

The Vietnam War & Its Legacy in Fresno

Overview:

This lesson will help students understand experience of the Vietnam War and its lasting impact on the individuals and communities in the central San Joaquin Valley.

Lesson Summary:

The communities of the central San Joaquin Valley experienced the Vietnam War in many different ways. Some went to fight for their country, either drafted or volunteers. Some were forced to fight for their homeland and then became refugees when the war ended. Some joined organizations like the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom to protest the war. These same experiences were felt across the country during this pivotal time in American history. Using primary sources from oral histories to song lyrics, this lesson is designed to help students connect the local experience of the war to this national narrative. Students will be able to understand the mass immigration of the Southeast Asian refugee community to the central San Joaquin Valley in the wake of the war. Students will also understand the perspective of those who were involved in the war through protest or service.

This is designed as a local supplement to a broader foundational lesson.

Time Allotment:

50 Minutes

Grade Level:

Secondary - Grades 9, 10, 11

Standards:

Grade Nine 9.2C.1

Assess the Vietnam policy of the Kennedy, Johnson, and Nixon administrations and the shifts of public opinion about the war. [Analyze multiple causation].

Grade Nine 9.2C.2

Explain the composition of the American forces recruited to fight the war. [Interrogate historical data].

Grade Nine 9.2C.3

Evaluate how Vietnamese and Americans experienced the war and how the war continued to affect postwar politics and culture. [Appreciate historical perspectives].

Grade Nine 9.2C.5

Analyze the constitutional issues involved in the war and explore the legacy of the Vietnam war.

Grade Ten WH.10.9.3

Understand the importance of the Truman Doctrine and the Marshall Plan, which established the pattern for America's postwar policy of supplying economic and military aid to prevent the spread of Communism and the resulting economic and political competition in arenas such as Southeast Asia (i.e., the Korean War, Vietnam War), Cuba, and Africa.

Grade Eleven U.S 11.8.4

Analyze new federal government spending on defense, welfare, interest on the national debt, and federal and state spending on education, including the California Master Plan.

Grade Eleven US.11.9.3.g

Trace the origins and geopolitical consequences (foreign and domestic) of the Cold War and containment policy, including the following: The Vietnam War.

Grade Eleven U.S 11.9.4

List the effects of foreign policy on domestic policies and vice versa (e.g., protests during the war in Vietnam, the "nuclear freeze" movement).

Grade Twelve AD.12.5.4

Principles of American Democracy - Explain the controversies that have resulted over changing interpretations of civil rights, including those in Plessy v. Ferguson, Brown v. Board of Education, Miranda v. Arizona, Regents of the University of California v. Bakke, Adarand Constructors, Inc. v. Pena, and United States v. Virginia (VMI).

Learning Objectives:

Students will be able to:

Identify the effect of the draft on the American perception of the Vietnam War.

Understand the impact of the war on American and Vietnamese soldiers and citizens.

Understand how the effects of the Secret War in Laos led to the immigration of the Hmong people to America.

Identify the effects of the war in the central San Joaquin Valley, including the development of one of the nation's largest Hmong communities.

Materials For Lesson:

Video. "[Vietnam: The End of the War and the Draft: The Draft.](#)" PBS LearningMedia. The Draft, December 12, 2019.

Video. "[10thirtysix | Exclusive | The Secret War: Hmong Soldiers Who Served Alongside Americans in Vietnam.](#)" Milwaukee PBS. YouTube, September 25, 2017.

Article. Lisa Lee Herrick. "[Eating Thirty in Fresno: Finding Home at Hmong New Year.](#)" Boom California, December 24, 2019.

Materials:**Primary Sources:**

Photograph. Vietnam War protest outside Armed Forces office in downtown Fresno, circa 1970. Fresno County Historical Society.

Photograph. Protesters holding signs that support the Vietnam War during march in downtown Fresno, circa 1970. Fresno County Historical Society.

Document. "Excerpt from Address by Senator Fulbright: The Two Americas." Women's International League for Peace and Freedom Records, Special Collections Research Center, California State University, Fresno, March 25, 1966.

Document. "Memorandum Re: Action on Vietnam, the Draft, and Civil Rights." Women's International League for Peace and Freedom Records, Special Collections Research Center, California State University, Fresno, July 7, 1966.

Cartoon. "Resistance FSC." Women's International League for Peace and Freedom Records, Special Collections Research Center, California State University, Fresno, February 20, 1969.

Document. "Strike" flyer. Women's International League for Peace and Freedom Records, Special Collections Research Center, California State University, Fresno, May 12, 1970.

Document. "Who is Arrogant? A Fact Sheet on the Vietnamese Struggle for Independence." Women's International League for Peace and Freedom Records, Special Collections Research Center, State University, Fresno, 1972.

Document. "For Our Sisters in Vietnam" pamphlet. Women's International League for Peace and Freedom Records, Special Collections Research Center, California State University, Fresno, November, 1975.

Document. Leo Rennert and Joe Rosato. "FBI Files Reveal FSU Campus Ties." *The Fresno Bee*, November 30, 1977. Women's International League for Peace and Freedom Records, Special Collections Research Center, California State University.

Document. "Why Abolish The Draft?" Women's International League for Peace and Freedom Records, Special Collections Research Center, California State University, Fresno, circa 1970.

Document. "Stop It" protest flyer. Women's International League for Peace and Freedom Records, Special Collections Research Center, California State University, Fresno, circa 1970.

Article. "Nearly 60,000 Pack SF Kezar Stadium in Viet War Protest." *The Fresno Bee*, April 16, 1967. Newspapers.com

Article. "King Warns of Racial Violence in LA, Oakland, and Other Cities" *The Fresno Bee*, April 17, 1967. Newspapers.com

Article. L.G. "Letter to the Editor - Live-But Where?" *The Fresno Bee*, April 28, 1967. Newspapers.com

Article. Brad Taylor. "Letter to the Editor - Proud at 14." *The Fresno Bee*, May 2, 1968. Newspapers.com

Article. "Fresno Soldier in Vietnam Gets Medal." *The Fresno Bee*. June 2, 1968. Newspapers.com

Article. K.C. McClatchy, Executive Editor. "Time for Nixon to Unveil Plan." *The Fresno Bee*, April 17, 1970. Newspapers.com

Article. Old Sarge. "Letter to the Editor - Opposes 'Polite War'." *The Fresno Bee*, April 24, 1970. Newspapers.com

Oral History. Chong Erskine. "Vietnam War" in *Stories of Service. Valley Veterans Remember World War II, Korea, Vietnam and the Cold War, Vol. II*. Edited by Janice Stevens. Fresno, CA: Craven Street Books, 2011. Pg. 213-215.

Oral History. Richard Gonzalez. "Warrior of the Mountains" in *Stories of Service. Valley Veterans Remember World War II, Korea, Vietnam and the Cold War, Vol. II*. Edited by Janice Stevens. Fresno, CA: Craven Street Books, 2011. Pg. 215-216.

Oral History. Sing Houngviengkham, as told to Charlotte Hutchison. "Try Hard and Never Quit," in *Stories of Service. Valley Veterans Remember World War II, Korea, Vietnam and the Cold War, Vol. II*. Edited by Janice Stevens. Fresno, CA: Craven Street Books, 2011. Pg. 224-227.

Oral History. "[Vietnam Stories: Leland House](#)." *Stories of Service*, April 27, 2018. VallyPBS.org.

Oral History. "[Vietnam Stories: Robert Wood](#)." *Stories of Service*, February 16, 2018. ValleyPBS.org.

Oral History. "[Vietnam Stories: Craig Meadors](#)." *Stories of Service*, March 9, 2018. VallyPBS.org.

Oral History. "[Vietnam Stories: Hoang Chi Truong](#)." *Stories of Service*, February 16, 2018. ValleyPBS.org.

Oral History. David Harris. "[I Picked Prison Over Fighting in Vietnam](#)." *The New York Times*, June 24, 2017.

Song. "[Still in Saigon](#)" by the Charlie Daniels Band. Song lyrics by Dan Daley. 1982.

Song. "[The FISH Cheer/I Feel Like I'm Fixin' to Die](#)" by Country Joe and the Fish. Song lyrics by Country Joe and the Fish. 1969.

Song. "[Born in the U.S.A.](#)" by Bruce Springsteen. Song lyrics by Bruce Springsteen, 1984.

Introductory Activity – Part I (15 minutes):

Discuss with students their understanding of why some people joined the military during Vietnam and why some did not. Ask if students know about the military draft. Explain to students that the draft changed many people's perception of the war because young men were being forced to go to war. Explain that protests of the draft culminated into protests of the Vietnam War. Preface the video segment with a warning that it may contain sensitive material for some students. Play the

"Vietnam: The End of the War and the Draft: The Draft" video clip (9:12). Discuss how the draft changed the American people's perspective of the war. Students should understand how the end of the draft instigated the end of America's involvement in the Vietnam War.

Video. "[Vietnam: The End of the War and the Draft: The Draft.](#)" PBS LearningMedia. The Draft, December 12, 2019.

Introductory Activity Part 2 (20 minutes):

Ask students if they know what the Secret War was and how it impacted the Hmong people in Laos. Show a short video, The Secret War: Hmong Soldiers Who Served Alongside Americans in Vietnam. (16:52). After the video, discuss with students how the Hmong people fighting alongside America impacted their home country and forced them to evacuate.

Video. "[10thirtysix | Exclusive | The Secret War: Hmong Soldiers Who Served Alongside Americans in Vietnam.](#)" Milwaukee PBS. YouTube, September 25, 2017.

Introductory Activity Part 3 (10 minutes):

Have students take turns reading the article "Eating Thirty in Fresno: Finding Home at Hmong New Year". Discuss with students the effect of the Secret War on Hmong culture, what it was like to be a refugee, and finding a place to call home in Fresno as described in the article.

Article. Lisa Lee Herrick. "[Eating Thirty in Fresno: Finding Home at Hmong New Year.](#)" Boom California, December 24, 2019.

Learning Activity (10 minutes):

Give each student one or two primary sources from the list of Materials. Explain to students that their assignment is to write a minimum of 250 words, five paragraph analytical essay linking their source to the national narrative of the lesson. Students should include in their essay answers to the key questions below.

Assessment: Use the following questions to guide a recap discussion, as a quiz, or a guideline for a quick write assignment.

How did the draft process work? Why did the American government thought it was necessary?

Who was drafted and who was not?

Why did President Nixon think changing the draft process to a lottery would affect the negative perception of the Vietnam War in a positive way?

How the end of the draft instigate the end of the Vietnam War?

Describe the experiences of both American and Southeast Asian soldiers.

List some of the challenges and threats the Hmong people faced after America withdrew from Vietnam.

Describe some of the challenges the Southeast Asian refugees faced when they came to the United States.

How did people in the central San Joaquin Valley react to the Vietnam War?

Describe the ways that people protested the draft and the war in the central San Joaquin Valley.

What were some of the different forms of media that were used by people to express their support or protest of the war? (political cartoons, songs)

Assessment:

Students' essays should reflect on the key understandings of the lesson provided above based on the analytical essay rubric provided.

Extension Activity:

Expand essay assignment to 1000 words. Students are provided with three or four primary sources to link to the national historical narrative.

Distance Learning Options:

- Direct students to watch introductory videos using links directly from the website.
- Hold discussions via video conferencing software like [Zoom](#), or chat service like [Discord](#). Alternatively, require students to contribute to an online discussion board 3-5 times per discussion session.
- Assign 250-500 word analytical essay using any two of the sources provided.