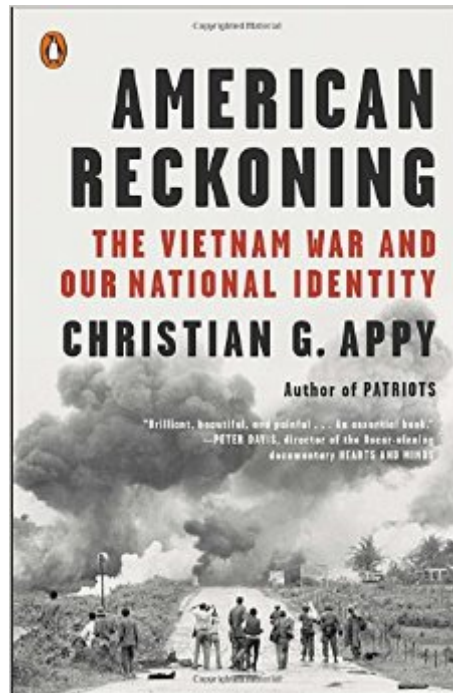


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# American Reckoning: The Vietnam War And Our National Identity



## Synopsis

The critically acclaimed author of *Patriots* offers profound insight into Vietnam's place in America's self-image. How did the Vietnam War change the way we think of ourselves as a people and a nation? In *American Reckoning*, Christian G. Appy—author of *Patriots*, the widely praised oral history of the Vietnam War—examines the war's realities and myths and its lasting impact on our national self-perception. Drawing on a vast variety of sources that range from movies, songs, and novels to official documents, media coverage, and contemporary commentary, Appy offers an original interpretation of the war and its far-reaching consequences for both our popular culture and our foreign policy. Authoritative, insightful, and controversial, urgently speaking to our role in the world today, *American Reckoning* invites us to grapple honestly with the conflicting lessons and legacies of the Vietnam War.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Professor of history and author (*PATRIOTS: The Vietnam War Remembered from All Sides*) Christian G. Appy examines the lingering damage to America's self-image as a result of the Vietnam War, urging us to heed the mistakes of the past so we are not doomed to repeat them. Called to Vietnam to help foster stability after the French left in the 1950s, America was unprepared for the declaration of hostilities (the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution) pushed through Congress in 1964 by President Lyndon Johnson. Thousands of American lives would be lost in what later seemed to have been a futile exercise of military force that, long before its less than satisfactory denouement, sharply divided the nation. It was not a divide born of mere political

posturing; it was a deep cultural and generational wound that has never healed. For many, Appy asserts, Vietnam busted the trust in our government, in its intention always to occupy the moral high ground. The Vietnam experience initiated and galvanized a broad-scale anti-war movement that still flickers across our screens to this day. It made protest, along with combat, part of the national conversation. Fifty years on, many Americans recall the war being served up with supper on the 6:00 news, especially the bizarre term "body count." High body counts led to medals, rapid promotion, and plum assignments for the upper echelons of the military; that, in turn, led to inflation of kill numbers by their subordinates in the field of battle. Worse, as one medic recalled, "there was a real incentivizing of death." Back home, one of the more devastating events, arguably a turning point even for some fence sitters, was the gunning down by National Guardsmen of student protestors at Kent State University.

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