

Curriculum Guide to Accompany *For High School Students–Notes and Images from the Viet Nam War*

In *For High School Students–Notes and Images from the Viet Nam War*, director Jill Godmilow uses photographs and images to share information on the Vietnam War with high school students. Godmilow focuses on the political and economic factors that contributed to the war, the United States' military tactics, and the anti-war movement and protests that arose in response to the quagmire and the United States' prolonged involvement in it. This curriculum guide was developed to support teachers using the film. It includes additional primary sources and recommended film clips with accompanying questions, as well as Essential Questions, objectives, and activities aligned with each of the three sections of the film. Used together, the film and the resources here offer students insight into and context for this significant era in the world's history.

For High School Students—Notes and Images from the Viet Nam War: Part 1 **Curriculum Resources and Activity**

Essential Questions:

- How did multiple factors contribute to the United States' decision to intervene and prolong its military involvement in Vietnam?
- To what extent did the United States' involvement in Vietnam result from an altruistic effort to contain communism? To what extent is it more accurate to characterize US involvement as an act of imperialism?

Discussion prompts:

Based on the film clips and primary sources, ask students the following questions. These prompts may also be used in a Socratic seminar, debate, Four Corners, etc. discussion or activity.

- How did U.S. leaders characterize the United States' involvement in Vietnam in the 1950s and 1960s?
 - What factors might have motivated Eisenhower, Kennedy, and Johnson to portray the conflict to the public in the ways that they did?
- To what extent did the United States' status as a world superpower play a role in its extended involvement in Vietnam?
- At the start of the film the narrator claims that US involvement in Vietnam was fueled by “a toxic fear of communism, an imperial ambition for a land base in Asia, and, eventually, a near psychotic fear of losing face.” Based on the information in the film and the primary sources, to what extent do you agree with that statement?
- In your opinion, should the US have left Vietnam sooner? Why do you think the US continued to fight despite arguments that the war was unwinnable?

Activity:

Evaluating the situation in Vietnam and the United States' reasons for involvement there, create a fake Twitter feed reacting to the war and the US's prolonged involvement in it. Your feed must include:

- At least one statement on whether the US should have gotten involved in Vietnam in the 1950s
- At least one statement on what you think the motivation for US involvement was, and whether or not it was justified
- At least one statement on how the US's involvement in Vietnam influenced your opinion of at least one United States president (Eisenhower, Kennedy, and/or Johnson)
- A “reply” to one of your statements disagreeing with your position
- Your reply supporting the statement to which the “sender” disagreed
- At least one statement agreeing or disagreeing with @georgeball that Vietnam was “an unwinnable war”

You can also include images, GIFs, hashtags, etc. in your posts.

Student Resources:

Primary Sources:

I) [President Dwight D. Eisenhower, Press Conference \(April 7, 1954\)](#)

"If someone sets up a row of dominoes, and knocks over the first one...it is certain that the last one will go over very quickly.... Asia has already lost some 450 million of its peoples to the Communist dictatorship...the United States simply can't afford greater losses...the loss of Indochina would set off the loss of Burma, of Thailand, of the Malay Peninsula and Indonesia.... It would turn the so called island defenses chain of Japan, Formosa and the Philippines and to the southward it would move in to threaten Australia and New Zealand.... In its economic aspects... it would take away that region that Japan must have as a trading area, or it would force Japan to turn toward China and Manchuria, or toward the Communist areas in order to live. The possible consequences of the loss to the free world are just incalculable..."

→ *Secondary source discussing Eisenhower's statements:* "President Eisenhower delivers Cold War "domino theory" speech," [History.com](#)

Questions:

- How does Eisenhower invoke the domino theory in this statement?
- Do you agree with his assessment of the situation? Why or why not

II) [Geneva Accords \(July 2, 1954\)](#)

"The Conference declares that, so far as Vietnam is concerned, the settlement of political problems, affected on the basis of respect for the principles of independence, unity and territorial integrity, shall permit the Vietnamese people to enjoy the fundamental freedoms, guaranteed by democratic institutions established as a result of free general elections by secret ballot. In order to ensure that sufficient progress in the restoration of peace has been made, and that the necessary conditions obtain for free expression of the national will, general elections shall be held in July 1956..."

Questions:

- What provisions do the Geneva Accords make for Vietnam?
- Do you think that this agreement reflects the best interests of the Vietnamese people?

III) [President John F. Kennedy, Interview with Walter Cronkite \(September 2, 1963\)](#)

"I don't think that unless a greater effort is made by the Government to win popular support that the war can be won out there. In the final analysis, it is their war. They are the ones who have to win it or lose it. We can help them, we can give them equipment, we can send our men out there as advisors, but they have to win it—the people of Vietnam—against the communists. We are prepared to continue to assist them, but I don't think that the war can be won unless the people support the effort... But I don't agree with those who say we should withdraw. That would be a great mistake. I know people don't like Americans to be engaged in this kind of an effort. Forty seven Americans have been killed in combat with the enemy, but this is a very important struggle even though it is far away. We took all this—made this effort to defend Europe. Now Europe is quite secure. We also have to participate—we may not like it—in the defense of Asia."

→ [Video of President Kennedy's Interview with Walter Cronkite](#)

Questions:

- What is JFK's stance on Vietnam?
- In your opinion, was it necessary for the US to participate in the defense of Asia?
- How might history be different if JFK resolved that "they are the ones who have to win or lose it"?

IV) [Gulf of Tonkin Resolution \(Approved August 10, 1964\)](#)

"Whereas naval units of the Communist regime in Vietnam...have deliberately and repeatedly attacked United States naval vessels lawfully present in international waters, and have thereby created a serious threat to international peace... Whereas the United States is assisting the peoples of southeast Asia to protect their freedom and has no territorial, military or political ambitions in that area... Resolved by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, That the Congress approves and supports the determination of the President, as Commander in Chief, to take all necessary measures to repel any armed attack against the forces of the United States and to prevent further aggression."

→ *Secondary source on the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution:* [History.com](#)

Questions:

- What rights does LBJ gain as a result of this resolution?
- Did the attack on the USS Maddox necessitate this reaction?

V) [“Peace Without Conquest”: President Lyndon Johnson’s Speech at Johns Hopkins University \(April 7, 1965\)](#)

“We fight because we must fight if we are to live in a world where every country can shape its own destiny. And only in such a world will our own freedom be finally secure.... The first reality is that North Viet-Nam has attacked the independent nation of South Viet-Nam.... We are there because we have a promise to keep. Since 1954 every American President has offered support to the people of South Viet-Nam. We have helped to build, and we have helped to defend. Thus, over many years, we have made a national pledge to help South Viet-Nam defend its independence.... To dishonor that pledge, to abandon this small and brave nation to its enemies, and to the terror that must follow, would be an unforgivable wrong. We are also there to strengthen world order.... To leave Viet-Nam to its fate would shake the confidence of all these people in the value of an American commitment and in the value of America's word. The result would be increased unrest and instability, and even wider war.... We want nothing for ourselves--only that the people of South Viet-Nam be allowed to guide their own country in their own way.”

→ [Video of President Johnson’s speech](#)

Questions:

- Are these good reasons to participate in another country’s civil war?
- Do you believe that the U.S.’s aims in Vietnam were as honorable as Johnson implies? Why or why not?

VI) [George Ball Speaks Against the War: Meeting in the White House Cabinet Room \(July 21, 1965\)](#)

President: Wouldn’t all those countries say Uncle Sam is a paper tiger—wouldn’t we lose credibility breaking the word of three presidents—if we set it up as you proposed. It would seem to be an irreparable blow. But, I gather you don’t think so.

Ball: The worse blow would be that the mightiest power in the world is unable to defeat guerrillas.

President: Then you are not basically troubled by what the world would say about pulling out?

Ball: If we were actively helping a country with a stable, viable government, it would be a vastly different story. Western Europeans look at us as if we got ourselves into an imprudent fashion [situation]....

<Bundy> To Ball’s argument: The difficulty in adopting it now would be a radical switch without evidence that it should be done. It goes in the face of all we have said and done. His whole analytical argument gives no weight to loss suffered by other side. A great many elements in his argument are correct. We need to make clear this is a somber matter—that it will not be quick—no single action will bring quick victory. I think it is clear that we are not going to be thrown out.

Ball: My problem is not that we don’t get thrown out, but that we get bogged down and don’t win.

Questions:

- Why might Ball have looked at the situation differently than others in the Johnson administration?
- Was the U.S. destined to lose the Vietnam War?

VII) Professor John T. MacAlister, Jr., Testifying Before Senate Committee on Foreign Relations (March 7, 1968)

“Why is it that more than 500,000 American troops cannot now quell the armed opposition in a small portion of territory in 1968 that only 11,000 French troops were able to control with hardly firing a shot just 30 years ago? Certainly this is not because American troops have not fought bravely and fiercely...Our...difficulties have risen because when we went into Vietnam, our policies did not take into account that the country was in the midst of an unresolved political conflict nor did they reflect an understanding of what the underlying nature of this conflict really was. We are not merely fighting against an external invader that is attempting to gain control over a culturally distinct foreign country by force, nor are we fighting in a civil war that is purely [an] internal matter among the South Vietnamese, but instead we have become engaged in a revolutionary war involving all of the Vietnamese people.”

Questions:

- How does McAlister contradict the reasoning of Eisenhower, Kennedy and Johnson?
- Why do you think he refers to the Vietnam War as a revolutionary war?

Film clips: For High School Students–Notes and Images from the Viet Nam War

I) Diem/“Why did the US sabotage an election to unify a small state on the other side of the world?” (7:56-10:27)

Questions:

- According to the film, why did the United States back Diem?
- How might support for a leader who differed significantly from the people create profound problems?
- How did the “domino theory” motivate United States involvement in Vietnam?
- How might the United States’ reputation and position in the world have contributed to its initial and prolonged involvement in Vietnam?

II) DeGaulle warning to Kennedy (10:30-11:40)

Questions:

The narrator states that Charles DeGaulle, the president of France, warned John F. Kennedy, “You will find that intervention in this area will be an endless entanglement. Once a nation has been aroused, no foreign power, however strong, can impose its will upon it...”

- How did this statement predict what the United States encountered in Vietnam?
- Why might Kennedy have neglected to take DeGaulle’s advice?

III) US goes through phases (11:40-13:00)

Questions:

- According to the film, how did the United States’ goals for its involvement in Vietnam change over the course of the war?
- To what extent does this evolution indicate that the United States’ failure in Vietnam was inevitable?
- The narrator says that, ultimately, the U.S. hoped to “avoid humiliating defeat.” Why might this have been the United States’ final goal?

**For High School Students—Notes and Images from the Viet Nam War: Part 2
Curriculum Resources and Activity**

Essential Questions:

- To what extent were the tactics of the United States military justified?
- How did the tactics used by the US military undermine the war effort?

Discussion prompts:

Based on the film clips and primary sources, ask students the following questions. These prompts may also be used in a Socratic seminar, debate, Four Corners, etc. discussion or activity.

- Which tactics used by the US military were not justified?
- To what extent did the media contribute to loss of support for the war in Vietnam?
- Was it possible to fight the war differently and more effectively?
- To what extent did the United States government learn the lessons of the Vietnam war?

Activity: RAFT Writing

Evaluate the tactics used by the US military in the Vietnam war by choosing to express your ideas using the format of your choice. Please select a Role, Audience, Format and Topic of your expression. First, choose the “role” or perspective that you will use as the voice of your expression. Then, select an “audience” to speak to. Next, choose a “format” to express your ideas. Finally, choose a “topic” from the lesson to explain and evaluate in the format you have selected. Use the chart below:

Role	Audience	Format	Topic
US Soldier	US President	Instagram Storyboard	Justification or lack of justification of US tactics
Viet Cong Soldier	Ho Chi Minh	Persuasive Letter	Justification or lack of justification or Viet Cong tactics
Peasant/Villager	US Public	Diary/Journal Entry	Impact and importance of the MLK speech
US High School Student	World	Newspaper Article	Impact and importance of the Pentagon papers

Your RAFT selections are:

Role: _____ **Audience:** _____ **Format:** _____ **Topic:** _____

I) Historical Context: “Frontless War”

“As you know, we are fighting a war with no front lines, since the enemy hides among the people, in the jungles and mountains, and uses covertly border areas of neutral countries. One cannot measure progress by lines on a map. We therefore have to use other means to chart progress...”

-Source: US General in Vietnam, General Westmorland, April 28, 1967

Discussion:

- What does a “frontless war” mean?
- What are the challenges that a “frontless war” presents for US troops?
- How does engagement in a “frontless war” impact US military strategy?

II) US Military Tactics

As you watch the film, please take notes using the images and the descriptions of the tactics used by the US military in battle in Vietnam. Gather specific and detailed evidence to capture the goal and the impact of the tactics.

Film clips: [For High School Students–Notes and Images from the Viet Nam War](#)

TIME	Tactic	Describe the goal of the tactic	Describe the impact of the tactic
13:50-16:15	Agent Orange		
16:20-17:20	Cluster Bombs		
17:20-18:25	Napalm		
18:30-19:00	Phoenix Program		
19:00-19:40	Free Fire Zones		
19:40-20:10	Zippo Raids		

Discussion:

- Which of these tactics is most problematic for global opinion of the US involvement in Vietnam?
- How would the media coverage of these tactics impact opinions of the war?
POV: Of Vietnamese? Of US citizens? US soldiers? Of the world?
- Can these tactics be justified by ‘war’? Or the tactics of the enemy? (below)

III) Tactics of the Viet Cong (North Vietnamese)

Despite having no aircraft, tanks or artillery of their own, the Vietcong managed to hold out against the Americans until the USA left Vietnam in the 1970s. The Vietcong used a number of tactics to help them do this.

A) Guerrilla warfare



Guerrilla warfare is the art of using knowledge of the landscape to avoid open battle with the enemy and to launch raids and surprise attacks, before disappearing back into the undergrowth.

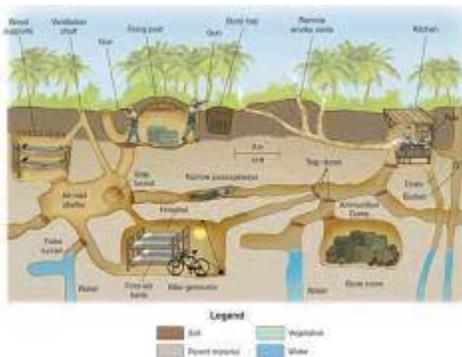
The Vietcong had experience of doing this while fighting the Japanese and the French after World War Two - they were very familiar with the terrain and the climate. They used the Ho Chi Minh Trail, which stretched from North Vietnam to the South, to keep their forces supplied.

B) Support from peasants



The Vietcong won the 'hearts and minds' of the South Vietnamese peasants. They would offer to help them in their daily work and also promised them land, more wealth and freedom under Ho Chi Minh and the communists. It was difficult for American troops to know who was a Vietcong and who was not.

C) Tunnel systems and traps



The Vietcong had a hidden system of tunnels stretching over 200 miles. There were hospitals, armories, sleeping quarters, kitchens and wells underground. These tunnel systems could hide thousands of Vietcong which helped them fight their guerrilla war. It would be the job of US 'tunnel rats' to search these tunnels. However, they were often booby-trapped with spikes and grenades.

D) Surprise Attacks: The Tet Offensive 1968



On January 31 1968, the Vietcong changed tactics from their usual guerilla warfare strategy. During celebrations of the Vietnamese New Year (known as Tet) North Vietnam, supported by South Vietnamese Vietcong launched a number of surprise assaults on towns and cities in US-held areas of South Vietnam. They took control of parts of Saigon and other cities, having most success in Vietnam's ancient capital, Hue. One group managed to blow a hole in the walls around the US Embassy in Saigon. The Vietcong did not hold onto any of the territory gained for long.

Secondary source of text: BBC News, "Vietnam War"

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/guides/zv7bkqt/revision/4>

Questions:

- How did the tactics of the Viet Cong and North Vietnamese Army challenge the US military despite their disadvantages?
- To what extent do these tactics justify the US military's tactics?
- Ho Chi Minh said, "You can kill ten of my men for every one I kill of yours. But even at those odds, you will lose and I will win." Do you believe that Ho Chi Minh's statement applies correctly to the war in Vietnam?

IV) US War in Iraq and Afghanistan (Congressional legislation)

<p style="text-align: center;">Joint Resolution of Congress H.J. RES 1145 August 7, 1964</p> <p>Resolved by the Senate and House of Representatives ..., that the Congress approves and supports the determination of the President, as Commander in Chief, to take all necessary measures to repel any armed attack against the forces of the United States and to prevent further aggression.</p> <p>Section 2. The United States regards as vital to its national interest and to world peace the maintenance of international peace and security in southeast Asia. Consonant with the Constitution of the United States ..., as the President determines, to take all necessary steps, including the use of armed force, ...</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Authorization for Use of Military Force Against Iraq Resolution of 2002</p> <p>The Congress of the United States supports the efforts by the President to strictly enforce through the United Nations Security Council all relevant Security Council resolutions regarding Iraq and encourages him in those efforts;</p> <p>(a) AUTHORIZATION-The president is authorized to use the armed forces of the United States as he determines to be necessary and appropriate in order to (1) defend the national security of the United States against the continuing threat posed by Iraq, and (2) enforce all relevant United Nation Security Council resolutions regarding Iraq."</p>
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Discussion:

- How did the US government (Congress) enable the prolonged and unlimited war in Vietnam and Afghanistan/Iraq?
- Why do you think that the US government repeated the mistake of the Vietnam war?
- Do you think that the US government could repeat this mistake of entering a prolonged war in the future?

V) US tactics in Afghanistan (Human Rights Watch)

Following the September 11, 2001 attacks, the United States went to war in Afghanistan in the name of national security and the protection of fundamental rights and freedoms, and with a stated secondary aim of liberating the people of Afghanistan from the cruel and capricious rule of the Taliban. Yet today, on Afghan soil, the United States is maintaining a system of arrests and detention as part of its ongoing military and intelligence operations that violates international human rights law and international humanitarian law (the laws of war).

From 2002 to the present, Human Rights Watch estimates that at least one thousand Afghans and other nationals have been arrested and detained by U.S.-led forces in Afghanistan. Some of those apprehended have been picked up during military operations while taking direct part in hostilities, but others taken into custody have been civilians with no apparent connection to ongoing hostilities... There are numerous reports that U.S. forces have used excessive or indiscriminate force when conducting arrests in residential areas in Afghanistan. As shown in this report, U.S. military forces have repeatedly used deadly force from helicopter gunships and small and heavy arms fire, including undirected suppressing fire, during what are essentially law-enforcement operations to arrest persons in uncontested locales. The use of these tactics has resulted in avoidable civilian deaths and injuries, and in individual cases may amount to violations of international humanitarian law.

Many of those arrested by U.S. forces are detained for indefinite periods at U.S. military bases or outposts. While held, these detainees have no contact with relatives or others, although some detainees receive visits from the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). Detainees have no opportunity to challenge the basis for their detention, and are sometimes subjected to mistreatment or torture. Some detainees have been sent to the U.S. detention center at Guantanamo Bay Naval Base in Cuba, while others have been kept in Afghanistan.

Secondary Source: "Enduring Freedom: Abuses by US Forces in Afghanistan," March 8, 2004
<https://www.hrw.org/report/2004/03/07/enduring-freedom/abuses-us-forces-afghanistan>

Discussion:

- Why might the international community be critical of the US tactics in Afghanistan?
- How do these tactics compare to the tactics used in Vietnam?
- To what extent does the United State use (or abuse) their status as the world's superpower?

VI) Cost of Vietnam and Iraq / Afghanistan

Vietnam	Afghanistan	Iraq
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • U.S. war spending (2019 dollars): \$843.63 billion • Duration: 17 years, 9 mons. • U.S. military deaths: 58,220 <p>The war in Vietnam cost the United States \$843.63 billion in 2019 dollars, or 2.3% of GDP in 1968. By the end of the conflict, the names of more than 58,000 dead soldiers were recorded on the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, D.C. After the Vietnamese defeated the French in 1954, ending a brutal era of colonialism, the Geneva Accords stipulated that elections in the South be scheduled for the following year.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • U.S. war spending (2019 dollars): \$910.47 billion • Duration: Since 2001 • U.S. military deaths: 2,285 <p>The United States has been embroiled in an ongoing battle in Afghanistan since 2001. Following the terrorist attacks on Sept. 11, 2001, the United States invaded the central Asian nation in order to drive out the ruling Taliban, which provided al-Qaeda, the terrorist group responsible for the 9/11 terror attack, with safe haven.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • U.S. war spending (2019 dollars): \$1.01 trillion • Duration: 7 years, 5 months • U.S. military deaths: 4,410 <p>The conflict in Iraq has cost the United States about \$1 trillion. Believing he had weapons of mass destruction, U.S. troops invaded Iraq in 2003 and overthrew Saddam Hussein. The U.S. government considers elections in Iraq, as well as training military personnel to help stabilize the region, as successes. Even so, the country continues to be marred by conflict and terror.</p>

Source: "What were the 13 most expensive wars in U.S. history?" John Harrington and Grant Suneson, June 13th, 2019, USA Today

<https://www.usatoday.com/story/money/2019/06/13/cost-of-war-13-most-expensive-wars-in-us-history/39556983/>

- Were the US tactics worth the money and lives lost?
- Do you believe the US will avoid conflicts that engage in these tactics in the future?

For High School Students—Notes and Images from the Viet Nam War: Part 3 **Curriculum Resources and Activity**

Essential Questions:

- How would you know or be able to measure if a protest movement was ultimately successful?
- College campuses: Why were they the hub of anti-war protests in the late 1960s/early 1970s?

Discussion prompts:

Based on the film clips and primary sources, ask students the following questions. These prompts may also be used in a Socratic seminar, a debate, a discussion or activities like Four Corners.

- Why do you think public opinion against U.S. involvement shifted so dramatically between 1965 and 1971?
- To what extent were returning veterans from the Vietnam conflict effective in providing an alternative perspective on the war?
- What events, either in the U.S. or in southeast Asia, were key moments in shifting public opinion against U.S. involvement in southeast Asia?
- Why was Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. opposed to the Vietnam War?
- Why did so many college students mobilize against the Vietnam War?
- How was U.S. consensus (agreement) a casualty of the Vietnam conflict?

Optional Activity: Many college students in the United States held demonstrations, damaged university property, and tried to disrupt campus life during the late 1960s and early 1970s to protest the draft and the Vietnam War. A million students went on strike, particularly after President Nixon's illegal and secret expansion of the war to Cambodia in May of 1970. At Kent State in Ohio, four students were killed and nine students were wounded by the National Guard. At Jackson State in Mississippi, a Historically Black College/University (HBCU), two students were killed and 12 students were wounded by the police.

If possible, provide students access to this interactive map, [887 Campuses Participating in May Strikes](#) (Mapping American Social Movements Project - University of Washington).

In small groups, students will:

- Imagine themselves as second semester seniors on one of these campuses. They will jot down how these strikes might affect their ability to learn or work on campus during the late spring of 1970.
- Transform their roles to become the administration of these colleges and universities. Students will consider the responsibilities of the administration to the students, staff, and faculty on campus.
- Develop an action plan for how the administration will respond to the student strikes. Should they temporarily shut down classes? Should they end the semester early? Should they hold classes? Groups should consider: How will students be graded? What about graduating students? What about students with deferments from the draft? What about students on financial aid?
- Present their action plan to the class who will vote on the best course of action for May, 1970.

Extension activity: Students will research what happened to a college or university in their city and/or state.

Student Resources:

Primary Sources:

1) Excerpt from Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., "[Beyond Vietnam: A Time to Break Silence](#)," Riverside Church (April 4, 1967)

[Note: Teachers may choose to download the entire speech or use this excerpt and conduct a "[reader's theater](#)" where students highlight themes, words, or messages that resonate with them.

"I come to this great magnificent house of worship tonight because my conscience leaves me no other choice... A time comes when silence is betrayal. That time has come for us in relation to Vietnam. The truth of these words is beyond doubt, but the mission to which they call us is a most difficult one. Even when pressed by the demands of inner truth, men do not easily assume the task of opposing their government's policy especially in times of war...

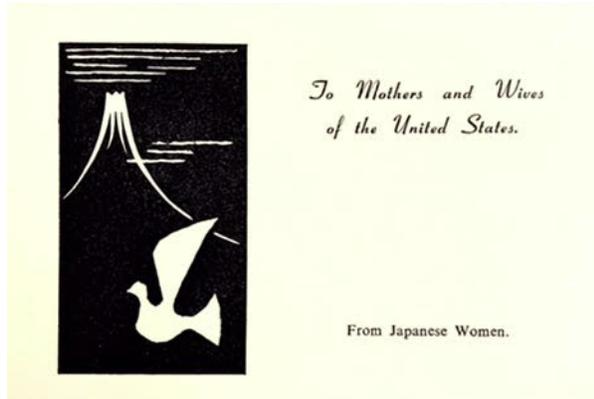
Somehow this madness must cease. We must stop now. I speak as a child of God and brother to the suffering poor of Vietnam. I speak for those whose land is being laid waste, whose homes are being destroyed, whose culture is being subverted. I speak for the poor in America who are paying the double price of smashed hopes at home, and death and corruption in Vietnam. I speak as a citizen of the world, for the world as it stands aghast at the path we have taken. I speak as one who loves America, to the leaders of our own nation: The great initiative in this war is ours; the initiative to stop it must be ours...

I am convinced that if we are to get on the right side of the world revolution, we as a nation must undergo a radical revolution of values. We must rapidly begin the shift from a thing-oriented society to a person-oriented society. When machines and computers, profit motives and property rights, are considered more important than people, the giant triplets of racism, extreme materialism, and militarism are incapable of being conquered."

Questions:

1. Why do you think Dr. King did not publicly oppose the Vietnam War before this Riverside speech in 1967?
2. In this excerpt, how does Dr. King explain his reasons for opposing the war?
3. What do you think was the reaction of the public to the Riverside Speech?

II) Excerpt from “To Mothers and Wives of the United States. From Japanese Women,” 1967.
(Printed by the Committee of Japanese Women Working For Ending The War in Vietnam)



Yes, we have came [sic]. through the same ordeal.
We sent our sons and husbands to war,
To fight communism and defend our lands,
To liberate Asia....., so we were told...

Now, in Vietnam we see the tragedy being repeated.
You send your sons and husbands to war,
To kill and be killed so far away from home,
To safeguard Free Asia..., so you are told.
We appeal to you, we want you to remember
You have the right to ask whether
Freedom can be preached with napalm and gasses.
You aren't forbidden to reason why
You pay so much to create enemies,
To support a government unpopular with the people.
You are citizens entitled to demand :
Is all this really worth the sacrifice ?
So !
You have power to let your dear ones come back to you.
You have power for building a home-land of the free.
How we yearn to hear you say, for the whole world to hear,
“Peace, not war, will save our democracy.”

Questions:

1. While the Japanese had occupied Vietnam during World War II, Japan did not have an active military until the 21st century. Why do you think an organization of Japanese women committed themselves to ending the Vietnam War?
2. What could have been the interest of the Japanese government in the Vietnam War during the 1960s/1970s?
3. Why might this poem be addressed to mothers and wives?

III) [A Turning Point: Six Stories from the Dow Chemical Protests on Campus, University of Wisconsin- Madison, October, 1976.](#)



UW–Madison student protesters mock police officers by giving the “Sieg Heil” Nazi salute during a demonstration against the Dow Chemical Company on Oct. 18, 1967. (Photo by John Wolf and Heiner Giese)

IIIa) Jane Mandell:

“The United States was dropping napalm on children in Vietnam. Dow Chemical Company was making it, and the university was allowing Dow to recruit students. Everybody was so angry.

I remember showing up at the Commerce Building the day of the Dow protest. We just filled the building. You couldn’t walk. There was no space to breathe. A whole bunch of us went into the dean’s office — it was completely packed — and said to him, “We’re not leaving here until the university agrees not to allow Dow to recruit on this campus.” He was very calm. He tried to explain to us that if people wanted to work for Dow, they should be allowed to. We said there were things that were right and things that were wrong. We had an obligation to prevent wrong from happening...

...I do believe that actions like the Dow Chemical Company demonstration and things that were happening on other campuses across the country really did help end the Vietnam War. We succeeded in helping to end the war by taking it to the streets.”

IIIb) Bob Lawrence:

“I was pretty much a liberal back then, but I supported what we were doing in Vietnam. At the time, I thought what the protesters were doing was wrong, though I understood their anger over the draft.

I was a business student and had most of my classes in Commerce, but on the day of the Dow protest, we couldn’t get in the building. So I watched from across Observatory Drive. I was an Army ROTC cadet, and we had been told by our commanders that if any of us were photographed at a protest, we’d automatically be thrown out of ROTC and drafted immediately. As cadets, we had basically already enlisted.

What I remember so well is that the protesters started chanting “Sieg Heil” and giving the Nazi salute to police officers. Many of the officers were World War II veterans. That was just not something you did. My dad was a World War II veteran, and I thought the protesters were crazy to do that. It caused the police to riot. I saw an officer pin a female student on the ground, face up. He was standing on her wrists and beating her head with a nightstick. I attribute that to “Sieg Heil.” I’d seen other protests, but nothing as ugly and as violent as that one.

I felt sorry for the administration. They were caught between the conservative pressures of state

government and the liberal leanings of the student body. I think they did everything they could — it was just a really difficult time.

In hindsight, looking back more clearly, I view the Vietnam War as a huge mistake. It showed me that our government can make bad decisions. I also can understand the protesters better now. I can't blame them for protesting. Many of them had a lot of respect for Martin Luther King Jr. I think for the most part, they adhered to his nonviolent philosophy. But "Sieg Heil?" That was really, really dumb..."

Questions:

1. How was the University of Wisconsin - Madison impacted by the Vietnam War?
2. What were students specifically protesting?
3. How was Bob Lawrence's life affected by the Vietnam War?
4. Do you think the activists were justified in disrupting campus life?

IV) Primary source document from Madison High School, Brooklyn, NY, 1970

June 2, 1970

Dear Parents,

On Thursday, June 4, at 8:00 P.M., the students of Madison will present a program in which they will explain their efforts to peacefully bring an end to the War.

Instead of continuing their strike against the War, the students decided to transfer their efforts to the school, from where they could launch a community-wide anti-war effort. Now, after nearly a month of leafletting, collecting signatures and interviewing candidates, the students are ready to report to the adults of the community their accomplishments.

Speaking on Thursday night will be candidates for state legislature, a draft counselor, and, most important, the students themselves, relating to you their efforts, and their hopes for enlisting your support. Please attend this meeting which is jointly sponsored by the P.T.A. and the S.G.O.

DAY: THURSDAY, JUNE 4

TIME: 8:00 P.M.

PLACE: MADISON HIGH SCHOOL AUDITORIUM

PEACE,

SELMA SCHUMER*PRESIDENT PARENTS ASS.

MINA WOHL-Pres. elect P.A.

Richard Herskowitz-Pres. elect S.G.O

Steven Cohen-Chairman James Madison
Coalition to End the

War

[Note: the president of the Parents Association, Selma Schumer, is the mother of the U.S. Senate Majority Leader, Chuck Schumer (D)]

Questions:

1. What do you think is a student strike?
2. What actions did the students at Madison High School take before June 2, 1970? To what extent do you think they were effective?
3. What ideas do you think the students shared at the June 4th program to end the war in Vietnam? Who were other key speakers and what do you imagine they presented?

V) Excerpt from The Madness of it All: Essays on War, Literature and American Life, W. D. Ehrhart (McFarland & Company, Inc., Publishers: Jefferson, 2002)

“Our high school history teachers I learned only years later, of course had not taught us that the U.S. had handed eastern Europe over to Joseph Stalin and his minions even before World War Two had ended. Nor had they mentioned that the Soviet Union was completely ringed by American nuclear missiles, those in Turkey and Iran and Alaska closer to Russian soil than the Cuban missiles were to American soil.

There were lots of things we were never taught by either our history teachers or anyone else responsible for our education, but I did not come to know this until much later...”

“... it became clear within a few days of my arrival in [in Vietnam] February 1967 that what was happening there was not at all like what Lyndon Johnson and *Time* and my high school history teachers had told me. And by the time we came upon that woman down on Barrier Island during Operation Pike in August 1967 with her chest torn wide open and her dead baby blue in her arms and her house blown flat by heavy artillery only our side possessed that far south of the demilitarized zone, I was sick in my soul of the whole damned thing and wanted nothing except to get out alive. By the time I got back to Perkasio [the author’s hometown] in March 1968, I still didn’t understand what the hell was actually going on in Vietnam - I wouldn’t begin to learn the truth until after the Ohio National Guard murdered four kids at Kent State University and wounded nine others, and I finally realized I’d sure better find out what was going on and damned quick - but I understood enough to know that I’d been sucker-punched by somebody, and it hurt like hell. It hurt more than anything I’d ever imagined...”

“...Before the decade’s end John Diehl* would suffer two nervous breakdowns and leave not only Pennridge but the profession of teaching - a terrible loss, in my opinion, and in my opinion occasioned by the unbearable stress of trying to teach kids to think critically in an atmosphere where critical thinking was deemed disrespectful, impudent [shameless], and treasonous.”

*The author’s English teacher who was one of only two teachers who tried to counter the author’s support for the war in Vietnam and who tried to dissuade the author from enlisting in the Marines.

Questions:

1. Why do you think Ehrhart’s understanding of Soviet influence in Europe was incomplete?
2. What was the source(s) of Ehrhart’s authentic understanding of the conflict in Vietnam?
3. Why do you think Ehrhart felt “sucker-punched?” Why do you think he felt so hurt?
4. What indictment [accusation] about his education does Erhart offer? Do you think he is fair in his indictment? Why or why not?
5. From Ehrhart’s perspective, what would have been provided to him and the students at Pennridge High School in order to receive a complete education?
6. Do you think your education is complete? Why or why not?

Additional teaching ideas and resources:

I) PBS’ *Ken Burns and Lynn Novick’s: The Vietnam War: The Vietnam Experience in Music*. In this [handout](#) by a veteran social studies teacher, students can listen and analyze musical lyrics from the 1960s through contemporary times.

II) The New-York Historical Society provides an excellent curriculum on the [Vietnam War: from 1945-1975](#), with interactive maps, resources, and discussion questions.

Film clips: "[Notes and Images from the Viet Nam War](#)"

I: The Anti-War Movement: GIs, Veterans, and Shifting Public Opinion [27:00 - 32:02]. **Be sure to pause over images of protesters at [27:30], [27:40], and [27:48].**

Questions:

- How did public opinion about the war change between 1965 and 1971? What factors may account for this flip in public opinion?
- Carefully look at the images of protesters. How would you describe the protesters? Do they represent the images you may have of anti-war protesters?
- Why do you think the protesters hold signs that say, "We will not fight another rich man's war?"
- What do you notice about how the group of GIs looked and who they were?
- How were high school students involved in the anti-war movement? What might have been students' motivations to stop the war?
- How do you think the public reacted to the revelations of the Winter Soldier Hearings (1971) in Detroit? How do you think the military and government reacted?
- The narrator says, "The amount of GI opposition was unprecedented in U.S. history." Why do you think so many veterans and active GIs protested the Vietnam War as opposed to other U.S. conflicts?

II: The Anti-War Movement: Civilians [31:30-36:05]

Questions:

- In what ways did civilians such as students peacefully protest the war?
- How did leadership such as the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee and the National Chicano Moratorium, national movements led by Black and Brown leaders, connect U.S. foreign policy in southeast Asia to domestic policies? **[Note: see the excerpt from Dr. King's "Beyond Vietnam" for a broader examination]**
- Why did anti-war activists believe corporations and universities should be held accountable for their participation in the war? How did they affect the war?
- What was the impact of campus protests on students? **[Note: see the optional activity for a broader examination]**

III: The Anti-War Movement: Student free speech [38:57-43:00]

Questions:

- What was the constitutional issue that brought the armbands of John and Marybeth Tinker and Chris Eckhert to the United States Supreme Court?
- What are current issues about student speech that concern you?
- Ultimately, how successful were the anti-war protests? Which tactics do you think were the most effective?