

Part 3: Consequences of the Vietnam War, 1975 – Today

Lesson Overview

Students will identify and evaluate events that contributed to the end of the Vietnam War and the post-war period in Southeast Asia and the United States. Through class debates and connection activities, students will discuss the United States' involvement in Vietnam, and connect social, political, economic, and military aspects of the war to current events. Both activities should be prefaced by a complete review of the provided synopsis of the Vietnam War, with an emphasis on the end of the war.

Wyoming Standards

- SS12.4.1: Describe patterns of change (cause and effect) and evaluate how past events impacted future events and the modern world.
- SS12.5.3: Analyze, interpret, and evaluate how conflict, demographics, movement, trade, transportation, communication, and technology affect humans' sense of place.
- SS12.2.1: Analyze and evaluate the ways various groups (e.g., social, political, and cultural) meet human needs and concerns (e.g., individual needs and common good) and contribute to identity (e.g., group, national, and global), situations, and events.

Objectives

- Students will be able to describe how the United States withdrew from Vietnam and the consequences of that action in Vietnam and the United States.
- Students will identify the direct impact the Vietnam War had on surrounding countries, specifically Laos and Cambodia.
- Students will examine the relationship of policy during the Vietnam War to that of the modern day in the United States.

Materials

- Synopsis of the war (provided with the lesson plans)
- Writing utensils

- Notebooks/paper
- Index cards
- Computer/laptop (for research)
- Projector/television

Classroom Activities

Morality and Validity Debate

Students will answer a series of questions while reading and watching assigned articles and videos to prepare themselves for a classroom debate on the validity and morality of the United States' involvement in the Vietnam War. This activity is designed to engage students on a personal level with the content and foster respectful productive discourse between different or opposing perspectives.

1. Begin this activity after a review of the end of the Vietnam War from the lesson plan synopsis. Tell the class that they will have a debate to discuss whether they believe the United States' involvement in the Vietnam War was justified and moral *after* they watch an informational video and read several provided articles.
 - a. Project this video for the class to watch as a whole, or ask that it be watched individually or in small groups: “**The Cold War in Asia: Crash Course US History #38**” - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y2lcmLkuhG0>
 - i. This video must be watched before the other articles are read.
 - b. Read this brief article on the Paris Peace Accords - <https://www.history.com/this-day-in-history/january-27/paris-peace-accords-signed>
 - c. Read this article on the Mayaguez Incident - <https://daily.jstor.org/the-mayaguez-incident-the-last-chapter-of-the-vietnam-war/>
 - d. After watching the video and understanding how American bombing campaigns into Cambodia destabilized the Cambodian government and contributed to the rise of the Khmer Rouge, read this article on the Cambodian Genocide - <https://www.ushmm.org/genocide-prevention/countries/cambodia/cambodia-1975>
2. Before or during the time allotted for students to read through the articles, write down or project the debate prompt and tell the class to take notes and write down their thoughts about the Vietnam War, particularly as they relate to the prompt.
 - a. Prompt: **Was the United States justified in becoming involved in the Vietnam War? Was the cost of lives, resources, and political power worth the outcome of the war?** Think Domino Theory, the Fall of Saigon, the Gulf of

Tonkin Resolution, etc., and use evidence from the articles (and additional research if needed) to support your points.

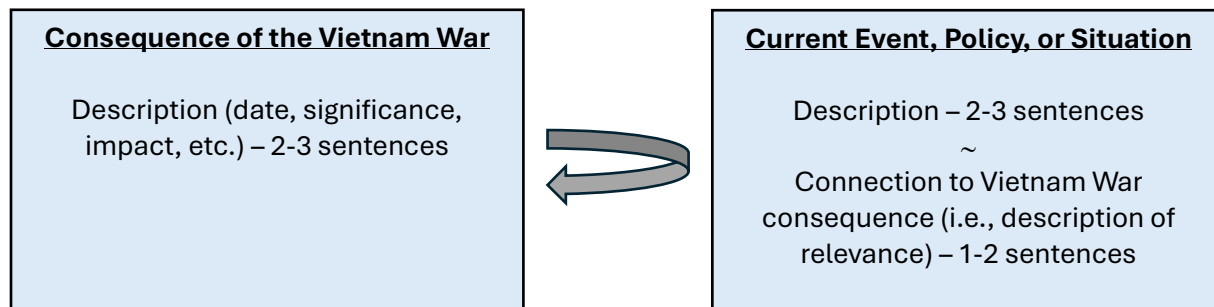
3. When the students have finished reading, ask them to gather in a circle for their group debate. Referencing the prompt, ask one student to volunteer to begin the discussion with their answer to one or both of the prompt questions. Facilitate this discussion to ensure that every student speaks at least once. No student should speak more than twice until every student has shared once. Each student must use evidence from the articles and video, although direct quotes do not have to be used.
 - a. If the students generally all agree with each other in their answers and the conversation is not moving forward, encourage them to argue for the opposite view, even if they may not agree with it.
 - b. Because this activity is intended to take the form of a debate, emphasize that the students must be respectful of differing perspectives and respond to them appropriately.
4. Toward the end of the debate time, ask the students to wrap up their final thoughts and prepare to transition to their next class or activity.
 - a. For grading purposes, keep track of 1) how many times each student responds to the discussion and 2) how engaged and thoughtful responses are (this is subjective and up to interpretation based on your familiarity with your class).

Consequences and Connection Trade Activity

Students will connect the implications of the Vietnam War and the counterculture movement to modern-day foreign, political, and social policies in the United States. Through a collaborative activity, the students will explain their connections and rotate groups, so the whole class may share with each other.

1. Begin this activity by introducing the purpose of the task, which is to explore the long-term implications of the United States' involvement in Vietnam extending to the present day. Provide students with this link, and ask them to individually choose and read at least one article that appeals to them:
<https://www.history.com/topics/vietnam-war>
 - a. The articles on this webpage provide a brief overview of events, controversies, and situations surrounding the Vietnam War. However, several articles contain content that is best for mature readers. Because you best know your students and their capabilities, review these articles before beginning the lesson. If needed, narrow the selection of articles down to a few specific titles to best fit your students' ages and needs.

- b. This section of the activity is designed to engage students with the content and encourage them to draw connections between their article topics and present-day events, policies, and situations.
 2. After each student has read their article(s), hand out one index card to each student. Now, they will begin establishing their connections. Instruct the students to write the name of one circumstance surrounding the Vietnam War on one side of their index card. Ask the class to briefly research their topic and write a 2-3 sentence description below its title on the same side of the index card.
 - a. This could be a consequence of the war or an event, policy, or situation that occurred *during* the war but had direct effects on the post-Vietnam War period (approx. 1973-1976). It is up to the students to identify and select their topic.
 - b. Consider using these (or similar) guiding questions for students to build off of when writing their descriptions:
 - i. What was this event, policy, or situation? Did it occur before, during, or after the withdrawal of American troops from Vietnam in 1973?
 - ii. Why are the consequences of this topic significant? Who did they affect and how so?
 3. With one side of the index card completed, direct the students to explore how their chosen topic relates to an event, policy, or situation that has been relevant in the United States within the past several decades. For example: If I discuss the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution and/or the War Powers Act of 1973, I may connect that to the War on Terror, which was not a congressionally declared war, beginning after September 11, 2001. Similar to the first side, the students will write the title of their topic and briefly research it to write a 2-3 sentence description on the empty side of the index card. **Then**, they will write an additional 1-2 sentences below the description to discuss its connection to the topic on the first side of the card.
 - a. This should look similar to this:



4. Once both sides of the card are filled out, and the students are familiar with their consequences and connections, ask the class to arrange themselves in even groups. Within two minutes (one for each side of the card), each student will share

the information on both sides of their card. Set a timer or watch the clock to let the students know when to switch. When the first student is done, the next person in the group will take their turn until everyone in the group has gone.

5. When all students in a group have shared, ask them to regroup by joining other students who they have not yet shared with (i.e., students who were not in their previous group). The groups should remain the same size as the first round. Each student will describe their topics as before. Repeat this step several more times until each student has shared with everyone in the class.
6. If class time still remains after the students have shared their topics, instruct them to return to their seats and ask the students to share one connection of someone else's that they found interesting (and why). Encourage them to discuss their thoughts on the concepts they explored during this activity.
7. For grading purposes, ask the students to write their names and date on their index cards and turn them in. This activity could be counted instead for a participation grade.

Compilation of Sources

- *Sources for direct use in the activities are listed within the activity directions*
- Additional sources on the consequences of the Vietnam War:
 - BBC article series – “The Vietnam War: Impact of the War” - <https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/guides/zv7bkqt/revision/6>
 - “What Were the Impacts of the Vietnam War?” – YouTube video <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Mapo-8qqi10>
 - “The Vietnam War — A Decade Later: Impact on American Values” - <https://www.jstor.org/stable/23609773?seq=1>

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 (Consequences of 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. Toward the end of the Vietnam War in the Puller Gallery, the “Tet Offensive” exhibit explains the costly Tet Offensive and the consequences that stemmed from it. Although this is not a post-war event, it contributed heavily to the controversy and consequences of the conflict. Emphasize this to students as they walk through this section.
2. After walking through the “Tet Offensive” display and into the next room, read the large wall panels that highlight controversies of the Vietnam War. The panels are titled “There Ain’t No Daylight in Vietnam,” “Hell No We Won’t Go,” “The Johnson Administration,” “Peace with Honor,” and “Agent Orange in Vietnam.”
 - a. This section is especially relevant for both activities, Consequences and Connection Trade Activity and the Morality and Validity Debate, and would provide students with ideas.
3. At the end of the Vietnam War exhibit, spend time discussing the “Consequences of the Vietnam War” statistics displayed on the walls. Pay close attention to the death tolls for both sides, number of veterans treated for Agent Orange and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), and Americans wounded and missing in action.
 - a. In this section, also read the “Coming Home” panel to further the students’ understanding of consequences of the conflict.