

## Remembering Vietnam

### Overview

Students will gain a basic understanding of the Vietnam War with a special focus on the Vietnam Memorial Wall. After assessing student prior knowledge of the Vietnam War using a word web, students examine basic information about the Vietnam War through a jigsaw reading. An illustrated timeline activity and discussion are used to assess student learning of reading. Students learn about the controversy surrounding the creation of the Vietnam Memorial Wall through a “Reader’s Theatre” activity. The lesson culminates with students creating their own Vietnam Memorial for a class competition.

### Grade

High School

### Materials

- Interactive Vietnam Wall Website - <http://thewall-usa.com/Panoramas/TheWall.htm>
  - If internet is not available, use the attached image of the Vietnam War Memorial
- Vietnam Memorial Wall Image (optional) (attached)
  - <http://ianpatrick.co.nz/gallery/d/2490-2/139+vietnam+war+memorial+wall.jpg>
- Chart paper and Post-it notes
- “A Short Summary of the Vietnam War” handout (attached)
- “A Short Summary of the Vietnam War” Questions (attached)
- “Short Summary of the Vietnam War” Answer Key (attached)
- “Vietnam War Illustrated Timeline” handout (attached)
- “The Vietnam Memorial’s History” Script (attached). It is divided into the following “Acts”:
 

○ Act I: Prologue	○ Act IV: The Best	○ Act VI: A Communist
○ Act II: Two Officers and	Goddamn	Among Us
Grunt	Competition	○ Act VII: The
○ Act III: How Much are	○ Act V: We Had a	Compromise
You Fellows Putting In?	Problem Here	○ Act VIII: The Soldiers
		Like It.
- “Designing a New Vietnam Memorial” handout (attached)
- Pencils, pens, markers, colored pencils
- Poster paper (optional)

### Essential Questions:

- What were the causes of the Vietnam War?
- What were the major events of the Vietnam War?
- Who were the major personalities of the Vietnam War?
- How did the Vietnam War Change the United States?
- Why was the Vietnam War Memorial a controversial issue?

### Duration

- 1-2 periods (60-90 minutes)
  - The “Illustrated Timeline” during day one of this activity serves as an overview of the Vietnam War; if your students already have a firm knowledge of the events of the period, teachers can skip the “Illustrated Timeline” activity and more on to focus on the memorial.

## Procedure

### Day One

#### Warm Up: Viewing the Wall

1. Project the interactive image of the Vietnam Memorial Wall on the board as students enter class. It can be accessed at <http://thewall-usa.com/Panoramas/TheWall.htm>. Instruct students to view the image silently for a few minutes and then pose the following questions to the class. (The image can be manipulated using the mouse to rotate, the shift key to zoom in and control to zoom out):
  - When you first viewed this image, what jumped out at you?
  - Is there anything that stood out after viewing the image for a few minutes?
  - What is the image you are viewing? What leads you to believe this?
    - If students are unsure about the image, explain that it is the Vietnam Memorial Wall.
  - What is the purpose of a memorial such as this?
  - What are your feelings about this memorial? Do you think it's appropriate? Why or why not?
  - Can you think of any other memorials? If so, what are they and what do they honor?
- **Teacher Note:** If internet access is not available, project the attached "Vietnam Memorial Wall" image. Do not share the image title with students until they have identified the image.
2. Draw a word web on a piece of chart paper with the words "Vietnam War" in the center. Give each student three Post-it notes and instruct them to think about the phrase and then write down the first three things that come to mind. Students should then add their Post-it notes to the word web. After the allotted time, discuss what students have posted to gauge prior knowledge of the Vietnam War. Some questions to the further discussion (optional):
  - Do you know anyone who fought in the Vietnam War? Have they told you about their experiences?
  - Where do you get most of your information about the Vietnam War? School? Video games? Movies? TV?
  - Have you seen any films about the Vietnam War? How is the war depicted?

Dispel any misinformation before explaining to students that they will be learning about the Vietnam War with a special focus on the Vietnam War Memorial.

#### Vietnam War Illustrated Timeline

3. Divide students into groups of 2 – 4 and provide each group with a copy of the following attached handouts: "A Short Summary of the Vietnam War," and "A Short Summary of the Vietnam War Questions." Allow students approximately fifteen minutes to read the summary aloud and answer the questions as a group.
4. Once groups have finished, provide them with a copy of the timeline instructions and allow groups to work on their timelines for approximately twenty minutes. Circulate throughout the room to ensure that students are on task and to answer any questions.  
*Teacher Note:* Timeline instructions can be projected on the board to save paper.
5. After the allotted time, choose a few groups to present one of the events on their timelines. Then pose the following discussion questions to the class:
  - What were some major turning points of the Vietnam Conflict?
  - Based upon what you previous knew and what you just learned, could the Vietnam War have turned out differently? If so, how?
  - Why do you think some political commentators compare the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan to Vietnam? Can you see any parallels?

6. Explain to students that the Vietnam War remains surrounded in controversy. Strangely, one of the most controversial aspects of the Vietnam War was how to honor those that survived and those that died. Since the war was so divisive, some believed it should be forgotten, while others felt that a memorial would help heal the wounds the war caused.
7. Inform students that they will be participating in a “Reader’s Theatre” activity to explore some of the controversies surrounding the Vietnam War Memorial. Reader's theatre is a style of theatre in which the actors do not memorize their lines. Rather, they stand in a queue and step forward to read their lines off the script. Once they have completed their lines, they step back to the queue, to indicate the end of their reading. In Reader's theatre, actors use vocal expression to help the audience understand the story rather than visual storytelling such as sets and costumes.

Assign the following eight “acts” and thirty-five roles to students. Depending on class size, students may have to assume multiple roles across different “acts”. Students will perform their parts in this order for the class:

**Prologue:**

- Narrator

**Act I: Two Officers and a Grunt**

- Robert Doubek
- Jan Scruggs
- John Wheeler

**Act II: How Much Are You Fellows Putting In?**

- Robert Doubek
- Jan Scruggs
- John Warner
- Monica Healy
- John Parsons
- Senator Charles Mathias

**Act III: The Best Goddamn Competition**

- Robert Doubek
- Paul Spreiregen
- Ross Perot
- Maya Lin
- Andrus Burr
- John Wheeler

**Act IV: We Had a Problem Here**

- Tom Carhart
- Milton Copulous
- Jim Webb
- William Chatfield

**Act V: A Communist Among Us**

- Maya Lin
- John Wheeler
- Tom Carhart
- Robert Doubek
- Jan Scruggs

**Act VI: The Compromise**

- Jan Scruggs
- Robert Doubek
- Tom Carhart
- Milton Copulous
- George Price

**Act VII: The Soldiers Like It**

- Robert Doubek
- John Parsons
- John Wheeler
- Tom Carhart
- John Murtha

8. Once you have divided up the “acts”/roles, distribute the appropriate attached scripts. Allow the students a few minutes to review and discuss their acts. (One paper saving option is to distribute one copy of the script to each group and from that, have the students copy their lines onto a separate sheet of paper.)

9. Before students begin the “Reader’s Theatre”, remind students that they should be respectful audience members during their classmates’ presentations. Project or write the following discussion questions on the board and discuss them at the end of each scene or at the end of the activity.

**Prologue:**

- How did some people feel about the returning Vietnam Veterans? Why do you think they felt this way?

**Act I: Two Officers and a Grunt**

- How much money did the organization for the Vietnam Memorial initially raise? What does this tell you about American’s feelings about the Vietnam War?

**Act II: How Much Are You Fellows Putting In?**

- Why was the location of the monument important to Jan Scruggs? Why was it “poetic justice?”

**Act III: The Best Goddamn Competition**

- What was Ross Perot’s stipulation before he donated money for the memorial? How did they choose the design for the memorial? Who designed the memorial?

**Act IV: We Had a Problem Here**

- What were some criticisms of the memorial design? What was Ross Perot’s criticism of the memorial?
- What is your reaction to the question, “Why is it that every other monument in Washington is white, but this one is black?”

**Act V: A Communist Among Us**

- Why do you think people suggested that there was a communist involved in the memorial project?

**Act VI: The Compromise**

- What was the compromise that allowed the memorial to be built?

**Act VII: The Soldiers Like It**

- What were people’s reactions to the memorial? What was the purpose of the memorial according to Jan Scruggs?

10. *Homework:* Instruct the students to go home and research a memorial. It can be any type of structure and can honor any cause (does not have to be a statue or honor soldiers). Instruct students to answer the following questions and if possible, print a picture of the memorial:
- What or who does the memorial honor?
  - Why is the design significant? What does it represent?
  - Does the memorial consist of one part or many different parts?
  - Do you believe this memorial is an appropriate way to honor its subjects?

**Day Two**

**Designing a Vietnam Memorial**

11. As a warm up activity, randomly place students in groups of three to five and instruct them to share the memorials they researched for homework. Allow students five to ten minutes to discuss their memorials before moving on.
12. Explain to the class that they have been asked by the US Department of Veteran’s Affairs to create a new memorial honoring one aspect of the Vietnam War. Students will be divided into teams and each team will submit a design for a class wide competition. The designs can be completely original or can be influenced by other established memorials.
13. Distribute and review the competition rules before dividing students into design teams. Students should be divided into mixed ability teams of approximately three to four students. Design team roles can be assigned by the teacher or decided by the students.

14. Allow approximately 45 – 60 minutes for students to design their memorials. Circulate throughout the room to ensure students are on task. Project a countdown timer on the board so students know how much time they have to complete the assignment. A free stopwatch can be found at: <http://www.online-stopwatch.com>. With five minutes remaining, direct students toward finalizing their memorials and presentations.
15. Once all the groups have completed their projects, randomly choose groups to present their projects to the class. Each group should explain what their memorials honor and why they made the design choices they made. Limit each presentation to 3 to 5 minutes.
16. After all the groups have presented, post the memorials around the room and instruct the class to participate in a gallery walk. Students should examine each memorial for 1 or 2 minutes before moving on. Once all the groups have completed the walk inform them that they will now be voting to choose a class Vietnam Memorial. Students should use the ballot at the bottom of their project instructions. Tally up the votes to determine the winner. Give the winning group a prize or candy.

### **Additional Activities**

- See the Consortium's database for additional lessons concerning Vietnam
  - <http://www.civics.unc.edu/resources/intro.php>

### **Resources**

- Vietnam War Oral Histories:
  - <http://fcit.usf.edu/vietnam/index.html>
- Vietnam War Pictures:
  - <http://www.vietnampix.com/index.html>
- Battlefield: Vietnam:
  - <http://www.pbs.org/battlefieldvietnam/>

## Vietnam War Memorial



## A Short Summary of the Vietnam War

### Imperialism and Colonialism

The Vietnam War has roots in Vietnam's centuries of domination by imperial and colonial powers—first China, which ruled ancient Vietnam, and then France, which took control of Vietnam in the late 1800s and established **French Indochina**. In the early 1900s, nationalist movements emerged in Vietnam, demanding more self-governance and less French influence. The most prominent of these was led by Communist leader **Ho Chi Minh**, who founded a militant nationalist organization called the **Viet Minh**.



### The First Indochina War

During World War II, when France was occupied by Nazi Germany, it lost its foothold in Vietnam, and Japan took control of the country. The Viet Minh resisted these Japanese oppressors and extended its power base throughout Vietnam. When Japan surrendered at the end of World War II in 1945, Ho Chi Minh's forces took the capital of **Hanoi** and declared Vietnam to be an independent country, the **Democratic Republic of Vietnam**.



Ho Chi Minh

France refused to recognize Ho's declaration and returned to Vietnam, driving Ho's Communist forces into northern Vietnam. Ho appealed for aid from the United States, but because the United States was embroiled in the escalating Cold War with the Communist USSR, it distrusted Ho's Communist leanings and aided the French instead. Fighting between Ho's forces and the French continued in this First Indochina War until 1954, when a humiliating defeat at **Dien Bien Phu** prompted France to seek a peace settlement.

### Divided Vietnam

The **Geneva Accords** of 1954 declared a cease-fire and divided Vietnam officially into **North Vietnam** (under Ho and his Communist forces) and **South Vietnam** (under a French-backed emperor). The dividing line was set at the 17th parallel and was surrounded by a demilitarized zone, or DMZ. The Geneva Accords stipulated that the divide was temporary and that Vietnam was to be reunified under free elections to be held in 1956.

### The Cold War and the Domino Theory

At this point, the United States' Cold War foreign policy began to play a major part in Vietnam. U.S. policy at the time was dominated by the **domino theory**, which believed that the "fall" of North Vietnam to Communism might trigger all of Southeast Asia to fall, setting off a sort of Communist chain reaction. Within a year of the Geneva Accords, the United States therefore began to offer support to the anti-Communist politician **Ngo Dinh Diem**. With U.S. assistance, Diem took control of the South Vietnamese government in 1955 and declared the Republic of Vietnam. Due to the popularity of Ho Chi Minh throughout Vietnam, Diem promptly canceled the elections that had been scheduled for 1956.



Self –  
Immolation



### The Diem Regime

Diem's regime proved corrupt, oppressive, and extremely unpopular. He was so unpopular that some Buddhist monks protested his regime using **self-immolation** – setting oneself on fire. Nonetheless, the United States continued to prop Diem up, fearful of the increasing Communist resistance activity in South Vietnam. This resistance against Diem's regime was organized by the Ho Chi Minh-backed **National Liberation Front**, which became more commonly known as the **Viet Cong**.

In 1962, U.S. president John F. Kennedy sent American "military advisors" to Vietnam to help train the South Vietnamese army, the ARVN, but quickly realized that the Diem regime was unsalvageable.



Therefore, in 1963, the United States backed a coup that overthrew Diem and installed a new leader. The new U.S.-backed leaders proved just as corrupt and ineffective.

### Johnson and U.S. Escalation

Kennedy's successor, **Lyndon B. Johnson**, pledged to honor Kennedy's commitments but hoped to keep U.S. involvement in Vietnam to a minimum. He kept Kennedy's Secretary of Defense, **Robert McNamara**, but replaced the previous American military commander with **William C. Westmoreland** – a U.S. general who advocated aggressive strategies against Viet Cong and NVA using large numbers of U.S. forces. After North Vietnamese forces allegedly attacked U.S. Navy ships during the **Gulf of Tonkin Incident** in 1964, Johnson was given carte blanche in the form of the **Gulf of Tonkin Resolution**. This resolution allowed Johnson "to take all necessary measure to repel any armed attack against the forces of United States and to prevent further aggression;" this greatly expanded his presidential power. With the free hand recently provided by Congress, Johnson ordered the U.S. Air Force and U.S. Navy to begin an intense series of air strikes called **Operation Rolling Thunder**. He hoped that the bombing campaign would demonstrate to the South Vietnamese the U.S. commitment to their cause and its resolve to halt the spread of Communism. Ironically, the air raids seemed only to increase the number of Viet Cong and NVA (North Vietnamese Army) attacks. Johnson's "Americanization" of the war led to a presence of nearly 400,000 U.S. troops in Vietnam by the end of 1966.



Vietnam takes its toll on President Johnson

### Quagmire and Attrition

In 1965, Westmoreland began to implement a **search-and-destroy** strategy that sent U.S. troops out into the field to find and kill Viet Cong members. Westmoreland was confident that American technology would succeed in slowly wearing down the Viet Cong through a war of **attrition**—a strategy of extended combat meant to inflict so many casualties on the enemy that it could no longer continue. U.S. leaders agreed, believing that North Vietnam's economy could not sustain a prolonged war effort.

In light of this new strategy of fighting a war of attrition, U.S. commanders were instructed to begin keeping body counts of enemy soldiers killed. Although body counts were indeed tallied, they were often exaggerated and proved wildly inaccurate, as the bodies of Viet Cong soldiers often were difficult to distinguish from the bodies of friendly South Vietnamese soldiers.

However, the Viet Cong's guerrilla tactics frustrated and demoralized U.S. troops, while its dispersed, largely rural presence left American bomber planes with few targets. The United States therefore used unconventional weapons such as **napalm** – a highly flammable jellied substance -- and the herbicide defoliant **Agent Orange** but still managed to make little headway.

### The Ho Chi Minh Trail

Meanwhile, U.S. forces continued to try to cut off Viet Cong supply lines through air power. These efforts expended a great deal of time and resources, but the North Vietnamese government proved extremely savvy in its ability to keep the Viet Cong supplied. Rather than attempt to send materials across the heavily guarded DMZ (the demilitarized zone surrounding the border between North and South Vietnam at the 17th parallel), they sent supplies via the **Ho Chi Minh Trail**, which ran from North Vietnam through Laos and Cambodia into South Vietnam ([see map above](#)). Troops and supplies streamed into South Vietnam via the trail and despite intense U.S. bombing throughout 1965, the trail never closed once, not even temporarily.

### The "Credibility Gap"

Despite the numerous setbacks, Johnson and other U.S. officials, citing increased troop numbers and redefined objectives, again claimed to be making headway in the war. Many government officials reported that the North Vietnamese were declining in strength and were on the brink of defeat. Photos and video footage of dead American soldiers in newspapers and on evening news programs, however, indicated otherwise. Moreover, U.S. spending in support of the war had reached record levels, costing the government an estimated \$3 billion a month. As a result, many people in the United States began to speak of a "**credibility**



gap” between what Johnson and the U.S. government was telling the American people and what actually was transpiring on the ground.

### The Tet Offensive

In 1968, the North Vietnamese Army and the Viet Cong launched a massive campaign called the **Tet Offensive**, attacking nearly thirty U.S. targets and dozens of other cities in South Vietnam at once. Although the United States pushed back the offensive and won a tactical victory, American media coverage characterized the conflict as a defeat, and U.S. public support for the war plummeted. Morale among U.S. troops also hit an all-time low, manifesting itself tragically in the 1968 **My Lai Massacre**, in which frustrated U.S. soldiers killed hundreds of unarmed Vietnamese civilians in a small village.



### The Antiwar Movement

Meanwhile, the antiwar movement within the United States gained momentum as student protesters, countercultural hippies, and even many mainstream Americans denounced the war. Protests against the war and the **selective service system** -- military draft -- grew increasingly violent, resulting in police brutality outside the **Democratic National Convention** in 1968 and the deaths of four students at **Kent State University** in 1970 when Ohio National Guardsmen fired on a crowd. Despite the protests, Johnson’s successor elected in 1968, President Richard M. Nixon, declared that a “silent majority” of Americans still supported the war.

### Vietnamization and U.S. Withdrawal

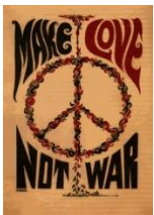
Nonetheless, Nixon promoted a policy of **Vietnamization** of the war, promising to withdraw U.S. troops gradually and hand over management of the war effort to the South Vietnamese. Although Nixon made good on his promise, he also illegally expanded the geographic scope of the war by authorizing the bombing of Viet Cong sites in the neutral nations of **Cambodia** and **Laos**, all without the knowledge or consent of the U.S. Congress. The revelation of these illegal actions, along with the publication of the secret **Pentagon Papers** in US newspapers in 1971, caused an enormous scandal in the United States and forced Nixon to push for a peace settlement. These papers revealed that the U.S. Army, as well as presidents Truman, Eisenhower, Kennedy, and Johnson, had authorized a number of covert actions that increased U.S. involvement in Vietnam unbeknownst to the American public. The government tried to block the publication of these papers under the guise of “national security”, but the Supreme Court ruled in **New York Times v. US** that the government must prove an immediate threat to national security to censor the papers.



“General Nguyen Ngoc Loan executing a Viet Cong prisoner in Saigon”  
Famous Tet Offensive

### Congress’s Response

Outraged by the unauthorized invasion of Cambodia and by the double scandal from the My Lai Massacre and the Pentagon Papers, many in Congress took steps to exert more control over the war and to appease the equally angry public. The Senate voted to repeal the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution to reduce the military’s unchecked spending power (although the House of Representatives did not follow suit). Congress also reduced the number of years drafted soldiers needed to serve in the army. Finally, the **Twenty-Sixth Amendment** was ratified in 1971 to lower the U.S. voting age from twenty-one to eighteen, on the grounds that the young men serving in Vietnam should have a say in which politicians were running the war.



### The War Powers Resolution

In July 1973, Congress and the American public learned the full extent of the secret U.S. military campaigns in Cambodia. Testimony in congressional hearings revealed that Nixon and the military had been secretly bombing Cambodia heavily since 1969, even though the president and Joint Chiefs of Staff had repeatedly

denied the charge. When the news broke, Nixon switched tactics and began bombing Cambodia openly despite extreme public disapproval.

Angry, Congress mustered enough votes to pass the November 1973 **War Powers Resolution** over Nixon's veto. The resolution restricted presidential powers during wartime by requiring the president to notify Congress upon launching any U.S. military action abroad. If Congress did not approve of the action, it would have to conclude within sixty to ninety days. In effect, this act made the president accountable to Congress for his actions abroad. Congress also ended the draft in 1973 and stipulated that the military henceforth consist solely of paid volunteers. Both the War Powers Resolution and the conversion to an all-volunteer army helped quiet antiwar protesters.

### **The Cease-fire and the Fall of Saigon**

After secret negotiations between U.S. emissary **Henry A. Kissinger** and North Vietnamese representative **Le Duc Tho** in 1972, Nixon engaged in diplomatic maneuvering with China and the USSR—and stepped up bombing of North Vietnam—to pressure the North Vietnamese into a settlement. The **Paris Peace Accords** were finally signed in January 1973, and the last U.S. military personnel left Vietnam in March 1973. Under the terms of the agreement, Nixon pledged to **withdraw** all remaining military personnel from Vietnam and allow the tens of thousands of NVA troops in South Vietnam to remain there, despite the fact that they controlled a quarter of South Vietnamese territory. However, Nixon promised to intervene if North Vietnam moved against the South. In exchange, North Vietnam promised that **elections** would be held to determine the fate of the entire country. Although Nixon insisted that the agreement brought “**peace with honor**,” South Vietnamese leaders complained that the terms amounted to little more than a surrender for South Vietnam.

The U.S. government continued to fund the South Vietnamese army, but this funding quickly dwindled. Meanwhile, as President Nixon became embroiled in the **Watergate scandal** that led to his resignation in August 1974, North Vietnamese forces stepped up their attacks on the South and finally launched an all-out offensive in the spring of 1975. On April 30, 1975, the South Vietnamese capital of **Saigon** fell to the North Vietnamese, who reunited the country under Communist rule as the **Socialist Republic of Vietnam**, ending the Vietnam War.

Adapted and Edited by Carolina K-12

Source: <http://www.sparknotes.com/history/american/vietnamwar/summary.html>

#### Image Sources:

<http://www.vntours.com/images/tour/map/vietnam-asia-map.gif>  
[http://img.timeinc.net/time/time100/images/main\\_hochiminh.jpg](http://img.timeinc.net/time/time100/images/main_hochiminh.jpg)  
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Name \_\_\_\_\_

## Short Summary of the Vietnam War Questions

1. Why was Ho Chi Minh fighting the French? What was the name of his organization?
2. What happened at Dien Bien Phu?
3. How did the United States' foreign policy relate to an increased presence in Vietnam?
4. What group organized resistance to Diem's regime? List both names for the organization.
5. What was the Gulf of Tonkin resolution? Why was it passed? Why is it significant?
6. What was the purpose of Operation Rolling Thunder? Did it work?
7. What strategies did the United States use in Vietnam? Why did they believe they would work?
8. Why was the Ho Chi Minh Trail significant?
9. What was the Tet Offensive? How is it related to the Credibility Gap?
10. What was Vietnamization?

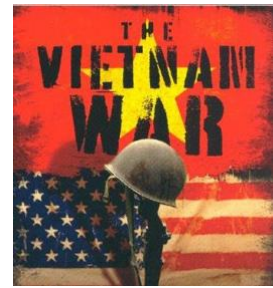
## Short Summary of the Vietnam War Answer Key

1. Why was Ho Chi Minh fighting the French? What was the name of his organization?  
**Ho Chi Minh wanted to remove French control and influence from Vietnam, so the Vietnamese could rule themselves. His organization was called the Viet Minh.**
2. What happened at Dien Bien Phu?  
**The French were defeated by Ho Chi Minh's forces and forced to leave Vietnam.**
3. How did the United States' foreign policy relate to an increased presence in Vietnam?  
**The Domino Theory stressed that if one nation fell to communism, the surrounding nations would also fall. Ho Chi Minh was extremely popular in Vietnam after defeating the French and he probably would have won elections to unifying the country under a communist government. To prevent Vietnam falling to communism under Ho Chi Minh, the United States sent large amounts of aid and advisors. Eventually, this policy led to an increase in the amount of US troops in Vietnam.**
4. What group organized resistance to Diem's regime? List both names for the organization.  
**The National Liberation Front consisted of supporters of Ho Chi Minh stationed in South Vietnam that carried out various resistance activities. They are more commonly known as the "Viet Cong."**
5. What was the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution? Why was it passed? Why is it significant?  
**The Gulf of Tonkin Resolution was a congressional authorization that allowed President Johnson to greatly expand the war in Vietnam. It was passed in response to the Gulf of Tonkin Incident. It is significant because it greatly expanded Presidential War Powers and allowed Johnson to escalate the war without oversight from Congress.**
6. What was the purpose of Operation Rolling Thunder? Did it work?  
**The purpose of Operation Rolling Thunder was to bomb the N. Vietnamese into submission and to demonstrate to the South Vietnamese that the US was serious about supporting its cause. It did not work, it actually strengthened the resolve of the North and increase the number of people siding with Ho Chi Minh.**
7. What strategies did the United States use in Vietnam? Why did they believe they would work?  
**One strategy was "Search and Destroy" – US troops would go into the countryside to find and kill Viet Cong members. Another strategy was attrition – extend combat to inflict the most amount of enemies casualties thus forcing them to surrender. They believed it would work because they felt that N. Vietnam's economy could not sustain a protracted war effort.**
8. Why was the Ho Chi Minh Trail significant?  
**It allowed the North to resupply the Viet Cong in the South despite US efforts to stop the trail.**
9. What was the Tet Offensive? How do you think it is related to the Creditability Gap?  
**A massive North Vietnamese surprise attack against various American and South Vietnamese targets. It was a military failure for the North Vietnamese, but it helped turned American support against the war. Many government officials issued reports that the North Vietnamese were on the brink of defeat, but the Tet Offensive proved they were not.**
10. What was Vietnamization?  
**President Nixon's plan to withdraw U.S. troops gradually and hand over management of the war effort to the South Vietnamese.**

Name \_\_\_\_\_

## Vietnam War Illustrated Timeline

**Directions:** After reading the “Short Summary of the Vietnam War” and answering the attached questions, create a timeline on the back of this sheet that plots the following events. After plotting the events, choose any five and write a short one or two sentence description about the event’s significance. Then, draw a picture for each of the 5 events you have chosen.



Begin your timeline writing the year (and month, if applicable) next to the event.

1. Saigon falls ending the Vietnam War (\_\_\_\_\_)
2. Gulf of Tonkin Resolutions (\_\_\_\_\_)
3. Japan Surrenders ending World War II (\_\_\_\_\_)
4. Geneva Accords signed (\_\_\_\_\_)
5. Diem takes control of South Vietnamese Government (\_\_\_\_\_)
6. Battle of Dien Bien Phu (\_\_\_\_\_)
7. 26<sup>th</sup> Amendment ratified (\_\_\_\_\_)
8. Diem cancels democratic elections (\_\_\_\_\_)
9. The United States sends “military advisors” to Vietnam (\_\_\_\_\_)
10. Viet Minh is founded by Ho Chi Minh (\_\_\_\_\_)
11. United States backed coup deposes Diem (\_\_\_\_\_)
12. President Kennedy is assassinated and Lyndon Johnson becomes President (\_\_\_\_\_)
13. Riots at the Democratic National Convention (\_\_\_\_\_)
14. Gulf of Tonkin Incident (\_\_\_\_\_)
15. Tet Offensive (\_\_\_\_\_)
16. Pentagon Papers Released (\_\_\_\_\_)
17. France takes control of Vietnam (\_\_\_\_\_)
18. Last US Military Personnel leave Vietnam (\_\_\_\_\_)
19. Search-and-destroy strategy implemented (\_\_\_\_\_)
20. My Lai Massacre (\_\_\_\_\_)
21. Ken State University shootings (\_\_\_\_\_)
22. Richard M. Nixon elected president (\_\_\_\_\_)
23. Nixon authorizes bombing of Cambodia and Laos (\_\_\_\_\_)
24. *New York Times v. US* decided (\_\_\_\_\_)
25. War Powers Resolution passed (\_\_\_\_\_)
26. Paris Peace Accords (\_\_\_\_\_)
27. Ho Chi Minh seizes Hanoi and declares Vietnam independent (\_\_\_\_\_)
28. Congress ends the draft (\_\_\_\_\_)

**Grading Rubric**

CATEGORY	4	3	2	1
Content/Facts	Facts were accurate for all events reported on the timeline.	Facts were accurate for almost all events reported on the timeline.	Facts were accurate for most (~75%) of the events reported on the timeline.	Facts were often inaccurate for events reported on the timeline.
Dates	An accurate, complete date has been included for each event.	An accurate, complete date has been included for almost every event.	An accurate date has been included for almost every event.	Dates are inaccurate and/or missing for several events.
Learning of Content	The student can accurately describe 75% (or more) of the events on the timeline without referring to it and can quickly determine which of two events occurred first.	The student can accurately describe 50% of the events on the timeline without referring to it and can quickly determine which of two events occurred first.	The student can describe any event on the timeline if allowed to refer to it and can determine which of two events occurred first.	The student cannot use the timeline effectively to describe events nor to compare events.
Readability	The overall appearance of the timeline is pleasing and easy to read.	The overall appearance of the timeline is somewhat pleasing and easy to read.	The timeline is relatively readable.	The timeline is difficult to read.
Time Use	Classroom time was used to work on the project. Conversations were not disruptive and focused on the work.	Classroom time was used to work on the project the majority of the time. Conversations were not disruptive and focused on the work.	Classroom time was used to work on the project the majority of the time, but conversations often were disruptive or did not focus on the work.	Student did not use classroom time to work on the project and/or was highly disruptive.

## The Vietnam Memorial's History

### Prologue

Twenty-five years ago, the Vietnam Veterans Memorial divided Washington. Today it's an emotional touchstone.

On November 13, 1982, the Saturday after Veterans Day, thousands of Vietnam vets marched down Constitution Avenue. They wore mothballed uniforms, held hands, and wept. It was a homecoming parade seven years after the war.

In the 25 years since that day's dedication of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, millions have come to see what is now a landmark. They read the names of the 58,256 dead and missing on the wall. They stare at their reflections in the polished black granite. Few can resist touching it.

Yet the memorial was almost never built. Supporters had to fight to raise money and to put it on the Mall. While many veterans saw the black V design as dignified, others thought it resembled a ditch or gravestone—a condemnation of the war. Early backers of the memorial—including billionaire Ross Perot and Jim Webb, a decorated Vietnam vet who was years away from the Senate—denounced it as an insult to veterans.

The fight was bitter, fueled by emotions that had as much to do with the war as they did with the memorial itself. There were death threats, racial slurs, and broken friendships. Memories of that time still spark pain and anger.

The idea for a memorial came from Jan Scruggs, an infantryman who had gone to Vietnam in 1969 straight out of Bowie High. He was wounded and saw friends die. Thirteen were killed in a single explosion.

Scruggs came home shortly before the 1970 Kent State shooting. Women wouldn't date him because he'd been in Vietnam. "That was the feeling in the air," he says, "that we were unclean."

A decade later, Scruggs, who was working as a civil-rights investigator at the Department of Labor, proposed a memorial while attending a meeting of Vietnam veterans here.

"It went over like a lead balloon," says Robert Doubek, an attorney and former Air Force officer. The veterans wanted benefits; a memorial seemed superfluous.

But Doubek liked the idea. He and Scruggs incorporated the nonprofit Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund. On May 28, 1979, Scruggs held a press conference to announce their plans.



## **Act I: Two Officers and a Grunt**

*Scruggs saw heavy combat in Vietnam and spent months “raising hell” after he was discharged. Doubek, an intelligence officer who interrogated North Vietnamese prisoners, went straight to Georgetown Law.*

**Doubek:** “Scruggs was a very uninspiring person. He slouched. He didn’t dress like a professional—Levi’s and a checked shirt. He didn’t look you in the eye, didn’t have a solid handshake. But I was somewhat intimidated by him because he was an enlisted man and a combat veteran.”

**Scruggs:** “I went to see my boss and told him I was going to need a couple weeks off to build this monument.”

**Doubek:** “I remember watching the evening news on July 4. Roger Mudd closes out the broadcast and says, ‘And finally, an organization that has been formed to build a national memorial to Vietnam veterans has raised a total of \$144.50.’ It was sardonic. You know—what can you expect from such a bunch of losers?”

**John Wheeler**, a staff officer at Army headquarters in Vietnam from 1969 to 1970: “Jan had risked one of the most horrible things you can do in America, which is appear foolish. I called him and said, ‘You can do this.’ He came over to my house and asked me to be chairman of the fund. It was one of the greatest compliments I’ll ever get.”

**Doubek:** “I was thinking about quitting right before Jack Wheeler became involved. I really didn’t have any faith in Jan. Wheeler was impressive. He was a West Point graduate, a graduate of Yale Law School. He had an MBA from Harvard, he was a member of the Army and Navy Club. He was a WASP.”

## Act II: "How Much Are You Fellows Putting In?"

*Scruggs, Doubek, and Wheeler found a champion for their cause in Senator Charles Mathias, a Maryland Republican. John Warner, who had been secretary of the Navy during the war and was in his first months on the job as a Republican senator from Virginia, also agreed to help. Ross Perot, a Naval Academy alum known for his efforts to rescue POWs, became one of the first donors.*

**Doubek:** "Jim Webb came onto the scene in August of 1979. Everybody was in awe of Webb because he had written the first major Vietnam novel [Fields of Fire]. When we met, he quoted from British prime minister William Gladstone: 'Show me how a country honors its dead, and I'll show you the quality of a nation,' or something like that."

**Warner:** "Jan Scruggs walked into my office in a very quiet, humble way. I was taken aback by the man's extraordinary humility. I immediately wanted to work with him."

**Scruggs:** "I called Ross Perot. He told me he had had the exact same idea in 1977 and had offered to pay for a memorial in Washington if it had all the names [of the dead] on it and was in a prominent site."

**Monica Healy**, legislative aide to Mathias: "One of the first fundraising events was in Senator Warner's home [in Georgetown]. It was a breakfast event. Warner was in the middle of his pitch, and down the stairs walks his famous wife, Liz Taylor. She was in her pink robe and white slippers and looked like she had her makeup on from the night before."

**Warner:** "In Hollywood, a lot of people don't appear before midday. She came down unexpectedly and listened. As the attendees were getting up to leave, she said, 'How much are you fellows putting in?'"

**John Parsons**, National Park Service official who oversees the addition of new memorials to the Mall and other public land in Washington: "We showed Jan a site on Memorial Drive [near the entrance to Arlington National Cemetery], where the Seabee Memorial is located. He could not believe we thought he'd be interested in something that insignificant. I next met him with Senator Mathias. I was called up there [to the Hill.] The senator said, 'I think we're talking about something different, Mr. Parsons.'"

**Mathias:** "We chose the site one day in the Senate reception room. We had an Exxon map of the District, and we marked the spot we thought would be good."

**Scruggs:** "The idea of having all these names permanently displayed in Washington a few blocks from the White House, a block from the State Department, down the street from the US Congress—to me, this was poetic justice. These were the people everyone wanted to forget. They wanted this whole thing to go away, and I didn't want it to go away."

### **Act III: “The Best Damn Competition”**

*In July 1980, President Jimmy Carter signed legislation that set aside two acres on the Mall. The memorial fund organized a national design competition and picked an eight-person jury, including architect Harry Weese, who designed the Washington Metro system.*

**Doubek:** “From the first day Scruggs walked into my office, I said it should be designed through a competition. I grew up in Chicago and went to the Tribune Tower. In the lobby there were photographs of the other designs, because it was designed in a competition. I always remembered that.”

**Paul Spreiregen**, Washington architect and adviser for the competition: “This was going to be the best damn competition that had ever been held for anything. I wanted to have senior gray eminences on the jury—people of broad and deep knowledge of design.”

**Wheeler:** “I was worried that Perot would help us to death, because he had such strong ideas. But Jan went ahead and got \$160,000 from him for the competition.”

**Perot:** “I said I’d fund the design with one stipulation—that the men who fought over there like it. If we were to build a memorial to you, it should be one you like, right?”

*The fund received so many designs that it arranged to use a hangar at Andrews Air Force Base to display them for the jurors. Among the entries was an abstract scheme created by Maya Ying Lin, the daughter of Chinese immigrants and a 21-year-old Yale undergraduate.*

**Spreiregen:** “The jurors went individually into this display of 1,400 designs—a linear mile and a third. Harry Weese came back after a couple of hours and said, ‘Paul, there are two designs out there that could do it.’ He had spotted it.”

**Maya Lin**, in her book *Boundaries*: “The drawings were in soft pastels, very mysterious, very painterly, and not at all typical of architectural drawings. One of the comments made by a juror was ‘He must really know what he is doing to dare to do something so naive.’ ”

**Doubek:** “I remember seeing [Lin’s] design when I was in a hurry. I couldn’t conceptualize what the hell it was. It just looked like two black triangles.”

**Scruggs:** “As you looked at the other designs, they were miniature Lincoln Memorials. There was the helicopter on the pole, there was the army helmet with dog tags inside. They seemed so banal and average and typical compared to this.”

*On May 1, 1981, the jury presented its unanimous choice of Lin’s design to the fund’s organizers, who were assembled in the hangar.*

**Wheeler:** “I stood up and said, ‘It’s a work of genius,’ and started clapping. Everyone else clapped.”

**Spreiregen:** “There was an envelope on the back with this registration form. I opened it up, and saw ‘Maya Ying Lin.’ Who’s that?”

**Andrus Burr**, a Yale professor who taught Lin’s funerary-architecture course, for which the design was an assignment: “She was a pleasant, happy-go-lucky, not very serious kid. She was a casual student. I only gave her a B-plus for the course because she hadn’t done that well.”

**Wheeler:** “Maya Lin was perfect. She was right from central casting.”

**Lin:** "I remember one of the veterans asking me before the wall was built what I thought people's reaction would be to it. . . . I was too afraid to tell him what I was thinking, that I knew a returning veteran would cry."

#### **Act IV: "We Had a Problem Here"**

*Tom Carhart, a classmate of Wheeler's at West Point, had been a volunteer on the memorial fund's board until he entered the design competition. An amateur, he didn't expect to win. After Lin's entry was selected, he led the opposition.*

*Jim Webb maintained ties to the fund for months while insisting the monument be built in white marble and placed above ground. He eventually demanded the fund remove his name from its letterhead.*

**Carhart:** "I was stunned when I saw the design. It seemed the opposite of a memorial to recognize and honor veterans."

**Milton Copulos**, who was badly wounded in Viet nam and worked at the Heritage Foundation: "It was just names on the wall. There was no mention of what they had done, no flag, none of the things you would associate with a memorial. It was just two long black walls."

**William Chatfield**, a former Marine who worked for the Defense Department: "I'm not saying it's a ditch. It's just black and in the earth. The artist herself called it a wall of death. So we had a problem here."

**Carhart:** "I spoke to other veterans who were involved in the memorial fund, and we all agreed it was a slap in the face. But everyone had reasons they couldn't publicly announce their disdain: 'My wife will kill me' or 'I'll get fired.' Finally I said, 'Forget it. I'll do it.' There was a meeting of the Fine Arts Commission [which had to approve the design]. They said I could speak but only for two minutes. I contacted the media, and they were there in droves. I spoke for 15 minutes, and I wore a black suit with two Purple Hearts pinned to the pocket."

**Lin** in *Boundaries*: "I remember Ross Perot when he was trying to persuade the veterans that it was an inappropriate design, asking me if I truly didn't feel that the veterans would prefer a parade instead, something happy or uplifting."

**Perot:** "The memorial did not honor all the soldiers. It just honored the dead. We have all these people who were scarred worse when they came home than they were on the battlefield. I wanted all of the men honored."

**Jim Webb**, in a letter to Scruggs in December 1981: "I never in my wildest dreams imagined such a nihilistic slab of stone."

**Scruggs:** "The most powerful piece of rhetoric was this simple phrase, and this is what killed us: Why is it that every other monument in Washington is white, but this one is black?"

## **Act V: A Communist Among Us?**

*Men on both sides say they received threatening phone calls at home and that their careers suffered because of their involvement. But the controversy helped the memorial fund raise money—eventually \$8.4 million in donations.*

**Lin:** “I remember at the very first press conference a reporter asking me if I did not find it ironic that the memorial was for the Vietnam War and that I was of Asian descent.”

**Wheeler:** “They attacked her for being a ‘gook.’ ”

**Carhart:** “One of the members of the other side said, ‘Carhart, at one of these meetings, called that woman a gook.’ That’s like saying, ‘Have you stopped beating your wife?’ No matter what I say, I’m wrong. The allegation endured.”

**Doubek:** “There was a reception at the Washington Post, and Chuck Hagel was there. He was working as the deputy administrator of the Veterans Administration. He said, ‘Some guy came to my office and left this document saying there was a communist on the jury.’

“There had to be someone totally without professional standards to be low enough to put it in the media. That was Pat Buchanan. It appeared on December 26, 1981, in his column.”

**Scruggs:** “If there was a communist involved in this, we wanted to find out. We got the jurors all on the phone and gave them the interrogatory. It turned out one of the jurors [landscape architect Garrett Eckbo] had given a course at the California Labor School in the ‘30s or ‘40s. But he was not teaching about Marxism or Leninism.”

## **Act VI: The Compromise**

*The design received approval from the US Commission of Fine Arts and the National Capital Planning Commission, which have jurisdiction over the Mall. But James Watt, President Reagan's secretary of the Interior, blocked the project because of the controversy.*

**Scruggs:** "We'd gotten the camel through the eye of the needle, and then this crazy thing happens. It was just like getting punched in the stomach."

**Doubek:** "Senator Warner set up this meeting, which we envisioned as three on their side, three on our side. Perot had sent a retired Air Force lieutenant general to drum up support. The meeting was held in the Senate conference room. It was packed. We were probably outnumbered five to one. The atmosphere was extremely tense."

**Carhart:** "Maybe we did pack the meeting. We had a lot of emotional support on our side."

**Copulos:** "J. Carter Brown [Fine Arts Commission chair and National Gallery of Art director] said that adding an American flag 'would be like interrupting a beautiful aria with some country-western song.' He later amended that to say 'interrupting the national anthem.' "

**George Price,** a retired brigadier general who was a memorial-fund supporter: "Young men began to get up and say, 'This is a black gash of shame.' I'd heard as much of that crap as I could stand. I stood up and told them, 'I'm tired of hearing you talk about black as the color of shame. We've gone through a civil-rights movement to prove that's not so.' "

**Scruggs:** "A guy named Michael S. Davison—a famous general and World War II hero—listened for four hours and then stood up and said, 'Gentlemen, I have a solution. Let us build this admittedly nonconformist memorial but add to it a statue to symbolize the spirit of the American fighting soldier.' He was a very wise man. He knew to hold his firepower until people were tired."

**Carhart:** "I stood up and said, 'If you're going to give us a statue, you've got to give us an American flag.' The flag would be at the intersection of the walls, and the statue would be below that, somewhere within the V made by the walls."

**Scruggs:** "We needed to get this built. That was the mission. If we needed to add a flag and statue, so be it."

## Act VII: "The Soldiers Like It"

*The two sides agreed to the compromise, but over Lin's objections.*

**Doubek:** "I went down and talked to John Parsons at the National Park Service. He had this thick document that needed a signature. He said, 'Don't you need to go back to your board and get the approvals?' I said, 'John, I have all the approvals I need.' I signed it. I found a pay phone and called Jan Scruggs and I said, 'I got the permit. I got the damn permit.' "

**Parsons:** "The dedication was on a very cold day. It had rained significantly. The crowd, which was standing down in the apex, destroyed the grass. People were in mud up to their ankles."

**Wheeler:** "Jan and I were walking together on the crest above the memorial. It was quiet even though there were 150,000 people. I thought we might be getting a glimpse of the resurrection—meaning peace, unity, a sense of completion. A moment's break in space and time."

**Doubek:** "I was so exhausted and burned out that I said to myself, 'I don't give a damn if anybody likes it. It's done. And if they don't like it, they can go build their own.' "

**Wheeler:** "The first month of the memorial, it was cold and there were clamoring crowds of people. I was in the swim of people going back and forth, and this guy was holding up an older fellow so he could touch something. The son was holding up his blind father to touch his other son's name."

**Parsons:** "People were down there with matches and cigarette lighters and flashlights trying to find names at 2 o'clock in the morning."

**Carhart:** "The Fine Arts Commission put the flag and the statue off in the woods. That's a direct contradiction of the compromise. It's a betrayal. A hundred years from now, people will wonder why we would ever create such a travesty to insult the men and women who served in an unpopular war. Maybe they'll bury it."

**Perot:** "The soldiers like it, and the families of the men who didn't survive like it. That's what it's all about as far as I'm concerned."

**John Murtha,** the first Vietnam combat veteran elected to Congress: "I go down there every once in a while just to watch people put their hands on the wall."

**Scruggs:** "It was three years of work. Day after day, night after night, that's all I did. It was part of my healing process, but the purpose was to help heal the wounds of the nation and my fellow veterans and to give them the recognition they'd never had."

**Adapted and Edited by Carolina K-12**

**Source:** <http://www.washingtonian.com/articles/people/5595.html>





Name \_\_\_\_\_

## Designing a New Vietnam Memorial

Congratulations! You and your design team have been chosen to compete in a nationwide competition to design a new Vietnam War Memorial.

The memorial should serve to answer the following questions:

- Who or what event from the Vietnam War is being honored?
- Why did you choose to honor this aspect of the Vietnam War?
- What physical features of the memorial evoke memories of the Vietnam War?
- Why did you choose this medium (statues, paintings, gardens, etc.) to remember the Vietnam War?

Your design team should assume the following roles:

1. Researcher(s) – It is your job to complete further research about the event or person from the Vietnam War you chose to honor. Using the materials provided you should provide the group with three to five additional bits of information. Once you have finished you should assist the artist and the poet laureate with their portions of the memorial.
2. Poet Laureate – It is your job to write a poem for your memorial's dedication ceremony. It should evoke powerful emotions (hope, sadness, regret, looking towards the future, remembering the dead) and should also relate to the memorial's overall theme. The length of the poem should be between five and ten lines.
3. Artist – It is your job to draw your design team's idea. Working with the other members of your team, draw and color your memorial. Remember that you are entering your design into a competition, so make it as eye catching and attractive as possible.

Once you have finished the memorial, create a short (2 – 3 minute) informal presentation that explains your memorial to the other design groups. Your Poet Laureate should read their poem at the end of the presentation.

This contest has a strict deadline for submitting your memorial, so pay close attention to the time remaining.

Good Luck!

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### Memorial Voting Ballot

After viewing each memorial, vote for the one you think best honors the Vietnam War by writing the name in the space below.

\_\_\_\_\_