

Analyzing Visual Primary Sources

The Vietnam War

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The Vietnam War (continued)

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Dien Bien Phu and the Start of U.S. Involvement

- Viet Minh fights war of independence
- French defeated at Dien Bien Phu
- Geneva Conference (1954)
- North becomes communist; South backed by U.S.
- U.S. military advisors sent to Vietnam to support South



Dien Bien Phu and the Start of U.S. Involvement

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- What is the nationality of this soldier?
- How can you tell?

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- How would you describe the condition of this soldier's body?
- What does the condition of the body imply?

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Describe the physical location shown in the cartoon.

- What is its relation to the dead soldier?
- What might this symbolize?

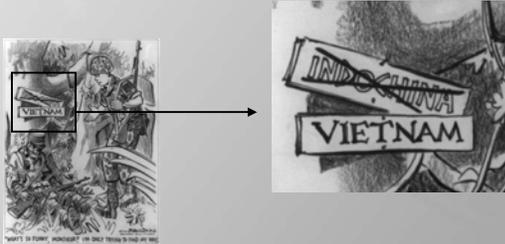
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- What is the nationality of this soldier?
- How can you tell?

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What is the significance of these two signs?



"WHAT'S SO FUNNY, MONSIEUR? I'M ONLY TRYING TO FIND MY WAY."



- What do you think the caption of this cartoon means?
- What larger message is the cartoonist trying to convey?



This cartoon was published in November 1964.

Do you think the cartoonist might have been responding to events at the time, or does the cartoon appear to be commenting on the war in general?

North Vietnamese Soldiers and the Viet Cong

- North Vietnamese troops were “regular army” (NVA)
- Viet Cong, also known as the “National Liberation Front” (NLF)
- Viet Cong used guerrilla tactics; did not have advanced weapons
- Viet Cong employed not only soldiers but civilians to harass U.S. troops
- Difficult for U.S. soldiers to distinguish enemy from civilians



North Vietnamese Soldiers and the Viet Cong



How does this Viet Cong soldier's equipment compare to that of the average U.S. GI's at the time?

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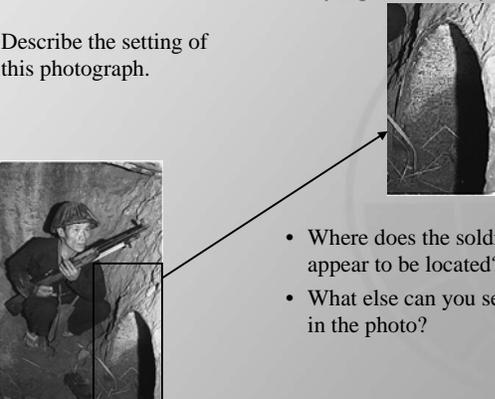


How effective of a fighter in battle do you think this soldier might have been? Why?

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Describe the setting of this photograph.



- Where does the soldier appear to be located?
- What else can you see in the photo?

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Does this photograph look realistic, or does it look staged? Explain why you feel this way.

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- Who do you think might have taken this photograph?
- Why might this photo have been taken?

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What sort of conclusions might Americans—both soldiers and civilians—who viewed this photo have made about the enemy?

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Escalation of the War and “Vietnamization”

- LBJ widens war after Gulf of Tonkin incident
- Opposition to U.S. involvement convinces LBJ not to run for reelection in 1968
- Nixon promises “secret plan” to end war
- Nixon follows Vietnamization policy
- Nixon still unable to end U.S. role in war until 1973

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Escalation of the War and “Vietnamization”

“Now, as I was saying four years ago—”
— a 1972 Herblock Cartoon, copyright by the Herb Block Foundation

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Who is this person?

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What can be inferred from Nixon’s facial expression in the cartoon?

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Who does this person in the cartoon represent?



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©1972

What is the significance of the year when this cartoon was published?

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What did the cartoonist mean by the words on the folder Nixon is holding?

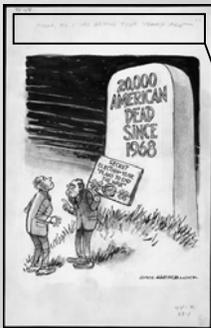
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Why might the cartoonist have shown this statistic in this manner?

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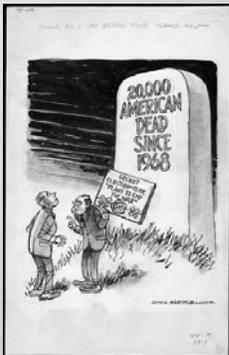


The caption reads, "Now, as I was saying four years ago..."

What message was the cartoonist trying to convey here?

"NOW, AS I WAS SAYING FOUR YEARS AGO..."

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What do you think the cartoonist's overall message is regarding Nixon and his Vietnam policy?

War Protesters

- Protests began in 1965
- Several groups formed the “New Left”
- Protests also included many from “mainstream” America
- War divided nation into “hawks” and “doves”
- War caused discontent even in LBJ’s administration

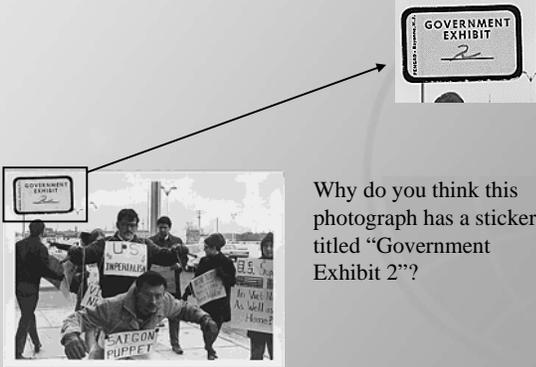
War Protesters





Do the protesters shown in this photo resemble what you think of as the “typical” type of Vietnam-era protest? Why or why not?

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The photograph shows a group of protesters. One man in the foreground is kneeling and holding a sign that says "SAIGON PUPPET". Other protesters in the background hold signs with "U.S. IMPERIALISM" and "U.S. Support the War in Viet Nam As Well as Home". A sticker in the top right corner of the photo reads "GOVERNMENT EXHIBIT 2" with a handwritten number "2" below it. An arrow points from this sticker to a larger, magnified version of the sticker shown in the top right of the slide.

Why do you think this photograph has a sticker titled "Government Exhibit 2"?

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- What symbolic act are these two protesters playing out?
- What do you think they meant by the signs they wore saying "U.S. Imperialism" and "Saigon Puppet"?



The top photograph shows a group of protesters with signs. The bottom photograph is a close-up of a man kneeling and holding a sign that says "SAIGON PUPPET".

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The photograph shows a group of protesters. One man in the foreground is kneeling and holding a sign that says "SAIGON PUPPET". Other protesters in the background hold signs with "U.S. IMPERIALISM" and "U.S. Support the War in Viet Nam As Well as Home". A sticker in the top left corner of the photo reads "GOVERNMENT EXHIBIT 2" with a handwritten number "2" below it.

Do you think this was a large-scale, organized protest against the war? Why or why not?

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What does the image (with the word “genocidal”) on this sign symbolize?



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What effect do you think photos such as this might have had on morale when viewed by the “average GI” in Vietnam?

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What impact do you think protests such as this one might have had on the war effort in South Vietnam and North Vietnam?

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American Soldiers in Vietnam

- Many younger in age than World War II counterparts
- Many soldiers were poor, African American
- Many soon became disillusioned; morale low
- Many tried to maintain “comforts of home”
- Some able to avoid service through deferments



American Soldiers in Vietnam



What do the soldiers in this photograph appear to be doing?

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What materials did the soldiers use to construct the shelter shown in the photo?

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Why do you think the soldiers put this sign on top of their shelter?

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How would you describe the mood of the soldiers in this picture?

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Do you think this photo is real or was it staged? Why?

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Do you think this scene is representative of the typical experience of GIs in Vietnam? Why or why not?

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American Soldiers in Vietnam

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- What symbols or words are visible on this soldier's helmet?
- Why do you think Vietnam-era soldiers adorned their helmets with these sorts of markings?

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- What appears to be happening in this photo?
- How does this scene highlight the differences between Vietnam-era soldiers and earlier soldiers?



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Do you think this scene is representative of the typical experience of GIs in Vietnam? Why or why not?



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