

Fetch me a pen

Fast Writing and Reflective Editing

**Making sense of the paragraph; making sense of
historical events**



Fast writing: Encouraging reflective editing

This paragraph writing activity, created for the Fetch Me a Pen project, provides a model for how teachers and students might approach reflective editing. Students studying the Vietnam War in History were working towards an essay response that answered the following question:

Why were the US army unable to defeat the Viet Cong in the Vietnam War?

The first paragraph, created by the class teacher, typifies many of the mistakes students were making when using 'fast writing' – writing down what they had learned and understood in a very short amount of time – to construct a point to their argument.

This activity takes students through the initial paragraph, sentence by sentence, and asks questions of what had been written. Each slide here has a command (top right) for each sentence, and usually includes questions (in speech bubbles) that students need to effectively answer in their new, improved sentences. Each slide also has a box in which to model a new, improved sentence or parts of them should students need this.

american soldiers had hersheys on their journey and left rubbish on the floor for them to find, their shoes that made loud noises while they were walking and they also used deodorant that left the smell so the vietcong always found them and this made the americans frustrated and angry.

Reflective editing of fast writing: issues to address

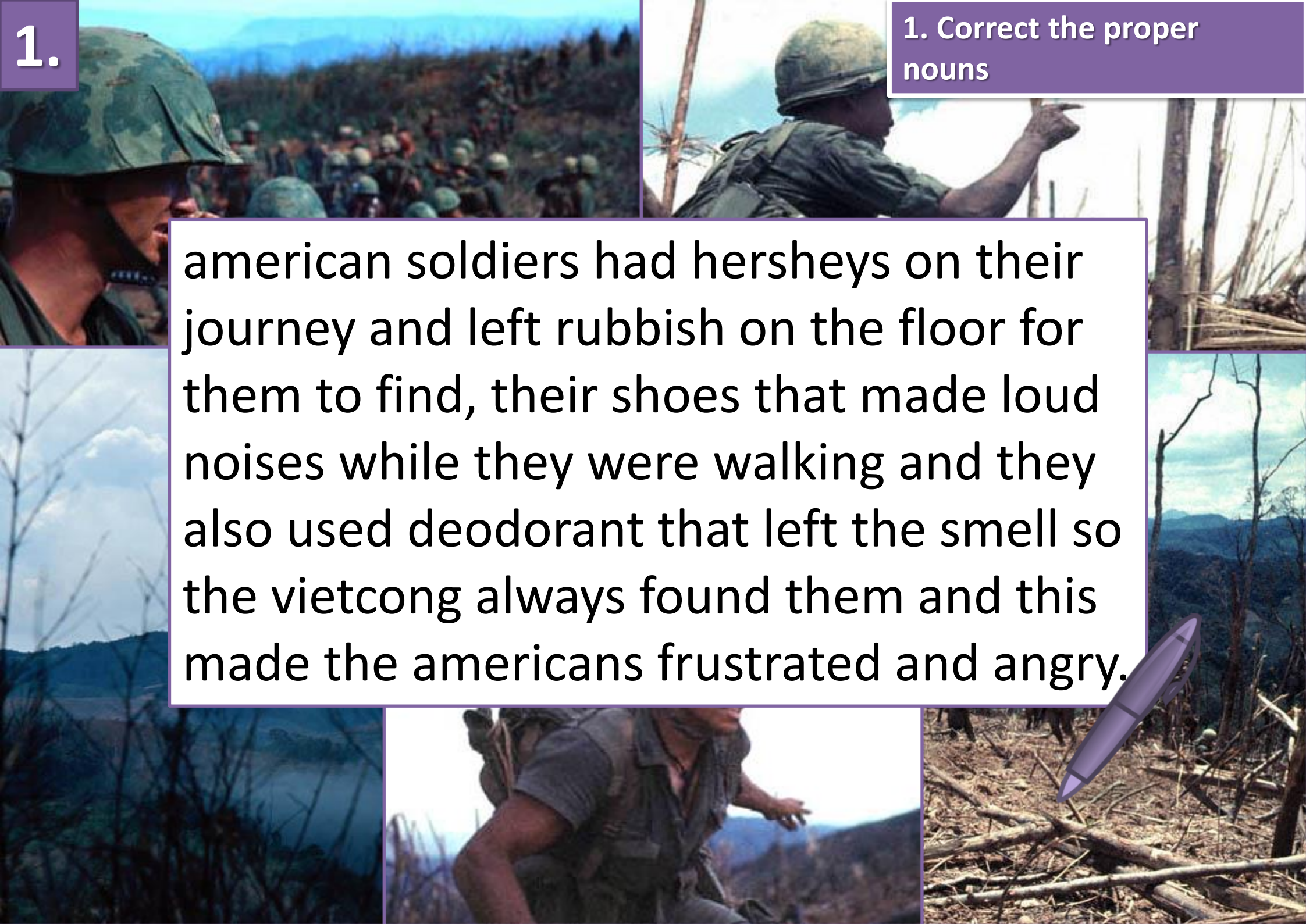
- Assuming too much knowledge on the part of the reader!
- Proper nouns - getting them right
- Avoiding the comma splice (a comma where a full-stop or connective should be placed)
- Replacing imprecise pronouns (they, them, it...) with noun phrases to improve explicitness and fluency
- Contextualising ideas – addressing the ‘what’, ‘who’, ‘why’ and ‘when’
- Using connectives for organisation, cohesion and impact
- Improving paragraph or ‘point’ structure with topic and concluding sentences

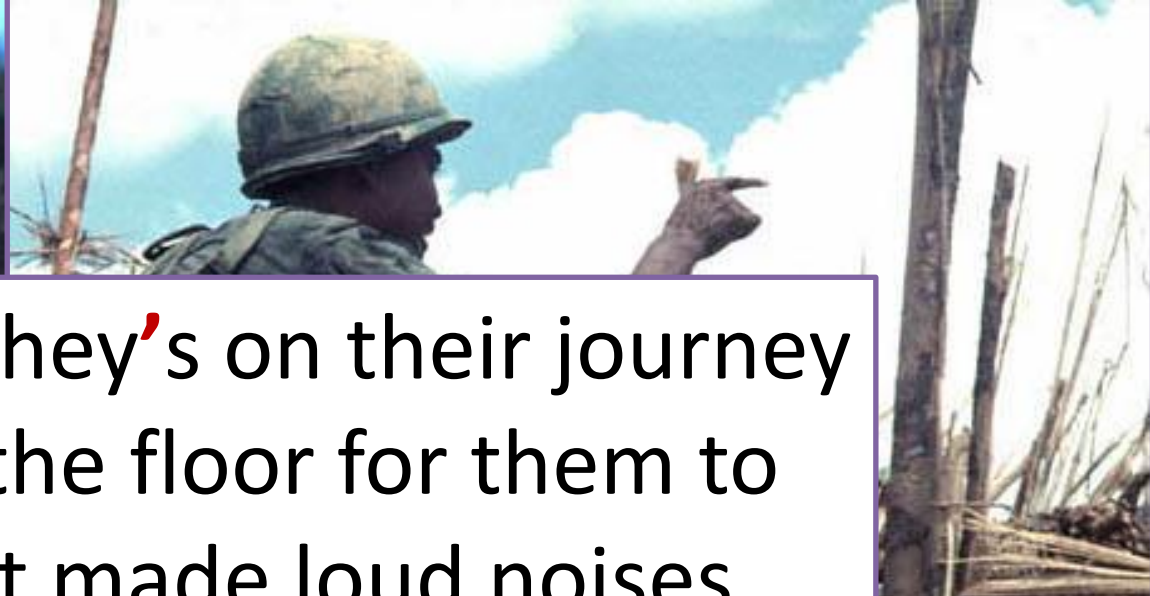
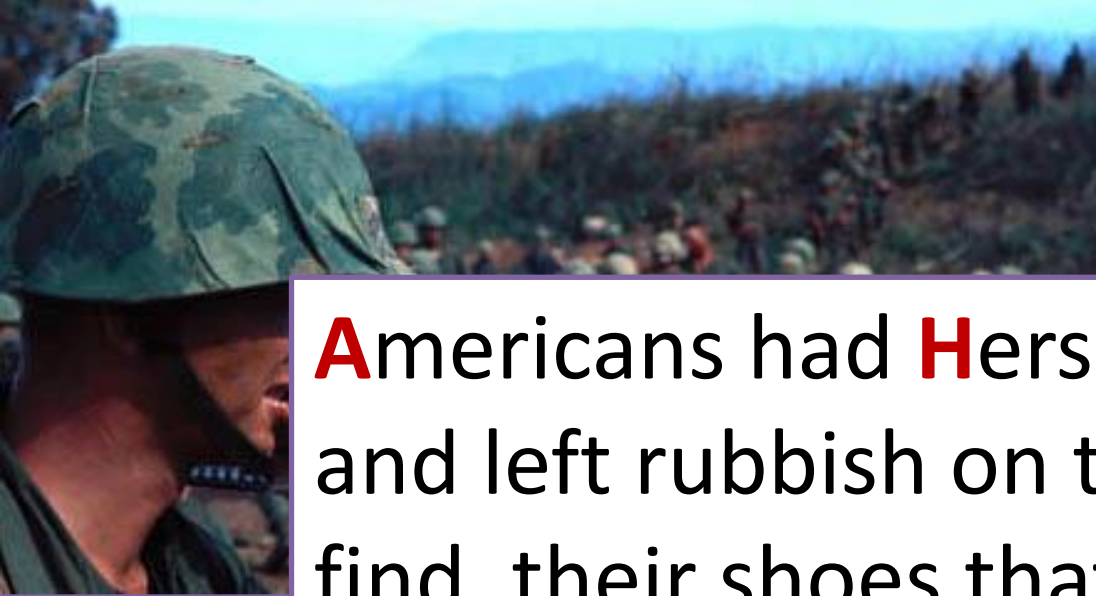


1.

1. Correct the proper nouns

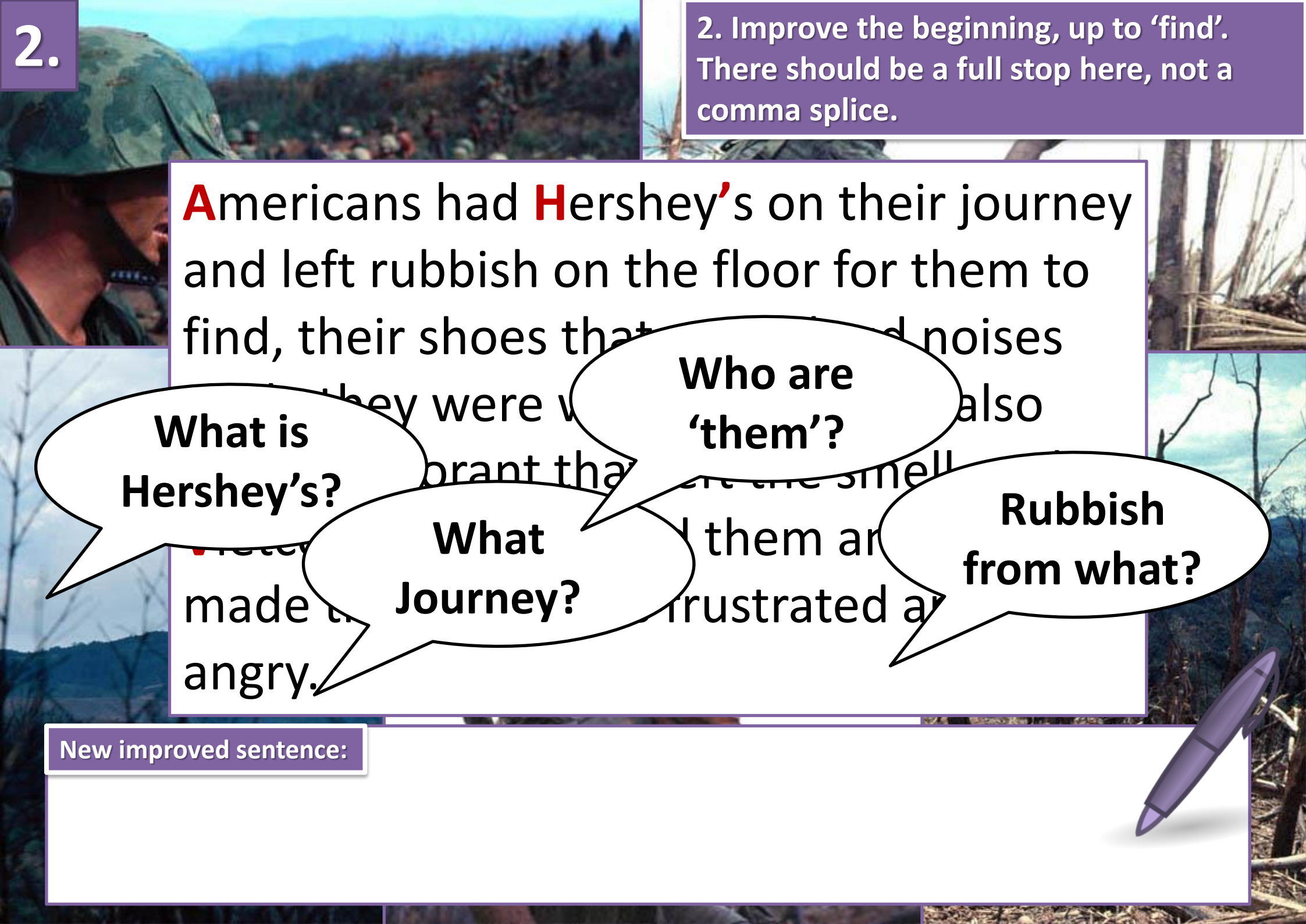
american soldiers had hersheys on their journey and left rubbish on the floor for them to find, their shoes that made loud noises while they were walking and they also used deodorant that left the smell so the vietcong always found them and this made the americans frustrated and angry.





Americans had **H**ershey's on their journey and left rubbish on the floor for them to find, their shoes that made loud noises while they were walking and they also used deodorant that left the smell so the **V**ietcong always found them and this made the **A**mericans frustrated and angry.





2.

2. Improve the beginning, up to 'find'. There should be a full stop here, not a comma splice.

Americans had Hershey's on their journey and left rubbish on the floor for them to find, their shoes that they were wearing also made them angry.

What is Hershey's?

Who are 'them'?

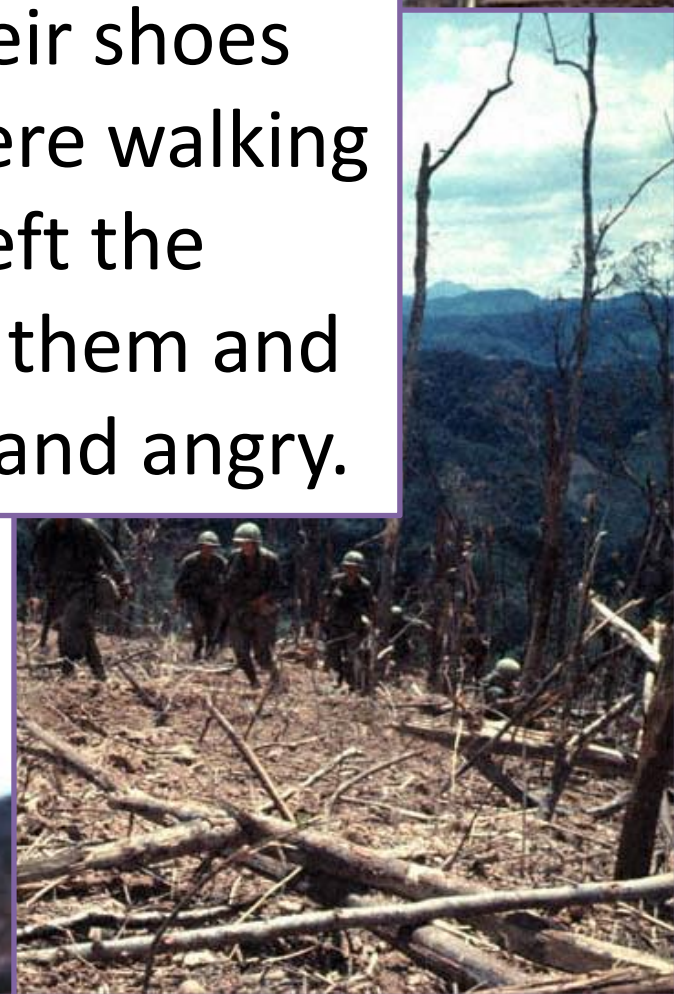
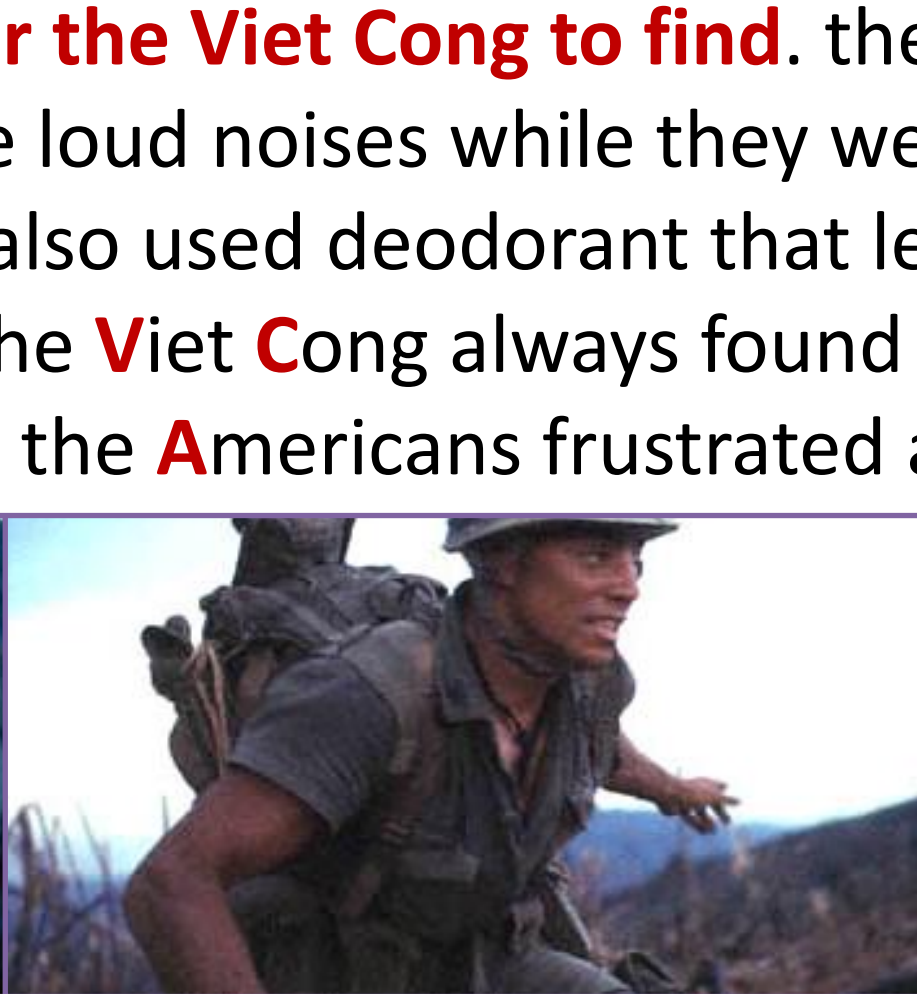
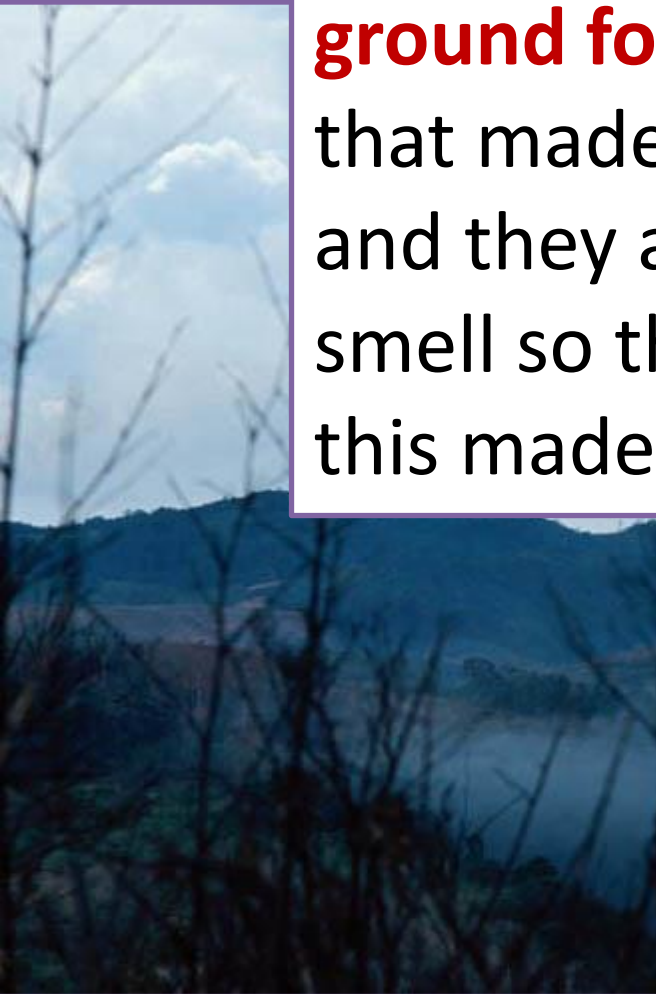
What Journey?

Rubbish from what?

New improved sentence:



American soldiers had Hershey's chocolate bars as part of their rations while fighting, and they often left their wrappers on the ground for the Viet Cong to find. their shoes that made loud noises while they were walking and they also used deodorant that left the smell so the **V**iet **C**ong always found them and this made the **A**mericans frustrated and angry.



3.

3. Create another sentence, up to 'smell'. Are the ideas in the sentences similar to those in the first? If so, which connective could you begin with?

'Their shoes'?
Whose shoes?

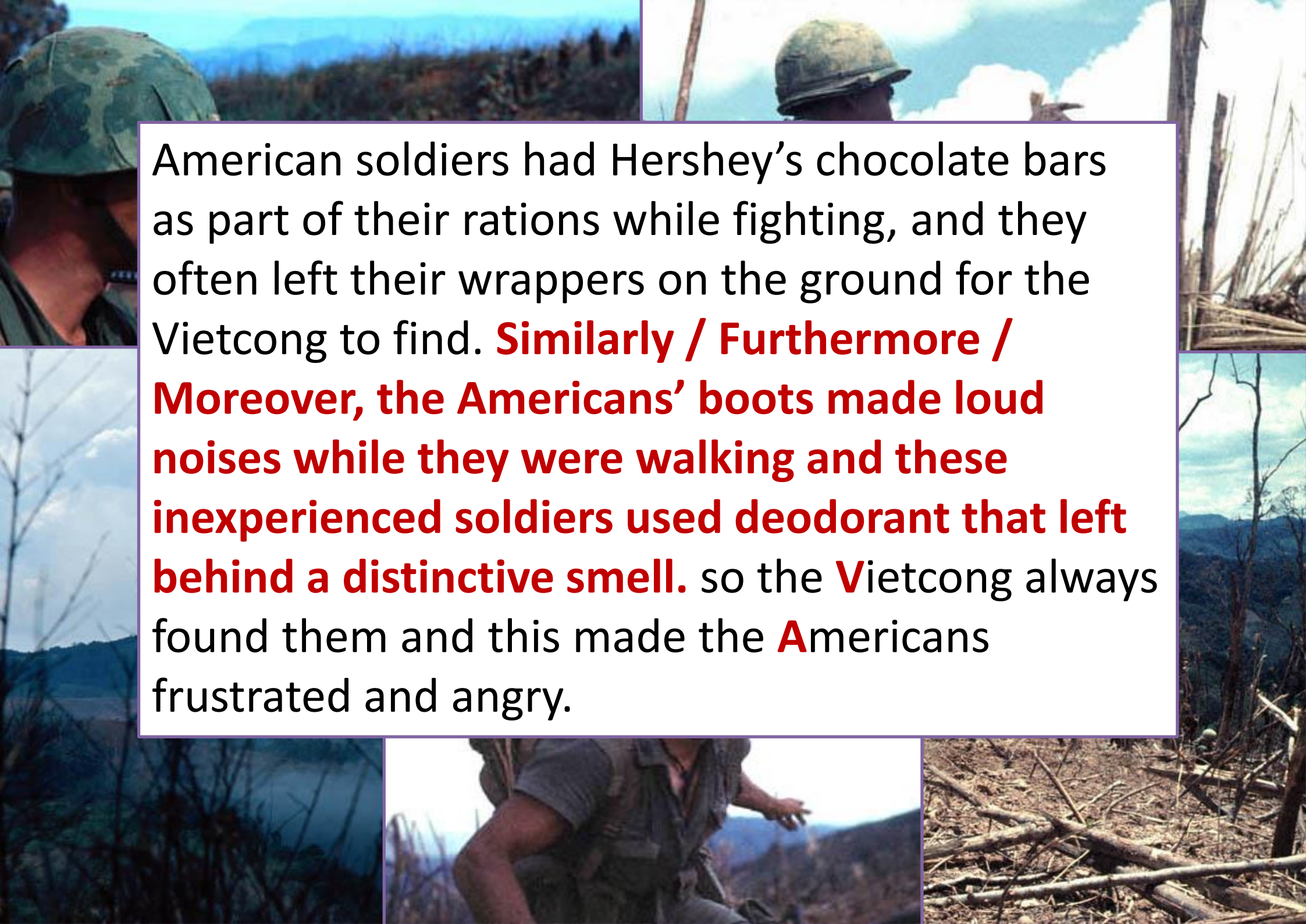
'They?' Again,
who do you mean?

'The smell'?
What smell?

...Hershey's chocolate
...while fighting,
...wrappers on the
...for the Viet Cong to find. their shoes
that made loud noises while they were walking
and they also used deodorant that left the
smell so the Viet Cong always found them and
this made the Americans frustrated and angry.

New improved sentence:





American soldiers had Hershey's chocolate bars as part of their rations while fighting, and they often left their wrappers on the ground for the Vietcong to find. **Similarly / Furthermore / Moreover, the Americans' boots made loud noises while they were walking and these inexperienced soldiers used deodorant that left behind a distinctive smell.** so the Vietcong always found them and this made the Americans frustrated and angry.

4.

4. Sum up, using the last sentence here. 'So' is a little weak. What might be a more powerful 'summing up' connective?

American soldiers had Hershey's chocolate bars

Did they really
always find them?

their rations while fighting, and they
wrappers on the ground for the

needing to find **Similarly / Furthermore /**

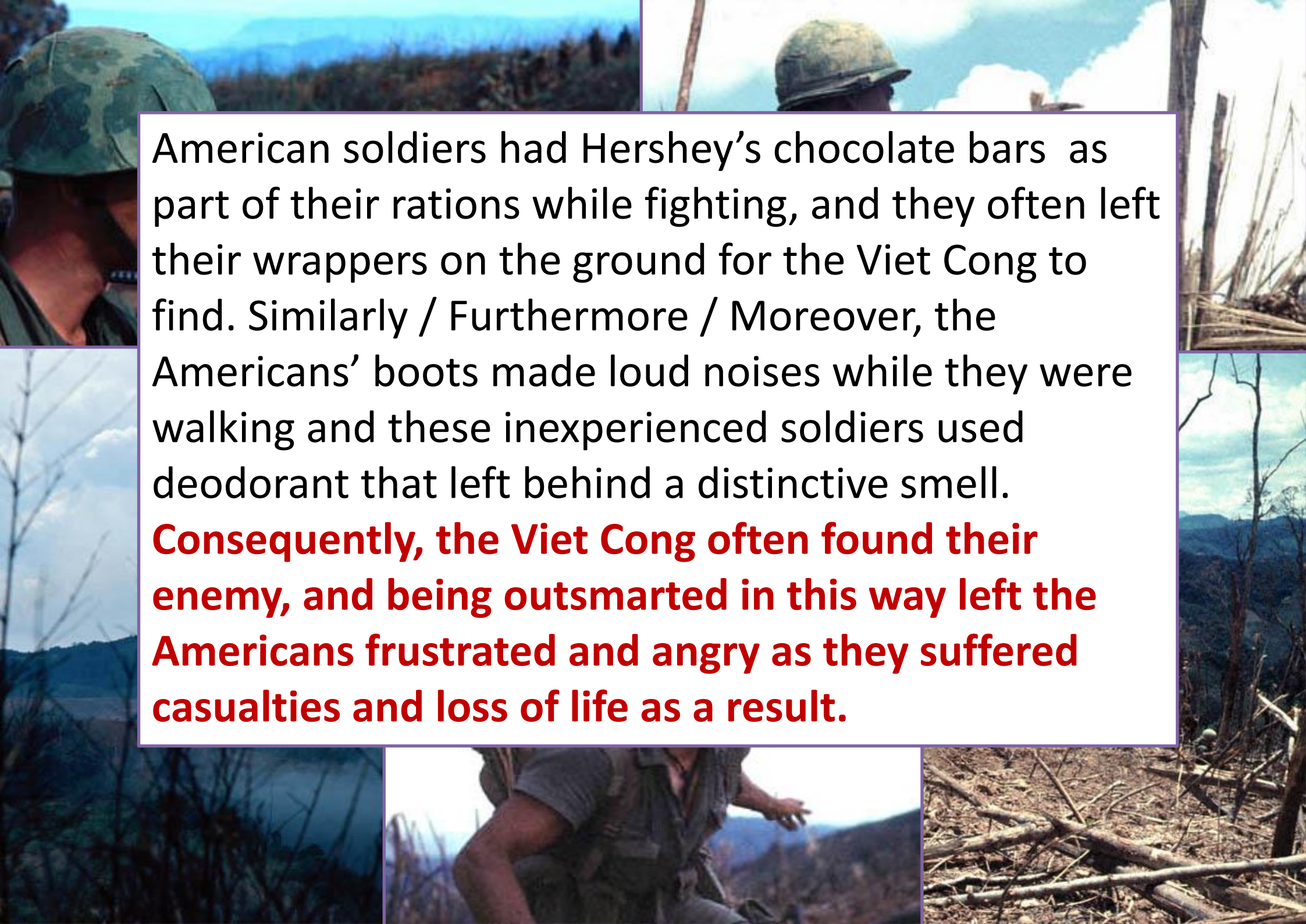
Moreover, the 'Frustrated and
noises while angry'? Why?

inexperienced soldiers used deodorant that left

behind a distinctive smell. so the **Vietcong** always
found them and this made the **Americans**
frustrated and angry.

New improved sentence:





American soldiers had Hershey's chocolate bars as part of their rations while fighting, and they often left their wrappers on the ground for the Viet Cong to find. Similarly / Furthermore / Moreover, the Americans' boots made loud noises while they were walking and these inexperienced soldiers used deodorant that left behind a distinctive smell.

Consequently, the Viet Cong often found their enemy, and being outsmarted in this way left the Americans frustrated and angry as they suffered casualties and loss of life as a result.

5.

5. It's good, but it needs a topic sentence.
What point have you made. What have you proved?

American soldiers had Hershey's chocolate bars as part of their rations while fighting, and they often left

Why are these facts a big deal?

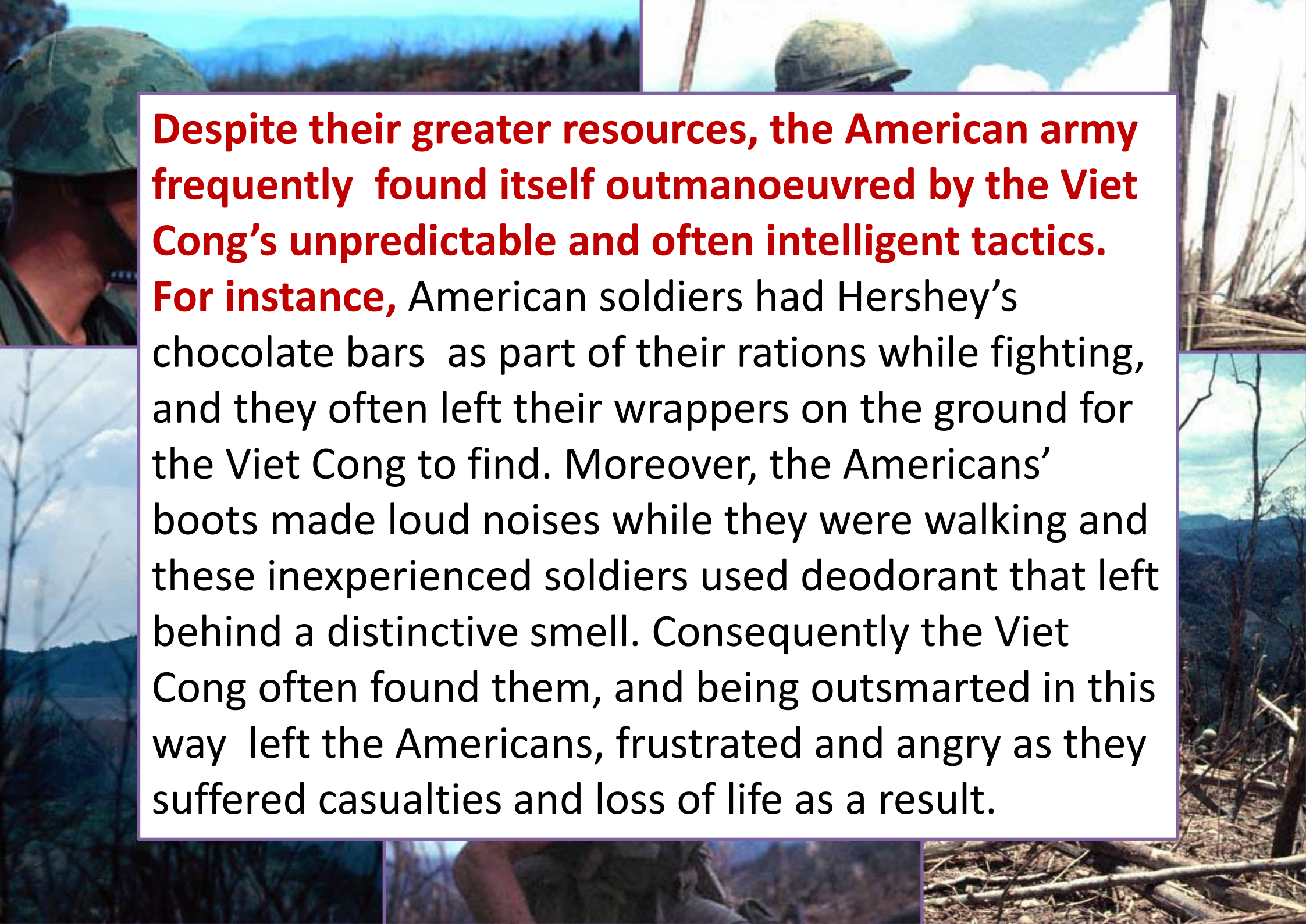
What do they tell us about the Viet Cong?

...boots made these inexperienced soldiers used deodorant that left behind a distinctive smell.

Consequently, the Viet Cong often found their enemy, and being outsmarted in this way left the Americans frustrated and angry as they suffered casualties and loss of life as a result.

Opening topic sentence:





Despite their greater resources, the American army frequently found itself outmanoeuvred by the Viet Cong's unpredictable and often intelligent tactics.

For instance, American soldiers had Hershey's chocolate bars as part of their rations while fighting, and they often left their wrappers on the ground for the Viet Cong to find. Moreover, the Americans' boots made loud noises while they were walking and these inexperienced soldiers used deodorant that left behind a distinctive smell. Consequently the Viet Cong often found them, and being outsmarted in this way left the Americans, frustrated and angry as they suffered casualties and loss of life as a result.