



## DISCUSSION GUIDE

*In the Shadow of the Blade* provides an excellent backdrop for a panel or individual Question-and-Answer discussion with people who were directly affected by the Vietnam War. Done properly, such sessions can be an unforgettable learning opportunity.

The discussion facilitator should be mindful that, though many veterans and families are willing and even eager to educate audiences, they may also have lost friends or loved ones in the Vietnam War or other wars. They may also have suffered physically or emotionally themselves. A productive discussion will therefore be centered in a climate of dignity and respect for the often sacred nature of the subject matter. Regardless of politics, those who serve in the military do so on behalf of the American people at the orders of the President. Their service should be honored with the public's respect.

With student audiences especially, it will be helpful to have an advance discussion to set the tone and guide the questions. Though students should be encouraged to ask their questions, they should also be cautioned about the importance of being appropriate. Some examples of questions that are not appropriate:

How many people did you kill?

Do you have PTSD?

Instead, steer students toward more appropriate, suggested questions to facilitate discussion:

Why did you serve?

When, where, and with what unit did you serve? What was your job?

What do you most want people to know about your experience?

What part of *In the Shadow of the Blade* most resonates for you?

How accurately do you believe most movies portray your experience?

*In the Shadow of the Blade* shows us that most veterans are “taken back” by the sound of a helicopter. What other sounds or sights or smells remind you of your experience in the Vietnam War?

It's clear from *In the Shadow of the Blade* that soldiers in a war develop a close camaraderie. Can you talk about that?

What was your homecoming from Vietnam like?

Fifty years from now, what do you hope people will remember about Vietnam veterans?