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Escobar

Assignment One

Phan Xuan Sinh said "It was a war with countless heartbreaking experiences" (p. 25) and continues on during his interview with Appy to discuss a few of the experiences that not only broke his heart, but brought tears to my eyes as I read this account of life as a young Vietnamese soldier for the Army of the Republic of Vietnam. As Sinh described firing upon a group of unarmed fishermen, mistaking them for what was a perceived ambush, my chest tightened as I felt the pain within the story. Sinh's account, being so honest and open and not bragging or lighthearted gave credibility to his experiences because it did not appear he was proud of what he had done but instead was the account of a man who regretted the position he had been placed in.

Credibility has to be given to those who experienced the war, although throughout the stories that have been read there tends to be some that are more opinionated than factual and for that reason, Sinh's experiences seem more factual and less subjective because he gives specific examples of what he saw. The images he portrays are vivid and seem to be the type of experiences one would not forget, no matter how much time had passed. When he quoted the old villager says "All my ancestors are buried here and this is our land. We're not going to leave" (p. 26) it is believable because that is a powerful statement and something that would be etched into the memory of a person. Sinh leaves out mere opinion for the most part in his interview and leans toward his experiences and telling the story of his experiences, not his opinion on the war. He stated "We were forced to bear arms and saw no compelling reason to fight" which also lends credibility to his experiences because he wasn't coming from an agenda, but merely a young man drafted into a war he didn't want to be a part of.

careful - "no compelling reason" can also constitute a person with an agenda.

Romantic is not a word one would expect to be linked to the Vietnam War. Yet this is a word that comes up not once, but twice in the Appy's interview with Richard Olson. Olson's interview was disappointing to read because it lacked any kind of compassion for the war and its victims and instead it was almost dreamy in his account. His idolization of the other American pilots he flew with seemed to almost glorify his experience and he spoke with a light-hearted feeling one does not usually connect with war. His interview had a feeling of mockery and disgust when he recalled his interactions with the South Vietnamese. This was all very disappointing to think that someone who was in the war, on the front lines and saw the death he seemed to experience (flying in to retrieve dead bodies), would be so flippant about something so dreadful. It was interesting to note that while his interview seemed very romanticized, the author notes that Olson was a painter and his paintings reflected a much different side than his interview portrayed, so perhaps Olson was unable to articulate his true experience in Vietnam, but through his

very wise to bring this point to light

paintings that is where he could truly express the horrors he saw.

The self-sacrifice of Thich Quang Duc, while tragic and horrifying, shows hope in the goodness of people. That may sound odd, but through Malcolm Browne's account, a lesson is taught about how people will rise up and protest something they feel is fundamentally wrong. Along with this lesson, Browne also recounts his relationship with the Buddhist monks and a friendship and respect that developed during such a horrific time in American history. So much of a friendship formed that Browne and his wife continue to return to Vietnam, as recently as 1994 when they visited their friends. Although there is hope in his story, it is still tinged with sadness knowing that in the footnotes, the author mentions that the monks are still being oppressed just as they were during the rule of Diem.

Awk

too brief

unclear how this is positive...

friendships?

¶'s 1 & 2

were very good

nice work

excellent & thoughtful analysis.

This last ¶ wavers between positive & negative

With a little more time, this ¶ could have been stronger.