

# History and the Individual

## Indiana Standards Connection:

**USH.7.5** Identify and describe United States foreign policy issues during the 1960s and 1970s.

**USH.7.7** Describe United States' involvement in Vietnam and reactions by Americans to this involvement.

**USH.9.2** Locate and analyze primary sources and secondary sources related to an event or issue of the past.

**USH.9.5** Use technology in the process of conducting historical research and in the presentation of the products of historical research and current events.

**USH.6.1** Describe the domino theory and its relationship to the principle of containment. Identify key events and individuals as well as their connections to post World War II tensions

## Lesson Summary:

*During this lesson, students will examine and analyze a primary source document related to the Vietnam War. The students will discuss and determine if the authors of these documents convey the popular perception of the conflict, or if their viewpoints are different from what historians tell us. Students will analyze the emotions/opinions conveyed in the two books and explore the individual impact of combat.*

## Commentary:

This lesson is on-going, as the students read *Naked In Da Nang* and *Vietnam Letters*. The DVD will require 15 minutes of class time and the eight-page summary and subsequent discussion will take the rest of the class. Students can then be instructed to do internet research and be prepared to discuss the Vietnam conflict in the next class.

## Pre-Assessment:

-- Watch the DVD *Vietnam: A Nation Remembers*. Discuss why it was produced (for a 2005 Operation Welcome Home celebration for Vietnam Veterans.) Why would it be necessary to welcome home troops 35-40 years after the end of a war? What is the DVD saying about the conflict? Does the DVD convey a political point of view or opinion? Is it "pro-war," "anti-war" or neither? **Have each student write a brief persuasive essay stating the overarching message of the DVD and whether it was effective in conveying that message.**

-- Distribute copies of each book to the students, along with the eight page conflict summary. Instruct students to read the summary before starting either book. Discuss what was happening in America between 1965 and 1973. What was the mood of the country? What were the cultural divides? Talk about the multitude of social issues of the time, ranging from the war to civil rights to feminism.

-- Urge students to do internet research regarding the Vietnam war. What are the varying opinions they encounter? How were America's GIs impacted by the protests and the social unrest in our society?

-- Discuss the current conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan. Instruct the students to read the two texts and imagine they had been written by a contemporary soldier. How are things different today? How are they the same? What is the reaction to the war throughout "grass roots" America? Are Americans as divided over today's conflict? How are they voicing their concerns?

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## Scoring Guidelines:

- The results of the pre-assessment activity should be analyzed for student participation and accuracy of student responses. Student essays should be analyzed for their understanding of the content of the DVD and how well they support their argument regarding the purpose and effectiveness of the DVD.
- Student answers should be reviewed to determine how accurately they convey the issues faced by America during the 1960s and how/whether they are able to relate those issues to contemporary topics.
- Use conclusions about the number and accuracy of student responses to determine the pace and depth with which to proceed with the lesson. Also, identify any students who might benefit from differentiated instruction.

## Post-Assessment:

- Discuss in class the impact that the war has on each of the lives chronicled in *Naked In Da Nang* and *Vietnam Letters*. Do the authors experience changes in their belief systems? How so? Can you relate to those changes and to the authors' hopes and fears? The author of *Naked In Da Nang* uses humor to tell much of his story. Is it effective? Does it make you feel more or less sympathetic to his situation?
- The *Vietnam Letters* story is told entirely through Allen Paul's letters home to his parents and girlfriend. Mike Jackson also discusses sending letters home but the two authors have different approaches. Jackson notes that his letters rarely shared any of the horrors of war, while Paul was fairly honest about what he was seeing and experiencing. **Have the students write a brief essay comparing and contrasting each man's approach to sharing his experiences with those on the home front.** Which method would you choose? Why do you think each man made this choice? If you were a loved one on the home front would you rather know more or less about what was going on in your GI's life? Why?
- Have the students discuss and document each author's voice and perspective. Are the authors "pro-war" or "ant-war"? Explain your answer. Do you sense that the authors grow and change during their tours of duty? What clues do you find in the text that indicates such growth? Are the changes for the better or worse?

## Instructional Procedures:

1. Return the student papers from the pre-assessment.
2. Point out that each book they are reading reflects a deeply personal perspective on a geo-political event that shaped global policies and practices for years to come. Explain that historians, filmmakers, and authors often interpret history to fit their own political agenda or perspective, and that the best way to truly understand history is to examine differing perspectives from those who actually "lived the history." After reading historical analyses and articles from the internet, discuss with the students which documents give them the best perspective on the Vietnam conflict? Do they feel they have a balanced view of America's involvement in this complicated war? Explain that each author served at the time of two key North Vietnamese offensives – Paul was in-country just following the Tet Offensive while Jackson served during the Easter Offensive. **Have students look up information on each offensive and write a paragraph explaining what took place**

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**and how American troops responded. Now re-read each author's experiences during those time frames and write another paragraph, this time discussing how/whether each author was impacted by the Tet Offensive or the Easter Offensive, and how these events or their aftermath may have touched them on a personal level.** Did either man discuss these military actions in their writing, either directly or indirectly? As a reader and student of history do you understand the events better by reading a scholarly report on the event or by reading the personal accounts shared by the authors?

### **Differentiated Instructional Support:**

Instruction is differentiated according to learner needs, to help all learners either meet the intent of the specified indicator(s) or, if the indicator is already met, to advance beyond the specified indicator(s).

- Adjust the complexity of the assignment for students who have not met the intent of the indicator.
- Allow students to work in pairs to read and discuss the selections and primary source documents.
- Assign a peer helper for any student having difficulty selecting a historical event and finding a relevant primary source.
- Give alternative assessments in line with students' learning styles.

### **Extension:**

Have students examine political campaign material or magazine articles from the years covered by each book. How do these materials relate back to the opinions and stories told by the authors? Do the general references to "American troops" have more impact when you relate them to individual experiences such as those conveyed by Allen Paul and Mike Jackson? When you read about "body counts" or discuss the names on the Vietnam Memorial in Washington, does it mean more now that you "know" two of the individuals who served in that conflict?

### **Interdisciplinary connections – Language Arts**

- 11.2.5** Analyze an author's implicit and explicit assumptions and beliefs about a subject.
- 11.4.4** Structure ideas and arguments in a sustained and persuasive way and support them with precise and relevant examples
- 12.5.9** Write academic essays, such as an analytical essay, a persuasive essay, a research report, a summary, an explanation, a description, or a literary analysis that:
- develops a thesis.
  - creates an organizing structure appropriate to purpose, audience, and context.
  - includes accurate information from primary and secondary sources and excludes extraneous information.
  - makes valid inferences.

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- supports judgments with relevant and substantial evidence and well-chosen details.
- provides a coherent conclusion

### 12.7.16 Deliver reflective presentations that:

- explore the significance of personal experiences, events, conditions, or concerns, using appropriate speech strategies, including narration, description, exposition, and persuasion.
- draw comparisons between the specific incident and broader themes and to illustrate beliefs or generalizations about life.
- maintain a balance between describing the incident and relating it to more general, abstract ideas.

### 12.7.19 Deliver multimedia presentations that:

- combine text, images, and sound by incorporating information from a wide range of media, including films, newspapers, magazines, CD-ROMs, online information, television, videos, and electronic media-generated images.
- select an appropriate medium for each element of the presentation.
- use the selected media skillfully, editing appropriately, and monitoring for quality.

### Post-Assessment

*Extension Exercise – will require parental permission  
(If a parent does not want his/her student to watch either or both films,  
they can prepare their report exclusively on one of the books.)*

### Primary Source/Historical Interpretation Task

**Instructions:** For this concluding task, students will view two distinctively different Vietnam films, Oliver Stone’s *Platoon* and Mel Gibson’s *We Were Soldiers*. Both claim to be based on the experiences of GIs who served in Vietnam. Both paint a dramatically different picture of the men who fought and died there. Instruct the students to watch each film, keeping in mind the stories conveyed in Allen Paul’s and Mike Jackson’s books. In a classroom discussion, students should be asked to compare and contrast the two films with each other and with *Vietnam Letters* and *Naked In Da Nang*. Students will then be paired into teams and each team will select one of the movies or one of the books as the subject of a comprehensive report that will be presented orally.

1. Compare and contrast your selected subject to the other three examples. How well does it relate “the Vietnam experience” as you understand it? Did it hold your interest and give you an opinion or perspective you did not previously have? How is it similar to the other three resources? What is different, and why did you select this resource?
2. Explain the time frame covered by your resource. What was going on elsewhere in the world at that time? What was the mood in America? Put together a poster or Powerpoint presentation of images that reflect the time period and mood of America and the world at that time.

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3. Develop a timeline for the Vietnam War – at the bottom side of the timeline, mark the major events of the conflict. On the top side, place significant dates related to your resource. Share the timeline with the class during your presentation. .
4. The report you prepare should contain:
  - a. A brief description of the resource you chose to examine;
  - b. Your summary/interpretation of the writer’s or filmmaker’s opinions and attitude toward the Vietnam war and the individuals who served there;
  - c. Cite and paraphrase any additional source material you consulted;
  - d. Provide a statement of conclusion as to how your resource changed or confirmed your opinions regarding the Vietnam War, and whether you feel the lessons of Vietnam are applicable today;
  - e. If you disagree with the opinions or portrayals featured in your resource, be prepared to defend the reasons for that disagreement with additional supporting source material.
5. If both members of the team agree on the opinions expressed regarding the resource they have chosen, then they should jointly present their materials, each taking a turn reading from the report and explaining the visuals. If the two members disagree, then they should still work together on the visuals and exhibits but should take a point/counterpoint approach to the presentation regarding their chosen resource.
6. Turn in your report by the due date \_\_\_\_\_. All of the supplemental materials listed must be turned in before the essay will be read.

Extra credit: Interview and videotape a veteran who served during the same timeframe as your selected resource. Ask him or her to confirm or contradict the accuracy of your resource. Question him or her on his/her personal experiences and impressions during their tour of duty. How are they similar to or different from the opinions expressed by your resource? What is your veteran’s opinion of the Vietnam War and whether its lessons are applicable today? The video presentation should be shared with the class and should be no longer than five minutes.

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## Attachment A Post-Assessment Scoring Guide

<b>5 Superior</b>	<b>3 Average</b>	<b>1 Limited</b>
An accurate and complete description of the historical event and the approach of the resource is provided.	A description of the historical event is provided that has minor inaccuracies and/or is missing some minor details.	A description of the historical event is provided that has major inaccuracies and/or is missing some major details.
An accurate and complete summary of the writer's interpretation is provided.	A summary of the writer's interpretation is provided that has minor inaccuracies and /or is missing some minor points related to the task.	A summary of the writer's interpretation is provided that has major inaccuracies and /or is lacking information critical to completing this task.
An accurate paraphrase of the resource material is provided.	A paraphrase of the resource material is provided that has some minor inaccuracies	A paraphrase of the resource material is provided that contains major inaccuracies.
The conclusion is supported with one or more relevant citations from the source material.	The conclusion is supported with one or more citations from the source material whose relevance is not clear.	The conclusion uses one or more citations from the primary source material that are not relevant to the position taken.