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Curriculum Units by Fellows of the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute
2002 Volume III: War and Peace in the Twentieth Century

Debating the Future of Indochina in 1945: Making Your Case

Guide for Curriculum Unit 02.03.05
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This unit uses the brewing conflicts in post-World War II Indochina as a basis for developing persuasive skills. The unit blends history with student creativity as students use facts to develop and support a position on the fate of the former French colony. It was developed for use in a middle school French class, complementing the world language curriculum, but the unit is easily adapted to (and perhaps even better suited for) middle or high school history classes dealing with the 20th century. It could work especially well in a team-taught environment that blends social studies and world language.

One of the benefits of this unit is its lack of dependence on extensive outside resources. While outside sources can certainly enhance the unit, I developed it to be self-contained. Teaching in an urban environment has engrained in me the fact that not everyone has access to perfect libraries and media centers, so for this unit all the teacher absolutely needs is the unit, a classroom and students. This allows room for creative embellishment on the part of the teacher, so it can be easily adapted to particular student populations and class levels.

Classroom activities include reading a brief overview of the regional history of Indochina, developing a proposal, and role-playing (playing the parts of various countries) in a debate to determine the fate of French Indochina in 1945. Assessments include several writing tasks to focus the students' understanding of the points of view involved in the debate.

(Recommended for American History, World History, and French, grades 7-12.)

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