Clarion Review

Historical

All for Nothing
Clair A. Raney
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Five Stars (out of Five)

The Vietnam War is one of the most tragic events in modern world history. The war spanned three decades, cost nearly 60,000 US soldiers their lives, and wounded another 150,000. The number of Vietnamese casualties is staggering: approximately five million men, women, and children, from North and South Vietnam, were killed during the many years of conflict. In *All for Nothing,* Clair A. Raney examines the war through the eyes of three American Navy men. In their own way, the three men question the politics behind US involvement and the failure to accomplish a meaningful outcome.

Chuck Ramsey is a reservist who finishes his term in the navy, and is ready to get out of the military. His handler entices him to sign a new contract by promising a very desirable post in London. He signs, but is sent to Vietnam instead. Rob Fisher is from a navy family. His life's ambition is to become an admiral, as his father and grandfather did before him. During his second tour of duty, he orders his crew to fire on a village from which the Viet Cong had just fired on his boat. That order causes the death of twelve Vietnamese civilians, and seriously injures six more. Robert Nash is the son of an Alabama sharecropper, looking to start a new life. He learns that, with his father's permission, he can join the navy even though he is only 17. The opportunity to get away from the poverty and abuse that he has known all of his life seems like a fantastic one, and Nash is quick to sign up. These three men from very different backgrounds form tight friendships on the battlefield as they try to survive a war that seems pointless and hopeless.

All for Nothing is a compelling story. The author is a Vietnam vet with 23 years of naval service. Every page is filled with the details of military life, and although this can make the story slow at points, the book is fascinating. The reader will grow to understand and care about the three main characters, and will surely gain a new perspective on the war by seeing it through

their eyes. Ramsey is perhaps the most vocal of the characters in expressing his concern and frustration. He frequently asks the same two questions: “What constitutes the completion of the mission? What is it specifically that we are trying to accomplish?” Though Ramsey never finds satisfactory answers to these questions, the reader will certainly come away from this book with a much clearer, though no less tragic understanding of the Vietnam War.

Catherine Thureson