

# Part 1: Leading up to the Vietnam War, 1954-1964

## Lesson Overview

Students will engage with primary and secondary sources to build an understanding of the events and policies that directly provoked the beginning of the Second Indochina War, or the Vietnam War, in 1965. Both activities should be prefaced by a complete review of the provided synopsis of the Vietnam War, with an emphasis on the beginning of the war.

## Wyoming Standards

- SS.12.1.6: Compare and contrast various world political systems (e.g., ideologies, structure, and institutions) with that of the United States.
- SS.12.4.3: Given a significant current event, critique the actions of the people or groups involved; hypothesize how this event would have played out in another country.
- SS12.6.4: Evaluate and integrate accurate, sufficient, and relevant information from primary and secondary sources to support writing.

## Objectives

- Students will analyze how the involvement of different Western powers, including France, the United States, the Soviet Union, and China, influenced the conditions of the United States's involvement in Vietnam after the First Indochina War.
- Students will use primary source documents to evaluate the political policies that characterized the United States' involvement in Vietnam.
- Students will explore and discuss the political, social, military, and national changes that occurred within Vietnam and the United States leading up to the Vietnam War.

## Materials

- Synopsis of the war (provided with the lesson plans)
- Printed worksheets (provided at the end of this lesson)
- Writing utensils
- Notebook/paper
- Laptop/computer for writing and creating presentations
- Projector or television

## Classroom Activities

### Primary Source Essay

This activity will ask students to examine multiple primary sources originating between 1954 and 1964 in an essay format, identifying instances of cause and effect as well as continuity and change over time relating to the United States in Vietnam before the beginning of the Vietnam War.

1. After reading through the synopsis of the Vietnam War, review these concepts with the class to prepare them to write their essays (see “Compilation of Sources” for resources on explaining these concepts):
  - a. How to differentiate between and analyze primary and secondary sources.
  - b. How to cite sources (i.e., in APA, MLA, or CMOS format).
  - c. How to format an essay and write a strong thesis claim.
  - d. How to edit and revise completed writings.
2. Hand out the assignment outline and criteria page to each student in the class. This is included on the last pages of this lesson plan. Review the assignment instructions and answer any questions the students may have. Remain available during class time to answer additional questions and provide guidance.
  - a. The handout does not include a time frame for research and writing. You must decide how much time in and out of class will be allotted to this assignment for your particular students. Inform the class of when they should be finished with their research and begin the writing process *and* when their essays should be completed and submitted. Additionally, there is no specified word count or page maximum. All essays should be at least one page and as long as necessary to meet the criteria.
3. Provide the students with time to begin researching and writing. When they have completed their essays collect and grade their papers using the criteria on the direction’s handout.
  - a. If possible, have each student print their essays and staple their directions handout to the front. Provide feedback on their writing so that they may continue to develop their analysis and writing skills.

### Short Film Analysis and Discussion

After watching a short film on the end of the First Indochina War, the beginning of the United States’ involvement in Vietnam, and the outbreak of the Vietnam War, the class will discuss how the information introduced in the video challenged their previous ideas and knowledge about the Vietnam War.

1. Begin this activity by asking the class to take out a notebook or paper for note-taking on the project or pull up this video so that it is ready to play after you give instructions: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EDSjoqgmc9g>
  - a. This is a brief, 30-minute video that covers the beginning of the Vietnam War from multiple perspectives, extending beyond those of the United States and its government.
2. Then, introduce the following discussion prompt that will be debated after the end of the film. Ask the students to take notes during the film, writing down specific points in response to the prompt and to serve as evidence in the class discussion.
  - a. Prompt: **In what ways did the film challenge your previous understanding, knowledge, and opinions of the United States' involvement in Vietnam? What do you think about the pre-war period (1954-1964) now?**
3. When the film is over, ask the students to gather in a circle. Referencing their notes and specific information from the film, pick one student volunteer to begin the discussion.
  - a. Making sure that it is done respectfully, encourage the students to explain why they agree or disagree with their classmate's interpretations. This is an open conversation that should engage students and ask them to build on each other's thoughts.
4. If needed for grading, ask the students to turn in their notes to demonstrate their attention to the video, following instructions, and engaging with the content.

## Compilation of Sources

- Analyzing historical documents - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WTA-QNOGK1M>
- Review on thesis writing
  - How to Write a STRONG Thesis Statement – Scribbr - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DFp1uGTxo4Q>
  - Purdue OWL - [https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/general\\_writing/the\\_writing\\_process/thesis\\_statement\\_tips.html](https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/general_writing/the_writing_process/thesis_statement_tips.html)
- Purdue OWL citation style writing guides
  - APA - [https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research\\_and\\_citation/apa\\_style/apa\\_formatting\\_and\\_style\\_guide/general\\_format.html](https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research_and_citation/apa_style/apa_formatting_and_style_guide/general_format.html)
  - MLA - [https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research\\_and\\_citation/mla\\_style/mla\\_formatting\\_and\\_style\\_guide/mla\\_general\\_format.html](https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research_and_citation/mla_style/mla_formatting_and_style_guide/mla_general_format.html)

- Chicago Manual of Style (CMOS) -  
[https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research\\_and\\_citation/chicago\\_manual\\_17th\\_edition/cmos\\_formatting\\_and\\_style\\_guide/chicago\\_manual\\_of\\_style\\_17th\\_edition.html](https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research_and_citation/chicago_manual_17th_edition/cmos_formatting_and_style_guide/chicago_manual_of_style_17th_edition.html)

## Planning a Visit to the NMMV

Although the lessons in this series can be implemented in the classroom without time-consuming or difficult preparation, they are also designed to be taught along with a visit to the National Museum of Military Vehicles, specifically the Puller Gallery.

For this lesson (Leading up to the Vietnam War), pay special attention to these displays and/or highlight the significance of these concepts in the museum. All suggestions are made in a chronological sequence and as they appear in the museum's exhibit.

1. In the entrance to the Puller Gallery, significant statistics concerning demobilization and the United States military are presented on the walls. After reading through these statistics, proceed into the Consequences Theater. This film explains international relations and rising tensions during the Cold War.
  - a. The Consequences film gives an overview of the post WWII period across the world, providing background for the Vietnam War. Additionally, it names specific historical figures, events, and policies that are relevant to this lesson plan's activities.
2. Entry into the Vietnam War exhibit:
  - a. There are five panels in the entrance to this exhibit that briefly explain the circumstances leading up to the Vietnam War. They include: "French Struggle for Control," "Domino Theory," "North & South Solidify Power," "U.S. Advisors," and "Gulf of Tonkin Resolution." These should be used to provide specific examples of events leading up to the war.
  - b. Use the wall map in this entrance to familiarize students with the geography of Vietnam and the surrounding area. Highlighting French Indochina, which includes modern-day Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia.

**Primary Source Essay: Leading Up to the Vietnam War, 1954-1964****Directions:**

- 1) Read the prompt closely to determine the questions and concepts that must be addressed within your essay. After reading, draft a thesis to build your research on. This does not need to be your final thesis, but it is intended to be a starting point for your essay.
- 2) Review the essay requirements below, then begin your research. Take notes and write down relevant information and quotes from your research.
- 3) When you are finished with your research, begin the writing process. This essay must be **at least** one page in length (double-spaced), but there is no page limit. Make sure to check off the criteria as you meet them within your essay.
- 4) After writing, revise and edit your paper to make sure there are no grammatical or factual errors. Submit your essay as instructed by your teacher.

**Prompt:**

**Explain and evaluate the social, political, and military conditions in the United States and Vietnam between 1954 and 1964 that led to the beginning of the Second Indochina (Vietnam) War.**

Use these to help answer the prompt:

- Analyze American policies, events, and conditions that led to the outbreak of the Vietnam War in 1965.
- Identify the origin of the United States' involvement in Vietnam and describe how it evolved.
- Explore the perspectives of nations outside of the United States; including Vietnam, the Soviet Union, France, and China on the First Indochina War as well as U.S. involvement.

**Criteria:**

- Include information from at least **two** primary and **two** secondary sources (at least four sources in total).
  - At least one direct quote must be included within the essay.
- Cite all sources and include a references page at the end of your essay.
- Fully address the prompt, evaluating **at least** one social, one political, and one military condition that contributed to the conflict.
- Ensure your paper contains no grammatical errors.
- The essay is a minimum of one page in length, double-spaced.

**Sources:**

To get started, review this list of sources and the events, policies, and situations addressed within them. Copy and paste or type these links into the search bar to use these sources.

- The Diem-Bao Dai Referendum - <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1955-57v01/d278>
- The Geneva Conference's Final Declaration on Indochina - <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1952-54v16/d1038>
- *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1955-1957, Vietnam, Volume I* (E-book; explore the documents within different sections) - <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1955-57v01>
- The Gulf of Tonkin Resolution - <https://www.archives.gov/milestone-documents/tonkin-gulf-resolution>
- CIA memorandum on the Soviet Union's involvement with North Vietnam - <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1964-68v02/d55>
- CIA memorandum on the Domino Effect Theory - <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1964-68v01/d209>