

84/100

Zoë Valentine

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Assignment 1

The story that had the greatest impact on me from part one of Appy's book Patriots, was the account of George Watkins. He really gave the reader an intimate account of how bad things were for the United States infantrymen during the Vietnam War. It was shocking that even though Watkins was trained as a combat engineer, they merely threw him on the front lines as soon as he got there. Another striking thing about Watkins was his compassion, or at least respect he had for the Vietnamese people. "They's some of the most determined people I've ever run into. I don't hate them. They did what they had to do. It's the politicians that put everybody in that place." (Appy 23) Even after Watkins had stepped on the land mine which cost him both his legs and eyesight, he still didn't bear a great prejudice towards the Vietnamese people as a whole. This really breaks the stereotype some people have of all American GIs hating and showing cruelty towards the Vietnamese. Even though there were cases like that, stories like Watkins' are very important because it breaks that stereotype.

As for the credibility of the speakers in the stories read so far, they all probably suffer from a certain amount of subjectivity – everybody perceives experiences differently, whether because of ideas, political beliefs, moral code, station in life, et cetera. However, such subjectivity doesn't necessarily negate the truth of the stories or what they say of their experiences. Most of what these people say they experienced is true, but it is definitely warped in some stories, especially because of political belief systems. Directions.

This leads me to one of the stories in which I found disappointment. In Malcolm Browne's account in Part Two, I was particularly disappointed by what he said about John Wayne. While I have always been a fan of John Wayne, I am not inclined to think that he was a saint. It is entirely likely he had his drunk moments, but it was really disappointing to think that he got in a shouting match with this person Browne. It seems possible that a political slant of Browne's could have made him decide to embellish his interactions with Wayne. However, thinking from Browne's point of view, it's easy to see how frustrating his own position might be; being someone who can see and understand all the problems with the Vietnam war, and nobody wants to listen to what you have to say, simply because you ally yourself with certain political parties. The ineptness of the U.S. officials concerning Vietnam was really shocking. It seems like none of them even bothered to get to know anything about Vietnam or its people. It was this that was disappointing in Chester Cooper's account, where he said that the people on Kennedy's team "... couldn't [even] find Vietnam on an outline map of Asia." (Appy 85) It's rather bothersome to think that we were fighting a war in a country about which we knew nothing.

I did take away some positive lessons from these stories, however. A lot of the stories speak almost like it's impossible for our Western culture and that of Asia's to find connections with each other and get along. But, at the end of Richard Olsen's story, it was really touching to see that he was saved by a Vietnamese man from a riptide. "I thought, how absurd. I survived the war and here I am getting drowned as a tourist! ... All of a sudden a ninety-pound man came up to my face like a dart. We were face to face. The first thing I thought was Viet Cong! Here he was, rescuing me, eyeball to eyeball. We looked into each other's soul and he was

brilliant.” (Appy 64) A lot of the U.S. officials seemed to treat the Vietnamese almost like aliens – our cultures are so foreign from one another’s. But in reality, we are all human. Another surprising story was the account of Nikita Krushchev’s son Sergei, particularly what he said about how the Russian people perceived the Cold War. “The Russian people always wanted improved relations with the United States. They never believed that the American government was against them.” (Appy 88) Being someone who did not grow up in the right generation, I do not understand how frightening the idea of Communism was for people in this time. To someone like myself, it seems almost ridiculous the amount of fear-mongering the U.S. had about Communism. As Krushchev said, “I think ordinary Americans were far more affected by Cold War propaganda, much more hostile to Russians, and much more fearful.” (Appy 88) It tends to make one wonder how things would’ve gone if the governments of all countries had been more open to discussion, and less swayed by paranoid thinking. Overcoming prejudices has a lot to do with it, and maybe a lot of the failings in Vietnam were because we couldn’t overcome those prejudices.

Appy, Christian G. *Patriots: The Vietnam War Remembered from All Sides*. London: Penguin, 2003. Print.

Part 1
the credibility analysis was supposed to be about Watkins. Instead, you presented a generalized perspective which lacked details.

Part 2
You wrote on multiple stories, instead of just one. And you strayed from the positive Olsen story back to a negative Krushchev story. Organization problem here.

Following the assignment directions more carefully was important in this assignment.

I agree... so don't choose to write from a lack of historical understanding

You choose a less than truthful Russian communist to sum up the entire Cold War as paranoid US thinking? Not accurate.

AND is this supposed to be positive.