

Teaching with Primary Sources Assessment

Grade Level: High School (9-10)

Standard(s) or Objectives: CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.9-10.2 Determine a central idea of a text and analyze its development over the course of the text, including how it emerges and is shaped and refined by specific details; provide an objective summary of the text.
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.9-10.6 Determine an author's point of view or purpose in a text and analyze how an author uses rhetoric to advance that point of view or purpose.

Library of Congress or Morris Special Collections Resources:



Interview with Allen Howard Pickford (Veteran's History Project)

<http://memory.loc.gov/diglib/vhp/story/loc.natlib.afc2001001.87419/transcript?ID=sr0001>

Thumbnail from:

<https://www.loc.gov/item/2011661234/>

Topic Background:

The Vietnam war was the longest war in United States history. Promises and commitments to the people and government of South Vietnam to keep communist forces from overtaking them reached back into the Truman Administration. Eisenhower placed military advisers and CIA operatives in Vietnam, and John F. Kennedy sent American soldiers to Vietnam. Lyndon Johnson ordered the first real combat by American troops, and Richard Nixon concluded the war.

Despite the decades of resolve, billions and billions of dollars, nearly 60,000 American lives and many more injuries, the United States failed to achieve its objectives...And night after night, Americans turned on the news to see the bodies of their young flown home in bags...The average age of the American soldier in Vietnam was nineteen.

Excerpted from: <http://www.ushistory.org/us/55.asp>

Source(s) Used:

The source used in this assessment is an excerpt from an interview with Allen Howard Pickford, a veteran of the Vietnam war. Pickford enlisted in the armed forces when he was 17 years old. In his interview, he describes working as a medic for the army in Vietnam, highlighting the youth and inexperience of many of his fellow-soldiers, as well as the extremely harsh and traumatic experiences of the war. In this excerpt, Pickford tells the story of writing a medical card for a young man who begged to be sent home after an especially traumatic firefight. This interview was taken in 2012.

Answer Key:

Question 1 – C
Question 2 – A

The Vietnam War

Excerpts from an interview with Allen Howard Pickford, a Veteran of the Vietnam War

Well, then I was shipped to another platoon because they lost a couple of medics...The medic that I replaced on my platoon, he had -- he was going home. So he gave me his -- he had a holster...almost like a cowboy holster...where you could put a lot of .45 shells into it. I thought it was pretty cool. I got on the helicopter. Well, the colonel came out with us and he didn't like it at all. I thought he was going to throw me off the helicopter. That's how mad he was. I'm saying I'm 18 years old, give me a break -- to myself. I didn't say it to him, but ... That was about my first encounter with the colonel. I had a couple more encounters with him. He did not like me.

We -- one time we were -- got hit and we had a couple casualties, and one guy, he sort of snapped out. He ran over to me and hugged my legs, he dropped on his knees and hugged my legs. He says, Doc, send me back, send me back, please. I said I can't, you know. We need you. We need everybody we have here. So as I turned around, and there was [sic] two helicopters that came down for the wounded, he jumped on the helicopter. He was in shock. So when...the helicopter took off...I ran over to the other helicopter. There was [sic] a couple medics helping put other wounded in there. I filled out a card for the guy that jumped on it. I said to tell he was in shock. We were kids, you know. Some of us really couldn't take it. But I got back on the hill and the colonel wanted to court martial him, but since I already wrote out a medical tag for him, the colonel couldn't do it.

Questions:

1. Why is it significant that Pickford begins this excerpt by describing his holster? (CCSS. RI.9-10.2)
 - a. It shows how ready and well-trained he was for battle.
 - b. It illustrates the camaraderie between the medics on the field.
 - c. It highlights Pickford's youth and immature values.
 - d. It establishes that the colonel had no reason to dislike Pickford.
2. Which of the following statements best describes Pickford's point of view in the passage? (CCSS. RI.9-10.6)
 - a. "We were kids, you know."
 - b. "We need everybody we have here."
 - c. "[The colonel] did not like me."
 - d. "I was shipped to another platoon..."