



1960s AND 1970s LESSON PLANS

The Vietnam Era 1967–71 War and Antiwar Sentiment Unit Introduction and Lesson Overview

by Teresa Boruff-Young

Introduction

These lessons are part of a U.S. Department of Education Teaching American History Grant to the Brown County Schools, Nashville, Indiana, in collaboration with the Department of History, Indiana University–Purdue University at Indianapolis and the Indiana Historical Society.

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This topic has long interested me. I was a high school student during the years 1967 to 1971 and participated in discussions and protests with school groups and on the campus of Indiana University. I knew young men who went to fight in the war and listened to accounts of their experiences. But in the years since the war, I have realized that I need to look back at the war with a new perspective. I wanted to know why some Americans reacted to it as they did. Were protests simply an emotional reaction to war in any form or were they a specific opposition to the United States' involvement in Vietnam? I needed to know the facts about policies and decisions made by the American president and congress and how these decisions played out in Vietnam. I also realized that high school students today do not know about the Vietnam War or they do not care about it.

I believe this period in the history of our nation is especially important today as war continues in the Middle East and elsewhere. I hope to pique students' interest by using authentic materials that will personalize the war for them. This unit will, therefore, combine my personal interests in the Vietnam War with information that will help students understand the war and time period. Once students have a basic understanding of the Vietnam War era, they will be asked to participate in a class discussion in which they draw comparisons to present-day conflicts.

Essential Question

How did the Vietnam War impact Americans?

Grade level

High School

Learning Objectives

This unit focuses on the Vietnam War and its impact on Americans during the years 1967 to 1971. While students will learn about the war in general, the emphasis will be on how Americans at home reacted to it, especially those who opposed the war.

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The lessons in this unit will increase students' knowledge of the Vietnam War, from a basic understanding of a few important events to an analysis of several events and the impact they had on the American public. The lessons will reach students through tactile, kinetic, written, oral, aural, and visual methods to accommodate various learning styles. The six lessons are organized so that students build knowledge from one lesson to the next.

Students will:

- Study newspaper articles, political cartoons, and editorials from newspapers such as the *Bloomington Herald-Telephone* and Indiana University's *Indiana Daily Student* in order to understand what information was given to the American people and how they reacted to it.
- Read comments from Indiana senator Vance Hartke, who opposed the war, newsletters and communiqués from the Hoosiers for Peace organization, and letters from an Indiana nurse who was stationed in Vietnam.
- Interview Vietnam veterans about their experiences using guidelines provided by the Veterans History Project and submit these interviews to the Library of Congress.
- Use interview materials and research to create documentaries about Vietnam War veterans.

At the end of this unit students will be able to:

- Identify important dates during the Vietnam War and plot them on a time line.
- Make inferences about the Vietnam experience through observations of photographs.
- Analyze and state sentiments of people living in Indiana toward the Vietnam War.
- Identify and summarize antiwar sentiments, specifically in Indiana.

- Interpret newspaper articles and primary sources about opposition to the war.
- Connect antiwar activities to simultaneous military actions.
- Make inferences about the experiences of Americans involved in the war as well as those on the home front.
- Analyze individual experiences during the war.
- Explain the connection between the experiences of one individual to specific events in the war.
- Prepare and conduct an interview with a veteran.
- Determine appropriate questions for an oral history interview with a Vietnam War veteran.
- Use technology to create a documentary.

Academic Standards for the Social Studies

- Indiana Standards:
 - High School, U.S. History, Standard 7, The United States in Troubled Times: 1960 to 1980 (USH 7.3, 7.4, and 7.10)
- National Standards (National Council for Social Studies): II Time, Continuity, and Change; III People, Places, and Environments; V Individuals, Groups, and Institutions; VI Power, Authority, and Governance; and X Civic Ideals and Practices

Social Studies/Historical Concepts

Vietnam War and antiwar protest

Unit Length

Multiple class periods (approximately fourteen eighty-minute periods) are required to complete all lessons in this unit of study. Refer to the specific lessons for more details on time requirements..