

Teachers' Guide

Module 6

THE LEGACY OF THE VIETNAM WAR

The Statue of Liberty opens her arms to those fleeing political persecution and seeking a better life for their children. Many South Vietnamese fled Vietnam as the United States withdrew. This module contains activities to aid your students' understanding of the experience of the Vietnamese refugees.

In addition, this module contains materials to help students understand the economic effect of the war on Vietnam and Southeast Asia.

The concept of a limited war, or limited U.S. involvement in a war, was honed during the Vietnam War, prompting the phrase the "Vietnam Syndrome." The activities in this module provide an opportunity to apply the analogy of limited war to other conflicts in which the United States has been involved.

Other legacies of the Vietnam War include the lingering effects of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and the chemical defoliant known as Agent Orange. This module provides discussion questions to help students gain an understanding of these phenomena.

This module also discusses the plight of those classified as missing in action (MIA) in Vietnam and the steps the United States has taken to account for them.

Finally, this module issues a challenge and some suggestions for students to create legacies of peace and courage in their own communities.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

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

- The experience of the Vietnam War refugee, including the experience of the Vietnamese "boat people;"
- Compare the experience of the Vietnamese war refugee to that of other refugees of war and natural disasters;
- The economic effect of the Vietnam War on Asia;
- The meaning of the Vietnam Syndrome and its effect on the Persian Gulf War;
- The deadly legacies of the war: Agent Orange and land mines and their lingering effect on Vietnam and those who served there;
- The psychological legacy of PTSD;
- The plight of Amerasian children;
- The projects that have helped veterans to heal from the war by sending veterans back to Vietnam to deal with the war's deadly legacies, to clear mines, to build clinics, to work in hospitals and universities, and otherwise contribute to the country's rebuilding;
- The controversy that developed about personnel who were MIA during the Vietnam War; and
- Ways to contribute a legacy of peace to your community.

MATERIALS

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

- The condensed version of *Vietnam: A History*, by Stanley Karnow (module 6, appendix A)
- Article — *Back to Vietnam: A Personal Peace Mission*, by Stephen Sossaman (module 6, appendix B)
- Travel article — *Incountry*, by David Berman (module 6, appendix C)

ACTIVITY: THE EXPERIENCE OF THE VIETNAMESE REFUGEE

Immediately following the U.S. withdrawal of troops from Vietnam, many Vietnamese who had fought with or worked with the Americans sought refuge from political persecution in the United States. Since many people began their journey by boat, Vietnamese refugees were often referred to as "boat people." Not all boat people settled in the United States. Many were returned unwillingly to Vietnam; some died trying to escape, while others made their way to different countries. Refer students to the material by Stanley Karnow (module 6, appendix A) and lead a discussion about the plight of Vietnamese refugees.

ACTIVITY: COMPARING REFUGEE EXPERIENCES

Use the Internet or library to find stories or articles about the experiences of the Vietnamese boat people immigrating to the United States. Compare their experiences to the experiences of people in your community who immigrated to the U.S. to escape war and/or political persecution in Bosnia, Cuba, China, El Salvador, Kosovo, or Somalia, or to escape famine and pestilence in Ethiopia or Guatemala.

ACTIVITY: PROBING THE ANALOGY OF FIGHTING LIMITED WARS

Use the format developed by Richard Neustadt and Ernest R. May, found in module 1, to separately probe each of the following analogies:

- U.S. involvement in the Persian Gulf War was like/different from U.S. involvement in Vietnam.
- U.S. involvement in Bosnia was like/different from U.S. involvement in Vietnam.

ACTIVITY: THE VIETNAM SYNDROME

Read the description of the Vietnam Syndrome in the glossary. Use the following questions to stimulate discussion:

- What is meant by the Vietnam Syndrome?
- What effect, if any, do you think the Vietnam Syndrome had on our involvement in the Persian Gulf War?
- How, if at all, do you think the memory of U.S. involvement in Vietnam affected our actions in Iraq?
- How, if at all, do you think the memory of U.S. involvement in Vietnam affected our involvement in Bosnia or Kosovo?

ACTIVITY: THE ECONOMIC EFFECT OF THE WAR ON VIETNAM AND SOUTHEAST ASIA

Have students read the following publications:

- The excerpt from Stanley Karnow's book, Vietnam: A History (module 6, appendix A) on Vietnam's economy following the war.
- Vietnam Reconsidered, by Ambassador Edward Marks.

Be sure to include the following points in your discussion:

- Although torn by war, the country has made economic gains.
- American tourism is now contributing to the growth of the Vietnamese economy as Vietnam veterans return to visit.
- The Vietnam War actually contributed to the economic strength of the region.
- While the United States was involved in Vietnam, it poured large sums of money into Southeast Asia's economy.
- The Vietnam War spurred economic growth in Southeast Asia.

ACTIVITY: AN AMERICAN VETERAN RETURNS TO VIETNAM

Have students read the articles Back to Vietnam: A Personal Peace Mission, by Stephen Sossaman, and Incountry, by David M. Berman.

Encourage the students to reflect on the following questions in their learning logs and then lead a discussion in class:

- Do you think people can change from being enemies to being friends? If so, how?
- What lessons do you think Sossaman learned from his experience?
- How do you think you would feel if you returned as a tourist to a place where you were once a soldier?
- How do you think you would feel if you were a North Vietnamese soldier and your country was visited by former U.S. soldiers?

ACTIVITY: REGIONAL COOPERATION IN SOUTHEAST ASIA

Background

Since the Vietnam War, Southeast Asia has created organizations that encourage regional cooperation. Members in these organizations reach decisions through consultation and consensus. The Association of South Eastern Asian Nations (ASEAN) was formed in 1967. At that time, Thailand, Indonesia, Malaysia, and Singapore were members. Following the aftermath of the Vietnam War, Brunei and Vietnam became members of ASEAN. Laos, Cambodia, and Myanmar are slated to become members.

More recent organizations promoting regional cooperation include:

- the Asian Pacific Economic Council, founded in 1989; and
- in 1994, ASEAN created the ASEAN Regional Forum, known as ARF, to engage external powers in discussions about regional security. ARF supported anti-Khmer Rouge resistance in Cambodia and sponsored a seminar on peacekeeping opportunities and challenges in 1995. ARF has been instrumental in supporting UN peacekeeping missions.

Have students locate the member nations of ASEAN on a map of Southeast Asia.

ACTIVITY: THE LEGACY OF PTSD

One legacy of the Vietnam War is PTSD. Have students visit www.va.gov to learn what the Veterans Administration does to treat PTSD.

ACTIVITY: THE LEGACY OF MIAS

Have students review material and resources on MIAs. Have them create a mock documentary describing MIAs, the government efforts to account for them, and the concerns of groups of veterans and citizens who believe that some of the MIAs are still being held captive or were held captive and then executed after the war.

- How many Vietnam War MIAs were there? Who was responsible for determining this? How do these figures compare to statistics from the Korean War and World War II?
- What difficulties prevent complete accounting for all MIAs?
- Not all veterans feel the same way about the possible existence of MIAs still being held prisoner in Vietnam. Interview two veterans with differing opinions. Describe their differences and their beliefs. What resources did they rely on to make their decision? Do you think these materials are objective?
- Do you think there are any MIAs who may still be alive? Why or why not?

ACTIVITY: THE WAR'S DEADLY LEGACIES

Have students prepare a report that discusses the deadly legacies of the war — Agent Orange and land mines — and their lingering effects on both the citizens of Vietnam and the veterans who served there.

- Review readings about Agent Orange. How was it used in Vietnam? How did it affect the trees and foliage there? Describe its lingering effects on the land, the Vietnamese, and veterans who were exposed to it.
- Invite a veteran in your community to speak about how Agent Orange has affected some veterans.
- Review readings and resources about land mines and other explosive devices and their use by both sides in the war. How do these devices still affect Vietnam? What is being done to solve the problem? What other countries besides Vietnam are dealing with land mines as a legacy of war? Document any projects or movements to solve the lingering threat of land mines.
- Check with your local Red Cross to see if anyone is involved in work on the legacy of land mines. If so, invite the person to speak to your class.

TEAM LEARNING

TEAM ACTIVITY: THE VIETNAMESE BOAT PEOPLE

Immediately following the U.S. withdrawal of troops from Vietnam, many Vietnamese who had fought with the Americans sought refuge from political persecution in the United States. Because many people began their journey from Vietnam by boat, Vietnamese refugees were often referred to as "boat people." Not all these boat people settled in the United States. Many were returned unwillingly to Vietnam; others made their way to different countries.

Have your students create a documentary to present to the class showing what the refugee experience was like.

Or

TEAM ACTIVITY: LIVING HISTORY INTERVIEW

Have your students find someone in their community who came to the United States immediately following the Vietnam War. Direct the students to interview the person about his/her experience as a Vietnamese refugee. Have the students videotape the interview and share it with their classmates.

Or

ACTIVITY: COMPARING IMMIGRANT EXPERIENCES

Invite to your class a panel of people from your community who immigrated to the United States from South Vietnam immediately following the U.S. withdrawal of troops from Vietnam. Other people to include in this panel could be people who immigrated to this country seeking a better life after famine in Somalia or Ethiopia, or because of civil war in Bosnia or El Salvador. Have them discuss their experiences with the class.

Or

Have your students interview people who have immigrated to the United States, and compare their experiences with those of the Vietnamese refugees.

ACTIVITY: THE IMPACT OF AGENT ORANGE

Many soldiers were exposed to the herbicides used to defoliate the Vietnam jungles. Upon their return to the United States, many veterans became ill with undiagnosed symptoms. These symptoms were referred to as "Agent Orange Syndrome." Have students interview a veteran exposed to Agent Orange, or invite a veteran to speak to your class.

ACTIVITY: A VIRTUAL VISIT TO VIETNAM

Have your students take the class on a virtual tour of Vietnam today that will show the legacies of the war. They may use materials from the Internet or library, as well as interviews with people from their community who have traveled to Vietnam in the last decade to prepare the text of their travelogue. Direct your students to print photos from the Internet or photocopy pictures from books to illustrate their virtual visit. The tour should inform the class about the attitudes and lives of the Vietnamese and describe the legacies of the war that exist in Vietnam today.

TEAM ACTIVITY: LEGACY OF PEACE AND COURAGE

President John F. Kennedy once said, "Without belittling the acts of courage with which men have died, we should not forget those acts of courage with which men have lived."

- Have students interview someone who has demonstrated courage in the way s/he is living his/her life.
- What situations exist in their community or school that require their personal courage and commitment to change? How might they go about changing these situations?

TEAM ACTIVITY: KEEPING THE PEACE AT YOUR SCHOOL BY STARTING A PEER MEDIATION PROGRAM

Peer mediation is a structured process that trains high school students to help their peers negotiate and settle conflicts. If a peer mediation program already exists in your school, have students volunteer as mediators. If no peer mediation program exists at your school, students can work with a sponsoring teacher to create one. In peer mediation, students each tell their version of a problem to a team of student mediators. The mediators help their peers to generate and select workable solutions to a specific conflict. Students sign a contract agreeing to honor the solutions they reach. You may find more information about peer mediation on the following websites:

- www.fred.net/hhhs/html/peermed.htm
- www.jalmc.org/peer/pm-links.htm
- www.peer.calpeer.html

APPENDICES

Using and evaluating material from electronic databases

This curriculum encourages the use of material from the Internet. The following two databases offer guidelines in citing and evaluating material from electronic databases:

- MLA Guidelines: *MLA-Style Citations of Electronic Sources*, by Janice R. Walker, www.cas.usf.edu/english/walker/mla.html
- Kaye Turabian's Reference-List Style: *Citing Electronic Information in History Papers*, by Maurice Crouse, www.people.memphis.edu/~mcrouse/elcite.html

The following National Archives worksheets are available free of charge for your students to use. You may obtain them by visiting the following URLs:

- Written Document Analysis Worksheet
www.nara.gov/education/teaching/analysis/write.html
- Photograph Analysis Worksheet
www.nara.gov/education/teaching/analysis/photo.html
- Cartoon Analysis Worksheet
www.nara.gov/education/teaching/analysis/cartoon.html
- Poster Analysis Worksheet
www.nara.gov/education/teaching/analysis/poster.html
- Map Analysis Worksheet
www.nara.gov/education/teaching/analysis/map.html
- Artifact Analysis Worksheet
www.nara.gov/education/teaching/analysis/artifact.html
- Sound Recording Analysis Worksheet
www.nara.gov/education/teaching/analysis/sound.html
- Motion Picture Analysis Worksheet
www.nara.gov/education/teaching/analysis/movie.htm