

Teachers' Guide

Module 4

THE VIETNAMESE AND VIETNAM

Any history of the Vietnam War would be incomplete without a discussion of key players in North and South Vietnam and the history of that region. This module provides information on the leaders and decision makers in North and South Vietnam. This module discusses the effects of the war on the region. Primary sources are provided to help students understand the viewpoints of these key decision makers.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

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

- Identify the key players in North and South Vietnam during the Vietnam War era.
- Present both North Vietnam's and the United States' view on the Vietnam War.
- Analyze the historical impact of American attitudes concerning Asians on the conduct of the Vietnam War.
- Use primary source materials, information from oral history presentations, interviews with the Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN) veterans, and readings to discuss the make-up and morale of the ARVN forces and their relationship with their U.S. allies.
- Use primary source materials (e.g., letters, poems) and readings to discuss the make-up, morale, and experience of the VC and North Vietnamese Army (NVA) forces.
- Compare and contrast the treatment of NVA and VC prisoners by U.S. and ARVN forces to the treatment of U.S. prisoners by the North Vietnamese.
- Discuss the impact of the war on Vietnamese citizens.
- Discuss the basic philosophical, religious, and political beliefs that shaped Vietnamese society.
- Discuss the experience of the South Vietnamese civilians during the war.
- Discuss the experience of the North Vietnamese civilians during the war.

Materials

The *Echoes From The Wall* Teachers' Guide should be used in conjunction with a history textbook.

- Excerpts from Vietnam: A History, by Stanley Karnow (module 4, appendix A)
- Poem — Mourning the Death, by Hemorrhage, of A Child from Honai, by Basil T. Paquet (module 4, appendix B)
- Political Report of the Charter Committee delivered during the Fourth Congress of the Communist Party of Vietnam (module 4, appendix C)

ACTIVITY: KEY PLAYERS IN NORTH AND SOUTH VIETNAM

Use the Internet or library to locate images and information about the key players in North and South Vietnam. Students should read material about North and South Vietnam to understand the positions and major concerns of these key players.

Have your students write a paragraph identifying each of the following key players:

Pham Van Dong
General Vo Nguyen Giap
Le Duc Tho
Madame Ngo Dinh Nu

Ho Chi Minh
Duong Van Minh
Ngo Dinh Diem
Nguyen Cao Ky

ACTIVITY: CONTRASTING THE OFFICIAL NORTH VIETNAMESE VIEW WITH THE OFFICIAL U.S. VIEW

Instruct your students to research the views of North Vietnam. Have them write a paper discussing the official views of Ho Chi Minh and Robert McNamara, and what they think these leaders would have said to each other.

ACTIVITY: THE LEGACY OF AMERICAN ATTITUDES TOWARD ASIANS IN PREVIOUS WARS

Lead a discussion about the attitudes Americans displayed toward Asians in previous periods of history. Students might review material on the Boxer Rebellion, McKinley's remarks about Filipinos ("our little brown brothers"), and the treatment of Chinese railroad workers. Have students read War Without Mercy to gain a better understanding of attitudes in the Pacific during World War II. Have attitudes toward Asians been different from attitudes toward other foreign or immigrant groups? If so, why?

ACTIVITY: THE CULTURE OF VIETNAM

Have students read excerpts from The Vietnam Guidebook, by Barbara Cohen, Houghton Mifflin. This book provides material for discussing and understanding the culture, history, arts, and economy of Vietnam.

ACTIVITY: POEM FOR A CHILD FROM HONAI

Have students read the poem Mourning the Death, by Hemorrhage, of A Child from Honai, by Basil T. Paquet (module 4, appendix B), and reflect in their learning logs.

- How does the poet think governments view children in the war?
- What do you think the poet means by "And after the first death, the many must go unmourned?"
- What do you think is the difference, if any, between the "battles for the body politic" and the lives of ordinary people?

ACTIVITY: UNDERSTANDING OUR ALLIES IN SOUTH VIETNAM

Have students prepare a report on the South Vietnamese military forces. Use suggested readings from this module and oral history resources. Here are some suggestions for topics.

- Identify the South Vietnamese military and paramilitary forces. Describe how they worked with U.S. forces in Vietnam. You may write a historical overview of their evolution over the course of the war, or write about their involvement during a particular part of the war. You may choose to focus on a particular part of the military, such as the South Vietnamese Navy or the Hmong.
- If there is a Vietnamese community in your neighborhood, invite a veteran of the Vietnamese forces into your classroom. Review the material on the ARVN forces, and prepare questions to ask the speaker.

ACTIVITY: THE VC AND THE NVA

Have students prepare a report on the military forces fighting for North Vietnam, using suggested resources from this module. Here are some suggestions for topics.

- Identify the differences between the NVA and the VC.
- Discuss how the tactics of the VC and the NVA differed from those of the U.S. military.
- Compare the letters and poems written by North Vietnamese soldiers to the letters written by U.S. soldiers.
- Compare and contrast the attitudes and morale of both groups.

ACTIVITY: NORTH VIETNAMESE POWS

Have students compare and contrast the treatment of NVA and VC prisoners in Vietnamese or U.S. custody to the treatment of U.S. POWs by the North Vietnamese. How was the treatment similar? How was it different?

ACTIVITY: THE IMPACT OF THE WAR ON VIETNAMESE CIVILIANS

Have students review the information available on Vietnamese civilians and prepare a report on how the war affected their society and their day-to-day lives. Here are some suggestions:

- Describe, compare, and contrast the experiences of the civilians living in the cities of Vietnam with those living in the countryside. Identify some of the ways the war changed the lives of Vietnamese civilians.
- Describe the experiences of civilians living in North Vietnam. How were they similar or different from the experiences of civilians in South Vietnam?
- Describe the U.S. military's program to help win the "hearts and minds" of rural peasants in South Vietnam. How did it work? Did it succeed or fail? Why?

ACTIVITY: VIETNAMESE CULTURE AND THE WAR

Have students explore the religious, philosophical, and political beliefs of the Vietnamese people (e.g., Buddhism, Catholicism, Confucianism, Communism). How did these beliefs work together or conflict?

TEAM LEARNING

Team activity: the Vietnamese and Vietnam

The assignment is to have your students help each other understand the key players in North and South Vietnam during the war.

There are many ways students can complete this assignment. Using the Internet or the library, students should collect images and information about the key players.

Be certain to include the following individuals in your discussion:

Pham Van Dong
General Vo Nguyen Giap
Le Duc Tho

Ho Chi Minh
Duong Van Minh
Ngo Dinh Diem

Madame Ngo Dinh Nu

Nguyen Cao Ky

Students may present their findings to their classmates in any of the following ways:

- a stand up presentation,
- a report where they appear in costume as the key players, or
- a documentary film or magazine article that they write or produce to explain who the key players were in North and South Vietnam during the war.

Or

Have the students create either an encounter or a mock debate between Ho Chi Minh and Robert McNamara. What do they think each spokesperson for his country's official view of the Vietnamese War would have to say to each other?

Or

Direct students to read documents on the diminishing support in South Vietnam for the war effort. Have the students pretend they are advisors to President Johnson. What intelligence would they provide President Johnson about South Vietnam's staying power.