

Influences of war essay



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Influences of War The Vietnam War had different effects on many people. It affected people at home and obviously greatly affected those who were fighting in Vietnam. An excerpt from *Everything We Had* by Al Santoli and *Beginning and Arrival*, excerpts from *If I Die in a Combat Zone: Box Me Up and Send Me Home* by Tim O'Brien, are memoirs that explore the effects and influences of war on two young men.

Tim O'Brien wrote about his own experiences in the war, and in the piece of work by Santoli, he tells about the events of a soldier named Robert Santos. These men are quickly shaped and molded by the war and the people there. Because of their youthfulness and lack of experience or knowledge of war, Santos and O'Brien had no idea how to be soldiers or what to do in war. O'Brien wrote, " I had neither the expertise nor the wisdom to synthesize answers; most of the facts were clouded. " O'Brien had no shame in admitting that he was not knowledgeable about the war, and that he made his decision to go to the war merely on not having a reason not to.

Santos confesses that he did not know anything. At first he simply followed everything he had learned in training even if it was not the best solution to the situation at hand. He was transformed from a naive " wait-a-minute lieutenant" to a battle-hardened, fatherly, and knowledgeable military officer. War caused this evolution of Santos, but it also caused him to grow in wisdom and experience. He explained that he learned many things about himself that he never would have discovered otherwise.

There were also mixed views from experienced soldiers and others that O'Brien came in contact with one in Vietnam. Two sergeants reassured him

in different ways. One told O'Brien that as long as he stuck with him, he would be okay. Other soldiers seemed to be relaxed and have a casual attitude toward the explosions that happen in the middle of the night one night, and this made O'Brien feel as if he did not need to worry.

However, there were others such as Wolf that assured him that it would get much worse, and that he had not really experienced anything yet. Possibly one of the biggest assurances that the war was real and dangerous was the two dead GIs. Santos was faced with outside factors and views that influenced his thoughts of the war as well. When he saw the base camp on the way to Hue he realizes that they were “as disciplined and efficient” as he and his men were. He felt as though he could relate to them. He also felt sympathy for the young boy that came and asked for food and the boy's sister because he realized that their entire life and all that they knew consisted of the war. All of O'Brien's friends somehow found ways to evade the war, either by doctors' letters or deferments.

This led to O'Brien feeling alone and not having anyone that could relate to his emotions. He said that it was hard to find people who had to think about the problem. Santos also had difficulty finding people that could relate to him. He stated that it was impossible to translate or explain the experience to anyone, especially someone who had not been there.