

1965

## Conscientious Objector?

What can you do if you oppose this war but your government wants you to fight?

It is 1965. You are a young man, 19 years old. The draft board has just sent you a letter. The letter orders you to join the military. Young men who are in school can wait to join the military, but you are not in school.

You do not want to join the military. Some men do not join the military because their religion says that killing is wrong. They are called conscientious objectors. But that is not your reason. You believe that some wars, such as wars to defend our country, are right.

But nobody is attacking our country.

You do not want to join the military because you think this war in Vietnam is wrong. The U.S. should not be fighting in Vietnam. This war is for the Vietnamese. It is a civil war. America has no business there. American supplies and soldiers are only making the war continue longer. Thousands of people are being killed and wounded. The country is being destroyed.



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### Comprehension

1. Who are you in this story?
2. What is the draft board's job?
3. Why does the draft board say that you have to join the military?
4. What are conscientious objectors?
5. What does that refer to in the second paragraph?
6. Why aren't you a conscientious objector according to the draft board?
7. Why don't you want to join the military now?
8. Are some wars good and some wars bad?
9. What does The country refer to in the last paragraph?
10. For each statement, write *F* for fact or *O* for opinion. Remember that facts are things that can be checked and agreed to by everyone. Opinions are a person's own ideas.
  - (a) The Bible says that killing is wrong.
  - (b) Some wars are right.
  - (c) A war to defend your own country is all right.
  - (d) The war in Vietnam is wrong.
  - (e) If the government tells you to join the military, you should do it.
  - (f) Thousands of people are being killed.
  - (g) Conscientious objectors don't have to join the military.





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### Decision

- *What should you do? Choose one of the following options:*

- (a) Tell the draft board you are a conscientious objector. That means you are opposed to war for religious reasons. (You will have to prove that you have religious reasons against fighting in the war.)
- (b) Leave the U.S.A. Go to Canada. (If you do, the U.S.A. might never let you return to America.)
- (c) Tell the draft board you refuse to join the military. (You will be put in prison.)
- (d) When you go to the draft board, act crazy. Or say that you are a homosexual. Maybe they will not want you.
- (e) Cut off a finger or a toe. Friends tell you that handicapped men do not have to be in the military.
- (f) Join the military. Maybe they will not send you to Vietnam. If they send you to Vietnam, don't fight.
- (g) Tell the draft board you are a conscientious objector because you think *this* war is wrong. Ask the board to change its definition of a conscientious objector.
- (h) Tell the draft board that you are a pacifist and you think all wars are wrong.
- (i) Other: \_\_\_\_\_

- *Why did you decide that way? Plan how you will explain your decision to your classmates. Write out your reasoning completely.*

