same battle told by victors and losers is a very different battle. Just the terms "liberating" and "containing" had contrasting connotations for The North Vietnamese and Americans. We also have to remember the spectrum of veteran's politics, religions, demographics, and the reasons for enlistment are very broad and can alter the opinion or viewpoint of that person and their recounting of the Vietnam War or subsequent change(s) cause of it.

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

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Re: question 2

by Maraya Maxson - Friday, May 17, 2013, 1:54 PM

I agree with what you said about stories being easy to distort for personal gain or a lack of memory. Although I believe that there are very useful aspects of personal accounts I also see the need for other sources. How people grew up and their personal values have a lot to do with the way they are going to respond to a situations, which of course effects the way they will retell it.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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Re: question 2

by Georgia Haskell - Sunday, May 19, 2013, 11:32 PM

I also agree with this reasoning. I think it is important to point out that the personal values and upbringing has an affect on the how the story is told but also that the values, opinions, and upbringing affects how the person reading it interprets it. Which is another good reason to get information form many sources when writing a book like Patriots

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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Re: Soldier Perspectives on Wartime

by Jacob Hutchins - Wednesday, May 15, 2013, 9:22 PM

I think that if it were up to me I would just put all the letters in. We can only benefit from a variety of opinions on this. I feel like Vietnam was so complicated and such a different experience on a person-by-person basis that it's really imprudent to make blanket claims like "no one was spit on". I'm sure plenty of people were. But we can't put all our eggs in one basket and I think there were plenty of protestors that did no such thing. If it's one thing that's been made clear to me through all of our videos and reading it's that the Vietnam war left skeletons in pretty much everyone's closet.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

Show parent | Edit | Split | Delete | Reply



Re: Soldier Perspectives on Wartime

by Brendan MacDonald - Thursday, May 16, 2013, 9:23 AM

I would agree that when learning about history, sometimes it is good to get both sides of a story and then leave it up to the student to determine what really happened/didn't happen based upon the most intelligible information. I guess I

would just say that between someone who actually experienced the events of the war first-hand as opposed to someone who simply went online and did some "research" on a subject, there isn't really any question as to who's side of the story I would believe first and foremost. That is why I would not include the letter written by **Bob Thompson**, however according to one veteran **Robert Shaw**, he was not subject to that humiliation and there were other vets that did not. And I would include those along with those who said they did have to put up with the aggression of anti-war protestors.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

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Re: Soldier Perspectives on Wartime

by Jon-wesley McLeod - Saturday, May 18, 2013, 2:29 PM

The Bob Thompson letter was deficient, poorly written, and internet researched. But, I think if the letters from the vets are included, the original source of their discontent should also be published. It shows the unfounded ideas that spread and become "truth" to some people. If Thompson's letter was left unrefuted, some readers of that particular newspaper might think he had some validity not hearing any rebuttal and not seriously giving the subject much thought. If left out, readers might wonder where the intensity and passion from these vets is coming from and why this issue inflames certain people's indignation. Since the ignorance of the proudly written letter struck a nerve with members of his own community that experienced otherwise, a flood of responses poured in and gave that reader a better understanding of the treatment of vets returning from Vietnam. I agree with your later assessment, we should split the "sides" into veterans that were subject to attack and those that weren't, instead veterans versus anti-war protestors. Like most of us realize, some protestors hated the war not the soldiers. It's evident that there were cases of conflict with returning soldiers so Thompson's letter is obviously incredulous, but letters from vets that returned without incident should be included as well to inform the reader of different recollections.

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

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Re: Soldier Perspectives on Wartime

by Elizabeth Gambee - Sunday, May 19, 2013, 11:45 AM

You make a good point. I initially thought it would be a better idea to discard the more outlandish accounts (for instance, the ones that seemed overwhelmingly emotional to me), but as you mentioned, we truly do benefit from having a wider variety of selections. Showing all the stories would provide a broader insight into the war itself in addition to the various emotions and opinions that came with it.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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Re: Soldier Perspectives on Wartime

by Georgia Haskell - Sunday, May 19, 2013, 11:39 PM

I thought the same thing at first. That some of the letters were too emotional, however, the passion they were written with gave validity to them in my eyes. I do think the confrontational manner of some of the letters would cause more of an argument than just simply getting the story out there though.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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Re: Soldier Perspectives on Wartime

by David Hartness - Sunday, May 19, 2013, 10:22 PM

Putting every letter in there sounds absurd. Sure it's appropriate to have opposing conflicts of opinion, Even Appy didn't include every interview and piece of personal experience within his book on Vietnam. It's best to try and decide what's best with your own judgement, just like Appy did to try and get a realistic view of the picture.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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Re: Soldier Perspectives on Wartime

by Cameron Cole - Sunday, May 19, 2013, 11:10 PM

I completely agree, by putting all of this information out through putting all of the letters in would give the readers every perspective of the situation. Making it up to the reader to figure out what he or she actually believes based off the extensive research that they have done. When discussing complicated wars, there will be so much information that people believe will be right. "History has always been written by the victors" and I believe that this is the problem when comparing similarities and differences.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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Question #1

by David Hartness - Wednesday, May 15, 2013, 9:22 PM

Well if I was Appy writing my Patriots, the choice accounts would have to be the most interesting ones. It seems apparent that such disrespectful acts such as spitting

on soldiers on returning from war did happen in some instances. It didn't appear to have happened to every soldier, but common enough to be a known often occurrence. The account of Thomas Postelle was a good example as he even spoke of having fear of being witness in his military uniform to avoid further harassment. But as we can see it wasn't always the case, as Robert Shaw is an example of never having been harassed upon his arrival home. It would be good to include both of these letters from the Register Guard, as they both include different perspectives on the attitude of American protesters at the time. It's good to note that its apparently obvious that not everyone was so vulgar and disgusting towards veterans, but the vocal minority tend to stick out more.

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

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Re: Question #1

by Melissa Booth - Sunday, May 19, 2013, 9:36 PM

Those are great points that you brought up. I too also think that it is a good idea to have a few stories from different perspectives. In any argument it is great to point out different views instead of focusing on only one. I think that if you just focus on one side of an argument, you may make it seem that those were the only events that happened. For example, if we only included the accounts of the personal attacks into the Patriots book, then we would not know about the side were there was no problem at all. Although Robert Shaw mentions on how he was not spat on, but he did experience some other problems. He had problems getting and keeping jobs. So, although he did experience some problems when coming back, it was from a different point of view.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

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question 1

by Maraya Maxson - Wednesday, May 15, 2013, 10:07 PM

If I were to have to choose letters to include in a book intended to gain perspective I would use the letters of, Bob Thompson, Robert L. Shaw, and Herman Isaacs. The reason I choose these three is because I think they are all saying very different things. The diversity gives way for a lot of different perspectives. For starters Thompson's letter claims that there was no disrespect to returning soldiers of the Vietnam way, a topic which has been widely discussed. This is a very bold statement to make considering the amount the soldiers went through from what I believe to be true. Thompson says in the beginning of his letter, "In fact, it appears the "spitting on the veterans" story is completely false.(Thompson)." This bothered me because in saying that it was "completely false" he takes away any possibility that things may have happened that were never published or couldn't be found on the internet. If I had a the chance to write a note about the author I would be sure to include whether

or not he was a veteran of the Vietnam War or not (I'm assuming not but it didn't mention it). I would also include his current occupation so that if he has any credibility at all the reader is aware of it

The second person I would include in my book would be Shaw. Although Shaw agrees with Thompson that veterans were not spat upon, and tells that he was treated humanely by the protesters he encountered, however when he tried to get a job he was either denied or quickly fired due to his participation in Vietnam. This seems to go against what Thompson was saying or at least the way I interpreted Thompson's letter. The way I understood Thompson's point of view was that the veterans were not mistreated by the American public. I think that Shaw makes it clear that this was not the case, agreeing only that he had not been treated with the kind of disrespect that spitting on someone would be. For this level of contrast I would include these two stories. In a note about Shaw I would include his role in the war (rank, years served, the state he lived in, ect.).

I also choose Isaacs letter. I made that choice because it was a polar opposite of Thomas, in his accounts he was, "I was spat on just outside the San Francisco airport while waiting for my flight home"(Isaac). Having someone who actually experience the issue at hand and discrediting Thomason's (who I'm still assuming hasn't) "research". Isaac mentions being called a "baby killer". I think its important that these things come to light and the fact that people are still trying to water down what people went through at home after having gone through a horrible war is proof that the disrespect is continuing. In order to give the veterans the respect they deserve we first have to acknowledge what they went through.

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Re: question 1

by Cameron Cole - Wednesday, May 15, 2013, 10:47 PM

If I had the power to choose what type of letter or information to put in Appy's *Patriots*, I would unquestionably select the POW's stories first, then I would choose . I would choose this route bthe register guard letter, and then the black lions. I decided to choose this information in this order because the POW stories was brought fourth by American prisoners of war because their information was so powerful due to the fact that they learned so much from the Vietnamese because they were around them so often. During there extensively long time spent under captivity, many men had documented/remembered very precise details in regards to the Vietnamese propaganda techniques and the way they got into the minds of the soldiers and Americans back home. Furthermore, POW'S have crucial evidence in regards to the Geneva Accord laws being broken due to first handed occurrences with this false treatment. Being held under such treatment was inhumane which resulted in either death are extremely scared individuals who could never find the light again. Some of these men said, "I will never get captured" or even "I was the toughest fighter pilot in the world" and within a minute on the battlefield they were surrounded by

hundreds of rifles, only to be turned into the weakest state a man could possibly go to. These were very strong men, and they were returned weak and utterly useless due to the false treatments. In my opinion, I feel that in Appy's chapter where he talks about POWs well organized and stated, but I do not feel the compassion and intensity that it needs to be, especially about talking about such an intense subject that really is a touchy subject to a lot of people. Appy's chapter needs to go into further depths with this issue. For example, providing the reader with more personal occurrences with people who actually were in captivity or a soldier who knew a guy that was once held. So the reader can get a before and after of how harsh the treatment was on these men and how much it changed their life afterwards.

The Black Lions and the register guard are other examples direct accounts of the struggles in Vietnam. These examples are through the words of American soldiers who saw and went through it all. This type of scholarship is very strong because it catches the reader's attention more thoroughly. People always want to hear stories "especially war stories" about what exactly happened in war, because they knew it is the truth and not fabricated in any way.

Through these texts, the readers pick up on how the American philosophy has expanded since the catastrophe in the war. With the thousands of protesters that ultimately hurt the moral of the American people, but everyone is always dubbed to their beliefs and that is the good thing about having all three of these texts so that one can make their own visual about these many circumstances.

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Question 2

by David Hartness - Wednesday, May 15, 2013, 10:15 PM

The truth of history is such a complicated matter. There really isn't always a defined "Truth." In the readings from the Register Guard, it really does seem apparent that there is more than one truth on the situation. One thing I can say with certainty though, the more instances of accounts you have recorded, the more likely you will be able to get a more accurate picture. For instance, the letter by "Bob Thompson", seems to hold "The Spitting Image: Myth, Memory and the Legacy of Vietnam," as his only source of accounts of saying veterans of the Vietnam war were never spat upon. As a student of history, it is apparent that falsehoods will be written occasionally, but as one can see with the accounts of THOMAS W. POSTELLE, RODNEY GORDON, HERMAN ISAACS, and H. HILLIARD GASTFRIEND make it seem that these events did happen to them or individuals they knew. The main thing to be concerned about studying events from our own soldiers is that not all of them shared the same experiences.

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**Re: Question 2**

by Jon-wesley McLeod - Saturday, May 18, 2013, 1:39 PM

You made a great point about getting a more accurate picture of an event with the more instances of accounts. It's important that we try to document as much as we can about these experiences before they're lost to history. Appy's *Patriots* does a great job of bringing perspectives and accounts of the Vietnam War that we normally wouldn't hear. For example, North Vietnamese doctors working in the jungles, Artists encouraging the troops on both sides, and American working mechanic support, bored as hell and spending most of his free time playing ping pong. Unfortunately, some people are so scarred from the war that they can't retell and bring up the horrors they lived through. Of course, some didn't make it back at all. Like you said David, "not all of them shared the same experiences."

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by Elizabeth Gambee - Sunday, May 19, 2013, 11:57 AM

Appy really did do an incredible job of providing a plethora of accounts in his piece. I feel as though he was definitely aware of the fact that different people experiencing the same event process it differently and notice and remember different things from the other people experiencing the same occurrence. Even if a group of people share the same experience, their stories and recalling of that experience are likely to be different from one another's. I agree that it's really great that Appy provided perspectives from the Vietnam War that we typically wouldn't hear.

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by Maraya Maxson - Wednesday, May 15, 2013, 10:19 PM

When it comes to basing anything on someone else's perspective there are a lot of things to keep in mind. How someone was raised, where they grew up, and their own set of personal morals all come into account when there recalling an event. Several things govern the way someone remembers something and the way they are going to tell the story in the future. It's important to read personal accounts, and even facts, with a certain amount of discession. I think when reading the stories of the Vietnam War through the eyes of our soldiers is important to remember that they are telling the story from the perspective of a trained soldier. They also only know so much because they were only experiencing a specific part. This is not to discredit anyone, what im saying is they only know what they saw and what they were told so that's the only thing they can share. This runs the risk of being bias.

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Re: question 2

by Cameron Cole - Wednesday, May 15, 2013, 10:54 PM

when someone creates a perspective on a situation is always essentially comes from where they grew up or even of how their family has looked upon certain situation. Some people respond stronger to some issues and others do not care. It really depends on the morals and backgrounds of the certain individual. It is really important to take information that comes straight from the source, and in this particular case, the soldiers information is the most valid due to their specific interactions with these issues.

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Re: question 2

by Elizabeth Gambee - Sunday, May 19, 2013, 11:59 AM

Exactly. Peoples' accounts of various events are commonly tainted by their life experiences and backgrounds, regardless of whether or not this bias is intentional or unintentional. I think that it is important not only to take information stemming directly from the source, but also to find a wide range of sources (in this case, soldiers) in order to enhance the plethora of input.

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Question 1

by Melissa Booth - Wednesday, May 15, 2013, 10:35 PM

When reading the Appy book, I remember reading in the beginning when he mentions that if the story does not seem accurate, he would not use it. This being said, I would probably not use the story from Bob Thompson. He mentions that the fact that veterans were spat upon were false. Then, he says, "Unless Preuss can provide references to proven instances of such behavior, I will be steadfast in my understanding that exhaustive research on that very topic has shown no examples of such behavior, period." (Thompson) Here he is asking for credible resources to prove their point, yet he does not provide any credible resources to prove his point. Now, if I had to choose one to use in the Appy book, it would have to be the stories from Rodney Gordon and Robert L. Shaw. I chose Rodney Gordon because not only does he mention his own experience, he also mentions that it did not happen t everyone. I think that it is important to mention that it was not something to be labeled onto everyone. He did happen to some, and it did not happen to others. I chose Robert L. Shaw because his experience was a little different. He wasn't spat on, but he did

experience some trouble in a different way. You do not have to be spat upon to be disrespected. I think for all of these stories a letter to the reader about each person's rank, history in the war, and dates and times.

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

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Re: Question 1

by Skyla Brocksmith - Friday, May 17, 2013, 12:29 AM

I also remembered Appy having said he doesn't use what he finds inaccurate and decided I wouldn't have used Thompson's letter. I found it hard to view his point as truthful because he didn't support his claims with reliable sources. Contrary to what he clearly believes, Google searching does not suffice.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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Question 1

by Celese Mauser - Wednesday, May 15, 2013, 10:50 PM

I think it's important to recognize that many people were affected by the war in different ways, whether or not they chose to be actively involved in it. So that allowed for a very wide variation in opinions of the actual events. If I were Christian Appy and writing *Patriots*, I would narrow down the accounts to include a variance of perspectives, but I would only include the stories of those who were physically at the event they are describing. This would make the story more factual, as anyone can misinterpret a story or information and relay it incorrectly. For that reason, I would not include Bob Thompson's perspective. He does not mention his affiliation to the war, and what role he played in it. His story sounds more like a 3rd person perspective, relying on articles and Google searches for his information. I would definitely include Shaw's story which mentions his struggles with reintegration into society after returning from the war. I would also include Gordon's letter which makes a good point when he discusses how the media wouldn't write an article about a mere escalation between the troops and the protesters. There was so much news to cover at the time, it would have had to include an actual confrontation. I would also include Postelle's letter which said that he experienced the spitting twice. This led him to fly in civilian clothes and pay taxes instead. I think that these stories are the strongest of those I read.

I would include a note to the reader discussing the debate on soldiers being spat on. Then I would include each person's background in the war. Without that context sometimes, I think it would make the situation harder to understand. It would also help explain the differences in the versions of each story.

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

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Re: Question 1

by Jacob Hutchins - Sunday, May 19, 2013, 11:33 PM

"I would include a note to the reader discussing the debate on soldiers being spat on. Then I would include each person's background in the war. Without that context sometimes, I think it would make the situation harder to understand. It would also help explain the differences in the versions of each story. "

This is an excellent point. Context is crucial, and I really appreciate that Appy explained some of the background for the storytellers in his book. Any kind of debate needs context if it is going to be an *informed* debate.

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Question 2

by Melissa Booth - Wednesday, May 15, 2013, 10:50 PM

When hearing a story from someone who has had a personal experience in any subject, you must be aware that they will have their own opinion already. Their experiences in that subject can affect how they will react to that certain topic, and anything they say may lean towards what they think is right. For example, if a soldier had a horrible experience when returning from war, they may have no respect for whoever treated them that way. Now, whenever you ask them how they feel, they may respond in a certain way based on how they were previously treated. There is some good that can come out when multiple people respond to one topic. When multiple people respond to one topic, you can begin to put together some similar facts that were mentioned, and conclude that that incident may have happened. You also get different viewpoints and opinions that could be interesting to hear about.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

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Re: Question 2

by David Hartness - Saturday, May 18, 2013, 11:22 PM

Yes, Personal bias does play a big role in someones perspective on events. I think it's acceptable to use someone's perspective if you get opposing ones from other viewers. That way the reader can jump to their own conclusion based on the information presented to them.

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Re: Question 2

by Brendan MacDonald - Sunday, May 19, 2013, 5:41 PM

Absolutely, personal opinions can play a large role in how a person responds to a certain thing however I think when you have one particular event that more than person recalls the same details; for example going back to the **Vietnam: A Television History**'s episode *America Takes Charge* when they are explaining what happened when they raided the village, most of them involved recall similar occurrences which makes it easier to believe what they are saying is true.

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Question 2

by Celese Mauser - Wednesday, May 15, 2013, 11:09 PM

These letters to the editor reinforce the importance of checking your sources of information. Anyone can have an opinion, but it's important to get the facts straight from the source. Because this war was full of controversy, you must consult both sides and gather a variance of perspectives within each side. The accounts from the POW's captured by the Vietcong and their shocking experiences remind us that everyone has their story and some soldiers were more damaged than others. Among the horrible stories of capture and torture, was also a more surprising one of a North Vietnamese soldier who helped a captured American soldier by re-setting his broken leg. This points out a variance in behavior which creates different experiences for the soldiers. I think it's really important to be understanding to different perspectives as everyone has a reason for thinking the way they do. What makes one soldier right- and the other one wrong? To them, that's what happened. It's up to you to decipher the information and make up your own mind.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

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Re: Question 2

by Cameron Cole - Saturday, May 18, 2013, 6:05 PM

When talking about such controversial topics, especially war related, many people have different perspectives on the fine print when looking back on the certain actions that took place. It is very important to understand that many people have different morals and different personal backgrounds that affect their judgments towards their activity in the Vietnam War. This leads me to my main point that some people are affected by the war in different many different ways. For example, certain people care about some aspects strongly and others do not really care. With this reality of life come the different variations of perspectives or ideas on the War which leads to uproar in finding actual/unbiased information. In my opinion, this is what has caused such a widespread variation in opinions in regards to the post Vietnam debate between the American people.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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Question 2

by Elizabeth Gambee - Sunday, May 19, 2013, 11:31 AM

I believe that this compilation of stories reflect how difficult it can be to learn the whole truth of even the smallest historical occurrences of the Vietnam War era. In attempting to seek out the truth, it seems guaranteed that one will come across a variety of conflicting information stemming from various peoples' personal inputs. Indeed, it almost seems inevitable that any given individual's personal account of a specific event is going to be tainted by some sort of personal bias (be it intentionally or not). For this reason, I think that it is important for students to be mindful of potential bias and should attempt to gather information from a wide variety of resources and people to get a wider range of data. In short, what I'm trying to say is that studying the events of this war from the perspective of our own soldiers requires the ability to recognize both intentional and unintentional biases and prejudices that stem from any particular soldier's experiences. The experiences that a soldier endures during his course of work are undoubtedly likely to be extremely dramatic and traumatizing. Such potent experiences assist in catalyzing biases towards personal opinions and accounts of various events.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

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Re: Question 2

by Jon-wesley McLeod - Sunday, May 19, 2013, 3:02 PM

Great summary. The polarization of this country regarding the feelings of this war and the direction it was going led to propaganda on both sides trying to sway popular opinion. It seems like it was very difficult to get the truth about what was going on here and in Vietnam. There is still no real accurate number of how many Vietnamese died during the conflict. The sheer amount of people that participated or were affected by the war from both countries is staggering and contradictions of events are unavoidable.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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Re: Question 2

by Melissa Booth - Sunday, May 19, 2013, 9:45 PM

It is hard to fully understand the whole truth when you are learning from someone else's experiences. Anytime that you are asking someone about their personal experience, it is going to be clouded by sometime of bias. Like you mentioned, intentional or not, there is always going to be a chance of some potential bias. Although, if you take a bunch of different points of view, you can then begin to piece together the similarities, and have a better understanding of

the events that took place. You also have to keep in mind that the media is always going to try and persuade you to believe a certain way. So, even though you may think one way, you may start to think another because of the media trying to persuade you. There are just a number of things that one should keep in mind when learning from personal experiences. I'm not saying that personal experiences are a bad thing though. They are actually very helpful and interesting to learn from.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

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Question #2

by Brendan MacDonald - Sunday, May 19, 2013, 5:15 PM

I agree somewhat with what other students have been saying regarding the accuracy of what veterans recall about the war. Undoubtedly there are certain events that happen to a soldier that may make recollection blurry for them such as torture or Post-Traumatic Stress; however I believe when it comes to obtaining the most truthful information about what transpired during the war, a veteran is who I am going to trust sooner than anyone or anything else because they are the ones who have gone through the actual experience. Obviously they are going to be able to give you the best details based on what they personally experienced anyway. Most of the veterans who have been interviewed have had very similar stories and recalled the same details as well. For example in the **American POW's video clip**, most of the prisoners had very similar stories about being in their cells and communicating with each other via wall "tapping", and waking up in the night listening to other prisoners being interrogated and tortured. Many of their stories paralleling others make it easier to believe that what they are saying is true.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

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Re: Question #2

by Jacob Hutchins - Sunday, May 19, 2013, 11:16 PM

" Many of their stories paralleling others make it easier to believe that what they are saying is true."

This is true. Personal accounts are not reliable for making overarching statements, but taking many corroborating statements together can be used as fairly effective evidence. This is why I like all of the different stories within *Patriots*. Putting it all together, even the stories I find questionable or less reliable, creates an entire picture, rather than just what I've been exposed to and have already reached conclusions on.

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Question 2

by Jacob Hutchins - Sunday, May 19, 2013, 10:15 PM

The first thing I take away from the compilation of Register Guard letters is that people are still bitterly divided about this war despite the passage of time. The Vietnam war seems to really have left a raw spot in our country. People's interpretations of the war, it's events and causes seem. to me, much more sensitive than the discussion of other wars. I would even hazard to say that our country has never really been able to cope with the dissapointment and anger that came with it. I appreciate hearing individual accounts from any war, and this one in particular, so I find a lot of value in reading these letters. I think hearing personal accounts, while not the same as reading academic sources, help us to avoid making sweeping generalizations about something that had so many facets. That's not to say that everything lies in the middle; I think there are certain hard conclusions and raw facts that can be taken from any given situation. The major issues concerning me, as a student trying to learn history, is having some confidence that what I am learning has gone through an academic process and posesses some semblence of empirical data to support it. Personal stories are valuable, but they must be transposes within a framework of academic study and data. Comparing these things allow us to generate insights that neither alone provide. Studying this war from decades later, it is easy to approach with preconcieved notions. We must strive actively to avoid this and weigh our conclusions against those of other people to come up withthe best answers for questions that, apparently, still haunt our country even to this day.

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Re: Question 2

by Cameron Cole - Sunday, May 19, 2013, 10:54 PM

The letters to the editor definitely reinforces the significance of examining each sources information carefully. Everyone who has studied or has been apart of the Vietnam War has a opinion that will contradict facts and other opinions. Which is why it is so vital to gather up all of the facts straight from the most reliable source. Because this is one of the most controversial wars in the history of the world, everybody must be very careful and check both sides and gather each perspective from all the various sides.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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