



Discussion Questions

They Marched Into Sunlight by David Maraniss

Source: Madison Public Library

1. How did the way Maraniss wrote the book, interweaving the different threads (Black Lions, Lyndon B. Johnson, UW students and administration, Dow Chemical, and the military generals), enhance or detract from your understanding and appreciation of the complexity of that time?
2. What about this period in our history surprised you? Did you learn something new? What are some of your memories of this time that resonated on reading this book?
3. So much of the anti-war movement back in the 60s and 70s focused negatively on the veterans returning from the war. By introducing the reader to so many of the Black Lions and providing their background information, Maraniss made us care for every one of them. Did your feelings about war change at all on reading this book? About soldiers in battle?
4. Is it a surprise to you that the anti-war movement at the UW was so diverse and amorphous? What were your reactions to the way the police handled the student's obstruction in the Commerce Building? The administration? The students? Did you think that William Sewell made the right decision to call in the city police?
5. Did Maraniss' sections on President Johnson give you more sympathy for the role of the president in time of war? Much of the pundit talk during our current war stresses the importance of continuity and steadiness of leadership while at war. Do the sections on the debate going on in the White House give you more insight into how the President has to deal with a war? Were you surprised at Johnson's obsession with the anti-war demonstrations?
6. What do you think about Johnson's decision not to run again? Do you think the war would have ended sooner had he had a second full term?

7. Dow Chemical debated long and hard before their decision to continue to produce napalm. What were your reactions to how Dow dealt with the negative publicity they were receiving? Were you surprised that there was an increase in the number of interviews after the publicity on the demonstrations?
8. Why do you think the military brass was so intent on naming Operation Shenandoah II on October 17 a battle and not an ambush? From Maraniss' information, it seems there were some disastrous decisions during the battle (decisions not to bomb the area prior to and during the battle, decision not to retreat). Do you think there should have been more investigation into that battle and responsibility for the devastation (blame) given to Colonel Newman? General Westmoreland? Lieutenant Colonel Allen?
9. How did you feel about the meeting, 35 years after the battle, of Clark Welch and Vo Minh Triet? Can you believe that these men who suffered so much at the hands of each other during the war, can forgive and understand each other as veterans of a terrible war?