

Vietnam and the College Campus | Lesson Plan

Target Audience: 11th Grade U.S. History

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Rationale:

Why were college campuses a center for wartime protest? The Vietnam War polarized America during the 1960s and 70s. Evaluating the viewpoints of both sides is key to understanding the tumultuous Cold War period of American History. This module focuses on the Kent State shooting and gives the perspectives of both the Ohio National Guard and the student demonstrators. It is especially topical for teenagers today to make the connection that these students were not much older than themselves.

This lesson is for an 11th grade US History class. This lesson is designed as a flipped lesson, in which students do the activity on their own time – typically as homework – however, it is easy to change this to an in-class activity. A full class discussion should follow the written reflection. The activity focuses on the role of college campuses as a hotspot for activism during the Vietnam War. US History topics such as Nixon’s expansion of the war into Cambodia and public opinion of the war may be addressed.

A recent goal of social studies in Virginia is to focus on skills that teach students to evaluate, problem solve and communicate effectively. Rather than just answer content-based questions on the video clips, the students should pose their own questions and problem solve if the violence could have been avoided.

Virginia and United States History [Standards of Learning](#):

STANDARD VUS.1 The student will demonstrate skills for historical and geographical analysis and responsible citizenship, including the ability to

- a) identify, analyze, and interpret primary and secondary source documents, records, and data, including artifacts, diaries, letters, photographs, journals, newspapers, historical accounts, and art, to increase understanding of events and life in the United States;
- b) evaluate the authenticity, authority, and credibility of sources;
- c) formulate historical questions and defend findings, based on inquiry and interpretation;
- d) develop perspectives of time and place, including the construction of maps and various timelines of events, periods, and personalities in American history;
- e) communicate findings orally and in analytical essays or comprehensive papers;
- f) develop skills in discussion, debate, and persuasive writing with respect to enduring issues and determine how divergent viewpoints have been addressed and reconciled;
- g) apply geographic skills and reference sources to understand how relationships between humans and their environment have changed over time;
- h) interpret the significance of excerpts from famous speeches and other documents;
- i) identify the costs and benefits of specific choices made, including the consequences, both intended and unintended, of the decisions and how people and nations responded to positive and negative incentives.

STANDARD VUS.13 The student will demonstrate knowledge of United States foreign policy since World War II by

- b) explaining the origins of the Cold War, and describing the Truman Doctrine and the policy of containment of communism, the American role in wars in Korea and Vietnam, and the role of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) in Europe.
- c) explaining the role of America’s military and veterans in defending freedom during the Cold War.
force a communist government in South Vietnam. The United States helped South Vietnam resist.

Essential Knowledge VUS.13: The American military buildup in Vietnam began under President John Kennedy. After Kennedy's assassination in 1963, the buildup was intensified under President Lyndon Johnson.

The scale of combat in Vietnam grew larger during the 1960s. American military forces repeatedly defeated the North Vietnamese forces in the field, but by fighting a limited war, could not force an end to the war on favorable terms.

America became bitterly divided over the issue. While there was support for the American military and conduct of the war among many Americans, others opposed the war, and active opposition to the war mounted, especially on college campuses.

After Johnson declined to seek re-election, President Nixon was elected on a pledge to bring the war to an honorable end. He instituted a policy of "Vietnamization," withdrawing American troops and replacing them with South Vietnamese forces while maintaining military aid to the South Vietnamese.

Objectives:

The Student Will Be Able To:

- Recognize the topic/time period using primary and secondary source documents (Remember)
- Identify the significant parts of the video clips (Understand)
- List and recall basic facts of the Kent State event (Remember)
- Compare and Contrast opposing viewpoints of the event (Analyze)
- Solve questions posed by teacher and other students (Apply)
- Defend their own opinion using historical knowledge during reflection (Evaluate)
- Debate the various points of view on the War during class discussion (Analyze)

Background:

The Vietnam War is part of the longer Cold War period of American History. Prior to this lesson students will have covered the Domino Theory and Containment policy of the 1950s and 60s, how America became involved in Vietnam and the build-up of troops under the Johnson administration. Nixon's Vietnamization of the war could be addressed before or after the lesson.

Prep for lesson:

1. If you have not already, log onto [PBS Learning Media](#) as a teacher and find "[Vietnam & the College Campus](#)" lesson plan. Set up your classes so that you can assign the lesson to students.
2. Have students set up their PBS accounts in class or access the site for the first time together, to trouble shoot any possible kinks.
3. This activity is designed to be a flipped lesson in which students view and complete the module on their own as homework or in class at their own pace, without much teacher support. The discussion portion is then given ample class time. If using the modules in class, headphones will be needed for individual viewing or a projector to show the video once to everyone.

Materials:

- Computers, internet access, access to the free [PBS Learning Media website](#)
- Video Clip "[Unrest at Kent State](#) | The Day the '60s Died" from PBS Learning Media site 5min57 sec
- Video clip "[May 4, 1970: The Kent State Shootings](#) | The Day the '60s Died" from PBS Learning Media site 6min 40sec
- Headphones for each student if viewing individually in class

Module Instructions:

The module prompts students to watch video clips and respond in writing after each clip. PBS Learning Media then saves the responses for teacher grading. The slide instructions are as follows:

- Watch the Video Clip “[Unrest at Kent State](#) | The Day the '60s Died” from PBS Learning Media site (5min57 sec). As you watch, you may want to take down brief notes or pay close attention to the following:
 - The events in Kent, Ohio between Friday and Sunday
 - How the governor views the protestors
 - How the students view the guardsmen
- After finishing the video clip – individually write a brief description of what you think will happen on Monday. Be sure to cite facts from the video clip to explain your reasoning.
- Watch the 6min 40 sec clip “[May 4,1970](#)” on the PBS Learning Media site. While you’re watching, pay close attention to:
 - Describe the feeling preceding the shooting at Kent State
 - How might the National Guard be seen as the aggressor?
 - How might the student demonstrators be seen as the aggressors?
- Reflect on the two video clips. Be sure to consider the following in your written response:
 - Why 18-22 year old college students would be so passionate about a war on the other side of the world
 - Why anti-war protests often took place on college campuses
 - In your opinion - who, if anyone, do you feel holds fault for the events at Kent State

Discussion Instructions:

In class, following the video clips and submitted written responses, have students discuss Kent State and the Anti-War movement. The discussions should be student centered on what they submitted on the PBS site, however, nudge them toward these possible expansion topics:

- The narrators in the video clips are remembering events that took place decades previous. How might that affect their descriptions of that weekend?
- Could the violence at Kent State have happened elsewhere in America in the late 60s/early 70s?
- How significant were the images and video of that weekend – how might news coverage of events like this and the Vietnam War in general have affected public opinion of the war?
- What, if anything, could have been done differently?

Assessment: The written reflections will gauge comprehension of the curriculum. In addition, the activity and discussion act as a Performance Based Assessment to evaluate how well students demonstrate skills for historical analysis and responsible citizenship.