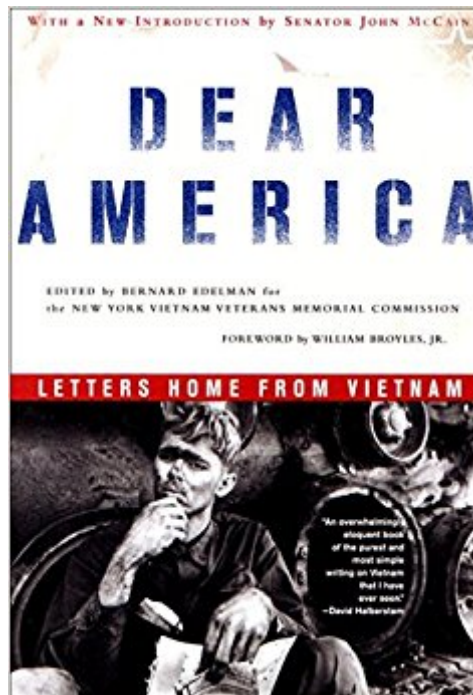


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Dear America: Letters Home From Vietnam



Synopsis

"An overwhelmingly eloquent book of the purest and most simple writing on Vietnam." —David Halberstam Nearly forty years after the official end of the Vietnam War, *Dear America* allows us to witness the war firsthand through the eyes of the men and women who served in Vietnam. In this collection of more than 200 letters, they share their first impressions of the rigors of life in the bush, their longing for home and family, their emotions over the conduct of the war, and their ache at the loss of a friend in battle. Poignant in their rare honesty, the letters from Vietnam are "riveting,... extraordinary by [their] very ordinariness... for the most part, neither deep nor philosophical, only very, very human" (Los Angeles Times). Revealing the complex emotions and daily realities of fighting in the war, these close accounts offer a powerful, uniquely personal portrait of the many faces of Vietnam's veterans.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

This is a poignant collection of letters and poems, mostly to loved ones back home, written by soldiers while serving in Vietnam. Ordered roughly by a typical GI's year of service (arrival "in-country," leave, etc.), the selections range from brave and philosophical to raging and grief-stricken. "Last Letters," the chapter containing missives sent by men shortly before their deaths, is particularly haunting. "This book provides valuable insight into what 'grunts' went through," PW stated. Major ad/promo. February Copyright 1985 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

â œNot a history book, not a war novel.... Dear America is a book of truth.â • - Boston Globeâ œDear America is painful, but it must be difficult to be realistic and entertaining about war.... Reading it, I felt I was listening to the voices of the men and women who lived and fought in Vietnam.â • - Baltimore Sunâ œDear America tells of an ache as ancient as timeâ • adolescents off to war with high expectations, who soon change greatly. Ambiguities aboundâ • from pain, disillusionment and sorrow for dead comrades to a hard-earned measure of individual strength and survival.â • - Washington Post Book Worldâ œHere is the sad and beautiful countermelody of truth, audible at last, now that we have trashed the drums and cymbals of yet another senseless war.â • - Kurt Vonnegutâ œNo full understanding of the most disastrous foreign war in American history can be complete without reading these letters from the GIs to their loved ones back home.â • - Peter Arnett, Pulitzer Prize-winning Vietnam correspondent

"Dear America" is a collection of letters back home from men-and women- in Vietnam. DA is split up into 8 sections, giving the reader a decent exposure into what guys went through over there. For the record, this reviewer was in country from July '70-July '71. (Most vets dropped the "19" when it came to their years over there). Describing Vietnam in writing to someone who never came within 15,000 miles of the place is virtually impossible but the letters herein do a good job in this regard. The most poignant section is the final one. These are letters from guys, including one female, who did not make it home. This reviewer was pained to read of the Army nurse from Canton, Ohio who was killed when her hospital was mortared. For the record, 8 military women were killed during the War. Their names are on the Wall. Reading about soldiers who were just weeks away from homecoming before dying is excruciating. Being a "short timer" over there was the most sensitive of subjects. This reviewer will stop at this point but not without adding one personal note: He should his lucky stars every day that he was not in the infantry and escaped the worst over there. He is also lucky that he did not extend his tour to get an early discharge. The Army dangled that little sweetener and some guys who grabbed it-including at least two in these pages -were killed during their extension. Apologies: A good review should exclude personal tales, but this is Vietnam! Some reminiscing is hard to avoid. There are so many superior Vietnam writings out there. "Dear America" is yet another. It is fully recommended for its insight into that conflict that affected so many of us.

The basis for the HBO production of the same name, Dear America provides a glimpse into the Vietnam war through letters home by the young men and women who served. The book is broken

into seven sections, each portraying a different view of the war, from first impressions ("Cherries"), to life in the field ("Humping the Boonies") to "quiet" life in the rear with the gear ("Base Camp"). The editors include a variety of voices both enlisted and officer from all branches of service (and some from other civilian volunteers). Taken as a whole, the book does a solid job of showing the sweep and scope of experiences. Similar to *Since You Went Away: World War II Letters from American Women on the Home Front* - a collection of letters from the "home front" in World War II, *Letters Home from Vietnam* is intensely personal, powerful and moving, all the more so because the editors tell what happened to the writers after the war - many moved on to successful careers in the civilian world in all manner of occupations. Some died in the conflict. Knowing what the future held for the letter writers makes the letters all the more powerful in the reading. An excellent resource in teaching history and as a collection of primary documents, it is also a haunting reminder of the personal sacrifice Vietnam demanded of those who served.

I cannot say enough things about this book. I discovered it years ago and wore out that paperback copy. I ordered this again as a permanent edition to my library. I have not read a compilation of letters or journal entries from any time period that matches or comes close to the wonderful job Mr. Edleman did in putting this book together. What the reader gets from this book would depend on many factors -- are they military or former military, are they anti-war proponents, or particularly interested in the Viet Nam era. Personally, I watched my father serve three tours (one in 1963 as an advisor to the French as it was his second language, once in 1965 when he was wounded and spent a year at the hospital in Fort Campbell, Kentucky, and again in 1971. As a military child, I was keenly aware of the effects of the war on my mother, myself, and the mother and children who lived on the base during this time of great death and sorrow. Mr. Edelman starts out with the "newbies" and ends with the aftermath the war had on families. I would recommend this book to anyone. It is filled with very personal and intimate details of so many young men and women who served.

Few books touched me as much as *Dear America: Letters Home from Vietnam*. I was a teenager/young adult while this war took place, and each letter reminded me of someone I knew. The common theme of each of the writers was their sense of duty to their country despite the hardships. There are funny letters, and heartbreaking letters and each should be honored.

I wasn't really sure how I was going to like this book as it's not a typical story line, but once I started reading it, I fell in love. Listening to the individual stories of varying experiences in Vietnam. I love

how that the author gives information on what happened to these soldiers both in combat and after. Of course, reading about those that didn't make it is heart breaking. It's such a monumental piece of American History and it kills me to know how poorly these young men were treated after they came home. As a veteran of an equally unpopular war, Operation Enduring Freedom, I feel that the Nam Vets really set the precedent for how not to treat soldiers. Thank you to every man and woman who served their country during this awful war. Your sacrifices will forever be appreciated. Thank you.

Such a good book, so sad but really good and makes you even more thankful for our veterans.

This book was required for one of my classes and I honestly wasn't at all excited about it at first. However, after reading it, my mind has been changed 100%. This book is touching and emotional. Even if you have no personal connection to the Vietnam War, like myself, this book allows you to connect with the men and women writing the letters. This book is very insightful and inspiring and I recommend it to everybody.

Very poignant book. Have Kleenex when you read them.

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