***The Fog of War: Eleven Lessons from the Life of Robert S. McNamara*** is a 2003 American documentary film about the life and times of former U.S. Secretary of Defense Robert S. McNamara illustrating his observations of the nature of modern warfare. The film was directed by Errol Morris. The title derives from the military concept of the "*Fog of war*" depicting the difficulty of making decisions in the midst of conflict. The overall plot of the film focuses on the interviews of former Secretary of defense, Robert McNamara, who was interviewed for about 20 hours by the director of the documentary. In the interviews, McNamara talks about aspects of international security and how and by what means it can be influenced by circumstances. The documentary explores recent events in American history and also focuses on McNamara's life and how he rose from a humble American family to be a politician who achieved enormous power and influence. McNamara worked with presidents John F. Kennedy and Lyndon B. Johnson and with general Curtis LeMay, and had direct access to many governmental documents. His opinions, personal experiences and lessons learned while serving as a Secretary of Defense can provide the audience with an enlightening philosophy and outlook on American politics. McNamara is regarded as the "architect" of the Vietnam war; a war that cost an enormous number of lives against a foe whose resolve he seriously underestimated.

**Significant Quotes:**

* McNamara: It's almost impossible for our people today to put themselves back into that period. In my 7 years as Secretary, we came within a hair's breadth of war with the Soviet Union on three different occasions. 24 hours a day, 365 days a year for 7 years as Secretary of Defense, I lived the Cold War ...Hell, it was a hot war!
* EM: And at this point, how many Americans had been killed in Vietnam?  
  McNamara: About 25,000. Less than half of the number ultimately killed: 58,000.

EM: Do you feel in any way responsible for the War? Do you feel guilty?  
McNamara: I don't want to go any further with this discussion. It just opens up more controversy. I don't want to add anything to Vietnam. It is so complex that anything I say will require additions and qualifications.

EM: Is it the feeling that you're damned if you do, and if you don't, no matter what?  
McNamara: Yeah, that's right. And I'd rather be damned if I don't.

**Questions:**

1. **What were McNamara and Kennedy’s goals concerning Vietnam in 1963?**
2. **How does Johnson feel about Vietnam? How does Johnson change America’s position in Vietnam after Kennedy’s death?**
3. **What is Lesson #7?**
4. **Why was there so much confusion concerning the Gulf of Tonkin attack?**
5. **What was Rolling Thunder?**
6. **What was the misunderstanding between the US and Vietnam according to McNamara?**
7. **What is Lesson #9?**
8. **What impact did the political protests have on McNamara’s view of the Vietnam War?**
9. **What is Lesson #10?**
10. **Who does McNamara believe was responsible for the Vietnam War?**
11. **What is McNamara’s argument for why Johnson involves the US in the Vietnam War?**
12. **What is Lesson #11?**