

Teachers' Guide

Module 2

CONFLICT ON THE HOME FRONT

The Vietnam War was fought on the home front as well as in Vietnam. In 1968 the United States was divided with intensity, much as it was in 1861 at the start of the Civil War. In many ways, 1968 was one of the most tragic in American history. The moral and social fiber of the United States was stretched almost to the breaking point, beginning with the Tet Offensive early in the year, followed by the assassinations of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., and the presidential hopeful Senator Robert Kennedy, the ensuing race riots in the wake of Dr. King's murder, the escalation of war protests on college campuses across the country, and the tumultuous Chicago Democratic National Convention. This module uses primary source materials (e.g., newspaper articles, video clips, popular music) to help students understand the breadth and depth of feelings and opinions for and against continued U.S. involvement in Vietnam.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

At the end of this lesson, students will be able to:

- Analyze newspaper articles, video clips, and popular music to identify how divided the American public was about continued participation in the Vietnam War.
- Evaluate the role of the media and the coverage of the war.
- Discuss the growth of the anti-war movement on college campuses.
- Describe the nature and extent of public opposition to the war between 1965 and 1971.
- Discuss the role of popular culture in both reflecting and shaping public opinion.
- Explain the significance of 1968 in U.S. history.
- Identify key personalities, terms, and events of 1968.
- Determine the relationship between the various forces of change that affected the United States in 1968.
- Consider how the Vietnam War was part of a larger cultural and social phenomenon.
- Empathize with people who experienced the turmoils of 1968.
- Discuss the effect of the turbulence of the era on the nation as a whole.
- Interview veterans of the peace movement and/or Vietnam veterans, and critically analyze their comments.
- Discuss the multifaceted nature of the anti-war movements.
- Discuss the role that many Vietnam veterans played supporting and fostering mainstream public support for the anti-war movement.

Note: There is a wealth of material about conflict on the home front. You may choose any combination of these assignments for your students to complete.

MATERIALS

The *Echoes From The Wall* Teachers' Guide should be used in conjunction with a history textbook. You also will need:

- Excerpts from the Port Huron Statement (module 2, appendix A)

- Dear Abby column (module 2, appendix B)
- Lyrics to Where Have All The Flowers Gone?, by Pete Seeger (module 2, appendix C)
- Lyrics to Ohio, by Neil Young (module 2, appendix D)
- Excerpts from Hell No We Won't Go, by Sherry Gershon Gottlieb (module 2, appendix E)
- Excerpts from The Strength Not To Fight, by James W. Tollefson (module 2, appendix F)

ACTIVITY: WHAT SONGS ABOUT THE VIETNAM WAR SAY ABOUT SUPPORT FOR THE WAR

Have students read or listen to the following songs:

- The Ballad of the Green Berets, by Barry Sadler
- Fortunate Son, by John Fogerty
- Where Have All The Flowers Gone?, by Pete Seeger
- Blowin' In The Wind, by Bob Dylan
- What's Goin' On?, by Marvin Gaye
- Ohio, by Neil Young
- Fixin' to Die Rag, by Country Joe McDonald

Have students discuss or write about what the lyrics of these songs imply about popular opinion during the war.

ACTIVITY: PRO-WAR AND ANTI-WAR ARGUMENTS

Use the Internet or a library to find newspaper and magazine accounts from the 1960s describing the pro- and anti-war arguments. Then choose any of the following activities for the students to discuss in class:

- Two popular bumper stickers of the 1960s were: "My country — right or wrong" and "America — love it or leave it." What do students think these slogans mean, and what kinds of people might have used them in the Vietnam War era?
- Study the Kent State photographs, and ask students for their reaction.
- How do students think that most people reacted to news of the events at Kent State interrupting television programs or appearing on the front page of the paper? What does the event suggest about the nation in 1970?
- Study the pictures of the girl burned by napalm, the sudden execution of a Vietcong (VC), and pictures of one week's U.S. dead in Life magazine. How do students think that most people reacted to these images interrupting television programs or appearing on the front pages of newspapers or in magazines?
- Pro- and anti-war sentiments often divided families and friends. (Many young men of draft age in the Vietnam War era had fathers who were veterans of World War II.) In what ways might those who supported the war, because the government asked them to support it, be connected to those who opposed it? What tensions would this create in families and society? How might these tensions be similar or different from tensions faced by American families and communities during the Civil War?

ACTIVITY: HISTORIC PRECEDENT FOR CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE

Lead a discussion based upon the following questions:

- Where did demonstration organizers get their ideas for staging protest marches and vigils?
- In what ways might the goals of the anti-war movement and the civil rights movement overlap?
- Youth of the 1950s were known as the "silent generation." What labels could be given to youth of the 1960s? What would your students call their generation?

ACTIVITY: INTERVIEWING EYEWITNESSES TO HISTORY

Use the guidelines in the "Oral History" section of the curriculum (module 3, appendix A) to locate and prepare for a classroom presentation by an activist in the anti-war movement and/or a veteran or veterans with perspectives and experience with the anti-war movement. Prepare the students to ask questions that explore pro- and anti-war arguments and the effect of the peace movement on society.

- If you have time, have two people representing opposing viewpoints (one who staunchly supported the war and one who opposed it) speak to the students on different days. (See guidelines for locating veterans in the "Oral History" section.)
- Have students discuss or write about what they learned from the presentations and interviews. Pose the question, "How is what you heard similar to or different from what you learned from reading histories or viewing documentaries on the subject?"

ACTIVITY: THE HISTORICAL HEAD, IMAGES FROM THE HOME FRONT

- Assign any of the following readings to students:
 - Passages in their U.S. history textbook that relate to 1968.
 - Selected passages from The Year The Dream Died: Revisiting 1968, by Jules Witcover.
 - Selected newspaper or periodical articles from 1968.
- Provide students with a copy of the 1968 Historical Head worksheet.
- Assign students the task of interviewing their parents about the experiences of family members during the Vietnam War as soldiers or protesters.
- Consider bringing to your class veterans of the different military services; veterans who served in different years (1962-1972); and veterans who can serve as role models to the students, such as elected officials or business people.

HISTORICAL HEAD WORKSHEET

Directions: This activity is to be completed based on the teacher-assigned readings. Please fill in the Historical Head space with ideas and images you have found in your readings and/or research. The images that you choose should reflect what you have learned about 1968. For example:

You may choose to select the thoughts and feelings of a student or a National Guardsman at Kent State University.

or

You might opt for the image of a pro-war demonstrator.

or

You might choose the image of a hippie placing a flower in the rifle stock of a soldier.

or

You may decide on another viewpoint that catches your interest.

Use the Hollow Head provided to complete the Historical Head assignment.

ACTIVITY: LEARNING LOG OR GUIDED CLASSROOM DISCUSSION MODULE SUMMARY

Encourage students to keep a reading-response log to record their reactions to what they read, hear, and see in this lesson. One of the difficulties they may have with the lesson is understanding the complexity of support for and opposition to the war. Keeping a reading-response log may help them clarify their thoughts in preparation for discussion.

Here are some questions you may wish to have students ponder in their learning logs:

- If you were a student in 1968, what do you think your position on U.S. involvement in the Vietnam War would have been?
- Are there things your country might ask you to do that you would refuse?
- Under what circumstances, if any, would you refuse to do what the law says you must do and engage in civil disobedience?
- What other examples in U.S. history can you cite of civil disobedience?
- In times of war, what do you think is the difference between civil disobedience and treason?
- What did the conscientious objectors and the draft evaders who left the country have in common? Had they given real thought to what they were doing? How do they differ? Were any or all of them justified in what they chose to do? Should any or all of them have gone to prison?
- If you were supporting the war, how would you have felt about the anti-war demonstrators circling the White House?

LEARNING LOG QUESTIONS

- If you were a reporter during the Vietnam War, what would you have said or written about U.S. involvement in the war?
- What do you think a reporter's duty is? How would you respond to the need to clear all information through official spokespersons?
- How should a reporter balance the public's need to know against the commander-in-chief's need to conduct and manage a war?
- Which of the various pro- and anti-war factions you studied would you join if you had been a student in 1968? Why?

ACTIVITY: ROLE OF THE MEDIA IN THE VIETNAM WAR

Have students read Reporting Vietnam, by William M. Hammond. Assign the learning log questions below. Then lead a discussion of the ways Presidents Johnson and Nixon reacted to media coverage of the war. Invite a journalist who reported during the Vietnam War to your class. Most journalists are terrific with students.

TEAM LEARNING

Note: This is a large module, and you may wish to assign more than one team to present lessons to their classmates.

TEAM ACTIVITY: CONFLICT ON THE HOME FRONT

Give one team the assignment of helping classmates understand the conflict that existed in our country surrounding U.S. participation in the Vietnam War. The war divided this nation as no other event since the Civil War. Throughout the Vietnam War era, there was a full spectrum of arguments about why the United States should or should not commit troops and resources to fighting in Vietnam. Despite spirited protests, American voters in 1972 overwhelmingly reelected Richard Nixon, who promised "peace with honor," rather than electing Democratic candidate George McGovern, who pledged to withdraw U.S. troops and end American involvement in Vietnam.

Help your students gain a better understanding of the complexity of the issues surrounding U.S. involvement in Vietnam and the depth of passions on both sides of the issue. Here are some suggestions on how you might do this. First, have your students use the Internet or library to:

- Locate newspaper and magazine accounts describing the pro- and anti-war arguments.
- View video clips or of anti-war demonstrations, anti-war teach-ins, and pro-war demonstrations.

After viewing this material, have your students:

- Debate the issue, "Resolved: the United States should commit troops, material, equipment, and military advisors to aid the South Vietnamese in fighting their war against the North Vietnamese."

Or

- Create a mock debate or public forum on both sides of the issue. Each person on the team should research the position taken by the person whose role s/he will play. Ask each student to dress like the person whose role s/he is are playing. Spokespersons may include:

Henry Kissinger
General William Westmoreland
President John F. Kennedy
President Richard M. Nixon
Senator William Fullbright
Jane Fonda
Tom Hayden

Dean Rusk
Robert McNamara
President Lyndon B. Johnson
General Alexander M. Haig, Jr.
Daniel Berrigan
Daniel Ellsberg
The Chicago Seven

TEAM ACTIVITY: DOCUMENTARY ABOUT PRO- AND ANTI-WAR DEMONSTRATIONS

- Direct students to create a documentary using source materials from the VVMF Education Website about unrest at home during the Vietnam War era. Have students include information about:
 - American protestors' visits to Hanoi;
 - the student demonstrations and related shootings at Kent State University;
 - the marches and protests in Washington, D.C.;
 - draft card burnings;

- burning the American flag; and
- demonstrations of support for U.S. involvement in Vietnam.
- Have students listen to popular songs from the Vietnam War era, such as Ballad of the Green Berets and Blowin' in the Wind and discuss how popular culture reflected and shaped the divided opinions about American involvement in the Vietnam War.
- Encourage students to use source material from www.teachvietnam.org relating to unrest at home during the Vietnam War. If the school has audio-visual equipment, students could videotape presentations by veterans and peace activists and use segments of the tape in their documentary.
- Students may describe the nature and extent of public opposition to the war between 1965 and 1971. Students may discuss the effect of the turbulence of the era on the nation as a whole.

Or

TEAM ACTIVITY: USING PRIMARY SOURCES TO LEARN ABOUT PRO- AND ANTI-WAR POSITIONS

Encourage interviews and/or invite people to speak to your class who took the following positions during the Vietnam War:

- a conscientious objector;
- someone who protested U.S. involvement in the Vietnam War; or
- someone who actively supported U.S. involvement in the Vietnam War.

Or

TEAM ACTIVITY: RADIO DOCUMENTARY ABOUT THE WAR AT HOME

Direct students to write the script for a radio documentary about disagreement over U.S. policy in Vietnam using multiple resources. As part of their script, have them create a commentary as reporters do on radio documentaries. Here are some suggestions for students creating the documentary:

- Explain the nature of the pro- and anti-war movements.
- Tell the story of a significant event or focus on a particular group (Vietnam Veterans Against the War, for example).
- Tape presentations by veterans and activists for the class and/or conduct interviews that may be taped for use in a documentary. (If students are creating a written script, these interviews may be transcribed.)
- Incorporate the lyrics from popular songs of the time into the script wherever they complement what is being said