



## 1960s AND 1970s LESSON PLANS

# The Vietnam Era 1967–71 War and Antiwar Sentiment Lesson Five – Veterans History Project

*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.

In this lesson students will be assigned the task of interviewing Vietnam War veterans and submitting digital recordings of these oral history interviews to the Library of Congress Veterans History Project.

### Essential Question

How did the Vietnam War impact Americans?

### Grade Level

High School

### 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

### Time Required

Multiple class periods. Additional work outside of class is required to complete this lesson.

### Objectives

At the conclusion of the lesson students will be able to:

- Determine what questions are appropriate to ask in an interview.
- Demonstrate how to ask for information in an interview in a manner that will elicit a response.
- Conduct a sensitive and respectful interview with a Vietnam War veteran.
- Identify information that is important to include in the Veterans History Project interviews and submission materials.

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- Collect and assemble material from the interview to submit to the Veterans History Project.

### Materials Required

- The Library of Congress Veterans History Project Field Kit
  - Download the VHP Field Kit from the Library of Congress Web site at <http://www.loc.gov/vets/kitmenu.html> (accessed February 15, 2011).
  - If necessary, make photocopies of the kit for student use.
- Digital video and audio recording equipment for student use
- Student Handout
  - Make photocopies of the handout provided on page four of this lesson, one copy per student.

### Procedure

- Preactivity Preparation: The instructor should contact local veterans' organizations to identify Vietnam War veterans who may be willing to be interviewed by students.
  - Be sure to explain that this is a classroom project and that the materials collected will be submitted to the Library of Congress as part of the Veterans History Project.
  - Make sure the individuals know that the interviews will be recorded, transcribed, and made available for use by students and members of the public.
    - Consult the Veterans History Project Field Kit for details on obtaining written permissions.
  - Discuss your plans with school administrators to determine if any additional requirements must be met before contacting the veterans and setting dates for the interviews.

- Introduction: Begin the lesson by discussing the goals and mission of the Veterans History Project with the students.
  - Explain that the students will be conducting oral history interviews to submit to the Veterans History Project.
  - Students may identify a Vietnam War veteran they know or contact the individuals you have identified who are willing to participate.
- Student Homework Assignments
  - Watch two evenings of network news to identify the content and format of on-camera interviews.
  - Review the contents of the Veterans History Project Field Kit to become more familiar with this project's procedures.
  - Prepare a written list of ten questions that are important to ask a Vietnam War veteran in order to better understand the war.
    - Students will need to understand that some Vietnam War veterans may not be willing to talk about the details of their experiences and that their wishes should be respected.
- Prepare for the Interviews
  - Conduct a class discussion to identify questions and interview techniques that might be effective in the interviews with the veterans.
  - Create an outline for students to use during the interviews.
    - Include sample questions as well as follow-up questions.
  - Divide the class into small teams of two to four students.

- Have teams assign roles for the project.
  - Assignments would include an on-camera spokesperson, camera persons, sound recording specialists, transcribers, researchers, and still photographers, etc.
  - In some cases, students will have multiple roles on their team.
- Ask students to set up the interviews with the Vietnam War veterans.
- Have student teams conduct the interviews following the procedures outlined in class and in the Veterans History Project Field Kit.
- Have students prepare their oral history interviews for submission to the Veterans History Project at the Library of Congress following the instructions provided in the field kit.
- Postinterview Wrap-up
  - Conduct a class discussion to consider the responses obtained during the interviews.
  - Students may want to invite the veterans involved in the project to a postinterview reception to meet each other and celebrate the conclusion of the assignment.

### **Assessment**

Compilation of a Veterans History Project interview and submission of materials to the project at the Library of Congress will indicate successful completion of the lesson.

# LESSON FIVE STUDENT HANDOUT

## Veterans History Project

### Instructions

- Watch the evening news for two nights and consider the content and format of the interviews. Note how people are questioned and what kinds of questions are asked.
  - Does the interviewer ask the same question more than once, but in a different way?
  - Why might he/she do this? Are any of the people being questioned hostile toward the interviewer? Why?
  - Bring your notes to class for further discussion.
- Using information you have learned about the Vietnam War, consider why some Vietnam War veterans might not want to be interviewed.
  - How would you handle a situation when someone you were interviewing refused to answer a question?
  - Think about how you might change the wording of a question so that it might be answered.
- Discuss with your classmates some boundaries to set regarding what you should and should not ask a veteran during the interview.
- Identify other people who were alive during the Vietnam War era who might agree to an interview and get their perspective on the climate in the United States at that time.
- Work with a small group or partner to find a Vietnam War veteran to interview or ask your teacher for suggestions.
- Study the Veterans History Project Field Kit from the Library of Congress to understand the guidelines and expectations of the project. To download and print copy of the field kit and forms, go to <http://www.loc.gov/vetskitmenu.html> (accessed February 28, 2011).
- Conduct an interview with a Vietnam War veteran.
- Prepare the interview for submission to the Library of Congress Veterans History Project as described in the VHP field kit.