

# Cold War America Lesson #4:

## *The Vietnam War (1945 – 1975)*

### Major Topics:

- Origins of the Vietnam War
- Tonkin Gulf & Escalation
- A War of Attrition
- The War's Legacies
- Anti-War Movement
- End of the War

### What did the United States lose in Vietnam?



*Photograph of a Marine Landing at Danang, Vietnam, 08/03/1965. Source: National Archives, ARC Identifier 595865.*

This lesson teaches students that American involvement in Vietnam must be understood in the context of the Cold War. Students will draw from their earlier explorations of how Containment was implemented abroad and at home and use this knowledge to understand the roots and consequences of American intervention in Vietnam. The lesson spans several decades that cover the colonial history of Vietnam, the independence movement during World War II, the French-Vietnamese War, the country's division at the 17<sup>th</sup> parallel, the escalation of the war following the Gulf of Tonkin Incident, specific strategies and battles in fighting the war, the divisions that the war caused abroad and at home, the American loss and its consequences for the nation. Along the way, a range of perspectives teaches students that America's longest war (up until that point) went through a number of transformations on the battlefield and in public support. Students will study the agency of ordinary Americans that both participated in and protested the war, diplomatic leaders across the world, and the important role played by the media in turning the tide of opinion in the war.

## Procedures

### Step 1: Introduction to the Vietnam War (Class Time: 10 minutes)

Begin this lesson by immersing students in the sights and sounds of the Vietnam War. Project the Vietnam War Powerpoint presentation, accompanied by appropriate music from the period, such as Creedence Clearwater Revival's "Fortunate Son," Marvin Gaye's "What's Going On?", or "Blowin' in the Wind" by Bob Dylan. (Alternatively, clips from films like *Letters Home from Vietnam* can provide an engaging introduction for students).

### Step 2: Origins of the Vietnam War (Class Time: 55 minutes)



Begin this lesson by briefly asking students if they know how long the Vietnam War lasted. When did it begin and end? Tell students that the answers to these questions are not as simple as it would seem. Explain to students that although direct American involvement in what was to become the Vietnam War began in 1964 and lasted until 1975, the roots of the War were varied and can be traced back to the mid-1800s when the region became a colony of France. Introduce the focus question for the unit: *What did the United States lose in Vietnam?* Explain to the class that in order to really understand the conflict and the role it played in the larger Cold War, they'll need to develop multiple explanations to answer the question.

In this first part of the lesson, however, tell students that they will learn first about the origins of the Vietnam War by considering the following question from a variety of perspectives: *Why did we fight the Vietnam War?* Distribute **Origins of the Vietnam War (CWA 4.1)**, a secondary source that provides historical context for the events leading up to U.S. military intervention in Vietnam. This document teaches students about the history of colonization and anti-colonialism in Vietnam and America's containment policies post-World War II. The text can be read aloud as a class or in small groups. Note that this secondary source includes a number of time markers which detail a chronology of events leading to war. In order to help students understand and track the chronology, have them annotate and complete the text questions row by row together (or in small groups), carefully underlining dates and other time markers in order to build their own timeline of events. Project and distribute **Southeast Asia Map (CWA 4.2)** to reinforce the sequence of key events and to learn more about the region.



Distribute **Why Did We Fight the Vietnam War? (CWA 4.3)** and tell students that they will now hear from four participants in the conflict: Ho Chi Minh, Ngo Dinh Diem, John Foster Dulles, and Dwight D. Eisenhower. Using the source analysis tool (CWA 4.3), have students work in groups to first source each document and then summarize briefly how each historical actor would explain their answer to the focus question: *Why did we fight the Vietnam War?*



Before moving on to Step 2, have students complete **Origins of the Vietnam War Quiz (CWA 4.4)**, using their notes and sources. Circulate throughout the class to support students and correct any individual misunderstandings. Review as a class using **Origins of the Vietnam War Quiz Key (CWA 4.4K)** as needed.

### Step 3: Escalation - The Gulf of Tonkin (Class Time: 100 minutes)

**Origins of the War Review:** In groups of two or three, have students quickly jot down their answers to the following two questions: Why did we fight the Vietnam War? Ask for volunteers to share their answers, which will likely vary, but should include mention of the U.S. commitment to its containment policies and the Vietnamese struggle, both North and South, for independence and self-determination.



Next, divide the class into groups of three or four. Distribute two copies of **CWA 4.5 – The Tonkin Gulf Resolution** to each group (students can share to save paper). Following the directions on the student handout, have the class first read and discuss the first historical context paragraph, and then listen to the audiotaped recordings of phone conversations between President Lyndon Johnson and Defense Secretary Robert McNamara (transcripts are included for each conversation in CWA 4.5). Finally, have students discuss with their group the questions listed on page 22. Repeat this process with the second conversation, starting on page 26, and Johnson’s Tonkin Gulf Speech, which starts on page 29. As students discuss, circulate around the room to make sure they understand what happened on both August 2 and 4, and how the president’s team responded to those events.

Next, distribute or project **CWA 4.6 – Vietnam Troop Escalation**. Ask students what they notice from this chart to make sure they understand that after 1964, troop levels increased dramatically. Make sure students take note of the term “escalation” and understand what it means in the Vietnam context.

Finally, distribute **CWA 4.7 – Who Was Responsible?** In groups, have students decide who they believed to be most responsible for the US’ military intervention in Vietnam, using the directions and rubric included in the student handout.



### Step 4: A War of Attrition (Homework or Class Time: 30 minutes)



Inform students the warfare in Vietnam, both ground and air, is the focus today. They will study how the war was fought, from the military strategies employed to the impact of the fighting. Tell the class they will analyze for themselves why some historians, politicians, and veterans alike have called the Vietnam War a war of attrition, one in which traditional methods of fighting would not work. Distribute **A War of Attrition (CWA 4.8)** and have students either read it for homework or as a full class. This reading provides the class an overview of the ground and air war in Vietnam. As students read, have them circle in the text or images examples of non-traditional fighting methods that made the war difficult, time-consuming, and costly. Review as a class.

### Step 5: Walter Cronkite Editorial (Class Time: 15 minutes)

Divide students into groups of three or four. Distribute **Walter Cronkite Editorial (CWA 4.9)**. Explain to students that in 1968 Walter Cronkite was the anchor of CBS news at a time when news was not available 24 hours each day. Many Americans would watch the evening news, which always included information on the Vietnam War. Significantly, this was the first war to be seen on TV, and this made Americans more aware of the



realities of the fighting. Reporters questioned soldiers in battle; this was the kind of footage Americans watched on the evening news. Walter Cronkite himself would often broadcast the news from Vietnam. Many Americans viewed Cronkite as a trusted and authoritative voice on news in America. When Walter Cronkite shared his opinion on the Vietnam War after the Tet Offensive, even more Americans began to grow skeptical of the war. (See introduction on the student handout for more background information). Review Cronkite's editorial, either on its own, or with the audio or video excerpt. Circulate around

room as students answer the discussion questions in their groups, making sure all students a) understand Cronkite's main point, and b) grasp the significance of Cronkite's editorial in shaping public opinion.

## Step 6: What Happened at My Lai? (Class Time: 50 minutes)

Another key turning point during the Vietnam War was the My Lai massacre. The mass killing of Vietnamese civilians by U.S. soldiers took place on March 16, 1968, but did not become public until late 1969, when Seymour Hersh, journalist, reported the story. At the same time, the military tried Lieutenant William Calley with murder. Tell students that they will study the varying responses to the killing of over 300 unarmed women, men, and children. In particular, they will view the massacre at My Lai from five different perspectives: (1) Army Photographer William Haeberle and LIFE magazine journalists, (2) Lieutenant William Calley; (3) Lewis B. Puller Jr, a Vietnam veteran who wrote about the massacre in his autobiography; (4) Nguyen Hieu, an eye-witness, at My Lai; and (5) the Peers Commission report, the Army's official investigation of the My Lai massacre and cover up. At the end of class, they will discuss the focus questions, *What happened at My Lai?* and *Why is My Lai important?*



First, distribute **What Happened at My Lai (CWA 4.10)**. Each student should have one copy of the source analysis chart (pages 41- 42) and each group should have one copy of each primary source (pages 43 – 46). Depending on how much time you want to spend on the activity, you can either have each student review one or two sources and then share their findings with the group as a jigsaw activity, or have each student review each source and complete their charts independently, following the directions on the source analysis chart.



Debrief the activity as a full class, asking students for their answers to the two focus questions: What happened at My Lai? Why was My Lai Important? Make sure all students have evidence to support their interpretations and that they consider the historical significance of the event to both the course of the Vietnam conflict and the larger Cold War battle, such as the following:

- Many Americans believed that Lt. Calley was a scapegoat during the trial: the brutality of combat and war in general led American soldiers (the average age was 19) to commit atrocities otherwise unthinkable. The stress of war and the pain from losing friends inevitably led to the massacre.
- Moreover, many believed low ranking soldiers took the blame even though they were just following orders from their superiors.
- Others agreed with Lewis Puller, who took offense to the argument that war, rather than an individual, was to blame for the massacre. Puller, who also experienced vicious combat, took pride in his ability to control his emotions.



- Nguyen Hieu’s interview vividly illustrates the tragedy of the massacre and raises questions about details of the massacre that has not been part of the public dialogue, the rape of women.
- The My Lai massacre profoundly impacted American’s perception of the war. The massacre further infuriated, energized, and recruited more people to the anti-war movement. Moreover, the massacre, and its subsequent cover up, created widespread resentment toward the Johnson administration and increased American’s suspicions that their government told numerous lies about the war.

## Step 7: Who Fought in Vietnam? (Class Time: 15 minutes)



Previously, students learned that My Lai massacre and cover-up, the Tet Offensive, and Walter Cronkite’s reaction to the Tet Offensive led many Americans to be skeptical about the war. Further inflaming the public, but most especially students, was the draft. The purpose of this lesson is 1) for students to understand how the draft worked, 2) to think about what they would have done if they were drafted, and 3) to analyze the significance of the draft. Students will investigate the following questions: Who fought in Vietnam? How were those men selected? Was the draft equitable?

Distribute **CWA 4.11 – Who Fought in Vietnam?** Review the background information detailed on the first page. Next, project the Draft Lottery Chart on the second page of the handout. In groups, have students first determine if they would have been selected in that 1969 draft and then, what they would do if they were or weren’t selected, following the discussion questions listed on the first page.

## Step 8: How Can We Stop the War? (Class Time: 50 minutes)

As a brief opening discussion, ask students if they have heard about the peace and anti-war movement during the Vietnam War. Do they recall any specific images that come to mind? Students may reference hippies, flowers, peace signs and symbols, and student demonstrations. Tell them that anti-Vietnam War movement is the focus of today’s class and provide them with this background information:

Explain to students that the class will together analyze five primary sources from the anti-war movement in order to consider two important questions: Why did some Americans oppose the war? What methods did they use to demonstrate their opposition? Divide class into groups of three or four. For each group prepare and distribute **How Can We Stop the War (CWA 4.12)**, making sure:



- each student has one copy of the directions on the first page and five copies of the source analysis chart on the second page
- each group has one copy of each of the five accompanying sources.

Students will complete an analysis chart for each primary source independently, in pairs, small groups, or whole class depending on your preferences and following the directions listed on the student handout. After students have completed their analysis of the individual sources, have them discuss in groups the three questions listed on the first page of the handout. Circulate to clarify or explain as needed.

## Step 9: Vietnamization and the Silent Majority (Class Time: 30 minutes)

Distribute **Vietnamization & the Silent Majority (CWA 4.13)**. Tell students that they will now consider President Richard Nixon's plan to exit Vietnam. As a full class, listen to the audio or watch the Silent Majority Speech using the links provided in the student handout. Working in pairs or groups of three, have students discuss their answers to the discussion questions on the last page. Circulate to clarify or explain as needed.



Before moving on, make sure students understand the following:

- With the public increasingly turning against the war, Nixon wanted to bring the war to end, but he did not want to admit defeat. He did not want U.S. troops to leave and then have Communist North Vietnam overtake South Vietnam. Nixon sought peace with honor.
- With these goals in mind, Nixon implemented a policy of Vietnamization to end the war. Nixon wanted to gradually give South Vietnam all responsibility of repelling the Communist North Vietnamese influence. Ideally, as the South Vietnamese took more control, Nixon would bring American troops home. His policy of Vietnamization was also designed to strengthen the South Vietnamese government.
- Additionally, Nixon continued the Johnson administration's strategy of heavily bombing North Vietnam. Finally, Nixon secretly ordered bombs to be dropped in neighboring Cambodia and Laos, in an effort to cut off supplies running from Cambodia and Laos into North Vietnam.

## Step 10: Legacy of the Vietnam War (Class Time: 50 minutes)



Tell students they will analyze the war's legacy and determine the lasting consequences for both Americans and the Vietnamese in this final day of instruction. They will focus on how the war ended and the long term implications of American intervention in Vietnam. Distribute **The Legacy of the Vietnam War (CWA 4.14)**. In pairs or groups of three, have students review the documents detailing the war's impact on veterans, refugees, and war powers. As they review, have students consider the discussion questions listed on the first page of the handout. Circulate to clarify or explain as necessary.

## Step 8: Final Essay

For the final assignment students will draw upon many of the documents and activities to compose and original analytical essay. **CWA 4.15** contains explicit directions for students, including step-by-step directions to teach students how to develop a thesis, select, organize, and evaluate evidence, writing introductions and conclusions. There is also a sample grading rubric for your consideration. Be sure to emphasize that the goal of the essay is for students to develop an original analytical argument that answers the question: What did the United States lose in Vietnam?



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## Standards

### **Common Core Reading Standards for Literacy in History/Social Studies and/or Writing Standards (Grades 9-12 Students) taught in this unit:**

**RH 1.** Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources, attending to such features as the date and origin of the information.

**RH 2.** Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary of how key events or ideas develop over the course of the text.

**RH3.** Analyze in detail a series of events described in a text; determine whether earlier events caused later ones or simply preceded them.

**RH 4.** Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including vocabulary describing political, social, or economic aspects of history/social science.

**RH 6.** Compare the point of view of two or more authors for how they treat the same or similar topics, including which details they include and emphasize in their respective accounts.

### **Common Core Reading Standards for Literacy in History/Social Studies and/or Writing Standards (Grades 11-12 Students) taught in this unit:**

**RH 1.** Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources, connecting insights gained from specific details to an understanding of the text as a whole.

**RH 2.** Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary that makes clear the relationships among the key details and ideas.

**RH 4.** Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including analyzing how an author uses and refines the meaning of a key term over the course of a text.

**RH 5.** Analyze in detail how a complex primary source is structured, including how key sentences, paragraphs, and larger portions of the text contribute to the whole.

**RH 6.** Evaluate authors' differing points of view on the same historical event or issue by assessing the authors' claims, reasoning, and evidence.

**RH 7.** Integrate multiple sources of information presented in diverse formats and media (e.g. visually, quantitatively, as well as in words) in order to address a question or solve a problem.

**RH 8.** Evaluate an author's premises, claims, and evidence by corroborating or challenging them with other information.

**RH 9.** Integrate information from diverse sources, both primary and secondary, into a coherent understanding of an idea or event, noting discrepancies among sources.

**WHST 1.** Write arguments focused on discipline-specific content.

**WHST 4.** Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

**WHST 7.** Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects to answer a question (including a self-generated question) or solve a problem; narrow or broaden the inquiry when appropriate; synthesize multiple sources on the subject, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation.

**WHST 9.** Draw evidence from informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.

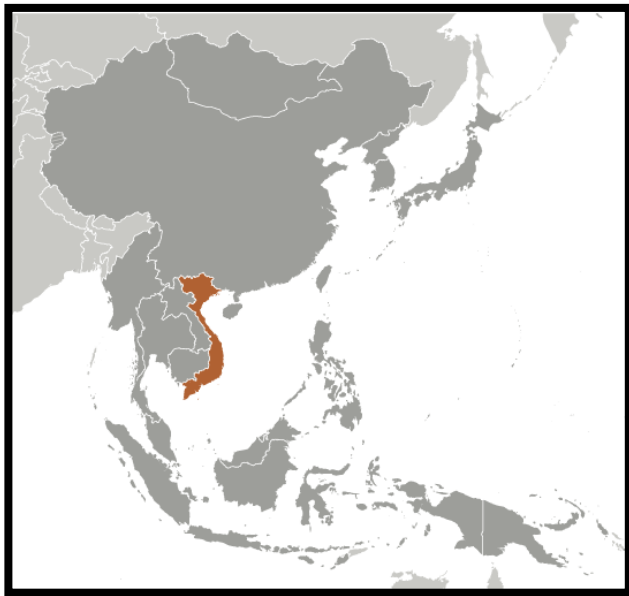


## CWA 4.1 – Origins of the Vietnam War (Page 1 of 6)

Instructions: On each page, first, underline the dates and time markers (for example, "In the same year...") in the text below. Next, write a chronological list of the dates and include a one-sentence description of its importance and answer the questions posed. The first page is done for you.

### Regional History

In ancient history, Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam were connected to one another through the exchange of culture and religion. They also engaged in trade, as well as fought one another over territory. China bordered these three countries on the north. While they traded with China, they each had a history of conflict with China too. For nearly 1000 years, China held power over Vietnam before Vietnam achieved its independence in 939 under the rule of King Ngo Quyen.



Vietnam  
South Asia  
and  
Vietnam  
Detail Map,  
CIA  
Factbook.  
Source:  
Central  
Intelligence  
Agency,  
[https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/maps/vmlar\\_gelocator\\_template.html](https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/maps/vmlar_gelocator_template.html)  
&  
[https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/maps/maptemplate\\_vm.html](https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/maps/maptemplate_vm.html)

List two time markers with explanation (what happened and when):

- *Ancient history: Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam connected through culture & religion; region traded and fought with China*
- *Approximately 200 BC – 939: China controlled by Vietnam*
- *939: Vietnam achieves independence*

## CWA 4.1 – Origins of the Vietnam War (Page 2 of 6)

### French Colonialism

In modern history, many European countries seized areas of Asia and Africa and made them into their colonies. A colony is established when native land or territory is ruled by a distant country. France violently took over Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam in the mid-1800s. By 1893, France re-organized these countries as colonies under one name—“Indochina.” Determined to “civilize” the people of Indochina, the French imposed upon the Southeast Asians Western culture, religion, language, and government. Many endured forced labor in the production of tin, pepper, coal, cotton, rice, and rubber.



*Group of children, with baskets, posed under palm tree, Saigon, South Vietnam, ca. 1890 – 1923. Source: Library of Congress, <http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/98507284/>*

While the primary motivation for colonialism, the system by which colonies are maintained, was economic exploitation, each of the countries within French Indochina experienced colonialism differently. French presence was especially strong in Vietnam where it had set up administrative centers in the South (Cochinchina), Center (Annam), and North (Tonkin). The Vietnamese faced economic oppression, such as high taxes and monopolies on salt and trade. French dominance permeated throughout all of Vietnam’s cultural, educational, and political institutions.

List two time markers with explanation (what happened and when):

What is a colony?

What was the primary motivation for French colonialism in Southeast Asia?

## CWA 4.1 – Origins of the Vietnam War (Page 3 of 6)

### Rebellions and Revolution

From the very beginning, the colonized people wanted to be free of French rule. Over the years, there were many anti-colonial uprisings and rebellions throughout all of Southeast Asia. World War II (1939-1945) was a turning point in the struggle for independence.

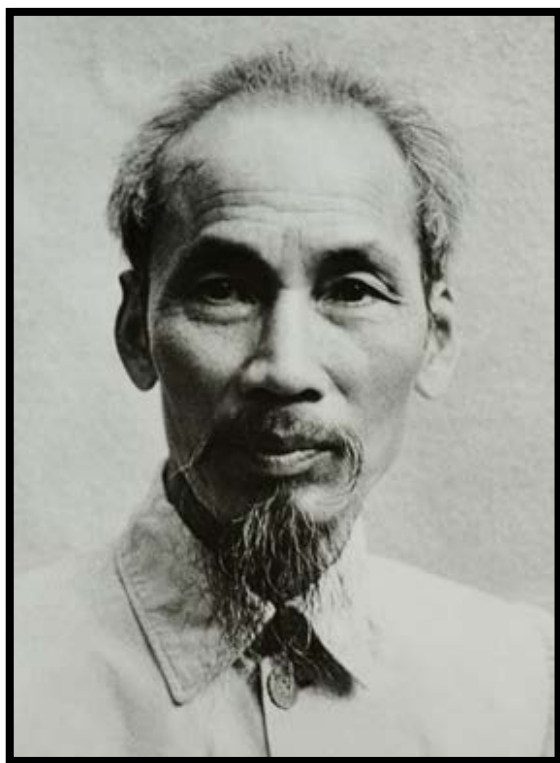
When Germany invaded France in 1940, France was forced to give up control of Indochina to Japan, an ally of Germany. Busy with their war efforts, Japan appointed local government leaders. Taking advantage of French military and political weakness at the time and in protest against Japanese occupation, anti-colonial movements flourished. Seizing on this opportunity, the Viet Minh is formed in 1941, a nationalist movement who called for Vietnamese independence, led by Ho Chi Minh. Japan removed the French from Vietnam in March of 1945. Six months later, the U.S. drops two atomic bombs on Japan, ending WWII, when Japan surrenders to the Allies on August 14. By August 19, Viet Minh revolutionaries seized power in Hanoi, in what becomes known as the August Revolution. On August 25, the emperor of South Vietnam turned over control to the Viet Minh. In the North, Ho Chi Minh declares the establishment of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRV) in September. Despite the August Revolution, Vietnam did not have peace. France returned to re-colonize Vietnam in 1946.



*Three Japanese oilers burning in Camranh Bay, Indochina. TBM's from the US Hornet (CV-12) which delivered the fatal bombs fly overhead, ca. January 12, 1945. Department of Defense. Department of the Navy. Source: National Archives, ARC Identifier: 520865.*

Time Marker	What happened? Why is this important?
1940	
1941	
March, 1945	
August 14, 1945	
August 19, 1945	
August 25, 1945	
September, 1945	
1946	
What was the effect of Japanese surrender on Vietnam?	

## CWA 4.1 – Origins of the Vietnam War (Page 4 of 6)



Ho Chi Minh, 1946. Cropped version Source: Wikipedia Commons, Vietnamese Public Domain,  
[http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Ho\\_Chi\\_Minh\\_1946\\_and\\_signature.jpg](http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Ho_Chi_Minh_1946_and_signature.jpg)

### The Cold War

Unlike WWII, which was fought between the Axis (Germany, Italy, Japan) and the Allies (U.S., Soviet Union, Britain), the Cold War saw the United States and Soviet Union on opposite sides. Both the U.S. and the Soviet Union viewed Vietnam as strategically important. Ho Chi Minh made several requests for U.S. support for Vietnamese independence in the 1940s. He even modeled the Vietnamese Declaration of Independence (September 2, 1945) after America's. However, Ho Chi Minh was a communist and the U.S. and France were long-time allies. France had lent its support of America's Marshall Plan in 1947 to rebuild Europe economically. The United States was committed to this containment policy. France sought and received funds from the U.S. in its campaign to retake Vietnam. In 1950, the U.S. established the U.S. Military Advisory Group-Indochina. In the same year, the Soviet Union and the People's Republic of China officially recognized the DRV and sent aid to Ho Chi Minh. From 1950-52, the U.S. spent \$50 million in military and economic aid to support nation-building and fight the communists in South Vietnam. Elsewhere in Asia, the Korean War was fought from 1950-1953. The U.S. sent troops to fight on behalf of South Korea against communist-led forces in North Korea, which was supported by China. The Korean peace treaty made permanent the division of Korea along the demilitarized zone (DMZ).

Time Marker	What happened? Why is this important?
1940s	
Sept. 2, 1945	
1947	
1950	
1950	
1950-52	
1950-53	
Why did the U.S. refuse to help Ho Chi Minh?	



## CWA 4.1 – Origins of the Vietnam War (Page 5 of 6)

### First Indochina War

From 1946-1954, Southeast Asians fought the First Indochina War in a war of independence from French reoccupation. On May 7, 1954, Ho Chi Minh's forces finally defeated the French in the battle of Dien Bien Phu. The Geneva Accords, the peace treaty, called for the French to withdraw and give independence to Cambodia and Laos. Vietnam was more complicated. The country was divided between North and South at the 17<sup>th</sup> parallel, known as the demilitarized zone (DMZ), until 1956 when reunification would be decided by a presidential election. North Vietnam would be communist, governed by Ho Chi Minh. South Vietnam would be anti-communist. To give South Vietnam international recognition as a new country, the United States, along with France, Great Britain, New Zealand, Australia, the Philippines, Thailand and Pakistan formed the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization, or SEATO, in September 1954; South Vietnam was signed on as a formal member. SEATO existed to prevent the spread of communism in Southeast Asia. The U.S. installed a pro-western leader, Ngo Dinh Diem as the president of the Republic of Vietnam in the South in 1955. The same year, with U.S. assistance, South Vietnam forms the Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN).



*President Dwight D. Eisenhower and Secretary of State John Foster Dulles (from left) greet South Vietnam President Ngo Dinh Diem, Washington National Airport, May 8, 1957. Dept. of Defense, Dept. of the Air Force. Source: National Archives, ARC Identifier: 542189.*

Time Marker	What happened? Why is this important?
1946 - 54	
May 7, 1954	
1954	
1955	
1955	
What did the Geneva Accords mean for Vietnam?	
What was the purpose of SEATO?	



**CWA 4.1 – Origins of the Vietnam War** (Page 6 of 6)

*Vietnam. Vietnamese army personnel training in the jungle, May, 1962. U.S. Dept. of Defense, Department of the Army. Source: National Archives, ARC Identifier: 530607.*

**The Vietnam War**

An election never took place in Vietnam because the two opposing sides—South Vietnam supported by the U.S., and North Vietnam supported by China and Russia—could not agree on the terms of the presidential election. The U.S. believed that Ho Chi Minh would win the election, because of his popularity. North and South Vietnam were positioned to fight a civil war to determine which government would rule post-colonial Vietnam. Both sides built up their armed forces and engaged in battles. Thus began the Second Indochina War, known to Americans as the Vietnam War. It is called the Second Indochina War by historians because fighting also took place in Cambodia and Laos.

Why did the Second Indochina War start in 1956?

Why did the U.S. get involved in this conflict?

Why do historians call it the Second Indochina War?

## CWA 4.2 – Southeast Asia Map

# The Vietnam War



*Map of Vietnam War, Sonali Dujari, for California History-Social Science Project. Copyright © 2013 Regents of the University of California, All Rights Reserved.*

### CWA 4.3 - Why did we fight the Vietnam War?

*Directions: In your groups, you'll review a variety of primary sources from people with their own perspective on the causes of the Vietnam War. For each source, consider both the personal perspective of each author and how that perspective has shaped their argument or actions. Finally, speculate how each author would answer the question: Why did we fight the Vietnam War?*

<i>Author and Title of Source</i>	<i>Personal information about author – who was he? What do we need to know about his life to understand his perspective?</i>	<i>Major points or argument of source</i>	<i>How would the author answer the question "Why did we fight the Vietnam War?"</i>
<i>Ho Chi Minh; Vietnamese Declaration of Independence</i>			
<i>John Foster Dulles, Opposition to the Spread of Communism Speech</i>			
<i>Dwight D. Eisenhower, Interview with Copley Press</i>			
<i>Ngo Dinh Diem, letter to President Kennedy</i>			

## CWA 4.3.1 - Why did we fight the Vietnam War? (Vietnamese Dec. of Independence)

*Editor's Note: On September 2, 1945, Ho Chi Minh delivered the Declaration of Independence of Vietnam in Hanoi. An excerpt follows:*



*Ho Chi Minh, 1946. Cropped version*  
Source: Wikipedia Commons,  
Vietnamese Public Domain,  
[http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/  
File:Ho\\_Chi\\_Minh\\_1946\\_and\\_signatur  
e.ina](http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Ho_Chi_Minh_1946_and_signature.ina)

"All men are created equal. They are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights; among these are Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness."

This immortal statement was made in the Declaration of Independence of the United States of America in 1776. In a broader sense, this means: All the peoples on the earth are equal from birth, all the peoples have a right to live, to be happy and free...

...Nevertheless, for more than eighty years, the French imperialists, abusing the standard of Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity, have violated our Fatherland and oppressed our fellow citizens. They have acted contrary to the ideals of humanity and justice.

In the field of politics, they have deprived our people of every democratic liberty.

They have enforced inhuman laws; they have set up three distinct political regimes in the North, the Center, and the South of Vietnam in order to wreck our national unity and prevent our people from being united.

They have built more prisons than schools. They have mercilessly slain our patriots; they have drowned our uprisings in rivers of blood....

In the field of economics, they have fleeced us to the backbone, impoverished our people, and devastated our land.

They have robbed us of our rice fields, our mines, our forests, and our raw materials. They have monopolized the issuing of banknotes and the export trade.

They have invented numerous unjustifiable taxes and reduced our people, especially our peasantry, to a state of extreme poverty.

They have hampered the prospering of our national bourgeoisie; they have mercilessly exploited our workers... "

Source: Ho Chi Minh, "Declaration of Independence of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam," *Selected Writings* (Hanoi: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1977), pp. 5356.



### CWA 4.3.2 - Why did we fight the Vietnam War? (Dulles' Speech)

*Editor's note: In the spring of 1954, as the French defeat in Indochina became more certain, leading government officials such as Secretary of State John Foster Dulles and Vice-President Richard Nixon campaigned for the United States to take France's place. In a speech that Secretary of State Dulles made, he argued that to save the "free world" from the spread of Communism, US intervention might be necessary, especially because, in the words of Vice-President, the "Vietnamese lack the ability to conduct a war by themselves or govern themselves."*



*John Foster Dulles Speaking at a Podium, Walter K. Leffler, Photographer, April 8, 1958.*

*Source: Library of Congress,  
<http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/2011660831/>*

*...Under the conditions of today, the imposition on Southeast Asia of the political system of Communist Russia and its Chinese Communist ally, by whatever means, must be a grave threat to the whole free community. The United States feels that that possibility should not be passively accepted but should be met by united action. This might involve serious risks. But these risks are far less than those that will face us a few years from now if we dare not be resolute today...*

*Source: John Foster Dulles, "Opposition to the Spread of Communism By Whatever Means" Speech to the Overseas Press Club, New York, March 29, 1954, in Department of State Bulletin, April 12, 1954, p. 539, in Marvin E. Gettleman et al. (eds.), Vietnam and America (New York: Grove Press), 1995, p. 51-52.*



### CWA 4.3.3 - Why did we fight the Vietnam War? (Eisenhower Interview)

*Editor's note: This question and answer exchange is from Robert Richards of Copley Press asking President Eisenhower a question during the press conference on April 7, 1954. The president commented frankly about the significance of Indochina, the colonial name of Vietnam.*

**Q: Robert Richards, Copley Press:**

Mr. President, would you mind commenting on the strategic importance of Indochina to the free world? I think there has been, across the country, some lack of understanding on just what it means to us.

**A: The President:**

You have, of course, both the specific and the general when you talk about such things. First of all, you have the specific value of a locality in its production of materials that the world needs.

Then you have the possibility that many human beings pass under a dictatorship that is inimical to the free world.

Finally, you have broader considerations that might follow what you would call the "falling domino" principle. You have a row of dominoes set up, you knock over the first one, and what will happen to the last one is the certainty that it will go over very quickly. So you could have a beginning of a disintegration that would have the most profound influences.



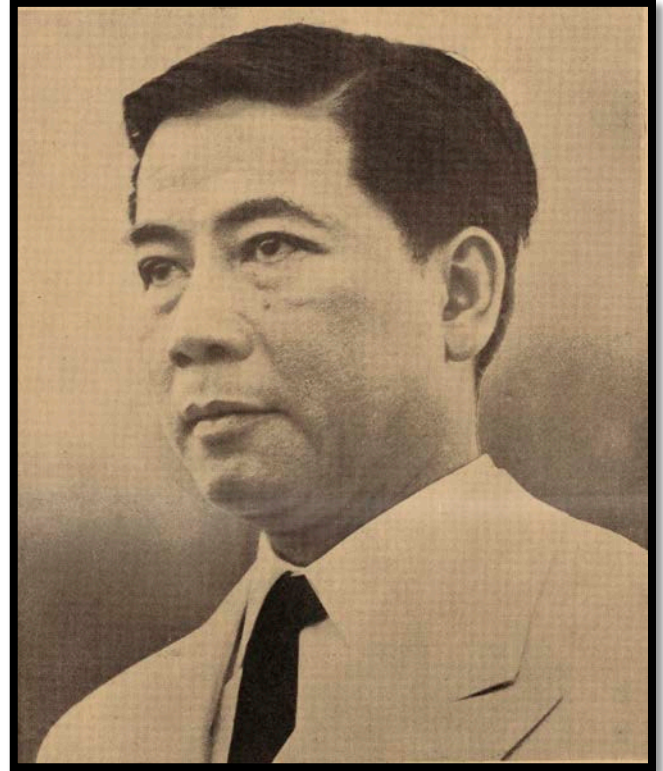
*Dwight D. Eisenhower, half-length portrait, facing slightly right, holding glasses / photograph by the New York Times, New York, U.S.A., ca 1954.*

*Source: Library of Congress,  
<http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/91482942/>*

*Source: President Eisenhower's News Conference, April 7, 1954, Public Papers of the Presidents, 1954, p. 382  
The Pentagon Papers, Gravel Edition, Vol. 1 (Boston: Beacon Press, 1971), p. 597-8  
<https://www.mtholyoke.edu/acad/intrel/pentagon/ps11.htm>*

#### CWA 4.3.4 - Why did we fight the Vietnam War? (Diem's Letter)

*Editor's Note: The 1954 Geneva Accords, the peace treaty ending French colonialism in Southeast Asia, divided Vietnam between North and South. Reunification would depend on the outcome of a presidential election to be held in 1956. However, realizing Ho Chi Minh's popularity, the United States and President Ngo Dinh Diem, the leader of South Vietnam, refused to hold the elections. In this letter addressed to President John F. Kennedy, President Diem thanks and seeks additional support from the United States.*



*Resident DIEM Small Poster, 11/25/1954. Source: National Archives, ARC Identifier 6949135*

December 7, 1961  
Dear Mr. President,

Since its birth, more than six years ago, the Republic of Vietnam has enjoyed the close friendship and cooperation of the United States of America...

....For more than 2,000 years my people have lived and built, fought and died in this land. We have not always been free. Indeed, much of our history and many of its proudest moments have risen from conquest by foreign powers and our struggle against great odds to regain or defend our precious independence. But it is not only our freedom which is at stake today, it is our national identity. For, if we lose this war, our people will be swallowed by the Communist bloc, all our proud heritage will be blotted out by the "Socialist society" and Vietnam will leave the pages of history. We will lose our national soul.

*Source: Marvin E. Gettleman, Jane Franklin, Marilyn Young, and H. Bruce Franklin, eds., Vietnam and America: The Most Comprehensive Documented History of the Vietnam War (New York: Grove Press, 1995), 162.*

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## CWA 4.4 – Origins of the Vietnam War Quiz

1. Organize the following events in the correct chronological order, marking the earliest event with a "1":
  - ☐ Japan surrenders to the Allies
  - ☐ China controls Vietnam
  - ☐ WWII begins
  - ☐ Vietnam first becomes a colony of France
  - ☐ Viet Minh established, led by Ho Chi Minh
  - ☐ Declaration of Independence of Vietnam released
  - ☐ Vietnam divided at the 17<sup>th</sup> Parallel
  - ☐ Ho Chi Minh's forces defeated the French at Dien Bien Phu.
2. Mark each of the following as either true or false. Correct all false statements.
  - ☐ Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam were all once known as Indochina.
  - ☐ Indochina was a colony of the United States in the 1800s.
  - ☐ The Japanese removed the French from Vietnam during WWII.
  - ☐ Ngo Dinh Diem led the Viet Minh.
  - ☐ Ho Chi Minh asked the U.S. for help in his fight against communism.
  - ☐ The Second Indochina War started after Ho Chi Minh won the 1956 election to reunify Vietnam.
  - ☐ SEATO was created to expand communism in Asia.
  - ☐ China and the Soviet Union supported North Vietnam.
3. Consider the positions taken by Ho Chi Minh, Ngo Dinh Diem, John Foster Dulles, and Dwight D. Eisenhower. Which of the following statements best represents each of their arguments?
  - ☐ Communism must be fought in Vietnam so that it doesn't spread to the rest of Asia.
  - ☐ We must fight communism so that Vietnam doesn't lose its national identity.
  - ☐ Colonial rule has impoverished Vietnam and taken away individual liberty.
  - ☐ If the U.S. doesn't fight communism in Vietnam, it will pose a threat to our own national security.

## CWA 4.5 – The Tonkin Gulf Resolution (Page 1 of 11)

*Directions: The United States first became involved in Vietnam in the early years of the Cold War, but significant military involvement didn't begin until 1964, following the passage of the Tonkin Gulf Resolution by Congress. The resolution, which gave President Lyndon Johnson the power to wage war against communist North Vietnam, came as a result of a controversial series of incidents in the Gulf of Tonkin, off the northeastern coast of North Vietnam. To better understand how the US went from South Vietnam's sponsor to fighting a war, first read about the events of early August, 1964, then listen to taped phone conversations between Johnson and Defense Secretary Robert McNamara. Finally, in your groups, prepare an investigative editorial report, that answers the following: Why did the U.S. begin fighting the Vietnam War in 1964? Was the fighting justified?*



Photo #: NH 95611 North Vietnamese motor torpedo boats attacking USS Maddox, 2 Aug. 1964  
Photo #: NH 95611, Tonkin Gulf Incident, August 1964, Source: Official U.S. Navy Photograph, Naval History & Heritage Command, <http://www.history.navy.mil/photos/sh-usn/usnsh-m/dd731-k.htm>

**Historical Context, Part 1:** On August 2, 1964, the U.S. Maddox was collecting evidence while patrolling in international waters in the Gulf of Tonkin, off the eastern boarder of North Vietnam. Also in the Gulf were South Vietnamese gunboats, which had just launched a clandestine raid on the North Vietnamese coastline as part of Operations Plan (OPLAN) - 34A, a covert intelligence operation coordinated by the United States. The Maddox was fired upon by North Vietnamese torpedo boats. In the battle that followed, two DRV (North Vietnamese) ships were sunk, but the Maddox sustained no losses. When word reached Washington, President Johnson and

Defense Secretary Robert McNamara, along with other senior advisors began to discuss how the US should respond and what information should be shared with Congress and the public at large about the incident.

On August 3, at 10:30 Washington time, McNamara and Johnson discussed the incident on the phone. As you listen to their discussion, and follow along using the transcript below, consider the following questions to discuss with your group:

1. What did McNamara and Johnson want Congress and the public to know about what happened in the Gulf of Tonkin on August 2?
2. Why do you think Johnson and McNamara were so worried about controlling what the public heard about the incident?

**\*\*Note:** LBJ and McNamara reference a number of congressional leaders, including Speaker of the House John McCormick, Senate Majority Leader Mike Mansfield, and Minority Leader Everett Dirksen, as well as U.S. Secretary of State Dean Rusk. At the end of the call, they mention Goldwater, in reference to Barry Goldwater, the conservative Republican who challenged Johnson in the 1964 presidential election, George Ball, an American diplomat who opposed the U.S.' increasing involvement in Vietnam, George Reedy, Johnson's Press Secretary, and Walter Jenkins, a longtime Johnson aide.



## CWA 4.5 – The Tonkin Gulf Resolution (Page 2 of 11)

### Clip 1: Telephone conversation between President Lyndon Johnson and Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara, August 3, 1964, 10:30 EST.\*

\*Source for transcript and audio recording: the National Security Archive at George Washington University:

<http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB132/tapes.htm>

President Lyndon B. Johnson: Now I wonder if you don't think it'd be wise for you and Rusk to get Mac, uh, the Speaker and Mansfield to call a group of fifteen to twenty people together eh from the Armed Services and Foreign Relations to tell them what happened.

A good many of them are saying to me

Secretary Robert McNamara: Right. I've been thinking about this myself, and I thought that uh

President Johnson: They're going to start an investigation

Secretary McNamara: Yeah.

President Johnson: if you don't.

Secretary McNamara: Yeah.

President Johnson: And you got Dirksen up there

Secretary McNamara: Yeah

President Johnson: and he's saying you've got to study it further, and say to Mansfield, "Now the President wants us, you, to get the proper people." And we come in and you say, "They fired at us. We responded immediately. And we took out one of their boats and put the other two running. And we kept our..., we're puttin' our boats right there, and we're not running on in."

Secretary McNamara: And it's hard to destroy.

President Johnson: That's right

Secretary McNamara: Right. And we're going to, and I think I should also, or we should also at that time, Mr. President, explain this Op Plan 34-A, these covert operations. There's no question but what that had bearing on. And on Friday night, as you probably know, we had four TP [McNamara means PT] boats from Vietnam manned by Vietnamese or other nationals, attack two islands. And we expended, oh, a thousand rounds of ammunition of one kind or another against them. We probably shot up a radar station and a few other miscellaneous buildings. And following twenty-four hours after that, with this destroyer in that same area, undoubtedly led them to connect the two events.

President Johnson: Well say that to Dirksen.

Secretary McNamara: That's what I know he'll like.

President Johnson: You notice Dirksen says this morning, that "we got to reassess the situation, do something about it." I'd tell him that we're doing what he's talking about.

Secretary McNamara: Well, I, I was, I was thinking doing this myself in personal visits. But I think your thought is better. We'll get the group together. You want us to do it at the White House or would you rather do it at State or Defense?



*Lyndon B. Johnson, head-and-shoulders portrait, facing left, June, 1964.*

*Source: Library of Congress,  
<http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/96522661>*



## CWA 4.5 – The Tonkin Gulf Resolution (Page 3 of 11)

President Johnson: I believe it'd be better to do it uh up on the Hill.

Secretary McNamara: All right.

President Johnson: I believe it'd be better if you say to Mansfield, "You call"

Secretary McNamara: Yup

President Johnson: Foreign Relations

Secretary McNamara: Yup, OK.

President Johnson: Armed Services

Secretary McNamara: OK. OK.

President Johnson: and get Speaker to do it over on his side [i.e., within the House of Representatives, as opposed to the Senate].

Secretary McNamara: We'll do it

President Johnson: And just say it's very, I'd tell him awfully quiet, though, so they won't go in and be making a bunch of speeches. And tell Rusk that a, that's my idea.

Secretary McNamara: Great. .

President Johnson: And he's in New York, so I don't know whether he's got back.

Secretary McNamara: Well I just talked to George Ball a few minutes ago, and I'll have George arrange it. Or at least I'll tell him that, and then I'll call the Speaker and Mansfield himself.

President Johnson: Now I wish that uh you'd give me some guidance on what we ought to say. I want to leave an impression on the background in the people we talk to over here that we're gonna be firm as hell without saying something that's dangerous. Now what do you think? Uh, uh, the people that are calling me up, I just talked to a New York banker, I just talked to a fellow in Texas, they all feel that the Navy responded wonderfully and that's good. But they want to be damned sure I don't pull 'em out and run, and they want to be damned sure that we're firm. That's what all the country wants because Goldwater's raising so much hell about how he's gonna blow 'em off the moon, and they say that we oughten to do anything that the national interest doesn't require. But we sure oughta always leave the impression that if you shoot at us, you're going to get hit.

Secretary McNamara: Well I think you would want to instruct George Reedy this morning at his news conference to say that you you personally have ordered the, the Navy to carry on the routine patrols uh off the coast of North Vietnam, uh to add an additional destroyer to the one that has been carrying on the patrols, to provide an air cap, and to issue instructions to the commanders to destroy any uh force that attacks our force in international waters.

President Johnson: [speaks over McNamara] Bob, if you don't mind,

Secretary McNamara: . . . I think that's the way...

President Johnson: If you don't mind, call Walter Jenkins and tell him

Secretary McNamara: Sure

President Johnson: that you want to dictate this to me

Secretary McNamara: I'll do it right now

President Johnson: to give to my people or George Reedy because I'm over at the Mansion with some folks here

Secretary McNamara: I'll do it right now.

President Johnson: OK. Right



*Advisors; Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara, 02/08/1968, President Johnson White House Photographs. Source: National Archives, ARC Identifier # 192540.*

## CWA 4.5 – The Tonkin Gulf Resolution (Page 4 of 11)

### Clip 2: Telephone conversation between President Lyndon Johnson and Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara, August 3, 1964, 1:21 pm EST.

\*Source for transcript and audio recording: the National Security Archive at George Washington University:  
<http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB132/tapes.htm>



Sec. of Defense Robert McNamara pointing to a map of Vietnam at a press conference, Marion S. Trikosko, Photographer, US News & World Report Magazine Photograph, April 26, 1965. Source: Library of Congress, <http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/2004666288/>

President Lyndon B. Johnson: Yes?

Secretary Robert McNamara: Mr. President, I set up those meetings for this afternoon with the Senate and House leaders and I thought if it was agreeable with you, I would say to them that some months ago you asked us to be prepared for any eventuality in the Southeast Asia area and as a result of that we have prepared and just completed in great detail target analyses of the targets of North Vietnam. As a matter of fact in ten minutes I'm going over with the Chiefs [the Joint Chiefs of Staff] the final work on this. We have pictures, analyses, numbers of sorties, bomb loadings, everything prepared for all the target systems of North Vietnam, and I would describe this to the the leaders, simply indicating your desire that we be fully prepared for whatever may develop. And furthermore we've prepared detailed

movement studies of any contingency forces required, air squadrons, et cetera.

President Johnson: So obviously now, if you go put this in the paper...

Secretary McNamara: Yeah, and I, I'm going to tell 'em that

President Johnson: and your enemy reads about it then he thinks we're already taking off and obviously you've got us in a war. But I've got to be candid with you and I want to tell you the truth.

Secretary McNamara: Exactly. I was going to start my remarks by that, but be damn sure it doesn't, or try to be sure it doesn't get in the paper.

President Johnson: And uh, uh I think it's right, and I, I will tell 'em that yesterday morning that uh, uh they reported the *Maddox* incident and uh during the day yesterday we sent we sent out this order and read them the statement I made this morning.

Secretary McNamara: Right, I'll do that.

President Johnson: And, so that Dirksen doesn't think that we have to wait on him, and that we...

Secretary McNamara: Yeah.

President Johnson: did go out when.

Secretary McNamara: Yes, I'll tell them the order went out yesterday and you were simply repeating it to the press this morning.

President Johnson: OK.

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## CWA 4.5 – The Tonkin Gulf Resolution (Page 5 of 11)

Historical Context, Part 2: Two days later, on August 4, the *Maddox*, and another US ship, the *C. Turner Joy*, were in the Gulf of Tonkin together. Both ships were on high alert, following the August 2 attack. Both ships recorded a number of sonar and radar signals they assumed to be from hostile DRV torpedo boats. In addition, naval personnel confused North Vietnamese radio signals actually sent on August 2 as new orders from Hanoi to attack the American ships. In this confusion, the ships radioed to Washington that they were under attack. The local commander, Captain John D. Herrick, quickly questioned this initial report, but the head of the Pacific fleet and Washington moved forward as if the initial confused reports were accurate.

On August 4, at 9:43 am Washington time, McNamara and Johnson discussed the incident on the phone. As you listen to their discussion, and follow along using the transcript below, consider the following questions to discuss with your group:

1. Why did President Johnson and Secretary McNamara believe the early reports which erroneously claimed that the U.S. was attacked by North Vietnam on August 4?

### **Clip 3: Telephone conversation between President Lyndon Johnson and Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara, August 4, 1964, 9:43 am EST.\***

*\*Source for transcript and audio recording: the National Security Archive at George Washington University: <http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB132/tapes.htm>*

Male Voice: Yes, sir. Off limits.

President Lyndon B. Johnson: Hello?

Female Voice: Secretary Robert McNamara's calling you again, sir. "0"

Secretary Robert McNamara: Mr. President, uh, General Wheeler and I are sitting here together. We just received a cable from Admiral Sharp [Ulysses S. Grant Sharp Jr. was the American commander for the Pacific] making three recommendations with respect to our destroyer tracks and enemy action responses. And I wanted to mention them to you with a recommendation. I discussed this with Dean Rusk [secretary of state] and he and I are in agreement on the recommendations. Sharp recommends first that the uh, the track of the destroyer be shifted from eleven miles offshore to eight miles offshore. This makes no sense to us; we would recommend against it. His purpose, by shifting the track, is simply to make clear that we believe the twelve-mile limit is not an effective limit on us. We don't, we think we do that adequately by sailing at eleven miles as opposed to eight. Secondly, Sharp recommends that we authorize the task

President Johnson: What reason does he give for his eight?

Secretary McNamara: Simply that it more clearly indicates our, our refusal to accept a twelve-mile restriction. We think we've clearly indicated our refusal to accept a twelve-mile restriction with the, the eleven-mile limit; we see no need to change the track at this time.

President Johnson: Why, what, what other objections do you have?

Secretary McNamara: It, it, uh, changes a program that that uh shouldn't be changed frequently. These orders are very precise; the tracks are laid down very clearly; they go through the three command channels to get out there; this ship is allegedly uh to be attacked tonight-we don't like to see a change in operation plan of this kind at this time. And we don't think it achieves any any uh international purpose, so no, certainly no military

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## CWA 4.5 – The Tonkin Gulf Resolution (Page 6 of 11)

McNamara (continued): purpose is served by it.

President Johnson: All right.

Secretary McNamara: Secondly, he recommends that the task force commander be authorized to pursue the attacking vessels in the event he is attacked and destroy their bases. In this case, it would be

President Johnson: Wait just a minute. [Speaking away from the telephone: I've got a call. I can't hear him. I've got a real important thing... ]. Go ahead, Mac.

Secretary McNamara: Secondly, he recommends that the task force commander be authorized to pursue any attacker and destroy the base of the attacker. In this instance, if he were attacked by patrol boats, it would mean that he would pursue the patrol craft into the shore line, uh identify the base of the patrol craft and destroy that base. Now this is an action that we might well wish to consider after the second attack. But I think it would be inappropriate, and General Wheeler agrees, and Dean Rusk agrees, inappropriate to provide the task force commander that authority. There will be ample time for us, after a second attack, to bring this problem to your attention, and you can then decide how far you wish to pursue the attacker into his base area.

President Johnson: What objections do you have to pursuing it?

Secretary McNamara: With only the objection that if we give such authority, you have, in a sense, lost control of, of the degree of our uh response to the North Vietnamese. If you don't op, exactly what bases will be attacked, where they are in relation to population centers, how much force will be applied to attack them, when it will occur. I, I personally would recommend to you, after a second attack on our ships, that we do retaliate against the coast of North Vietnam some way or other. And we'll be prepared

President Johnson: **What I was thinking about when I was eating breakfast, but I couldn't talk it-I was thinking that it looks to me like the weakness of our position is that, uh, we respond only to an action and we don't have any of our own. But when they, when they move on us, and they shoot at us, I think we not only ought to shoot at them, but almost simultaneously, uh, uh, pull one of these things that you've, you've been doing**

Secretary McNamara: Right.

President Johnson: **on one of their bridges or something.**

Secretary McNamara: Exactly. I, I quite agree with you, Mr. President. And I'm not, not sure that the response ought to be as Admiral Sharp suggests

President Johnson: Well me not, I'm not either, I'm not either. I don't know, unless I knew what base it was

Secretary McNamara: Yes.

President Johnson: and what is compelled, but I wish we could have something that we already picked out, and uh

Secretary McNamara: We'll see

President Johnson: and just hit about three of them damned quick. Right after

Secretary McNamara: **We will have that, and, and I, I've talked to Mac Bundy [national security adviser] a moment ago and told him that I thought that was the most important subject we should consider today, and, and be prepared to recommend to you a response, a retaliation move against North Vietnam in the event this attack takes place within the next six to nine hours. And we**

President Johnson: All right. Now we better do that at lunch. There's some things I don't want to go in with these other, I want to keep this as close as I can. So let's just try to keep it to the two.



## CWA 4.5 – The Tonkin Gulf Resolution (Page 7 of 11)

Secretary McNamara: I, I

President Johnson: three...

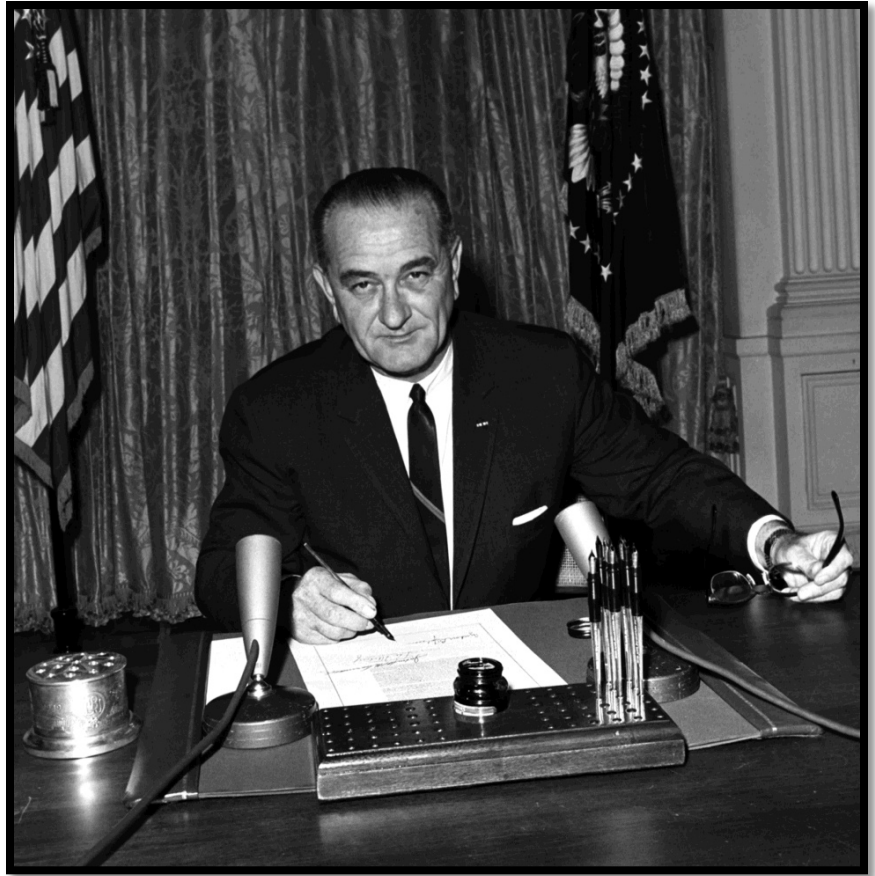
Secretary McNamara: I will be prepared to do so at lunch.

President Johnson: All right.

Secretary McNamara: Now, thirdly, Sharp recommends that, that, uh, the, uh, task force commander be authorized to engage in hot pursuit beyond the eleven-mile limit in as far as the three-mile limit, which we [i.e., the United States] accept as the definition of territorial waters. At present the instructions to the commander are: do not pursue an attacker, uh, closer to shore than eleven miles. Uh, Sharp recommends that that eleven mile limit be shifted to three miles. I've talked to Dean about this; he agrees, uh, as far as air pursuit is concerned. Pursue by air as close as three miles to shore. Do not pursue by sea closer than eleven miles. Uh, his reason for differentiating sea from air is that we can always argue that the, uh, the uh, air, uh, uh, was further out than three miles and he is concerned about taking the ships in as close as three miles to shore. I'm willing to accept his, his point for a different reason, however. I don't think ship pursuit uh, between eleven miles and three miles, would be effective anyhow because our ships travel at about twenty-seven knots, and these patrol boats travel at fifty knots, and the possibility of a ship being effective in that eleven to three mile area is not very great. The air power is likely the most effective power anyhow. And I would, therefore, recommend that we accept Sharp's recommendation but limit it to air.

President Johnson: All right. OK.

Secretary McNamara: Fine.



*President Lyndon B. Johnson signs (Gulf of Tonkin) resolution, August 10, 1964, Official White House Photo. Source: Lyndon Baines Johnson Presidential Library, Serial # 313-4-WH64*



## CWA 4.5 – The Tonkin Gulf Resolution (Page 8 of 11)

### Report on the Gulf of Tonkin Incident (August 4, 1964)\* Lyndon Baines Johnson

\*Source for transcript and video recording: Miller Center of Public Affairs at the University of Virginia and the Lyndon Baines Johnson Presidential Library (<http://millercenter.org/president/speeches/detail/3998>)

Directions: Despite questions about the accuracy of early reports detailing a second attack in the Gulf of Tonkin, President Johnson addressed the nation late on the night of August 4. As you watch his address (and read along using the transcript below), be prepared to discuss the following with your group:

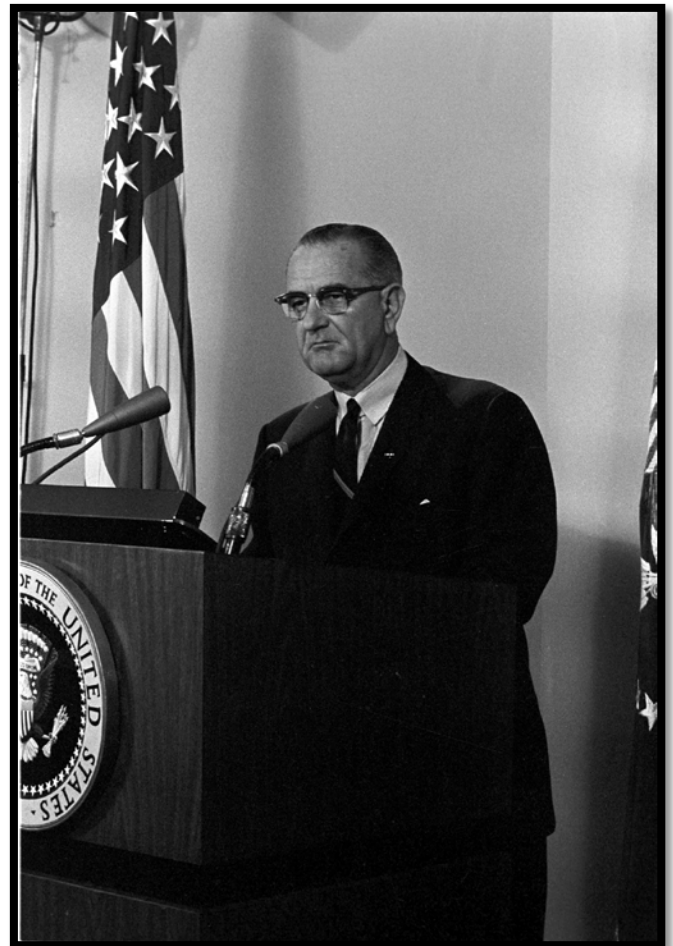
- What actually happened in the Gulf of Tonkin on August 2? On August 4?
- What does LBJ say happened in the Gulf? Is this report accurate? Why or why not?
- Consider Johnson's argument that military action will promote peace and freedom in Southeast Asia. Why does Johnson use this language and what does that reasoning have to do with American efforts to contain communism?

My fellow Americans:

As President and Commander in Chief, it is my duty to the American people to report that renewed hostile actions against United States ships on the high seas in the Gulf of Tonkin have today required me to order the military forces of the United States to take action in reply.

The initial attack on the destroyer 'Maddox, on August 2, was repeated today by a number of hostile vessels attacking two U.S. destroyers with torpedoes. The destroyers and supporting aircraft acted at once on the orders I gave after the initial act of aggression. We believe at least two of the attacking boats were sunk. There were no U.S. losses.

The performance of commanders and crews in this engagement is in the highest tradition of the United States Navy. But repeated acts of violence against the Armed Forces of the United States must be met not only with alert defense, but with positive reply. That reply is being given as I speak to you tonight. Air action is now in execution against gunboats and certain supporting facilities in North Viet-Nam which have been used in these hostile operations.



*Photograph of President Lyndon B. Johnson's Midnight Address on Second Gulf of Tonkin Incident, 08/04/1964, White House Photo Collection. Source: LBJ Presidential Library, National Archives, ARC Identifier 192482.*

## CWA 4.5 – The Tonkin Gulf Resolution (Page 9 of 11)



*President Lyndon B. Johnson signs (Gulf of Tonkin) resolution. White House Photo Collection, August 10, 1964. Source: LBJ Presidential Library, Serial # 313-3-WH64*

In the larger sense this new act of aggression, aimed directly at our own forces, again brings home to all of us in the United States the importance of the struggle for peace and security in southeast Asia. Aggression by terror against the peaceful villagers of South Viet-Nam has now been joined by open aggression on the high seas against the United States of America.

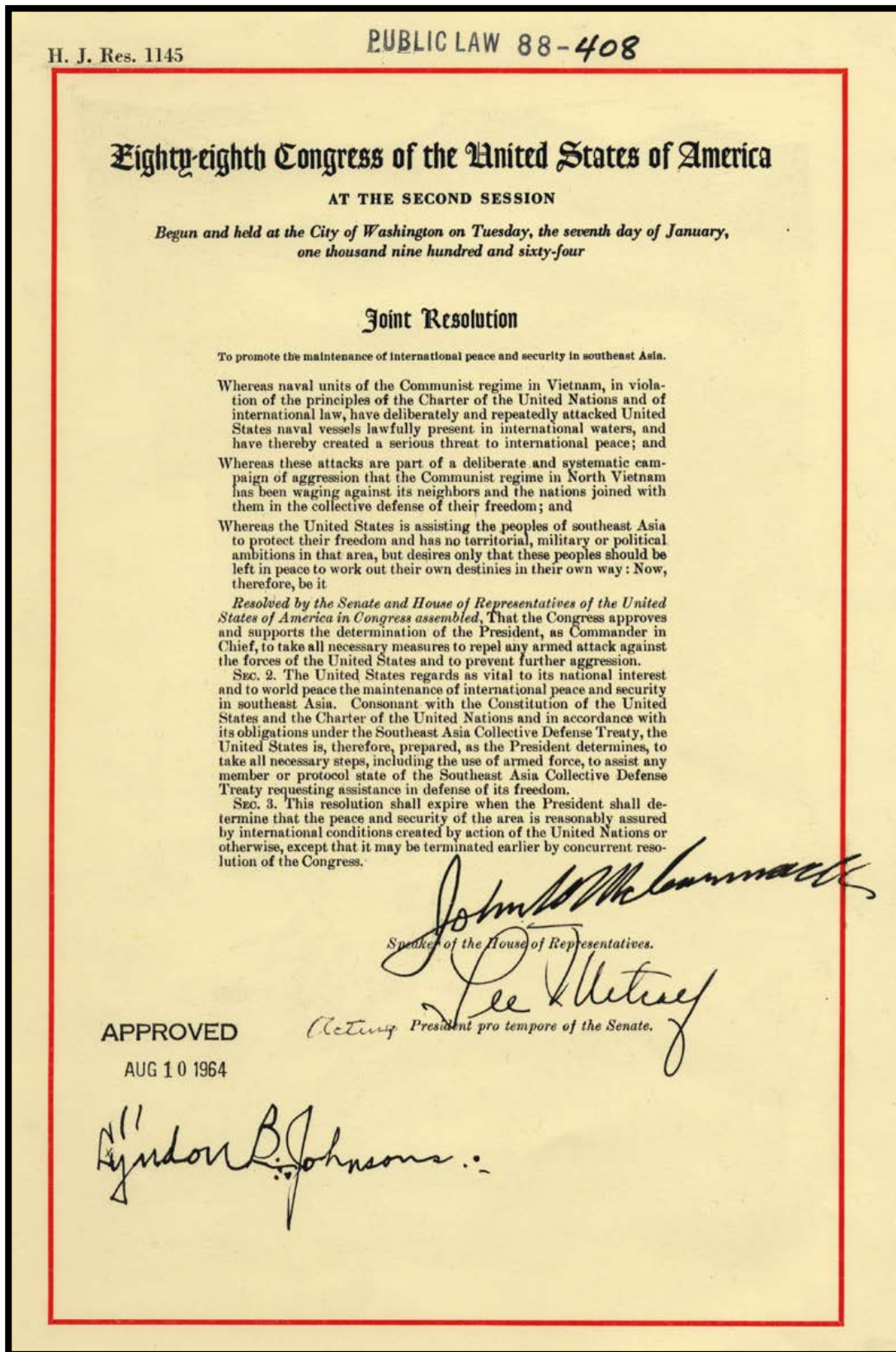
The determination of all Americans to carry out our full commitment to the people and to the government of South Viet-Nam will be redoubled by this outrage. Yet our response, for the present, will be limited and fitting. We Americans know, although others appear to forget, the risks of spreading conflict. We still seek no wider war.

I have instructed the Secretary of State to make this position totally clear to friends and to adversaries and, indeed, to all. I have instructed Ambassador Stevenson to raise this matter immediately and urgently before the Security Council of the United Nations. Finally, I have today met with the leaders of both parties in the Congress of the United States and I have informed them that I shall immediately request the Congress to pass a resolution making it clear that our Government is united in its determination to take all necessary measures in support of freedom and in defense of peace in southeast Asia.

I have been given encouraging assurance by these leaders of both parties that such a resolution will be promptly introduced, freely and expeditiously debated, and passed with overwhelming support. And just a few minutes ago I was able to reach Senator Goldwater and I am glad to say that he has expressed his support of the statement that I am making to you tonight.

It is a solemn responsibility to have to order even limited military action by forces whose overall strength is as vast and as awesome as those of the United States of America, but it is my considered conviction, shared throughout your Government, that firmness in the right is indispensable today for peace; that firmness will always be measured. Its mission is peace.

CWA 4.5 – The Tonkin Gulf Resolution (Page 10 of 11)



Joint Resolution for the Maintenance of Peace and Security in Southeast Asia, 08/10/1964. Source: National Archives, ARC Identifier 2803448.



## CWA 4.6 – Vietnam Troop Escalation

*Context:* Following the passage of the Tonkin Gulf Resolution in 1964, the U.S. began its military intervention in Vietnam in earnest. In the years that followed, the American military presence grew considerably. As detailed in the chart below, troop levels increased under both Republican and Democratic administrations – reaching their highest number in 1968, when more than 500,000 American troops were serving in Vietnam.

Administration	Date	Military Forces, Total
Kennedy (Democrat)	1961	3,200
Kennedy	1962	11,300
Kennedy	1963	16,300
Johnson (Democrat)	1964	23,300
Johnson	1965	184,300
Johnson	1966	385,300
Johnson	1967	485,600
Johnson	1968	536,100
Nixon (Republican)	1969	475,200
Nixon	1970	334,600
Nixon	1971	156,800
Nixon	1972	24,200

*Source:* Data in this chart is taken from two tables printed in the National Defense and Veterans Affairs section of two editions of the US Census Statistical Abstract of the United States, 1967 (table # 372) and 1973 (table #428). The U.S. Census cites Selected Manpower Statistics from the U.S. Department of Defense, Office of the Secretary as the source for their tables.

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## CWA 4.7 – Who Was Responsible? (Page 1 of 2)

*Directions:* Using **CWA 4.6 (Vietnam Troop Escalation)**, your notes from **CWA 4.1 (Origins of the Cold War)**, the primary sources from **CWA 4.3 (Why Did We Fight the Vietnam War?)**, and the historical context, phone transcripts, Johnson's address, the Tonkin Gulf Resolution passed by Congress, and your discussion notes from **CWA 4.5 (The Tonkin Gulf Resolution)**, consider the following question: *Who was most responsible for the United States' involvement in the Vietnam War?*

In your groups, you'll need to first decide who you believe was most responsible – President Johnson? Congress? Defense Secretary McNamara? President Kennedy, Eisenhower, or Nixon? The North Vietnamese? American military or intelligence leaders? The American public? Someone else? Second, you'll need to select specific pieces of evidence from your notes and the primary and secondary sources we've reviewed. Third, decide how to present your answer to this question: through a written editorial, a political cartoon, or an oral and /or multimedia presentation. Finally, you'll present your argument to the class, prepared to defend your interpretation with evidence and reason.

No matter what format you choose, keep in mind that **each presentation must include the following:**

- **A thesis** – a one-sentence answer to the question: Who was most responsible for the Vietnam War?
- **Specific evidence** that directly supports the thesis: quotes, statistics, actions, policy decisions, etc. that provide explicit support for your argument. For example, if you believe that President Johnson was most responsible for the U.S.' involvement, you would want to include specific quotes and actions that he took to support your argument.
- **Analysis** which links the evidence to the thesis and considers the overall significance of your position. For example, if you believe that Congress was most responsible, you could reference the Tonkin Gulf resolution, and then discuss how that resolution gave away their war powers to the President, making it easier to wage war.
- A **title** that summarizes your thesis in a clever and engaging way.
- **Citations** – for each quote, statistic, or image you use to support your argument, make sure you detail the source for the information.
- **Full group participation** – the work of each member of the group should be documented in order for all members of the group to receive full credit.

Additional considerations:

- For **political cartoons**, make sure that your thesis is quickly apparent to the viewer, that you reference specific evidence in a creative and artistically appropriate fashion, and that you include a separate 100-150 word explanation of your cartoon.
- For **written editorials**, please note that your essays should be 350-500 words in length, typed, double-spaced.
- For **oral or multimedia presentations**, prepare two to three minutes of presentation, and include relevant images, video, and audio recordings.



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*Directions:* with your group, attach answers to questions one and two below. Turn this sheet in just before you give your presentation.

1. **Thesis** – a one-sentence answer to the question: Who was most responsible for the U.S.' involvement in the Vietnam War?
2. **Group members** – a list of all members of your group with a brief description of what each did to support your presentation:

Criteria	Comments	Points Possible	Points Earned
<b>A thesis</b> – a one-sentence answer to the question: Who was most responsible for the Vietnam War?			
<b>Specific evidence</b> that directly supports the thesis: quotes, statistics, actions, policy decisions, etc. that provide explicit support for your argument.			
<b>Analysis</b> which links the evidence to the thesis and considers the overall significance of your position.			
A <b>title</b> that summarizes your thesis in a clever and engaging way.			
<b>Citations</b> – for each quote, statistic, or image you use to support your argument, make sure you detail the source for the information.			
<b>Full group participation</b> – the work of each member of the group should be documented in order for all members of the group to receive full credit.			
Additional considerations: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>For political cartoons</b>, make sure that your thesis is quickly apparent to the viewer, that you reference specific evidence in a creative and artistically appropriate fashion, and that you include a separate 100-150 word explanation of your cartoon.</li> <li>• For <b>written editorials</b>, please note that your essays should be 350-500 words in length, typed, double-spaced.</li> <li>• For <b>oral or multimedia presentations</b>, prepare two to three minutes of presentation, and include relevant images, video, and audio recordings.</li> </ul>			

## CWA 4.8 – A War of Attrition (Page 1 of 5)

The war in Vietnam was not fought on traditional battlefields with clearly identified soldiers seizing new territory. Instead, the war was fought with different weapons, markers of success, and consequences than previous wars. Military planners on both sides of the conflict initially hoped to achieve quick success through strategic attacks on the enemy. While initial operations did inflict damage on their opponents, both sides ultimately settled into a war of attrition, a series of relatively small battles designed to deplete the resources of the enemy, weaken their morale and reduce public support for the conflict so that they are willing to surrender.

### *American Military Strategy*

The United States, for example, hoped to defeat North Vietnam through massive bombing campaigns, such as *Operation Rolling Thunder*. Starting in early 1965, American planes began to drop what would eventually total 4.6 million tons of bombs onto North Vietnam, as well on the Ho Chi Minh Trail, a supply line that the communists used to transport people and goods from the north to the south.



Two bombs tumble from a Vietnamese Air Force A-1E Skyraider over a burning [Viet] Cong hideout near Cantho, South Viet Nam, U.S. Air Force, 1967.

Source: Library of Congress,

<http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/2001699982/>



Photograph of a Marine Landing at Danang, Vietnam, 08/03/1965. Source: National Archives, ARC Identifier 595865.

American commanders intended the campaign to demoralize the Communist soldiers and compliment U.S. ground troops. When President Richard Nixon took office in 1969 he employed a secret plan to end the war, which expanded the American air campaign. He began a secret bombing campaign in the neighboring countries of Laos and Cambodia, sovereign nations separate from Vietnam, in an effort to attack the communist forces hiding in these border nations.

On the ground, American troops conducted “search and destroy missions,” to seek out the enemy and kill them to increase the body count, one measure of American success or failure in the conflict. Helicopters, a new military asset, quickly transported soldiers in and out during these missions. Soldiers burned to the ground many villages that contained suspected communist sympathizers. This displaced many civilians leaving them without food or shelter. (To see search and destroy missions in action, visit The History Channel website to see a three-minute video clip

## CWA 4.8 – A War of Attrition (Page 2 of 5)

(<http://www.history.com/topics/vietnam-war/videos#search-and-destroy>) to hear interviews with Vietnam veterans and archival footage of the war. You will see graphic images of search and destroy missions. As you watch, listen to the soldiers describe the purpose of these missions and the role that they or other soldiers played. What are their perspectives of this war strategy? )



Another tactic the U.S. employed was the use of defoliants and herbicides on the Vietnamese countryside. Hoping to

*Vietnam. As the second phase of operation "Thayer," the 1st Air Cavalry Division (airmobile) is having operation "Irving" in the area 25 miles north of Qui Nhon which lies 400 miles north-northeast of Saigon. The 1st Air Cavalry was given the mission of clearing a mountain range where an estimated two battalions of North Vietnam regulars were supposed to be massing an attack on Hammond Airstrip. Troops of "A" Company, checking house during patrol, 10/06/1966. Source: National Archives, ARC Identifier #530612*

both deplete the communists' food supply and eliminate their cover from the sky, the US military sprayed, by air and waterways, 12 million gallons of Agent Orange, a variety of defoliants and herbicides, on Vietnam. This campaign destroyed the forests and farmland; millions of Vietnamese and Americans were ultimately exposed to the toxic chemicals. (To see film clips of soldiers spraying defoliant on riverbanks in Vietnam (and what the trees looked like afterwards), visit the Vietnam Center and Archive at Texas Tech University, "U.S. Army Newsfilm V-73-69: Weed Killer Knocks Out VC's Riverbank Ambush Sites," South Vietnam [VC Weed Killer], 8-11 February 1969. Item Number: 987VI0672, Record 85332)

The United States also tried to gain the support of local people so that they would not aid the communists. American soldiers would go into South Vietnamese villages and (1) determine if locals were providing food or weapons to the communists, and (2) if the villagers were not helping the North Vietnamese, solicit their support through food aid or protection from the enemy.

### *Vietnamese Communist Strategy*

The North Vietnamese Army (NVA) and the Viet Cong (VC) employed a different strategy, but with the same goal – consistent pressure designed to weaken American resolve and promote a negotiated peace that favored their side. Employing a guerilla warfare strategy, NVA and VC forces favored hit and run attacks and surprise ambushes over full-scale military conflict. Although American forces benefitted from more training and



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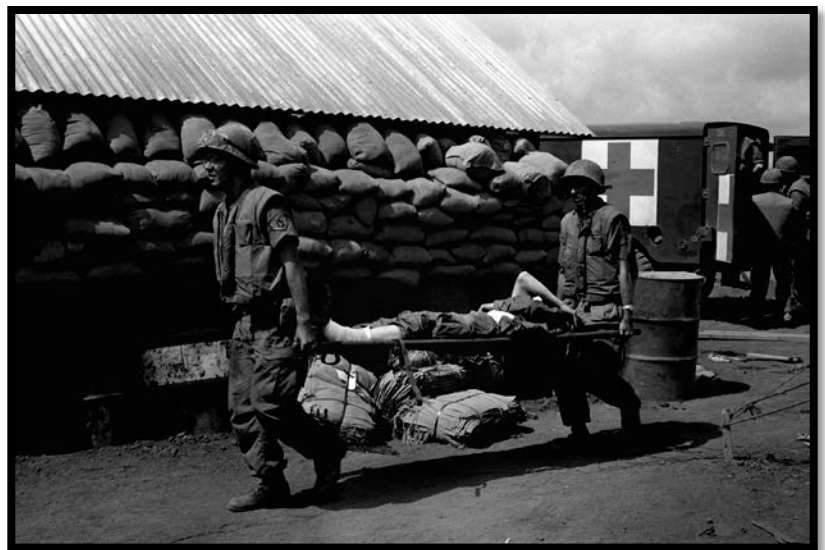


*Vietnam. Vietnamese army personnel training in the jungle, May, 1962. U.S. Dept. of Defense, Department of the Army. Source: National Archives, ARC Identifier: 530607.*

advanced military technology, NVA and VC forces posed significant challenges to the Americans. Neither the VC or the NVA wore bright uniforms marking their enemy status, making it difficult for American soldiers to differentiate between a civilian and a military combatant. And while many of the VC's weapons were crude in comparison to American firepower, as the war progressed Communist forces became increasingly proficient in killing and maiming American forces, using home-made booby traps and mines, mortars, rocket-propelled grenades, and machine guns and anti-aircraft artillery imported from the Soviet Union and China. They repurposed the over 20,000 tons of explosive material dropped by U.S. planes for the homemade bombs. The communists also benefitted from a series of tunnels stretching throughout North and South Vietnam. The tunnels allowed for safe travel; stored ammunition, food, and water; provided sleeping quarters; and hospice for those in need of medical aid. The Communists were also aided by many civilians who provided safe haven, food, and support in local villages across South Vietnam.

### *Khe Sanh and the Tet Offensive*

Likely the most significant military confrontation of the war occurred in January of 1968, when American troops faced a determined and aggressive communist attack. 40,000 members of the North Vietnamese Army (NVA) surrounded Khe Sanh, an American military base just south of the Demilitarized Zone in South Vietnam, home to less than 6,000 Marines. On January 21, 1968, the NVA launched a massive attack against the base, driving the Marines into underground bunkers. The NVA used shells, mortars, and rockets to try to overrun the base and early on, it looked like they'd succeed, especially after hitting the base's ammunition storage, which caused an explosion that killed eighteen, wounded 40, and destroyed 90% of the Marine's ammunition. During the siege, which lasted a



*U.S. Air Force medical personnel, on detached duty from Da Nang Air Base, move a Marine casualty from the aid station at embattled Khe Sanh to a waiting C-130 Hercules aircraft for the flight to medical facilities at the base. Wounded personnel can be transported from the field to completely equipped hospitals in less than an hour, 01/01/1968*

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total of 77 days, Marines were hunkered down, sheltering in rat-infested underground bunkers that were dirty and lacked sufficient food and supplies. Both President Johnson and the American public were deeply engaged in the crisis – reading daily updates in the papers and watching the latest on nightly news reports on television. American forces outside Khe Sanh ultimately defeated the NVA, by resupplying the Marines manning the base, bringing in food, ammunition, and supplies, evacuating the wounded, and finally bombing the NVA soldiers circling the base into retreat.

On January 30 of the same year, the communists staged their largest military campaign, the Tet Offensive, a surprise attack of nearly all of South Vietnam's major cities and the U.S. Embassy in 1968. Tet, Lunar New Year, had been traditionally observed as a time of cease-fire for Vietnam's most important holiday and with the exception of Khe Sanh, American forces had expected a relatively quiet holiday. In a coordinated attack by the Viet Cong and the North Vietnamese forces, American troops were at first surprised, but quickly rallied to push back the communist offensive.



*Battle of Hamo Village during Tet, 1968.  
Source: National Archives, ARC Identifier # 532451.*

### *Prisoners of War / Missing in Action*



*James Scott Graham, US Navy, shot down over Vietnam on May 4, 1967.  
01/01/1967, Source: National Archives, 6404008*

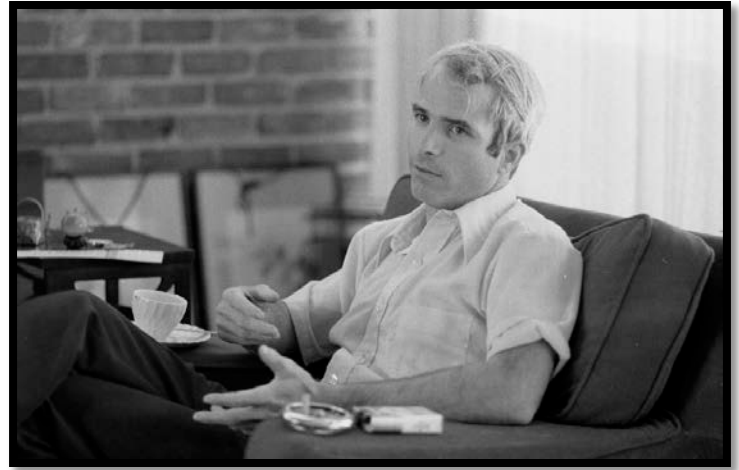
Hundreds of American troops were held as prisoners of war (POW) during the Vietnam War. Often, they were pilots and airplane crews shot down as they conducted bombing missions. Many POWs were held in prisons in North Vietnam; the most famous of these was Hoa Lo prison, known to Americans as the "Hanoi Hilton." Conditions in these prisons were exceedingly harsh – beatings and torture were common occurrences, as the North Vietnamese captors sought tactical military information from the American prisoners. The Communists also used the POWs as part of their propaganda campaign, putting them in front of cameras or forcing them to write letters home detailing crimes committed by American forces against the Vietnamese people. Communication between prisoners and with the outside world was restricted – many POWs were held in solitary confinement for years. While some POWs

succumbed to their harsh treatment, others resisted by secretly communicating with each other or "confessing" untrue information to trick the Vietnamese military. James Stockdale, a naval pilot who had led aerial attacks



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from the U.S.S. Ticonderoga in the Gulf of Tonkin was shot down in 1965 and spent the next seven and one-half years as a prisoner of war. John McCain, who was elected to Congress in 1982 and became the Republican Presidential Nominee in 2008, was shot down and captured by the North Vietnamese in 1967, on his 23<sup>rd</sup> bombing mission in Vietnam. A graduate of the Naval Academy whose father and grandfather had been Admirals, McCain was offered early release by his North Vietnamese captors. McCain refused, believing his family's connections would be used as propaganda by the communists. McCain spent five and one-half years in prison, including time at the Hanoi Hilton. He was repeatedly beaten and tortured. Following his release from prison in 1973 as part of the peace negotiations, McCain was awarded the Silver and Bronze Stars, a Purple Heart, and a Distinguished Flying Cross. 590 American POWs were eventually released by the North Vietnamese; more than 2000 were classified as Missing in Action.



IVU w/ [i.e., interview with] Lt. Comdr. John S. McCain, Vietnam POW / [TOH]. Photographer: James O'Halloran, April 24, 1973, U.S. News & World Report Magazine Photograph Collection. Source: Library of Congress, <http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/2003673983/>

### *The End of the War*



Photograph of Marines of Company I in Vietnam, 10/30/1969. Source: National Archives, ARC Identifier # 532492

President Richard Nixon shifted America's military strategy with his election in 1968. Nixon advocated a policy of "Vietnamization," which called for gradual reduction of American forces and increasing military leadership by the South Vietnamese. At the same time, Nixon's Secretary of State began secret peace negotiations with the North Vietnamese in Paris. These negotiations dragged on for years; a peace treaty between the U.S. and North Vietnam wasn't signed until 1973. In the interim period, the fighting continued and Nixon launched a controversial bombing campaign in Cambodia designed to destroy the supply bases supporting the communist forces. Public support for American involvement in the conflict declined precipitously during the period as well, increasing pressure on the Nixon Administration to end the war. Following the American departure from the war in 1973, South Vietnamese forces continued to fight until they were overrun in 1975 with the fall of Saigon.

## CWA 4.9 – Walter Cronkite Editorial (Page 1 of 2)

*Background: Several years after the war in Vietnam was "escalated," American military officials and government leaders continued to tell the public that a victory over the Communists was within sight. However, in the early months of 1968, in what became known as the Tet Offensive, the North Vietnamese Army conducted a coordinated attack of dozens of major cities in the South. Television cameras recorded American and Vietnamese soldiers fighting in this gruesome seemingly guerilla style of urban warfare. Watching these scenes on television disturbed many Americans. Although the U.S. and South Vietnamese forces were able to defeat the North, the battles damaged American support for the war; in the days and weeks after Tet many Americans came to believe that the war*



*Vietnam. Walter Cronkite of CBS interviewing Professor Mai of the University of Hue., 02/20/1968. Source: National Archives, ARC Identifier 532481.*

*could not be won and that it was therefore not worth fighting. Below is an editorial from Walter Cronkite, a popular journalist who served as anchor of CBS News for from 1961 to 1981, who was voted the "most trusted man in America" in 1972. He wrote about his perceptions and conclusions about the war, which influenced the way many felt about it. An excerpted audio recording can be listened to here: <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=106775685> and clips from the report with commentary is available here: <http://www.cbsnews.com/video/watch/?id=2827337n>*

"Tonight, back in more familiar surroundings in New York, we'd like to sum up our findings in Vietnam, an analysis that must be speculative, personal, subjective. Who won and who lost in the great Tet offensive against the cities? I'm not sure. The Vietcong did not win by a knockout, but neither did we. The referees of history may make it a draw.... On the political front, past performance gives no confidence that the [South] Vietnamese government can cope with its problems, now compounded by the attack on the cities. It may not fall, it may hold on, but it probably won't show the dynamic qualities demanded of this young nation. Another standoff.

We have been too often disappointed by the optimism of the American leaders, both in Vietnam and Washington, to have faith any longer in the silver linings they find in the darkest clouds.... For it seems now more certain than ever that the bloody experience of Vietnam is to end in a stalemate. This summer's almost certain standoff will either end in real give-and-take negotiations or terrible escalation; and for every means we have to escalate, the enemy can match us, and that applies to invasion of the North, the use of nuclear weapons, or the mere commitment of one hundred, or two hundred, or three hundred thousand more American troops to the battle. And with each escalation, the world comes closer to the brink of cosmic disaster.

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CWA 4.9 – Walter Cronkite Editorial (Page 2 of 2)

A man and a woman watching film footage of the Vietnam war on a television in their living room, Warren K. Leffler, Photographer. February 13, 1968. U.S. News & World Report Photograph Collection. Source: Library of Congress, <http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/2011661230/>.

To say that we are closer to victory today is to believe, in the face of the evidence, the optimists who have been wrong in the past. To suggest we are on the edge of defeat is to yield to unreasonable pessimism. To say that we are mired in stalemate seems the only realistic, yet unsatisfactory, conclusion.... [I]t is increasingly clear to this reporter that the only rational way out then will be to negotiate, not as victors, but as an honorable people who lived up to their pledge to defend democracy, and did the best they could.

Source: *Reporting Vietnam: Part One: American Journalism 1959-1969* (1998), pp. 581-582.

[http://www.digitalhistory.uh.edu/active\\_learning/explorations/vietnam/cronkite.cfm](http://www.digitalhistory.uh.edu/active_learning/explorations/vietnam/cronkite.cfm)

#### Questions for Group Discussion:

1. In this address, to whom do you think Cronkite was talking?
2. According to Cronkite, who won the recent battles during the Tet Offensive? Why was there uncertainty surrounding it?
3. How does Cronkite think the war will end? Why?
4. What did Cronkite mean when he said "mired in a stalemate?"
5. In general, what impact do you think television can have on the public's perception of war? What role do journalists play in public opinion?

## CWA 4.10 – What Happened at My Lai? (Page 1 of 6)

*Background:* On March 16, 1968, the soldiers of Charlie Company entered My Lai, within Son May village, prepared for a fierce fight with Vietnamese communists believed to be the area. The platoon had already suffered heavy casualties from previous missions. However, reports had been wrong: there were no enemy soldiers. Without any return enemy fire, Captain Ernest Medina, Lieutenant William Calley and other members of Charlie Company shot and killed nearly every man, woman, and child in the village. The official U.S. count for those murdered is 347, while the My Lai site memorial notes 504 killed. Seymour Hersh, an independent journalist, reported the cover up on November 11, 1969. By then, the military had charged Lt. Calley with murder and ordered an official investigation, which produced the Peers Commission report. Calley's trial opened a heated national debate about the morality of war, soldier conduct, and U.S. objections in Vietnam.

*Instructions:* Assign each person in your group a primary source. Everyone must compile notes and fill in notes for their source below. Afterwards, share your results with your group. Next, write one paragraph explaining what happened on March 16, 1968. You must refer to each primary source and cite evidence from it. Your paragraph should also answer the following question: Why is My Lai Important?

Source – Citation (Title, author, date, audience)	How is this source related to the My Lai massacre? What is this source's perspective about the My Lai massacre?	What information from this source is most important? How does it help you understand what happened at My Lai?
"The Massacre at MyLai," <i>Life Magazine</i> , December 6, 1969, available online here: <a href="http://life.time.com/history/my-lai-remembering-an-american-atrocity-in-vietnam-march-1968/#3">http://life.time.com/history/my-lai-remembering-an-american-atrocity-in-vietnam-march-1968/#3</a> (Photos by Ronald Haeberle, former U.S. Army photographer)		
Lt. William Calley Military Court-Martial Transcript, 1970.		
Lewis Puller Autobiography <i>Fortunate Son</i> (1991)		

## CWA 4.10 – What Happened at My Lai? (Page 2 of 6)

Source – Citation (Title, author, date, audience)	How is this source related to the My Lai massacre? What is this source's perspective about the My Lai massacre?	What information from this source is most important? How does it help you understand what happened at My Lai?
Nguyen Hieu Testimony Peers Commission, 1970		
Peers Commission Report "Summary of Findings" 1970		
<b>1. What Happened at My Lai?</b>		
<b>2. Why is My Lai Important?</b>		



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## CWA 4.10 – What Happened at My Lai? (Page 3 of 6)

### Lt. William Calley Trial Transcript

*At his court-martial trial in 1970, Lt. William Calley answered questions about company casualties and operations prior to My Lai and how those events affected his attitude. A military jury found him guilty of killing 22 people and sentenced him to life imprisonment. President Richard Nixon placed Calley on house arrest and pardoned him in 1974. Below is an excerpt:*

**Q:** Every time that the company would go, at least a company-sized unit, to try to get in that area and stay in there, they encountered hostile fire, enemy fire, suffered casualties, and were driven out?

**A:** Yes, sir. [Calley was asked about an incident that occurred when he was returning to his company from in-country R and R. As he was waiting for a helicopter to take him to his men, he helped unload a chopper filled with casualties caused by a mine field.]

**Q:** What did you see and what did you do in connection with that helicopter when it landed back there and before you boarded up to get to meet your company?

**A:** The chopper was filled with gear, rifles, rucksacks. I think the most—the thing that really hit me hard was the heavy boots. There must have been six boots there with the feet still in them, brains all over the place, and everything was saturated with blood, rifles blown in half. I believe there was one arm on it and a piece of a man's face, half of a man's face was on a chopper with the gear.

**Q:** Did you later subsequently learn that those members that were emaciated in that manner were members of your company or your platoon?

**A:** I knew at the time that they were.

**Q:** What was your feeling when you saw what you did see in the chopper and what you found out about your organization being involved in that kind of an operation?

**A:** I don't know if I can describe the feelings.

**Q:** At least try.

**A:** It's anger, hate, fear, generally sick to your stomach, hurt.

**Q:** Did it have any impact on your beliefs, your ideas or what you might like to do in connection with somehow or other on into combat accomplishing your mission? Am I making that too complicated for you?

**A:** I believe so.

**Q:** I'm trying to find out if it had any impact on your future actions as you were going to have to go in and if you did go in and reach the enemy on other occasions and if so, what was the impact?

**A:** I'm not really sure of what my actual feelings were at the time. I can't sit down and say I made any formal conclusions of what I would do when I met the enemy. I think there is an—that instilled a deeper sense of hatred for the enemy. I don't think I ever made up my mind or came to any conclusion as to what I'd do to the enemy.

**Q:** All right. Now did you have any remorse or grief or anything?

**A:** Yes, sir. I did.

**Q:** What was that?

**A:** The remorse for losing my men in the mine field. The remorse that those men ever had to go to Vietnam, the remorse that being in that situation where you are completely helpless. I think I felt mainly remorse because I wasn't there, although there was nothing I could do. There was a psychological factor of just not being there when everything is happening.

**Q:** Did you feel sorry that you weren't there with your troops?

**A:** Yes, Sir.

*Source: Olson, James and Randy Roberts. My Lai: A Brief History with Documents (Boston: Bedford Books, 1998), 52-53.*

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## CWA 4.10 – What Happened at My Lai? (Page 4 of 6)

### Lewis Puller Autobiography

*From Fortunate Son: The Autobiography of Lewis B. Puller Jr. (1991). Lewis Puller, a U.S. Marine who lost both of his legs and an arm in combat during the Vietnam War, felt that the My Lai episode stained the reputations of millions of honorable young men who had fought in Vietnam.*

On November 12, 1970, at Fort Benning, Georgia, the court martial of Lieutenant William L. Calley, Jr., for the murder of civilians at My Lai began. The trial lasted for more than four months and was the focus of such intense media coverage that it became, in effect, a forum for debate over American involvement in Vietnam. Calley was portrayed by supporters of the war as a maverick acting alone and without orders, whose actions, brought on by the stress of prolonged combat and casualties in his own unit, were an aberration from the rules of engagement. The opposing viewpoint held that his actions, if not sanctioned by higher authority, were at least tolerated and were typical of the conduct of ground units in the war.

I was deeply offended by the notion that the hideous atrocities committed by Calley and his men were commonplace in Vietnam, an inevitable consequence of an ill-advised involvement in someone else's civil war. The men I had in combat, were, like any cross section of American youth, capable of good and evil, and I felt we all were, by implication, being branded as murderers and rapists. Throughout the proceedings the reportage seemed to me to accentuate the monstrous evil of a group of men gone amok without any effort to depict fairly the discipline and courage that existed along with the forces of darkness in most units.

Lieutenant Calley was ultimately found guilty of the premeditated murder of twenty-two civilians and sentenced to life imprisonment, but I felt his punishment could never right the evil he had done or the perceptions he helped foster of America's soldiers and Marines as bloodthirsty killers. At the end of the trial I wrote letters to several local newspapers protesting that it was unfair for the Calley case to have so influenced public opinion, but the grisly photographs of murdered civilians lying in a ditch at My Lai which had been so prominently displayed in newspapers across the country, spoke far more eloquently than my feeble words.

Source: Lewis Puller, "Fortunate Son: The Autobiography of Lewis B. Puller," in James Olson and Randy Roberts, *My Lai: A Brief History with Documents* (Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's Press, 1998): 187-188.

## CWA 4.10 – What Happened at My Lai? (Page 5 of 6)

### Nguyen Hieu Testimony

*Nguyen Hieu was 23 years old and an eye-witness of the massacre at My Lai. The following is his testimony to the Peers Commission, the official U.S. Army investigation of the killings and cover up.*

**Q:** What is your name?

**A:** Nguyen Hieu.

**Q:** How old are you?

**A:** Twenty-five years old.

**Q:** Are you a native of Tu Cung?

**A:** Yes...

**Q:** ...Were you in a house on the morning of 16 March 1968 when the Americans came?

**A:** Yes, I lived there in 1968.

**Q:** Were you there on the morning of 16 March 1968 when the Americans came?

**A:** Yes, I was there that morning.

**Q:** How many other members of your family were there with you in the house that morning?

**A:** Five.

**Q:** What did you do when you heard the artillery fire?

**A:** For the first time early in the morning I heard artillery come in here (indicating) and American helicopters come into here (indicating) on the west side of the village. They came here and they took us from the bunker.

**Q:** Was the bunker near your house?

**A:** Yes, right here (indicating).

**Q:** Did all the members of your family go in the bunker?

**A:** My mother stayed in the house. I and the children went to the bunker.

**Q:** How long did you stay in the bunker?

**A:** About 2 hours.

**Q:** Did you Americans come near the bunker?

**A:** Yes, they came into the bunker

**Q:** They came into the bunker?

**A:** Yes.

**Q:** And did they make you come out of the bunker?

**A:** When the Americans came to my house my mother came out of the house, and the Americans then raped my mother and they shot her.

**Q:** They shot and raped your mother?

**A:** Yes, shot and raped my mother. My sister ran out of the bunker and they shot my sister and two children.

**Q:** How many Americans were there?

**A:** Two Americans

**Q:** Were you the only one that stayed in the bunker?

**A:** Yes, I stayed alone.

**Q:** And your sister went out of the bunker and was shot?

**A:** My sister went out of the bunker to help my mother and was shot.

**Q:** After the soldiers that shot the people left, how long were you in the bunker before the other soldiers came that burned the house?

**A:** About 40 minutes

**Q:** Did they shoot any livestock? Any animals, chickens, pigs?

**A:** They killed two buffalo.

**Q:** What did you do after the soldiers left?

**A:** After the Americans left I buried my mother and sister.

**Q:** I am sorry that your family was killed like this. Thank you for coming here today to help us.

Source: *My Lai: A Brief History with Documents* 94-96.

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## CWA 4.10 – What Happened at My Lai? (Page 6 of 6)

### Peers Commission Summary of Findings

After the media exposed and charged the military with a cover up of the massacre, the U.S. Army assigned Lieutenant General William R. Peers with the investigative task of determining an official account of the events on March 16, 1968 and the extent of the cover up since that day. Known as the Peers Commission, the task force interviewed eye-witnesses and personnel with knowledge of the massacre. A summary of its findings is below. "Task Force Barker," "11<sup>th</sup> Brigade," and "Americal Division" refers to parts of Charlie Company of which Lt. William Calley's was a commanding officer. For more information, see [http://www.loc.gov/rr/frd/Military\\_Law/pdf/RDAR-Vol-I.pdf](http://www.loc.gov/rr/frd/Military_Law/pdf/RDAR-Vol-I.pdf) (page 2-12 to 2-13).

It is concluded that:

1. During the period of 16-19 March 1968, troops of Task Force Barker massacred a large number of Vietnamese nationals in the village of Son My.
2. Knowledge as to the extent of the incident existed at company level, at least among the key staff officers and commander at the Task Force Barker level, and at the 11<sup>th</sup> Brigade command level.
3. Efforts at the Division command level to conceal information concerning what was probably believed to be the killing of 20-28 civilians actually resulted in the suppression of a war crime of far greater magnitude.
4. The commander of the 11<sup>th</sup> Brigade, upon learning that a war crime had probably been committed, deliberately set out to conceal the fact from proper authority and to deceive his commander concerning the matter.
5. Investigations concerning the incident conducted within the Americal Division were superficial and misleading and not subjected to substantive review.
6. Efforts were made at every level of command from company to division to withhold and suppress information concerning the incident at Son My.
7. Failure of Division headquarters personnel to act on information received from GVN/ARVN officials served to suppress effectively information concerning the Son My incident.
8. Efforts of the Division to suppress and withhold information were assisted by US officers serving in advisory positions with Vietnamese agencies.

For more information, [http://www.loc.gov/rr/frd/Military\\_Law/Peers\\_inquiry.html](http://www.loc.gov/rr/frd/Military_Law/Peers_inquiry.html).

## CWA 4.11- Who Fought in Vietnam? (Page 1 of 2)



*Congressman Alexander Pirnie reaching into a container of draft numbers (center) as others look on, including retiring Selective Service Director Lt. General Lewis Blaine Hershey (left) and Deputy Director Col. Daniel O. Omer (right) at the Selective Service Headquarters during the nationwide draft lottery / MST. December 1, 1969, Marion S. Triskoso, Photographer.*

Source: Library of Congress,  
<http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/201166122>.

**Background:** From 1948 to 1973, young men were drafted into the military services to fill vacancies that could not be filled by volunteers. From 1948 to 1969, American males were selected for the draft based upon their age, with the oldest man in the age category drafted first. Starting on December 1, 1969, the Selective Service System launched the first lottery draft.

The 1969 lottery drawing determined the order in which men, born from 1944 through 1950, were called to report for induction into the military. 366 capsules, each containing a birthday (including the leap year) were put into a canister. On national television, officials assigned each birth date to a lottery number. The first capsule Congressman Alexander Pirnie drew had the date September 14, so every man born between the years 1944 and 1950 with that birth date had a lottery number of 1. Pirnie drew 366 capsules

until each birth date was assigned a number. For the year 1970, numbers 1-195 were drafted. The highest lottery number called for this group was 195; all men assigned that lottery number or any lower number, and who were classified 1-A or 1-A-O (available for military service), were called to report for possible induction. Draftees could be exempt from or defer their military service for medical reasons, if they were religious ministers, if they were students, or if they could prove they were conscientious objectors (opposed to all forms of violence). Thousands of draft-age young men also fled the country to avoid the draft.

In 1973, the draft ended and the U.S. converted to an all-volunteer military. Registering for the draft was suspended between 1975 and 1980, when President Carter resumed the requirement in response to the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. Even today, young American males are required to register, although there has not been a draft since 1973.

### Group Discussion Questions:

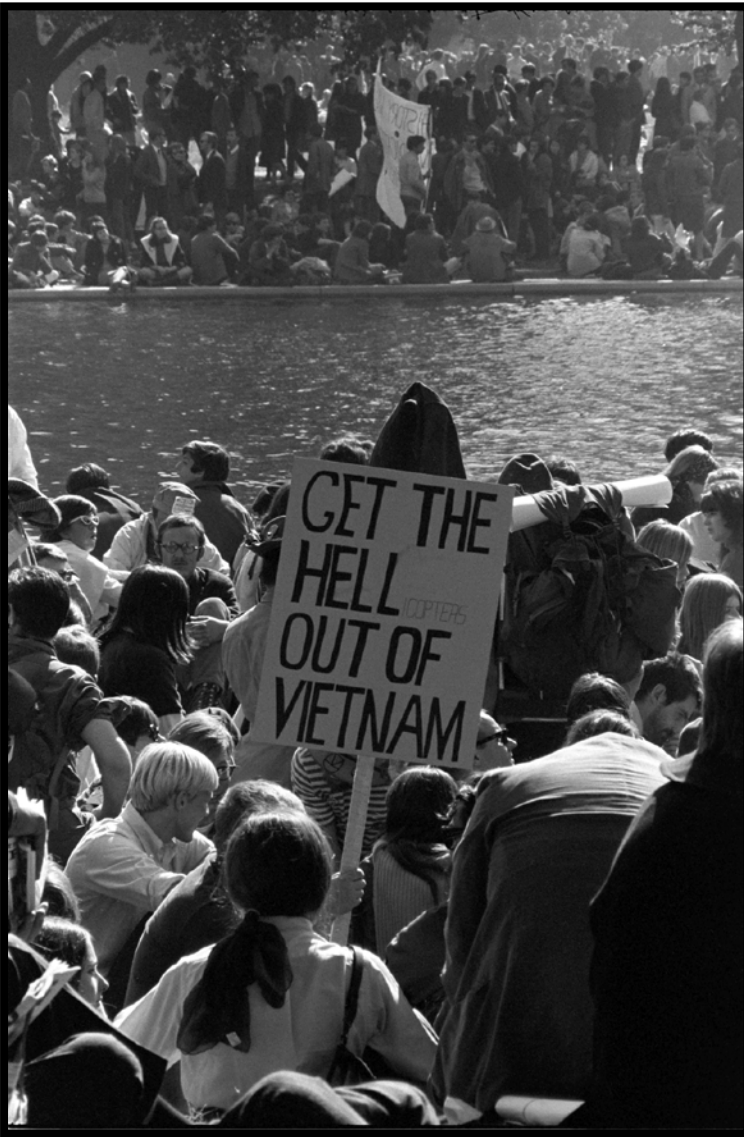
1. Pretend it is 1969 and you were born between 1944 and 1950. Find your birthday on the chart. Would you have been drafted? (Not sure? If your birthday is March 7, in 1969 your draft lottery number would have been 122 and since numbers 1-195 were called up for the draft, you would have been selected). (Source: Selective Service System, U.S. Department of Defense, <http://www.sss.gov/lotter1.htm>)
2. If you had been selected for the draft in 1969, what would you have done? Would you have willingly served? Would you have pursued deferment? If so, what would you claim as the reason for your deferment?
3. If you did not get drafted, because your number wasn't selected, you were a woman, or you were granted deferment, would you have volunteered to serve in a non-combat role? Would you have participated in the anti-war movement? Why or why not?



## CWA 4.11- Who Fought in Vietnam? (Page 2 of 2)

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
1	305	086	108	032	330	249	093	111	225	359	019	129
2	159	144	029	271	298	228	350	045	161	125	034	328
3	251	297	267	083	040	301	115	261	049	244	348	157
4	215	210	275	081	276	020	279	145	232	202	266	165
5	101	214	293	269	364	028	188	054	082	024	310	056
6	224	347	139	253	155	110	327	114	006	087	076	010
7	306	091	122	147	035	085	050	168	008	234	051	012
8	199	181	213	312	321	366	013	048	184	283	097	105
9	194	338	317	219	197	335	277	106	263	342	080	043
10	325	216	323	218	065	206	284	021	071	220	282	041
11	329	150	136	014	037	134	248	324	158	237	046	039
12	221	068	300	346	133	272	015	142	242	072	066	314
13	318	152	259	124	295	069	042	307	175	138	126	163
14	238	004	354	231	178	356	331	198	001	294	127	026
15	017	089	169	273	130	180	322	102	113	171	131	320
16	121	212	166	148	055	274	120	044	207	254	107	096
17	235	189	033	260	112	073	098	154	255	288	143	304
18	140	292	332	090	278	341	190	141	246	005	146	128
19	058	025	200	336	075	104	227	311	177	241	203	240
20	280	302	239	345	183	360	187	344	063	192	185	135
21	186	363	334	062	250	060	027	291	204	243	156	070
22	337	290	265	316	326	247	153	339	160	117	009	053
23	118	057	256	252	319	109	172	116	119	201	182	162
24	059	236	258	002	031	358	023	036	195	196	230	095
25	052	179	343	351	361	137	067	286	149	176	132	084
26	092	365	170	340	357	022	303	245	018	007	309	173
27	355	205	268	074	296	064	289	352	233	264	047	078
28	077	299	223	262	308	222	088	167	257	094	281	123
29	349	285	362	191	226	353	270	061	151	229	099	016
30	164	----	217	208	103	209	287	333	315	038	174	003
31	211	----	030	----	313	----	193	011	----	079	----	100

## CWA 4.12- How Can We Stop the War? (Page 1 of 5)



*Vietnam War protesters at the March on the Pentagon, October 21, 1967, Frank Wolfe, Photographer. Source: Lyndon Baines Johnson Presidential Library, National Archives, Reference # 7051-33.*

**Background:** Unlike previous wars, the public outcry over Vietnam was national in scope and protests were large, highly publicized mobilizations that involved many student groups, social justice organizations, and civil rights activists. Much like the war itself, the anti-war movement was prolonged as well. As early as 1965, Americans began protesting the Vietnam War because they questioned the legitimacy of U.S. presence in Vietnam. The protest movements started with younger Americans, who often organized on college campuses. These college-aged anti-war protesters felt the immediate threat of the war since they were subject to the draft. Widespread protest grew by 1967 when the U.S. had nearly 500,000 troops in Vietnam; by the end of that year 15,058 troops had been killed and 109,527 had been wounded. Over time, the war was costing Americans \$25 billion each year and nearly 40,000 men were being drafted each month. In one of the largest anti-war protests up until that point in American history, on October 21, 1967 about 100,000 protesters gathered at the Lincoln Memorial in Washington D.C. to express their discontent over the war. The next year turned even more Americans against the war. The Tet Offensive and Walter Cronkite's public questioning of the U.S.'s ability to win the war turned more Americans against the war. In fact,

many soldiers returning from the war joined the anti-war movement. The organization Vietnam Veterans against the War began in 1967; 30,000 became members quickly. On campuses,

students and professors staged teach-ins. Elsewhere, artists and musicians produced anti-war art and songs.

**Directions:** In your groups, review each primary source and complete the source analysis chart. After you've completed your review, discuss the following:

- Why did some Americans oppose the Vietnam War?
- What methods did protestors use to oppose the war?
- What impact, if any, did protests have upon American leadership?

## CWA 4.12- How Can We Stop the War? (Page 2 of 5)

Basic Source Information	Source Description	Source Analysis
Title:	What is the source about? (use bullets to describe)	Audience: Who is the intended audience for this source?
Author:		
Document type (text, photo, map, etc.):		Purpose: Why was this source created?
When created:	What is the main idea / thesis of the source?	
Where created:		Relevant Evidence: Why did some Americans oppose the Vietnam War?
Citation:		Relevant Evidence: What methods did protestors use to oppose the war?

## CWA 4.12- How Can We Stop the War? (Anti-War Protest Outside White House)



Anti-Vietnam war protest and demonstration in front of the White House in support of singer Eartha Kitt, who publicly criticized the war effort when she was invited to a luncheon hosted by first lady Lady Bird Johnson. January 19, 1968, Warren K. Leffler, Photographer, U.S. News & World Report Photo Collection. Source: Library of Congress, <http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/2010646065/>



## CWA 4.12- How Can We Stop the War? (*Beyond Vietnam* by Martin Luther King, Jr.)



*Martin Luther King, Jr., half-length portrait, facing left, speaking at microphones, during anti-war demonstration, New York City / World Journal Tribune photo by Don Rice, 1967. Source: Library of Congress, <http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/94505369/>*

**Background:** Martin Luther King, Jr. (1929-1968), a prominent Civil Rights leader, gave a speech on April 4, 1967 before 3,000 people at Riverside Church in New York City, as guest of the organization Clergy and Laymen Concerned About Vietnam. Dr. King risked his political influence within the Civil Rights Movement and with President Lyndon Johnson when he made this public declaration against the war. During the speech, he presented seven reasons for his opposition: 1) funds that could go towards the poor in the U.S. were spent instead on the war; 2) a disproportionate number of black people were sent to fight and die in Vietnam compared to whites; 3) a firm belief in non-violence; 4) a commitment for full equality for black people, and not just civil rights; 5) dedication to "life and health of America; 6) his religious faith; and 7) vows as a minister of his faith. In this excerpt, Dr. King provided five recommendations for ending the Vietnam War.

**Excerpt:** "If we continue, there will be no doubt in my mind and in the mind of the world that we have no honorable intentions in Vietnam. If we do not stop our war against the people of Vietnam immediately, the world will be left with no other alternative than to see this as some horrible, clumsy, and deadly game we have decided to play. The world now demands a maturity of America that we may not be able to

achieve. It demands that we admit we have been wrong from the beginning of our adventure in Vietnam, that we have been detrimental to the life of the Vietnamese people. The situation is one in which we must be ready to turn sharply from our present ways. In order to atone for our sins and errors in Vietnam, we should take the initiative in bringing a halt to this tragic war.

I would like to suggest five concrete things that our government should do to begin the long and difficult process of extricating ourselves from this nightmarish conflict:

Number one: End all bombing in North and South Vietnam.

Number two: Declare a unilateral cease-fire in the hope that such action will create the atmosphere for negotiation.

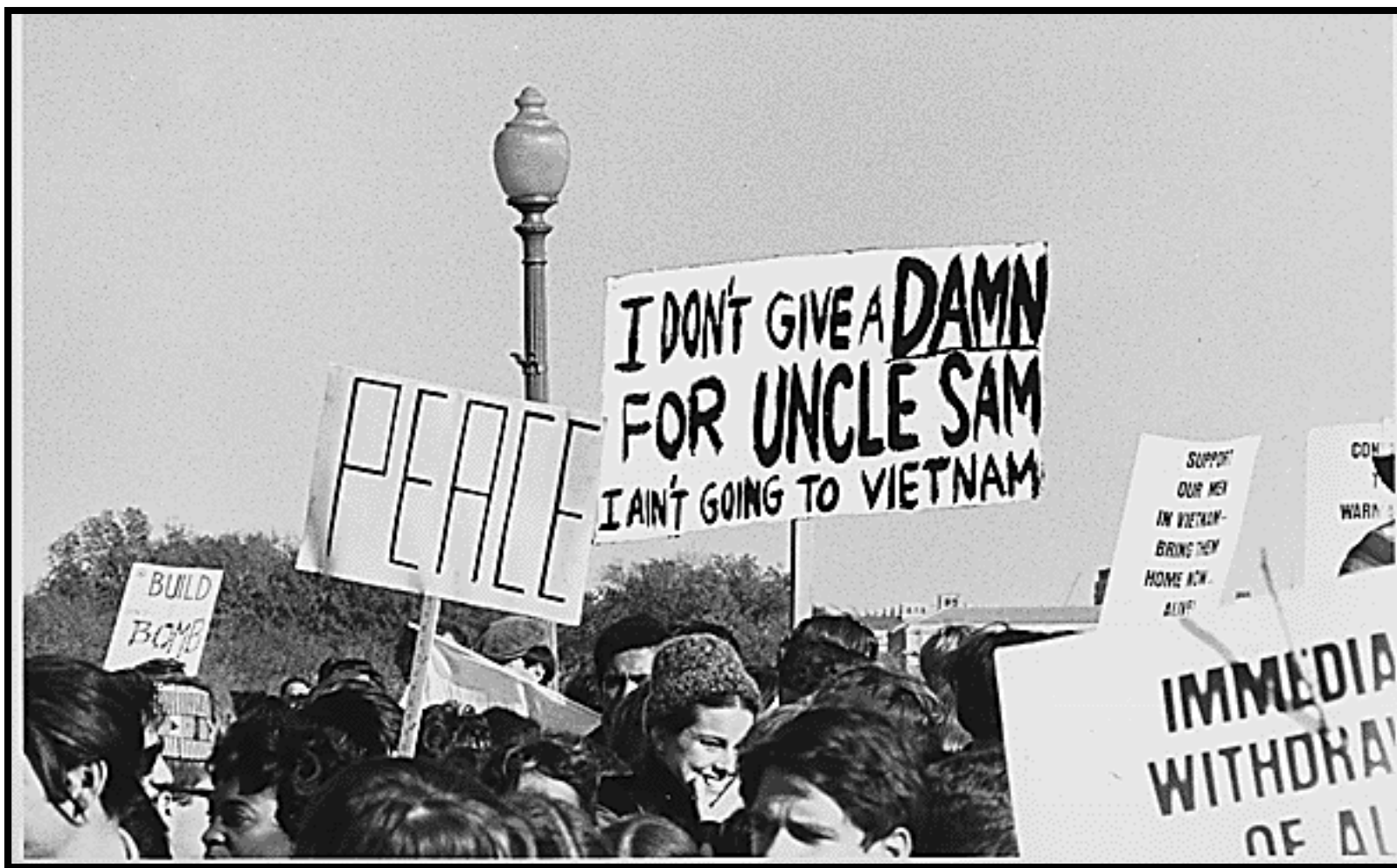
Three: Take immediate steps to prevent other battlegrounds in Southeast Asia by curtailing our military buildup in Thailand and our interference in Laos.

Four: Realistically accept the fact that the National Liberation Front has substantial support in South Vietnam and must thereby play a role in any meaningful negotiations and any future Vietnam government.

Five: Set a date that we will remove all foreign troops from Vietnam in accordance with the 1954 Geneva Agreement."

Source: *The Martin Luther King, Jr. Research and Education Institute at Stanford University, [http://mlk-kpp01.stanford.edu/index.php/encyclopedia/documentsentry/doc\\_beyond\\_vietnam/](http://mlk-kpp01.stanford.edu/index.php/encyclopedia/documentsentry/doc_beyond_vietnam/). The corresponding audio clip for the text above is from timestamp 33:50 to 37:16.*

## CWA 4.11- How Can We Stop the War? (March on the Pentagon)



*Public Reactions:  
The March on the  
Pentagon,  
10/21/1967.  
Source: Lyndon  
Baines Johnson  
Presidential  
Library, National  
Archives, ARC  
Identifier 192605*

## CWA 4.12- How Can We Stop the War? (Kansas War Protestors)



Vietnam War Protesters,  
Wichita, Kansas, 1967  
Item from Record Group 21:  
Records of District Courts of  
the United States, 1685 –  
2004, [U.S. District Court for  
the Second \(Wichita\) Division  
of the District of Kansas.  
\(06/09/1890 - \) File  
Unit: United States v.  
Blackmon, 1967 - 1967](#)  
Source: National Archives,  
ARC Identifier 283625

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## CWA 4.12- How Can We Stop the War? (John Kerry Testimony before Congress)

*Background:* On April 22, 1971, Lt. John Kerry, spoke on behalf of Vietnam Veterans of America to the U.S. Senate Foreign Relations Committee. Kerry later became a U.S. Senator himself, representing Massachusetts and was appointed Secretary of State in 2013. An excerpt of the transcript of his testimony is printed below.

*(Source: Congressional Record (92nd Congress, 1st Session) for Thursday, April 22, 1971, pages 179-210. To see excerpts of his recorded testimony online, visit C-SPAN <http://www.c-spanvideo.org/program/181065-1>)*

*Excerpt:* "The country doesn't know it yet, but it has created a monster, a monster in the form of millions of men who have been taught to deal and to trade in violence, and who are given the chance to die for the biggest nothing in history; men who have returned with a sense of anger and a sense of betrayal which no one has yet grasped.

As a veteran and one who feels this anger, I would like to talk about it. We are angry because we feel we have been used in the worst fashion by the administration of this country.

...we cannot consider ourselves America's best men when we are ashamed of and hated what we were called on to do in Southeast Asia. In our opinion, and from our experience, there is nothing in South Vietnam, nothing which could happen that realistically threatens the United States of America. And to attempt to justify the loss of one American life in Vietnam, Cambodia, or Laos by linking such loss to the preservation of freedom, which those misfits supposedly abuse, is to us the height of criminal hypocrisy, and it is that kind of hypocrisy which we feel has torn this country apart.

... I want to relate to you the feeling that many of the men who have returned to this country express because we are probably angriest about all that we were told about Vietnam and about the mystical war against communism. We found that not only was it a civil war, an effort by a people who had for years been seeking their liberation from any colonial influence whatsoever....

We found most people didn't even know the difference between communism and democracy. They only wanted to work in rice paddies without helicopters strafing them and bombs with napalm burning their villages and tearing their country apart. They wanted everything to do with the war, particularly with this foreign presence of the United States of America, to leave them alone in peace, and they practiced the art of survival by siding with whichever military force was present at a particular time, be it Vietcong, North Vietnamese, or American."



## CWA 4.13 – Vietnamization & the Silent Majority (Page 1 of 3)

*Instructions:* See below for an excerpt from President Richard Nixon's "Silent Majority" speech, which he delivered to the nation on November 3, 1969. Nixon made the speech following a period of intense anti-war protests and to address a public that overwhelmingly opposed continuing American involvement in Vietnam. Read the excerpt and with your group, discuss the questions that follow.

For an audio excerpt of the speech, visit the Richard Nixon Presidential Library: <http://www.nixonlibrary.gov/forkids/speechesforkids/silentmajority.php>. For a video of the entire speech, visit the C-Span archive: <http://www.c-spanvideo.org/program/153819-1>.

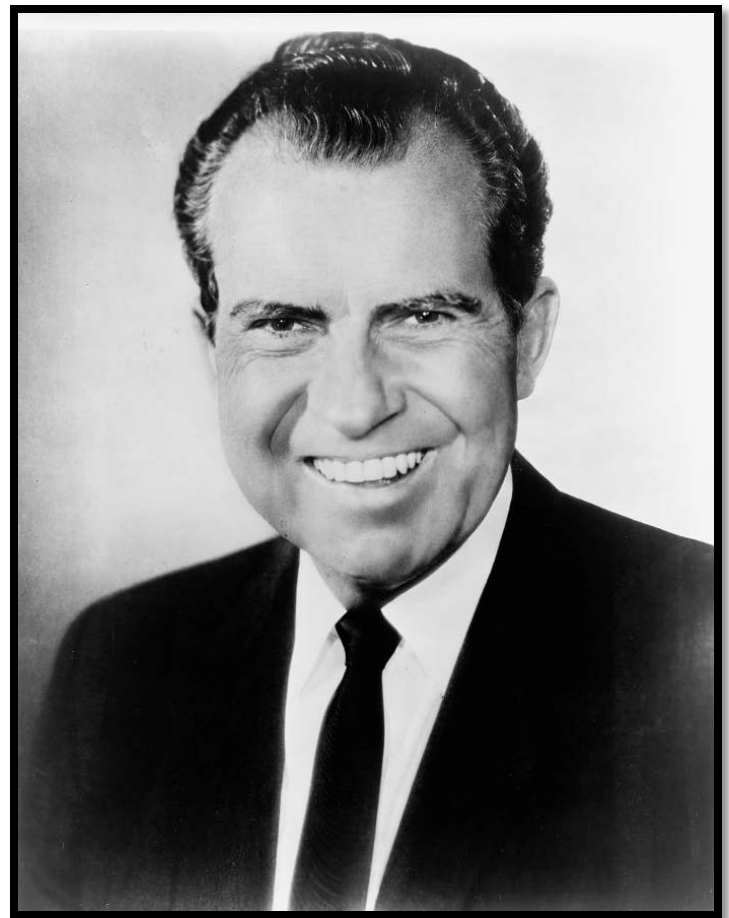
The defense of freedom is everybody's business--not just America's business. And it is particularly the responsibility of the people whose freedom is threatened. In the previous administration, we Americanized the war in Vietnam. In this administration, we are Vietnamizing the search for peace.

The policy of the previous administration not only resulted in our assuming the primary responsibility for fighting the war, but even more significantly did not adequately stress the goal of strengthening the South Vietnamese so that they could defend themselves when we left.

The Vietnamization plan was launched following Secretary Laird's visit to Vietnam in March. Under the plan, I ordered first a substantial increase in the training and equipment of South Vietnamese forces. In July, on my visit to Vietnam, I changed General Abrams' orders so that they were consistent with the objectives of our new policies. Under the new orders, the primary mission of our troops is to enable the South Vietnamese forces to assume the full responsibility for the security of South Vietnam....

We have adopted a plan which we have worked out in cooperation with the South Vietnamese for the complete withdrawal of all U.S. combat ground forces, and their replacement by South Vietnamese forces on an orderly scheduled timetable. This withdrawal will be made from strength and not from weakness. As South Vietnamese forces become stronger, the rate of American withdrawal can become greater.

I have not and do not intend to announce the timetable for our program....



*Richard M. Nixon, head-and-shoulders portrait, facing front], 1969 – 1973. Source: Library of Congress, <http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/96522669/>*

## CWA 4.13 – Vietnamization & the Silent Majority (Page 2 of 3)



*Richard M. Nixon shaking hands with armed forces in Vietnam  
July 30, 1969. Source: National Archives, ARC Identifier 194650*

My fellow Americans, I am sure you can recognize from what I have said that we really only have two choices open to us if we want to end this war.

--I can order an immediate, precipitate withdrawal of all Americans from Vietnam without regard to the effects of that action.

--Or we can persist in our search for a just peace through a negotiated settlement if possible, or through continued implementation of our plan for Vietnamization if necessary--a plan in which we will withdraw all of our forces from Vietnam on a schedule in accordance with our program, as the South Vietnamese become strong enough to defend their own freedom. I have chosen this second course. It is not the easy way. It is the right way.

It is a plan which will end the war and serve the cause of peace--not just in Vietnam but in the Pacific and in the world.

In speaking of the consequences of a precipitate withdrawal, I mentioned that our allies would lose confidence in America.

Far more dangerous, we would lose confidence in ourselves. Oh, the immediate reaction would be a sense of relief that our men were coming home. But as we saw the consequences of what we had done, inevitable remorse and divisive recrimination would scar our spirit as a people.

We have faced other crises in our history and have become stronger by rejecting the easy way out and taking the right way in meeting our challenges. Our greatness as a nation has been our capacity to do what had to be done when we knew our course was right.

I recognize that some of my fellow citizens disagree with the plan for peace I have chosen. Honest and patriotic Americans have reached different conclusions as to how peace should be achieved.

In San Francisco a few weeks ago, I saw demonstrators carrying signs reading: "Lose in Vietnam, bring the boys home."

## CWA 4.13 – Vietnamization & the Silent Majority (Page 3 of 3)

Well, one of the strengths of our free society is that any American has a right to reach that conclusion and to advocate that point of view. But as President of the United States, I would be untrue to my oath of office if I allowed the policy of this Nation to be dictated by the minority who hold that point of view and who try to impose it on the Nation by mounting demonstrations in the street.

For almost 200 years, the policy of this Nation has been made under our Constitution by those leaders in the Congress and the White House elected by all of the people. If a vocal minority, however fervent its cause, prevails over reason and the will of the majority, this Nation has no future as a free society.



*Richard M. Nixon during a press conference on Vietnam and Cambodia, 04/30/1970.  
Source: National Archives, ARC Identifier 194674.*

And now I would like to address a word, if I may, to the young people of this Nation who are particularly concerned, and I understand why they are concerned, about this war.

I respect your idealism. I share your concern for peace. I want peace as much as you do. There are powerful personal reasons I want to end this war. This week I will have to sign 83 letters to mothers, fathers, wives, and loved ones of men who have given their lives for America in Vietnam. It is very little satisfaction to me that this is only one-third as many letters as I signed the first week in office. There is nothing I want more than to see the day come when I do not have to write any of those letters....

*Source: The American Presidency Project at UC Santa Barbara, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=2303>*

### Discussion Questions:

1. What was Vietnamization?
2. Who was "the silent majority?"
3. Why did President Nixon believe that Vietnamization was the best plan for the nation in 1969?
4. How did President Nixon answer critics who he anticipated would oppose his plan?
5. Based on what you have learned about the war in Vietnam and the broader Cold War, do you think Nixon's plan for Vietnamization was a continuation of the governmental policy of containment or something totally different? Explain.

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## CWA 4.14 – The Legacy of the Vietnam War

*Background:* The war in Vietnam had many and far-reaching effects. In addition to the hundreds of thousands lives lost, those who returned home struggled to survive in civil society. The end of the war brought real change to the American government and reunified Vietnam under communist rule. Finally, environmental damage has had a profound effect on both the Vietnamese landscape and the people who survived the war.

More than 58,000 American troops died during the conflict. Many more soldiers, sailors, airmen, and Marines returned home permanently disabled, sick, or suffering from mental and emotional distress. Many veterans reported a variety of health problems and concerns, which some of them attributed to their exposure to Agent Orange or other herbicides. Unlike veterans coming home from WWII or Korea, American veterans from Vietnam came home to a society that did not, by and large, support their mission. Some anti-war protestors believed veterans were war-criminals; instead of welcoming the soldiers home, they treated them with antipathy or outright hatred. Popular opinion had turned so strongly against military intervention, the government passed laws and implemented policies designed to make sure the country would never again commit itself to this kind of war, especially a war that lacked Congressional oversight.

In Vietnam, the end of the war reunified the country under communist rule. Many South Vietnamese citizens who feared for their safety had to flee the country and became war refugees. Decades after the end of the war, the country's landscape still contains visible signs of the conflict and many of the people and their bodies have been permanently disfigured because of the environmental impact of the weapons during the war.

Directions: Review each of the following sources. As you review each source, be prepared to discuss with your group your answers to the following questions:

1. What is most interesting, puzzling, or important about this source?
2. What does this source tell you about the legacy, or long-term impact of the Vietnam War?



## CWA 4.14 – The Legacy of the Vietnam War (Veterans)

### American Wounded & Casualties of the Vietnam War

#### Sources:

- *Statistical Information about Fatal Casualties of the Vietnam War*, National Archives, <http://www.archives.gov/research/military/vietnam-war/casualty-statistics.html#category>.
- *Diseases associated with Agent Orange Exposure*: Dept. of Veterans' Affairs: <http://www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures/agentorange/diseases.asp>.
- *Image: An Air Force honor guard pallbearers carrying the casket of an MIA away from a C-141 Starlifter aircraft are framed by a saluting arm.* The C-141 transported the remains of POW's and MIA's from North Vietnam, 03/29/1977. Source: National Archives, ARC Identifier # 6375756.



Wounded		Casualties					
Total Severely Disabled	75,000	By Category	Number	By Service	Number	By Race	Number
		Accident	9,107	Air Force	2,586	Amer. Indian / Alaska Native	226
Total 100% Disabled	23,214	Declared Dead	1,201	Army	38,224	Asian	139
Lost one or more limbs	6,364	Dead of Wounds	5,299	Coast Guard	7	Black or African American	7,243
Partial list of diseases associated with Agent Orange Exposure: Cancer (Leukemia, Myeloma, Prostate, Respiratory, Soft Tissue sarcomas), Diabetes, Hodgkin's Disease, Ischemic Heart Disease, Neuropathy,		Homicide	236	Marines	14,844	Hispanic one-race	349
		Illness	938	Navy	2,559	Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander	229
		Killed in Action	40,934			Non-Hispanic more than one-race	204
		Presumed Dead (Remains recovered)	32			White	49,830
		Presumed Dead (Remains not recovered)	91				
		Self-inflicted	382				
<b>Total Records</b>	<b>303,704</b>	<b>Total Records</b>	<b>58, 220</b>	<b>Total Records</b>	<b>58,220</b>	<b>Total Records</b>	<b>58,220</b>

## CWA 4.14 – The Legacy of the Vietnam War (War Powers Resolution, page 1)

Background: On November 7, 1973, through a Joint Resolution, Congress passed the War Powers Act, which checks the President's power to commit troops into battle without Congressional consent. The resolution was passed over President Richard Nixon's veto; every president since has questioned its constitutionality. An excerpt is included below.

Source: *The Avalon Project at Yale University*, [http://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th\\_century/warpower.asp](http://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/warpower.asp)



*D.C., Washington - Capitol - Exterior - Night View of S.E. front on rainy night, 1919. Source: Library of Congress, <http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/2005681020/>*

### Purpose and Policy

#### SEC. 2.

a. It is the purpose of this joint resolution to fulfill the intent of the framers of the Constitution of the United States and insure that the collective judgment of both the Congress and the President will apply to the introduction of United States Armed Forces into hostilities, or into situations where imminent involvement in hostilities is clearly indicated by the circumstances, and to the continued use of such forces in hostilities or in such situations.

b. Under article I, section 8, of the Constitution, it is specifically provided that the Congress shall have the power to make all laws necessary and proper for carrying into execution, not only its own powers but also all other powers vested by the Constitution in the Government of the United States, or in any department or officer thereof.

c. The constitutional powers of the President as Commander-in-Chief to introduce United States Armed Forces into hostilities, or into situations where imminent involvement in hostilities is clearly indicated by the circumstances, are exercised only pursuant to (1) a declaration of war, (2) specific statutory authorization, or (3) a national emergency created by attack upon the United States, its territories or possessions, or its armed forces.

### Consultation

**SEC. 3.** The President in every possible instance shall consult with Congress before introducing United States Armed Forces into hostilities or into situation where imminent involvement in hostilities is clearly indicated by the circumstances, and after every such introduction shall consult regularly with the Congress until United States Armed Forces are no longer engaged in hostilities or have been removed from such situations.

**CWA 4.14 – The Legacy of the Vietnam War** (War Powers Resolution, page 2)**Reporting**

**SEC. 4.** (a) In the absence of a declaration of war, in any case in which United States Armed Forces are introduced--

- (1) into hostilities or into situations where imminent involvement in hostilities is clearly indicated by the circumstances;
- (2) into the territory, airspace or waters of a foreign nation, while equipped for combat, except for deployments which relate solely to supply, replacement, repair, or training of such forces; or
- (3) in numbers which substantially enlarge United States Armed Forces equipped for combat already located in a foreign nation; the president shall submit within 48 hours to the Speaker of the House of Representatives and to the President pro tempore of the Senate a report, in writing....

**Congressional Action**

**SEC. 5.** (c) ... at any time that United States Armed Forces are engaged in hostilities outside the territory of the United States, its possessions and territories without a declaration of war or specific statutory authorization, such forces shall be removed by the President if the Congress so directs by concurrent resolution.



*Photograph of Private First Class Russell R. Widdifield in Vietnam, 1969. Source: National Archives, ARC Identifier 532493.*



## CWA 4.14 – The Legacy of the Vietnam War (Refugees)

*After the fall of Saigon and the Communist re-unification of Vietnam in the mid-1970s, many South Vietnamese citizens and people from neighboring Laos and Cambodia fled the nation. Close to 2 million became known as “boat people refugees” because they tried to sail across the Pacific Ocean on small boats. The excerpt below is from a refugee’s memoir. He explained what changed under this Communist government and how that motivated his desire to flee to the United States.*



*South China Sea...Crewmen of the amphibious cargo ship USS Durham (LKA-114) take Vietnamese refugees aboard a small craft. The refugees will be transferred later by mechanized landing craft (LCM) to the freighter Transcolorado., 04/03/1975. Source: National Archives, ARC Identifier # 558518.*

From the day of liberation to the day I left, it was three years. Life under the Communists was so hard compared with before. Every three to six months, the Communists would do an inventory of everything in our house. People owned these things, but the government controlled it. In that sense, it belonged to the Party and the nation. The reason why I, my family, and other people decided to escape from Vietnam was that we didn’t own anything at all.

Food prices increased. It became hard to get work, and finally we could not work. We could not freely buy rice. Everything belonged to the government cooperative. Under their control, even rice became scarce. A person had to have a ticket to buy everything.

Each family had a ration ticket book for rice, meat, milk, things like that. When a person went to the government cooperative, they gave him some rice and took the ration ticket. They gave the buyer what they had, but they did not have everything. We were authorized to buy up to a certain limit, but it was not enough for us. That’s the reason we had to buy outside the cooperative, on the black market. Because we had insufficient rice, we had to buy other things outside, such as corn and manioc. Still, it was not enough, so we had to add water and make soups of rice. That made people dissatisfied. That’s why we and so many others turned to unlawful or black- market behavior.

*Source: “Mr. Liem Escape from Ban Me Thuot: 1975-1978” in James M. Freeman Hearts of Sorrow: Vietnamese-American Lives (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1989) P.277-278.*



*Vietnam. Vietnamese children of the Phong Dien refugee hamlet peer through a fence. There are 126 families, 10 sisters, 250 children from 6 years to 15, and 115 children under 6 years old in the village., 01/12/1967. Source: National Archives, ARC Identifier # 532507*



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## CWA 4.14 – What did the United States Lose in Vietnam?

**Length:** 3-5 pages

**Due Date:**

**California History-Social Science Standards:**

11.9 Students analyze U.S. foreign policy since World War II

11.11 Students analyze the major social problems and domestic policy issues in contemporary American society.

**Common Core State Standards:**

WHST 1 Write arguments focused on *discipline-specific content*.

WHST 2 Write informative/explanatory texts, including the narration of historical events, scientific procedures/experiments, or technical processes.

WHST 4 Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

WHST 7 Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects to answer a question (including a self-generated question) or solve a problem; narrow or broaden the inquiry when appropriate; synthesize multiple sources on the subject, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation.

**Background:** Over the course of this lesson you have learned about how and why America became involved in the war in Vietnam. You have studied the Cold War interests that contributed to American policies and many of the factors that made the war challenging for American soldiers. You have also learned about the effects of the war on the home front, in terms of the draft and the anti-war movement, for example. Finally, you have surveyed the consequences of becoming involved in the war. Now your job is to put all of the different pieces together to construct an analytical essay.

**Question:** What did the United States lose in Vietnam? Consider the reasons the United States entered the war, the methods the military employed to fight the communists, the sacrifices made by those touched by the war, public support for the war and the American government before, during, and after the war, relationships with American allies and enemies, and the ongoing Cold War efforts. The United States lost the Vietnam War, but the cost of the conflict extended well beyond the battlefields of Southeast Asia. What, specifically, did the US lose and what were the consequences of that loss?

**Task:** Construct a written argument in a multi-paragraph essay in which you:

1. Present a clear thesis in your introduction that answers the question above.
2. Provide evidence that supports your thesis.
3. Analyze how that evidence supports your thesis.
4. Conclude your argument in a manner consistent with your thesis.

**Vocabulary:** Use at least 5 of the 12 terms correctly within your essay to help support your thesis:

Domino Theory, Vietnamization, Silent Majority, Deferment, Search and Rescue, Agent Orange, Refugees, War Powers, Escalation, My Lai, Tonkin Gulf, Tet Offensive, War of Attrition.

## CWA 4.14 – Organizing your Evidence: What did the United States Lose in Vietnam?

### Organizing Evidence:

Before starting to write your paper, it's important to first develop your argument by selecting relevant evidence, analyzing what the evidence you've selected means, and drafting a thesis. The basis of good historical analysis is answering questions with arguments that are supported by evidence. Initially, it may be easiest to start by rephrasing the questions into an argument based on the evidence available, omitting any words that imply a personal opinion to create a more authoritative argument.

For example, consider the following question:

"How did American citizens express their opposition to the Vietnam War?"

What evidence can we find that could begin to provide an answer to this question? Consider the following, all taken from **CWA 4.12 – How Can We Stop the War?**

- Many Americans marched and held rallies to speak out against the war.
- Prominent Americans, such as Martin Luther King, gave speeches to bring attention to the anti-war cause.
- Vietnam veterans, such as John Kerry, testified before Congress.

Using that as a model, consider the essay question at hand, "What did the United States Lose in Vietnam?"

Reviewing all your notes and handouts, briefly list below all the evidence you can find that could begin to answer the question:



*Washington, D.C. Anti-Vietnam Demonstration. Protesters sit on the wall around their bonfire after spending the night at the Pentagon's mall entrance., 10/22/1967. Source: National Archives, ARC Identifier 530619.*

After you've completed your list, compare your list with your neighbor. Share feedback, questions, and concerns.

## CWA 4.14 – Analyzing Evidence: What did the United States Lose in Vietnam?

How to Organize, Evaluate, and Analyze your Evidence

After you've completed your first selection of evidence, you'll need to carefully review it to make sure it's relevant, organize it into categories or themes, and analyze it to determine the evidence's overall significance or importance.

### 1. Evaluate the Relevance of your Evidence

Carefully review your evidence to make sure that you've selected information that is closely related to the topic at hand, and more specifically, the essay question: *What did the United States Lose in Vietnam?*

For example, suppose you were writing a paper based upon the following argument: "Was the Vietnam draft fair?" Suppose as well that you've selected the following evidence as relevant to your argument: 1) Women could not be drafted; 2) Citizens could defer their service by going to college; 3) Religious leaders could avoid the draft; and 4) We do not have a draft today. While three out of these four pieces of evidence are on point, one is not directly related to the unfairness of the draft during the war. Which one is not relevant?

Before moving on, review the evidence you've selected for your assigned topic: What did the United States Lose in Vietnam? Which evidence is most relevant? Is there any evidence that is not related? Do you have enough evidence to support your thesis? Discard any unrelated evidence and replace, as necessary with closely related information.

## CWA 4.14 – Organizing Evidence: What did the United States Lose in Vietnam?

### Distinguishing Between Main and Supporting Evidence

When writing body paragraphs, you'll want to use multiple sentences of evidence on the same topic to provide depth and prove your **claims**, or main parts of your argument that support your thesis. Along with the **main evidence** supporting each claim, you'll want to make use of additional and usually more detailed pieces of evidence on the same topic, which become your **supporting evidence**. *Often, the main evidence is a more general statement and the supporting evidence is more specific, such as a particular quote or statistic.*

#### Practice: Organizing Main & Supporting Evidence

- Let's return to our original practice argument: "By marching in the streets, testifying before Congress, and support from popular leaders, American citizens opposed the Vietnam War."
- Review the following list of evidence and mark each as either Main Evidence (ME – general statement) or Supporting Evidence (SE – specific details, such as quotes, events, or statistics).
 

\_\_\_\_ Protestors held public rallies, speeches, and marches.

\_\_\_\_ Activists testified and lobbied their legislators.

\_\_\_\_ Martin Luther King, Jr. called for an end to the Vietnam War at a speech before the Clergy and Laymen Concerned about Vietnam in New York in 1967.

\_\_\_\_ In 1971, Vietnam veteran John Kerry testified before Congress in opposition to the war.
- Next, draw lines to connect the Main Evidence to its related Specific Evidence.
- Consider any claims someone could make against this thesis and evidence. How would you counter these claims?
- Turn to your neighbor to compare your work. Discuss any differences.

#### For Real: Organizing Main & Supporting Evidence

- Write your argument statement / thesis in response to the question, "What did the US lose in Vietnam?"
- List all evidence you've already selected, organized, and confirmed as relevant. Next to each piece of evidence, mark either ME (for main evidence) or SE (for supporting evidence).
- Draw lines to connect the Main Evidence to its related Specific Evidence.
- Consider any claims someone could make against this thesis and evidence. How would you counter these claims?
- Turn to your neighbor to compare your work. Share any questions / suggestions / feedback.



## CWA 4.14 – Developing an Argument: What did the United States Lose in Vietnam?

### Developing a Thesis

A compelling and concise thesis is one of the most important parts of an argument. A good thesis directly answers the question at hand, makes an argument that can be supported by evidence, and provides a clear vision for what follows. Although thesis statements are usually only one to two sentences in length, they are often difficult to get right and may need to be revised as an argument is drafted.

For example, let's return to the following question about opposition to the war:

"How did American citizens express their opposition to the Vietnam War?"

If you remember, we had selected the following evidence as important:

- Many Americans marched and held rallies to speak out against the war.
- Prominent Americans, such as Martin Luther King, gave speeches to bring attention to the anti-war cause.
- Vietnam veterans, such as John Kerry, testified before Congress.

Using that evidence as our guide, let's write a first draft in response to the question, informed by the evidence listed above:

"I believe American citizens expressed their opposition to the Vietnam War through public events, speeches, and testimony before Congress."

After that, let's refine the thesis by taking out any words or phrases that imply a personal opinion:

"American citizens expressed their opposition to the Vietnam War through public events, speeches, and Congressional testimony."

Finally, let's customize the thesis by changing the language from the exact wording from the question to something that's perhaps more interesting or persuasive:

"By marching in the streets, testifying before Congress, and support from popular leaders, American citizens opposed the Vietnam War."



*Vietnam War Protestors – Veterans for Peace March on the Pentagon, October 21, 1967, Frank Wolfe, Photographer. Source: Lyndon Baines Johnson Presidential Library, Serial # 7049-30*

## CWA 4.14 – Writing an Argument: What did the United States Lose in Vietnam?

### Practice: Developing a Thesis

1. Consider the following question: "How were American troops affected by their service in the Vietnam War?"
2. Briefly list relevant evidence (if necessary, refer to your notes and handouts from **CWA4.8 – War of Attrition**, **CWA4.10 – What happened at My Lai?**, **CWA4.11 – Who fought in Vietnam?**, **CWA4.12 – How Can We Stop the War?**, and **CWA4.14 – The Legacy of the Vietnam War**). Select any evidence that directly relates to the impact of the war on American veterans, and list it below in bulleted form:
3. Next, write a draft response to the question, informed by the evidence you've listed above:
4. Finally, refine the thesis by 1) taking out any words or phrases that imply a personal opinion, and 2) changing the language from the exact wording from the question to something that's perhaps more interesting or persuasive:
5. Switch papers with another student. Does their thesis: a) answer the question? b) reference the evidence they've listed? c) avoid the use of words that imply personal opinion?, and d) present their position in a compelling or interesting fashion? Explain.

### For Real: Developing your Thesis

4. Your question: "What did the United States lose in Vietnam?"
5. Review all of your notes, handouts, and readings from your study of the Vietnam War. Select any evidence that directly relates to what the US lost in the Vietnam War, and list it below in bulleted form:
6. Next, write a draft response to the question, informed by the evidence you've listed above:
7. Finally, refine the thesis by 1) taking out any words or phrases that imply a personal opinion, and 2) changing the language from the exact wording from the question to something that's perhaps more interesting or persuasive:
8. Switch papers with another student. Does their thesis: a) answer the question? b) reference the evidence they've listed? c) avoid the use of words that imply personal opinion?, and d) present their position in a compelling or interesting fashion? Explain.

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## CWA 4.14 – Writing an Argument: What did the United States Lose in Vietnam?

### Writing the Introduction

Writing an introduction to an argument is both very important and often difficult for writers. Before you begin, you'll want to be clear about your thesis (and that the thesis actually answers the question at hand). You'll also want to have a vision of where your argument is headed – What are your claims that support your thesis? What evidence do you have to prove or support those claims? Have you considered how someone could argue against your thesis? If so, what evidence would you cite to counter their claims? Finally, you'll want to think ahead of time about what you could write that would engage or interest any potential readers so they'll actually keep reading your argument.

#### Step 1: Historical Background

The first thing you want to do is set the stage for your readers so they understand the historical context of your argument. To do that, you'll want to write a couple sentences clarifying what happened, who was involved, where and when it happened, why it happened, and why it's important without mentioning yourself, your reader, or the essay you're writing.

For example, here's some historical context for the thesis, "The system for drafting soldiers to fight in Vietnam was unfair." (When, where, why, what, who, and why important added for clarification only).

*From 1948 -1973 (WHEN), the United States (WHERE) filled vacancies in its military (WHY) through a draft (WHAT). Because the US couldn't recruit enough volunteers, young male American citizens (WHO) were selected to serve in order to provide for the national defense (WHY IMPORTANT).*

#### Step 2: Explanation of the Basics

If necessary, you'll next need to introduce your concepts and any key terms. For example, using the draft thesis, you might want to include a sentence like this, which explains three concepts / terms - conscription, age-based draft, and lottery-based draft:

*Until 1969, conscription in the United States was age-based – young men were drafted based upon their ages, with the oldest in the group selected first. In 1969, the draft switched to a lottery system, where the draftees were selected based upon a random drawing of the day of the month they were born.*

#### Step 3: Thesis Statement & Main Evidence or Claims

After writing your historical context and explaining any terms or concepts, you'll write your thesis, followed by a preview of your main evidence, or claims, which will support your thesis and become the body of your argument in one or more sentences. Using the same draft example from above, a thesis and claims might look like this:

*The system for drafting soldiers to fight in Vietnam was unfair. Not every citizen had an equal chance to be drafted – many avoided the draft because of their personal characteristics, their religious beliefs, or if they could afford to attend and get admitted to college.*

#### Step 4: Write your Introduction

Following Steps 1-3 above, write a draft introduction for your argument in response to "What Did the US Lose in Vietnam?"

Switch papers with another student. Share feedback, questions, or suggestions.

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## CWA 4.14 – Writing an Argument: What did the United States Lose in Vietnam?

### Writing the Conclusion

While it can be a challenge to write a conclusion without repeating what you've already written earlier in your argument, it provides you with your last opportunity to convince your reader that your argument is both correct and important. Like the introduction, the conclusion usually includes your thesis and a summary of your main evidence. The conclusion also provides the opportunity for you to really drive home the importance of your argument.

#### Step 1: The Thesis, Rewritten.

In the conclusion, the first thing you'll want to do is to restate your thesis in different words in order to reinforce your main point. If you're having trouble doing this, consider: What, exactly, have you proven? What synonyms can you use to rephrase your main idea? For example, here's how we might rewrite our original draft thesis, "The system for drafting soldiers to fight in Vietnam was unfair."

*Conscription in the United States during the Vietnam War did not offer all citizens an equal opportunity to avoid service.*

#### Step 2: The Evidence, Summarized.

Next, you'll want to sum up your main evidence or claims in a concise and hopefully new way. Continuing with the draft example, consider the following:

*Citizens could defer or exempt themselves from military service by claiming religious objections, citing their gender, or just going to college.*

#### Step 3: The Significance

After restating your thesis and summarizing your evidence, write a couple sentences to really highlight the significance of your argument. Why does it matter? Why is it interesting? Why should the reader care? For example:

*The foundation of American culture, democracy, and service is based upon a shared belief in equality. Giving some citizens the opportunity to avoid military service during a time of war damaged American trust in their government and led to deep divisions between its people.*

#### Step 4: Write your Conclusion

Following Steps 1-3 above, write a draft conclusion for your argument in response to "What Did the US Lose in Vietnam?"

Switch papers with another student. Share feedback, questions, or suggestions.



## CWA 4.14 – Writing an Argument: What did the United States Lose in Vietnam?

### Grading Sheet

Name:	Points Possible	Points Earned
<b>Introduction:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Does it include historical context and definitions of key terms or concepts?</li> <li>The thesis: is it clear, does it answer the question, and is it the main idea of the argument?</li> </ul>		
<b>Body Paragraphs:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Are the claims clearly written and support the thesis?</li> <li>Do the paragraphs stay focused on their individual claims?</li> </ul>		
<b>Use of Evidence:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Is the evidence clear, sufficient, cited, and accurate?</li> <li>Is the evidence organized with supporting details to further clarify or prove claims?</li> <li>Is there analysis provided to clearly explain how the evidence supports individual claims and the thesis?</li> <li>Is evidence used to counter opposing claims?</li> </ul>		
<b>Conclusion:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The thesis: is it restated in other words?</li> <li>Does it include a summary of the evidence?</li> <li>Is the significance clear?</li> </ul>		
<b>Quality of Writing &amp; Presentation:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Does the author maintain a formal tone or style, avoiding use of the first person?</li> <li>Is each paragraph focused on only one topic?</li> <li>Are the sentences understandable and logically organized?</li> <li>Does the author use proper grammar, spelling, and punctuation?</li> <li>Is the paper properly formatted?</li> </ul>		
<b>Additional Comments:</b>		
<b>Totals:</b>		