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History 380

Professor Ferrell

Life Magazine

Throughout history pictures, videos, and countless other sources of media have been a staple in remembering the past. Pictures have the capability of accessing emotions. For example when thinking of Kent State, a textbook picture probably pops in to one's memory. Life Magazine was a popular media outlet throughout the mid-nineteenth century especially through the time of World War II and the Cold War. The cover page of all Life Magazines were bold pictures that illustrated events or people that were prevalent to their perspective publication dates. With these pictures and illustrations this paper will articulate the subjects and events depicted and their suggestions to the public in correlation to the Vietnam War.

The year 1965 offers a wide array of imagery relating to the Vietnam War. While the year mostly depicts American dominance through the August 6th cover titled "U.S.S. Oklahoma City shells the Vietcong" and the November 26th cover titled "Vietcong Prisoner, Held by the U.S. Marines" which showed him with his eyes and mouth taped shut. While in the same year the cover titled "Deeper into Vietnam" depicts a wounded U.S. soldier being aided by friendly soldiers offers a relatable and humanistic perspective.

1966 started off with a more gruesome beginning to the Vietnam War. The February 11th, cover titled "The War Goes on" showed two wounded and bandaged U.S. soldiers. Along with the October 28th cover titled "Marines' Crucial battle to Block North Vietnamese Invasion of DMZ" showcased a more gritty side of the war. In 1966 Life Magazine only portrayed a U.S.

stand point on the war. The year 1967 was filled with more cover pages that were aimed to change the public's opinion on the war. After the two previous years of showcasing injured soldiers and military power Life Magazine seemed to take a step towards comforting the American people. With covers that illustrated soldiers with down time, and less violent pictures the year played a role in the way the American viewed the Vietnam War.

The close of the decade from 1968-1969 Life Magazines attention moved away from the topic of the Vietnam War toward the growing war at home. In these two years the magazine had very limited title pages in reference to the Vietnam War. When the Vietnam War was a cover page like in the 1968, February edition titled "Bloody Vietcong Guerrilla is Taken Alive" there was a sense of dehumanization toward them. Unlike the years prior, Life Magazine's close of the 1960s offered less imagery toward the Vietnam War.

The 1970s was similar to the late 1960s in the way that Life Magazines coverage of the Vietnam War diluted with the growing changes on the Homefront. A 1971 cover page titled "War in Laos" had a photo of a land mine exploding among South Vietnamese troops depicted the struggles of an ongoing war. Then in 1972 a cover titled "Vietnam Retreat" was one of the last front pages in the early 1970s.

Over the span of 1965-1973 the Vietnam War was portrayed and illustrated in many different ways throughout media. Life Magazine cover's and front page illustrations had changed with the tides of the American society. From a strong display of American military dominance in the mid-1960s to the dehumanization of the Vietnamese Life Magazine illustrated both sides of the war. From wounded American soldiers to wounded or captured Vietnamese the magazine offered a rounded image of the Vietnam War. (I Pledge... Word count: 581)

Bibliography

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