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Peace and Aggression: A Challenge of Our Time

Curriculum Unit 83.04.02

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Objectives

The purpose of this unit is to present an alternative method of teaching students about the American involvement in the Vietnam War. Rather than concentrate on a historical study of the war, we have decided to discuss the war from a moral and ethical point of view. In doing so there are five major objectives.

First, we hope to make the students aware that there are distinctions between legitimate force and violence. The teaching of peace and aggression is vital for schools in a democratic society. If young people are to be responsible citizens of their nation, then they should have some understanding of the problems besetting their world. As teachers we cannot dodge these issues of decision making and participation if the student is to exercise his or her moral responsibilities. An attempt will be made to show that understanding peace, aggression and responsibility is the only solution to human progress and moral development. Aggression in everyday life has to be minimized and eliminated on a personal level before the student can have an impact on a national level. Students will examine aspects of human aggression and realize that there are other responses to conflicts besides aggression and avoidance.

Second, we hope to give the students an awareness of the morality of war. Are all wars just or is there such a thing as an unjust war? What must be realized is that the reasons for war as well as the way in which the war was fought must both be examined.

The third objective is to motivate the students to think about the problems of obedience to authority, survival, moral responsibility and dissent. If an effort is not made to develop an awareness in recognizing dangerous and immoral assumptions, then it can lead to serious undesirable consequences. Obedience to authority without questioning its morality can lead to destructive and violent acts. Students should be taught the importance of logical reasoning. Such a skill will give the student a valuable tool to question leaders as to their motives and their moral responsibilities. It will also give individuals the courage to question immoral acts and refuse to be a participant in anything that is immoral. The student should hopefully acquire the capacity to meet unexpected challenges and should be able to make informed value judgments. These objectives will prepare the student to go on learning for a lifetime.

The fourth objective is to give students an understanding that all people (including leaders) are complex, and that this complexity is a result of many different factors which in turn affects the role they play as well as their

behavior.

The fifth objective is to reinforce the necessary skills for a student of history; the ability to determine fact from opinion, the ability to understand new vocabulary words, the ability to evaluate alternatives, the ability to participate in decision making, and the ability to achieve the tools for critical thinking.

Strategies

In addressing the first objective—the distinction between following questions or discussion to the class. What is aggression? When is it justifiable to use force in order to achieve stability and peace? Students would be given worksheets on aggression which would list various situations and elements to consider when making judgments about aggression. (See the sample lesson plan) Some examples of aggressive acts would be: a bird eats a worm, two lions fight for leadership of the pack, the execution of a prisoner by the person who pulls the switch or turns on the gas etc. The elements the student would have to consider when deciding whether or not these are aggressive acts are listed on the sample lesson plan. The situations should be discussed with the class. The purpose of this worksheet is to expose the students to different kinds of aggression. It should show the students that they may not be aware that certain behavior may be regarded by others with whom they interact as aggressive. This in turn should help them to understand why conflicts arise. Discussion should bring about or intensify sensitivity to some degree. It will also improve communicative skills during the discussions as to why they believe some acts are aggressive and others are not.

To illustrate that there are other alternatives other than aggression as a solution to resolve a situation or gain their point, the students can be given choices in how to avoid an aggressive situation. Humor may be one of the alternatives. A question that may be addressed is—Do you think that a problem solved through humor is more likely to stay solved than one where force is part of the solution? Explain your answer. Students would be asked to suggest as many ways as they can by which problems can be resolved without resort to force. After a discussion students would be asked to investigate a situation in the 1960's where aggression was used, evaluate the situation, and suggest how the situation or problem could have been resolved peacefully and with long lasting effect. A good example would be the Kent State tragedy as can be seen in the sample lesson plan.

In examining the second objective on the morality of the Vietnam War, Michael Walzer's *Just and Unjust Wars* is an excellent source to be used as a base. He states: "The morality of war is divided into two parts. War is always judged twice, first with reference to the reasons states have for fighting, secondly with reference to the means they adopt. The first kind of judgment is adjectival in character: we say that a particular war is just or unjust. The second is adverbial: we say that the war is being fought justly or unjustly." With Walzer's twofold definition the teacher should discuss the reasons for the war in Vietnam as well as the "justifications" for American involvement and the unconventional way in which the war was fought. Pertinent information on the war can be found in the appendix. This would also be a good time to use the sample lesson on important dates in the Vietnam War.

At this time the students should address such questions as: Is war inevitable? When does a nation legitimately intervene? Are there any moral responsibilities a soldier has while engaged in combat? What are the rights of civilians in war? Is guerilla warfare morally right or wrong? What is the difference between a terrorist and a guerilla? Should guerillas be entitled to prisoner of war status when captured? Should reprisal or revenge be justified as a means to bringing an end to war? What is considered a war crime? Was the American war in Vietnam a justified or unjustified intervention? Was the Vietnam War fought in a just manner? Should self-preservation in the face of an enemy be an excuse for an immoral act?

There are differences of opinion on most of these questions. On the question of legitimate intervention, Michael Walzer offers three situations where it would be acceptable. First in the case of secession or civil war. Second, if the country is invaded by foreign armies. Third, if human rights are being violated as in a massacre or enslavement.

It is at this point that the teacher should relay the following information about the nature of war. Mankind has always known war. From the beginning of time man has fought against man. People joined together have found relative peace with each other under some kind of custom or law, but they have always waged war with strangers. Even today, with the planet's very existence at stake, there is little recourse when nations disagree. Fear and distrust are prevalent. The strong still crush the weak. The "haves" stubbornly defend the status quo. The fear of the atomic bomb hangs over everyone's head. Peace seems to be a distant dream. Many nations also face serious domestic unrest. While law and government appear to be war's best prevention, they are not an absolute guarantee of peace. People sometimes rise against their established governments to wage hideous war until one side finally triumphs and either a new order is established (often as unjust as the old) or the insurgents are brutally crushed.

Thus, there are two kinds of war; those between organized societies, and those within an organized society. The second while not as common as the first, is usually the most frightful—it is here that you might encounter fighting between brothers.

If people can live in peace, then why can't nations? Why must there be war? Why have many wars been glorified? These are questions the teacher may use to begin a discussion on the nature of war. One of the strongest things about war is its appeal to the imagination, despite its atrocity. The songs, the flag waving, the sounds of trumpets, the rolling drums and marching feet have stirred men's blood for centuries. The teacher may at this point ask the students how many war movies they have seen? Why do you think these movies about war were made? What is it about these movies that compel people to spend their money seeing men kill other men and nations destroying other nations. Oh, the "glory" of war: Why is it that a nation's history seems to revolve around its battles and triumphs? Does a nation's heritage revolve around its heroes? Why does a nation never forget the man who says, "Damn the torpedoes, full speed ahead!" or "I only regret that I have one life to live for my country."

Even the most avid opponents of war can understand the intensity of the war experience. Nothing can compare with the comradeships forged under fire, with the exhilarating sense of purpose when people work together for a "just" cause. The powers of war's enchantment can be seen when veterans who have faced the most terrible horrors of war can later look back with nostalgia on their war years.

But what about the Vietnam War? Why hasn't this war been glorified? Where were all the trumpets, flags and songs; the marching bands when this war was being fought? Where was all the exhilaration when our "boys" were finally brought home? Where are all the heroes? Why was all so silent when the war was finally over. These are all good questions for discussion.

The Vietnam War was such a different and unconventional war. There were no Normandies or Gettysburg's. There were no epic clashes that decided the fates of armies and nations. The war was mostly a matter of enduring weeks of expectant waiting, and, random viscous manhunts through jungles and swamps where snipers and booby traps were waiting. The tedium was occasionally relieved by a large scale search and destroy operation, but the "exhilaration" of riding the lead helicopter into a landing zone was usually followed by more of the same hot walking, with the mud sucking on boots and the sun beating on helmets, while invisible enemies shot from distant tree lines. The rare instances when the VC chose to fight a set piece battle

provided the only “excitement” of contact. Weeks of bottled tensions would be released in a few minutes of violence-grenades exploding and the rapid burst of automatic rifles.

It is at this time that the teacher might want to use selections from the book *Everything We Had* by Al Santoli. By reading the different personal accounts of 33 veterans of the Vietnam War, the students might better understand the reality of fighting in such an unconventional war. It is also a good opportunity for the students to familiarize themselves with a primary source. As Al Santoli states in his preface: “It must always be remembered that the Vietnam War was a human ordeal and not an abstract heroic adventure as might be understood by Hollywood or a politician’s speechwriter . . . In our book we hope you will see what we saw, do what we did, feel what we felt.”

In dealing with the third objective-problems of obedience, moral responsibility, survival and dissent, the Vietnam War may be successfully used to illustrate all. Any or all of the following lesson plans would be appropriate to use at this time; You Are In the Army???, Dissent, Civil Disobedience.

In order to illustrate the variety of reactions to the American involvement in the Vietnam War, the following information may be used. The United States participation in the Vietnam War became one of the most divisive foreign policy issues in United States history. Americans disagreed on both the objectives and the strategies of U.S. involvement. The war became increasingly unpopular as casualties increased and chances for victory appeared to decrease.

The basic premise that communism should be opposed in Vietnam was not questioned; it was firm U.S. policy to oppose communism everywhere. Some Americans believed that U.S. participation was necessary to stop communist aggression and to maintain U.S. honor and prestige. Paramount was the domino theory, that if one nation fell to communism, another and another would inevitably follow like a set of dominoes. The National Security Council believed that the loss of one single country in Southeast Asia would ultimately lead to the fall of Southeast Asia and then to India and Japan and finally endanger the stability and security of Europe.

Other Americans believed that the conflict in Vietnam was a Civil War in which the United States should not be involved. They felt U.S. security was not threatened and the U.S. should not attempt to be a world policeman. Still other Americans felt that the U.S. armed forces were supporting a corrupt, undemocratic government in South Vietnam and that the war was drawing money away from vital U.S. domestic programs. Then there were those Americans who opposed the war because it resulted in hundreds of thousands of military and civilian casualties and left large areas of Vietnam in ruin.

Some military experts argued for more military involvement stating that North Vietnam would only surrender if the war was carried to North Vietnam by bombing or other means. Others disagreed and wanted more emphasis on counter-guerrilla methods in South Vietnam. Still others feared U.S. bombing would bring China into the war.

As the war dragged on year after year with no end in sight, opposition began to increase in the United States. The opposition was slow in developing; at first many people felt that the government knew what it was doing and it seemed that many people who opposed the war in the beginning were the same sorts who would have cheered Chamberlain after Munich. But when the American atrocity at My Lai was revealed many other Americans began to feel that something was wrong, especially since the newspapers gave the impression that this was one atrocity of many. United States officials on the other hand insisted that American atrocities were amazingly few, while Viet Cong cruelty abounded. They maintained that the press was totally disinterested in Communist atrocities.

Many American newspapers began to give the impression that the war had degenerated into one of American soldiers against civilians; that it featured ruthless destruction of hamlets and villages. More and more Americans, therefore, began to believe that the war contained the same basic fallacy as the Phillipine insurrection some 65 years earlier—that the only way of liberating a country was to destroy it. They began to wonder why the massive military machine was in that tiny place some 10,000 miles away where the majority of people never heard of Marx or Lenin and were merely struggling to feed their children.

In 1967 Assistant Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara wrote “. . . a feeling is widely and strongly held that the ‘Establishment’ is out of its mind. The feeling is that we are trying to impose some U.S. image on distant people we can not understand . . . and that we are carrying the thing to absurd lengths.”

By the beginning of the 1970’s it was generally believed that some serious mistakes had been made, that the course which the U.S. government had pursued was failing to accomplish its goals. Anger and frustration grew as many Americans began to feel that the government was unresponsive to their views. Dissension increased bordering in some areas on revolution. More and more Americans began to demand an immediate end to the war.

In April, 1970 with the invasion of Cambodia many people felt that Nixon was widening the war. Antiwar protests broke out on hundreds of college campuses in the United States. At Kent State University in Ohio, National Guardsmen fired into a crowd of demonstrators killing four students and wounding nine others. They thought they had been fired upon by the demonstrators, but this was later proved to be false.

Tensions mounted in the United States as Nixon silently vowed not to be the first President to lose a war. But how does a nation extricate itself from a mistake especially after the investment of so many years, so much money and the loss of so many lives? Nixon decided to pursue a gradual withdrawal from Vietnam.

An analysis of the Vietnam War will require a perspective of many more years. However, one fact remains incontestable whether history will find the war justifiable or not, the American people gradually lost all heart for it. Mounting dissension at home gradually undermined America’s position at the bargaining table, leading the enemy to believe that he would triumph in any event. The result however viewed is one of great disappointment for the United States.

The tide of time and events can work for people. This does not mean forgetting the lessons of the past, but rather continually adjusting them to conditions of the present. It would be a tragedy if we substitute “No More Vietnam” for “No More Munich” or lost sight of the fact that communism has dangerous expansionist aspects or forget the vital lessons of World War II that weakness invites aggression. Maybe the lesson of Vietnam should be. “No More Easy Slogans.”

In introducing the fourth objective on the complexity of people and their roles, it is suggested that you begin the lesson with the following questions: How many persons are you? You should get answers such as “I am a brother/ sister.” “I am a son/daughter.” “I am a citizen of the U.S.” “I am a dancer/singer/football player.” (or any other activity they take seriously. The discussion should illustrate that people are complex personalities, and it is this complexity that affects their behavior which in turn affects the various roles they play. If students through discussions realize their various roles, they may be able to understand why there are conflicts in their roles as students, citizens, sons, brothers and friends etc. It may give them some insights as to who they really are. Perhaps they could avoid conflicts and re-examine their behavior without resorting to aggressive acts. Students would be asked: Do any of your roles conflict with each other? and Is relating to others who have different values or ideas of behavior difficult? The students would have to discuss their reasons. It should

be pointed out that the soldiers in Vietnam, the protesters against the war, and political leaders were also many persons in one. They were not only activists, but they played various roles that may have colored their outlook and actions. Another question that may be discussed is—How did they play so varied a role and not see the enormous moral conflict of their actions as participants in planned or unplanned destruction? When does a soldier disobey a military command issued by his commanding officer? These questions would lead to activities and discussion on moral responsibility vs. traditional military behavior.

To understand the actions of people and their leaders in the 60's one may ask the student on what moral basis did people make their decisions in regard to the course of action taken to obtain or achieve their objectives. Possible questions that could be asked are: Do leaders put the whole nation's interest before their own political or economic interests? Do you think all leaders are concerned about history's judgments just as we are concerned about our friend's or family's judgments of us as individuals? Are the judgments we make of events at the time they happen usually correct? Why does a judgment of an event or a person often change with the passage of time? Students would be asked if they could cite some examples which have been changed by the passage of time. Can they identify the factors which caused the change in judgments (such as additional evidence, cooling passions, research by objective scholars, etc.)? Comparing newspaper articles that were published during the sixties and articles that were published in the eighties on the same subject would be helpful in answering the questions posed in regard to the changes in the passage of time. Interviewing people who were participants in the various causes during the sixties and how they feel about their participation now would also be a valuable tool as well as a good primary source in determining change with the passage of time.

Speakers of opposing views would be invited to address the students about their experiences in the sixties, hopefully discussing what factors helped to shape them into the person they were in the sixties. Such a resource would offer students the opportunity to question firsthand and receive answers which should give them a more personal feeling and an awareness of the times.

The last objective to be discussed is that which deals with skills that all students of history should successfully complete. At the beginning of this unit students should be given a map of Southeast Asia and be able to identify those key places that became newsworthy during the Vietnam War. A sample lesson on map skills is provided for this purpose. Students should also be given an assignment on determining fact from opinion. So much has been written about the Vietnam War that is opinion, it is necessary for the student to be able to separate the two. Films, filmstrips, records of speeches and propaganda materials would be viewed, listened to and explored to give the student various experiences of prejudice and the psychology of mass persuasion. The students hopefully will be aware of propaganda techniques, exploding stereotypes and myths.

The list of new vocabulary terms should be distributed to the students. There is a sample lesson plan offered for this reason. The teacher may then give the student a word like aggression and ask them to list the first word or adjective that comes to their mind when they see or hear this word. After that, exercise answers should be exchanged with the rest of the class. Here they would come to realize that the word aggression means different things to different people. This is one example where communication may block a solution because different people have a different concept of the same word.

The next skill students should be able to perform successfully is to be able to distinguish primary sources from secondary sources. It is hoped that once they can distinguish one from the other, they will realize the advantages of using primary sources for a supply of information. It is suggested that the teacher use selected passages from *Everything We Had* or *Dispatches* as examples of primary sources.

The ability to evaluate alternatives is another important skill that students should be able to master. It is suggested that the lesson plan “You’re in the Army Now” be used at this time. This lesson offers student the opportunity to have experience in decision making as well as evaluating alternatives. Luring the 1960’s young men facing the draft had to make some very important decisions. By putting the students in their “shoes” (role playing), they should be able to get a feel for the importance of having to make such a decision as well as becoming aware of the consequences of the various alternatives.

The last skill that will be developed under this objective is the ability to think critically. Students need much practice in critical thinking. All too often they are just anxious for the “right answer”. By presenting them with dilemmas they will be forced to do some analytical thinking. The sample lesson on “Civil Disobedience” is offered for this purpose.

Lesson Plan #1

The Tragedy of Kent State

Objective to show students how a protest against aggression resulted in violence itself.

Procedure

1. Remind students of the rights under the First Amendment
2. Present the following information to the class:

On April 30, 1970, President Nixon made a speech on national television to announce the invasion of Cambodia. He said the purpose of this mission was to destroy central military headquarters of the Communist forces in South Vietnam which he claimed was hidden in Cambodia. He thought such an act would shorten the war; however, people thought the war was being expanded.

Mass rallies and protests were held throughout the U.S. against the bombing in Cambodia. One such rally was held at Kent State University in Ohio. At noon on May 1, 1970, 300 Kent State students rallied in protest. Black United Students had held that rally. That night 1000 people rallied in downtown Kent. Windows were broken. On Saturday May 2, the National Guard were called out. Later that same evening 2000 students marched on the ROTC building and set fire to it. While it burned the guardsmen were given orders to shoot anyone that was cutting the fire hoses. No shooting took place, but the mood was set.

On May 4, at noon students gathered in the Commons. The speaker called for a student strike. Meanwhile state troopers arrived and stated that the gathering was an illegal assembly. They told the people to leave the premises. A few students threw rocks at the state police. When the National Guardsmen arrived they gassed the crowd. Some of the protesters left, but not all. Rocks were thrown at the guardsmen and the guardsmen fired shots into the crowd. The guardsmen later stated that they thought they had been fired upon, but this was later proved to be false. Four students were killed and many were wounded. Within a few days 350 universities across the United States went on strike.

3. Questions for discussion:

- a. Describe the mood of the time.
- b. Was this an illegal assembly as was proclaimed by the state police?
- c. Evaluate the circumstances of this tragedy; Could it have been resolved peacefully or was violence inevitable?
- d. Discuss this statement—This was to be a peaceful assembly protesting violence (bombing of Cambodia), yet it led to aggression.

Lesson Plan #2

The Many Faces of Aggression

Objective to expose the students to different kinds of aggression.

Procedure

1. The teacher is to distribute worksheets on aggression which would list various situations and elements to consider when making a definition or accusation of aggression.
2. The student would be instructed to label aggressive acts and explain why they feel it is an aggressive act.
3. The teacher will explain to the student the following elements to consider when making a definition or accusation of aggression.
 - a. intent v. accident
 - b. humans v. nonhumans (animals)
 - c. humans v. nonhumans (plants and inanimate objects)
 - d. fantasy v. actual behavior
 - e. effectiveness v. ineffective (attempt to harm)
 - f. obedience v. enjoyment
 - g. immediate harm v. long range good
4. Worksheet on aggression. The teacher will distribute a worksheet with the following examples of aggressive acts. The student would then be instructed to label those acts they consider to be aggressive and state why.

- a. A spider eats a fly.
- b. A soldier shoots his enemy on the front line.
- c. The warden of a prison executes a prisoner by turning on the gas.
- d. Two hungry men fight for a piece of bread.
- e. A man viciously kicks a dog.
- f. A boy kicks a car.
- g. An angry driver kicks his flat tire.
- h. A man mentally rehearses killing his wife.
- i. A small child kicks another small child while fighting over toys.
- j. A mother spanks her child.
- k. A mother locks her child in a closet as punishment.
- l. A principal while breaking up a fight shoves a student against the wall.
- m. Jean, a notorious gossip, speaks disparagingly of many people.
- n. Jane, far more subtle in her ways speaks with barely detectable, yet cutting irony to those who fail to live up to her expectations.
- o. Mr. Jones, known for his great sarcasm, verbally tears his boss to shreds.
- p. A woman daydreams about meeting her old boyfriend and slapping him in the face. She really has no expectations of actually doing this, but she loves to think about it.

Lesson Plan #3

You Are In the Army Now????

Objective to give students an idea of the various reactions that young men had concerning being drafted during the Vietnam War.

Procedure

1. Give the following information to the class:

Let's turn the clock back to November 13, 1969. President Nixon has just made the following statement to the Senate: "I know this war is the most difficult and controversial war in our nation's history." Since 1968 it had been the longest war in which the U.S. had become involved and more Americans had been killed in Vietnam than in the Korean War. Many Americans were becoming impatient and wanted to put an end to the war. "Let's bring our boys home" was what was being heard across the U.S." In October, 1969 a Moratorium Day was declared. The Vietnam War was clearly one of the most divisive foreign policy issues of our history.

2. Role playing. Inform the students that they have just received in the mail notification that they are to report for their physical in order to be classified by the Selective Service. Being drafted is now on their doorstep. What would they do if it really was their decision to make? Assign the following roles to the various students. Have them split up into groups with one person from each role. Once they are in their groups tell them to discuss the various options that they have. (listed below)

- a. 18 year old high school graduate
- b. 22 year old college graduate
- c. 18 year old high school drop out
- d. 22 year old college graduate who had been active in the ROTC
- e. 19 year old high school graduate, working a full time job; 23 year old brother had already been killed in Vietnam
- f. 22 year old college graduate from a military family

3. What are your options? The following were various decisions that young men of draftable age made in the 1960's.

- a. enlist in the branch of service of their choice instead of waiting to be drafted in the army
- b. waited to be drafted in the army, yet hoping their lottery number would be high enough so as not to be called
- c. try and get into the Reserves
- d. try and get a conscientious objector status
- e. try and get a medical deferment
- f. leave the United States and move to another country
- g. refuse to go, burn your draft card and suffer the consequences in the United States

4. After the students have discussed the various options as a group bring all the groups together as a class and discuss the outcomes with the entire class.

5. Questions for class discussion:

- a. How did you come to your decision concerning the draft? What factors did you take into consideration?
- b. Should individuals give obedience to authority without questioning its morality?
- c. Should individuals refuse to be a participant or question anything that they believe is immoral?
- d. Was U.S. participation in Vietnam necessary to stop communist aggression?
- e. Would you consider it to be “unAmerican” to refuse to participate in a war you thought to be immoral or unjust?
- f. Would you consider it to be “unAmerican” to refuse to participate in a war in which the United States was deliberately attacked on their own soil?

Lesson Plan #4

Knowing New Terms

Objective to have the students achieve a good understanding of the key words that are constantly in use in a unit on Vietnam.

Procedure

1. Put the following terms on the blackboard or on a ditto sheet and discuss them with the class. It is suggested that this be done before the unit is begun.

Key terms:

1. *Vietminh* —a group controlled by the Communists and headed by Ho Chi Minh; gained power in North Vietnam; fighting broke out between French forces and the Viet Minh in 1946
2. *Geneva Conference* —April, 1954, an international conference to arrange a peace settlement for Vietnam; representatives of the Vietminh and of the French supported the state of Vietnam; also France, Great Britain, United States, China and Russia; divided Vietnam into two zones; called for the country to be reunited through elections in 1956
3. *French Indochina* —included Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos
4. *Viet Cong* —also known as the VC; Communist guerillas
5. *boat people* —refugees who left Vietnam in the late 1970's
6. *ARVN* —South Vietnamese army; opposed the Viet Cong
7. *National Liberation Front* —also known as the NLF; a Political group organized in Hanoi in 1960 to support the Viet Cong
8. *Ho Chi Minh Trail* —many of the VC supplies and troops came from a system of roads and trails
9. *Vietnamization* —policy whereby American troops would be replaced by South Vietnamese forces, began in 1969
10. *DRV* —Democratic Republic of Vietnam; formed September 2, 1945, controlling northern Vietnam
11. *dissenters* —people who disapprove of certain policies of government or society and let others know how they feel
12. *aggression* —destructive behavior
13. *civil disobedience* —deliberately breaking the law because they feel it is unjust or immoral, hoping that this course of action will then change the unjust or immoral law
14. *containment* —an American policy to stop the spread of communism
15. *SEATO* —Southeast Asia Treaty Organization sponsored by the Eisenhower administration; an alliance that was to stop the spread of Communism in Southeast Asia; formed to allay the fears of South Vietnam after the Geneva accord in 1954
16. *communism* —a theory or a system of a social organization based on the holding of property by the government; a system where the state controls the production, the distribution and the

consumption of industrial products.

17. *moratorium* —a temporary suspension of activity

18. *colonialism* —a policy advocating control over another province or country like that of a mother country

19. *imperialism* —the policy of extending the rule of an empire or nation over foreign countries either by direct acquisition or by indirect control of economic and political life

20. *draft dodger* —one who evades or tries to evade compulsory service in the armed forces

21. *guerilla* —one of a band of independent soldiers who prey on the enemy by harassment, surprise attack, and short, sharp engagements, often behind the lines

Lesson Plan #5

Dissent

Objective to give students an understanding that all Americans have the right to dissent, but with limitations.

Procedure

1. Discuss the wording of the First and the Fourteenth Amendments with the class.
2. Present the following information to the class:

It is true that the First and Fourteenth Amendments to the Constitution guarantee certain basic liberties to all Americans. But it is also true that there has to be certain limitations on these freedoms. For example, you can not yell “fire” in a theater causing the crowd to rush for the nearest exit (when there is no fire) and then claim free speech as a defense for your actions.

The Constitution states that all Americans are guaranteed the rights to free speech, free press and the right to assemble and petition. Does that mean that people can say or print anything? Can people assemble anywhere? Obviously not. The man who yelled fire as a joke might have incited a riot with people trampling over one another trying to get to the door. A newspaper is not permitted to print false information about an individual or call someone a murderer unless it is true. To do otherwise would deprive that person of his rights.

A group wishing to protest a government action has the right to meet, but not in your backyard unless they were invited. Nor do they have the right to meet on a public highway during rush hour backing up traffic for miles.

A person has the right to free speech, but if he is inciting a crowd to riot he may be arrested for disturbing the peace.

The right to protest in schools against government policy has come before the Supreme Court. In a famous case several students were suspended from school because they were wearing black arm bands to classes. The armbands were a sign of mourning for those who had died in the Vietnam War and to protest the war itself. The Supreme Court decided that the students had a right to wear armbands if they did not disrupt the normal school program. The Court called this the right to symbolic speech.

Certain broad rules apply to dissent.

- a. People have the right to speak out against things they oppose when their speech does not interfere with the rights of others.
- b. People have the right to organize with others to support their position. They have the right to assemble, picket and hold demonstrations as long as they do not interfere with the rights of others.
- c. If the activities present a “clear and present danger” to the security of the U.S. or to others in the society, then these activities are illegal.

3. Present the following questions to the class for discussion:

- a. The right to free speech, free press and the right to assemble is not an absolute right. Explain.

- b. How far can people go in what they say or do in protest?

- c. If you do not like what a group stands for, should you be allowed to prevent it from meeting?

- d. Should everyone have the right to criticize the government if the criticism is dangerous to our national interest?

- e. If there appears to be no clear danger of violence, do you think any group should be allowed to protest against the government?

Lesson Plan #6

Civil Disobedience

Objective to encourage analytical thinking on an issue where there is no right or wrong answer.

Procedure

1. Present the following information to the class:

The war in Vietnam led to many acts of civil disobedience. Many Americans felt that it was an unjust and immoral war. Some people in order to dramatize their feelings resorted to acts of civil disobedience. Selective Service offices were invaded and records were destroyed. The President and members of Congress were interrupted when they tried to make public speeches. Colleges and universities were shut down by demonstrations against the war.

2. Present the following arguments used *for* these acts of civil disobedience:

a. The law was broken to protest a far greater crime: American participation in the Vietnam War.

b. They used the arguments that Dr. King used in the fight for civil rights. There is a higher law—the law of God. If the government’s law violates the law of God then it is an unjust law; one has a moral responsibility to disobey unjust laws. An individual who breaks a law that his conscience tells him is unjust and willingly accepts the penalty by staying in jail to arouse the conscience of the community over its injustice is in reality expressing the very highest respect for the law.

c. A nation whose history enshrines the civil disobedience of the Boston Tea Party can not fail to recognize at least the symbolic merit of demonstrated hostility to unjust laws.

3. Present the following arguments used *against* the acts of civil disobedience:

a. Lawlessness can not be justified on the grounds of individual beliefs.

b. Even if the war is immoral, the general level of morality of the country is not much improved by such conduct.

c. If we let the individual conscience guide disobedience to the law, we must take all consciences. The law does not distinguish between saints and sinners.

d. Our government can not function if people take it upon themselves to break the law.

e. When people take the law into their own hands, there is no longer any government. Civil disobedience will destroy our democracy.

4. Questions for discussion:

a. Are citizens ever justified in breaking a law?

b. If you believe that it is right in some instances to disobey unjust laws, who would you say should be the one to decide which laws are unjust?

c. How far should civil disobedience go? Is violence ever justified as a means of protesting an unjust policy or law?

d. Is there room for civil disobedience in a democracy?

e. Could a bank robber claim that he took the money as an act of protest against immoral bank practices?

f. What would happen to our government if Democrats decide to ignore laws passed by

Republican majorities or vice-versa?

g. Suppose a person decided that the government was spending citizen's tax money incorrectly. Should that citizen be allowed to decide whether or not to pay taxes?

5. Homework assignment: Write your opinion on civil disobedience and the reasoning you followed in coming to that opinion.

Lesson Plan #7

Important Dates in the Vietnam War

Objectives

1. Students will be aware of the events leading up to the American involvement in the Vietnam War.
2. Students will be able to identify the President who was in office at the time of each event.

Procedure

1. Put the events listed below on the blackboard or a ditto sheet. Do not put them in the correct chronological order.
2. Assign the student research the dates of the following events. Have the students place them on a time line in the correct chronological order.
3. Assign to the students—state next to each event the name of the President who was in office at that time.

Important Dates in the Vietnam War

1957 The Viet Cong began to attack the South Vietnamese government headed by President Ngo Dinh Diem.

1963 (*June*) Buddhists in South Vietnam began large scale demonstrations against the Diem government.

1963 (*November*) South Vietnamese generals overthrew the Diem government and Diem was killed the next day.

1964 (*August 7*) The U.S. Congress passed the Gulf of Tonkin resolution which gave the President power “to take all necessary measures to repel any armed attack against the forces of the United States and to prevent further aggression.”

1965 (*February*) The President orders marines to be sent to Da Nang, South Vietnam to protect American bases there. The marines were the first U.S. ground troops in the war.

1967 (*September 3*) South Vietnam held the first elections under its new constitution, adopted earlier that year. Nguyen Van Thieu was elected president.

1968 (*January 30*) The Communists launched the TET offensive, a large scale attack against 30 South Vietnamese cities.

1968 (*March 16*) U.S. troops killed hundreds of South Vietnamese civilians in the village of My Lai. One officer, Lieutenant William L. Calley Jr. was found guilty of murder by a U.S. court martial.

1968 (*May 13*) Preliminary peace talks between the U.S. and North Vietnam began in Paris.

1969 (*June 8*) The President announced that the U.S. troops would begin to withdraw from Vietnam.

1970 (*June 24*) The Senate repealed the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution.

1973 (*January 27*) The U.S., North and South Vietnam, and the Viet Cong signed a cease fire agreement in Paris.

1973 (*March 29*) The last American troops left South Vietnam.

1975 (*April 21*) President Thieu resigned.

1975 (*April 30*) South Vietnam surrendered to the Communists.

Lesson Plan #8

Map Skill-Important places in Southeast Asia

Objective *The students will be able to locate key places that became newsworthy during the Vietnam War.*

Procedure

1. Give to each student a blank map of Southeast Asia.
2. Put the following places on the blackboard and have the students locate them on their own maps.
 - a. North Vietnam
 - b. South Vietnam
 - c. Cambodia
 - d. Laos
 - e. Thailand
 - f. Hainan
 - g. Gulf of Thailand
 - h. South China Sea
 - i. Gulf of Tonkin
 - j. Bien Dien Phu
 - k. Hanoi
 - l. Haiphong
 - m. Demilitarized Zone (DMZ)
 - n. Da Nang
 - o. Dak To
 - p. Saigon
 - q. Mekong Delta
 - r. Phnom Penh
 - s. Bangkok
 - t. 17th parallel
 - u. Mekong River
 - v. Ho Chi Minh Trail
 - w. Pleiku
 - x. Central Highlands

Appendix

Background of the Vietnam War

Before World War II, Vietnam was a part of French Indochina, which also included Laos and Cambodia. During World War II, Japan occupied Indochina, but much of the area came under French control after the war. Ho Chi Minh, Communist leader of the League for the Independence of Vietnam became head of an independent government in northern Vietnam.

Trouble started as early as 1946, when the Vietminh revolted against the French. Fighting dragged on for seven and a half years, during which time Ho Chi Minh repeatedly asked for American and United Nations intervention against French colonialism. He even asked that President Truman give Vietnam the same status as the Philippines for a period of tutelage before independence. But because Ho Chi Minh had direct

communist connections his appeals were not answered.

The French were defeated in May, 1954 despite generous American aid which did make many people uncomfortable. Such aid was questioned for by trying to help the French defeat communism, the U.S. in turn found themselves on the side of imperialism. President Eisenhower had agreed to American aid which paid for much of the French war effort, but refused to intervene militarily.

In April 1954, representatives of the DRV, the state of Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos, China, France, Great Britain, Russia and the United States met in Geneva, Switzerland to arrange a peace settlement for Vietnam. Vietnam was to be temporarily divided into two sections, North Vietnam and South Vietnam. The dividing line was the 17th parallel. Elections were to be held in two years for the purpose of uniting the north with the south. The territory south of the 17th parallel became the Republic of Vietnam after Emperor Bao Dai was deposed in 1955. President Ngo Dinh Diem then began to rule with the backing of the United States. Some officials in the U.S. were disappointed with the surrender of northern Vietnam to the Communists. Since direct military aid was not offered, there was little the U.S. could do except refuse to sign the Geneva accord. Other officials however, felt appeased that at least colonialism no longer existed. Even though they did not sign the accord, both the U.S. and South Vietnam announced their intention to abide by the agreement.

Upset by the Geneva accord and to allay the fears of South Vietnam of a Communist take-over, the Eisenhower Administration sponsored a new alliance, the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization. The purpose of this organization was to stop the spread of communism in that part of Asia. SEATO's members agreed to act together if any country in the region was threatened by aggression.

Following the Geneva agreement, President Eisenhower pledged America support to South Vietnam. This support helped to rehabilitate the country. President Diem stayed in power largely because of U.S. support. American support was economic as well as military, including equipment and training of a South Vietnamese army.

President Diem became increasingly unpopular as he neglected the peasants and showed favoritism to his family, particularly his brother Ngo Dinh Nhu. When Diem was supposed to hold elections according to the Geneva accord, he refused on the grounds that North Vietnam would not permit campaigning in its territory and Ho Chi Minh would gain control of a united Vietnam. He appointed his own village officials and ended all local elections. Popular feeling against him mounted.

History of the War

Viet Cong raids began as early as 1957. Guerillas began to attack farm villages, particularly in the Mekong Delta. The Viet Cong guerillas were under Communist control, but many of them were not Communist party members. They fought against the South Vietnamese government because of its repressive measures and its failure to provide the necessities of life. They won easy victories.

In 1961 when John Kennedy became President, Communist forces controlled much of the country. They virtually encircled the city of Saigon. The U.S. was forced to choose between the collapse of the South Vietnamese government and increasing its support. At that time the U.S. had about 750 advisors in South Vietnam. President Diem was constantly appealing for American combat troops and tactical air squadrons.

Kennedy like Eisenhower, believed that the U.S was engaged in a global conflict with communism. In his inaugural he had promised that " . . . we shall pay any price, bear any burden, meet any hardships, support

any friend, oppose any foe to assure the survival and success of liberty . . . ” He felt that it was essential to prevent a Communist takeover of South Vietnam.

During his 34 months in office, he increased the American military advisors from 750 to roughly 16,000. This was accomplished so quietly that few Americans realized what was happening. A steady growing casualty list 14 Americans killed in 1961, 109 in 1962, 489 in 1963, finally alerted newsmen that at least some Americans were in combat situations. The White House insisted that they were attempting to help Vietnam to maintain its independence and not fall under the domination of the Communists.

If Kennedy had lived, would he have continued that course leading the U.S. into an all-out ground and air war that President Johnson pursued? There is no way of knowing.

In 1963 many Buddhists in South Vietnam were protesting treatment they were receiving under the rule of President Diem. They claimed that Diem, a Roman Catholic, was treating them unfairly because of their differences in religion. Some Buddhist monks even went so far as to burn themselves alive as a sign of their protest. Special forces under Diem’s brother Nhu raided and wrecked some Buddhist pagodas. When news of these events reached the U.S. Diem’s government was formally criticized and certain types of economic aid were suspended.

The South Vietnamese generals encouraged by the U.S. disapproval of Nhu’s actions, overthrew the Diem government on November 1, 1963. Diem and his brother were killed on November 2, 1963. A series of short lived regimes governed South Vietnam for the next two years. In June, 1965 Air Force Commander Nguyen Cao Ky headed a military committee that took power.

The shocking assassination of Diem and his brother Ngo Dinh Nhu, following a coup that Kennedy had known about in advance and tacitly approved could have been a turning point especially since political conditions actually worsened after Diem’s death. Before he left for Dallas in November 1963 Kennedy requested a plan for a total withdrawal of American forces by 1965. He had also requested in depth review of the entire Vietnam situation including whether the U.S. should be there at all.

Lyndon Johnson continued what Kennedy had started and that road led straight to the outright war that developed in 1965; for once the basic objectives had been set, Viet became mainly a military problem. A determination to achieve victory led to continued escalation. Controversy among government officials during these years centered around strategy and tactics, not over whether the U.S. should be in Vietnam at all.

The American people had virtually no control over these developments, although many were drafted to serve in the war. President Johnson did obtain a congressional “Gulf of Tonkin Resolution.” On July 30, 1964 South Vietnamese naval crafts raided islands in the Gulf of Tonkin, north of the 17th parallel. Two U.S. destroyers were patrolling nearby. North Vietnamese PT boats, probably while pursuing the South Vietnamese attacked the destroyers. Two PT boats were sunk. U.S. planes then bombed the PT boat bases. This was the first U.S. attack on North Vietnamese territory. * After this incident Johnson asked Congress for powers “to take all necessary measures to repel an armed attack against the forces of the United States and to prevent further aggression.” Congress granted these powers by an overwhelming vote. Johnson used this Gulf of Tonkin resolution as a chief legal basis of U.S. support for South Vietnam in the war.

The war gradually grew in intensity. In late 1964 South Vietnamese morale was very low and the United States began to consider bombing North Vietnam as a way of assisting. An attack on two U.S. camps at Pleiku in early 1965 triggered the decision for the bombing of infiltration routes and military installation in North

Vietnam. In midspring of 1965, following the bombing of North Vietnam, large numbers of North Vietnamese troops began arriving in South Vietnam. In March, 1965, President Johnson ordered U.S. marines into South Vietnam with General William C. Westmoreland as commander of all U.S. troops.

In 1966 and 1967 the fighting in Vietnam increased. Meanwhile, South Vietnam tried to establish a representative government. In 1967, voters approved a new constitution and elected a President, Vice-President, and a legislature. General Nguyen van Thieu was elected President and Ky became Vice-President.

In 1968, the Vietnam War became the longest war in which the United States had ever been involved. By March, 1969, more Americans had been killed in the Vietnam War than in the Korean War. More and more Americans became impatient for the war to end. In June, 1968 President Nixon announced the first of several withdrawals of U.S. forces from Vietnam. He said American troops would be replaced by South Vietnamese. This policy became known as Vietnamization.

* It has been suggested that few Congressmen realized that the U.S. had been mounting secret provocative attacks against North Vietnam for months and were looking for an incident to justify the bombing of North Vietnamese targets. In April, 1970 U.S. and South Vietnamese forces invaded Cambodia to attack the North Vietnamese supply depots there. Nixon said the action would save the lives of American troops in South Vietnam and shorten the war. By June, 1970 all U.S. troops were removed from Cambodia.

As U.S. troops were being withdrawn during 1970 the level of fighting fell sharply. However, little progress was being made at the Paris peace talks. In 1970, each side presented peace proposals, but each side refused to agree to the other.

Early in 1971 South Vietnamese troops invaded Laos in an effort to cut the Ho Chi Minh Trail. U.S. forces provided air and artillery support. The South Vietnamese destroyed many enemy supplies, but they suffered heavy casualties and were forced to withdraw. Many U.S. planes were shot down. During 1971 both the U.S. and the Viet Cong presented new peace proposals. Neither was acceptable. On March 30, 1972 North Vietnam launched a major offensive in South Vietnam. President Nixon then ordered the mining of North Vietnamese harbors to cut off war supplies from Russia and China. Bombing of rail and highway networks also took place. By August, 1972 the Communist offensive was halted.

U.S. troops continued withdrawal during 1972. Formal peace talks in Paris continued while secret negotiations between Kissinger and North Vietnamese officials were being conducted. However, when the talks broke down Nixon ordered the full scale bombing of the Hanoi-Haiphong area. The bombing ended after 12 days and the talks resumed again. Finally on January 27, 1973 a cease fire agreement was signed in Paris by the U.S., North Vietnam, South Vietnam, and the Viet Cong.

The cease fire was to be supervised by joint military commission of the signing parties and by the International commission of control and supervision. By the terms of the agreement all U.S. and allied forces were to be withdrawn and all prisoners were to be released, both within 60 days; the continued presence of North Vietnamese forces was tacitly agreed to; South Vietnam was assured that it was to have a government of its own choosing; and the U.S. guaranteed economic and military aid to South Vietnam. The first prisoners of war were released on March 2, 1973 and by March 29, 1973 the exchange of prisoners of war was supposedly complete and the last American troops left Vietnam. A 13 party conference in Paris endorsed the cease fire agreement which was signed by the foreign ministers of China, Russia, United States, North Vietnam, South Vietnam and the Viet Cong.

However, North Vietnam, South Vietnam and the Viet Cong violated the cease fire. The fighting in Southeast Asia continued and intensified as the Communist forces took the offensive in 1974. In Cambodia, during 1974 and 1975, Communist troops captured much of the country and surrendered the capitol of Phnom Penh. In April, 1975 the last remaining Americans were evacuated by helicopters and the victorious Communist armies took control of Cambodia.

Meanwhile in South Vietnam, resistance to the Communists was also crumbling. When the South Vietnamese government ordered a withdrawal of its troops from the north and central highlands in March, 1975, entire units abandoned their equipment and retreated southward before the advancing North Vietnamese and the Viet Cong. In a last desperate attempt to prevent a complete collapse of South Vietnam, President Ford asked Congress to vote \$772 million in emergency military aid. But Congress, convinced that the South Vietnamese cause was hopeless and fearing a renewal of American involvement, refused to support the President. At the end of April, with Saigon surrounded, American helicopters and ships lying off the coast withdrew the remaining Americans as well as 100,000 South Vietnamese. The Vietnamese refugees for the most part destitute, were temporarily housed on American military bases until they could be relocated in new homes throughout the United States. And so, with the Communist takeover of South Vietnam in 1976 three tragic decades of fighting in Vietnam came to an end. The war toll included the deaths of 57,000 U.S. troops (46,000 in combat) 303,700 wounded, and over 780 missing; the deaths of 254,300 South Vietnamese, and 1,027,100 North Vietnamese and Viet Cong.

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Classroom Materials

Movies

America's Pledge—We Seek No Wider War

Covers the Vietnam struggle in the early months of 1965.

History of the U.S. Foreign Relations , Part 4, *The Road to Interdependence*

Follows the development of U.S. foreign policy from 1945-1970.

Ho Chi Minh

The life and personality of Ho Chi Minh; includes the powerful roles he played and the struggle for Vietnamese independence, unification and the division of Vietnam.

My Country—Right or Wrong

A college student and his father disagree over obligations and patriotism.

The Sixties

An exciting and perceptive look at America during the 1960's.

Televisionland

Nostalgic and entertaining view of what has been seen on television including newsclips of the Vietnam War and the peace marches.

Vietnam—An Historical Document

A study of the war; offers explanation for U.S. involvement and the events that led up to the withdrawal.

Vietnam Epilogue

Presents the chronology of fighting in Vietnam from 1954-1973.

Vietnam, Guardians at the Gate

Offers a brief history of North and South Vietnam; includes the role of the U.S. in the war and a clip of President Johnson explaining America's responsibility to Vietnam.

Vietnam in Retrospect

A documentary of America's commitment to South Vietnam.

Vietnam—Journal of War

Cameras probe the Vietnamese people, their villages, and their rehabilitation centers.

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