

Who's Who

Both famous and ordinary people played important roles in the Vietnam War. You will hear the words of the following men and women as you watch *Ordinary Americans: Vietnam*.

The Famous

Ho Chi Minh was the communist hero of Vietnam's independence from France and the political leader of the communist forces fighting in Vietnam.

Ngo Dinh Diem was the political leader of South Vietnam until he was overthrown and murdered in a coup d'etat in 1963.

President John Kennedy increased the U.S. military presence in South Vietnam in the early 1960s to help its government fight the communist Viet Cong.

President Lyndon Johnson greatly increased U.S. troop strength in South Vietnam between 1964 and 1969.

Robert Kennedy was a U.S. senator from New York who later ran for president in 1968 as an opponent of the war.

Henry Kissinger was President Nixon's national security adviser and the lead negotiator at the peace talks that eventually led to the U.S. pullout from Vietnam.

President Richard Nixon started the gradual withdrawal of U.S. troops from Vietnam, finally ending his country's military presence there in 1973.

The Ordinary Americans

Philip Caputo was a lieutenant in the U.S. Marine Corps who describes the frustrations of fighting guerrilla-style jungle warfare in Vietnam.

Robert Mason was an army helicopter pilot who recounts his experiences in rescuing wounded GIs in a Vietnamese jungle.

Dusty was a military nurse who shares her thoughts about the intimacy of helping a young soldier as he lay dying in a hospital in Vietnam.

Joey Sintoni was a young GI in Vietnam who describes his feelings about the war to his fiancée, Angela, in a letter she would receive after his death.

Marjorie Swann talks about her experience as one of thousands of people demonstrating against the war in Boston in 1968.

Gene Woodley was a 19-year-old American GI who describes his horror at finding a wounded and tortured comrade in a Vietnamese jungle.

Eugene "Red" McDaniel was a captured U.S. Navy pilot who describes the time he spent in a North Vietnamese prison.

An anonymous writer of a letter left at the Vietnam Memorial says goodbye to his comrade Smitty, whom he saw die in Vietnam.

Quotations

You will hear all of the following quotations as you watch the video. They come in the order they are listed on this handout. Listen for them.

1. "Now we have the problem of making our power credible, and Vietnam looks like the place."—President John Kennedy

What did President Kennedy mean by "making our power credible"?

2. "We believed we were ordained to play cop to the communists' robber and spread our own political faith around the world . . . we carried, along with our packs and rifles, the implicit convictions that . . . we were doing something altogether noble and good. We kept the packs and rifles; the convictions, we lost."—Philip Caputo

What was Caputo's point when he said he and his fellow soldiers had lost their convictions?

3. "The VC [Viet Cong] hold the initiative and continue to develop their strength among the population."
—William Colby, director of the Central Intelligence Agency

What was Colby's statement implying about the potential success of the U.S. effort in Vietnam?

4. "If we pull out of Vietnam, all the trusted islands in the Pacific, as well as the Philippines, are in danger."
—Senator Everett Dirksen (R-Ill.)

How does Dirksen's fear relate to the U.S. policy of containment?

5. "South Vietnam is not worth the life of one single American boy."—Senator Wayne Morse (D-Oreg.)

Do you think Morse's position was popular with the American people in 1964? Why or why not?

6. "Hey, hey, LBJ, how many kids did you kill today?"—Anti-war protesters

Do you think this slogan was fair to President Johnson? Why or why not?

7. "Don't these anti-war protesters realize they are giving the enemy real comfort and support?"—Wounded U.S. infantryman in Vietnam

Do you think the Viet Cong and North Vietnamese soldiers were affected by the anti-war protests in the United States? If so, in what ways?

8. "Freedom, like breathing and circulating blood, is part of our being. Why must people take their freedom for granted? Why can't they support the men who are trying to protect their lifeblood, freedom?"—Joey Sintoni, a soldier killed in Vietnam

What was Sintoni saying about his country's involvement in Vietnam?

9. "What the hell is going on? I thought we were winning the war!"—CBS news anchor Walter Cronkite

Why was President Johnson dismayed when he heard what Cronkite had said?

10. "Maybe this [anti-war demonstration] is a beginning of the fulfillment of the old adage, 'Wars will cease when men refuse to fight.'"—War protester Marjorie Swann

Was Swann's quote prophetic? If so, in what way?