

describes O'Brien's reaction when he looked at the dead body of an enemy he just killed. O'Brien looked at the man's wounds and imagined different stories about him. He was a young boy with a typical life who wished every day that the Americans would leave, so he would not have to join the war. The story, at every moment it was discussed, *evoked* many personal feelings and memories from me.

3 It is commonly said that war *distorts* all the values of humanity. War allows only action, which is that a man kills another man, so he will not be killed himself. But to learn this *deconstruction* of humanity from a soldier who was put in a situation where it was either kill or be killed brings the cruelty of war to a new dimension. This extreme situation pushes a human into a dead end; it traps him or her in a corner where the only choice is either to give up on conscience or to die. Why does this type of situation dominate war, when people all across the world are taught not to kill? We understand that when a soldier kills another human, he has a good reason to do so: He is trying to protect himself and survive.

4 However, war causes *combatants* to lose sight of the value of humanity. The act of killing another human crosses a line which devalues the life of another human being. Once the line is crossed, what the soldiers see and feel becomes the hidden part of war that only a soldier, not an outsider, can tell. And this hidden part has been covered in the darkness of war trauma, which Vietnamese and American soldiers all experienced. At least, that is what I found out from my family members and friends.

5 My family has many members who were devoted to the war. They fought and killed to survive and contribute to a Vietnamese victory. They were honored and received many medals and awards which they should be proud of. Yet, besides their accomplishments, I have never heard a specific war story vividly describing a battle.

6 For example, my uncle often used words like "we fought," "we won," and "we lost." He never told stories about what actually happened: whom he met, how he fought, or what he thought about the war. In fact, my uncle and the millions of participants, real people, are hidden behind characters. There is a key emotion that is always missing from history texts, novels, and movies, seemingly because no one really knows the truth or they just never tell. I wanted to get the answer from my uncle, but he usually stayed quiet and immersed himself in deep thought whenever I asked him about the battles he participated in. He would never tell me anything, and I could feel that the war created a secret circle around him which would haunt him for the rest of his life.

Why do you think Nguyen's family members avoid telling "specific" war stories?

What, exactly, does the writer want to learn from her uncle?