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# Improving Critical Thinking Skills in the United States Survey Course: An Activity for Teaching the Vietnam War

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**IMPROVING CRITICAL THINKING**—defined by one expert as “reasonable reflective thinking focused on deciding what to believe or do”<sup>1</sup>—has been a frequent topic in the writing of history educators at least since the early 1970s.<sup>2</sup> Although articles and papers from the 1970s<sup>3</sup> through the 1990s<sup>4</sup> have suggested that history textbooks can be a suitable focus for instructional activities on critical thinking, more often history educators have argued that source documents beyond the textbook and, today, electronic sources are especially good media for helping students improve their critical thinking abilities.<sup>5</sup> Indeed, a convincing case can be made for emphasizing critical thinking whenever the Internet is used in history classes, partly because of the inconsistent reliability of the sources that can be easily accessed electronically.<sup>6</sup> Even if students are guided to reputable sources for research and writing activities in history classes, Avner Segall has pointed out that the current intellectual climate, heavily influenced by critical theory, deconstructionism, and postmodernism,

makes it important that history teachers use instructional methods which instill a critical perspective in students.<sup>7</sup>

Although some educators are skeptical about the efficacy of critical thinking instruction with school-aged youth and others see it as a challenge even with college students,<sup>8</sup> we believe critical thinking can be taught successfully in high school and college history classes. To be more precise, we believe progress can be made in the improvement of critical thinking in these classes *if* instructional activities take appropriately into consideration what is known about the determinants of ability in critical thinking. In the past twenty years psychologists have become increasingly convinced that cognitive abilities, particularly higher-level abilities, are only partially determined by cognitive processing skills and are influenced even more by interests and personality factors such as attitudes and, most importantly, by knowledge.<sup>9</sup>

Respected experts on improving critical thinking in high school classes, such as Barry Beyer, and experts on critical thinking at the college level, such as Diane Halpern, stress that promoting critical thinking is not simply a matter of teaching critical thinking skills or operations.<sup>10</sup> Such instruction must foster the dispositions or attitudes supporting critical thinking, and it must ensure that the students have adequate knowledge in the topic area in which the critical thinking is expected to occur. Trying to teach critical thinking skills or operations in isolation to students who may see little or no value to learning them is difficult at best. Even if learning of such skills does occur, the skills are not likely to be applied in real-world settings if the students do not have the attitudes and dispositions which make them consider use of the skills important. Moreover, because trying to make students successful in using cognitive skills or operations of critical thinking on a topic about which they know little is difficult, recent theory-based or research-based articles on methods for improving critical thinking in history discuss teaching cognitive skills or operations of critical thinking when history content is being taught.<sup>11</sup> This so-called infusion approach certainly has more support in the form of theory and research than does the teaching of critical thinking skills in isolation.<sup>12</sup>

Indeed, our own experiences attempting to promote critical thinking in our classes and our experiences becoming critical thinkers ourselves have convinced us that the psychologists are correct. Attitudes and interests do support higher-level thinking and, most importantly, knowledge used in carrying it out is crucial to the success of critical thinking instruction. Even if teaching focuses in an admirably systematic way on cognitive skills or operations of critical thinking, the instruction is likely to fall short if the teacher does not ensure a richness of content knowledge and

an atmosphere reinforcing the attitudes and dispositions which motivate and support critical thinking. The activity we will describe for improving critical thinking in history classes is one that fits into what has been called the immersion approach to improving higher-level thinking.<sup>13</sup> Although one of the present authors began using a variant of the activity almost thirty years ago, a theoretical justification for it is appropriately associated with such educators as Richard Prawat and David Perkins.<sup>14</sup> In describing the activity as a possible element in the immersion approach to critical thinking in a United States history class, we will place the emphasis on ensuring richness of content knowledge and an atmosphere demonstrating the importance of critical thinking. We will also suggest possible materials and methods for teaching specific critical thinking skills or operations prior to the main activity, but we will focus primarily on ways to attend successfully to the attitudinal and knowledge aspects of critical thinking.

### **The Vietnam War**

We have chosen this topic because: (1) it is acceptable to deal with this war in depth in a history class, (2) it is advisable to expose students to varied perspectives on the war,<sup>15</sup> (3) there is a diversity of viewpoints about the Vietnam War among parents and other adults in the lives of students today and because many students want to make some sense of that diversity of opinions, and (4) many relevant articles on the Vietnam War at a wide range of readability levels are electronically accessible. Dedicated readers of this journal may know that a history educator recently proposed in these pages another activity for helping students see the importance of a critical perspective when studying about wars in the past, including the Vietnam War.<sup>16</sup> Our activity is not presented as better than the “postmodernist?” exercise of Michael Palo, but as an option—perhaps a more traditional option—for promoting critical thinking when studying the Vietnam War.

Before engaging in the critical thinking activity, the students must have sufficient background knowledge and understanding about the Vietnam War. A variety of direct and indirect instructional methods can be used to provide this context, including traditional lectures, textbook and secondary source readings, films or film excerpts, presentations by Vietnam War veterans, and examination of Internet sites. (See Table 1.) The appropriate mix of these types of approaches and activities would depend partly on the ability levels of the students. For example, in a class with many weak readers, greater emphasis on oral or video presentation of content might be reasonable. In a typical high school or introductory

college United States history class, this background instruction on the war might begin with students reading their textbook's section on the Vietnam War followed by a combination of lecture and discussion on the general outline of the conflict. This preliminary material should expose the students to the key names, terms and concepts that they will encounter in the magazine articles that are at the heart of the critical thinking activity we will describe. Some of these names, terms, and concepts include: Cold War, liberalism, communism, containment doctrine, domino theory, Ho Chi Minh, Ngo Dinh Diem, Gulf of Tonkin Resolution, strategy of attrition, "search and destroy," Robert McNamara, General William Westmoreland, anti-war movement, draft, Tet Offensive, Henry Kissinger, Vietnamization, Khmer Rouge, and Powell Doctrine. As suggested above, background preparation can be continued through inclusion of video segments from both documentary and commercial films, oral history presentations from Vietnam War veterans, and exercises involving Internet sites, particularly those that focus on the use of primary source materials. Exposure to a specific set of primary sources would only heighten the students' awareness of issues involved in the war and would also expose them to additional names, terms, and concepts crucial for background understanding. In a high school class it may also be useful for the instructor to engage the students in a pre-reading definition activity using the various names, terms, and concepts discussed during these background sessions. Approximately five instructional days (assuming 50-minute class periods) are likely necessary for this background preparation. For this type of unit, a block schedule consisting of 90- to 120-minute class periods might be preferable given the emphasis on sustained reading and discussion.

One of the challenges and a virtual necessity for designing an effective critical thinking activity on a topic such as the Vietnam War is identifying a variety of accessible articles representing different perspectives on the topic and preferably representing different reading difficulty levels. We have found that the best electronic database to search for recent articles on a topic taught in a high school or introductory college history class is MAS Ultra-School Edition. This database, which is accessible through EBSCOhost, can provide full-text articles published as far back as 1990 in over 500 periodicals useful in high school or introductory college classrooms. An especially useful feature of MAS Ultra-School Edition is that the reading difficulty level of most articles is included in the information presented about the article. The measure by which the difficulty level is reported is known as the Lexile unit, which was developed by a for-profit company. Though the company carefully controls and markets most of its services and products, we were fortunate to obtain an explana-

tion of the Lexile unit when it was previously available on the company's website. The company is unwilling to say that Lexile units can be directly translated into reading grade levels, but we interpret the previously available information as indicating that the 3rd grade readability level corresponds approximately to 600 Lexile units, the 4<sup>th</sup> grade to 750 Lexile units, the 5<sup>th</sup> grade to 850 Lexile units, the 6<sup>th</sup> grade to 950 Lexile units, the 7<sup>th</sup> grade to 1000 Lexile units, the 8<sup>th</sup> grade to 1050 Lexile units, the 9<sup>th</sup> grade to 1100 Lexile units, the 10<sup>th</sup> grade to 1150 Lexile units, and the 11<sup>th</sup> grade to 1200 Lexile units. The articles in the sample sets that we suggest for the activity on the Vietnam War range in difficulty from a Lexile rating of 720 to a rating of 1390.

After providing the students with initial background on the Vietnam War and selecting appropriate reading materials, a critical reading exercise reflecting the infusion approach should be used to introduce or reinforce several of the cognitive skills and operations that the students need to internalize before they undertake the primary critical thinking activity that illustrates the immersion approach. One possible period-long infusion activity surrounds the recent revelations about former United States Senator Bob Kerrey's admission of civilian deaths during a mission he led in the Mekong Delta in 1969. Using the article set noted in Table 2 below, the instructor would provide three groups of students, organized according to reading ability, with varying levels of assistance in understanding the issues conveyed in the four moderately difficult articles. (The Lexile scores of all four articles are between 1050 and 1270.) The articles selected are effective for an infusion activity because of the consistent subject focus and similar emphases on how the Kerrey incident illustrates the war's moral ambiguity. Yet each article provides a different perspective on the incident's meaning and ramifications. These differences reflect the author's as well as the periodical's political leanings. Moreover, because each article is only one page long, each student in the three groups would be able to read all four articles in approximately 15 to 20 minutes.

To provide appropriate differentiated guidance for the three groups in the introductory infusion exercise and to take advantage of the availability of articles at different reading difficulty levels, the teacher must have some sense of the reading ability levels of the students. The teacher could simply ask the class which individuals would like to read the difficult articles, which the moderately difficult articles, and which the relatively easy articles. We do not recommend this tack, however, because it can reinforce a tendency of some students to not challenge themselves. Another possible approach is also based on student input, but it is less likely to lead to the placement of students into inappropriate groups. With

this approach, the teacher, at the beginning of the course, says that some activities during the semester will work best if the teacher has an accurate picture of the reading ability of each student. The teacher then hands out slips of paper on which the students are to write their names and indicate with a check mark whether they are a strong and reasonably fast reader, an average reader, or a slow reader in comparison to their classmates. Another approach for obtaining estimates of the reading ability levels of the students in a class is to obtain standardized reading test scores from student files or to ask for this information from a school counselor. If the intent during the course is to use many activities with reading materials at different difficulty levels, the teacher might consider administering a quick group reading placement test, such as the Reading-Level Indicator, published by American Guidance Service. This test can be completed by students in 5 to 15 minutes.

For the lowest level reading group in the introductory critical thinking exercise, the instructor might choose to either tell the students explicitly about the issues involved, including the authors' personal biases, the reputation of the periodicals, and the values and perspectives usually reflected in the periodical or might provide substantial help about the authors' perspectives and the periodicals' political leanings. For instance, the instructor might point out elements about the authors' backgrounds and previous writings. He or she might also explain who each of the periodicals' target audiences is and what it is that these readers find appealing about the particular periodical. For the lowest level reading group, it would be useful to not only point out what the authors' credentials are and the periodicals' political leanings but also to engage students in discussion about why an author's credentials or a periodical's perspectives matter when evaluating an article's incisiveness on the issue at hand. For the middle group of readers, the instructor would provide only moderate assistance with these issues. For the best readers, the instructor would provide no such assistance other than to alert them to notice the magazines in which each article appeared and any background presented about each author. For all readers, this information is important for understanding the point of view of each article and for detecting possible bias. In each case, the guiding question the instructor should convey to each group of students would be: "What should we learn about the Vietnam War from each account of the Kerrey incident?" After these instructions and the reading of the articles by the students, each group would be given ten minutes to discuss how the varying perspectives surrounding the incident address the guiding question. One student from each group should then report on their findings to the rest of the class to finish out the exercise before the class period ends.



After the background instruction and this infusion reading exercise on critical thinking, the students should be adequately prepared for the immersion activity. (See Table 3)

For this critical thinking activity, students should again be divided into three reading levels: high, medium, and low. Ideally, these groups should consist of up to five students, equal to the number of articles or pairs of articles in each set. (See Table 4 for the reading sets) The activity requires two 50-minute instructional days (or, alternatively, one 90- to 120-minute block session). Before giving the students time to read, the instructor should explain that each group will collectively evaluate the articles for use as possible sources for a paper on what the United States should have learned from the Vietnam War. The instructor should also explain to the students that their evaluations should take into consideration the following criteria: the author's credentials and objectivity, the periodical's reputation, the article's authoritativeness, and the relevance of the article content to a lesson that should have been learned from the war. After reading the articles, each group of students should be prepared to determine which articles, according to these criteria, are most and least appropriate as sources for a paper on lessons that should have been learned from the war and, primarily, to explain their reasons for their rankings. Each student is then given about seven minutes to read each article or pair of articles in the group's reading set. The students should be encouraged to take notes for each article reflecting the various criteria outlined to help guide their post-reading discussions about the use of these readings as sources.

Once students have begun to discuss the articles, the instructor should circulate from one group to another and play an active role in helping to elicit and clarify the students' ideas. The instructor might help the students with prompts that relate back to facts and other issues presented during the previous contextual part of the unit. The instructor might also provide the students with reminders about elements of the articles that students may have overlooked or misunderstood. Of course, as the students discuss the relative strengths and weaknesses of the articles, they are likely to stray from the intention of the activity and instead debate issues related to the details of the war brought out in the articles. While a little of this might be acceptable, the instructor must remind the students to stay focused on the task at hand in order to complete the activity in the allotted time. Table 5 highlights a sample evaluation of one of the articles from the relatively easy reading level set.

Assuming that with two instructional days devoted to the activity, students might need the beginning of the second day to wrap up their evaluations of the articles, but the rest of that day should focus on the



students' presentations of their assessments. Each group is expected to briefly justify their collective decisions about how they evaluated each article according to the criteria; in other words, the presentations by the groups should emphasize the reasons they evaluated the articles as they did, not simply the rankings of the articles as sources. These justifications should constitute the heart of the discussions on the second instructional day. It is important for the instructor to prompt the students' remarks in a way that strengthens this focus. It is also helpful for the instructor to summarize the groups' evaluations of the articles on the board or an overhead projector as the students present their remarks.

If the class in which the activity is used contains only weak readers, the instructor could restrict the materials to the relatively easy articles and could provide for whole class discussion of each article after it has been read in class by all the students. Then the class could be divided into small groups for final discussion and evaluation of the articles before the small groups report back to the class. This combination of whole-class and small-group instruction would allow the instructor to guide the students in considering the credentials and objectivity of each author, the periodical's reputation, and the article's authoritativeness. It would also take advantage of the informal atmosphere of small groups when the students are discussing the relevance of article content to a lesson that should have been learned from the war and for arriving at a group consensus regarding the appropriateness of each article as a source for a paper.

The above immersion activity offers at least two possible summative assessment opportunities. If the primary concern is assessment of each of the three student groups' evaluations of the articles as possible sources, the instructor might develop a two-dimensional rubric which would allow him or her to judge students' proficiency on both the comprehensiveness of their review criteria and the depth of their arguments. For the first dimension of the rubric, the instructor might simply count the evaluation criteria cited by each group for each article. For instance, did they cite each author's credentials and objectivity, discuss or question each periodical's reputation, address each article's authoritativeness, and note whether or not the article is relevant for use in addressing lessons learned from the war? For the second dimension of the rubric, the instructor might evaluate the depth of the argument presented on each of the four criteria. This could be accomplished by devising a scale which measures the persuasiveness and detail of the groups' arguments. If the instructor is more concerned about evaluating each individual student's learning, another possible summative assessment would be requiring each student to actually write a paper on lessons learned from the Viet-

nam War. The instructor might provide a list of issues addressed in each of the reading sets, such as the cold war, containment doctrine, and the draft, and then ask each student to compare and contrast how specific authors and articles examined these issues.

We believe that the immersion approach to critical thinking as illustrated in this activity can reinforce and develop a variety of important dispositions and attitudes associated with critical thinking. By sparking students' interest in a contemporary and controversial debate, they will be more likely to want to understand important issues about the war and other related topics, such as the on-going debates about America's role as the world's policeman in Afghanistan and Iraq. The activity also provides the students with meaningful experiences in understanding and considering viewpoints other than their own. By comparing, contrasting, and evaluating authors' points of view, the students learn that factual presentations are not the only objectives of authors when writing about a topic or of a periodical when publishing an article on a topic. In each case, the immersion approach is a more effective vehicle for developing students' higher-level critical thinking abilities than approaches that stress specific skills or operations without attention to knowledge and attitudes.

**Table 1:**  
**Background preparation for a critical thinking activity**  
**on the Vietnam War**

Lectures and textbook and other secondary readings on:

1. origins of the war, including America's Cold War containment doctrine; Chinese, French, and Japanese imperialism in Vietnam before 1945; Vietnamese collaboration with the United States during the World War II; Ho Chi Minh's career and vision for an independent Vietnam; and the French Indochina War
2. American support for Ngo Dinh Diem and covert efforts of American forces before the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution
3. Johnson's focus on a strategy of attrition, especially use of "search and destroy" as a form of limited escalation
4. build-up of opposition to the war on the home front
5. the Tet Offensive as the war's turning point, resulting in Johnson's decision not to seek re-election
6. Nixon's "Vietnamization" policy and war in Cambodia
7. erosion of American military's morale and the final withdrawal of American forces

Films, including segments from commercial films such as *The Deer Hunter*, *Hamburger Hill*, *Hanoi Hilton*, *The Killing Fields*, and *We Were Soldiers*.

Presentations by Vietnam veterans

Primary Source materials found on the World Wide Web, including

1. Vietnam War, 1960-1973 <[www.kwanah.com/vl/021.htm](http://www.kwanah.com/vl/021.htm)> (part of University of Kansas WWW-VL History: United States)
2. The War in Vietnam: A Story in Photographs <[www.archives.gov/digital\\_classroom/lessons/vietnam\\_photographs/vietnam\\_photos.html](http://www.archives.gov/digital_classroom/lessons/vietnam_photographs/vietnam_photos.html)> (part of NARA Digital Classroom)

**Table 2:**  
**Infusion exercise reading set**

Jonathan Alter, "The Terrible Wages of War," *Newsweek* 137(May 7, 2001), 41.

"Anti-Hero," *New Republic* 224(May 14, 2001), 11.

Brad Knickerbocker, "Vietnam's Moral Mind Game," *Christian Science Monitor* 93(May 1, 2001), 9.

"The Kerrey Affair," *Economist* 360(May 5-11, 2001), 28.

**Table 3:**  
**Summary of immersion reading activity steps**

1. Instructor divides groups of up to five students into three reading levels: high, medium, low.
2. Instructor explains that each group will evaluate the articles by taking into consideration:
  - Author's credentials and objectivity
  - Periodical's reputation
  - Article's authoritativeness
  - Relevance of article content to a lesson that should have been learned from the war
3. Students given seven minutes to read each of the articles or pairs of articles in the reading set, and each student should take notes on the articles according to the four main criteria.
4. Instructor facilitates discussion within each group.
5. Each reading group presents their findings.

**Table 4:**  
**Sample Sets of Articles Suitable for Use**  
**in a United States History Class and Relevant to Consider-**  
**ation**  
**of Lessons to Be Learned from the Vietnam War**  
**(with reading difficulty levels in Lexile units in parentheses)**

*Relatively Easy Reading*

Alter, Jonathan. 'I Sweated Blood at Night.' *Newsweek* 125 (April 17, 1995): 52-53.

An interview with Robert McNamara following publication of his book *In Retrospect*. (840)

Beschloss, Michael. "I Don't See Any Way of Winning." *Newsweek* 138 (November 12, 2001): 58-61.

An excerpt from a book on Lyndon Johnson's secret White House tapes, revealing that Johnson did not believe the United States could win the Vietnam War. (840)

Broyles, Jr., William. "The Ghosts of Vietnam." *Newsweek* 123 (February 14, 1994): 30-32.

A wide-ranging personal statement amounting to a plea to let disagreements about the war pass, written by a former Marine lieutenant in Vietnam who was later the editor-in-chief of *Newsweek* and the co-creator of the television series "China Beach". (770)

Brudno, Robert J. "Unfinished Business." *Newsweek* 131 (June 1, 1998): 12.

A statement by a brother of a Vietnam-era prisoner of war, speculating about why his brother killed himself after returning to the United States. (1030)

Galloway, Joseph L. "Fatal Victory." *U.S. News & World Report* 109 (October 29, 1990): 32-34.

An argument that the realities of the first major battle by American troops in Vietnam were ignored and that the battle set the pattern of how the war was officially viewed and how it was fought. (1010)

Hanson-Harding, Alexandra. "Voices of Vietnam." *Junior Scholastic* 101 (May 10, 1999), 12-14.

Brief statements about the Vietnam War by a veteran, a military wife, a war protestor, and a South Vietnamese doctor. (720)

Lyons, Dan. "McNamara Never Understood U.S. Role in Viet-

nam—and Still Doesn't." *Human Events* 51(May 12, 1995): 13-14.

A critique of Robert McNamara and his book *In Retrospect* by a Vietnam War reporter who wrote *Vietnam: Why We Should Have Won*. (950)

Rissel, Morgan. "My Father's War Haunts Me." *New Moon* 7(September/October 1999): 44-45.

A young woman's description of ways in which her father's involvement in the Vietnam War affected him and her. (770)

### *Moderately Difficult Reading*

Blum, Edward. "My Vietnam War and Theirs." *Christian Science Monitor* 92(April 26, 2000): 9.

A statement of apology by a Vietnam War protestor who is now an investment banker and the chairman of legal defense foundation. (1100)

Dannenberg, James. "What I Did Was Legal, But Was It Right?" *Newsweek* 139(February 18, 2002): 19.

A statement of guilt by a man who avoided the Vietnam War draft through a student deferment and practiced draft law during part of the war, pointing out that draft avoidance shielded many young, well-educated American males from serious contemplation about the war. (1100)

Horowitz, David. "Vietnam General Confirms U.S. Left's Role in Losing War." *Human Events* 51(September 22, 1995): 15.

An argument drawing upon statements by a former general in the North Vietnamese army and concluding that America's involvement in the war was appropriate and that war protestors were a cause of America's failure in the war. (1110)

Jimenez, Vito. "What Mission for the U.S. Military?" *World & I* 9(July 1994): 94-97.

A statement presenting the Powell doctrine of either massive military engagement or no engagement, explaining why the doctrine was not applied in Vietnam, and arguing for its appropriateness, written by a naval officer who is a fellow at the American Enterprise Institute. (1080)

Karnow, Stanley. "Lost Inside the Machine." *Time* 157(May 7, 2001): 34.

A commentary on combat conditions for American soldiers during the Vietnam War, written by the author of *Vietnam: A His-*

*tory*, which was awarded the Pulitzer Prize in 1990. (1080)  
 “The Longest War.” *Economist* 355(April 29,2000): 25-27.  
 A wide-ranging piece on the Vietnam War in a British magazine. (1130)

Newman, Richard J. “Vietnam’s Forgotten Lessons.” *U.S. News & World Report* 128(May 1, 2000): 30-35.  
 A cover story by a full-time writer for a weekly news magazine. (1150)

### *Difficult Reading*

Davis, Peter. “Vietnam: A Cracked Mirror.” *Nation* 270(May 15, 2000): 18-21.

A statement contending that the United States lost the Vietnam War and that the defeat had beneficial effects for the country, written by the director of an Academy Award-winning documentary about the Vietnam War, *Hearts and Minds*. (1230)

Herring, George C. “America and Vietnam: The Unending War.” *Foreign Affairs* 70(Winter 1991/1992): 104-119.  
 A scholarly article by a professor of history at the University of Kentucky. (1390)

LeFever, Ernest W. “Uses of the Past: Vietnam as a Metaphor.” *World & I* 12(December 1997): 318-327.

An analysis of American society’s opposing interpretations of the Vietnam War, concluding with the view that America’s military intervention in Vietnam produced some positive results, written by the founder of the Ethics and Public Policy Center, who was a supporter of the war at the time. (1330)

Rostow, Walter W. “McNamara’s Vietnam War Reconsidered.” *Society* 35(September/October 1998): 78-83.

A review of Robert McNamara’s book *In Retrospect* by a political scientist who was a special assistant to President Johnson during the Vietnam War. (1230)

Summers, Jr., Harry G. “Final Days of South Vietnam.” *American History* 30(April 1995): 30-36.

An account of the final days before the fall of Saigon to the North Vietnamese, contending that the South Vietnamese military offered commendable resistance, written by a military historian who is a U. S. Army colonel and was a combat veteran in the Vietnam War. (1230)



**Table 5:**  
**Sample Evaluation of an Article**

Jonathan Alter, 'I Sweated Blood at Night About It,' *Newsweek* 125 (April 17, 1995), 52-53.

- *Author's credentials and objectivity:* McNamara was secretary of defense during the Johnson administration and one of Johnson's key policy makers. However, McNamara might not be considered very objective in his recollections since his book defends his attempts to limit America's involvement in the war and minimizes his role in escalating our use of military measures. Cynical observers might say that he has been engaged for some years in attempting to ensure a positive image for himself in history.
- *Periodical's reputation:* *Newsweek* is considered a reputable centrist mass market news magazine.
- *Article's authoritativeness:* McNamara conveys his positions with precision and persuasiveness, but, again, might also be slanting his remarks to defend his desire to be seen as an advocate of limited military involvement.
- *Relevance of the article content to a lesson that should have been learned from the war:* The interview material is highly relevant to the issue of lessons that should have been learned from the war because McNamara is conveying ideas about how the American government should have developed different policies during the war, such as winning over the hearts and minds of the South Vietnamese instead of relying on body counts.

## Notes

1. Robert H. Ennis, "Critical Thinking Assessment," *Theory into Practice* 32(Summer 1993), 180.
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3. Barry Kingman, "Students, History Textbooks, and the Hidden Dimension," Occasional Paper Number 77-1, ERIC Document Reproduction Services No. ED137197 (1976).
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5. Kline Capps and David E. Vocke, "Developing Higher-Level Thinking Skills through American History Writing Assignments," *OAH Magazine of History* 6(Fall 1991), 6-9; Robert A. Cole, "Confronting the Content Ogre with Critical Thinking," *OAH Magazine of History* 5(Summer 1990), 9-11; Robert P. Green, Jr., and Robert E. Coviello, "The Historian's Craft," *Social Science Record* 21(Fall 1984), 29-31; David S. Trask, "Teaching History in Historical Times: A Side Stage Approach," *Teaching History: A Journal of Methods* 21(Fall 1996), 59-67; Laurel R. Singleton and James R. Giese, "Using Online Primary Sources with Students," *Social Studies* 90(July-August 1999), 148-51; and Wilson J. Warren, "Using the World Wide Web for Primary Source Research in Secondary History Classes," in *History.edu: Essays on Teaching with Technology*, ed. Dennis A. Trinkle and Scott A. Merriman (Armonk, NY, 2001), 171-80.
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8. James S. Leming, "Some Critical Thoughts about the Teaching of Critical Thinking," *Social Studies* 89(March-April 1998), 61-66; and Robert J. Kloss, "A Nudge Is Best," *College Teaching* 42(Fall 1994), 151-58.
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