**Chapter review**

**Short-answer questions**

1. What was the background to the Vietnam War?

1. What were the key battles of the war?

1. What were the nature and impact of the anti-war protests?

1. How did the war in Vietnam end?

1. What were the outcomes and consequences of war?

**Analyse the historian’s views**

The Vietnam War is still hotly debated. There are three distinct schools of thought. Which one do you agree with most? Justify your response.

**Perspective 1 – Losing a noble war: Conservative revisionists**

These historians argue that the war was morally right, a noble crusade against ruthless communism. A winnable war was lost because of poor military and political decisions which were further undermined by the anti-war protests at home. Historians Harry Summers, Lewis Sorley, Bruce Palmer, Phil Davidson and Andrew Krepinevich hold this point of view.

**Perspective 2 – Seeing America as the real villain: The New Left**

These historians argue that the United States was morally wrong to fight the war in Vietnam. They view America as an aggressive imperialist power that was intent on dominating the Third World, mainly for economic reasons, and entered a civil war that was not its war. The most prominent historian holding this point of view is Gabriel Kolko.

**Perspective 3 – Making a tragic mistake: The liberal realists**

These historians argue that the war was wrong – not on moral grounds, but more for practical reasons. The war was not winnable for the United States. To the liberal realists, Vietnam was not worth the loss of so much American life and money. The most prominent historians who promote this point of view are George Herring, Neal Sheehan and Stanley Karnow.

**Extended-response question**

Write a considered response to this statement about the Vietnam War: ‘Did we have to kill them, in order to save them?’

To what extent do you agree or disagree? Provide detailed examples to support your answer. Use information from this chapter to form an argument that is supported by evidence.

* Think about provocative questions such as whether the Vietnamese could have been any worse off under communism.
* Was America engaged in a noble effort to defend a small, young country against an invading communist force? Or was it guilty of an aggressive war against a people who were merely seeking the right to determine their own style of government and therefore, their own future?
* To respond to this question, you will need to be able to evaluate the reasons for and against American intervention in Vietnam.
* What were the problems created by the war? Think about the death statistics. Think about the outcome of war for returning veterans. Think about the arguments over fighting someone else’s war. Think about the anti-war movement and massive protests.
* What did the war solve? Think about the Domino Theory and the desire to stop the spread of communism. Did the war actually ‘solve’ these issues, or just attempt to solve them? Question to what extent the battles in Vietnam were actually ideological ones.
* Form your overall argument. Crucially, were the Vietnamese really ‘saved’ thanks to America’s involvement in the war? Was the outcome of the war worth the deaths? What is your argument? Write it down in one sentence and include it in your introduction.