DISCUSSION GUIDE FOR FACILITATORS

INTRODUCTION

Leading a group discussion is a form of mindfulness. Good leaders are mindful of the atmosphere they create to facilitate a productive discussion, as well as the kinds of questions they ask to elicit independent thought and curiosity from participants.

In this guide, we use *The Vietnam War*, a documentary series by Ken Burns and Lynn Novick, as the basis for a group discussion. The approach we take is a variation on the Socratic seminar as applied to nonfiction media.

We've included an accompanying online video to this guide that demonstrates the discussion process with middle and high school teachers. The video includes additional information to help prepare group participants and facilitators for discussion, as well as strategies to assess students in a classroom setting. This free professional development video can be viewed by visiting [kenburnsclassroom.org](http://kenburnsclassroom.org).

As Ken Burns notes in the introduction to the video, many educators have shared with us that the Vietnam War is especially challenging to discuss in a classroom setting, in part because of the emotionally challenging questions involved. As Burns says, “We think it is crucial for teachers to pose those very difficult and thought-provoking questions, and we believe this webinar helps further that effort.”
SETTING A PURPOSE

There are various ways to organize a discussion. Do you want people to make personal connections to *The Vietnam War*? Or articulate whether they agree or disagree with what’s in the film? Or speculate on different outcomes of the war? A mindful discussion leader can guide the group in different directions, but an entirely rudderless discussion can confuse and frustrate participants.

Focus on establishing an understanding of the film as the foundation to build a discussion. Anchoring discussion in a common text and mindfully choosing a focus question to begin discussion sets a clear purpose and direction. Doing this will not prohibit participants from sharing personal connections, disagreeing with *The Vietnam War*, or postulating on how history could have flowed differently, nor should it. But focusing your discussion on interpreting the film will help mitigate the discussion from being dominated by large personalities and will, instead, promote critical thinking.

Focusing on the meaning of *The Vietnam War* is democratizing. It puts everyone on safe, equal footing and encourages all to share their ideas, do their own thinking, and collaborate on an exploration of meaning that leads to deep and insightful discussion. It also sets a basic requirement for discussion participants to view the same selected portion at the same time to establish common ground. *The Vietnam War* is 18 hours long. No discussion can cover the entirety of the film, much less the war. Pre-selecting clips, setting a purpose, and establishing goals are key steps toward success.

DISCUSSION TIPS

Choosing the Clip

It is important that you select the clip you plan to discuss in advance and view it at least two times before you lead a discussion. The more familiar you are with the clip, the better discussion you will lead. You can choose suggested clips and questions in the *Discussion Questions: The Vietnam War* section [page 8]. Or select your own clips and develop questions. For tips on this, visit *Developing Your Own Focus Questions* [page 6].

As a rough guide, choose a scene that represents no more than 25% of your overall time together. If you have 30 minutes total, use a 6-8-minute clip. For an hour, use 15 minutes. For 90 minutes, use 20-25 minutes. Ideally, show your group the clip two times. Showing the clip in class will help to ensure common ground. Once participants view it, they can jot down their own questions about it.

Arranging the Room

An ideal discussion group size is roughly 8-30 participants. Too few can mean a scarcity of divergent ideas; too many does not allow everyone adequate time or space to share their thoughts.

- Set up the requisite media technology, i.e., something that can project and display the selected scene: a projector/laptop and a screen or DVD/TV monitor.
- Ideally, arrange technical assistance to screen the selected scene for your group, freeing you up to focus on leading the group.
- Arrange the room in a circle, or square, or some shape where participants can look each other in the eye. Having participants arranged so that they can see each other is crucial. It ensures a discussion where exchanging ideas flows more easily than a situation where people have to turn around to see each other. It also facilitates a dialogue between you and your group and fosters an environment where ideas are freely exchanged directly between participants.
- Ensure participants have paper and pens/pencils or a laptop so that they will be able to take their own notes and respond to your focus question in writing.
Creating a Seating Chart
As participants introduce themselves, create a seating chart. Put people's names on the chart according to where they sit, as opposed to making a list. During discussion, think of the seating chart as an aid that helps you manage discussion in three key ways:

- It helps ensure that you encourage all to share and participate. Make check marks next to people's names to track the first time they speak. As your discussion builds, the chart allows you to call on individuals you haven't heard from by name and invite them to participate. You can always let people take a “pass” and let them know that you are not there to put them on the spot, but that you want to hear from everyone at some point. If you continue to make check marks each time someone speaks, the seating chart can also help to prevent people from dominating the conversation.

- Use the seating chart to help you manage ideas during discussion. Now and then, jot down a key word or phrase next to the name of the participant who is speaking to help you remember what is said. Use their words as precisely as possible. For example, “Musgrave was a true patriot” or “music was manipulative.” This way, you can refer back to ideas. If someone else says, “I thought Musgrave should have kept his mouth shut,” you can refer back to the first person who said he was a patriot and ask if they agree or disagree. Ask someone else to respond to the idea of the music as “manipulative.” Use the seating chart to help you weave ideas together, ensure people are listening and responding directly to one another, and deepen the discussion overall.

- If discussion is moving too fast for you to make check marks, it is moving too fast for your participants to digest the conversation. Take time and jot down a few notes to help create time and room for everyone to speak and everyone to listen. Your chart also gives you notes to use later if you are assessing student performance [see Discussion Assessment Rubric, page 7].

Discussion Guidelines
At the beginning of your discussion, state your purpose and discussion plan. Use the following example as a template to develop your own:

I am aiming to have a discussion to help us all better understand the scene we watched. To begin, I am going to ask an open-ended question that has more than one plausible answer based on the scene. This is a question for which I can't figure out the best answer myself. During discussion, my role will be asking questions only. I won't answer questions, make statements, or judge your answers. In fact, I need your help to better understand this scene myself. Therefore, during discussion, I want my follow-up questions to help you:

- Articulate and develop your ideas
- Support your assertions with evidence from the film
- Consider different ways to understand the scene by listening to your fellow participants
- Listen carefully to other participants and respond to them directly

Opening Reflection
After an initial viewing of the clip, pose your opening “focus” question. Then play the clip again, giving participants ample time to reflect and write their initial responses. Encourage them to note anything that comes to mind from the clip that supports their individual response, and to be ready to offer those moments as evidence during discussion.

Asking Follow-up Questions
During discussion, do your best to only ask questions and avoid making statements. The discussion belongs to your group, not to you. Think of your role as “chief listener.” Remember that your group is there to learn
from the film and each other. Whether you agree or disagree with what you hear, you can always ask questions about how they arrived at their thoughts.

During discussion, leaders use follow-up questions in direct response to participants’ ideas and comments. Follow-up questions help participants:

- Generate, clarify, and develop ideas
- Provide and explain evidence for ideas
- Listen and respond to the ideas of others

Below are some examples of how follow-up questions work toward these ends.

**Ideas:**
To generate new ideas, leaders often have to solicit them by asking questions:

- Can you read us what you wrote for your answer?
- Can anyone add to that idea?
- Does anyone have a different answer?

Participants do not always say exactly what they mean. Or they may have challenges articulating their idea. Or they may use unfamiliar terms. As leader, if you do not understand a comment or notice puzzled looks from others, help participants elaborate or clarify what they are saying. Ask:

- What do you mean by that word?
- Can you tell us more about that idea?
- How does that idea connect to the opening question?

**Evidence:**
As participants work to interpret the film, encourage them to back up their ideas by relying on the film for support. As leader, ask for participants to expand on their comments and provide evidence (and not just when you think an idea is unsupported). Use follow-up questions to encourage participants to find examples from the film, and to connect their personal experiences or prior knowledge to the film.

During discussion, consistently ask:

- What did you see that helped you come to that conclusion?
- Can you recall that moment?
- (If possible) Can we all look at that part again? (And then replay that part of the scene.)

To help participants connect their personal experience to the film, ask:

- Does your experience remind you of anything in the film?
- How does that experience help you understand the scene we just watched?
- Does the film support or challenge your own experience?

To help participants connect evidence from outside sources to the film, first ask for the source, and then ask:

- What did you learn from that (book/article/film) that can help us understand this scene better?
- How does that information affect your understanding of this scene?
- What is the connection between that information and this scene?

Help participants build strong interpretations by considering alternative ideas that might contradict their explanation. Ask:

- If you think that about [one part of the film], what do you think about this part?
- If you think that is true, then why does the film also state...?
**Listening:**
Help participants listen and respond to one another and to build onto and connect different ideas. Ask:
- What do you think of that idea?
- Have you heard an idea you agree with?
- Why do you disagree with that idea?
- How does your idea relate to her/his idea?

There is no single best follow-up question to ask in a given moment. The key is for facilitators to listen carefully and pursue ideas that help build deeper understanding of the film’s meaning. By listening and asking follow-up questions, you model how to interact in a civil discussion and create opportunities for meaningful dialogue.

As your group gains experience, encourage participants to ask follow-up questions of each other and respond directly to each other, so that each can assume a greater role in deepening the discussion.

**Closing Reflection**
Lead the discussion until you have about 5 minutes left. Then ask participants to think about what they’ve heard and reflect on their original answers: Has your original answer grown or changed based on what you heard during discussion? What was a new idea that you heard that intrigued you?

Bring your discussion to a close by having people share what they’ve learned. Ideally, your group will be more intrigued about the subject as a result of the discussion. This discussion is meant to be one part of their engagement, and it is helpful for you to be able to offer more ways for them to engage further. Visit kenburnsclassroom.org for additional ideas for engaging with *The Vietnam War* series.
DEVELOPING YOUR OWN FOCUS QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

After you have selected a clip(s) that you will use for a discussion, you'll want to develop a single focus question for your discussion. This question should be open-ended and focused on the clip that you have selected. Consider the following when developing your focus question:

- When you first view the clip, your initial reactions to the film can help you identify its key issues. Maybe you feel intensely sympathetic toward someone in the film, or you feel angered by a statement. Trust your responses. Consider motives of the individuals in the film or the filmmakers; consider moments that stand out as important to you and that resonate emotionally for you.
- View the clip a second time and turn your responses into questions about the film. Resist the impulse to teach your group a lesson with your questions or steer them to a conclusion.
- For each question, brainstorm potential answers and consider opposing views. When you can see the other side of the issue clearly, you can more effectively ensure that you are posing an open-ended, clip-focused question. Your effort here can be greatly aided by working with a partner, who might be able to see that other side more easily than if you were doing it alone.
- When finalizing the wording for your focus question, use simple and clear language. If you are asking a question about why someone says what they say in the film, use a direct quote, rather than paraphrasing.
- Try to make your question as specific to the film as possible, and avoid asking overly general questions. For example, refine the question “What is the relationship between Character X and Character Y?” to instead ask “Why does X tell Y...?”
- Remember, you are NOT trying to TEACH your group a lesson with your question, nor drive them to a conclusion you want them to make. You ARE trying to ASK your group a question that represents your sincere curiosity about something you saw or heard in the scene you select.

The more authentic you are about leading with your curiosity instead of an agenda, the more you encourage your group participants to do their own thinking. Leading with curiosity encourages your participants to authentically share their own ideas, do their own thinking, and pay greater attention to the ideas of other participants.

As a final step in preparation, try to identify two different moments in the clip you plan to discuss that can conceivably support two different responses to your opening question. This way, if your group gets stuck on one answer, you can direct them to consider an alternative and help deepen the consideration of the clip's full meaning.
# DISCUSSION ASSESSMENT RUBRIC

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ANSWER (High to Low)</th>
<th>EVIDENCE</th>
<th>LISTENING</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>OFFERS A CLEAR, RELEVANT ANSWER TO FOCUS QUESTION</strong></td>
<td><strong>DETAILS EVIDENCE TO EXPLAIN AND SUPPORT ANSWER</strong></td>
<td><strong>RESPONDS DIRECTLY TO OTHER STUDENTS AND CONSIDERS OPPOSING ANSWERS</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Offers sound ideas on motives and implications of characters or film's choices</td>
<td>• Synthesizes multiple parts of the clip into answer</td>
<td>• Listens for impact of other students' ideas on own answer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Is succinct and specific in making claim</td>
<td>• Voluntarily offers evidence without being prompted by leader</td>
<td>• Questions other participants about their ideas without leader prompting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Specifies meaning of own words used to articulate idea without prompting</td>
<td>• Weighs evidence contrary to own answer</td>
<td>• Explains agreement or disagreement of other students' ideas without</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>prompting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>OFFERS A CLEAR ANSWER TO THE FOCUS QUESTION</strong></td>
<td><strong>USES DETAILED EVIDENCE TO SUPPORT ANSWER</strong></td>
<td><strong>DEMONSTRATES ATTENTION TO OTHER STUDENTS' IDEAS</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Addresses some motives and implications of characters or film's actions or choices</td>
<td>• Recalls or identifies relevant parts of the clip to support answer</td>
<td>• Is open to impact of other students' ideas on own answer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Elaborates on answer, developing it further when prompted</td>
<td>• Often uses evidence without being prompted by leader</td>
<td>• Agrees or disagrees with other students, without leader prompting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Can clarify own word use</td>
<td>• Considers evidence from other students</td>
<td>• Adds to others' ideas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>OFFERS A GENERAL ANSWER TO THE FOCUS QUESTION</strong></td>
<td><strong>USES EVIDENCE IN GENERAL OR TANGENTIAL WAY</strong></td>
<td><strong>EXPRESSES BASIC AGREEMENT OR DISAGREEMENT</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Makes a guess instead of reflecting on answer</td>
<td>• Retells clip instead of zeroing in on specific evidence</td>
<td>• Considers impact of other students' ideas only when prompted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Simply agrees with answers from others, without developing it further</td>
<td>• Only uses evidence when prompted</td>
<td>• Limits response to “I agree,” or “I disagree” without explanation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Relies on evidence from beyond clip</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>HAS NO OR SCANT ANSWER TO THE FOCUS QUESTION</strong></td>
<td><strong>STRUGGLES TO RECALL OR IDENTIFY EVIDENCE</strong></td>
<td><strong>STRUGGLES TO LISTEN TO OTHER STUDENTS' IDEAS</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Does not answer when prompted</td>
<td>• Speculates instead of using evidence from clip</td>
<td>• Consistently interrupts other students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Only repeats other answers</td>
<td>• Cannot locate evidence</td>
<td>• Is not open to opposing ideas</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
DISCUSSION QUESTIONS BY EPISODE

The Vietnam War
A film by Ken Burns and Lynn Novick

Please note, scene/clip markers below are noted for use with The Vietnam War classroom version. All of these clips are also included in the full broadcast version of The Vietnam War, but time markers noted below may not correspond.

Episode One: Déjà Vu

Pre-viewing Questions:
- Why do countries go to war?
- When is war necessary?
- How is it possible to find meaning in suffering?

Episode Discussion Questions:
- Why was the U.S. unable to avoid becoming directly involved in Vietnam?
- Why does the film say the Vietnam War ended in “failure” instead of defeat?
- Why does the film include “the quality of mercy” as something that was called into question by the Vietnam War?
- Why does the film jump forward chronologically with short moments of U.S. veterans’ stories from the 1960s?

For Further Reflection:
- Why did France originally invade Vietnam?
- Which U.S. veteran’s story leaves you the most interested in learning more about him/her?

Episode Two: Riding the Tiger

Pre-viewing Questions:
- What does it mean for someone to consider him- or herself to be “political”?
- Do you have a cause that you care so much about that you’d risk your life to defend it?

Episode Discussion Questions:
- How did President Kennedy get caught up in “the lie”?
- What was the lie?
- Was Kennedy telling the truth in his response to the reporter during the news conference?

Episode Spotlight: Discussion Questions for Short Segment

All of Scene 6: “Ap Bac” (Length: 11:12)
- Why was Ap Bac such a crucial battle in the war?
- Why does the U.S. commander in the Pacific urge The New York Times reporters to “get on the team,” when they report Ap Bac as “a defeat”?
- Why does Madame Nhu describe the U.S. as “false brothers”?
- Why does President Kennedy say, “I cannot give up a piece of territory like that to the Communists and then get the people to reelect me?”
**Episode Spotlight: Discussion Questions for Short Segment**

**Scene 7: “A Monk Becomes a Martyr” (Length: 4:52)**

*From beginning of scene to 1:04:00, “soon other monks would become martyrs ...”*

- What impact did the monk who burned himself to death, Thich Quang Due, have on the war?
- Why did the photographer, Malcolm Brown, take photos of the monk burning himself?

**For Further Reflection:**

- What is the difference between communism and capitalism?
- Is there a “Cold War” happening now?

---

**Episode Three: The River Styx**

**Pre-viewing Questions:**

- Would you join the U.S. military today?
- What would you tell a family member or friend who was thinking about joining the military?

**Episode Discussion Questions:**

- Why did President Johnson escalate U.S. war involvement with “Operation Rolling Thunder”?
- Why did the U.S. strategy change from “retaliatory” to “systematic”?
- During the interview with Morley Safer, why does the American soldier say, “You can’t do your job and feel pity for these people”?
- Why did President Johnson say that Safer had to “face the American flag” after Johnson saw Safer’s coverage of the war?
- Why did the U.S. military consider a 10-to-1 kill ratio to be “a victory”?

---

**Episode Spotlight: Discussion Questions for Short Segment**

**Scene 3: “No Wider War” (Length: 4:53)**

*From beginning of scene to LBJ saying “no wider war.”*

- Why does the narrator say that the events surrounding the Gulf of Tonkin were “among the most controversial and consequential events in American history”?

---

**Episode Spotlight: Discussion Questions for Short Segment**

**Scene 6: “Off to War” (Length: 10:30)**

- Why did President Johnson say, “I don’t think anything is going to be as bad as losing,” despite Vice President Humphrey’s warning about expanding the war?
- Why did President Johnson feel he had “no choice” about using ground troops?
- Why does Phil Caputo talk about the geographic beauty of Vietnam when the Marines land on Danang?

**For Further Reflection:**

- Do you agree or disagree with how the U.S. military measured success in Vietnam? What does the American flag mean to you?
**Episode Four: Resolve**

**Pre-viewing Questions:**
- Is there a difference between being dutiful and being honorable?
- What do you think is a harder character defect to overcome, ignorance or arrogance?

**Episode Discussion Questions:**
- What does Kennan mean when he says it is “very difficult to dispel ignorance, if you retain arrogance”?
- What does Mogie mean when he writes, “I am once again an atheist until the shooting starts”?
- Why does the film include the Vietcong vet talking about U.S. soldiers weeping just like his Vietnamese comrades did?
- Why did McNamara believe that the bombing would kill morale in North Vietnam instead of increasing North Vietnamese anger?

**Episode Spotlight: Discussion Questions for Short Segment**

*Scene 4: “The Metrics” (Length: 4:28)*

*From beginning of scene to 25:22*
- What does Joe Galloway mean when he says that you make “honorable men” liars if you use body count as a “success mark” in the war?

**Episode Spotlight: Discussion Questions for Short Segment**

*Scene 13: (Length: 10:38)*

*From beginning to end of scene at 1:51:05*
- What does Harrison mean when he says, “I understood theoretically what it meant to be in a war, but of course no one can really understand it until they've done it”?
- Why does Carol Crocker say, “this almost had nothing to do with his death for me”?

**For Further Reflection:**
- Research whether or not there was an anti-war movement in North Vietnam.
- Write a letter to Mogie in Vietnam conveying your feelings and questions about his experience there.

**Episode 5: This Is What We Do**

**Pre-viewing Questions:**
- What does it mean to be racist?
- Can someone learn to overcome his or her own racism?

**Episode Discussion Questions:**
- Why does Musgrave say, “racism 101 turned out to be a very necessary tool when you have children fighting your war”?
- Why did the U.S. soldiers risk their own lives to recover the dead bodies of their comrades?
- Why did Harrison describe the battle of HHI 875 as “a microcosm” of what happened in Vietnam?

**For Further Reflection:**
- What do you think are some appropriate ways to honor and remember your ancestors?
- If you'd been drafted to serve in Vietnam, would you have gone?
Episode Six: Things Fall Apart

Pre-viewing Questions:
- What is difficult about “thinking for yourself”?
- What do you do if the idea of being loyal to your country conflicts with what you value as an individual?

Episode Discussion Questions:
- Why did President Johnson decide to “disengage” in Vietnam?
- Why did Martin Luther King decide to speak out against the Vietnam War?
- Why does Carol Crocker say that Robert Kennedy’s death “put those of us going out on our own on a path that felt uncertain”? Why “those of us going out on our own” as opposed to everyone?

For Further Reflection:
- Do you think that the racism that Black soldiers experienced in Vietnam is different from your understanding of racism within the United States now?
- What does the expression, “my country, right or wrong,” mean to you?

Episode Seven: The Veneer of Civilization

Pre-viewing Questions:
- Have you ever felt that you were forced to do something against your own will?
- What is the hardest decision you’ve ever had to make?
- Do you trust your government?

Episode Discussion Questions:
- Why does Tim O’Brien think that wrestling with whether to go to Vietnam was “more tortuous and devastating” than anything that happened in Vietnam?
- Why did Tim O’Brien say, “it was that failure of nerve that I still regret”?
- Why did the U.S. government tolerate so much corruption on the part of the South Vietnamese government?

Episode Spotlight: Discussion Questions for Short Segment
Scene 1: “Service to One’s Country” (Length: 3:25)
From beginning to 3:25 to “unpatriotic thing”
- Why does Tim O’Brien say it was “a forfeiture of a decision” when he boards the bus for military induction?

Episode Spotlight: Discussion Questions for Short Segment
Scene 3: “Looking at Our Future Selves” (Length: 4:37)
From beginning at 19:13 to 23:50
- Why does the film include this scene of the North Vietnamese military experience?

Episode Spotlight: Discussion Questions for Short Segment
Scene 5: “We Miss You a Lot” (Length: 5:23)
From beginning at 37:34 to fade to black at 42:57
- Why does the film include this scene of the U.S. military experience?
- (If you show this clip alongside the one above) How is the film’s portrayal of the U.S. experience similar or different from that of the North Vietnamese experience?
Episode Spotlight: Discussion Questions for Short Segment

Scene 7: “It Would Shock America” (Length: 5:36)
From 48:16 to 53:52
- Why didn't President Johnson go public about Nixon contacting “a foreign power in the middle of a war”?

For Further Reflection:
- What were the biggest obstacles that prevented each side from holding peace talks?
- What was the public response when it was first revealed that the Nixon campaign had reached out to South Vietnam urging them to not attend peace talks?

Episode Eight: The History of the World

Pre-viewing Questions:
- What are the most effective ways to protest government policy if you disagree with it?
- Is there a political movement happening now that is important to you?
- Is dissent patriotic or unpatriotic?
- What does it mean to be a “patriot”?

Episode Discussion Questions:
- Why couldn't Nixon allow the U.S. to be seen as surrendering?
- Why does McPeak say the music and overall counter-culture in the late 1960s made for a better America today?
- Why did Nixon describe the anti-war movement in the U.S. as “mindless”?
- Why does the film use a montage that cuts between footage of Woodstock and Vietnam?
- Why were attempts on the lives of U.S. military officers by their own soldiers increasing by 1969?
- What did Gillam mean when he said, “the other casualty was the end of the civilized me”?
- Why does Jack Todd say that going to Canada was “the bravest thing I ever did”?
- What does the army medic mean when he says, “when you kill someone for your country, all things change”? Why does he say, “for your country”?

Episode Spotlight: Discussion Questions for Short Segment

Scene 4: “All Kinds of Craziness” (Length: 5:09)
From 30:38 to 35:47 (“I want you to come home”)
- Why does Wayne Smith say, “Vietnam was a microcosm, everything that was happening in Vietnam was happening in America”?

Episode Spotlight: Discussion Questions for Short Segment

Scene 7: “The People in the Streets” (Length: 10:52)
From beginning of scene at 47:45 to 58:37 (“keep them on the run”)
- According to the film, what impact did the anti-war movement have?
- Why did Nixon write himself notes saying, “don’t waver, don’t react”?

Episode Spotlight: Discussion Questions for Short Segment

Scene 12: “A Wake-up Call” (Length: 9:37)
From beginning of scene at 1:36:15 to 1:45:52 (“wake-up call”)
- What did Sam Hynes mean in asking, “If we could kill our own students, what had happened to our country”?
- Why did Ehrhart join the anti-war movement?
For Further Reflection:
- Why were the peace talks held in France?
- If you were able to talk to Hegdahl now and ask him about his experience as a Prisoner of War (POW), what questions would you have for him? How do you imagine he would respond to you?

**Episode Nine: A Disrespectful Loyalty**

**Pre-viewing Questions:**
- What are healthy ways to help military veterans transition back to civilian life?
- Should the draft be re-implemented now?

**Episode Discussion Questions:**
- Why did most Americans both approve of the arrests of protesters, while also believing that their government was lying about the war?
- Why does the film label Jack Todd “a deserter”?

**Episode Spotlight: Discussion Questions for Short Segment**

*Scene 4: “The Turning” (Length: 9:32)*

From 29:10 (beginning of scene) to 38:42 (“that’s why it was so important.”)
- Why was it so important to John Musgrave to conduct his anti-war activism “as a Marine”?
- In his testimony, what did John Kerry mean in describing Vietnam as “a place where America finally turned, and where soldiers like us helped it in the turning?”
- Why was Phil Gioja so upset by Kerry’s testimony?
- Why did Ron Ferrizzi feel it was harder to throw away his medals than to serve in Vietnam?
- What did Tom Vallely mean by saying he did it out of a “disrespectful loyalty”?

For Further Reflection:
- Why does the military give awards for various kinds of military service?
- If you were going to teach a class on the Vietnam War, would you use this film to help you do it?

**Episode Ten: The Weight of Memory**

**Pre-viewing Questions:**
- What is the difference between capitalism and democracy?
- Which force holds greater sway in American life right now?
- Can a society heal from the wounds inflicted by its past?
- Why does history matter?

**Episode Discussion Questions:**
- Why does President Ford say, “Today America can regain the sense of pride that existed before Vietnam, but not by refighting a war that is finished as far as America is concerned”?
- Why did the U.S. government refuse to recognize the new Vietnamese government after the war?
- Why does the narrator of the film say that “everyone came home from Vietnam alone”?
Episode Spotlight: Discussion Questions for Short Segment


From Scene 3, 25:29 (Bao Ninh - “After 30 years of inconclusive war...”) to
Scene 4, 39:21 (Phan Quang Tue - “You have to lose a nation and a dream to feel...to feel that humiliation.”)

- Why does the leader of South Vietnam say, “it is so easy to be an enemy of the United States, but so difficult to be a friend”?
- Why does Phan Quang Tue say, “you have to lose a nation and a dream to feel...that humiliation”?

Episode Spotlight: Discussion Questions for Short Segment

Scene 6: “The Happiness of a Mother” (Length: 9:29)

From 57:13 “At 7:53 am, April 30, 1975, the last helicopter...” to 1:06:42 (fade to black)

- Why does news anchorman Walter Cronkite say, “We have reached the end of the tunnel and there is no light there”?
- Why does David Brinkley suggest that future U.S. leaders announce war plans from Arlington Cemetery?

For Further Reflection:

- Research the experience of South Vietnamese people in the “reeducation camps.” What happened there?
- Imagine you are a historian in the year as far in the future as the end of the Vietnam War is in the past. What are three defining elements of current life in America that you imagine you’d write about?
- If you were going to design a memorial commemorating those who lost their lives fighting in Iraq and Afghanistan, what would your memorial design be?
- What is the legacy of the Vietnam War?
Funding for this guide is provided by:

Members of

THE BETTER ANGELS SOCIETY

and

The Resnick Family Foundation

---

Discussion guide by Bill Siegel

As founder of Projecto Willis LLC, Bill Siegel is applying his skills as an educator and documentary filmmaker by offering consulting, professional development workshops, and video production services to schools, businesses, and community organizations across the country. This discussion guide accompanies a free, online webinar from The Ken Burns Classroom (kenburnsclassroom.org), where Siegel models and offers further instruction in this discussion process.

As an educator, Siegel served as vice president for school programs with The Great Books Foundation, leading more than 1,000 staff development workshops for K-12 educators nationwide. Siegel is also an award-winning documentary filmmaker. He was director and producer of the Emmy-winning The Trials of Muhammad Ali, which premiered at the 2013 Tribeca Film Festival and has screened worldwide. Siegel co-directed and produced The Weather Underground, which was nominated for an Academy Award in 2004. Siegel is currently working on a documentary series on the history of U.S. government propaganda and the new Cold War of weaponized information, titled America Sells Itself. Siegel earned a BA in History from the University of Wisconsin-Madison and an MS in Journalism from Columbia University in New York.