

Name: _____

Class Period: _____

Synthesis...comparing sources... *The Vietnam War*

Skill 9: Synthesis

Historical thinking involves the ability to develop meaningful and persuasive new understandings of the past by applying all of the other historical thinking skills, by drawing appropriately on ideas and methods from different fields of inquiry or disciplines, and by creatively fusing disparate, relevant, and sometimes contradictory evidence from primary sources and secondary works. Additionally, synthesis may involve applying insights about the past to other historical contexts or circumstances, including the present.

Reminder: Just as historians pull information from a plethora of different sources, you must also consider more than one source when analyzing history. Remember at least one of your SAQs on the AP exam will include opposing views and require synthesis! ...At least one multiple choice set will, as well.

From the Period 8 Content Outline:

Key Concept 8.1: The United States responded to an uncertain and unstable postwar world by asserting and attempting to defend a position of global leadership, with far-reaching domestic and international consequences.

- I. After World War II, the United States sought to stem the growth of Communist military power and ideological influence, create a stable global economy, and build an international security system.
 - A. The United States developed a foreign policy based on collective security and a multilateral economic framework that bolstered non-Communist nations.
 - B. The United States sought to “contain” Soviet-dominated communism through a variety of measures, including military engagements in Korea and Vietnam.
 - C. The Cold War fluctuated between periods of direct and indirect military confrontation and periods of mutual coexistence (or détente).
- III. Cold War policies led to continued public debates over the power of the federal government, acceptable means for pursuing international and domestic goals, and the proper balance between liberty and order.
 - A. Americans debated policies and methods designed to root out Communists within the United States even as both parties tended to support the broader Cold War strategy of containing communism.
 - B. Although the Korean conflict produced some minor domestic opposition, the Vietnam War saw the rise of sizable, passionate, and sometimes violent antiwar protests that became more numerous as the war escalated.

Step 1: Read each pair of excerpts and analyze in the space provided.

Source A: President Lyndon Johnson, 1964

“The first reality is that North Vietnam has attacked the independent nation of South Vietnam. Its object is total conquest....Women and children are strangled in the night because their men are loyal to their government. And helpless villages are ravaged by sneak attack....Our objective is the independence of South Vietnam and its freedom from attack. We want nothing for ourselves—only that the people of South Vietnam be allowed to guide their country in their own way.”

Historical Context for Both Documents:

LBJ's POV:

Source B: Neil Sheehan, journalist, 1964

“The regimes [of South Vietnam] were and are composed of men...who are allied with mandarin families....Most of the men who rule Saigon have, like the Bourbons, learned nothing and forgotten nothing. They seek to retain what privileges they have and to regain those they have lost....The Communist party is the one truly national organization that permeates both North and South Vietnam. The men who lead the party today...directed the struggle for independence from France and in the process captured much of the deeply felt nationalism of the Vietnamese people.”

Sheehan's POV:

Source C: President Johnson, 1968

"Our power, therefore, is a very vital shield. If we are driven from the field in Vietnam, then no nation can ever again have the same confidence in American promise or American protection.... Three Presidents—President Eisenhower, President Kennedy, and your present President—over 11 years have committed themselves and have promised to defend this small and valiant nation.... We just cannot now dishonor our word, or abandon our commitment, or leave those who believed us and trusted us to the terror and repression and murder that would follow."

"Peace will come also because America sent her sons to help secure it. It has not been easy—far from it.... I have lived daily and nightly with the cost of this war. I know the pain it has inflicted.... Throughout this entire long period, I have been sustained by a single principle: that what we are doing now, in Vietnam, is vital not only to the security of Southeast Asia, but it is vital to the security of every American.... I believe the men who endure the dangers of battle...are helping the entire world avoid far greater conflicts, far wider wars, far more destructive than this one."

Historical Context for Both Documents:**LBJ's POV:****Source D: Senators Stuart Symington and Joseph Clark, 1968**

"I believe what is going on now in Vietnam has hurt the concept of our capability in the minds of our friends and allies as well as our enemies. It has hurt the national will in this country because of increasing dissension and I am afraid it has made the people who are opposed to us reduce their belief in our capacity."

"Vietnam is a cancer which is devouring our youth, our morals, our national wealth, and the energies of our leadership. The casualty list from this war only begins on the battlefield. As victims we must count the programs of the Great Society, the balance of payments, a sound budget, a stable dollar, the world's good will, détente with the Soviet Union, and hopes for a durable world peace. The toll of this war can never be measured in terms of lives lost and dollars spent—they are only the tip of a vast iceberg whose bulk can never be accurately measured."

Symington and Clark's POV:**Step 3: Answer the SAQ.**

On a separate piece of paper, answer the following questions. Write in complete sentences, make sure your answers can stand alone, and back up each explanation with at least one specific piece of historical evidence NOT found in the excerpts.

1. Briefly explain ONE way President Johnson interpretation of the Vietnam War (Sources A & C) differs from Sheehan, Symington, and Clark's interpretation (Sources B & D).
2. Briefly explain ONE way the debate over the Vietnam War impacted American politics.
3. Briefly explain ONE way the debate over the Vietnam War impacted American identity.