

Name: _____ Period: _____

Vietnam War Essay Prompt

Did the attitudes and policies of the United States government regarding the war in Vietnam (1965-1975) reflect the attitudes of the American people during the time of the war? Why or why not? Include present-day opinions and facts about the war in assessing this question as well as the documents.

Use the outline at the end of this packet to help you map out your answer. Refer to the AFHS writing rubric to ensure you cover the essay in its entirety.

DOCUMENT A



SOURCE: Franklin D. Roosevelt, The Four Freedoms, January, 1941

DOCUMENT B

"Prior to the defeat in Vietnam, most Americans had been content to think of themselves as honorable people, unerringly drawn to the side of what was true and noble and right, not the kind of people to push women and children away from the last helicopter out of town. If the war proved them wrong in this judgment, it was because the war was never honestly declared and because, at the end of it, nobody, certainly none of its official sponsors, could say why 58,000 American soldiers were dead and another 300,000 wounded. What could be said was that America had lost not only a war but also the belief in its virtue."

SOURCE: Lewis H. Lapham, Harper's Magazine, May, 1989.

DOCUMENT C



SOURCE: Political Cartoon, 1971.

DOCUMENT D

"I want to say that these advocates of retreat, defeat, surrender, and national dishonor have not been doing the country any good when they went before a television network suggesting that this Nation was not committed to fighting aggression in this area. The Senate voted for the resolution in 1965, and Senators voted that this country would help that country resist aggression, and specifically authorized the President to take whatever steps he felt necessary to resist further aggression. We are committed. We have more than 200,000 men there. We have at stake our national honor. We are committed to resisting Communist aggression. That is what this is all about."

SOURCE: Russell Long, Congressional Record, February 16, 1966.

DOCUMENT E

"Our waging the war, not our losing of it, disgraced us in men's eyes. . . . Our national effort was squalid in concept and execution. We tried to bend an ancient and civilized people to our will, and we failed, but not before we used our overwhelming power and technology to the full. We cratered vast stretches of Vietnam with our bombs. We destroyed villages without number and herded their inhabitants into stockades. We poisoned the wells, the forests and the farms with Agent Orange. We bulldozed millions of acres of forest and jungle. All in all we killed over two million of them, mostly civilians. We napalmed women and children. Many of our soldiers disintegrated and did terrible things which haunt them today."

SOURCE: Charles Owen Rice, The Catholic Bulletin, January 13, 1982.

DOCUMENT F

"In this, as in most of the reproaches with which our children shower us, there is of course an element of justification. There is a point somewhere along the way in most of our adult lives, when enthusiasms flag, when idealism becomes tempered, when responsibility to others, and even affection for others, compels greater attention to the mundane demands of private life. There is a point when we are even impelled to place the needs of children ahead of the dictates of deviant idealism, and to devote ourselves, pusillanimously, if you will, to the support and rearing of these same children, precisely in order that at some future date they may have the privilege of turning upon us and despising us for the materialistic faintheartedness that made their maturity possible. This, no doubt, is the nature of the compromise that millions of us make with the imperfections of government and society in our time. Many of us could wish that it might have been otherwise, that the idealistic pursuit of public causes might have remained our elusive dedication down into later life. . . ."

SOURCE: George F. Kennan, speech at Swarthmore College on Dec. 11th, 1967

DOCUMENT G

Feelings about U. S. Involvement in Vietnam by Veteran Status				
	Supported	Confused	Opposed	N
Vietnam Veteran:	46	10	45	(227)
Vietnam Era Veteran:	32	19	49	(260)
Non-Veteran:	19	14	67	(472)

SOURCE: Ellen Frey-Wouters & Robert S. Laufer, Legacy of a War. Reprinted with permission of M.E. Sharpe, Inc., Armonk, New York, 10504.

DOCUMENT H

"It is time we recognized that ours was, in truth, a noble cause. A small country newly free from colonial rule sought our help in establishing self-rule and the means of self-defense against a totalitarian neighbor bent on conquest. We dishonor the memory of 50,000 young Americans who died in that cause when we give way to feelings of guilt as if we were doing something shameful, and we have been shabby in our treatment of those who returned. They fought as well and as bravely as any Americans have ever fought in any war. They deserve our gratitude, our respect and our continuing concern."

SOURCE: Ronald Regan in a 1980 speech.

DOCUMENT I

"No responsible world leader suggests that we should withdraw our support from Vietnam. To do so would unhinge a vast and vital area, thereby committing to Communist domination its resources and its people. This we cannot do. Therefore, we need the dedication and the courage to face some hard and unpleasant facts. We are at war in Vietnam and we must have the will to win that war. . . . This nation must back up its resolve with whatever manpower, equipment, and weaponry it may take, first to stem the Communist advance in Laos and Vietnam, and then to help these countries, along with their neighbors in Thailand, to create conditions of stability and freedom in Southeast Asia. The security of all Asia hinges on this crucial battle."

SOURCE: Barry Goldwater, Where I Stand, 1964.

DOCUMENT J

"The assertion that the Vietnam War was an immoral war was heard more and more often as the years dragged on. This said less about the war than about the construction that critics were putting on the idea of morality. Like all wars, Vietnam was brutal, ugly, dangerous, painful, and sometimes inhumane. This was driven home to those who stayed home perhaps more forcefully than ever before because the war lasted so long and because they saw so much of it on television in living, and dying, color. Many who were seeing war for the first time were so shocked at what they saw that they said this war was immoral when they really meant that all war was terrible. They were right in saying that peace was better than war. But they were wrong in failing to ask themselves whether what was happening in Vietnam was substantively different from what had happened in other wars. Their horror at the fact of war prevented them from considering whether the facts of the war in Vietnam added up to a cause that was worth fighting for. Instead, many of these naive:, well-meaning, instinctual opponents of the war raised their voices in protest."

SOURCE: Richard Nixon, No More Vietnams, 1985.

DOCUMENT K

"The debate over Vietnam has changed surprisingly little from the early '70s. Great division still exists over whether we should have been involved in that war. A majority of Americans remains sharply critical of the way the war was conducted. The Washington Post and ABC News asked a national sample of adults whether, in hindsight, the United States should have avoided sending troops to Vietnam, or should have sent troops but "gone all out to win the war." About half-54 percent-said the United States should not have sent troops. Another 36 percent said the United States was right to have entered the war and should have 'gone all out to win'. The rest were undecided."

SOURCE: The Washinton Post National Weekly Edition, April 29 – May 6, 1990.

DOCUMENT L

"The President, in his April 16, 1953, address, and I myself in an address of Sept. 2, 1953, made clear that the United States would take a grave view of any future overt military Chinese Communist aggression in relation to the Pacific or Southeast Asia area. Such an aggression would threaten island and peninsular positions which secure the United States and its allies. If such overt military aggression occurred, that would be a deliberate threat to the United States itself. The United States would, of course, invoke the processes of the United Nations and consult with its allies. But we could not escape ultimate responsibility for decisions closely touching our own security and self-defense."

SOURCE: John Foster Dulles, speech, June 11, 1954.

DOCUMENT M

"The reason for the loss of public support for the Vietnam War was that the United States never had a very convincing case for intervention in the first place; and whatever moral and strategic reasons it did have for intervention were far outweighed by the costs of the war. So it is a gross over-simplification to say that American public opinion turned against the Vietnam War simply because they could watch it, unlike earlier wars, on television. Public opinion turned against the war because the costs of the war were in plain sight while the benefits to be gained by continuing the war were quite elusive."

SOURCE: Ernest Evans, *Wars Without Splendor*, 1987.

DOCUMENT N

"Nor has the Rolling Thunder program of bombing the North either significantly affected infiltration or cracked the morale of Hanoi. There is agreement in the intelligence community on these facts. . . . In essence, we find ourselves . . . no better, and if anything, worse off. This important war must be fought and won by the Vietnamese themselves. We have known this from the beginning. But the discouraging truth is that, as was the case in 1961 and 1963 and 1965, we have not found the formula, the catalyst, for training and inspiring them into effective action."

SOURCE: Defense Secretary Robert McNamara, *Report to President Lyndon Johnson*, 1966.

DOCUMENT O

"Dear Mom, . . .

Yesterday I witnessed something that would make any American realize why we are in this war. At least it did me. I was on daylight patrol. We were on a hill overlooking a bridge that was out of our sector. I saw a platoon of Vietcong stopping traffic from going over the bridge. They were beating women and children over the head with rifles, clubs, and fists. They even shot one woman and her child. They were taking rice, coconuts, fish, and other assorted foods from these people. The ones that didn't give they either beat or shot. . . . Those slobs have to be stopped, even if it takes every last believer in a democracy and a free way of life to do it. I know after seeing their brave tactics I'm going to try my best. So please don't knock [President] Johnson's policy in Vietnam. There is a good reason for it. I'm not too sure what it is myself, but I'm beginning to realize, especially after yesterday. . . .

How are the people taking to the war in Portland? I've read too much . . . about the way some of those cowardly students are acting on campuses. They sure don't show me much as far as being American citizens.

. . . . A few weeks ago, I had the chance to talk with some Marines . What they had to say would have had an impact on the people back home. . . . From what they said, the Vietcong aren't the only ruthless ones. We have to be, too. Have to. You'd be surprised to know that a guy you went to school with is right now shooting a nine-year-old girl and her mother. He did it because if they got the chance they would kill him. Or throwing a Vietcong out of a helicopter because he wouldn't talk.

One guy (who had broke down and cried) said that his one desire is to get enough leave to go home and kick three of those demonstrators in a well-suited place and bring him back. I tell you, it's horrible to read a paper and see our own people aren't backing you up."

SOURCE: Excerpts from several letters of Glenn Munson, ed., Letters from Vietnam (New York: Parallax Publishing Co., 1966), pp. 104, 118.

DOCUMENT P



Bill Mauldin. *The Sun-Times* (Chicago), 1966.
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ESSAY PROMPT

“Did the attitudes and policies of the United States government regarding the war in Vietnam (1965-1975) reflect the attitudes of the American people during the time of the war? Why or why not? Include present-day opinions and facts about the war in assessing this question as well as the documents.”

- Claim (one sentence):
 - Counter-claim:

- Reason 1: Name a reason/fact to support the claim (from the documents)
 - Write an explanation of how this reason supports your claim:

- Reason 2: Name a reason/fact to support the claim (from the documents)
 - Write an explanation of how this reason supports your claim:

- Reason 3: Name a reason/fact to support the claim (from the documents)
 - Write an explanation of how this reason supports your claim:

- Conclusion:

Author's Name/Number _____

AFHS Writing Rubric

Reader's Name/Number _____

	Incomplete 0 points	Emerging 2 points	Moderate 3 points	Effective 4 points	Excellent 5 points
1 Main Claim/Thesis: A statement that asserts the writer's position on the given prompt, question, or topic	<p>___ The author offers no identifiable thesis.</p>	<p>___ In a single sentence at the end of the introduction, the author asserts their position on the prompt, question, or topic.</p>	<p>___ The thesis is clearly written . . . ___ and asserts an opinion (analysis, argument) OR presents the central idea (info.) that requires further support (doesn't simply restate the prompt).</p>	<p>___ The thesis/central idea addresses the fullness of the topic, question, or prompt (e.g., responds to all parts of multi-part question).</p>	<p>___ The author further limits, clarifies, and/or focuses their thesis (e.g., announces subclaims by introducing topics, offers a road map, etc.).</p>
2 Organization: Structure that includes an introduction, body paragraphs, transitions, and conclusion	<p>___ The organization of the paper is unintentional or chaotic.</p>	<p>___ The author supports most of the subclaims with paragraphs that reinforce the thesis.</p>	<p>___ Most paragraphs include a topic sentence that expresses a central idea with an appropriate level of generality.</p>	<p>___ The author uses transitions effectively to move from sentence to sentence and . . . ___ paragraph to paragraph.</p>	<p>___ The author utilizes an introductory paragraph effectively to introduce the thesis and . . . ___ a concluding paragraph to reinforce the thesis.</p>
3 Evidence: Specific facts, quotations, paraphrasing, data, etc., used to support the author's claim	<p>___ The author speaks generally and uses no specific evidence.</p>	<p>___ Evidence is mostly factual and reasonably accurate.</p>	<p>___ Evidence is relevant and . . . ___ properly cited (if necessary).</p>	<p>___ Evidence is specific and . . . ___ supports all of the author's claims.</p>	<p>___ Evidence effectively and convincingly supports the author's position (accurate and sufficient).</p>
4 Explanation/Analysis: Writing that explains how the evidence relates to and supports the claim	<p>___ The author does not explain or analyze the evidence.</p>	<p>___ The author offers explanation for most pieces or groups of evidence.</p>	<p>___ Explanation is clear and coherent.</p>	<p>___ Explanation is logically valid or reasonable.</p>	<p>___ Explanation thoroughly and convincingly relates the evidence to the claims (well informed and complete).</p>
5 Academic Voice & Style: Language that is sophisticated, structured, assertive; uses elevated diction and maintains clarity	<p>___ The writing is riddled with spelling, structural, and grammatical errors.</p>	<p>___ Most sentences are complete and . . . ___ introduce ideas with clarity.</p>	<p>___ The author uses a variety of sentence structures and . . . ___ avoids casual and informal language that is inappropriate for the audience.</p>	<p>___ The author uses diction appropriate for the subject matter and discipline and . . . ___ has very few grammatical and/or spelling errors.</p>	<p>___ Presentation is sophisticated and assertive, . . . ___ has mature sentence structure, and . . . ___ follows the formal style given by the teacher.</p>
6 Extension: Ideas, evidence, or other relevant material that contextualizes, relates, or synthesizes ideas, themes, etc.	<p>Extension options: ___ The author does not offer extension material.</p>	<p>Author acknowledges contradictory evidence or differing perspectives. ___ Extension material relates to the topic in an appropriate manner.</p>	<p>Author connects the claims to other contexts (themes, time periods, movements, etc.).</p>	<p>Author develops an additional subclaim beyond the demand of the prompt.</p>	<p>Author offers broader insight that relates to life, humanity, philosophy, etc.</p>

GradeCam Scoring

Item #	1	2	3	4	5	6	Total Score
Score	Thesis: ____/5	Organization: ____/5	Evidence: ____/5	Explanation: ____/5	Voice & Style: ____/5	Extension: ____/5	TOTAL: ____/30

Score	Weaknesses	Writing Element	Strengths
____/5		Main Claim/Thesis: A statement that asserts the writer's position on the given prompt, question, or topic	
____/5		Organization: Structure that includes an introduction, body paragraphs, transitions, and conclusion	
____/5		Evidence: Specific facts, quotations, paraphrasing, data, etc., used to support the author's claim	
____/5		Explanation/Analysis: Writing that explains how the evidence relates to and supports the claim	
____/5		Academic Voice & Style: Language that is sophisticated, structured, assertive; uses elevated diction and maintains clarity	
____/5		Extension: Ideas, evidence, or other relevant material that contextualizes, relates, or synthesizes ideas, themes, etc.	
____/5		Other:	

Total: ____/30