

Vietnam War

Backwards Planning Curriculum Units

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction.....	iv
Lecture Notes.....	S1
Student Handouts.....	H1
Backwards Planning Curriculum:	
The Vietnam War: Backwards Planning Activities	1
Project #1: What Was It Like to Serve in Vietnam?: Learning from Oral Histories.....	3
Project #2: Photojournalism in the Vietnam War	9
Project #3: Vietnam War–Era Interviews	15
The Vietnam War: Multiple Choice Quiz.....	25
The Vietnam War: Multiple Choice Quiz Answer Key.....	29

How To Use This Unit

Backwards planning offers an innovative yet simple approach to meeting curriculum goals; it also provides a way to keep students engaged and focused throughout the learning process. Many teachers approach history instruction in the following manner: they identify a topic required by state and/or national standards, they find materials on that topic, they use those materials with their students, and then they administer some sort of standard test at the end of the unit. Backwards planning, rather than just starting with a required instructional topic, goes a step further by identifying exactly what students need to know by the end of the unit—the so-called “enduring understandings.” The next step involves assessment: devising ways to determine whether students have learned what they need to know. The final step involves planning the teaching/learning process so that students can acquire the knowledge needed.

This product uses backwards planning to combine a PowerPoint presentation, activities that involve authentic assessment, and traditional tests (multiple-choice and essay) into a complete curriculum unit. Although the materials have enough built-in flexibility that you can use them in a number of ways, we suggest the following procedure:

1. Start with the “essential questions” listed on slide 2 of the PowerPoint presentation (these also appear in the teacher support materials). Briefly go over them with students before getting into the topic material. These questions will help students focus their learning and note taking during the course of the unit. You can also choose to use the essential questions as essay questions at the end of the unit; one way to do this is to let students know at the outset that one of the essential questions will be on the test—they just won’t know which one.
2. Next, discuss the activities students will complete during the unit. This will also help focus their learning and note taking, and it will lead them to view the PowerPoint presentation in a different light, considering it a source of ideas for authentic-assessment projects.
3. Present the PowerPoint to the class. Most slides have an image and bullet points summarizing the slide’s topic. The Notes page for each slide contains a paragraph or two of information that you can use as a presentation script, or just as background information for your own reference. You don’t need to present the entire PowerPoint at once: it’s broken up into several sections, each of which concludes with some discussion questions that echo parts of the essential questions and also help students to get closer to the “enduring understandings.” Spend some time with the class going over and debating these questions—this will not only help students think critically about the material, but it will also allow you to incorporate different modes of instruction during a single class period, offering a better chance to engage students.
4. Have students complete one or more of the authentic-assessment activities. These activities are flexible: most can be completed either individually or in groups, and either as homework or as in-class assignments. Each activity includes a rubric; many also have graphic organizers. You can choose to have students complete the activities after you have shown them the entire PowerPoint presentation, or you can show them one section of the PowerPoint, go over the discussion questions, and then have students complete an activity.

5. End the unit with traditional assessment. The support materials include a 20-question multiple-choice quiz; you can combine this with an essay question (you can use one of the essential questions or come up with one of your own) to create a full-period test.

6. If desired, debrief with students by going over the essential questions with them again and remind them what the enduring understandings are.

We are dedicated to continually improving our products and working with teachers to develop exciting and effective tools for the classroom. We can offer advice on how to maximize the use of the product and share others' experiences. We would also be happy to work with you on ideas for customizing the presentation.

We value your feedback, so please let us know more about the ways in which you use this product to supplement your lessons; we're also eager to hear any recommendations you might have for ways in which we can expand the functionality of this product in future editions. You can e-mail us at access@socialstudies.com. We look forward to hearing from you.

Dr. Aaron Willis
Chief Education Officer
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In the 20th century, Vietnam changed from a French colony to an independent nation, to a country divided politically and physically, and finally to a single nation under communist leadership. The role of the United States in this complex and difficult process remains controversial even more than 35 years after hostilities ended. Driven by the fear of communist expansion in southeast Asia, the U.S. government involved itself in Vietnamese affairs lightly at first, but unfolding events (and non-events) led four presidents to send material and hundreds of thousands of servicepersons to support a string of shaky South Vietnamese regimes. These increasing commitments put great strain not only on the members of the military, but also on the American public, which began to question with increasing force the goals and conduct of the war as it dragged on, as costs mounted, and as more and more friends and family members died. The war finally came to a brokered end only after years and years of horrific violence and tense negotiations; two years later, what the U.S. had wished to avoid from the outset—a communist-led, unified Vietnam—came to pass. Historians today examine the Vietnam War for a better understanding of its aims, its methods, its events, its mistakes, its worth, and its lasting effects on the American consciousness.

Essential Questions

- Was it possible for the United States to have definitively won the Vietnam War?
- What experiences did American soldiers undergo in Vietnam?
- How did the American public feel about the war in Vietnam, and how did these feelings change over time?
- What different perspectives did young people take regarding the Vietnam War at the time? What might have been some of the reasons for these opinions?
- In what ways was the Vietnam War a defining event for an entire generation of Americans?

Indochina

- Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia
- Mountainous terrain
- Deltas:
 - Red River (north)
 - Mekong (south)
- Tropical rainforests



Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos are southeast Asian countries in the region its French colonists named *Indochine*, or Indochina. Today, these independent countries have become increasingly popular travel destinations for Americans and Europeans. For much of the 20th century, this region remained mired in war. During the 1960s and 1970s, an intense and protracted conflict between the United States and Vietnam spilled over into neighboring Laos and Cambodia.

Vietnam is a mountainous country with dense tropical rainforests. Most of its population lives in one of two relatively flat and fertile river deltas: the Red River Delta in the north and the Mekong River Delta in the south. A mountain range runs from north to south along Vietnam's western border with Laos and Cambodia. Lying in the tropical rainforest ecozone, Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia experience high humidity, frequent heavy rainfall, and very hot temperatures in the lowlands. The rainforests provide homes for a vast variety of animal species, including many insects and snakes. The density of its forests has made much of the region difficult terrain for human travel and habitation.

Vietnam in the Mid-20th Century



Ho Chi Minh in 1945

- French colony from late 19th century to WWII
- Japan invaded in WWII
- Ho Chi Minh and the Viet Minh led independence movement
- Democratic Republic of Vietnam
- Power vacuum

After a thousand years of Chinese rule, Vietnam became a nation-state in the 10th century. From the late 19th century until World War II, France ran Vietnam as a colony. Japan invaded Vietnam during World War II but kept the French in place as a puppet government to provide administrative help.

While the Japanese controlled Vietnam, the communist Vietnamese nationalist Ho Chi Minh returned from 20 years abroad to help organize an independence movement. Born in Vietnam, Ho had lived in France, England, the U.S., the Soviet Union, and China, before returning to his native country. In France, he had joined the communist party and had become involved in efforts to remove France from Vietnam.

Beginning in 1941, Ho led the Viet Minh, an independence movement that took military action against the Vichy French (the French government under Nazi occupation) and the Japanese in Vietnam. The U.S. secretly supported the Viet Minh. At the end of World War II, Ho declared Vietnamese independence, calling the new country the Democratic Republic of Vietnam.

Unrecognized by any country, newly independent Vietnam found itself lacking a cohesive government. British troops entered the southern part of the country to disarm the Japanese. After British withdrawal, Chinese troops under the direction of Chiang Kai-shek entered northern Vietnam to oust the Japanese there. Non-communist Vietnamese wanted to control the government, while France wanted to reestablish its colonial authority. Vietnam therefore faced competing demands for leadership and did not fall under any one clear command.

The First Indochina War

- Ho Chi Minh declared independence in 1945; received U.S. support
- War with France broke out in 1947
- Vietnam received assistance from communist China
- U.S. supported France



French soldiers in combat in Indochina, 1953

In August 1945, Ho Chi Minh declared Vietnam independent from France. The United States joined in the celebration, flying war planes over Hanoi and standing by as a Vietnamese band played the “Star-Spangled Banner.” Officials noted the warm relations between the United States and the new country of Vietnam.

Despite this declaration, the French did not immediately leave Vietnam. In 1947, the Viet Minh entered a full-scale war with France in an attempt to drive out the colonial power for good and establish communist control. The French called this war the “First Indochina War”; the Vietnamese called it the “French War.” The war raged for almost ten years, with communist China becoming increasingly involved in providing aid to the Viet Minh. Under China’s guidance, the Viet Minh staged a bloody land-reform campaign against the French.

During the First Indochina War, the United States ended its support for Ho and the Viet Minh, denouncing the communist group and its leader. Instead, the U.S. supported the Vietnamese government that the French had fashioned, under the leadership of Bao Dai. The French considered this government officially a part of the French Union, though no longer a colony. The U.S. also gave strong military support to France, paying for nearly one-third of the war’s cost by 1952.

Eisenhower and J.F. Dulles



Eisenhower and Dulles

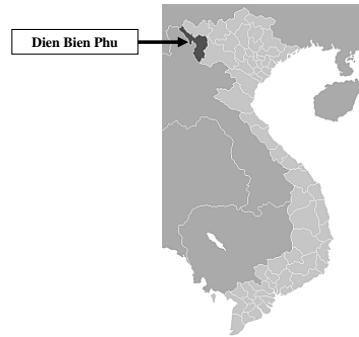
- Eisenhower took office in 1953
- Pressured France for a more aggressive strategy and a timetable for victory
- France agreed in exchange for financial assistance
- Dulles predicted victory by the end of 1955

President Dwight D. Eisenhower took office in 1953. The Eisenhower Administration had deep concerns that a French loss in Vietnam would lead to a communist takeover of southeast Asia. While Eisenhower did not make substantive changes to the policies that Harry Truman's administration had put into place regarding Vietnam, he did reassess the United States' role there and made some changes to Truman's war strategies. With Secretary of State John Foster Dulles, Eisenhower placed pressure on France to develop a more aggressive approach and a timetable for victory, while promising that the U.S. would continue to aid France in its efforts.

In September 1953, France promised to cooperate with an American plan to increase its offensive commitment against Ho Chi Minh. In exchange, France would receive \$385 million in military assistance from the United States. Dulles announced that this strategy would stop "communist aggression" in the region by the end of 1955.

Dien Bien Phu and the End of French Colonial Rule

- The American and French plan failed
- Viet Minh attacked French forces at Dien Bien Phu
- U.S. did not provide military assistance to the French
- Major victory for Viet Minh



The American and French plan did not go smoothly. In response to the threat of an expanded French army, the Viet Minh invaded Laos. Heavy Viet Minh aggression forced France to abandon its plan and counter these new attacks.

Both the Viet Minh and the French gathered large forces near the town of Dien Bien Phu in northwestern Vietnam. In March 1954, the Viet Minh (with strong support from communist China) launched a series of attacks on the French in this region. Unprepared to meet the Viet Minh forces and artillery, the French surrendered in May. The battle of Dien Bien Phu proved decisive in bringing about French withdrawal from Vietnam.

After the French defeat at Dien Bien Phu, discussions within the American government revolved around whether the U.S. military should become directly involved in Vietnam. Dulles favored an air attack on Dien Bien Phu, but many others in the administration disagreed. The French welcomed this possibility, but refused the concessions that the United States wanted in return for the favor. Much of Congress, including Senator John F. Kennedy, opposed military intervention. In the end, the U.S. did not send military support to Dien Bien Phu, and for the Vietnamese, the battle there represented an overwhelming victory.

The Geneva Accords and Aftermath



The Ho Chi Minh Trail appears in orange at the bottom of this map

- Treaty officially ended foreign involvement in Indochina
- Vietnam divided:
 - Communist North
 - U.S.-supported, Catholic South
- “Ho Chi Minh Trail”: supply line through Laos and Cambodia to South Vietnam

In July 1954, France and the Viet Minh signed the Geneva Accords, ostensibly ending foreign involvement in Indochina. The Geneva Accords divided Vietnam into northern and southern sections, mandating that the Viet Minh loyalists remain in the North and supporters of the French loyalists live in the South. The South became known as the Republic of Vietnam (or “South Vietnam”), named Saigon as its capital, and received support from the United States. The communist North became the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (or “North Vietnam”), and had its capital at Hanoi.

The division between North and South led to a large-scale internal migration, with many Catholics migrating south and many communist supporters moving north. The U.S. Central Intelligence Agency organized efforts to encourage Catholics to move into South Vietnam.

Despite the migration, communist support intensified in the South, with the new Communist Party secretary Le Duan coordinating activities south of the demarcation line as well as in the North. The communist North Vietnamese transferred supplies to southern communists via trade routes collectively called the “Ho Chi Minh Trail” (or the *Truong Son Road* in Vietnamese). These routes went from North Vietnam into Laos and Cambodia, eventually entering South Vietnam. The supplies came from China and the Soviet Union, both communist powers that supported the communist government of North Vietnam.

The Geneva Accords and Aftermath (continued)

- Ngo Dinh Diem took power in 1955
- Viet Cong threatened to overthrow Diem
- U.S. opposed mandated unification election



Ngo Dinh Diem

Ngo Dinh Diem seized power from Bao Dai in 1955 and declared himself president of the Republic of Vietnam (South Vietnam). Meanwhile, battles for control of South Vietnam raged. Communists gained increasing support and won military victories in the South. Growing communist sympathies coupled with increasing hardships in rural South Vietnam led a group of Viet Minh rebels to threaten overthrow of Diem's government. In 1960, communist revolutionaries in the South founded the National Liberation Front (NLF). The Diem regime called this organization the "Viet Cong," meaning "Vietnamese communist." **(Note to teacher:** The rest of this presentation uses the term "Viet Cong" because it is the most commonly recognized name for this group.

The Geneva Accords had stipulated that an election would be held to unify the North and the South and to determine the country's leader. However, the U.S. opposed the election, fearing that if Ho won, the entire country (and perhaps the entire region) would fall to communism. President Eisenhower supported the Diem government in its opposition to the election by sending civilian and military "advisors" to South Vietnam. Since the United States had not signed the Geneva Accords, it had no binding obligation to support the election.

The Viet Cong and the North Vietnamese



A Viet Cong soldier

- Viet Cong: communist revolutionaries in South Vietnam
- North Vietnam: Ho's communist government
- North Vietnamese Army (NVA)
- North Vietnam wanted the Viet Cong to appear as if fighting independently
- Tactics

It's important to distinguish between the Viet Cong and the North Vietnamese government: As described in the previous slide, the Viet Cong (NLF) was a group of communist revolutionaries based in South Vietnam. The actual military of North Vietnam was known somewhat colloquially as the North Vietnamese Army (NVA). The North Vietnamese government supported the Viet Cong but intentionally concealed this. In this way, the North Vietnamese government wanted to make the Viet Cong appear as rebels independently fighting the Diem regime. North Vietnam hoped that its apparent lack of involvement in the South would reduce the chances that the U.S. become involved in the conflict, while still allowing for communists to overthrow Diem.

Viet Cong soldiers usually operated as small, semi-independent units and became known for their stealth (they often attacked at night, and used an elaborate series of tunnels to hide and travel), and their brutal tactics, which included attacks on civilians, torture and murder of collaborators, and vicious booby traps set to waylay opposing forces. The Viet Cong also often wore civilian clothing in order to blend in with the general population, making them difficult to target.

Instability in South Vietnam

- Kennedy expanded aid to South Vietnam
- Protests by Buddhists
- U.S. supported overthrow of Diem government
- Popular support for communists in South increased



During ceremonies at Saigon in 1962, the Vietnamese Air Force pledged its support for Diem after a political uprising and an attempt on his life

As a result of the Viet Cong threat and South Vietnam's overall instability, Eisenhower's successor, John F. Kennedy, expanded economic and military aid to South Vietnam beginning in 1961. The U.S. sensed the possibility that the communists might prevail in Vietnam and aimed to prevent this from occurring.

Diem proved to be a brutal leader, forcing thousands of people off their land and onto fortified settlements strategically placed to ward off Viet Cong or North Vietnamese invasions. He also discriminated against Buddhists (the majority of Vietnamese people) and favored Catholics. The Kennedy Administration became increasingly concerned about public protests by Buddhists. Diem responded to these protests with attacks on Buddhist temples, and famously, on one Buddhist monk (Thich Quang Duc) who burned himself to death in a busy Saigon intersection.

Kennedy began to support a group of Diem's opponents in the South who overthrew Diem's government. This coup led to increased political disorder in South Vietnam, with a succession of new governments but with none strong enough to maintain control of the country. Due to this instability, North Vietnamese communists succeeded in gaining the support of up to three quarters of South Vietnam's people.

Discussion Questions

1. Why did the U.S. end its support for Ho Chi Minh and back France in the First Indochina War? Do you think this was a good strategy? Why or why not?
2. What were the Geneva Accords, and what impact did they have on Vietnam?
3. What was the relationship between the Viet Cong and the North Vietnamese government? Why did North Vietnam want to keep this relationship a secret?

1. During WWII, Ho's communist nationalist movement helped in the fight against the Japanese and Vichy (Nazi-controlled) France. With the war over and the Japanese out, Ho declared Vietnam an independent country; the French, however, wanted to maintain their colonial ties with Vietnam. Ho received support from communist China. The U.S. government feared that if France were to lose to Ho's Viet Minh, all of southeast Asia might fall to a communist takeover. Answers to the second part of the question will vary; make sure that students avoid using the benefit of hindsight in coming to an opinion.
2. The Geneva Accords were an agreement between France and the Viet Minh to end foreign involvement in Indochina. The agreement resulted in the partition of Vietnam into North Vietnam and South Vietnam, large-scale internal migration, and (unintentionally) increased support for the communists in the South.
3. The Viet Cong was an army of communist revolutionaries that operated in South Vietnam to fight the U.S.-supported government there. The North Vietnamese government was the official governing organ of North Vietnam; it too was communist. North Vietnam secretly provided support to the Viet Cong, but wanted the Viet Cong to appear as if they were fighting independently in order to make it seem as if there were widespread support in the south for a nationwide communist government.

Containment and the “Domino Theory”

- Kennedy began to call for limited withdrawal of advisors
- Johnson wanted escalation
- The domino theory of communism’s spread
- U.S. policy of containment



U.S. advisors in Vietnam, 1964

The Kennedy Administration had placed 16,000 military advisors in South Vietnam. By the time of his assassination in November 1963, Kennedy had begun to call for limited withdrawal of these advisors, sensing the South Vietnamese government were too inept and unwilling to reform itself and its country.

Kennedy’s successor Lyndon B. Johnson saw it important to increase U.S. military involvement in South Vietnam, in part to ward off influence by the Soviet Union. Johnson and many others in the U.S. government feared that the Soviet Union was trying to extend its reach into all the countries of Southeast Asia. This concept became known as the “domino theory” because its outcome resembled a toppling row of dominoes. If one country fell to communist rule, the theory stated, another nearby would be more likely to fall. Thus, if the U.S. could hem in communism and prevent it from spreading, the “dominoes” would not fall. The U.S. called its policy by which it attempted to keep communism from spreading to additional countries, “containment.”

LBJ: Why Escalation?



Secretary of State Dean Rusk (left) and
President Johnson

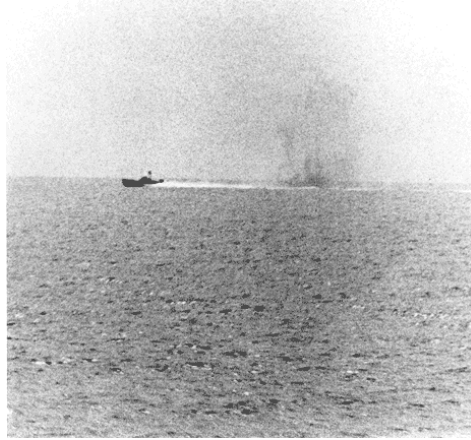
- U.S. wanted to maintain its international respect and reputation
- Hoped to prevent communist China's expansion
- Johnson's political concerns and ego
- Believed North Vietnam would give up its goals with gradual escalation

Johnson did not make his decisions alone, but acted with the assistance of numerous advisors, many of whom felt that the U.S. had to act in support of South Vietnam in order to maintain America's stature internationally. Secretary of State Dean Rusk and others believed that the U.S. needed to prevent the communist takeover of Vietnam in order to halt communist China's expansionist ambitions. Johnson also had a personal and political aversion to the idea of failure in Vietnam. He did not want to offend right-wing Republicans and Southern Democrats; his ego and pride also played a role in his decision to escalate the war.

Johnson's advisors erroneously believed that a gradual increase in bombing and of ground troops would convince North Vietnam to give up its goal of controlling all of Vietnam. The Johnson Administration greatly underestimated North Vietnam's resolve and therefore the extent and length of the war.

The Gulf of Tonkin Incident

- Top-secret missions against North Vietnam from 1961
- August 2, 1964: Attack on U.S. destroyer by NVA torpedo boats; U.S. fired first
- August 4: Alleged second NVA attack against U.S. destroyer



Photograph of action viewed from the U.S.S. *Maddox* during the Gulf of Tonkin Incident

The U.S. Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) had been conducting top-secret missions against North Vietnam since 1961. These included sending spies from South Vietnam into the North. Many of these agents were killed or disappeared into North Vietnamese prisons, not to be seen for decades. The missions also included attacks on North Vietnam's coast, operated by South Vietnamese crews but approved by the United States. These operations continued for several years.

On the evening of August 2, 1964, the U.S. government claimed that North Vietnamese torpedo boats had attacked its destroyer *Maddox*, which subsequently evaded the torpedoes and drove the North Vietnamese away. According to more recent information, however, the United States fired first, intended as warning shots to the North Vietnamese boats.

On August 4, United States destroyers *Maddox* and *C. Turner Joy* claimed to have been attacked by North Vietnamese forces. U.S. ships fired back repeatedly. Shortly afterwards, the commander of the *Maddox* admitted that a North Vietnamese attack might not have actually happened after all, and that radar reports of the attack could have been in error.

The Gulf of Tonkin Incident (continued)



President Johnson signing the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution

- Based on second “attack,” Johnson ordered retaliatory airstrikes
- Gulf of Tonkin Resolution allowed military action without declaration of war
- Recent evidence shows that second attack never happened

President Johnson launched airstrikes against North Vietnam on August 4 in retaliation against the alleged North Vietnamese attacks. The Johnson Administration called the North Vietnamese attacks “unprovoked,” since the American ships had been in international waters. On August 7, Congress passed a joint resolution which became known as the “Gulf of Tonkin Resolution.” This permitted the United States to use military force in southeast Asia without an official declaration of war by Congress. It granted President Johnson broad powers to provide military assistance to southeast Asian countries threatened by the spread of communism.

The truth surrounding the Gulf of Tonkin incident remains controversial. Recent evidence has demonstrated that the second North Vietnamese attack almost certainly did not happen. This attack in particular led to President Johnson’s reaction with the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution. Some people believe that the United States government conveniently covered up the lack of evidence to support the second attacks, therefore providing an excuse to go to war with North Vietnam. Recent evidence and historical research supports this idea. At any rate, the United States had clearly been waging a covert war against North Vietnam even before the Gulf of Tonkin incident.

Aerial Bombing Begins

- Aerial bombing campaign began in March 1965 (“Operation Rolling Thunder”)
- U.S. wanted to end North Vietnam’s support for the Viet Cong
- Bombing campaigns not effective toward this goal



In March 1965, the United States began a major aerial bombing campaign against North Vietnam (“Operation Rolling Thunder”) that lasted for the next three years. The United States planned to destroy North Vietnam’s industrial infrastructure and aerial defenses, hoping to end North Vietnam’s support for the Viet Cong in the South. Air Force Chief of Staff Curtis LeMay commented famously, “We’re going to bomb them back into the Stone Age.”

North Vietnam had cultivated supply lines to the South through Laos and Cambodia by way of the Ho Chi Minh Trail. It had developed this series of primitive footpaths into a network of modern roads that could carry heavy trucks full of supplies. In addition to bombing North Vietnam, the U.S. relentlessly bombed areas along the Ho Chi Minh Trail in order to disrupt this supply line.

These bombing campaigns, while causing crippling damage to its industry and agriculture, did not end North Vietnam’s support for the Viet Cong. North Vietnam received rapidly increasing levels of aid from the Soviet Union and China, thus offsetting its losses from the bombing campaigns. The bombings had the effect of increasing civilian support for the communist effort within both North and South Vietnam. It also allowed North Vietnam to effectively create propaganda decrying the bombing of a small, “backward” nation by one of the world’s superpowers.

The Ground War



U.S. troops during a
“search and destroy” mission

- Number of ground troops grew rapidly
- “Search and destroy” missions
- Caused difficulties for the South Vietnamese: loss of farmland, inflation, refugees
- Many South Vietnamese came to see the U.S. as the enemy

Shortly after the aerial bombing campaign began, President Johnson ordered the first U.S. ground troops into South Vietnam. The number of ground troops in Vietnam grew from 3500 to nearly 200,000 between March and December 1965.

Ground troops were primarily responsible for “search and destroy” missions, particularly beginning in 1966. These missions involved seeking out settlements of Viet Cong and their supporters, leveling them, and immediately leaving for another mission, rather than remaining on the scene to fortify these settlements against further enemy takeover. Troops would frequently set up ambushes involving landmines as well as artillery, killing many villagers who may or may not have been Viet Cong supporters.

These ground missions had some success in destroying many North Vietnamese holdouts, but new NVA troops tended to arrive rapidly to replace the ones who had been killed. The U.S. ground missions also destroyed much of the South Vietnamese infrastructure, including its farmland. This had the effect of decreasing the food supply for the South Vietnamese and increasing inflation, making it difficult for the average South Vietnamese family to survive. Many South Vietnamese had to flee their land, creating a refugee problem. Although the U.S. promised them freedom and peace, the South Vietnamese increasingly came to view America as the enemy. In this way, the Viet Cong won the support of many of these villagers, although a substantial number remained opposed to the presence of the communists as well as the U.S. troops.

Westmoreland's Strategy

- Gen. William Westmoreland
- War of attrition
- Large-scale ground and air attacks
- Viet Cong and NVA fought a smaller-scale guerilla war; difficult for U.S. to counter
- Attrition did not work
- “Logistical miracle”



General Westmoreland with
President Johnson

General William Westmoreland, Deputy Commander of Military Assistance Command, Vietnam (MACV), believed that continued fighting would lead to a war of attrition, in which the Viet Cong and the NVA would eventually be rendered unable to fight and would have to surrender. To this end, Westmoreland repeatedly tried to engage in large-scale ground and air attacks. The Viet Cong and the NVA, however, circumvented this approach by waging smaller-scale guerilla battles, preventing the U.S. from engaging in the large-scale warfare that its military had most prepared for. American troops found this type of combat more difficult than did the Viet Cong and the NVA, thus making Westmoreland's attrition strategy unsuccessful.

Westmoreland also created what has been called a “logistical miracle” by overseeing construction of the infrastructure required to house enormous numbers of troops and equipment.

American Allies' Views of the War

- Traditional European allies did not contribute; France openly opposed the war
- Pacific Rim allies included Australia, S. Korea, New Zealand, Thailand, and the Philippines
- All small and reluctant contributions
- Support waned as the war went on

The U.S. found few allies in its efforts in Vietnam. Its traditional European allies refused to bend to American pressure to provide military assistance. France openly opposed U.S. involvement in Vietnam; Canada also opposed the war and ended up welcoming thousands of dissenters and draft evaders from the United States.

The United States sought military assistance from countries in the Pacific Rim. Australia funded and sent 8000 troops. South Korea sent 60,000 troops. New Zealand sent a token artillery battery but was not willing to become more involved. Thailand and the Philippines also provided minor military support. The U.S. had requested far more than each country's contributions. As the war continued and became increasingly unpopular, these allies became even less willing to help, despite strong requests from the United States.

American Soldiers in Vietnam

- Terrible conditions in the Vietnamese jungle and swamps
- Constant vigilance
- Hard to distinguish Viet Cong from South Vietnamese villagers
- Some turned to drug abuse
- Low morale



U.S. Marines march through the Vietnamese jungle

American troops faced horrific conditions in Vietnam. The jungles and swamps featured fire ants, leeches, snakes, and soggy, muddy conditions. Their uniforms proved no match for the climate and conditions and tended to disintegrate in the humidity, even after the military switched from cotton to nylon. Torrential rainfall was common, but a soldier's rain poncho often had to double as his bedroll. Troops became infected with foot rot, scabs, malaria, and other tropical ailments.

The Viet Cong littered the Vietnamese jungle with booby traps and mines. A soldier never knew when he and his battalion would be ambushed, so they had to be constantly vigilant. It was extremely difficult to determine at first glance whether a Vietnamese was a friend or foe; American soldiers often came to assume that any Vietnamese they encountered in the jungle was Viet Cong, even if that person was in reality a South Vietnamese villager who opposed the Viet Cong. Viet Cong troops often entered villages and blended in with the villagers. Many soldiers therefore felt as if the enemy were everywhere. This confusion contributed to American troops' heightened sense of vigilance and to the deaths of many South Vietnamese villagers.

To cope with these difficulties, many soldiers turned to drugs, particularly marijuana and heroin. These substances could not compete, however, for the pervasive low morale that many battalions suffered as they wondered about the overall purpose of their fighting.

Weaponry



Phantom and Corsair fighters release bombs during a strike mission

- Bombers and fighters
- Tanks and armored personnel carriers
- Troops' individual weapons: rifles, mortars, grenades, mines
- "People sniffers"

The United States had a huge technological advantage over North Vietnam. The U.S. military employed several types of helicopters and fighter planes, including the B-52 Stratofortress and the F-4 Phantom fighter plane. B-52s could fly at very high altitudes and drop tons of bombs across wide areas. The F-4 proved highly successful against North Vietnamese anti-aircraft fire while delivering radar-guided bombs to areas that were too heavily protected to be accessible to the B-52s.

The U.S. also employed several types of tanks and armored personnel carriers. Tanks faced problems, however, in the humid Vietnamese jungle, which limited their use.

Troops carried automatic rifles, portable mortars, anti-personnel hand-rifle grenades, and anti-personnel mines. Soldiers could also throw grenades by hand about 30 yards to attack an enemy combatant, but they also sometimes detonated while still in the hands of the people who carried them. Soldiers often used the mines to secure the perimeter around their night camps.

For surveillance, the military used portable radar units and "people sniffers," devices that hung from helicopters and, when flown slowly over the jungle, could detect traces of human urine and thus locate Viet Cong troops (and sometimes the unfortunate farmer).

Weaponry (cont.)

- Chemical incendiary devices (e.g., napalm)
- Agent Orange:
 - Killed jungle foliage
 - Caused genetic defects
- Agent Blue:
 - Destroyed crops
 - Peasants more affected than Viet Cong



A napalm strike

The United States also used chemical incendiary devices. The most infamous was napalm, a chemical mixed with gasoline and dropped from airplanes. Upon impact, napalm sticks to the skin and burns for an extended length of time, leaving terrible injuries and often causing death.

The Vietnamese jungle proved difficult for U.S. forces to navigate and provided easy hiding places for the Viet Cong. The U.S. combated this problem with Agent Orange, an herbicide and defoliant that, when sprayed from airplanes onto the jungle, killed trees and destroyed the forest. Agent Orange led not only to significant environmental damage but contributed to increased rates of genetic disease and defects in people exposed to it.

In an attempt to destroy the Viet Cong's food supply, the U.S. sprayed farm fields with a chemical called Agent Blue, which killed the crops. This campaign had the unintended result of denying food to poor peasants more than it adversely impacted the Viet Cong.

Women in the Vietnam War



- Thousands served in various military and civilian roles
- Noncombat roles
- Witnessed the same types of atrocities as men
- Woman's efforts not highly recognized
- Vietnam Women's Memorial Project

A few thousand American women served in the Vietnam War, but they did not fight and were not allowed to carry weapons. Instead, they served as clerks, intelligence officers, photographers, translators, nurses, physical therapists, and other noncombat roles. The military draft did not apply to women; therefore, all the women who went to Vietnam enlisted voluntarily. Many joined the Women's Army Corps (WAC), which the army had created during World War II to provide auxiliary services to the male combat forces. Other women went to Vietnam with civilian organizations, including the Red Cross, the CIA, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), and churches and humanitarian groups.

Although they did not engage in combat, women directly witnessed many wartime atrocities. Nurses and other health workers cared for injured soldiers and Vietnamese civilians, including many badly injured young children. Women often found themselves in the line of fire, particularly during the Tet Offensive. Female veterans therefore experienced post-traumatic stress disorder (discussed in a future slide), much as their male counterparts did. Because of the attention given to male combat soldiers and veterans, however, the contributions and postwar challenges of female veterans have not been as widely recognized.

In 1984, a former Army nurse, Diana Carlson Evans, organized the Vietnam Women's Memorial Project. This group succeeded in ensuring that the Vietnam Women's Memorial would be included in the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, in recognition of the distinctive contributions of women to the war. (The Vietnam Veterans Memorial will be discussed in a future slide).

Prisoners of War

- Kept in North Vietnamese prisons in or near Hanoi
- Horrendous conditions
- Interrogation and torture increased after failed escape attempt
- U.S. began to publicize prison conditions
- Improvements after Ho's death
- Continued controversy over some POWs' fate



Former POW John McCain, shortly after his release in 1973

The North Vietnamese took many Americans as prisoners, holding them primarily in prisons located in or near the city of Hanoi. The Americans gave these prisons nicknames, including the Zoo, Alcatraz, Camp Hope, and the infamous Hanoi Hilton. Prison conditions were terrible, with filthy cells and little opportunity to look outside or to have contact with other prisoners. Because of the isolation, prisoners developed techniques for communication, including tapping out letters of the alphabet using a special code. One prison, however, known as the Citadel or Plantation, featured bright, clean cells that the North Vietnamese showcased as “proof” of adequate treatment of American prisoners.

On May 10, 1969, two American prisoners tried unsuccessfully to escape from the Zoo. In return, the North Vietnamese tortured them and stepped up interrogations and torture in other prison camps. Until this time, the U.S. government had remained quiet about conditions within the prisons, fearing that publicizing them would encourage the North Vietnamese to treat the prisoners worse. In May 1969, the U.S. government began to speak out about the torture and poor conditions. Ho Chi Minh died in September 1969. Conditions for prisoners improved markedly after his death, ending an era of torture.

After the war, the North Vietnamese released the prisoners and allowed them to return home to the United States. Many Americans, particularly the families of missing men, doubted the Vietnamese government's assertion that it had freed all prisoners. American organizations continue to investigate what happened to some of the missing men.

Discussion Questions

1. What was the domino theory, and how did it affect the U.S. government's decisions regarding Vietnam?
2. Why do you think that the U.S.'s European allies refused to support its actions in Vietnam? Were they justified in doing so? Explain.
3. Why did American ground troops have such a difficult time fighting in Vietnam?
4. What was the flaw in General Westmoreland's strategy of a war of attrition with the NVA?

1. The domino theory stated that if one country turned to communism, the rest of the region might also fall into communism, much like a toppling row of dominoes. The fear of losing all of southeast Asia to communist China contributed greatly to the Johnson Administration's escalation of U.S. military involvement in Vietnam.
2. Answers will vary. Students may offer that Europe had its own communist "menace" to deal with, one much closer to home than Vietnam—the Soviet Bloc; western European nations (especially France) saw the futility in engaging the Vietnamese on their own turf, given the death of France's colonial ambitions at Dien Bien Phu; that France may have resented the U.S. for not helping to avert the defeat at Dien Bien Phu, and had no desire to aid the U.S. in controlling what it had lost; or that they disagreed with the domino theory of communist expansion, considering the trouble in Vietnam as a civil war and not an international issue.
3. American ground troops found themselves in dense jungle littered with booby traps and mines, constantly at risk of ambush. They also had trouble distinguishing between the Viet Cong and the South Vietnamese, so they never really knew who or where the enemy were.
4. General Westmoreland based his strategy on his mistaken belief that large-scale air and ground attacks would eventually force North Vietnam and the Viet Cong to surrender. Instead, the Viet Cong and NVA waged smaller-scale guerrilla warfare that often caught U.S. forces by surprise.

Public Opinion in the U.S.

- Most Americans supported the war early on
- Opposition began to spread more widely in 1966
- Many still remained supportive
- “Hawks” and “doves”



Boxer Muhammad Ali, convicted for refusing to report for induction into the military during the Vietnam War, appealed his case to the Supreme Court and won

Most Americans firmly supported U.S. intervention in Vietnam at its outset, believing that the communist threat was real and must be stopped. Dissatisfaction with the war did not begin to spread widely until 1966, after LBJ sent large numbers of ground troops to Vietnam. Even after years of increasing protests against and questioning of the war, however, many Americans still saw the war as justified. It would therefore be a mistake to assume that in the late 1960s and early 1970s, “everyone” opposed the war.

The war divided the U.S. roughly into two major camps: those in favor and those opposed. Some people remained indifferent and tried to carry on with their lives without paying much attention to the war, but this became increasingly difficult as draft lotteries forced young men throughout the U.S. into the war. Most people at least knew someone whose life the war had directly affected.

People strongly in favor of the war received the nickname “hawks,” while those strongly opposed were called “doves.” The hawks—primarily conservative Democrats and right-wing Republicans—feared the global threat of communism and regarded the Vietnam War as an important defense against it. They demanded victory in Vietnam and considered antiwar protests treasonous. The doves comprised a highly diverse group of people who opposed the war on various grounds. Although this group received (and continues to receive) much attention, it represented a very small percentage of Americans. While college students stood at the forefront of war protests, most did not openly oppose the war. Antiwar activists tended to be outspoken and articulate, thus contributing to their prominence. Some war opponents had already achieved fame, including Martin Luther King Jr., boxer Muhammad Ali, and actress Jane Fonda.

The Antiwar Movement: Ideologies

- Three general categories
 - Pacifists
 - Radicals
 - Antiwar liberals
- Did not always agree on the best protest strategies

Those against the war fell into three general ideological categories:

- Pacifists opposed war as a matter of principle. They did not differentiate between wars they deemed just and those they deemed unjust.

- Antiwar radicals believed that the ruling classes of the U.S. tended to use war as a way to exploit people to perpetuate a corrupt capitalist society. Like the pacifists, they were opposed to war in general, but also saw the war in the context of a larger social struggle.

- Antiwar liberals constituted the largest group. They felt that the Vietnam War was legally and morally questionable, as opposed to other wars (such as World War II and the Korean War) that most believed the U.S. had fought on just grounds. They argued that the Vietnam War violated the Geneva Accords, the United Nations Charter, and the U.S. Constitution. Antiwar liberals also felt that Vietnam should be allowed to determine its own destiny and that the conservative linking of Vietnam with the Cold War communist threat was not an adequate argument for the U.S. going to war.

These groups did not always agree on what should be done to protest the war. Antiwar liberals tended to favor nonviolent protests, while radicals and some pacifists favored resistance, even if it was violent.

The Antiwar Movement: Protests

- Individual acts of protest:
 - Burning draft cards
 - Self-immolation
 - Antiwar entertainment
- Group protests:
 - Government and associated buildings
 - Draft boards, recruiters
 - Weapons manufacturers



War opponents protested in many different ways. Thousands of men drafted into the armed services demonstrated their opposition by burning their draft cards; some even intentionally injured or mutilated their bodies in order to avoid the draft. Seven Americans publicly set themselves on fire to protest the war. Many folk singers and other entertainers wrote and performed songs stating their clear opposition to the war.

Antiwar rallies and demonstrations made for the most visible types of protest. Beginning primarily on college campuses, demonstrations became increasingly well-attended in 1966 and 1967. Protesters outside of the White House chanted such slogans as “Hey, hey, LBJ, how many kids have you killed today?” Some groups tried to impede the work of government, as well as other entities that contributed to the war effort, including draft boards, military recruiters, and the Dow Chemical Company (which manufactured napalm). Others lay down in front of trains carrying troops headed for Vietnam.

The Antiwar Movement: Protests (cont.)



Federal marshals drag away a protester
after the march on the Pentagon

- Group protests:
 - March on the Pentagon (1967)
 - “Teach-ins” and “sit-ins” on college campuses

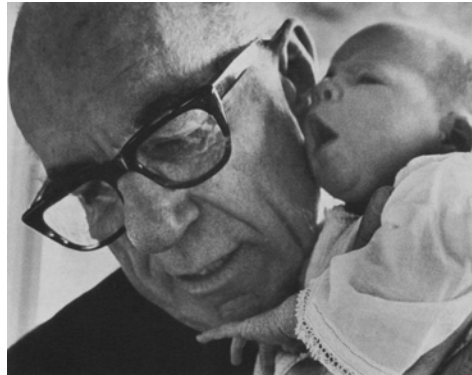
Numerous groups marched in Washington D.C. during the late 1960s and early 1970s. One of the largest marches occurred on October 21, 1967, with an estimated 100,000 protesters participating in the March on the Pentagon. Antiwar songs and speeches highlighted the initial protest at the Lincoln Memorial. Afterwards, around 35,000 people marched on the Pentagon. Federal marshals arrived and arrested around 700 demonstrators.

Another common form of campus protest involved teach-ins, in which students would gather to learn about and discuss war-related issues. These teach-ins often evolved into sit-ins, a form of nonviolent protest in which students would take over college administration buildings for days at a time, simply refusing to leave.

The Antiwar Movement: Leaders and Organizations

Pacifist movement:

- Often Quakers or Unitarians
- Dr. Benjamin Spock and SANE



Famous “baby doctor” Benjamin Spock was a vocal opponent of the war

Various leaders and organizations emerged within the antiwar movement. Many leaders of the pacifist movement, which had a long-standing presence in the U.S., came from Quaker or Unitarian religious backgrounds. Probably the best-known pacifist leader was Dr. Benjamin Spock, the well-known author of books educating parents about childrearing. He helped lead the pacifist organization, the National Committee for a Sane Nuclear Policy (SANE). This organization began in the 1950s as an outspoken critic of nuclear war and became very involved in antiwar activities during the Vietnam War, including a march on Washington in 1967 that attracted 100,000 people.

The Antiwar Movement: Leaders and Organizations (cont.)



Mario Savio, a leader of the Free Speech Movement, at a protest at the University of California, Berkeley, 1966

- Some grew out of the civil rights movement:
 - Students for a Democratic Society (SDS)
 - Free Speech Movement
- The “New Left”

Some antiwar groups grew out of organizations involved in the struggle for civil rights during the 1950s and early 1960s. Organized in 1960, Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) held its first convention in 1962, at which it unveiled its Port Huron Statement criticizing the U.S. for permitting the oppression of African Americans in the South and for engaging in nuclear-arms proliferation, among other criticisms. This manifesto encouraged students to engage in nonviolent civil disobedience against these problems and to strive for a fully “participatory democracy.” As the U.S. dug itself deeper in Vietnam, the SDS became more involved in the antiwar effort. Its original clean-cut image fell away in favor of a more radical “hippie” image that appealed less to the American middle class. SDS organized a march on Washington in 1965 and set up chapters on college campuses across the country, from which students planned antiwar protests.

Another antiwar group with roots in the civil rights movement was The Free Speech Movement (FSM). University of California at Berkeley students who had participated in the civil rights movement’s Freedom Summer denounced the university’s close ties with the military.

These campus antiwar organizations, along with others, collectively became known as the New Left. Members of these groups tended to be middle- and upper-middle-class white students, many of whose parents had been involved in political protests during the 1930s.

Martin Luther King Jr.

- Hesitated to speak out because of LBJ's War on Poverty
- Became a vocal critic of the war:
 - Felt it morally irresponsible
 - It diverted money from antipoverty programs
- "Beyond Vietnam" speech
- Criticized for antiwar position



Probably the most significant melding of the civil rights and antiwar movements was Martin Luther King Jr.'s role as an outspoken opponent of the Vietnam War. Although hesitant at first to alienate President Johnson, whose War on Poverty King strongly supported, he gradually became more vocal about his feelings regarding the war. He believed the war to be a morally irresponsible effort by the U.S. to colonize another country. He also felt that the huge amount of money being spent on the war could be much better spent fighting poverty at home (in 1966, Johnson announced that he would divert funds from the War on Poverty to the Vietnam War).

King gave several major speeches denouncing the war. On April 4, 1967, he gave a speech at New York's Riverside Church titled "Beyond Vietnam." In it, he spoke vehemently against the U.S. government's role in Vietnam, stating "If we continue, there will be no doubt in my mind and in the mind of the world that we have no honorable intentions in Vietnam." The mainstream media openly criticized King for this speech, calling it propaganda for North Vietnam and a disservice to his other social-justice causes. King's assassination on April 4, 1968 led to nationwide riots and exacerbated the antiwar mood within many communities.

The Antiwar Movement: Impact



- Protests did little to change public opinion about the war (or may have increased support for the war)
- Brought the war more closely into the public eye
- Kept Johnson from drastically escalating the war

It is a common belief that the antiwar protests contributed significantly to declining public support for the Vietnam War. Many historians, however, disagree with this view. The protests for the most part did not turn more people against the war, and their effectiveness was severely limited by disagreements within the antiwar movement. Most Americans were disgusted with the protesters and especially turned off by the hippie culture. This disdain could have actually strengthened support for the war.

Rather than leading directly to decreased public support for the war, the antiwar protests brought the Vietnam War much more closely into the public eye and encouraged people to think more carefully about what was going on, both in Vietnam and within the U.S. government. The antiwar movement contributed to Johnson's decision to back off from his escalation of the war, and it increased anxiety within both the government and the general public, leading to increased efforts to end the war.

1960s Counterculture and the War

- Mainly young people, but did not represent all youth
- Not all hippies protested; not all protesters were hippies
- Late 1960s to early 1970s
- Dissatisfaction with 1950s conservatism
- Musical influences and cultural experimentation



When thinking about the 1960s today, an image often comes to mind of long-haired hippies, rock music, drugs, and sexual promiscuity. It's important to remember that this counterculture applied mainly to young people in their late teens and early 20s and was not embraced by the majority of Americans, even within this age group. The counterculture movement became most prevalent in the later part of the decade and continued into the 1970s. People who embraced 1960s counterculture almost universally opposed the Vietnam War but did not necessarily actively protest against it. Likewise, not all war protesters were typical members of the counterculture; many male war protesters had short hair and were not heavy drug users, for example.

Historians have difficulty pinpointing the exact origins of the 1960s counterculture, though it related to the growing dissatisfaction with and questioning of the conservative political mindset of the 1950s. As many young people became increasingly aware of inequalities within society, especially in civil rights and women's issues, they began to question and rebel against traditional dress and behavioral codes. Dissatisfaction with the war in Vietnam heightened this sense of rebellion.

New popular music groups, including the Beatles, the Rolling Stones, and many others, both influenced and were influenced by this spirit of change and experimentation. The music festival near Woodstock, New York, in August 1969, epitomized this youthful, experimental hippie culture, as did urban neighborhoods such as San Francisco's Haight-Ashbury district.

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Coming Home



- Post-traumatic stress disorder
- Drug and alcohol addiction
- Veterans tended to resent antiwar protesters
- Sometimes blamed for the government's mistake
- Faced a nation that wanted to forget about the war
- Most did well upon their return

Veterans faced numerous difficulties upon returning from the war. The culture shock of returning to the U.S. after spending an extended period of time in Vietnam could prove challenging even for a traveler today. Veterans had been exposed to a variety of wartime stressors and traumas, including being amidst bombing campaigns, seeing their friends killed, and having to remain in a constant state of alert in case of attack. Many veterans therefore experienced (and still experience) post-traumatic stress disorder (then called “shell shock” or “battle fatigue”), in which they relived the emotional trauma and intensity of their time in Vietnam even when safely back home. Returning veterans found mental health services very limited.

Many soldiers became addicted to drugs during their time in Vietnam. They generally returned home with their addictions and faced uphill challenges in getting clean. For some, their difficult adjustment to life in the U.S. pushed them deeper into drug abuse and alcoholism. However, about the same percentage of Americans who stayed in the United States during this time period also had problems with drugs.

Many veterans resented the antiwar protesters and the American men who had avoided going to Vietnam. They felt unappreciated, even if they themselves had questioned the purpose and validity of the war when they were fighting it. Some veterans were blamed for the government's mistake in entering the war. Popular lore states that antiwar protesters spat on veterans who returned from Vietnam, but no evidence exists that this ever happened.

Veterans returning after the war ended faced a nation that wanted to forget about Vietnam as quickly as possible. The public tended to be silent about the war, providing little support to veterans struggling with their memories.

Despite these difficulties, most veterans adjusted well to their lives back in the United States, and a high percentage claimed to have no regrets about their service in the war.

Vietnam Veterans Against the War

- Organized in 1967
- Support groups and health-care assistance for veterans
- Membership and prominence grew after U.S. invasion of Cambodia
- Operation RAW



Not all returning veterans supported the war. In 1967, six veterans founded Vietnam Veterans Against the War (VVAW). This organization established groups for Vietnam veterans to discuss their experiences in the war and gain support from other veterans. They also assisted veterans with health-care issues.

The VVAW gained members and prominence after the United States invasion of Cambodia. Members staged several prominent events, including Operation RAW (Rapid American Withdrawal), a protest march over Labor Day weekend of 1970. During this march, veterans dressed in combat gear and simulated search-and-destroy missions in the towns they marched through, with citizen actors playing the roles of Vietnamese villagers.

The Draft: Lotteries



The first draft lottery,
December 1st, 1969

- Selective Service System
- Draft lottery in 1969
- Some men received deferments
- Many enlisted rather than be drafted
- Draft ended in 1973

In 1940, President Roosevelt signed the Selective Training and Service Act, establishing the Selective Service System. This act allowed men to be drafted into service during World War II and during the period of peace following that war. Between 1942 and 1969, age determined one's draft status, with the oldest men of the 18–25 age group drafted first.

In 1969, the Selective Service organized the first draft lottery since 1942. To make the process equitable, officials decided to randomly select men based on their birth date. On national television and radio, officials drew capsules from a large glass bowl, each of which contained a piece of paper with one day of the year. As the first date was drawn, September 14 received the draft number 1; therefore, men between the ages of 19 and 25 born on that date would be the first drafted. Men with numbers between 1 and 195 ended up drafted in 1970; men with numbers 196 or higher did not go that year. The draft lottery continued until 1973, when the military switched to an all-volunteer system.

Not all men with low draft numbers were actually drafted. Men could receive deferments or be deemed ineligible if they were in school, for instance, were married with children, worked in agriculture, had been convicted of felonies, or had certain health problems. As the draft loomed, many men decided to enlist in a branch of the armed forces than risk being drafted. Enlisting voluntarily allowed greater choice and control over whether one went to Vietnam or made to fight on the front lines. For example, the Navy, Air Force, and Coast Guard offered noncombat opportunities for those meeting these branches' more stringent enlistment requirements. Joining the National Guard or Reserves also decreased the chances of ending up in Vietnam.

The Draft: Avoidance and Evasion

- Conscientious objectors
- Illegally burning draft cards
- Fleeing the country, usually to Canada



In addition to the men deemed ineligible for the draft, many who might have been eligible for draft and deployment chose not to enter the armed forces. More than 170,000 men became conscientious objectors, meaning that they objected to fighting in the war on religious, moral, or ethical grounds. In order to be officially recognized as a conscientious objector, a man generally had to appear before a local board to prove that he had held his beliefs before the war started or that he had clearly changed his beliefs during the war. Many men who hoped to get out of the war received official conscientious objector status, but many others did not.

Some men who didn't qualify as conscientious objectors protested by publicly burning their draft cards. In 1965, Congress had outlawed the intentional destruction of draft cards. In 1966, David Paul O'Brien and three friends publicly burned their draft cards in Boston and were subsequently arrested and convicted. O'Brien appealed his case to the U.S. Supreme Court, which in 1968 ruled that his arrest had not violated his First Amendment right to free speech. Nevertheless, burning draft cards became a relatively widespread phenomenon amongst male war protesters between the ages of 18 and 25.

Approximately 100,000 men emigrated to other countries to avoid having to serve in the Vietnam War. Most of these "draft dodgers" moved to Canada, which opposed the war and generally welcomed them. Anyone who emigrated from the U.S. to avoid the draft was subject to arrest upon returning. Therefore, such a move out of the country required a commitment to remain separated from one's family and friends, perhaps forever. President Jimmy Carter pardoned all draft dodgers in 1977, but many chose to remain in Canada and the other countries they had emigrated to.

The Draft: Race and Class Issues



- The war drew attention to class and racial tensions
- More poor men and minorities had to serve in Vietnam
- African Americans tended to strongly oppose the war

The Vietnam War and the protests against it drew attention to class and racial divisions in the United States. Since college and graduate students could receive deferments, many middle-class and wealthy white men did not have to serve in Vietnam. Moreover, some wealthy men also had family connections that could help them avoid the draft. In contrast, a greater percentage of poor or working-class men and members of racial minorities could not secure deferments, since they had access to fewer resources telling them how to avoid serving in Vietnam, as well as a much smaller incidence of being enrolled in college or graduate school. A good deal of resentment therefore existed between the less- and more-privileged groups.

On the whole, African Americans opposed the war much more strongly than the rest of the population. Many felt that the war represented racial oppression, viewing the Vietnamese as victims of such by the U.S. They did not appreciate being represented on the front lines disproportionately to their numbers in American society. Many African Americans also objected to the enormous amount of money being spent on the war instead of on programs at home that benefited their communities.

Discussion Questions

1. What led Martin Luther King Jr. to oppose the Vietnam War?
2. Why do you suppose that some antiwar organizations arose from the civil rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s?
3. Do you think that the draft lottery was a fair way of determining who was sent to fight in Vietnam? Why or why not?

1. King initially hesitated to criticize the war because he didn't wish to alienate President Johnson, whose War on Poverty King strongly supported. However, he changed his position because he began to see the war as a superpower trying to effectively colonize a much smaller, weaker country, and also disapproved of Johnson's diversion of funds for the War on Poverty to the war effort.
2. Answers will vary. Students may offer that the civil rights movement promoted equality, standing up for democracy and against the oppression of weaker peoples; therefore, U.S. opposition to the election in Vietnam mandated by the Geneva Accords seemed anti-democratic, and the situation of a superpower occupying and fighting a much less powerful nation appeared unfair, if not outright oppressive. Some may also say that organizations such as SDS reacted to the disproportionate number of minorities drafted into the military, believing that African Americans (as did Muhammad Ali) shouldn't have to fight for a country in which they were considered by many to be second-class citizens, and against a people that hadn't started the conflict.
3. Answers will vary. Students who say the lottery was fair may point to the arbitrary system of selection by birth date and the randomness of the lottery drawing process. Students who disagree may mention that the types of deferments available to draftees disproportionately favored white men and the wealthy, since minorities and/or the poor were less likely to be in college or graduate school, had fewer resources at their disposal to learn about ways to avoid serving in Vietnam, and lacked the kinds of connections for securing non-combat roles or getting into the National Guard. Some students may simply object to the entire concept of a military draft.

The Tet Offensive

- Tet: Vietnamese New Year
- North Vietnam launched offensive despite cease-fire
- Focused on South Vietnamese cities and towns
- North Vietnam lost militarily
- Major psychological effect on American public
- Destruction in South Vietnam



January 31, 1968, marked the beginning of *Tet Nguyen Dan* (Tet, for short), a New Year holiday considered the most important in Vietnamese culture. Both sides had announced a cease-fire to celebrate the three-day holiday. Nevertheless, early on the morning of January 31st, North Vietnam launched a major offensive against the South. Over 80,000 Viet Cong troops attacked more than 100 South Vietnamese cities and towns.

Highly coordinated and widespread, the string of North Vietnamese attacks took the U.S., the South Vietnamese, and their allies by surprise. The news especially shocked the American public, which had been led to believe that the North Vietnamese hadn't the power to launch this type of offensive.

While both sides suffered significant casualties, the North Vietnamese fared much worse and lost the effort militarily. North Vietnam did not consider the Tet Offensive a loss, however, as the campaign had a profound psychological effect on people within the United States. Americans began to question much more than before whether the war effort could possibly be worth the lives and money at stake.

South Vietnam suffered severely from the Tet Offensive. South Vietnamese troops had to focus on defending the country's urban centers, where most of the attacks took place. As a result, the Viet Cong overtook much of the countryside. South Vietnamese civilians realized that even the heavy presence of American troops could not protect them from the Viet Cong and the NVA.

Tet: The American Public Reacts



U.S. soldiers in the city of Hue during the Tet Offensive

- Reduced confidence that the United States was winning the war
- Johnson considered adding 200,000 troops
- *New York Times* leaked article about troop increase; Johnson failed to respond
- Johnson reduced troop increase and bombing of North Vietnam

The American public reacted strongly to the Tet Offensive, ratcheting up public discourse opposed to the war. Fewer and fewer Americans believed the United States was winning the war, despite what the Johnson administration had told them prior to the Tet Offensive.

Shortly after the Tet Offensive, President Johnson and his advisors held meetings to consider General Westmoreland's request for more than 200,000 additional troops in Vietnam. When Johnson failed to respond to an article in which the *New York Times* leaked information about the possibility of troop increases, public trust for the war effort began to plummet. It soon became clear to the Johnson Administration that only a much more modest troop increase would be acceptable. The administration also decided to reduce its bombing campaign against North Vietnam.

The Paris Peace Talks

- LBJ concerned about his political reputation
- Suspended some bombing and encouraged North Vietnam to negotiate
- Slow pace, with contradictory demands
- Talks languished until 1972



U.S. Ambassador-at-Large
Averell Harriman

In March 1968, President Johnson suspended the bombing of the northern regions of North Vietnam and encouraged North Vietnam to enter peace talks. Johnson had concerns about his decreasing political popularity at home and hoped the American public would approve of this move.

North Vietnamese and U.S. officials met for peace talks in Paris on May 10, 1968. The talks went slowly, with each side making demands unacceptable to the other. Negotiations were complicated by the fact that neither the North Vietnamese government nor the Viet Cong acknowledged the legitimacy of the South Vietnamese government, nor did South Vietnam acknowledge the legitimacy of the Viet Cong. The U.S. Ambassador-at-Large, Averell Harriman, resolved this controversy by establishing the U.S. and North Vietnam as the only “official” parties in the negotiations, with the Viet Cong and the South Vietnamese merely providing assistance to their respective allies. The Paris Peace Talks dragged on for the next few years. It was not until the fall of 1972 that real breakthroughs occurred.

The Election of 1968



LBJ announcing his decision
not to run

- Johnson announced he wouldn't seek reelection
- Assassination of Robert Kennedy
- Democratic National Convention in Chicago
- Humphrey, Nixon, and Wallace
- Nixon won the election

In a televised address on March 31, 1968, President Johnson surprised the country by announcing that he would not run for reelection, claiming, "With America's sons in the fields far away...I do not believe that I should devote an hour or a day of my time to any personal partisan causes or to any duties other than the awesome duties of this office—the Presidency of your country."

Several events marred the election season of 1968: the Tet Offensive and the war's increasing unpopularity, the assassinations of Martin Luther King Jr. and Robert Kennedy, and a violent Democratic National Convention in Chicago. Kennedy, an opponent of the Vietnam War who served as senator from Massachusetts, was shot and killed after winning the Democratic primary election in California. Vice President Hubert Humphrey ended up winning the Democratic nomination and ran against Republican Richard Nixon and American Independent Party candidate George Wallace.

The Democratic National Convention gained notoriety for its conflicts between antiwar protesters and the Chicago police, who used tear gas and billy clubs against protesters. The police also used force against members of the media, who broadcasted the riots and contributed to the image of Chicago as out of control and of the Chicago police as exceptionally brutal.

Many Americans regarded Humphrey as too similar to LBJ, particularly because he supported Johnson's war policies, which likely contributed to his loss. Wallace's third party candidacy threatened both the Democratic and the Republican sides. Nixon ended up winning the election, with Wallace, a segregationist and former Alabama governor, winning most states in the Deep South.

The My Lai Massacre

- Charlie Company entered My Lai on search-and-destroy mission
- Brutally massacred over 300 villagers
- Covered up for a year and a half
- Fueled the antiwar movement
- Led more Americans to question the war strategy



Villagers killed in the My Lai massacre

The Viet Cong had entrenched themselves in the South Vietnamese region of Son My. The American troops collectively known as Charlie Company, of the 11th Brigade, incurred serious injuries and fatalities in this region in early 1968. On March 16, they entered the village of My Lai on a search-and-destroy mission. Their commanders announced, “This is what you’ve been waiting for—search and destroy—and you’ve got it.”

Following orders, the troops fired as they entered the village, despite no apparent attacks against them. They proceeded to massacre more than 300 villagers, including many women, children, and elderly. The American troops used bayonets and shot women and children in the back of the head as they prayed. The commander, Lt. William Calley, ordered some villagers into a ditch and fired until they were all dead.

The American public did not learn of the My Lai massacre until November 1969—a year and half after it occurred. The discovery of the atrocities at My Lai raised widespread public concern over the military’s conduct in Vietnam. Many members of the military complained that the best-educated and best-qualified soldiers were no longer in Vietnam, leaving less-qualified draftees and emotionally and intellectually unstable commanders. A court-martial convicted Calley of murder in 1971; he spent several years in prison. However, many viewed him as a scapegoat, since he was the only officer convicted.

The My Lai massacre invigorated the antiwar movement to an even greater level and prompted members of the public who had not strongly opposed the war to examine more carefully the country’s policies and behavior in Vietnam. Public outrage stemmed not only from the massacre itself but also from the government’s cover-up of the incident.

Nixon's War Leadership



Nixon shaking hands with a soldier in Vietnam

- Nixon's "secret plan"
- Nixon Doctrine
- "Vietnamization"
- Bombing under Nixon far exceeded LBJ's
- Increased devastation under Nixon's watch

During the 1968 campaign, Nixon had made the claim that "new leadership will end the war." This statement implied that Humphrey would not bring an end to the war, since he was Johnson's vice president and would therefore carry on Johnson's policies. A reporter picked up on this unspecific plan to end the war, labeling it Nixon's "secret plan." When questioned for specifics, Nixon claimed that providing details would jeopardize the negotiations that had begun in Paris. After the election, many critics began to view Nixon's "secret plan" as a campaign gimmick, not a carefully constructed strategy devised before the election.

After his election, Nixon implemented the so-called Nixon Doctrine—an initiative aimed to strengthen the South Vietnamese so that they could take charge of fighting the North and allow the U.S. to exit Vietnam. In July 1969, Nixon promised to honor all U.S. treaty commitments, to serve as a "shield" in the event that a nuclear power threatened an ally, and to provide other military and economic assistance in accordance with treaty commitments, but require the threatened nation to assume the primary responsibility for its defense.

The Nixon Doctrine paved the way for his policy of "Vietnamization," or putting the primary responsibility for the war in the hands of the Vietnamese. The Vietnamization process included increased training for South Vietnamese forces and an eventual, gradual withdrawal of U.S. troops from Vietnam.

Despite Nixon's talk of peace in Vietnam, the tonnage of bombs the U.S. dropped on Vietnam and its neighbors during the Nixon Administration far exceeded that of the Johnson Administration. The devastation following Nixon's election increased rapidly, including vast displacement of civilians and permanent environmental damage to the region.

The Secret War in Cambodia

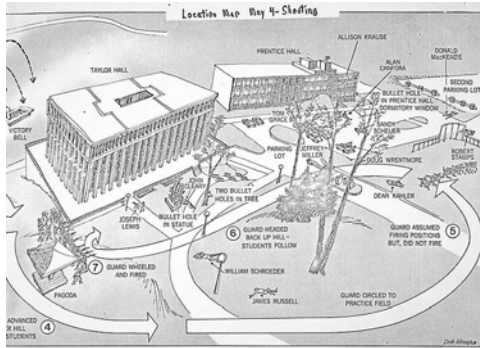
- Secret bombing attacks against Cambodia
- Cambodia officially neutral
- Attacked Viet Cong and NVA sanctuaries
- Nixon wanted to send a message of support to South Vietnam
- American public initially unaware



Nixon announcing the bombing in Cambodia

Although publicly aiming to reduce U.S. involvement in the war, Nixon ordered in spring 1970 a secret bombing campaign in Cambodia—an officially neutral nation. The objective was to attack areas in which the Viet Cong and NVA had established sanctuaries. Nixon aimed to send a strong message to North Vietnam that the new president of the U.S. continued to strongly support South Vietnam. The American public remained unaware of these attacks until late April, when Nixon announced them in an address to the nation.

The Kent State Massacre



A map showing where the shootings occurred

- Protests against Nixon's war in Cambodia
- Four days of protests at Kent State University (OH)
- National Guard killed four students
- Photos widely published
- Antiwar sentiments increased

Once word of the invasion of Cambodia spread, it predictably unleashed new waves of campus protests in the U.S. On May 1, 1970, students protested at Kent State University (OH). A graduate student burned a copy of the Constitution before a large crowd, symbolically protesting the government's policies. That night, fights erupted between students and police outside of the town's bars.

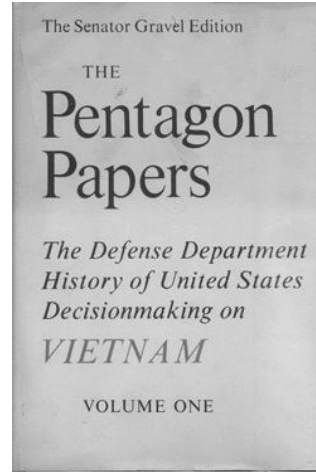
The next day, Kent's mayor declared a state of emergency and called on the National Guard to help restore order in town and on campus. That evening, students held another demonstration on campus and burned the Reserve Officer Training Corp (ROTC) building. Protesters and police again clashed; many arrests followed.

Protests and violent interactions between students and law enforcement continued for the next two days, with tensions mounting. On May 4th, about 2000 gathered for a planned protest, despite the university's announcement canceling it. The National Guard tried unsuccessfully to disperse the crowd, and a group of guardsmen advanced upon the protesters. The protesters retreated, but a standoff ensued, ending in guardsmen firing on the crowd. Four students died (only two of whom had been protesting), with nine injured.

The international media published photos taken immediately after the shooting, intensifying opposition to U.S. policies in Vietnam and Cambodia. Protests intensified on campuses across the country, including student strikes that shut down hundreds of campuses. Nixon reacted by referring to the situation as "civil war." The American public largely perceived Nixon's reaction to the protests as callous and insensitive.

The Pentagon Papers

- Daniel Ellsberg leaked classified documents to the *New York Times*
- Revealed that the government had consistently misled the American public about the Vietnam War
- Nixon filed injunction
- Supreme Court overturned injunction
- Ellsberg tried for espionage; charges dismissed



In 1971, former Pentagon official Daniel Ellsberg leaked classified documents to the *New York Times*. These became known as the Pentagon Papers and consisted of 14,000 pages of top-secret information from the Defense Department concerning decision making about the Vietnam War from 1945 to 1967. The newspaper published them in installments in succeeding editions.

The Pentagon Papers confirmed that Presidents Kennedy and Johnson had misled the public regarding U.S. activities in Vietnam and the reasons for escalating the war. The documents revealed, for example, that Johnson had secretly expanded the war before he had informed the American public, bombing Laos and the North Vietnamese coast. Ellsberg leaked these documents because he wanted the public to know about these deceptions and hoped the leak would lead to American withdrawal.

President Nixon felt increasingly threatened and feared that this information would damage his own war effort. In anger, Nixon and the U.S. Attorney General filed an injunction against the *New York Times* to prevent publication of the documents. The Supreme Court overturned the injunction, leading Nixon to propose a number of subversive methods to stop publication and discredit Ellsberg. The beginning of the end of Nixon's presidency, the Pentagon Papers uproar led to the actions exposed in the Watergate scandal, and his eventual resignation.

The federal government charged Ellsberg with espionage (among other crimes), but the presiding judge dismissed the case when the extent of the government's misconduct, including gathering evidence by illegal means, came to light.

The Easter Offensive



- March 1972
- NVA invasion nearly reached Saigon
- U.S. resumed bombing attacks against North Vietnam
- Ended in September
- Both sides claimed victory
- The North gained some bases in the South, and leverage at peace negotiations

North Vietnam commenced a major invasion of South Vietnam in March 1972. This “Easter Offensive” was widespread and reached deep into South Vietnam, extending by August almost to the capital city of Saigon. In contrast to North Vietnam’s reliance on guerrilla warfare in South Vietnam, the Easter Offensive had the hallmarks of conventional warfare, with thousands of troops entering South Vietnam at around the same time.

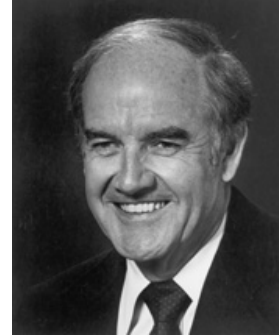
In response, President Nixon resumed bombing attacks against the North and ordered American forces to plant explosives in North Vietnam’s major harbor, Haiphong. While American and South Vietnamese forces initially retreated from some of their positions in South Vietnam, they launched successful counterattacks over the summer. The offensive ended in September, when the allied forces gained control of the city of Quang Tri. Although both sides claimed success, each had suffered heavy casualties.

While claiming victory in the Easter Offensive, the North Vietnamese government regretted that it had not gained more ground against South Vietnam and the U.S. North Vietnam had concerns about Nixon’s ongoing negotiations with China and the Soviet Union, which threatened to reduce the willingness of these communist powers to support the North Vietnamese war effort. Nevertheless, North Vietnam gained some new South Vietnamese bases from which to launch future attacks and increased its leverage at the peace negotiations in Paris.

The Election of 1972



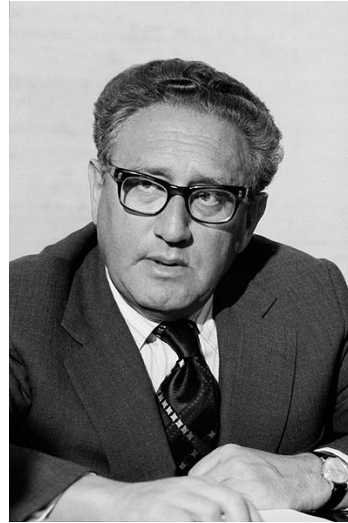
- Nixon vs. Senator George McGovern of South Dakota
- Nixon won by a landslide
- Nixon promised peace and portrayed the governor as a radical



Nixon won reelection in 1972 by a landslide. His opponent, South Dakota Senator George McGovern, had vehemently opposed the war, but Nixon promised that peace was close at hand and painted McGovern as a radical.

The Paris Peace Accords

- Paris peace talks had stalled for over three years
- Kissinger began meeting secretly with Le Duc Tho in 1970
- Thieu rejected tentative agreement in 1972
- Talks broke off in December



Henry Kissinger

The Paris Peace Talks had been stalled for 3½ years. The U.S. had not gotten North Vietnam to withdraw all troops from the South, and North Vietnam still refused to negotiate with the provisional, U.S.-supported South Vietnamese government. In the aftermath of the Easter Offensive, however, the stalemate began to dissolve. North Vietnam felt increasingly isolated and feared being cut off by a U.S. agreement with China. Nixon was ready to move away from Vietnam and on to other roles in his presidency.

In February 1970, National Security Advisor Henry Kissinger began secret meetings with North Vietnamese diplomat Le Duc Tho near Paris. They made little progress until the summer of 1972, when Kissinger agreed to allow the NVA to retain troops in the South, as well as to let South Vietnam, the Viet Cong, and international observers work out a plan for the South's government. North Vietnam agreed to stop sending troops into South Vietnam and insisted that South Vietnam's leader Nguyen Van Thieu be removed. The U.S. and North Vietnam reached a tentative cease-fire agreement in October, but Thieu (who had not participated in its drafting) rejected its terms. Negotiations broke off in December.

The Paris Peace Accords (cont.)

- Christmas Bombing of North Vietnam
- Peace accords signed on January 27, 1973
- Last American troops left Vietnam in March 1973



Signing the Paris
Peace Accords

Angered by this failure, Nixon launched a campaign against North Vietnam, targeting its infrastructure and mining its harbors. This Christmas Bombing lasted two weeks and destroyed 80 percent of North Vietnam's electrical capacity and 25 percent of its oil reserves. North Vietnam agreed to meet again in January 1973.

To secure Thieu's acceptance of the treaty, the U.S. promised to defend South Vietnam against treaty violations by the North. The parties reached an agreement (nearly identical to the earlier treaty), signing the final document on January 27. Per its terms, a cease-fire took effect, North Vietnam released many prisoners of war, and the U.S. began a process of troop withdrawal. The last American troops left Vietnam in March 1973, but the U.S. retained naval and air power in the Gulf of Tonkin, Thailand, and Guam, and continued its bombing campaign against Cambodia.

The Fall of Saigon

- NVA and Viet Cong took Saigon in 1975
- U.S. military helped with evacuations but failed to rescue many South Vietnamese who had helped in the war effort
- South Vietnam came under communist rule
- North and South united as the Socialist Republic of Vietnam



A soldier stands guard as a helicopter lands to evacuate U.S. personnel from Saigon, 1975

The Paris Peace Accords did not end all conflict in Vietnam. The South Vietnamese government remained extremely vulnerable to communist takeover, and approximately 150,000 North Vietnamese troops remained in the South. The U.S. had failed in its Vietnamization effort, unable to effectively build up a strong South Vietnam.

In the spring of 1975, North Vietnam and the Viet Cong launched a major offensive against South Vietnam, leading to the complete collapse of the South Vietnamese government. President Gerald Ford (Nixon had resigned in 1974) requested an additional \$300 million in military aid for South Vietnam; Congress rejected this request.

On April 30, 1975, North Vietnamese and Viet Cong forces took Saigon, the capital of South Vietnam. They renamed the city “Ho Chi Minh City” in honor of their late communist leader. Americans remaining in Saigon had to evacuate immediately. The U.S. military also attempted to rescue many of the South Vietnamese who had assisted it in the war, but in the chaos left many of these South Vietnamese behind. The bungled evacuation attempt, symbolized by images of desperate people trying to board rooftop helicopters, has been regarded as a low point in American history.

With the fall of Saigon, the Republic of South Vietnam came under communist rule. On July 2, 1976, North and South finally united as the Socialist Republic of Vietnam.

The Aftermath in the U.S.



Dead soldiers (background)
receive a rifle salute

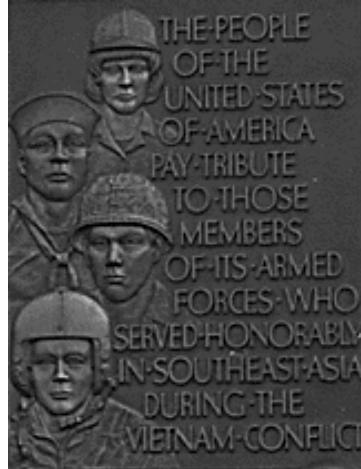
- More than 58,000 Americans killed; about 2000 missing
- Discussions concerning political miscalculations
- Military lessons learned
- U.S. had spent \$700 billion (today's dollars)
- Budget deficit

More than 58,000 Americans died in the course of the Vietnam War, with about 2000 missing and over 300,000 wounded. Its aftermath forced Americans and the U.S. government to examine what had gone wrong. Many discussions ensued concerning whether the Vietnam War had been more a political than a military disaster. It became apparent that the U.S. government's miscalculations, strategic errors, and dishonesty with the public may have been the true culprits in the failure of U.S. goals in Vietnam and in maintaining public support for the war. The U.S. military learned much from its experiences in Vietnam, including the understanding that widespread bombing campaigns do not necessarily deter all enemies.

The war created a large federal budget deficit. The United States had spent \$120 billion on the war (about \$700 billion in today's dollars). The country therefore had to deal not only with political but also with economic recovery in the aftermath of the war.

Veterans After the War

- Hundreds of veterans organizations
- Reunions
- Visits to Vietnam
- Some veterans prefer to avoid talking about the war



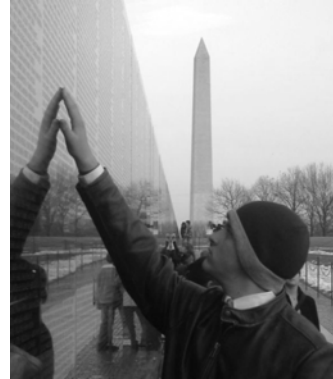
Vietnam War veterans have formed hundreds of organizations to keep in contact with other veterans, to honor their service in the war, and to offer support to veterans whose war experiences continue to traumatize them. Some battalions have held reunions, and many veterans have returned to Vietnam in recent years to see what the country looks like today and to help heal their emotional scars. Many veterans, however, find it too painful to talk about the war and would not consider returning to Vietnam.

The Vietnam Veterans Memorial



“The Three Soldiers”

- Completed in 1982
- “The Three Soldiers”
- Vietnam Women’s Memorial
- Vietnam Memorial Wall



“The Wall,” with the Washington Monument in the background

Completed in 1982, the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington D.C. serves as a visible symbol and reminder of the sacrifices made by soldiers in the Vietnam War. It features a bronze statue called “The Three Soldiers” (depicting an African American, a white, and a Hispanic in battle dress), as well as the Vietnam Women’s Memorial, which commemorates women who served in the war, primarily nurses. However, the memorial’s best-known component is the Vietnam Memorial Wall, a pair of tapered, black granite slabs inscribed with the names of the more than 58,000 Americans who died and the 2000 who went missing in Vietnam.

During its design and construction phases, the wall received criticism on a number of grounds, mostly because it didn’t match the style of the other monuments on the National Mall, with their white marble and classical architecture. Its design symbolizes a healing wound, alluding not only to the experiences of the soldiers who served, but also to the traumatic effect the war had on the country as a whole. It also implies a connection between the past and the present, as visitors can see their own reflections while looking at the names. A directory helps visitors locate the names of particular people. Visitors often make rubbings with pencil and paper of names engraved into the wall. It is common to see flags, flowers, photographs, and other mementos placed against the wall to honor loved ones who died in the war.

Note: The photo of the “Three Soldiers” in this slide (taken by Cezary P.) is licensed under the [Creative Commons Attribution ShareAlike 3.0](#), [Attribution ShareAlike 2.5](#), [Attribution ShareAlike 2.0](#) and [Attribution ShareAlike 1.0](#) License. In short: you are free to share and make derivative works of the file under the conditions that you appropriately attribute it, and that you distribute it only under a license identical to this one.

Discussion Questions

1. How did the Tet Offensive affect public perceptions of the Vietnam War in the U.S.?
2. What was the Nixon Doctrine, and what effect did it have on U.S. conduct of the war?
3. Do you think that the *New York Times* was justified in publishing the Pentagon Papers? Why or why not?
4. What do you see as the most important result of the Vietnam War? Explain.

1. The government had led the American public to believe that the United States was winning the war, but the surprise and scope of the Tet Offensive made many Americans doubt LBJ's assurances. Americans became much more skeptical, pressuring Johnson not to increase troops and to reduce the American bombing campaign against North Vietnam.
2. The Nixon Doctrine was a three-point plan for American foreign policy: (1) the U.S. must honor its treaty commitments, (2) the U.S. would act as a "shield" in the event that a nuclear power threatened an ally, and (3) the U.S. would provide military and economic assistance in accordance with treaty commitments, but would require the threatened nation to assume the primary responsibility for its defense. This led to the policy of "Vietnamization": strengthening South Vietnam so that it could govern itself and fight North Vietnam without U.S. ground troops or bombing campaigns. This effort at "Vietnamization" was highly unsuccessful, as South Vietnam proved unable to defend itself against the Viet Cong and North Vietnam.
3. Answers will vary. Students who think the *Times* was justified may say that the public's right to know what its leaders were doing in its name outweighed the government's potential embarrassment, especially in regards to such a long and costly war. Students who disapprove of the decision may mention the illegal means by which Ellsberg acquired the documents and that newspapers should not validate such actions, or that newspapers should not publish classified information, simply because it's classified.
4. Answers will vary.



Essential Questions

- Was it possible for the United States to have definitively won the Vietnam War?
- What experiences did American soldiers undergo in Vietnam?
- How did the American public feel about the war in Vietnam, and how did these feelings change over time?
- What different perspectives did young people take regarding the Vietnam War at the time? What might have been some of the reasons for these opinions?
- In what ways was the Vietnam War a defining event for an entire generation of Americans?

Indochina

- Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia
- Mountainous terrain
- Deltas:
 - Red River (north)
 - Mekong (south)
- Tropical rainforests



Vietnam in the Mid-20th Century



Ho Chi Minh in 1945

- French colony from late 19th century to WWII
- Japan invaded in WWII
- Ho Chi Minh and the Viet Minh led independence movement
- Democratic Republic of Vietnam
- Power vacuum

The First Indochina War

- Ho Chi Minh declared independence in 1945; received U.S. support
- War with France broke out in 1947
- Vietnam received assistance from communist China
- U.S. supported France



French soldiers in combat in Indochina, 1953

Eisenhower and J.F. Dulles

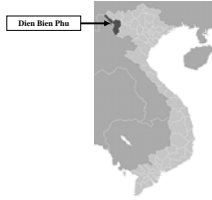


Eisenhower and Dulles

- Eisenhower took office in 1953
- Pressured France for a more aggressive strategy and a timetable for victory
- France agreed in exchange for financial assistance
- Dulles predicted victory by the end of 1955

Dien Bien Phu and the End of French Colonial Rule

- The American and French plan failed
- Viet Minh attacked French forces at Dien Bien Phu
- U.S. did not provide military assistance to the French
- Major victory for Viet Minh



The Geneva Accords and Aftermath



The Ho Chi Minh Trail appears in orange at the bottom of this map

- Treaty officially ended foreign involvement in Indochina
- Vietnam divided:
 - Communist North
 - U.S.-supported, Catholic South
- “Ho Chi Minh Trail”: supply line through Laos and Cambodia to South Vietnam

The Geneva Accords and Aftermath (continued)

- Ngo Dinh Diem took power in 1955
- Viet Cong threatened to overthrow Diem
- U.S. opposed mandated unification election



Ngo Dinh Diem

The Viet Cong and the North Vietnamese



A Viet Cong soldier

- Viet Cong: communist revolutionaries in South Vietnam
- North Vietnam: Ho's communist government
- North Vietnamese Army (NVA)
- North Vietnam wanted the Viet Cong to appear as if fighting independently
- Tactics

Instability in South Vietnam

- Kennedy expanded aid to South Vietnam
- Protests by Buddhists
- U.S. supported overthrow of Diem government
- Popular support for communists in South increased



During ceremonies at Saigon in 1962, the Vietnamese Air Force pledged its support for Diem after a political uprising and an attempt on his life

Discussion Questions

1. Why did the U.S. end its support for Ho Chi Minh and back France in the First Indochina War? Do you think this was a good strategy? Why or why not?
2. What were the Geneva Accords, and what impact did they have on Vietnam?
3. What was the relationship between the Viet Cong and the North Vietnamese government? Why did North Vietnam want to keep this relationship a secret?

Containment and the “Domino Theory”

- Kennedy began to call for limited withdrawal of advisors
- Johnson wanted escalation
- The domino theory of communism’s spread
- U.S. policy of containment



U.S. advisors in Vietnam, 1964

LBJ: Why Escalation?

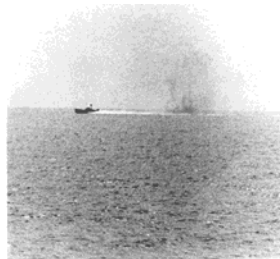


Secretary of State Dean Rusk (left) and President Johnson

- U.S. wanted to maintain its international respect and reputation
- Hoped to prevent communist China’s expansion
- Johnson’s political concerns and ego
- Believed North Vietnam would give up its goals with gradual escalation

The Gulf of Tonkin Incident

- Top-secret missions against North Vietnam from 1961
- August 2, 1964: Attack on U.S destroyer by NVA torpedo boats; U.S. fired first
- August 4: Alleged second NVA attack against U.S. destroyer



Photograph of action viewed from the U.S.S. *Maddox* during the Gulf of Tonkin Incident

The Gulf of Tonkin Incident (continued)



President Johnson signing the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution

- Based on second “attack,” Johnson ordered retaliatory airstrikes
- Gulf of Tonkin Resolution allowed military action without declaration of war
- Recent evidence shows that second attack never happened

Aerial Bombing Begins

- Aerial bombing campaign began in March 1965 (“Operation Rolling Thunder”)
- U.S. wanted to end North Vietnam’s support for the Viet Cong
- Bombing campaigns not effective toward this goal



The Ground War



U.S. troops during a “search and destroy” mission

- Number of ground troops grew rapidly
- “Search and destroy” missions
- Caused difficulties for the South Vietnamese: loss of farmland, inflation, refugees
- Many South Vietnamese came to see the U.S. as the enemy

Westmoreland's Strategy

- Gen. William Westmoreland
- War of attrition
- Large-scale ground and air attacks
- Viet Cong and NVA fought a smaller-scale guerilla war; difficult for U.S. to counter
- Attrition did not work
- "Logistical miracle"



General Westmoreland with President Johnson

American Allies' Views of the War

- Traditional European allies did not contribute; France openly opposed the war
- Pacific Rim allies included Australia, S. Korea, New Zealand, Thailand, and the Philippines
- All small and reluctant contributions
- Support waned as the war went on

American Soldiers in Vietnam

- Terrible conditions in the Vietnamese jungle and swamps
- Constant vigilance
- Hard to distinguish Viet Cong from South Vietnamese villagers
- Some turned to drug abuse
- Low morale



U.S. Marines march through the Vietnamese jungle

Weaponry



Phantom and Corsair fighters release bombs during a strike mission

- Bombers and fighters
- Tanks and armored personnel carriers
- Troops' individual weapons: rifles, mortars, grenades, mines
- "People sniffers"

Weaponry (cont.)

- Chemical incendiary devices (e.g., napalm)
- Agent Orange:
 - Killed jungle foliage
 - Caused genetic defects
- Agent Blue:
 - Destroyed crops
 - Peasants more affected than Viet Cong



A napalm strike

Women in the Vietnam War



- Thousands served in various military and civilian roles
- Noncombat roles
- Witnessed the same types of atrocities as men
- Woman's efforts not highly recognized
- Vietnam Women's Memorial Project

Prisoners of War

- Kept in North Vietnamese prisons in or near Hanoi
- Horrendous conditions
- Interrogation and torture increased after failed escape attempt
- U.S. began to publicize prison conditions
- Improvements after Ho's death
- Continued controversy over some POWs' fate



Former POW John McCain, shortly after his release in 1973

Discussion Questions

1. What was the domino theory, and how did it affect the U.S. government's decisions regarding Vietnam?
2. Why do you think that the U.S.'s European allies refused to support its actions in Vietnam? Were they justified in doing so? Explain.
3. Why did American ground troops have such a difficult time fighting in Vietnam?
4. What was the flaw in General Westmoreland's strategy of a war of attrition with the NVA?

Public Opinion in the U.S.

- Most Americans supported the war early on
- Opposition began to spread more widely in 1966
- Many still remained supportive
- "Hawks" and "doves"



Boxer Muhammad Ali, convicted for refusing to report for induction into the military during the Vietnam War, appealed his case to the Supreme Court and won

The Antiwar Movement: Ideologies

- Three general categories
 - Pacifists
 - Radicals
 - Antiwar liberals
- Did not always agree on the best protest strategies

The Antiwar Movement: Protests

- Individual acts of protest:
 - Burning draft cards
 - Self-immolation
 - Antiwar entertainment
- Group protests:
 - Government and associated buildings
 - Draft boards, recruiters
 - Weapons manufacturers



The Antiwar Movement: Protests (cont.)



Federal marshals drag away a protester after the march on the Pentagon

- Group protests:
 - March on the Pentagon (1967)
 - “Teach-ins” and “sit-ins” on college campuses

The Antiwar Movement: Leaders and Organizations

Pacifist movement:

- Often Quakers or Unitarians
- Dr. Benjamin Spock and SANE



Famous "baby doctor" Benjamin Spock was a vocal opponent of the war

The Antiwar Movement: Leaders and Organizations (cont.)



Mario Savio, a leader of the Free Speech Movement, at a protest at the University of California, Berkeley, 1966

- Some grew out of the civil rights movement:
 - Students for a Democratic Society (SDS)
 - Free Speech Movement
- The "New Left"

Martin Luther King Jr.

- Hesitated to speak out because of LBJ's War on Poverty
- Became a vocal critic of the war:
 - Felt it morally irresponsible
 - It diverted money from antipoverty programs
- "Beyond Vietnam" speech
- Criticized for antiwar position



The Antiwar Movement: Impact



- Protests did little to change public opinion about the war (or may have increased support for the war)
- Brought the war more closely into the public eye
- Kept Johnson from drastically escalating the war

1960s Counterculture and the War

- Mainly young people, but did not represent all youth
- Not all hippies protested; not all protesters were hippies
- Late 1960s to early 1970s
- Dissatisfaction with 1950s conservatism
- Musical influences and cultural experimentation



Coming Home



- Post-traumatic stress disorder
- Drug and alcohol addiction
- Veterans tended to resent antiwar protesters
- Sometimes blamed for the government's mistake
- Faced a nation that wanted to forget about the war
- Most did well upon their return

Vietnam Veterans Against the War

- Organized in 1967
- Support groups and health-care assistance for veterans
- Membership and prominence grew after U.S. invasion of Cambodia
- Operation RAW



The Draft: Lotteries



The first draft lottery,
December 1st, 1969

- Selective Service System
- Draft lottery in 1969
- Some men received deferments
- Many enlisted rather than be drafted
- Draft ended in 1973

The Draft: Avoidance and Evasion

- Conscientious objectors
- Illegally burning draft cards
- Fleeing the country, usually to Canada



The Draft: Race and Class Issues



- The war drew attention to class and racial tensions
- More poor men and minorities had to serve in Vietnam
- African Americans tended to strongly oppose the war

Discussion Questions

1. What led Martin Luther King Jr. to oppose the Vietnam War?
2. Why do you suppose that some antiwar organizations arose from the civil rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s?
3. Do you think that the draft lottery was a fair way of determining who was sent to fight in Vietnam? Why or why not?

The Tet Offensive

- Tet: Vietnamese New Year
- North Vietnam launched offensive despite cease-fire
- Focused on South Vietnamese cities and towns
- North Vietnam lost militarily
- Major psychological effect on American public
- Destruction in South Vietnam



Tet: The American Public Reacts



U.S. soldiers in the city of Hue during the Tet Offensive

- Reduced confidence that the United States was winning the war
- Johnson considered adding 200,000 troops
- *New York Times* leaked article about troop increase; Johnson failed to respond
- Johnson reduced troop increase and bombing of North Vietnam

The Paris Peace Talks

- LBJ concerned about his political reputation
- Suspended some bombing and encouraged North Vietnam to negotiate
- Slow pace, with contradictory demands
- Talks languished until 1972



U.S. Ambassador-at-Large
Averell Harriman

The Election of 1968



LBJ announcing his decision
not to run

- Johnson announced he wouldn't seek reelection
- Assassination of Robert Kennedy
- Democratic National Convention in Chicago
- Humphrey, Nixon, and Wallace
- Nixon won the election

The My Lai Massacre

- Charlie Company entered My Lai on search-and-destroy mission
- Brutally massacred over 300 villagers
- Covered up for a year and a half
- Fueled the antiwar movement
- Led more Americans to question the war strategy



Villagers killed in the My Lai massacre

Nixon's War Leadership



Nixon shaking hands with a soldier in Vietnam

- Nixon's "secret plan"
- Nixon Doctrine
- "Vietnamization"
- Bombing under Nixon far exceeded LBJ's
- Increased devastation under Nixon's watch

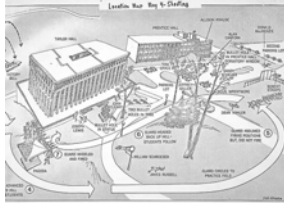
The Secret War in Cambodia

- Secret bombing attacks against Cambodia
- Cambodia officially neutral
- Attacked Viet Cong and NVA sanctuaries
- Nixon wanted to send a message of support to South Vietnam
- American public initially unaware



Nixon announcing the bombing in Cambodia

The Kent State Massacre

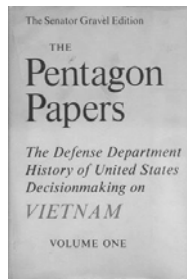


A map showing where the shootings occurred

- Protests against Nixon's war in Cambodia
- Four days of protests at Kent State University (OH)
- National Guard killed four students
- Photos widely published
- Antiwar sentiments increased

The Pentagon Papers

- Daniel Ellsberg leaked classified documents to the *New York Times*
- Revealed that the government had consistently misled the American public about the Vietnam War
- Nixon filed injunction
- Supreme Court overturned injunction
- Ellsberg tried for espionage; charges dismissed



The Easter Offensive

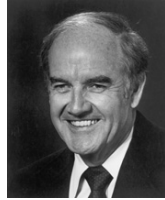


- March 1972
- NVA invasion nearly reached Saigon
- U.S. resumed bombing attacks against North Vietnam
- Ended in September
- Both sides claimed victory
- The North gained some bases in the South, and leverage at peace negotiations

The Election of 1972



- Nixon vs. Senator George McGovern of South Dakota
- Nixon won by a landslide
- Nixon promised peace and portrayed the governor as a radical



The Paris Peace Accords

- Paris peace talks had stalled for over three years
- Kissinger began meeting secretly with Le Duc Tho in 1970
- Thieu rejected tentative agreement in 1972
- Talks broke off in December



Henry Kissinger

The Paris Peace Accords (cont.)

- Christmas Bombing of North Vietnam
- Peace accords signed on January 27, 1973
- Last American troops left Vietnam in March 1973



Signing the Paris Peace Accords

The Fall of Saigon

- NVA and Viet Cong took Saigon in 1975
- U.S. military helped with evacuations but failed to rescue many South Vietnamese who had helped in the war effort
- South Vietnam came under communist rule
- North and South united as the Socialist Republic of Vietnam



A soldier stands guard as a helicopter lands to evacuate U.S. personnel from Saigon, 1975

The Aftermath in the U.S.

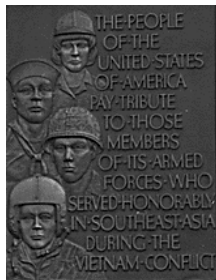


Dead soldiers (background) receive a rifle salute

- More than 58,000 Americans killed; about 2000 missing
- Discussions concerning political miscalculations
- Military lessons learned
- U.S. had spent \$700 billion (today's dollars)
- Budget deficit

Veterans After the War

- Hundreds of veterans organizations
- Reunions
- Visits to Vietnam
- Some veterans prefer to avoid talking about the war

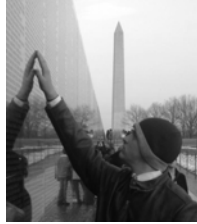


The Vietnam Veterans Memorial



"The Three Soldiers"

- Completed in 1982
- "The Three Soldiers"
- Vietnam Women's Memorial
- Vietnam Memorial Wall



"The Wall," with the Washington Monument in the background

Discussion Questions

1. How did the Tet Offensive affect public perceptions of the Vietnam War in the U.S.?
2. What was the Nixon Doctrine, and what effect did it have on U.S. conduct of the war?
3. Do you think that the *New York Times* was justified in publishing the Pentagon Papers? Why or why not?
4. What do you see as the most important result of the Vietnam War? Explain.

The Vietnam War: Backwards Planning Activities

Enduring understandings:

- The Vietnam War was a legacy of colonial and Cold War conflicts and suspicions, including the West's fear that communism would spread
- The difficulties the United States faced in Vietnam were related in part to the difference between U.S. and Vietnamese war strategies, with the U.S. waging large-scale bombardments and ground assaults, and North Vietnam and the Viet Cong waging guerilla warfare.
- The American public held a variety of opinions about the war, and there was no consensus within the United States about whether the war was a good idea and how it should be waged
- A high level of secrecy within the U.S. government ultimately contributed to public suspicions about and distrust of the war effort
- The antiwar movement, while not representing a majority of the American people, became highly vocal and prominent and eventually had an indirect influence on the war's progression
- The Vietnam War remains an important part of the American consciousness, affecting many veterans and other people who lived through that era, as well as overall political and governmental discussions and activities

Essential questions:

- Was it possible for the United States to have definitively won the Vietnam War?
- What experiences did American soldiers undergo in Vietnam?
- How did the American public feel about the war in Vietnam, and how did these feelings change over time?
- What different perspectives did young people take regarding the Vietnam War at the time? What might have been some of the reasons for these opinions?
- In what ways was the Vietnam War a defining event for an entire generation of Americans?

Learning Experiences and Instruction

Students will need to know...	Students will need to be able to...
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Events and conditions in Vietnam prior to U.S. involvement 2. The reasons the U.S. government chose to become involved and then increase its involvement in Vietnam 3. General U.S. war strategies in Vietnam, their effectiveness, and the reasons the U.S. had such trouble fighting in Vietnam 4. The role of U.S. presidents and their advisors in shaping the conduct of the war 5. Significant events in the war, including the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution, the Tet Offensive, the My Lai Massacre, and the Paris Peace Talks 6. How ground troops experienced the war 7. Major aspects of the antiwar movement, including ideologies, types of protest, and prominent organizations 8. The relationship of race and class to war participation and perspectives on the war 9. How the war ended 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Interpret and synthesize information about U.S. soldiers' experiences in Vietnam 2. Analyze and interpret photographs of key occurrences in the Vietnam War era 3. Write and ask questions to help them understand individuals' impressions of the Vietnam War's legacy 4. Interpret the experiences of individuals whom they have interviewed about their ideas concerning the legacies of the war

Teaching and learning activities that will equip students to demonstrate targeted understandings:

- Overview of essential questions and basic understandings
- Class discussion of subject matter questions in the PowerPoint presentation
- Teacher introduction of common terms and ideas in the essential questions and related projects
- Students conduct research in groups to be used later in individual and group projects
- Informal observation and coaching of students as they work in groups
- Evaluation and delivered feedback on projects and research reports
- Students create and present their unit projects
- Posttest made of multiple-choice questions covering the presentation, with one or more essential questions as essay questions

Project #1: What Was It Like to Serve in Vietnam?: Learning from Oral Histories

Overview:

A number of oral history projects focus on Vietnam War veterans. Their interviews provide firsthand information about what it was like to be a soldier directly involved in the war. Students will read or listen to interviews to get a better sense of how individuals experienced combat situations, their daily routines, and other aspects of the war. Taking the perspective of Vietnam soldiers, they'll write letters home describing their experiences and observations.

Objectives:

As a result of completing the lesson, students will be able to:

- Gain a better understanding of the day-to-day experiences of American troops in Vietnam
- Appreciate the value of oral history interviews in gaining information and insight into personal experiences of a time and place
- Take the perspective of a Vietnam War soldier and articulate their impressions and experiences into a brief letter

Time required:

Three to four class periods

Methodology:

Ask students to consider the things they have learned about what it was like to be an American serviceperson on the ground in Vietnam. What were the conditions like? How did soldiers cope with these conditions? Hold a brief class discussion on this subject.

Working with partners, have students listen to or read interviews with Vietnam War veterans. A number of these interviews can be found on the Internet; two good sites are the Vietnam Center and Archive: Oral History Project (<http://www.vietnam.ttu.edu/oralhistory/interviews/browse/ohh.php>), and The Vietnam War: Oral Histories (<http://fcit.usf.edu/vietnam/index.html>). They can also do an Internet search using the keywords "Vietnam War oral histories." Each pair should choose one oral-history interview and fill out the chart in Section 1 of the Student Handout, describing details about what they read or hear. For interviews that are divided into sections, students should focus on the parts that discuss experiences in Vietnam rather than in the U.S. Encourage the class to choose a variety of interviews so that not every pair uses the same one.

The last row of the chart in Section 1 of the Student Handout asks students to list the words and terms they are unfamiliar with from the interview. Have them research the meanings of these words and terms and write them in Section 2 of the handout.

Once students have completed their charts, ask them to combine with other partners to create groups of six. Allow each pair approximately ten minutes to share the interview they have listened to or read with other members of their group. If two pairs in the group have used same interview, try to place one of the pairs into another group.

As students listen to other interviews, ask them to take notes in Section 3 of the Student Handout describing what these other interviews are about.

Have students work individually to write letters home from the perspective of a Vietnam War soldier (one to two pages). Ask them to incorporate the things they have learned from the oral-history interviews. Their letters should discuss the following general points, but their ideas may vary depending on what students have learned from the interviews. When possible, students should use specific examples to support their points:

- What their daily life is like in Vietnam
- How they feel about their experiences
- Their overall observations on how the war is going as they are fighting in it, the purpose of the war, and other things they have considered

As a follow-up to the letters, hold a class discussion on what students have written and learned. How has this activity helped to them better understand some of the personal experiences of the Vietnam War? What questions have developed as a result of this activity? What would they like to ask a veteran if they had the chance? In what ways, if any, has this activity changed their impressions of the Vietnam War?

Evaluation:

Use a rubric to evaluate students' notes on the interviews and their letters. A sample rubric is provided at the end of this lesson.

What Was It Like to Serve in Vietnam?: Learning from Oral Histories Student Handout

Section 1

Fill out this chart to the best of your ability, depending on the information the interviewee has provided.

Source of interview (URL or title of book):	
Subject of the interview:	
Where was this person stationed?	
When was this person in Vietnam?	
Details about daily life in Vietnam:	
Things this person found interesting or noteworthy:	
Things this person found frightening or difficult:	
Things this person found entertaining, or that he or she	

did for fun:	
This person's perspectives on the war and how things were going at the time:	
Terms or words that came up in the interview that you don't understand:	

Section 2

Look up the definitions of the terms or words you did not understand in the interview, and write them down in this section:

Section 3

Use this section to take notes on the interviews that other students in your group tell you about:

Interview 1:

- Daily life:
- How their experiences made them feel (e.g., scared, hopeful):
- Attitudes toward the war:
- Other information:

Interview 2:

- Daily life:
- How their experiences made them feel (e.g. scared, hopeful)
- Attitudes toward the war:
- Other information:

What Was It Like to Serve in Vietnam? Rubric

Criteria:	Poor (0–5):	Fair (6–10):	Good (11–15):	Excellent (16–20):	Student score:
Notes on the initial interview	Chart shows little attention to interview's details; very incomplete	Chart shows some attention to interview's details; mostly incomplete	Chart shows good attention to interview's details; mostly complete	Chart shows careful attention to interview's details; complete or nearly complete	
Notes on other students' interviews	Student did not listen carefully to other group members, or took no or very sloppy notes	Student listened only partially to other group members, or took inadequate notes	Student listened somewhat carefully to other group members and took good notes	Student listened carefully to other group members and took careful and thorough notes	
Letters home: Clarity	Letters lack clarity and make little sense	Letters somewhat unclear and difficult to understand	Letters somewhat clear and easy to understand	Letters very clear and easy to understand	
Letters home: Content	Letters contain little substance or detail and/or fail to cover required elements	Letters lack adequate substance and/or cover only some required elements	Letters contain a decent level of substance and cover all required elements	Letters are highly substantive and cover all required elements	
Total:					

Project #2: Photojournalism in the Vietnam War

Overview:

Photojournalism can be a powerful tool in conveying stories and emotions related to wars and other major global events. Several famous photographs taken and published during the Vietnam War had a major impact on public perceptions of the war and related events, and have come to symbolize the war's brutality and complicated legacy. Students will view three of the most famous photographs from this era and consider their potential impact. They'll then write editorial articles about photojournalism's role in shaping political events.

These widely recognized photographs are important parts of the public's memory of the Vietnam War and are integral to an understanding of the media's role in the war. Despite this visibility, these photos are very graphic and may be particularly disturbing to some students. This activity is therefore best suited to more-mature high school students, including AP students. Use particular caution with younger students in middle school or kids who have experienced violent trauma of which you are aware. Whatever age you are teaching, prepare students for what they are about to see.

Objectives:

As a result of completing this lesson, students will be able to:

- Recognize and reflect on three well-known photographs from the Vietnam War era, and understand their context.
- Have a better understanding of the role of photojournalism in wars and related events.
- Articulate ideas about photojournalism's impact in political events.

Time required:

Two to three class periods

Methodology:

Show students some photographs from recent editions of newspapers or news magazines. You might bring in issues of your local newspaper or *Newsweek* or *Time* magazines, for example. Ask students to look at the photographs and describe their first impressions of what the photos show. Next, provide a brief overview of what each photograph is about, and ask them to explain how they feel the photographs influence the news stories. For example, if they're looking at a photograph of children playing in an empty lot and the article is about homeless families with children, how does the photograph enhance or influence the story?

Inform students that they are about to see three famous Vietnam War-era photographs that most people find disturbing. All three of these photos serve as graphic reminders of the often brutal and violent events of the Vietnam War, mainly in Vietnam but also in the U.S. Ask students to pause for a moment and prepare themselves to see some images that may bother them. Also, be prepared with an alternative activity in the event that certain students are especially disturbed by the photos and cannot continue with this activity.

Show students the following photographs one at a time. It would be ideal if you could project the images to the entire class. Alternately, you can have students work on their own computers but have everyone search for the same photograph at once:

- Eddie Adams's photo of a Vietnamese police chief shooting a suspected member of the Viet Cong during the beginning of the Tet Offensive
- John Filo's photo of a dead student taken immediately after the Kent State shootings
- Huynh Cong "Nick" Ut's photo of Vietnamese children running after a napalm attack

At first, do not give students information on what the photograph is about. Instead, for each photograph, hold a brief class discussion on its initial impact. What do students think is going on in the photo? What are their reactions to this photograph, both intellectually and emotionally? In what ways does this photograph tell a story, even without words?

Hold the above discussion for each of the three photographs.

Now provide some background about each photograph, explaining some of the stories behind each one.

- Eddie Adams: Adams took this photograph at the beginning of the Tet Offensive. President Johnson had been trying to convince the American people that the war was going well, and the public was therefore surprised to learn about this new North Vietnamese offensive. The media played an important role in increasing the public's skepticism about the war. The publication of Adams's photograph was particularly damaging to Johnson's credibility. It made Americans question the story they'd been told regarding South Vietnamese innocence and Viet Cong brutality; the photo turned these roles around, with the South Vietnamese general appearing brutal and the Viet Cong appearing small and weak. Americans therefore wondered whether the people they were supposedly fighting to protect (the South Vietnamese) were truly innocent and deserving of protection.
- John Filo: This widely published photograph gave Americans a direct view of the results of the government's policies toward war protesters. The protesters' youth reminded many American adults of their own children, thus increasing empathy for the protesters.
- Huynh Cong "Nick" Ut: This photograph powerfully portrays the results of South Vietnamese (and, by extension, American) bombing on innocent children. It appeared on the cover of *Time* magazine, thus gaining widespread notoriety in the United States. The American public was horrified to see such a graphic image of children fleeing a napalm attack.

Have students use Section 1 of the Student Handout to enter their reflections regarding the impact of these photographs.

Ask students to conduct Internet or library research to find out more about at least one of the photographs they have seen. Ask them to answer the questions in Section 2 of the Student Handout.

Ask students to imagine that they work as magazine editors. Their magazine is preparing a special issue to honor the contributions of photojournalists over the past century. Students have been asked to write editorial articles answering the questions, “In what ways can photojournalism serve as a political force? How might photographs influence the course of political events?” They should use examples from this activity to support their answers.

Evaluation:

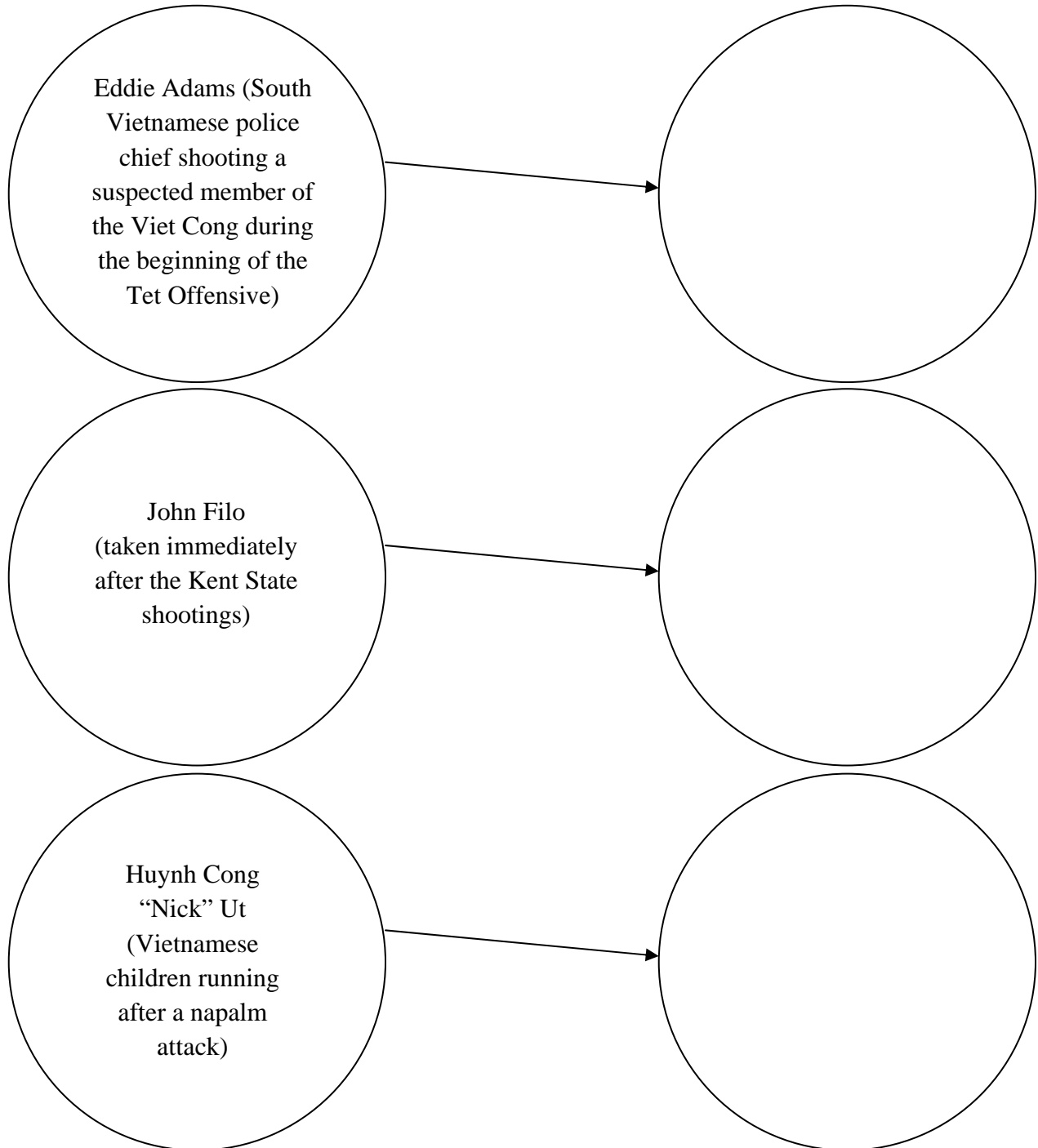
Use a rubric to evaluate students’ notes in the Student Handout and their articles. See the sample rubric, which may either be used as is, or adapted as needed.

Photojournalism in the Vietnam War

Student Handout

Section 1

Use the following diagram to organize your ideas about how each of the three photographs might have influenced public perceptions of the Vietnam War. Write your ideas in the circles on the right.



Section 2

Which photograph have you chosen to research?

Where was this photograph published? How famous did it become?

In what ways did the American public react to this photograph?

What were this photograph's lasting impacts? Did it contribute to any changes in the war or to the antiwar movement? If so, how?

Photojournalism in the Vietnam War Rubric

Criteria	Poor (0–5):	Fair (6–10):	Good (11–15):	Excellent (16–20):	Student score:
Reactions to photographs (diagrams on the Student Handout)	Student demonstrates little reflection or thought regarding the photographs and has written little or nothing of substance	Student demonstrates little reflection or thought, but has written something informative in the diagram	Student demonstrates some reflection, though poorly or hastily articulated in the diagram	Student demonstrates careful reflection and has written substantive comments in the diagram	
Notes about the photographs (Section 2 of the Student Handout)	Student has neglected to complete this section, or the answers make little sense	Student has partially completed this section or has given sketchy or only partially clear answers	Student has completed this section with mostly clear answers, but perhaps lacking in detail	Student has completed this section with very clear and detailed answers	
Articles: Clarity	Articles lack clarity and make little sense	Articles somewhat unclear and difficult to understand	Articles somewhat clear and easy to understand	Articles very clear and easy to understand	
Articles: Content	Articles offer an unclear argument and/or fail to provide supporting evidence or details	Articles offer a somewhat unclear argument and/or do not provide adequate supporting evidence or details	Articles offer a somewhat clear argument and provide decent supporting evidence and details	Articles offer a very clear argument and provide excellent supporting evidence and details	
Total:					

Project #3: Vietnam War–Era Interviews

Overview:

The Vietnam War has left lasting impressions on the people who lived through it and remains “alive” for many individuals and for the country as a whole. It’s difficult to pinpoint the specific legacies of the war, as different people have different perspectives on the war’s lasting impact. In this activity, students will attempt to uncover some of the war’s legacies through the eyes of adults who have strong memories of the era but who have lived through a good deal since that time, and are therefore in a position to reflect on how the war has “lived on” for them and for the nation. To that end, students will interview people who recall the Vietnam War, whether they were young people living in the U.S., soldiers, or in other roles.

The experience of conducting an interview can be fascinating for students and awaken them to new ideas and perspectives about the interview topic and the person they’re interviewing. This project differs from Project 1 in that it gives students the opportunity to directly conduct an interview and focuses on people’s reflections on the war’s legacies, rather than on daily life as a soldier in Vietnam (although students may interview veterans).

Objectives:

As a result of completing this lesson, students will be able to:

- Identify ways in which the Vietnam War affected individuals and the country as a whole
- Effectively prepare for and conduct interviews with people of a different generation
- Reflect on and communicate personal perspectives on the legacies of the Vietnam War

Time required:

Three to four class periods (not including conducting the interviews)

Methodology:

In a class discussion, ask students to brainstorm some of the long-term psychological and emotional effects of the Vietnam War. In what ways do they think the war may have affected the perspectives and attitudes of American people who remember this era? Ask them to consider how the war may have influenced people’s ideas in the following areas:

- Overall perspectives on and attitudes toward the federal government
- Perspectives on the U.S.’s role in other countries
- Perspectives on the war in general
- Perspectives on campus and street protests and protesters
- Perspectives on veterans
- Perspectives on how the U.S. government should spend taxpayers’ money
- Other perspectives and attitudes that the war may have influenced

Inform the class that there are no clear or correct answers to the above questions. Different people took different lessons from the Vietnam War, and the lessons of history have a way of changing or fading over time. Tell them that they will be interviewing people about their own recollections of and reflections on the war in order to find out various perspectives on these questions.

Also, remind students that the long-term impact of the war goes beyond individual perceptions and perspectives. The U.S. government, military, and other institutions changed in some ways as a result of the Vietnam War and related events. Students have learned a little about this from the PowerPoint and perhaps from other sources. They should try to gain a clearer understanding of this type of long-term impact from their interviews.

Ask students to calculate the approximate current age of people who were 18 to 25 during the Vietnam War. As they will notice, the oldest of these people would be around 70 years old and the youngest in their mid-50s (as of the publication of this lesson). Do they know anyone in this age group? Perhaps their grandparents, parents, aunts or uncles, neighbors, or teachers have vivid recollections of being a young adult during the Vietnam War era.

Have students research methods and tips for conducting oral-history interviews. They can search the Internet using combinations of the keywords “conducting Vietnam War oral history interviews.” One good resource is “How to Do an Oral History about the Impact of the Vietnam Era” (<http://www.pbs.org/pov/stories/vietnam/curriculum.html>). It’s very important that students understand the following points about conducting this type of interview:

- The interviewee must be fully informed about the subject and purpose of the interview and must be permitted to decline answering any questions that he or she feels uncomfortable with. Students should ask the interviewee in advance if he or she would prefer not to talk about certain subjects.
- Students should ask interviewees to sign a form granting permission to do the interview, stating how the interview will be used. The permission form should mention that students will be creating a class mural about what they learned during these interviews, and should ask the questions, “Do I have permission to quote you on the mural?” and, “Do I have permission to use your first name and last initial on the mural?”
- Students should prepare their questions in advance rather than “wing it.” The questions should be based on things they already know about the Vietnam War era and about the person they are interviewing. For example, if they know this person attended antiwar protests on his or her college campus, they may focus their questions on those activities and the person’s reflections about this part of his or her life.
- Students should be punctual and polite at all times, even if the interviewee is a close relative. Students need to keep in mind that the interviewee is doing them a favor by answering their questions, and students need to be respectful of the interviewee’s time. They should discuss the length of the interview beforehand, but it probably should not exceed one hour.
- Students should be prepared for some interviewees to find this part of their lives difficult to talk about and to be respectful if the interviewee wants to end the interview early.

As a class or in small groups, have students list questions they might ask that would help them better understand the long-term impact of the Vietnam War on individuals and on the country as a whole. They might search for sample questions on the Internet. If students do this part of the activity in small groups, have the groups convene as a class and create a master list of appropriate questions. The list should contain from five to eight questions. Some examples might include: “How has your participation in the protests affected your life since then?” or “How do you think the United States has changed as a result of the Vietnam War?”

Ask each student to find someone to interview about his or her recollections of the Vietnam War era. This person should be old enough to have vivid memories of the era and to have had some understanding of what was going on, and he or she should have been living in either the U.S., a southeast Asian country such as Vietnam or Cambodia, or another country but with some sort of direct experience of the war or the antiwar movement (perhaps Canada or Australia). As an option, if students have already done the first activity in this series, you may wish to have them interview people who played roles other than American soldiers during the war era. On the other hand, interviewing a Vietnam veteran who is willing to talk about his or her experience could be an invaluable opportunity for a student.

Students should decide whether they will make audio recordings of the interviews or take notes on paper or on their computers. This may depend on the interviewee’s preference. If they make audio recordings, they should offer a copy of the recording to the interviewee and promise to destroy the original copy after this assignment is over if the interviewee would like them to do so. The advantage of making an audio recording is that students have an opportunity to fully listen to what the interviewee is saying. The disadvantage is that they have to listen to the recording afterwards, perhaps more than once, to write down the highlights of the interview. The disadvantage of taking notes during the interview is that it can be distracting for the interviewee as well as for the interviewer, and it can be difficult to take adequate notes in a hurry.

Ask students to use Section 1 of the Student Handout to formalize their list of interview questions. They should use questions from the class list, plus additional questions that they feel may be of particular relevance to the person they are interviewing. They may ask about specific memories and experiences but should also include questions about the interviewee’s reflections on the war’s overall impact. It might be a good idea for you to review each student’s list of questions before they conduct their interviews.

After students have conducted their interviews, ask them to compile the things they have learned into a graphic organizer, such as the one in Section 2 of the Student Handout. It may be easier for them to create their own version of this “Idea Web” on the computer. While it might be difficult for them to distill the interviewee’s comments into this type of organizer, it is a helpful exercise that allows them to gain clarity on the main themes that arose during the interview.

Ask students to reflect on what they have learned during the interview by answering the question in Section 3 of the Student Handout.

Discuss students' experiences as a class. What did they learn? What did their interviewees have in common? In what ways did the interviewees' experiences and reflections differ? What was this experience like for the students?

Have students use large pieces of butcher paper to create a class mural showcasing some of the things they learned from their interviews regarding the long-term legacies of the Vietnam War. They may include drawings and text, but they should not directly quote anyone or include interviewees' names on the mural unless they have been given written permission to do so. If students do include names, they should only use the first name and last initial.

Display the mural either in the classroom or outside of the room as a visual tribute to the people who agreed to be interviewed, as well as a powerful reminder of the Vietnam War's lasting legacies.

Evaluation:

Use a rubric to evaluate students' work. A sample rubric is included at the end of this lesson, or you may use another one of your choice.

Vietnam War–Era Interviews

Student Handout

Section 1

In the space below, write the questions you will ask the person you are going to interview. During the interview, be prepared to pick and choose from this list and to skip or change some of these questions, depending on what the person wants to talk about. If they stray off the topic, however, try to bring them back to your questions about the long-term impact of the war.

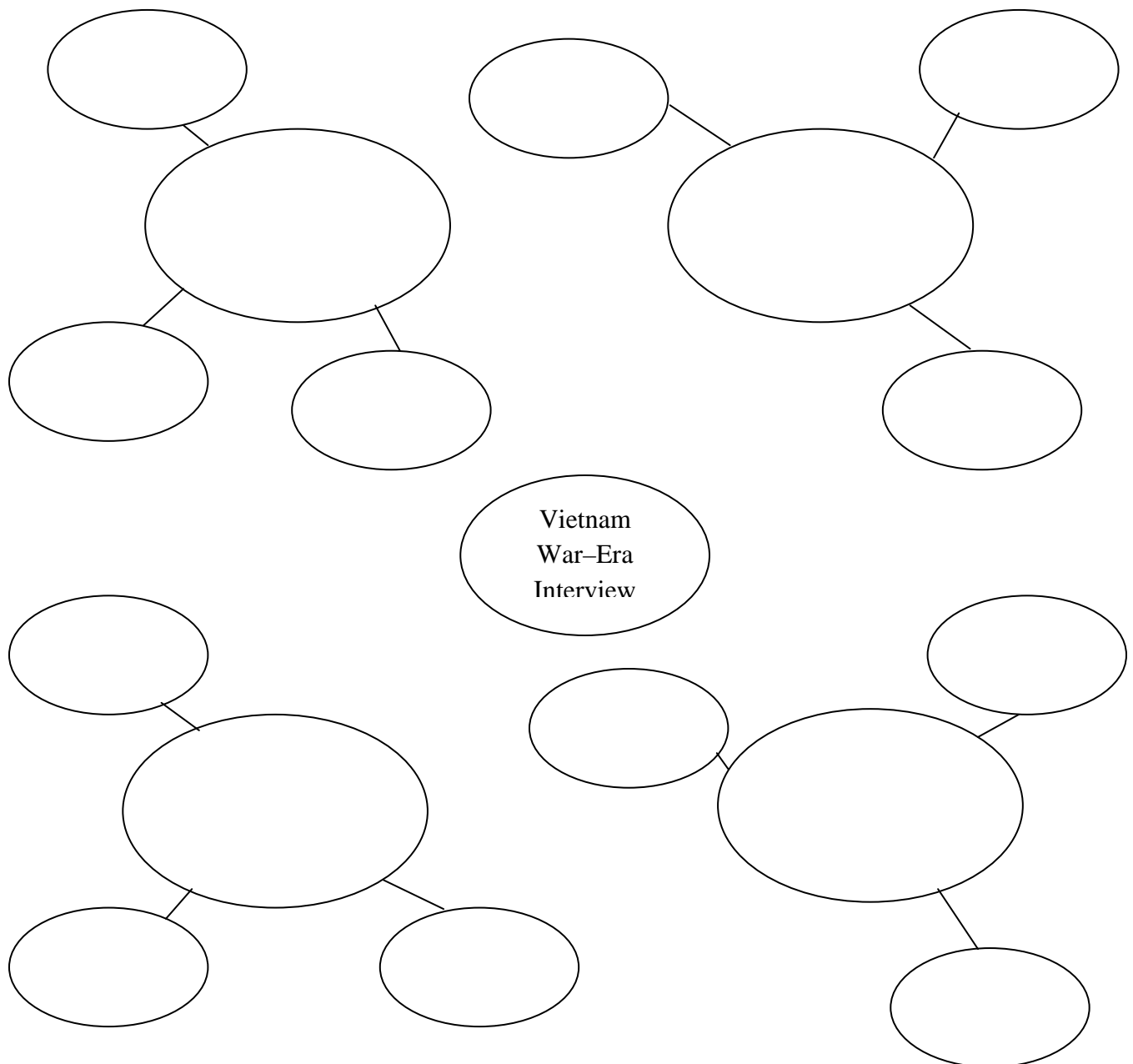
Questions from the class list:

Additional questions of your own:

Section 2

This is a sample Idea Web to help you organize what you have learned from your interview. You might find it easier to create your own Idea Web on the computer.

Think about the main ideas and lessons you learned from the interview. Write these overall concepts in the large main idea ovals. Next, think about the details, comments, and quotes from your interview that illustrate or support these main ideas. Write these details in the smaller ovals that link to the appropriate main idea ovals.



Section 3

Write a paragraph describing the main things you learned from conducting this interview. What have you learned about the lasting impact of the Vietnam War, from the perspective of the person you interviewed? What other interesting or important things have you learned?

Vietnam War–Era Interviews Rubric

Criteria:	Level 1 (0–10 points):	Level 2 (11–20 points):	Level 3 (21–30 points):	Level 4 (31–40 points):	Score:
Interview preparation	Followed directions poorly, has done a poor job of preparing and/or has not listed the questions	Followed directions somewhat poorly and/or has done only a fair job of preparing and/or has not adequately listed the questions	Followed directions for the most part and has done an adequate job of preparing, including listing the questions	Carefully followed directions and has done an outstanding job of preparing, including listing the questions	
Organizing interview results (Idea Web)	Student has not carefully considered what they have learned in the interview and/or has poorly organized results; or did not conduct the interview	Student has inadequately considered what they have learned in the interview and/or has somewhat carelessly organized the results	Student has adequately considered what they have learned in the interview and has organized the results with sloppiness or lack of attention to detail	Student has carefully considered what they have learned in the interview and has carefully organized the results	
Final paragraph	Student shows a poor understanding and synthesis of what they learned in the interview, or did not write the paragraph	Student shows a fair understanding and synthesis of what they learned in the interview	Student shows an adequate understanding and synthesis of what they learned in the interview	Student shows a superb understanding and synthesis of what they learned in the interview	

Participation in class mural	Student did not participate	Student participated only moderately, or failed to contribute substantively	Student participated somewhat, contributing something of substance to the mural but perhaps with less care	Student participated fully, contributing something highly substantive	
Total:					

The Vietnam War: Multiple-Choice Quiz

1. Which of the following statements about the First Indochina War is not true?
 - a. The United States supported the French-created Vietnamese government rather than the Viet Minh
 - b. The United States sent American ground troops to Vietnam
 - c. The Viet Minh were attempting to drive out French colonial forces
 - d. The United States provided military support to France
2. What happened at Dien Bien Phu?
 - a. French forces defeated the Viet Minh, leading the Viet Minh to retreat to the south
 - b. American forces stormed the town, defeating Viet Minh battalions
 - c. The Viet Minh defeated French forces, leading to French withdrawal from Vietnam
 - d. American fighter planes bombed the town for two days
3. Which of the following was not a consequence of the Geneva Accords?
 - a. North Vietnam gained the support of the United States government
 - b. Many Catholics migrated to South Vietnam
 - c. Vietnam was divided into two countries, North Vietnam and South Vietnam
 - d. Communism intensified in the South
4. What was the difference between the Viet Cong and the North Vietnamese government?
 - a. The Viet Cong were communist revolutionaries in North Vietnam, while the North Vietnamese government controlled the country
 - b. There was no difference—they were synonymous
 - c. The Viet Cong were communist revolutionaries in South Vietnam, while the communist North Vietnamese government controlled North Vietnam
 - d. The Viet Cong consisted of younger members than the North Vietnamese government
5. Which of the following might have been a desired result of a U.S. containment policy?
 - a. The United States offers military assistance to France to help defend itself against anti-colonial Vietnamese
 - b. China and the Soviet Union sign a treaty agreeing to protect communism from the Western threat
 - c. South Vietnam becomes increasingly controlled by communist forces
 - d. Cambodia never becomes communist because the U.S. stops North Vietnam from spreading communism to other parts of southeast Asia

6. What was the immediate impact of the Gulf of Tonkin incident?
- The United States halted its bombing campaigns against North Vietnam
 - The United States passed a resolution allowing the U.S. government to use military force in southeast Asia
 - The United States passed a resolution prohibiting the U.S. government from escalating military involvement in southeast Asia
 - North Vietnam bombed Saigon
7. What was the Ho Chi Minh Trail?
- A trail through the mountainous regions of North Vietnam
 - The trail by which most U.S. ground troops marched on their way to fight the Viet Cong
 - A region of South Vietnam known for its strong Viet Cong bases.
 - A series of supply routes from North Vietnam to South Vietnam by way of Laos and Cambodia
8. Which of the following was not a consequence of the American ground war?
- Vietnamese villagers were killed in search-and-destroy missions
 - Large areas of South Vietnamese farmland were destroyed
 - South Vietnamese villagers developed increasing trust in American troops
 - Many South Vietnamese villagers were forced into refugee status
9. Which of the following was not a role of American women in the war?
- Combat soldier
 - Translator
 - Physical therapist
 - Intelligence officer
10. What was the main purpose of Agent Orange?
- To kill crops
 - To kill Viet Cong
 - To strip the leaves off (defoliate) trees in the jungle so as to better spot Viet Cong
 - To help American soldiers detect Viet Cong by “smelling” their urine
11. Which of the following statements is true?
- North Vietnam refrained from torturing prisoners of war
 - After two prisoners of war failed in their escape attempt, North Vietnam increased its use of torture in prisons
 - South Vietnam held many high-level Viet Cong prisoners in the Hanoi Hilton
 - Prison conditions deteriorated after Ho Chi Minh’s death

12. Which of the following statements is true?

- a. The United States had many more allies in the Vietnam War than it had requested
- b. France was one of America's greatest allies in the Vietnam War
- c. U.S. allies grew more enthusiastic about their support of the war as time went on
- d. The U.S. had far fewer allies in the Vietnam War than it had requested

13. Which of the following statements best describes the antiwar movement?

- a. It consisted of people with a variety of beliefs about war and reasons for wanting the U.S. to withdraw from Vietnam.
- b. It consisted mainly of drug-addicted hippies
- c. It began with a speech by Martin Luther King, Jr.
- d. It was a homogeneous movement whose members all held the same views on war and the government

14. Antiwar groups were most likely to have previously been involved in which of the following?

- a. The women's movement
- b. The civil rights movement
- c. Opposition to World War II
- d. Opposition to the Korean War

15. What was one reason Martin Luther King, Jr. opposed the Vietnam War?

- a. He feared that the war would decrease public interest in other important causes
- b. He felt that too many white people were being asked to serve in the war
- c. He felt that the war diverted too much money from antipoverty programs in the U.S.
- d. He felt that the war diverted too much money from international development programs

16. Which of the following statements about the draft is not true?

- a. Men in college or graduate school could get deferments from the draft
- b. Men who enlisted voluntarily generally got better assignments
- c. Burning draft cards was determined to be a form of free speech
- d. Minorities and poor white men were less likely to obtain deferments than wealthier white men

17. Which of the following statements would you have been *most* likely to have heard at an American dinner table during the beginning of the Tet Offensive?

- a. "I thought we were winning the war—what's *really* going on over there?"
- b. "That president of ours is a very good man!"
- c. "I hope Johnson sends 200,000 more troops over there right away"
- d. "I'm not surprised—Johnson always said the North Vietnamese were strong and might win"

- 18.** All of the following factors contributed to a loss of public support for the war except one. Which is the exception?
- a. The disclosure of the My Lai Massacre
 - b. The election of Richard Nixon
 - c. The disclosure of Nixon's secret bombing campaign against Cambodia
 - d. The Tet Offensive
- 19.** What happened after the Paris Peace Accords ended official U.S. troop involvement?
- a. North Vietnam surrendered to South Vietnam
 - b. The United States continued to send ground troops to Vietnam
 - c. Saigon became part of Cambodia
 - d. North Vietnam and the Viet Cong overtook South Vietnam
- 20.** Which of the following is true of the postwar period?
- a. Many new veterans' groups have formed to serve veterans of the Vietnam War
 - b. The Vietnam Veterans Memorial has remained highly controversial and unpopular
 - c. Few people even think about the war any more, much less discuss it
 - d. American veterans have been barred from visiting Vietnam

The Vietnam War: Multiple-Choice Quiz Answer Key

1. B
2. C
3. A
4. C
5. D
6. B
7. D
8. C
9. A
10. C
11. B
12. D
13. A
14. B
15. C
16. C
17. A
18. B
19. D
20. A