

# VETERANS LEGACY PROGRAM CURRICULAR MATERIALS

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**VA**



**U.S. Department  
of Veterans Affairs**

National Cemetery  
Administration



**UCF**

**Department  
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UNIVERSITY OF CENTRAL FLORIDA



**UCF  
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# Remembering and Honoring Veterans

The Vietnam War

**Day One**

**Introduction to the Vietnam  
War**





# Essential Question

What was the Vietnam War, and how did it impact the people of the United States?

# Learning Goal

Understand the historical Vietnam War period and its significance on the people of the United States.

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**THINK:**

**What do you know about  
the Vietnam War?**

# Vietnam





# Vietnam



- Eastern coast of Southeast Asia
- Similar to the size of Norway
- Diverse topography - rivers, forests, mountains and plains
- Experiences monsoons (heavy rains)
- Annual average temperature ranges from 70-81 degrees
- Important Exports: rice, tea, sugarcane, seafood





## How Did it Start?



- Vietnam was ruled by France for a long time.
- Communist leader Ho Chi Minh started the Viet Minh to fight for independence during WWII.
- After WWII, Ho Chi Minh's group overthrew Emperor Bao and put Ho in charge.
- France supported Bao and set up government in South Vietnam to regain influence.
- Ho wanted communism, while Bao wanted ties with the West.
- Conflict increased, culminating in Ho's victory at the Battle of Dien Bien Phu in 1954.
- A treaty was signed at the Geneva Conference to split Vietnam at the 17th Parallel and planned elections for reunification in a few years.
- But In 1955, anti-communist leader Ngo Dinh Diem became president of South Vietnam, increasing resistance against Ho.

# The United States' Involvement



President Johnson greeting US troops  
on the USS Enterprise

## Communism was a major concern for Western countries.

- 1955 - President Eisenhower announced US support for South Vietnamese leader Diem Bien Phu.
  - US military and intelligence supported suppression of Viet Minh, now called the Viet Cong.
- 1957 - The Viet Cong began fighting back, and organized opposition grew.
- 1961 - President Kennedy was advised to increase US military presence to combat the Viet Cong threat.
- 1963 - Diem Bien Phu and Kennedy were assassinated within weeks of each other.
  - Johnson became president and increased support for South Vietnam.
- 1964 - the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution was passed by Congress in response to Northern Vietnamese torpedo boats attacking US destroyer ships.
- 1965 - Johnson initiated an airstrike campaign and sent US troops into combat to support the Southern Vietnamese army.

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## What Happened?



- 1966 – Johnson publicly announced deployment of troops in July at a news conference.
- Air war in the North and ground war in the South to combat Viet Cong insurgents.
- US military presence took the lead with the assumption their firepower and groundcover would help them outlast the enemy.
- Tactics included “attrition”, Agent Orange, new technology, bombing raids.
- The Viet Cong experienced massive casualties but was never wiped out. Northern Vietnam was bolstered by Soviet and Chinese support; soldiers knew their territory well. Air defense technology improved, causing major losses for US aircraft and personnel.
- 1968 – The Tet Offensive was a major turning point in the war.

## How Did it End?



*The Fall of Saigon, April 1975*

- 1969 - President Nixon took office and intended to end the Vietnam War honorably.
- Military offense continued as a show of strength, but it did not end the war.
- Troops were slowly brought home while they tried to build South Vietnam's military strength.
- Conflict between North and South Vietnam escalated with no resolution, with US influence failing to find a way to initiate peace talks.
- 1973 - The Paris Peace Accords were signed, ending US involvement.
- 1975 - North Vietnamese forces took Saigon and reunified the country as the Socialist Republic of Vietnam.



# The Effects

## The United States

- Congress replaced the military draft with a volunteer force
- Voting age reduced to 18
- The War Powers Act was enacted to restrict the president's ability to enter war without Congress
- The US economy experienced major inflation
- US military morale, commitment to internationalism and trust in the government was lowered
- The country became divided on perception and reaction to the war

## Vietnam

- The country was destroyed by 8 million tons of bombs and Agent Orange
- 2 million civilians and 1.3 million Vietnamese soldiers died
- Its economy still suffers today

# Exit Slip

Make sure you have at least five facts on your note-taking sheet.



**Day Two**

**The Vietnam Veteran  
Experience**





# Essential Question

How did serving in the Vietnam War  
affect Veterans?



# Learning Goal

Understand the historical Vietnam War period and its significance on the people of the United States.

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# Let's Discuss:

How do you think war affects soldiers?

# The Vietnam War Draft

- Between 1964 and 1973, the U.S. military drafted 2.2 million American men out of an eligible pool of 27 million.
- Only 25% of the military was drafted. Many volunteered to fight, but being drafted scared countless others.
- Some men sought various ways out of the draft through education, immigration or volunteering for their preferred branch.
- Antiwar activists staunchly opposed the draft as immoral and a form of government control.



Young man wearing helmet with peace sign, burns his draft card at an anti-draft demonstration at the Selective Service System headquarters, 1724 F St. N.W., Washington, D.C



## Public Perception and Controversy

- Many people questioned the reasons given by the U.S. government for getting involved in the war.
- Many were concerned with impacts on civilians, bolstered by graphic and detailed news spread through television.
- The American military's death toll was rising, and many found it hard to justify.
- Lack of progress discouraged many critics.

- Soldiers experienced a lack of support from some parts of their country, impacting morale over time.
- Soldiers developed PTSD and did not always have support to navigate it.
- Negative perceptions contributed to feelings of isolation and misunderstanding.

# Challenges Faced by Vietnam Soldiers



*Photograph of Private Fred L. Greenleaf  
Crossing a Deep Irrigation Canal during  
Operation Bang Dong*

- Soldiers risked many physical impairments, including diseases like Hepatitis C and injuries like hearing loss.
- Over 3 million military personnel were exposed to Agent Orange, leading to various health issues ranging from acute reactions like asthma to long-term diseases like Parkinson's.
  - Over 300,000 Americans died from exposure between 1962 and 1971.
- Drug use increased as a coping method for stress.
- Some companies experienced mutinies and desertion as reactions to high levels of stress.
- 19% of Veterans returned from Vietnam with PTSD from extreme wartime experiences. After 10 years, 10% had still not recovered.
- Many Veterans overcame these challenges and made a difference in their communities.



## Overcoming Hardship

- The VA's Vet Center was established in 1979 to recognize veterans' struggles with readjusting back home and provide support.
- Vietnam Veteran experiences paved the way for terming PTSD and prompting studies to investigate and treat it, prompted by 1983's National Vietnam Veterans Readjustment Study, completed in 1988.
- Vietnam Veteran support organizations were formed, including Vietnam Veterans of America and

# Get to Know a Veteran!!!

## INSTRUCTIONS

- You will be divided into research groups and assigned a Vietnam Veteran.
  - You will review provided sources and do your own research to learn about your Veteran's life and legacy.
  - Using a Group Planning Sheet and the provided PPT template, your group will present your assigned Veteran to the class.
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**Day Three**

**Your Assigned Veteran**







# Essential Question

What can I learn about the life and legacy of my assigned Veteran?

# Learning Goal

Conduct research using reliable and valid primary and secondary sources, synthesizing the information to show what can be learned from veteran lives and legacies.

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## Instructions

- Work in your groups to continue learning about your veteran.
- Use your Group Planning Sheet to keep track of roles, take notes and plan your presentation!
- You should have a completed PPT template by the end of class.

### REMEMBER

- Primary sources: firsthand evidence and information
- Secondary sources: secondhand information and commentary by other researchers

### Is This Source Credible?

- Is it primary or secondary?
- What kind of URL is the site?
- Is the author/publisher reliable?
- Is the information relevant?

**Day Four**

**Presenting Your Veteran**





# Essential Question

What is the importance of overcoming difficulty and building a legacy?

# Learning Goal

Orally present findings with a logical organization, coherent focus and credible evidence, using a digital presentation to improve understanding.

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## Presentation Expectations

1. Groups will take turns presenting to the class.
2. Class will listen quietly and take notes of anything interesting or striking.
3. Hold your applause until the end!
4. Class may give constructive feedback after each presentation.

# Let's Debrief

What have you learned this week  
about:

- The Vietnam War
- The Veteran experience
- What it takes to overcome difficulty
- The value of a legacy



# Exit Slip

Complete your Reflection Worksheet.





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