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ILAS 590
Lesson Plan

Vietnam Was More Than Just A War

Context:

This lesson is designed to take place at the end of an American History Unit on the Vietnam War. The students have had a broad overview of Vietnam's history, including the French and American colonial period. The students have also been introduced to the geography of Vietnam.

The purpose of this lesson is to introduce students to a different perspective. During this lesson, they are going to read about how the Vietnamese felt before, during, and after Americans became involved in their civil war. This lesson is going to help the students see how Vietnamese poetry was impacted and what the consequences of war often are.

Grade Level: Juniors in high school

Subject: American History

Topic: The Vietnam War

Objectives/Outcomes:

1. The students will be able to identify moods and themes in a variety of poems written during different times in Vietnam's history.
2. The students will be able to describe the differences in poetry from before, during, and after the Vietnam War.
3. The students will be able to describe how the Vietnam War impacted the poetry of the time period.

Materials:

Slide projector

Slides of Vietnam before, during, and after the Vietnam War

These pictures can be found in the following books, which are listed in the annotated bibliography.*

Vietnam: Where East & West Meet

The Illustrated History of the Vietnam War

The Vietnam Experience: America Takes Over

The Vietnam Experience: Combat Photographer

The Vietnam Experience: Rain of Fire, Air War, 1969-1973

* The best way to reproduce these photos is to take pictures of the pages with a camera. While following copyright procedures, have the pictures made into slides.

Handouts of poems from, *Of Quiet Courage: Poems from Vietnam*
Chalkboard or dry erase board to record ideas
Packet of poems and worksheet for a homework assignment

Procedure:

The lesson should take one class period to complete. However, the teacher should take some additional time the following day to finish any remaining discussion and review the homework assignment from the day.

The students will look at slides and listen to poetry together throughout the class period.

Introduction:

- A. Use a slide projector to show students pictures of Vietnam before the war without telling the students what they are looking at.
- B. Let the students try to guess the name of the country.
- C. Turning the slide projector off, allow the students to go to the board and list some adjectives describing the country.
- D. Read the poem, "White Clouds," by Luu Trong Lu.
- E. Engage the students in discussion by asking questions such as the following:
 - When do you think the poem was written? Why?
 - What is the poem about?
 - What is the author feeling? How can you tell?
 - What are some of the descriptive words the author uses?
- F. Once the students have discussed the poem, reveal some of the biographical information that was provided about Lu.
- G. Explain to the students that history is about perspective, and that this lesson's purpose is to introduce them to the Vietnamese perspective of the Vietnam War. Moreover, they are going to learn about how the Vietnam War impacted the poetry of the time period.

Strategies:

- A. After the introduction, turn out the lights and show students slides of the Vietnamese people during the war.
- B. As the slides are being shown, discuss the images the students are seeing by asking the following questions about each of the pictures:
 - What are the people doing?
 - How do the people look?
 - What kind of emotions do you think the people are feeling? How can you tell?
- C. Hand out copies of the poem, "Mother's Duties," by Hung Dung.
- D. Ask a student to read the poem aloud.
- E. Discuss the poem as a group by asking several questions:
 - When do you think the poem was written? Why?
 - What is the poem about?
 - What is the author feeling? How can you tell?
 - How does this poem make you feel? Why?
 - What are some particularly powerful words or phrases?

- Does the fact that a child wrote this poem affect you in any way? Why or why not?
- F. Turn the lights out and show some pictures of Vietnam during and after bombing raids. Try to find pictures that clearly illustrate the devastation throughout the country.
 - G. Turning the slide projector off, allow the students to go to the board and list some adjectives describing the country and how it changed from the pictures at the beginning of class.
 - H. Hand out copies of the poem, "Americans Are Not Beautiful," by Hoang Son.
 - I. Ask a student to read the poem aloud.
 - J. Discuss the poem as a group by asking the following questions:
 - When do you think the poem was written? Why?
 - What is the poem about?
 - What is the author feeling? How can you tell?
 - What are some particularly powerful words or phrases?
 - Does the fact that a child wrote this poem affect you in any way? Why or why not?
 - Is the poem anti-American? Why or why not?
 - How does this poem make you feel? Why?

Closure:

Even if the class does not get to finish viewing all of the slides and listening to the poems, the teacher needs to spend the last ten or fifteen minutes of class discussing what the students have learned. If you need to stop, find a suitable spot and finish the slides and poems the next day.

In order to be sure that the students understand the connection between the war and the poetry, the teacher needs to ask the following: How did the Vietnam War impact the poetry of this time period? How do you know?

Practice:

Since the class period was composed entirely of discussion, the teacher needs to be sure that each student understands the lesson. Therefore, a homework assignment needs to be given. If the lesson ends up taking two class periods, wait until the completion of the lesson to hand out the assignment.

The students will be given a packet of four poems to evaluate. The students will be responsible for reading all four of the poems and discussing them the following day in class, but they will only have to answer questions for two poems.

Any number of poems could be chosen, but it is a good idea to choose a poem from each of the time periods studied so that the homework models the format from class. It would also be a good idea to remove the names of the authors from the poems because the students may recognize some authors from class.

The following poems are good choices.

- “When Autumn Ends” by Luu Trong Lu
- “The Sound of Autumn” by Luu Trong Lu
- “Bullets” by Do Nghe
- “Child of My Lai” by Le Dan
- “Invasion” by Huy Vu
- “Strength” by Ho Chi Minh
- “Fine Weather” by Ho Chi Minh

The students should be able to answer each of these questions about two of the poems:

- When do you think the poem was written? Why?
- What is the poem about?
- What is the author feeling? How can you tell?
- What are some particularly powerful words or phrases?
- Is the poem making a statement about Americans? If so, what is it?

Evaluation:

The teacher will know whether or not the students have learned the material after he or she reads the responses to the homework assignment. However, each of the students should be able to do these things:

- Identify the time period of the poem based on clues within the poem.
- Identify the theme of the poem.
- Identify the mood of the poem

Annotated Bibliography

As Seen by Both Sides: American and Vietnamese Artists Look at the War. Edited by C. David Thomas. 1991. ISBN: 0-87023-744-6. This book is composed of various essays, interviews, and art by both Vietnamese and Americans. It offers many unique perspectives on the Vietnam War.

The Illustrated History of the Vietnam War. Brian Beckett. 1985. ISBN: 0-8317-48729. This book consists mostly of pictures of American soldiers and weapons. However, there are several powerful photos that show the devastation which resulted from air raids. There are also pictures of Vietnamese victims. A narrative accompanies the pictures.

Of Quiet Courage: Poems From Vietnam. Edited by Jacqui Chagnon and Don Luce. 1974. Indochina Mobile Education Project. No ISBN. This book is composed of poems by Vietnamese of all ages. Pictures accompany several of the poems and make them even more moving. The poetry addresses the Vietnam War and it is broken up into categories such as the following: "Poems From Prison," "Struggle," and "A Child's View."

The Other Side of Heaven: Post-War Fiction by Vietnamese and American Writers. Edited by Wayne Karlin, Le Minh Khue, and Truong Vu. 1995. ISBN: 1-880684-31-4. This collection of short stories by American and Vietnamese writers could be used in a variety of ways in different classes.

Viet Cong: A Photographic Portrait. Edward J. Emering. 1999. ISBN: 0-7643-0758-4. There is no narrative to this book composed entirely of pictures. However, if you are searching for different perspectives to introduce into the classroom, this is the book to use. The pictures are broken up into groups such as the following: weapons, portraits, and the Viet Cong in action.

Vietnam. www.odci.gov/cia/publication/factbook/index This is a great resource to use in order to introduce Vietnam. It has a map and several facts and figures to help students get a better understanding of Vietnam.

Vietnam Experience: America Takes Over. Edward Doyle and Samuel Lipsman. 1982. ISBN: 0-939-526-034. This narrative is accompanied by a large number of pictures. The pictures consist mostly of American soldiers, but the book also has pictures of weapons, victims, villagers, and maps.

Vietnam Experience: Combat Photographer. Nick Mills. 1983. ISBN: 0-939-526-08-5. This book is the best one of the series. It is a narrative with many pictures of American soldiers, but there is also a chapter called, "Vietnam Places," which has photos of the countryside and the people in different situations. Some of the pictures are of My Lai, homes on fire, and people being evacuated.

Vietnam Experience: Rain of Fire, Air War, 1969-1973. John Morrocco. 1985. ISBN: 0-939526-14-X. This narrative has some maps, pictures of the planes that dropped bombs, and some pictures of the devastation caused by the bombing. There are not a lot of pictures that illustrate the damage, but there are enough to help students see what the consequences were.

Vietnam War Literature: An Annotated Bibliography of Imaginative Works About American Fighting in Vietnam. By John Newman. 1982. ISBN: 0-8108-1514-1. This is an older reference and the focus is the American perspective, but if you do not have many resources, this should help.

Vietnam: Where East & West Meet. Do Van Minh. 1962. Paragon Book Reprint Co. No ISBN. This is a brief narrative of the history and people of Vietnam. It is accompanied by beautiful pictures of the people, of the countryside, and of the temples of Vietnam. The author was trying to preserve images of the past in the midst of war.

Vietnam Statistics: www.veteranshour.com/Vietnam_war_statistics.htm
Statistics and pictures of the Vietnam war. The site is associated with the U.S. Government.

Vietnam Yesterday & Today. <http://servercc.oakton.edu/wittman/index.htm>
This student friendly site has a chronology and characteristics of the Vietnam War. It also has book lists by category, war literature resources, personal accounts of a variety of people, and additional web links.

Luu Trong Lu was born in 1912 and went to school in Hue. He, along with many other famous poets of the pre-war period, now lives in the north. The following three poems reflect some of the beauty and peace of the Tien Chien period, the years just before the French Indochina War. These poems, still very popular, speak not of war, but of the age-old struggles—with the seasons, with love, with autumn sadness.

WHITE CLOUDS

By Luu Trong Lu

The white clouds fly over
An opening in the bamboo
And the autumn wind comes,
And the old sadness, too.

And there are a few young men,
Who know sadness deep and blue
But in whose hearts bloom still
Dreams red of brightest hue.

MOTHER'S DUTIES

By Hung Dung

Age 15

Provisional Revolutionary Government

In our land, mothers' duties are difficult:

There are countries where mothers teach children to love flowers,

In ours, mothers must teach children how to avoid bombs,

There are countries where mothers teach children to know musical notes and bird songs.

Here, mothers must teach children to distinguish the roar of the B-52 and the F-105.

O Virgin Mother, who holds your child,

Do you know that for months in my country

Mothers sleep far away from their children?

There were times when mothers needed to teach children only to be strong,

But when that's not enough, mothers must teach children to become heroes.

AMERICANS ARE NOT BEAUTIFUL

By Hoang Son
Age 14
Sai Gon

They are called *My**
Which my brother says means beautiful.
But they are not beautiful:
They have too much hair on their arms like monkeys,
They are tall like trees without branches,
Their eyes are green like eyes of boiled pigs
In the markets during the New Year.
Their hair is blonde and not black
Their skin is pink and not brown,
Their cars frighten cyclists in the streets,
Their "flying machines"*** and their "dragonflies"***
Drop death on people and animals
And make trees bare of their leaves.
Here, Americans are not beautiful.
"But they are,
In their far away country"
My brother says.

*Americans are called *My* (Me-e) which means beautiful in Chinese and Vietnamese.

**Planes.

***Helicopters.

WHEN AUTUMN ENDS

By Luu Trong Lu

Do you ever speak to me
Words full of the love
We knew when we were young?
Do you ever speak to me
When leaves fall
And lie in the empty yard;
And the song of the flute,
From behind some distant curtain,
Softly sounds in the still air?

Do you ever think of me
When your hand reaches out
And pulls a drooping leaf
Down from its branch?
Do you ever think of me
As the birds laugh and the wind jokes
And no one knows the love
I hold for you in my heart.

In my heart which is cold
Like the water of an autumn lake,
As the twilight falls
On a desolate night.
I, I hope the days and months
Will not pass too quickly;
But you, you care not at all
How the present time passes.

And soon winter comes
To the cold river bank,
And hurriedly you marry;
But, tell me, sometimes do you
Still remember the vivid summer,
And my love lingering
In a corner of my heart?

THE SOUND OF AUTUMN

By Luu Trong Lu

Come! listen to the autumn
Under the dim and restless moon.

Aren't you concerned with
Images of absent warriors
In the hearts of lonely women?

Come! listen to the autumn forest,
The quiet rustle of the leaves,
Where a bewildered golden deer
Steps on golden leaves.

BULLETS

Words by Do Nghe*
Music by Mien Duc Thang*

Oh, the kind allies offer us
Gifts of bright shiny bullets!
Vietnamese need clothing and rice
So our generous allies feed us
Rations
Of more red, copper bullets.

Death and starvation
Swelled by our diet
Of millions of bright shiny bullets.

Fathers and sons *rendez-vous*
under the flying bullets,
Brothers re-unite
under the whizzing cannonshells,
Neighbors meet
in the square
under the gunfire.

Oh, in the name of Peace
Our benevolent allies
Aid both sides
With bullets of their civilizations.

*For biographical data on these writers, see their other poems.

CHILD OF MY LAI

By Le Dan

Dear My Lai, my heart aches
With the cry of my young brother
Dying beside the corpses of his
 mother and grandmother,
Amid the sound of guns
And barbarous laughter.

Ricefields raise our children.
Why kill them, our people,
In so many places, so many times?
Why add hatred and violence?
Is it to achieve your rule
Upon this country
Of red blood and yellow skin?
Look at the heap of flesh and bones!
From thousands of years of struggle,
Each priceless person
Belongs to Viet Nam.

My young brother is like a bud
Growing on the tree of our nation,
The root, his father, he has never met;
The sap, his mother, he has never known,
And so it is with millions of brothers and sisters.
They have killed him, the bud of our tree;
They have killed his mother,
Killed his source of milk,
Yet can they kill his father
Who carries his gun against the invaders?
And can they kill the hatred
Within him as he dies?
His farewell is not his last word
For his brothers will be born and will grow,
Like the warriors of Phu Dong,
To repay the nation
Which has raised them,
The nation standing like a centennial tree.
And on its branches like the green buds
They will grow up,
Millions of hands to end this war
And drive from our country
These killers who cannot hide themselves.

Humanity will judge them.
My Lai, I ache every second,
I cannot wait an hour
Or for evening to pass.
I must act now
To save old mothers
And young children.

INVASION

By Huy Vu

As a child I was curious
And asked my mother over and over,
"Why are the French called invaders?"
With tears in her eyes she answered, "Have you not seen
Their tread upon our villages, the cannons, the airplanes?"
And angered she would say, "They are not Vietnamese!"

I nodded but didn't understand
For others said the French had come to help.
"Why have Ong Hai and Ong Ba grown rich with the French?
Why do you call them invaders, my mother?"
And sadly she answered,
"Wait, grow up, you'll understand."
Oh, why did you cry Mother? Why Mother?

She is dead now.
And the French have all gone.
Still I see my mother crying,
Tears rolling down the curve of her face.
Today. Is it today? or years ago?
For I am grown
And my nephews ask the same old question:
"What is an invasion?"
I want to cry, but only say
"You'll know when you grow up."

But they understand much younger now,
Not like when I was a boy.
And they ask their uncle harder questions,
"Where can we find our country?"
We know now, we all know now, what an invasion is,
But where can we find our country?

Ho Chi Minh is considered not only the father of the Vietnamese Resistance but also "the tender—yet steel-hearted poet." One important character of leadership in Viet Nam is the ability to write poetry, to open one's heart and mind to everyone.

STRENGTH

By Ho Chi Minh

Without the cold and
Bleakness of winter
The warmth and splendour
of spring
Could never be.

Misfortunes have steeled
and tempered me,
And further
Strengthened
My resolve.

FINE WEATHER

By Ho Chi Minh

The wheel of the law turns
without pause.

After the rain good weather.
In the wink of an eye

The universe throws off
its muddy clothes.

For ten thousand miles
the landscape

Spreads out like a beautiful brocade.
Light breezes. Smiling flowers.

High in the trees, amongst
the sparkling leaves

All the birds sing at once
Men and animals rise-up reborn.

What could be more natural?
After sorrow comes joy.