

Vietnam Veterans: Legacies of Service, 1965–2012



US Army soldiers near Duc Pho, Quang Ngai Province, South Vietnam, April 24, 1967 (National Archives)

VA



U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
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THE GILDER LEHRMAN
INSTITUTE of AMERICAN HISTORY

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Vietnam Veterans: Legacies of Service, 1965–2012

BY PETER C. VERMILYEA

Peter C. Vermilyea has taught grade 11 at Housatonic Valley Regional High School in Connecticut since 1995. He was named the 2006 Connecticut History Teacher of the Year.

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GRADE LEVELS: 7–12

RECOMMENDED TIME FOR COMPLETION: Five 45-minute class periods

UNIT OVERVIEW

This unit is one of the Gilder Lehrman Institute’s Teaching Literacy through History™ (TLTH) resources, designed to align with the Common Core State Standards. Students will learn and practice skills that will help them analyze, assess, and develop knowledgeable and well-reasoned points of view on textual and visual primary source materials. These skills will enable students to understand, summarize, and evaluate documents and other resources of historical significance.

The five lessons in this unit explore the experiences of American servicemen and servicewomen during and after the Vietnam War. Students will read a historical background essay by a leading scholar and analyze recruiting posters, photographs, newspaper articles, interviews, and other primary sources. You will assess students’ understanding through a research project that results in either a report or a creative piece. Projects that meet the contest guidelines in 2025 may be submitted to the Gilder Lehrman Institute for the Vietnam Veterans: Legacies of Service Awards by May 2, 2025.

Students will be able to

- Use reading strategies to analyze, summarize, and interpret the content of primary sources
- Interpret visual sources to gain an understanding of the past
- Draw comparisons between primary sources
- Effectively communicate their learning through writing and speaking
- Understand the significance of a historical event (e.g., Vietnam War)
- Explain how identity shapes historical experience (e.g., sex, religion, age, race, branch of service)
- Conduct research to effectively communicate the experience of a Vietnam Veteran



ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

- What assumptions, claims, and debates about military service existed in the Vietnam era?
- How was the experience of living and serving in Vietnam different from civilian life for Americans?
- How did the experience of war help Americans of different backgrounds work together for a common goal?
- How did Veterans use VA benefits to help their families?
- How have Veterans helped their fellow Veterans and their communities?

COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-8.6: Identify aspects of a text that reveal an author's point of view or purpose (e.g., loaded language, inclusion or avoidance of particular facts).

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-8.8: Distinguish among fact, opinion, and reasoned judgment in a text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.9-10.2: Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary of how key events or ideas develop over the course of the text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.9-10.4: Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including vocabulary describing political, social, or economic aspects of history/social studies.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12.1: Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources, connecting insights gained from specific details to an understanding of the text as a whole.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12.3: Evaluate various explanations for actions or events and determine which explanation best accords with textual evidence, acknowledging where the text leaves matters uncertain.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.9-10.2: Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas, concepts, and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content.

MATERIALS

- Source 1: Historical Background: "US Involvement in Vietnam and the Veterans' Experience" by William Sturkey, Associate Professor of History, University of Pennsylvania
- Activity Sheet 1: Background Knowledge
- Activity Sheet 2: Primary Source Jigsaw Activity
- Source 2: Excerpts from an Interview with Jose Antonio Berrios, November 9, 2010, interviewed by Julio Berrios, Jose Antonio Berrios Collection, 1965, Personal Narrative, Veterans History Project, American Folklife Center, Library of Congress, loc.gov/item/afc2001001.76580/
- Source 3: Excerpt from *If You Really Care, This Is Your Chance of a Lifetime*, US Air Force Nurse Corps, 1967, p. 2, Women Veterans General Printed Materials and Video Recordings Collection, Martha Blakeney Hodges Special Collections and University Archives, UNCG University Libraries, libcdm1.uncg.edu/islandora/object/wvhp%3A4702
- Source 4: Anti-War Demonstration Poster, Fifth Avenue Vietnam Peace Parade Committee, New York, 1970, Library of Congress, loc.gov/item/2015649227/



- Source 5: Excerpts from “Youngsters Write to Servicemen,” by Doris Wrights, *San Antonio (TX) Express/News*, January 26, 1969, p. 5-H, newspapers.com/image/82846702/
- Activity Sheet 3: Analysis of Vietnam Era Photographs
 - Photograph 1: United States Army soldiers participating in Operation Oregon near Duc Pho, Quang Ngai Province, South Vietnam, April 24, 1967, National Archives, Record Group 111: Records of the Office of the Chief Signal Officer Series: Color Photographs of Signal Corps Activity, catalog.archives.gov/id/530613
 - Photograph 2: Young soldiers who have just been drafted at Fort Jackson, Columbia, South Carolina, May 15, 1967, photograph by Warren K. Leffler, Library of Congress, loc.gov/item/2015647164
 - Photograph 3: United States Army soldiers in Tây Ninh Province, South Vietnam, January 18, 1968, National Archives, catalog.archives.gov/id/530617
 - Photograph 4: Members of the United States Army’s Delta Company, 31st Combat Engineer Battalion, 20th Engineer Brigade at Landing Zone Buttons/Sông Bé Base Camp, South Vietnam, 1970, Collection of the Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture, Gift of James E. Brown, si.edu/object/photograph-members-20th-engineer-brigade-vietnam:nmaahc_2013.11.4.5
- Activity Sheet 4: The American Experience in Vietnam
 - Reading 1: Excerpts from an Interview with Jose Antonio Berrios, November 9, 2010, interviewed by Julio Berrios, Jose Antonio Berrios Collection, 1965, Personal Narrative, Veterans History Project, American Folklife Center, Library of Congress, loc.gov/item/afc2001001.76580
 - Reading 2: Excerpts from a Letter from Paul D. Milhouse to His Wife, Martha, September 17, 1965, Paul David Milhouse Collection, 1965, Veterans History Project, American Folklife Center, Library of Congress, loc.gov/item/afc2001001.102299
 - Reading 3: Excerpts from an Interview with Gordon Ross Nagakawa, May 28, 2005, interviewed by Kimberly Peach and George Liki, Gordon Ross Nakagawa Collection, 1958, Personal Narrative, Veterans History Project, American Folklife Center, Library of Congress, loc.gov/item/afc2001001.27088
 - Reading 4: Excerpts from “Dead and Wounded Lay Thick at Hill 875” by Thomas Cheatham, *Red Bluff (CA) Daily News*, November 22, 1967, newspapers.com/image/698193626
 - Reading 5: Excerpts from “Soldier Volunteered for Dangerous Work” by Jack K. Graeme, *Clovis (NM) News-Journal*, January 15, 1967, p. 7, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/1499705>
- Activity Sheet 5: Veterans After the War Photo Analysis
 - John Podlaski, photographer, Vietnam Veterans Welcome Home Parade, Chicago, Ill., June 13, 1986, cherrieswriter.com/2021/07/03/welcome-home-vietnam-veterans-chicago-parade-1986/. Reprinted with the permission of the photographer.
- Source 6: Interviews with Vietnam Veterans
 - Reading 1: Excerpts from an Interview with Jose V. Orozco, October 4, 2004, interviewed by Audrey Wing Chi, Jose V. Orozco Collection, 1968, Personal Narrative, Veterans History Project, American Folklife Center, Library of Congress, loc.gov/item/afc2001001.24294
 - Reading 2: Excerpts from an Interview with Lester W. Elam, April 24, 2012, interviewed by Regina Korthals and Julia E. Shane, Lester W. Elam Collection, 1966, Personal Narrative, Veterans History Project, American



Folklife Center, Library of Congress, loc.gov/item/afc2001001.88463

- o Reading 3: Excerpts from an Interview with Judy Reed Russell, January 9, 2004, interviewed by Michael Lloyd Willie, Judy Reed Russell Collection, 1966, Personal Narrative, Veterans History Project, American Folklife Center, Library of Congress, loc.gov/item/afc2001001.19920
- o Activity Sheet 6: How Did Veterans Use the GI Bill to Help Themselves and Their Families?
- o Activity Sheet 7: Excerpts from an Interview with Michael Linden, April 15, 2009, interviewed by Tracey Flynn, Hickory High School, and James Galantis, Michael John Linden Collection, 1968, Personal Narrative, Veterans History Project, American Folklife Center, Library of Congress, loc.gov/item/afc2001001.66250
- Source 7: Contributions of Vietnam Veterans and Their Families to Communities
 - o Reading 1: Excerpts from an Interview with Mary Jane Crumpler, interviewed by Alice Marie Stratton on October 9, 2012, Mary Jane Crumpler Collection, 1952, Personal Narrative, Veterans History Project, American Folklife Center, Library of Congress, loc.gov/item/afc2001001.86348
 - o Reading 2: Excerpts from an Interview with Claire Brisebois Starnes, “‘Some Good Days, Some Bad Days’: A WAC Serving in Vietnam,” interviewed by David Siry, April 4, 2016, West Point Center for Oral History, westpointcoh.org/interviews/some-good-days-some-bad-days-a-wac-serving-in-vietnam
 - o Reading 3: Excerpts from an Interview with Clarence E. Sasser, undated, interviewed by an unknown interviewer, Clarence E. Sasser Collection, 1967, Personal Narrative, Library of Congress, loc.gov/item/afc2001001.89777
- Activity Sheet 8: Comparing the Experiences of Veterans and Their Communities
- Source 8: Jim Olson, “Guard Duty,” Minnesota Remembers Vietnam: The Story Wall, mnvietnam.org/story/6-vietnam-poems/index.html
- Activity Sheet 9: Summary Reflection List
- Activity Sheet 10: Project Planning
- Where to Start Your Research



HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

US INVOLVEMENT IN VIETNAM AND THE VETERANS' EXPERIENCE

by William Sturkey, University of Pennsylvania

The United States was deeply involved in the Vietnam conflict for more than twenty years. Based on the idea of containment, the American government sought to stop the spread of communism anywhere in the world. Between 1950 and 1954, the United States spent \$2.6 billion in military aid to the French to suppress communist-led uprisings across Vietnam. After the French were defeated in 1954, Vietnam was partitioned into two separate nations, North and South Vietnam, that were to be reunited with an election in 1956.

The United States, fearing that communist leaders of North Vietnam would win that election, led the creation of the Southeast Asian Treaty Organization (SEATO) to prevent the spread of communism in Southeast Asia. The organization encouraged South Vietnam to reject reunification in 1956 and began bolstering military support for an independent South Vietnam. When the North began a military campaign to unite the two nations, the United States and its SEATO allies began sending an increasing number of military advisors and weapons to help South Vietnam stave off invasion from the North. The American military presence increased as the war worsened for the South Vietnamese. From 900 advisors in 1960 to more than 23,000 in 1963, the American presence in Vietnam slowly increased in the early 1960s.

The first large-scale conflict between American and North Vietnamese troops occurred in November 1965. By the end of that year, 184,300 American soldiers were stationed in Vietnam. Those numbers continued to increase until 1968 when nearly 540,000 US soldiers were stationed in Vietnam. All told, between 1965 and 1973, roughly 2.7 million American men and women served in Vietnam. More than 58,000 US servicemen and women lost their lives during the war, with another 153,313 seriously wounded.

Most Americans who served in Vietnam were not draftees. Of the 2.7 million who served in Vietnam, only about 25 percent were drafted. Most volunteered, although many of these joined to avoid the draft. A 1968 survey found that 47.2 percent of volunteers cited the draft as the primary reason for joining the military. Voluntary enlistment allowed individuals to select their service branch, which allowed many to avoid Vietnam all together. Most people who served in the American military during the Vietnam era did not actually serve in Vietnam or Southeast Asia. In 1968, the highest year for American troop levels in Vietnam, only about 15 percent of active duty military were stationed in Vietnam. The rest were scattered across the globe.

Despite the preponderance of volunteers, the draft nevertheless served as one of the most contentious aspects of Vietnam War-era service. The percentage of eligible men who were inducted was relatively small. Between 1964 and 1973, only about 7 percent of age-eligible American men were drafted. Many young men were shielded from the draft by a host of deferments that exempted tens of millions from being selected. The most common of these deferments were related to college enrollment, a medical condition, or family obligations. Well-connected individuals with resources had better access to college or to physicians who could provide medical justifications for deferments. Because of these factors, Vietnam was predominantly a “working-class war,” writes historian Christian Appy.¹ Men from working-class and impoverished backgrounds made up about 80 percent of enlistees. About 300,000 African Americans, 80,000 Latinos, 42,000 Native Americans, and 35,000 Asian Americans served in the war.

The experiences of Vietnam Veterans varied widely, but most are connected by a sense of demoralization unique to that particular war. The Vietnam War generation had grown up in the shadow of World War II, “the good war” as it’s often called, when millions of Americans fought to preserve the world for democracy. When they returned home, Vietnam Veterans encountered a public with increasingly negative views of the war. Public opinion diminished throughout the 1960s as the prospects of victory and reasons for involvement looked increasingly bleak. College

¹ Christian G. Appy, *Working-Class War: American Combat Soldiers in Vietnam* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1993)



campuses filled first with protests and were soon followed by massive demonstrations in every major city in the nation. Some Veterans even joined anti-war protests themselves through membership in organizations such as Vietnam Veterans Against the War. Others returned home to welcoming communities but were taken aback by the growing unpopularity of the war as seen in the national media. For many, it was deeply disturbing seeing Americans turn against the conflict for which they had just risked their lives.

Even after the US military left Vietnam in 1973 and demonstrations tapered, there was a deep collective feeling among American citizens of regret and exhaustion over the war. Many Americans simply did not want to talk about it, leaving Veterans isolated amid a civilian population seemingly eager to bury their experiences. Although Veterans experienced a resurgence of pro-Veteran rhetoric in the 1980s, millions were further insulted by massive cuts to the VA and mental health services for Veterans. Still, a resurrection of esteem for Veterans allowed many to separate the Veterans from the cause for which they fought. The erection of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington DC in 1982 provided a sense of national recognition for the sacrifice of Vietnam Veterans.

Like most populations, Vietnam War Veterans are not a monolith. From deeply disillusioned to intensely patriotic and proud, hundreds of thousands of Vietnam Veterans remain prominent in American life today. Their experiences and perspectives are just as diverse as they are themselves.

William Sturkey is associate professor of history at the University of Pennsylvania. He is the author of three books, including The Ballad of Roy Benavidez: The Life and Times of America's Most Famous Hispanic Veteran.



LESSON 1

PUBLIC OPINION ABOUT MILITARY SERVICE, 1967–2010

BY PETER C. VERMILYEA

OVERVIEW

This lesson will focus on the processes by which the US military procured manpower for the Vietnam War, with special emphasis on why some men and women chose to enlist. The students will first read a secondary source by a historian and then participate in a knowledge check about American involvement in Vietnam. Then, they will consider the decisions men and women made to enlist, report for service after being drafted, or resist military service within the context of recruiting propaganda and the anti-war movement. They will analyze a newspaper article, an anti-war flyer, an Air Force recruiting document, and an excerpt from an interview with a Veteran.

Students will be able to

- Use reading strategies to analyze, summarize, and interpret the content of primary sources
- Interpret visual sources to gain an understanding of the past
- Effectively communicate their learning through writing and speaking
- Draw comparisons between primary sources
- Explain how identity shapes historical experience (e.g., sex, religion, age, race, branch of service)
- Understand the significance of a historical event (e.g., Vietnam War)

ESSENTIAL QUESTION

- What assumptions, claims, and debates about military service existed in the Vietnam era?

MATERIALS

- Source 1: Historical Background: “US Involvement in Vietnam and the Veterans’ Experience” by William Sturkey, Associate Professor of History, University of Pennsylvania
- Activity Sheet 1: Background Knowledge
- Activity Sheet 2: Primary Source Jigsaw Activity

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GRADE LEVELS: 7–12

RECOMMENDED TIME FOR COMPLETION: One 45-minute class period

UNIT OVERVIEW: This unit is one of the Gilder Lehrman Institute’s Teaching Literacy through History resources, designed to align with the Common Core State Standards. Students will learn and practice skills that will help them analyze, assess, and develop knowledgeable and well-reasoned points of view on textual and visual primary source materials. The five lessons in this unit explore the experiences of American servicemen and servicewomen during and after the Vietnam War.



- Source 2: Excerpts from an Interview with Jose Antonio Berrios, November 9, 2010, interviewed by Julio Berrios, Jose Antonio Berrios Collection, 1965, Personal Narrative, Veterans History Project, American Folklife Center, Library of Congress, loc.gov/item/afc2001001.76580
- Source 3: Excerpt from *If You Really Care, This Is Your Chance of a Lifetime*, US Air Force Nurse Corps, 1967, p. 2, Women Veterans General Printed Materials and Video Recordings Collection, Martha Blakeney Hodges Special Collections and University Archives, UNCG University Libraries, libcdm1.uncg.edu/islandora/object/wvhp%3A4702
- Source 4: Anti-War Demonstration Poster, Fifth Avenue Vietnam Peace Parade Committee, New York, 1970, Library of Congress, loc.gov/item/2015649227
- Source 5: Excerpts from “Youngsters Write to Servicemen,” by Doris Wright, *San Antonio (TX) Express/News*, January 26, 1969, p. 5-H, newspapers.com/image/82846702

PROCEDURE

1. Distribute Source 1, the essay by Professor William Sturkey. The Historical Background essay contains information about the origins of American involvement in Vietnam, the number of Americans who served in Vietnam, the means by which those servicemen and servicewomen entered the military, and the impacts of the war on them after returning home. You may choose to have the students independently read the Historical Background and complete the activity sheet before the class or complete the activity in class. You may choose to “share read” the essay with the students. Have the students follow along silently while you begin to read aloud, modeling prosody, inflection, and punctuation. Then ask the class to join in with the reading after a few sentences while you continue to read aloud, still serving as the model. This technique will support struggling readers as well as English language learners (ELL).

A note on terminology: We have used *Veteran* in this unit to denote someone who was honorably discharged from a branch of the military and *service member* to refer to someone in the service. Due to the origins of some primary sources (some created when the person was actively in the Armed Forces and some taken after they left the service) terminology can shift in different contexts.

2. Distribute Activity Sheet 1. This consists of six questions to assess student understanding of the Historical Background essay. Have the students respond to these questions. Review the answers to the questions as a class, elaborating as needed to ensure student understanding.
3. Distribute Activity Sheet 2: Primary Source Jigsaw Activity. Divide the class into four or eight groups, and provide each group with copies (one for each member) of one of the sources (2–5), so that each member of the group has the same source, but the four groups each have a different source.
4. Provide time for each group to analyze the source and come to an agreement regarding these questions: “What assumptions, claims, and debates about military service existed in the Vietnam era? What evidence from your primary source document supports your answer?” Each member of the group should be certain that they have recorded identical responses in the appropriate box on the activity sheet.
5. Distribute all the sources so each student has a copy of each. Reconfigure the class into new groups. Each new group should consist of four students: one who analyzed Source 2, one who analyzed Source 3, one who analyzed Source 4, and one who analyzed Source 5. Have each member of the new group share their findings, while the others record the evidence as it is presented.
6. Students should complete the three formative questions at the end of the activity sheet individually. If time permits, students can share their responses, especially to question 3.



7. Student responses to the jigsaw activity should emphasize:
 - a. Berrios interview: That his service may have been driven by family connections to the military, a personal interest in the Navy, and his enrollment in a special program.
 - b. *If You Really Care* pamphlet: That military service as an Air Force nurse provided opportunities for women while allowing them to act upon patriotic and humanitarian feelings.
 - c. Anti-war demonstration poster: The source provides many reasons why Americans might not want to serve, including casualties and economic cost.
 - d. Student responses to question 3 will vary.



LESSON 2

THE AMERICAN EXPERIENCE IN VIETNAM, 1965–2010

BY PETER C. VERMILYEA

OVERVIEW

Approximately 2,700,000 Americans served in Vietnam between 1964 and 1973, with nearly 60,000 deaths and more than 150,000 wounded personnel. This lesson focuses on the experiences of American military personnel during the Vietnam War, with special emphasis on the experience of combat. Students will analyze a variety of sources, textual as well as visual, to consider the question of how the experience of living and serving in Vietnam differed from civilian life.

Students will be able to

- Use reading strategies to analyze, summarize, and interpret the content of primary sources
- Interpret visual sources to gain an understanding of the past
- Draw comparisons between primary sources
- Explain how identity shapes historical experience (e.g., sex, religion, age, race, branch of service)
- Understand the significance of a historical event (e.g., Vietnam War)

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GRADE LEVELS: 7–12

RECOMMENDED TIME FOR COMPLETION: One 45-minute class period

UNIT OVERVIEW: This unit is one of the Gilder Lehrman Institute's Teaching Literacy through History resources, designed to align with the Common Core State Standards. Students will learn and practice skills that will help them analyze, assess, and develop knowledgeable and well-reasoned points of view on textual and visual primary source materials. The five lessons in this unit explore the experiences of American servicemen and servicewomen during and after the Vietnam War.

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

- How was the experience of living and serving in Vietnam different from civilian life for Americans?
- How did the experience of war help Americans of different backgrounds work together for a common goal?

MATERIALS

- Activity Sheet 3: Analysis of Vietnam Era Photographs
 - o Photograph 1: United States Army soldiers participating in Operation Oregon near Duc Pho, Quang Ngai Province, South Vietnam, April 24, 1967, National Archives, Record Group 111: Records of the Office of the Chief Signal Officer Series: Color Photographs of Signal Corps Activity, catalog.archives.gov/id/530613
 - o Photograph 2: Young soldiers who have just been drafted at Fort Jackson, Columbia, South Carolina, May 15, 1967, photograph by Warren K. Leffler, Library of Congress, loc.gov/item/2015647164
 - o Photograph 3: United States Army soldiers in Tây Ninh Province, South Vietnam, January 18, 1968, National Archives, catalog.archives.gov/id/530617



- o Photograph 4: Members of the United States Army's Delta Company, 31st Combat Engineer Battalion, 20th Engineer Brigade at Landing Zone Buttons/Sông Bé Base Camp, South Vietnam, 1970, Collection of the Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture, Gift of James E. Brown, si.edu/object/photograph-members-20th-engineer-brigade-vietnam:nmaahc_2013.11.4.5
- Activity Sheet 4: The American Experience in Vietnam
 - o Reading 1: Excerpts from an Interview with Jose Antonio Berrios, November 9, 2010, interviewed by Julio Berrios, Jose Antonio Berrios Collection, 1965, Personal Narrative, Veterans History Project, American Folklife Center, Library of Congress, loc.gov/item/afc2001001.76580
 - o Reading 2: Excerpts from a Letter from Paul D. Milhouse to His Wife, Martha, September 17, 1965, Paul David Milhouse Collection, 1965, Veterans History Project, American Folklife Center, Library of Congress, loc.gov/item/afc2001001.102299
 - o Reading 3: Excerpts from an Interview with Gordon Ross Nagakawa, May 28, 2005, interviewed by Kimberly Peach and George Liki, Gordon Ross Nakagawa Collection, 1958, Personal Narrative, Veterans History Project, American Folklife Center, Library of Congress, loc.gov/item/afc2001001.27088
 - o Reading 4: Excerpts from “Dead and Wounded Lay Thick at Hill 875” by Thomas Cheatham, *Red Bluff (CA) Daily News*, November 22, 1967, newspapers.com/image/698193626
 - o Reading 5: Excerpts from “Soldier Volunteered for Dangerous Work” by Jack K. Graeme, *Clovis (NM) News-Journal*, January 15, 1967, p. 7, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/1499705>

PROCEDURE

1. Distribute Activity Sheet 3: Analysis of Vietnam Era Photographs. The photographs should stimulate student thinking about the American experience in Vietnam. Students should examine each photograph, generate a list of five words that are prompted by their examination, and provide a one-sentence description of each.
2. Quickly review responses with the students. The following provides additional information about the circumstances surrounding each of the photographs:
 - a. Photograph 1: Operation Oregon was a search-and-destroy mission conducted by an infantry platoon of Troop B, 1st Reconnaissance Squadron, 9th Cavalry, 1st Cavalry Division (Airmobile), three kilometers west of Duc Pho, Quang Ngai Province. An infantryman is being lowered into a tunnel by members of the reconnaissance platoon.
 - b. Photograph 2: Young soldiers who have just been drafted stand in rows at Fort Jackson, Columbia, South Carolina; sign to the right reads “Initial receiving point, U.S. Army Reception Station.”
 - c. Photograph 3: Following a hard day during Operation Yellowstone, a few members of Company A, 3rd Battalion, 22nd Infantry (Mechanized), 25th Infantry Division, gather around a guitar player and sing a few songs.
 - d. Photograph 4: Members of the 20th Engineer Brigade in Vietnam. You may wish to note that the soldiers may be demonstrating a Black Power salute.
5. Ask the students to share their memories about their first day at their current school. What were they nervous about or afraid of? What were they excited about? How did they “learn the ropes” of their new school?
6. Distribute Activity Sheet 4: The American Experience in Vietnam, providing five accounts of the experiences of Americans in Vietnam.



7. Share read one or more of the excerpts with the students, as described in Lesson 1. As you read, students should be noting key passages and thinking about the experience being described, especially how it would have differed from the experience of civilians in the United States.
8. After share reading one or two of the excerpts, have the students read the other accounts individually.
9. When students have finished reading the accounts, they should record their responses to the questions on the activity sheet.

- a. Summarize the experience the Veteran or service member described.

Example: Captain Gordon Nakagawa described the experience of being held as a prisoner of war by the North Vietnamese.

- b. How did the Veteran's or service member's experience differ from civilian life?

Example: Captain Gordon Nagakawa was not given water and experienced sleep deprivation at the hands of the North Vietnamese.

- c. What quote offers the best evidence to support your response to the second question?

Answers will vary.

12. Have 2–3 students share their responses for each account, reinforcing the ideas listed below as they emerge from student responses. Make sure that all student responses are grounded in the evidence in front of them.
 - a. Student responses should reflect the changes to living conditions, the brutality and fear of combat, the loss of comrades, and the experiences of prisoners of war. Other acceptable responses may also emerge.
 - b. Students should emphasize the sacrifices service members made as well as the horrors and hardships they encountered that civilians would not have experienced.
 - c. Service members often relied on their friends or their training to overcome obstacles. Students should also emphasize the diverse and integrated nature of the American military in the Vietnam era. The military was integrated in every branch starting in 1948.



LESSON 3

HOW VIETNAM VETERANS USED VA BENEFITS AFTER THE WAR, 1986–2012

BY PETER C. VERMILYEA

OVERVIEW

This lesson will focus on the ways Veterans of the Vietnam War used Veterans Administration benefits, including the GI Bill, after their service. Following a warm-up activity, students will analyze three interviews with Veterans to consider the different ways they used military benefits to help themselves and/or their families after the war.

Students will be able to

- Use reading strategies to analyze, summarize, and interpret the content of primary sources
- Interpret visual sources to gain an understanding of the past
- Draw comparisons between primary sources
- Explain how identity shapes historical experience (e.g., sex, religion, age, race, branch of service)
- Understand the significance of a historical event (e.g., Vietnam War)

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UNIT OVERVIEW: This unit is one of the Gilder Lehrman Institute's Teaching Literacy through History resources, designed to align with the Common Core State Standards. Students will learn and practice skills that will help them analyze, assess, and develop knowledgeable and well-reasoned points of view on textual and visual primary source materials. The five lessons in this unit explore the experiences of American servicemen and servicewomen during and after the Vietnam War.

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

- What assumptions, claims, and debates about military service existed in the Vietnam era?
- How did Veterans use VA benefits to help their families?

MATERIALS

- Activity Sheet 5: Analysis of a Photograph
 - o John Podlaski, photographer, Vietnam Veterans Welcome Home Parade, Chicago, Ill., June 13, 1986, cherrieswriter.com/2021/07/03/welcome-home-vietnam-veterans-chicago-parade-1986/. Reprinted with the permission of the photographer.
- Source 6: Excerpts from Interviews with Vietnam Veterans
 - o Reading 1: Excerpts from an Interview with Jose V. Orozco, October 4, 2004, interviewed by Audrey Wing Chi, Jose V. Orozco Collection, 1968, Personal Narrative, Veterans History Project, American Folklife Center, Library of Congress, [loc.gov/item/afc2001001.24294](https://www.loc.gov/item/afc2001001.24294)



- o Reading 2: Excerpts from an Interview with Lester W. Elam, April 24, 2012, interviewed by Regina Korthals and Julia E. Shane, Lester W. Elam Collection, 1966, Personal Narrative, Veterans History Project, American Folklife Center, Library of Congress, [loc.gov/item/afc2001001.88463](https://www.loc.gov/item/afc2001001.88463)
- o Reading 3: Excerpts from an Interview with Judy Reed Russell, January 9, 2004, interviewed by Michael Lloyd Willie, Judy Reed Russell Collection, 1966, Personal Narrative, Veterans History Project, American Folklife Center, Library of Congress, [loc.gov/item/afc2001001.19920](https://www.loc.gov/item/afc2001001.19920)
- Activity Sheet 6: How Did Veterans Use the GI Bill to Help Themselves and Their Families?

PROCEDURE

1. Begin class with Activity Sheet 5, analyzing a photograph taken more than a decade after the war ended. Inform students that this photograph was taken at the “Welcome Home Vietnam Veterans” parade held in Chicago in 1986.
2. Students should examine the photograph with the Historical Background essay in mind. The photograph illuminates a moment of support for Veterans against the backdrop of vacillating public opinion regarding the Vietnam War. Quickly review responses with the students.
3. After reviewing responses, you may wish to reinforce for students that events like the 1986 Chicago parade were held well after the Vietnam War because there had not been large welcome home events for Vietnam veterans like there had been for military personnel returning from World War I and World War II.

Encourage students to understand that public opinion about the war and its Veterans was mixed and often changing and not everyone felt strongly one way or another. For some Veterans, it was support from their families rather than the public that made the biggest difference in their return to civilian life. There is not one single story of “returning from Vietnam.”

4. Prepare students for the next set of exercises by sharing the information about the GI Bill with them: The Servicemen’s Readjustment Act of 1944, better known as the GI Bill, was passed during World War II to facilitate the transition of military personnel to civilian life after the war. The act provided for educational funds, job training, low-income loans for houses, and unemployment insurance. The 1966 Veterans Readjustment Benefits Act extended the GI Bill to Vietnam Veterans and provided education benefits, home and farm loans, employment counseling, and placement services. Veterans were eligible for 1.5 months of educational benefits for every month they served on active duty.
5. Distribute Source 6, which provides excerpts from three accounts by Vietnam-era Veterans who used the GI Bill for job training, helping with post-service careers.
6. Share read one or more of the excerpts with the students. As you read, students should underline key passages and think about the experience being described, especially how the Veteran’s military service helped their post-service careers.
7. When students have finished reading the excerpts, they should complete the chart on Activity Sheet 6: How Did Veterans Use the GI Bill to Help Themselves and Their Families?, which asks students to identify:
 - a. Years of service
 - b. The branch of service they served in
 - c. Whether they were drafted or enlisted
 - d. Whether the GI Bill influenced their decision to serve



- e. What benefits were used
 - f. How those benefits helped the Veteran after the war
 - g. A quote from the interview that supports their answer to the previous question
8. Students should then respond to the formative assessment, which asks about the ways in which Vietnam-era Veterans used GI Bill benefits to help themselves and their families, and asks them to support their responses with specific evidence.



LESSON 4

VIETNAM VETERANS, FAMILIES, AND COMMUNITY, 1967–2016

BY PETER C. VERMILYEA

OVERVIEW

This lesson will focus on the ways Vietnam Veterans and their families participated in their communities. Students will first participate in a warm-up activity in which they read about one Veteran's experience. They will then analyze excerpts from interviews with three Veterans, two who participated in Vietnam and one Korean War Veteran married to a prisoner of war (POW) held in Vietnam, investigating how these Veterans shared stories and supported each other.

Students will be able to

- Use reading strategies to analyze, summarize, and interpret the content of primary sources
- Draw comparisons between primary sources
- Understand the significance of a historical event (e.g., Vietnam War)
- Explain how identity shapes historical experience (e.g., sex, religion, age, race, branch of service)

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

- What assumptions, claims, and debates about military service existed in the Vietnam era?
- How have Veterans helped their fellow Veterans and their communities?

MATERIALS

- Activity Sheet 7: Excerpts from an Interview with Michael Linden, April 15, 2009, interviewed by Tracey Flynn, Hickory High School, and James Galantis, Michael John Linden Collection, 1968, Personal Narrative, Veterans History Project, American Folklife Center, Library of Congress, loc.gov/item/afc2001001.66250
- Source 7: Contributions of Vietnam Veterans and Their Families to Communities
 - o Reading 1: Excerpts from an Interview with Mary Jane Crumpler, interviewed by Alice Marie Stratton on October 9, 2012, Mary Jane Crumpler Collection, 1952, Personal Narrative, Veterans History Project, American Folklife Center, Library of Congress, loc.gov/item/afc2001001.86348
 - o Reading 2: Excerpts from an Interview with Claire Brisebois Starnes, “Some Good Days, Some Bad Days’: A WAC Serving in Vietnam,” interviewed by David Siry, April 4, 2016, West Point Center for Oral History, westpointcoh.org/interviews/some-good-days-some-bad-days-a-wac-serving-in-vietnam

Peter C. Vermilyea has taught grade 11 at Housatonic Valley Regional High School in Connecticut since 1995. He was named the 2006 Connecticut History Teacher of the Year.

GRADE LEVELS: 7–12

RECOMMENDED TIME FOR COMPLETION: One 45-minute class period

UNIT OVERVIEW: This unit is one of the Gilder Lehrman Institute's Teaching Literacy through History resources, designed to align with the Common Core State Standards. Students will learn and practice skills that will help them analyze, assess, and develop knowledgeable and well-reasoned points of view on textual and visual primary source materials. The five lessons in this unit explore the experiences of American servicemen and servicewomen during and after the Vietnam War.



- o Reading 3: Excerpts from an Interview with Clarence E. Sasser, undated, interviewed by an unknown interviewer, Clarence E. Sasser Collection, 1967, Personal Narrative, Library of Congress, loc.gov/item/afc2001001.89777
- Activity Sheet 8: Comparing the Experiences of Veterans and Their Communities

PROCEDURE

1. Distribute Activity Sheet 7 with excerpts from an interview with Michael Linden, who shared his experience of returning to the United States from Vietnam. Students will respond to questions that ask about the specific challenges Linden faced. Students can work individually or with a partner.
2. Review student responses with the class.
3. Distribute Source 7 and Activity Sheet 8 and organize the students into groups of three or four to read excerpts from interviews with three Veterans about their work helping other Veterans or their communities in the postwar period. This activity sheet asks the students to explain how these three individuals helped their fellow Veterans and/or their communities upon returning home from Vietnam.
4. Students are to read the excerpts and, within their groups, complete the Venn diagram, analyzing the excerpts for similarities and differences in the Veterans' experiences.
 - Mary Jane Crumpler, a Korean War Veteran and wife of a Vietnam War prisoner of war (POW), was part of a nationwide effort to remember POWs.
 - Claire Brisebois Starnes assembled a list of American women who served in Vietnam.
 - Clarence E. Sasser, an Army medic during the war, worked for the VA after the war and talked to student and active military groups about his experiences.
5. Each group will then discuss and identify the most important sentence or phrase from each account. They should rephrase that sentence or phrase in their own words and explain why they found it important.
6. If time permits, ask the groups to share some of their sentences or phrases and why they are important.
7. The students will then answer the questions at the end of the activity sheet individually. Answers will vary, but will likely reflect the experiences of camaraderie or making sure their service was remembered.
8. If time permits, have students share their responses with the class.



LESSON 5

HIGHLIGHTING THE SERVICE OF VIETNAM VETERANS

BY PETER C. VERMILYEA

OVERVIEW

This lesson encourages students to demonstrate their understanding of the content and themes introduced in Lessons 1–4. The summative assessment asks students to explore what motivated a Vietnam Veteran (either local, notable, or known to the student and buried in a National Cemetery, state military cemetery, tribal cemetery, or Veterans Administration cemetery) to serve, the experiences of that Veteran, and/or how that service impacted them after the war. You will assess student learning through either a traditional report or a creative project based upon student research. The introduction, explanation, and initial research of the project should take one class period. Students will complete the project either in future class periods or for homework. You may choose to submit student work to the Vietnam Veterans: Legacies of Service Award (deadline: May 2, 2025).

Students will be able to

- Understand the significance of a historical event (e.g., Vietnam War)
- Explain how identity shapes historical experience (e.g., sex, religion, age, race, branch of service)

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

- What assumptions, claims, and debates about military service existed in the Vietnam era?
- How was the experience of living and serving in Vietnam different from civilian life for Americans?
- How did the experience of war help Americans of different backgrounds work together for a common goal?
- How did Veterans use VA benefits to help their families?
- How have Veterans helped their fellow Veterans and their communities?

MATERIALS

- Source 8: Jim Olson, “Guard Duty,” undated, Minnesota Remembers Vietnam: The Story Wall, mnvietnam.org/story/6-vietnam-poems/index.html
- Activity Sheet 9: Summary Reflection
- Activity Sheet 10: Project Planning
- Where to Start Your Research

Peter C. Vermilyea has taught grade 11 at Housatonic Valley Regional High School in Connecticut since 1995. He was named the 2006 Connecticut History Teacher of the Year.

GRADE LEVELS: 7–12

RECOMMENDED TIME FOR COMPLETION: One 45-minute class period

UNIT OVERVIEW: This unit is one of the Gilder Lehrman Institute’s Teaching Literacy through History resources, designed to align with the Common Core State Standards. Students will learn and practice skills that will help them analyze, assess, and develop knowledgeable and well-reasoned points of view on textual and visual primary source materials. The five lessons in this unit explore the experiences of American servicemen and servicewomen during and after the Vietnam War.



PROCEDURE

1. Distribute or display the poem “Guard Duty” (Source 8) by Vietnam Veteran Jim Olson. Share read the poem with the class. Ask students what emotions the author may have wanted to evoke, and what his sources of inspiration may have been.
2. Distribute Activity Sheet 9: Summary Reflection. Depending on your class size or grade level, you may ask students to work as a whole class, in small groups, in pairs, or individually. Explain that they are to compile a list of the ways the poem reflects the experiences of American service personnel in Vietnam. Provide students three to five minutes to make their list based on recalled information.
3. If there is time, ask students to share out their reflections. Possible responses may include, but are not limited to, combat, fear, the unknown, the weapons of war, and the difference between being a civilian and a member of the military.
4. Explain to the students that they will be engaged in a project designed to allow them to tell the story of a Vietnam Veteran or service member who is from their area, known to them personally, or nationally prominent. One option available to them will be writing a poem like “Guard Duty,” but you may choose a variety of ways for them to tell their Veteran’s story.
5. This assessment is designed to provide students with the opportunity to demonstrate the knowledge they gained throughout the unit. Additionally, if completed by May 2, 2025, their final product can be submitted to the Gilder Lehrman Institute for the Vietnam Veterans: Legacies of Service Award if it meets all the contest guidelines.
6. Students conduct independent research into the life of one Vietnam War–era Veteran or service member who is buried in a Veterans Affairs National Cemetery or a VA grant-funded state, territorial, or tribal Veterans cemetery. They then develop a project that explores that person’s experiences joining the military, serving in Vietnam, and returning home after the war (if they did return home). This will take longer than one class period and could include homework time.
7. They should present their research through a creative outlet such as
 - A written report or eulogy of 250–400 words (You may need to define and share a eulogy with the students.)
 - A poem or song of at least 7 lines
 - A mini-documentary or mini-podcast that is 2–4 minutes in length
8. To help students develop their research and their project ask them to review Lessons 1–4. What types of primary sources do historians use to learn about Veterans and service members? Ask students to brainstorm a list, and record their answers where everyone can see them.
9. Where might these types of sources be located? Invite students to consider what sources are likely to be online, in the library, or in an archive. Note: AncestryClassroom offers free subscriptions to schools. While this can only be used by students when they are at school, it allows them access to Ancestry.com, Newspapers.com, and Fold3 Historical Military Records.
10. Distribute Activity Sheet 10, which provides an outline for students to use to organize their research. Review “Where to Start Your Research.” This section helps students understand how to get started on their projects. It identifies a few specific places to help them find primary sources. They should consider both what the class discussed and this handout when developing a research plan.
11. A creative piece should focus on specific aspects of a Veteran’s or service member’s service in the military. This might be their entry into the military, a specific military action in which they were involved, something that made their experience distinctive, or an explanation of how their service shaped their post-war life. Remind students that “Guard Duty” is an example of a creative way of communicating a Veteran’s or service member’s story.
12. If you plan to submit student work for the Vietnam Veterans: Legacies of Service Award (providing ten \$500 prizes for students across the country), please review and discuss the contest guidelines provided here: <https://www.gilderlehrman.org/veterans-legacy-program/student-contest>.



Source 1: Historical Background US Involvement in Vietnam and the Veterans' Experience

by William Sturkey, University of Pennsylvania

The United States was deeply involved in the Vietnam conflict for more than twenty years. Based on the idea of containment, the American government sought to stop the spread of communism anywhere in the world. Between 1950 and 1954, the United States spent \$2.6 billion in military aid to the French to suppress communist-led uprisings across Vietnam. After the French were defeated in 1954, Vietnam was partitioned into two separate nations, North and South Vietnam, that were to be reunited with an election in 1956.

The United States, fearing that communist leaders of North Vietnam would win that election, led the creation of the Southeast Asian Treaty Organization (SEATO) to prevent the spread of communism in Southeast Asia. The organization encouraged South Vietnam to reject reunification in 1956 and began bolstering military support for an independent South Vietnam. When the North began a military campaign to unite the two nations, the United States and its SEATO allies began sending an increasing number of military advisors and weapons to help South Vietnam stave off invasion from the North. The American military presence increased as the war worsened for the South Vietnamese. From 900 advisors in 1960 to more than 23,000 in 1963, the American presence in Vietnam slowly increased in the early 1960s.

The first large-scale conflict between American and North Vietnamese troops occurred in November 1965. By the end of that year, 184,300 American soldiers were stationed in Vietnam. Those numbers continued to increase until 1968 when nearly 540,000 US soldiers were stationed in Vietnam. All told, between 1965 and 1973, roughly 2.7 million American men and women served in Vietnam. More than 58,000 US servicemen and women lost their lives during the war, with another 153,313 seriously wounded.

Most Americans who served in Vietnam were not draftees. Of the 2.7 million who served in Vietnam, only about 25 percent were drafted. Most volunteered, although many of these joined to avoid the draft. A 1968 survey found that 47.2 percent of volunteers cited the draft as the primary reason for joining the military. Voluntary enlistment allowed individuals to select their service branch, which allowed many to avoid Vietnam all together. Most people who served in the American military during the Vietnam era did not actually serve in Vietnam or Southeast Asia. In 1968, the highest year for American troop levels in Vietnam, only about 15 percent of active duty military were stationed in Vietnam. The rest were scattered across the globe.

Despite the preponderance of volunteers, the draft nevertheless served as one of the most contentious aspects of Vietnam War-era service. The percentage of eligible men who were inducted was relatively small. Between 1964 and 1973, only about 7 percent of age-eligible American men were drafted. Many young men were shielded from the draft by a host of deferments that exempted tens of millions from being selected. The most common of these deferments were related to college enrollment, a medical condition, or family obligations. Well-connected individuals with resources had better access to college or to physicians who could provide medical justifications for deferments. Because of these factors, Vietnam was predominantly a “working-class war,” writes historian Christian Appy.¹ Men from working-class and impoverished backgrounds made up about 80 percent of enlistees. About 300,000 African Americans, 80,000 Latinos, 42,000 Native Americans, and 35,000 Asian Americans served in the war.

The experiences of Vietnam Veterans varied widely, but most are connected by a sense of demoralization unique to that particular war. The Vietnam War generation had grown up in the shadow of World War II, “the good war” as it’s often called, when millions of Americans fought to preserve the world for democracy. When they returned home, Vietnam Veterans encountered a public with increasingly negative views of the war. Public opinion diminished throughout the 1960s as the prospects of victory and reasons for involvement looked increasingly bleak. College campuses filled first with

¹ Christian G. Appy, *Working-Class War: American Combat Soldiers in Vietnam* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1993)



protests and were soon followed by massive demonstrations in every major city in the nation. Some Veterans even joined anti-war protests themselves through membership in organizations such as Vietnam Veterans Against the War. Others returned home to welcoming communities but were taken aback by the growing unpopularity of the war as seen in the national media. For many, it was deeply disturbing seeing Americans turn against the conflict for which they had just risked their lives.

Even after the US military left Vietnam in 1973 and demonstrations tapered, there was a deep collective feeling among American citizens of regret and exhaustion over the war. Many Americans simply did not want to talk about it, leaving Veterans isolated amid a civilian population seemingly eager to bury their experiences. Although Veterans experienced a resurgence of pro-Veteran rhetoric in the 1980s, millions were further insulted by massive cuts to the VA and mental health services for Veterans. Still, a resurrection of esteem for Veterans allowed many to separate the Veterans from the cause for which they fought. The erection of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington DC in 1982 provided a sense of national recognition for the sacrifice of Vietnam Veterans.

Like most populations, Vietnam War Veterans are not a monolith. From deeply disillusioned to intensely patriotic and proud, hundreds of thousands of Vietnam Veterans remain prominent in American life today. Their experiences and perspectives are just as diverse as they are themselves.

William Sturkey is associate professor of history at the University of Pennsylvania. He is the author of three books, including The Ballad of Roy Benavidez: The Life and Times of America's Most Famous Hispanic Veteran.



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Activity Sheet 1: Background Knowledge

Please respond to the following after you have read the Historical Background essay.

1. During which years was America involved in the Vietnam War?

2. Why did the United States become involved in the Vietnam War?

3. How many Americans served in Vietnam during the Vietnam War?

4. Using the context in which the terms are used in the Historical Background essay, define the difference between a service member who “volunteered” and a service member who was “drafted.”

5. Professor Sturkey quotes Christian Appy, who referred to Vietnam as predominantly a “working-class war.” Using context clues, explain what this expression means.

6. What evidence in this essay shows that many Americans regretted their nation’s participation in the Vietnam War? Provide a quotation from the essay to support your answer.



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Activity Sheet 2: Primary Source Jigsaw Activity

Directions:

1. Analyze one of the primary sources with a group. Your goal is to answer these questions: What assumptions, claims, and debates about military service existed in the Vietnam era? What evidence from your primary source document supports your answer?
2. Join a new group of students who each analyzed one of the other three primary source documents. Each member of the group will share their findings. All members of the group should record each student's findings in the table below.
3. When each student has shared, answer the questions after the table on your own.

Source 2: Berrios Interview	Source 3: <i>If You Really Care . . .</i> pamphlet
Source 4: Anti-war demonstration poster	Source 5: "Youngsters Write Servicemen" article



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Answer these questions based on the evidence reported by your fellow students.

1. What incentives did the military provide to encourage enlistment? What specific evidence can you offer to support your answer?

2. What are some reasons why the military draft was controversial? What specific evidence supports your answer?

3. Based on the information from the primary sources, would you have volunteered for military service? Why or why not?

Source 2: Excerpts from an Interview with Jose Antonio Berrios, 2010



*Jose Antonio Berrios, in his Navy uniform, 1968
(Library of Congress)*

Julio Berrios: Where and when were you born?

Jose Antonio Berrios: I was born in Caguas, Puerto Rico, on July 20, 1947.

Julio Berrios: Give me some details about your family, your parents' occupation, number of people in your family, and the genders of your siblings.

Jose Berrios: My family consisted of seven children, brothers and sisters, four brothers, including myself, three sisters. My father was a butcher and my mother was a housewife.

Julio Berrios: What were you doing before you entered the service?

Jose Antonio Berrios: Before I entered the service, I had just graduated from high school.

Julio Berrios: Do you have any other family members who served in the military?

Jose Antonio Berrios: I had an uncle, served in World War II. And my father was also in World War II, but he was medically discharged for a heart condition.

Julio Berrios: Tell me about your early days of service. For example, how did you enter the service? Were you drafted? Were you enlisted?

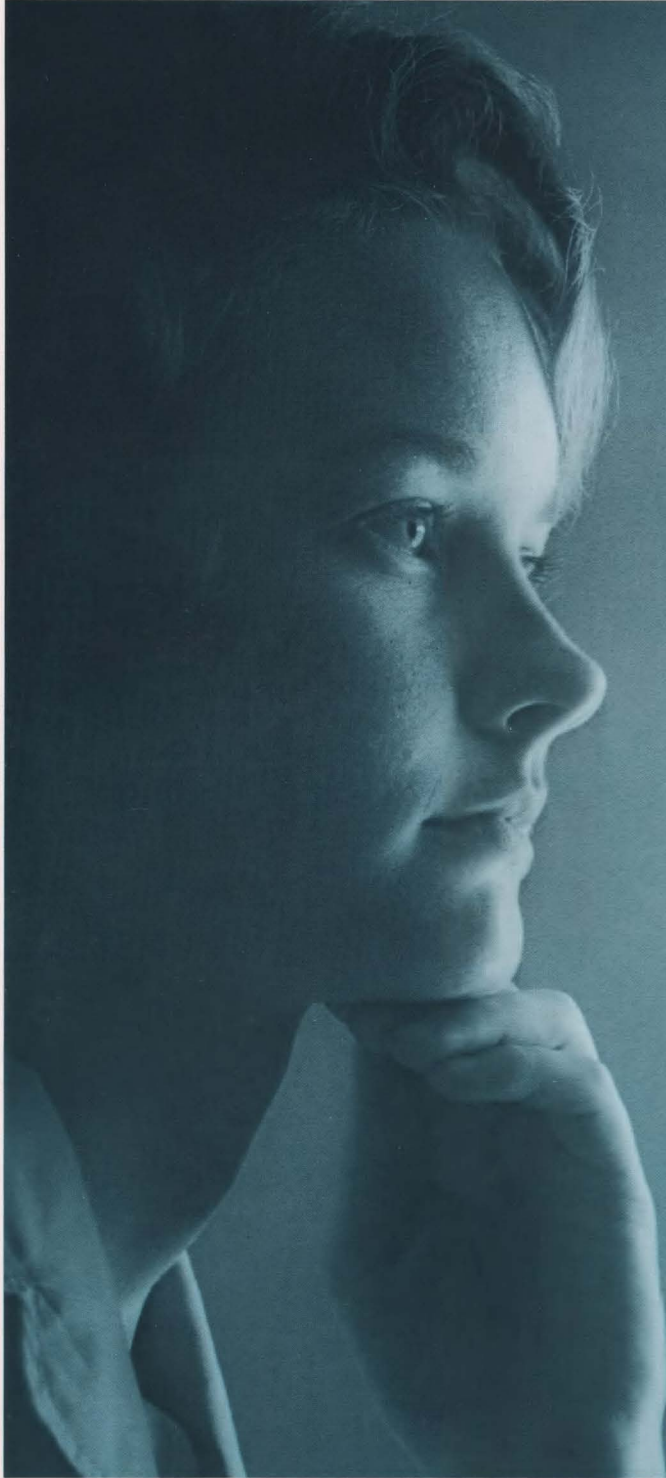
Jose Antonio Berrios: I enlisted voluntarily in the United States Navy at the age of seventeen under a kiddie cruise program. [The "kiddie cruise program" allowed seventeen-year-olds to join the US Navy and be discharged when they turned twenty-one, instead of the customary four-year enlistment.] . . .

Julio Berrios: What was the reason for you choosing the specific branch of service that you chose?

Jose Antonio Berrios: Ever since I was little, I was always fascinated by ships in the Navy.

From: Jose Antonio Berrios interviewed by Julio E. Berrios on November 9, 2010, Jose Antonio Berrios Collection, 1965, Personal Narrative, Veterans History Project, American Folklife Center, Library of Congress

Source 3: Excerpt from *If You Really Care, This Is Your Chance of a Lifetime*,
by the US Air Force Nurse Corps, 1967



If you really care . . .
about your country and the health of America's fighting men, consider the excellent opportunity offered you by the United States Air Force.

You gave careful consideration to entering the nursing profession. It may have been a lifelong dream or it may have been a sudden inspiration that led you to caring for the body, mind and spirit of your fellowman. Perhaps you've just graduated or maybe you are already established in your career. Now you want to start on a new adventure or broaden your professional horizon.

To those of you who are prepared to accept the opportunities offered by the Air Force to a selected group of professional and dedicated nurses, we present this booklet. We have attempted to give a glimpse of every facet of the daily life of a typical Air Force Nurse. Every one of the nurses shown is an Air Force Nurse. Some of the scenes will be familiar, while others will offer a preview of what you can expect as a flight nurse or as a nurse in aerospace medicine.

You wouldn't be a nurse if you didn't want to serve humanity, now you may have the opportunity to be of even greater service by serving your country as well. The life of an Air Force Nurse is satisfying and rewarding. As you read on, picture yourself as the girl in blue!

US Air Force Nurse Corps, *If You Really Care, This Is Your Chance of a Lifetime*, 1967, p. 2 (Martha Blakeney Hodges Special Collections and University Archives, UNCG University Libraries)

Source 4: Anti-War Demonstration Poster, 1970

. . . the U.S. Government
 continues, methodically,
 to murder thousands of
 innocent Vietnamese . . .
 how much longer can the
 American people accept
 this horror? . . .

1040
 So far,
 the Vietnam
 War has cost
 \$121,000,000.00
 This is \$150 per year for
 every man, woman and child
 in the U.S.
 If you are an average
 family, it has already cost you
 \$3,000.00
 in direct tax money

WED. APRIL 15 11:30 A.M.
**Spring Offensive To End
 The War On Vietnam**
**INTERNAL REVENUE SERVICE
 HEADQUARTERS**
Church & Murray Streets Manhattan
**THE PEOPLE ARE
 GETTING TOGETHER!**
**VIETNAM LAOS CAMBODIA
 ALL U.S. FORCES OUT NOW!**

Vietnam Peace Parade Committee
 22 West 42 Street
 New York, N.Y. 10018 Phone: 212-693-1100
 For latest information call 924-6215 (24 hours)

Fifth Avenue Vietnam Peace Parade Committee, 1970 (Library of Congress)



Source 5: Excerpts from “Youngsters Write to Servicemen,”
by Doris Wright, *San Antonio (TX) Express/News*, 1969

Thirty-five youngsters in Miss Estella Guerra’s second grade class at Camelot Elementary School pour out a stack of letters to six servicemen in Vietnam before Christmas, and now they’re planning what they’re going to write for Valentine’s Day.

The letters, for which responses are beginning to arrive at the school, were serious, funny, straight-to-the-point and concerned as only the very young can be concerned.

“Can you shoot straight?” asked one concerned youngster.

“My friend’s Daddy had to go to Vietnam twice. I hope you don’t have to go to Vietnam twice,” wrote another.

“Thank you for Defending our Country,” added one child in a postscript.

One small lad wrote six lines in neat block letters, ending with “The End” in letters four inches high.

“Are you winning the war?” and “We hope you come home safely” were most frequently written by the children, who then wished the men “Merry Christmas.”

Miss Guerra had learned that four of her pupils had fathers in Vietnam, another had a brother there and Miss Guerra’s own brother was stationed there. She suggested the children might like to write to these six men, whose names and addresses were written on the blackboard. . . .

[Specialist 5 Victor G.] Garcia wrote to Miss Guerra, “Thank you and your class for the letters and cards. They are really great. My buddies and I have read them over and over. They did not only make us feel good, but made us laugh with some of the cute things they said. Tell them that we are trying very hard to win the war. . . .”

[Major Charles] Shipman’s answer, written on Christmas Day, wrote: “The letters are well written with thought and feeling. . . . The hardships, uncertainties, death and destruction that I see surround the Vietnamese children every day cause me to appreciate the environment I grew up in and the environment our children are growing up in. . . . We hope that our contribution over here will make the entire world a better place to live tomorrow, because the problems of tomorrow will be for the children you are now teaching to solve.”

From: Doris Wright, “Youngsters Write to Servicemen,” San Antonio (TX) Express/News, January 26, 1969, p. 5-H, newspapers.com/image/82846702/

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Activity Sheet 3: Analysis of Vietnam Era Photographs

Directions: Examine each of these four photographs. Write down five words that come to mind when you look at each photograph. These words could refer to a specific person or item in the photograph, to an idea or theme related to the scene or setting, or the way the scene makes you feel. Then write a one-sentence description of what the evidence suggests each photograph depicts.

Photograph 1



*US Army soldiers near Duc Pho, Quang Ngai Province, South Vietnam, April 24, 1967
(National Archives)*

Five words:

One-sentence description:



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Photograph 2



United States Army draftees at Fort Jackson, Columbia, South Carolina, May 15, 1967 (Library of Congress)

Five words:

One-sentence description:



NAME

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DATE

Photograph 3



*US Army soldiers in Tây Ninh Province, South Vietnam, January 18, 1968
(National Archives)*

Five words:

One-sentence description:

NAME

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Photograph 4



Members of the US Army's 20th Engineer Brigade, Sông Bé Base Camp, South Vietnam, 1970 (Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture)

Five words:

One-sentence description:



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Activity Sheet 4: The American Experience in Vietnam

Read the following excerpts from interviews with, letters by, and newspaper articles about Vietnam Veterans. Then answer the questions that follow.

Reading 1

Excerpts from an Interview with Petty Officer Third Class Jose Antonio Berrios, United States Navy, 2010:

I had to get used to the food because I was used to eating Puerto Rican food. And at first I lost weight, but then I got used to eating certain foods. . . . In barracks . . . we had to do everything for ourselves. We had to wash and iron our own clothes. And then after a few months on, I was assigned to a ship and on the ship that was automatically taken care of, and we slept on cots. More like sardines in a can, barely room enough to breathe. . . .

I saw soldiers on the beach getting shot, and like I said, we were fired upon, but nobody on my ship got hurt.

I have quite a few friends. Race had no barriers. I had white friends, I had black friends, and I had Hispanic or Mexican friends. Even had some friends that were officers.

From: Jose Antonio Berrios interviewed by Julio E. Berrios on November 9, 2010, Jose Antonio Berrios Collection, 1965, Personal Narrative, Veterans History Project, American Folklife Center, Library of Congress

Reading 2

Excerpts from Letter from Specialist Four Paul D. Milhouse, United States Army, to His Wife Martha, 1965:

. . . I guess we are in a pretty secure area here [near An Khe, South Vietnam] with all of the troops and helicopters around. Last night we could hear artillery or mortar fire in the hills around us and I guess the night before some VC's [Viet Cong, South Vietnamese communist forces] fired some machine guns in the area but there isn't too much danger from them here and there isn't too much we down here can do about it. Its up to the troops protecting the area. . . .

We are sleeping in pup tents right now – 2 to a tent. We are supposed to have a bigger one set up soon. I also heard today that we are moving to another area, probably about ½ a mile away. I guess its too crowded where we are now. Its supposed to be a little denser than this so we will have to clean it up.

From: Paul David Milhouse to his wife, Martha, September 17, 1965, Paul David Milhouse Collection, 1964, Veterans History Project, American Folklife Center, Library of Congress



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Reading 3

Excerpts from an Interview with Captain Gordon Nakagawa, United States Navy, 2005:

Under interrogation, solitary confinement, where [the North Vietnamese] were trying to either extract military operation or have you assist in their propaganda efforts is what they were trying to do. They want to take advantage of your loneliness and uncertainties in order to take advantage of those two things. I felt very well prepared for this, and when I resisted their efforts, they accused me of having a bad attitude. . . . [T]hey said you need to improve your attitude in order to be deserving of better treatment. And at this time they're not giving me any water, using a lot of sleep deprivation, no food of course. So we're going through about the third day of this, and they still haven't given me any water. And in our US Navy survival training, we have some ground rules: Three minutes without air, three days without water, three weeks without food, then you need to start being concerned. You need to do something. So I've gone through my third day without water, and I'm thinking, do these guys have the same rules that we have? But that afternoon they said this evening after it gets dark, we're going to take you out to a B-52 target area, and we're going to leave you there because you have a bad attitude.

From: Interview with Gordon Ross Nakagawa, May 28, 2005, interviewed by Kimberly Peach and George Liki, Gordon Ross Nakagawa Collection, 1958, Personal Narrative, Veterans History Project, American Folklife Center, Library of Congress

Reading 4

Excerpts from "Dead and Wounded Lay Thick at Hill 875" by Thomas Cheatham, *Red Bluff (CA) Daily News*, 1967:

The smell of death told me I had reached the lost battalion of American paratroopers on the slopes of this Central Highlands peak. . . . Sunday the platoons had 30 men. Today they had only five.

Only the dead lay outside the foxholes, here in a bullet shredded jungle so close to the Communist fortress on the summit that I could hear the little plop as a North Vietnamese dropped a shell into a mortar tube. The dead Americans were wrapped in their green rubber ponchos. There were so many. So many that when I dug my foxhole I couldn't escape the odor. . . .

From: Thomas Cheatham, "Dead and Wounded Lay Thick at Hill 875," Red Bluff (CA) Daily News, November 22, 1967, newspapers.com/image/698193626



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Reading 5

Excerpts from “Soldier Volunteered for Dangerous Work,” by Jack K. Graeme, *Clovis (NM) News-Journal*, 1967:

Suddenly a rifle grenade flew out of the jungle and plopped onto the ground at [Specialist 4C Daniel] Fernandez’s feet. He jumped away but accidentally kicked the deadly projectile toward the other men. For a fraction of a second, he stared in horror at what he had done.

“Move out,” he yelled, leaping at the grenade. He scooped it under his body just as it exploded, tossing him into the air like a rag doll, tearing into his groin and abdomen. Seconds later a single .50 caliber machine gun bullet slammed into him. . . . [A helicopter arrived to take Fernandez to a field hospital while his comrades beat off the Viet Cong, who left behind 17 dead and were thought to have carried off five more of their dead. But Fernandez did not know or care. He died while the helicopter was still in the air.

From: Jack K. Graeme, “Soldier Volunteered for Dangerous Work,” *Clovis (NM) News-Journal*, January 15, 1967, p. 7.

Complete the following after you have read the excerpts.

<p>Reading 1: Jose Antonio Berrios</p>
<p>1. Summarize the experience described in the text.</p>
<p>2. How did this experience differ from civilian life?</p>
<p>3. What quote offers the best evidence to support your response to Question 2?</p>



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Reading 2: Paul D. Milhouse

1. Summarize the experience described in the text.

2. How did this experience differ from civilian life?

3. What quote offers the best evidence to support your response to Question 2?

Reading 3: Gordon Nakagawa

1. Summarize the experience described in the text.

2. How did this experience differ from civilian life?

3. What quote offers the best evidence to support your response to Question 2?



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Reading 4: "Dead and Wounded Lay Thick at Hill 875"

1. Summarize the experience described in the text.

2. How did this experience differ from civilian life?

3. What quote offers the best evidence to support your response to Question 2?

Reading 5: "Soldier Volunteered for Dangerous Work"

1. Summarize the experience described in the text.

2. How did this experience differ from civilian life?

3. What quote offers the best evidence to support your response to Question 2?



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Respond to the following questions using specific quotations or evidence from the sources:

1. What challenges did American service members face in Vietnam? How did they overcome these challenges?

2. How was the experience of living and serving in Vietnam different from civilian life?

3. Citing specific evidence from the photos or excerpts, in what ways did military experience potentially impact the worldview of Veterans?

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Activity Sheet 5: Analysis of a Photograph

Examine the following image. Using what you have learned in this unit, context clues, and the citation, respond to the questions below.



John Podlaski, "Vietnam Veterans Welcome Home Parade," Chicago, Illinois, June 13, 1986 (Reprinted with the permission of the photographer.)

1. What does the photograph depict? What evidence from the citation supports your interpretation?

2. Think back to the Historical Background essay. What is the meaning of "NEVER too late to say 'Welcome Home'" on the banner? How did events like this affect Vietnam Veterans?



Source 6: Excerpts from Interviews with Vietnam Veterans

Reading 1

Jose V. Orozco was drafted into the United States Army and served as a machine gunner from 1968 to 1970. This interview was conducted in 2004.

When I came back, I went to Colorado. I went up to finish my service in Colorado. And a month or two months before I finished my service, they give you a week vacation. That's when I went to Mexico and I got married. . . . I went to work the same place I was working [before I was in the army]. . . . While I was in Colorado, I took drafting, and it was all paid by the Army. . . . The GI Bill, it is a benefit that all veterans receive. It includes education. It includes loans. It includes help, benefits, hospitalization, a lot of benefits for the GI Bill.

From: Jose V. Orozco interviewed by Audrey Wing Chi on October 4, 2004, Jose V. Orozco Collection, 1968, Personal Narrative, Veterans History Project, American Folklife Center, Library of Congress

Reading 2

Lester W. Elam was drafted into the United States Army and served as a specialist working on helicopters from 1966 to 1969. This interview was conducted in 2012.

When I got home, I had a job waiting for me. I worked at AE Staleys, and I was working there—I'd been there a year when I got engaged to my wife, and we got married, and at that time they would save you your job until you got out, so when I went back, I had a job waiting for me, so I got out, and a week later I hit the ground running and I went back to work. . . . I came back in '69. I worked out in process until 1973, and they had, and still do at that time, had a bid on maintenance jobs, and that was like electrician, sheet metal, boiler maker, pipe fitter, et cetera, and they had some bids come up. I tried before but I didn't have enough seniority, so this time I bid, and I got a bid for sheet metal, and on doing so, I applied for GI Bill, no trouble, and I had three years apprenticeship through AE Staley with a monthly check coming from GI Bill, and they helped pay all my books and equipment I needed. Yes, it was very good at that time.

From: Lester W. Elam, interviewed by Regina Korthals and Julia E. Shane on April 24, 2012, Lester W. Elam Collection, 1966, Personal Narrative, Veterans History Project, American Folklife Center, Library of Congress



Reading 3

Judy Reed Russell enlisted in the United States Air Force and served as a sergeant and secretary in the cryptology office from 1966 to 1968. This interview was conducted in 2004.

[I] went on to Central High School, graduated from there in 1960 . . . and then I started a work scholarship at a college, but I had no money for personal items. And it was just such a struggle unless you had money coming in from somewhere. . . . So I later went into the military.

I had a [desire to serve in] the Vietnam crisis, and I also wanted to get the GI Bill so I could finish out college, so I had a—like, a dual purpose in going in. . . . And I thought I could finish college that way and, also, help my country at the same time. . . . While I was in the Air Force, where my barracks were located, all I could see was them bringing the Vietnam injured people back and watching them walk with their crutches or their arms, and I wanted to help them so much. . . . [a]nd I thought, aw, I wish I could be a nurse in there helping them. It just—it—it became deeper then. . . . I finished up my degree eventually and went on to nurse's training. I finished up the nurse's training, and from that point on, I was able to help people; like it was so deeply embedded in my heart. . . . [W]hen I walked across the stage to get my diploma, the other student nurses and all their families and everybody stood up because they knew my heart, and they clapped . . . and I cried. And then I began this journey as a nurse[.] And I think, also, my military background made me far more aware of cultures at large because of what I did. I was in a strategic place where I learned geography and cultures. And so when I began helping, not only did my military service background become a help that way, but my—also, my Bachelor's Degree in Organizational Behavior was an asset. So see, ultimately, the military provided that . . . to help these little rural areas all around the world.

From: Judy Reed Russell, interviewed by Michael Lloyd Willie on January 9, 2004, Judy Reed Russell Collection, 1966, Personal Narrative, Veterans History Project, American Folklife Center, Library of Congress



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Activity Sheet 6: How Did Veterans Use the GI Bill to Help Themselves and Their Families?

Directions: Read the excerpts of interviews with Veterans and use what you learn to complete the chart below.

	Jose V. Orozco	Lester W. Elam	Judy Reed Russell
Years of Service			
Branch of Service			
Was the Veteran a draftee or volunteer?			
Did the availability of GI Bill benefits influence their decision to serve?			
What GI Bill benefits were used?			
How did use of these benefits affect their life?			
Provide a specific quote that serves as evidence of this.			

In what ways did Vietnam Veterans use GI Bill benefits to help themselves or their families? Support your answer with specific evidence.



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Activity Sheet 7: Excerpts from an Interview with Michael Linden, 2009

Michael John Linden enlisted in the US Army and served in the 137th Engineering Battalion from 1968 to 1971. In his interview, he described his return to the United States at the end of his deployment to Vietnam.

Um—went home two ways home from Vietnam. We flew back, I remember the airline cause I never heard of it. I was wondering if this bird was gonna make it back. It was Tiger and I flew into Seattle, Washington, and it was early evening. There was no cheers, just protesters, baby killers, they'd call ya and everything. . . . I wasn't done with the service. I still had to go to Fort Bragg for the nine months. I'd have nightmares, I'd fight those things, took two years to get rid of them. And, when I . . . finally got Illinois State the school I went to. I was lucky enough to where the landlord said, "Do you want to live with Vietnam vets?" I said, "Yea." Of course ya know and the friends I had there helped and we helped each other let's put it that way. And it finally wore off to where now I like to forget about the whole thing. I threw everything about Vietnam I had away. I just wanted to get it out of my way.

From: Michael John Linden, interviewed by Tracey Flynn, Hickory High School, and James Galantis, Michael John Linden Collection, 1968, Personal Narrative, Veterans History Project, American Folklife Center, Library of Congress

Answer the following questions after reading the excerpt.

1. What challenges did Michael Linden face upon returning from Vietnam?

2. How did he manage these challenges?



Source 7: Contributions of Vietnam Veterans and Their Families to Communities

Reading 1

Mary Jane Crumpler was a Korean War–era Veteran whose husband Carl was a US Air Force pilot. Carl Crumpler was shot down over North Vietnam and held as a prisoner of war (POW) from 1968 to 1973. Mary Jane Crumpler was active in the National League of Families of Prisoners of War and helped begin a campaign to maintain awareness about POWs by selling bracelets with their names on them. This interview was conducted in 2012.

[The National League of Prisoners of War] started out speaking. . . . [W]e would speak to church groups and to the . . . Rotary Clubs . . . that type of thing. We asked them [to take part in a] letter writing campaign and that was our first campaign. And we started that, and that worked out real well. And then, the biggie was the bracelets. And I gave [Jacksonville, Florida, mayor Hans Tanzler] a bracelet. And that really made a difference because during that time, it was during the election, so he gave bracelets out to everybody who came to Jacksonville. Like I think [presidential candidate Edmund] Muskie . . . some of the candidates . . . and when I met with the mayor I told him Carl was missing. He said, well, where was the Red Cross? And I said, there is no Red Cross because they're not considered declared war. They're just declared criminals. And he couldn't believe it. He said, well, that war's been going on so long I just don't even realize. And then all of a sudden, when he started wearing Carl's bracelet, he said every morning he shaved, he'd look down and there was somebody he really knew.

From: Mary Jane Crumpler, interviewed by Alice Marie Stratton on October 9, 2012, Mary Jane Crumpler Collection, 1952, Personal Narrative, Veterans History Project, American Folklife Center, Library of Congress

Reading 2

Claire Brisebois Starnes enlisted in the Women's Army Corps in 1963 and in 1969 volunteered for service in Vietnam. She was one of at least 1,200 women, not including nurses, who served in Vietnam. Starnes was later co-founder of the Vietnam Women Veterans, an organization dedicated to finding all the American women who served in Vietnam. This interview was conducted in 2016.

Back in [19]97, when the Women in Military Service for America memorial was dedicated . . . we ran into other women that we had known in Vietnam. And when we left after the dedication that weekend we had promised ourselves that we wouldn't lose touch again and that we'd have our get together, a reunion. But on the way home, you know, I was thinking . . . maybe we ought to try to find all the women, the army women. Well, . . . a couple days later . . . we decided, well, you know, if we're going to do that, why don't we try to find all the staff and line officers and the enlisted women of all branches. . . .

In [19]98, I started searching for the women. And then in . . . February '99, we formed the VWV, Vietnam Women Veterans, Inc., . . . to know who all was there, to find our friends and all that. . . . [T]he nurses have gotten so much credit. . . . They did a tremendous job under very adverse conditions. But everybody knows about the nurses. Everybody knows about Red Cross. Not too many know about the special services folks, the librarians, the, you know, USO folks and all that. But especially on the non-nurses, military women who were there. . . . [The VWV was formed to] help each other out. Because if we felt the way we did, then surely the others must too. And they feel alone out there. And we, you know, we're reaching out to them. So there were many aspects to this reaching out to them, knowing that they're not alone, for their camaraderie, for good fellowship, instructional, you know, all that wrapped into one.

From: Clarence Brisebois Starnes, "Some Good Days, Some Bad Days": A WAC Serving in Vietnam," interviewed by David Siry, April 4, 2016, West Point Center for Oral History



Reading 3

Clarence E. Sasser was drafted into the US Army and served as a medic in Vietnam from 1967 to 1968. On January 10, 1968, Sasser, despite being wounded several times, provided medical assistance to many wounded or injured American soldiers. He was awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor for this service. After the war, Sasser worked for the Veterans Administration reviewing disability claims. This interview is undated.

I do talk to schools and a lot of veterans' organizations. I do some active duty military talks or—whatever you want to call them. But I always try to tell kids that number one is to do what you're supposed to. That once you do what you're supposed to you get a good, sweet, warm [TAPS CHEST] fuzzy feeling right here. You know that you have done your job. I—am not the most prolific, I guess shall we call them speaker or interview—I select what I do very carefully, and I have other interests other than this and, and whenever you do it—you tend to—dredge up memories, so I'm not the most prolific—you won't find a lot of interviews from me. In fact, I am probably one of the more reluctant ones that the historical society knows of. I do sign the autographs, but . . . I'm not that prolific even doing that. It dredges up memories, and these are memories that you deal with better if they're not on the forefront of your mind.

From: Clarence E. Sasser, interviewed by an unknown interviewer, undated, Clarence E. Sasser Collection, 1967, Personal Narrative, Veterans History Project, American Folklife Center, Library of Congress



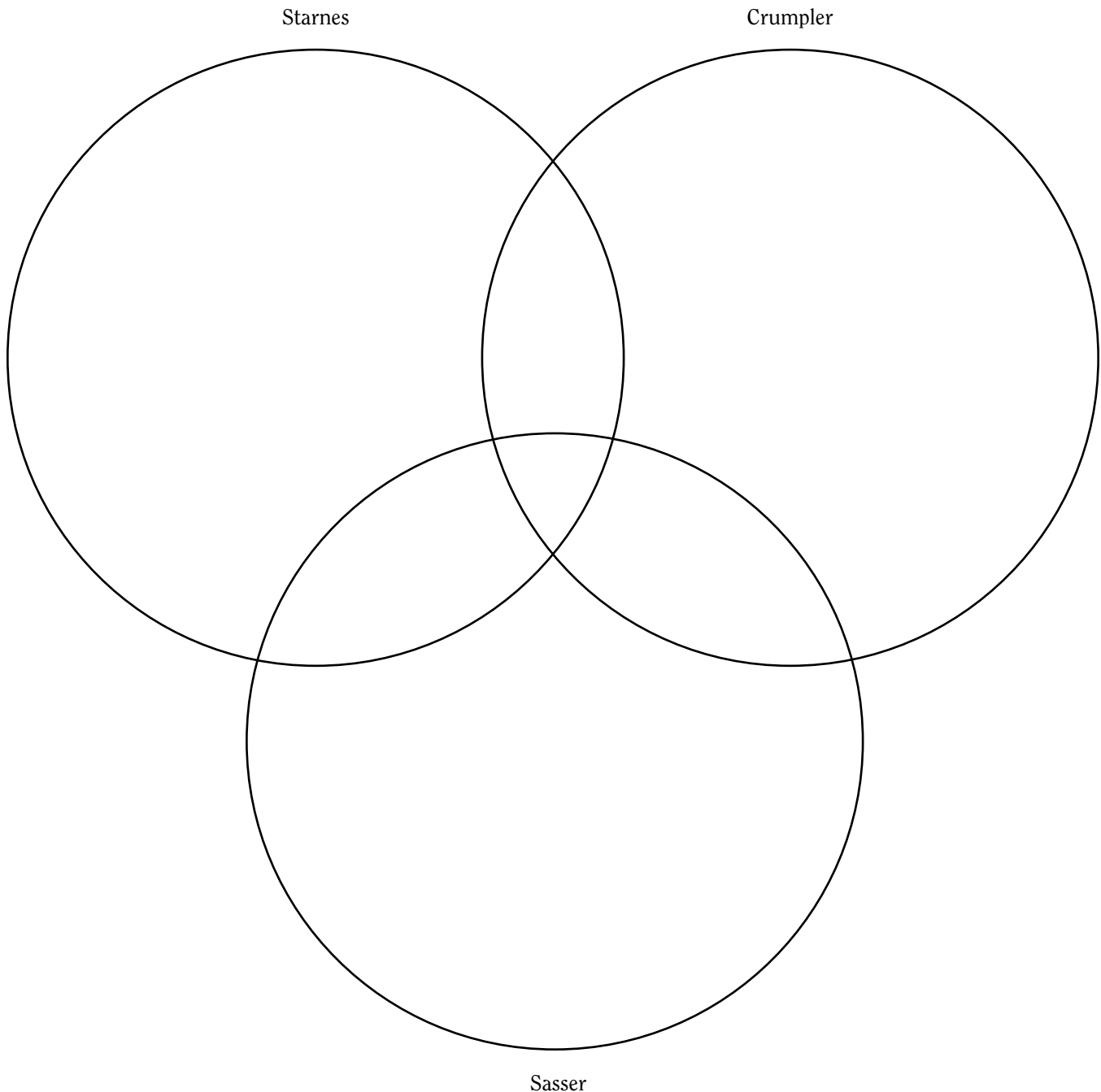
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Activity Sheet 8: Comparing the Experiences of Veterans and Their Communities

Directions: After you have read the interviews with Mary Jane Crumpler, Claire Brisebois Starnes, and Clarence E. Sasser, use the Venn diagram to organize your thoughts about the similarities and differences among the three.





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Review all three excerpts and underline what you believe to be the most important sentence or phrase in each excerpt. Then, rephrase that sentence or phrase in your own words below and explain why you believe it is the most important sentence.

Mary Jane Crumpler

Rephrase:

Why do you believe this is the most important sentence?

Claire Brisebois Starnes

Rephrase:

Why do you believe this is the most important sentence?

Clarence E. Sasser

Rephrase:

Why do you believe this is the most important sentence?



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Answer the following questions based on the interviews with Veterans:

1. In what ways did these three individuals help their fellow Veterans and/or their communities upon returning home from Vietnam?

2. Why, according to the evidence, were these activities so important to the individuals?



Source 8: “Guard Duty” by Jim Olson

Jim Olson, who wrote this poem, was a member of the United States Army from 1969 to 1970. He served as a chaplain's assistant during the Vietnam War.

I was not a combat soldier,
So, I was relatively safe, unless
Our helicopter was shot at, unless
Our jeep hit a land mine, unless
Our base camp was rocketed, unless
The enemy breached the perimeter.
We were, after all, in a war zone.

I would sit out on guard duty, M-60,
which I had never fired, to my right,
30 Claymore detonators to my front,
Wondering what I would do,
If the enemy came at me.

I wouldn't have believed
They could penetrate the maze of
wire and explosives
But in training we saw them do it.
Considering that, I didn't seem like
much of an obstacle.

In the distance Cobra gunships were attacking,
Far enough away that I couldn't hear them.
Pink and white tracers danced in swirling arcs.
Rockets, like reverse roman candles,
Streaked from air to ground.
Below them the earth glowed red.

It had a silent beauty,
Unless you realized that ten miles away
A village was being shredded to bits
By the horrific force of
Exploding metal and flaming heat.

I stared at the sky.
It was not a Minnesota sky.

From: Minnesota Remembers Vietnam: The Story Wall, undated, mnvietnam.org/story/6-vietnam-poems/index.html.



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Activity Sheet 9: Summary Reflection

Directions: Jim Olson served in Vietnam and wrote the poem “Guard Duty.” Drawing upon what you have learned in previous lessons, generate a list of the ways the poem “Guard Duty” reflects the experiences of American service members in Vietnam.

	Ways in which “Guard Duty” reflects the experiences of Americans in Vietnam
1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	
5.	
6.	
7.	



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Activity Sheet 10: Project Planning

Directions: You have read accounts of different aspects of several Vietnam Veterans' military experiences. Your next task is to research a Vietnam Veteran or service member who is buried in a National Cemetery or State, Territory, or Tribal Veterans Cemetery and tell their story to the best of your ability. There are many ways to conduct your research, and guides to some research resources are provided on the "Where to Start Your Research" handout.

Submission Type (Circle One)

Written Report/Eulogy

Poem/Song

Mini-Documentary/Mini-Podcast

Basic Information (where available)

Veteran/Service Member's Name: _____

Birth date: _____

US Armed Forces Branch: _____

Enlistment Date: _____

Where were they stationed? _____

What was their job in the military? _____

Discharge Date: _____

Date of death: _____ Burial Location: _____

Background Facts About the Veteran/Service Member

Background Fact #1: _____

Source: _____



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Background Fact #2: _____

Source: _____

Background Fact #3: _____

Source: _____

Was the person a volunteer or a draftee? If a volunteer, is there evidence for why they enlisted?

Source: _____

Facts About Experiences During the Vietnam War

Experience Fact #1: _____

Source: _____

Experience Fact #2: _____

Source: _____

Experience Fact #3: _____

Source: _____



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Facts About Experiences After the Vietnam War

Post-War Fact #1: _____

Source: _____

Post-War Fact #2: _____

Source: _____

Post-War Fact #3: _____

Source: _____

Create a brief written summary of the person's service in the military. Add other interesting or useful facts about their life.



Where to Start Your Research

Websites

These are a few websites that could prove useful for your research. Please be aware that websites like Ancestry, Family Search, Fold3, Newspapers.com, and others may require subscriptions. Your school or local library system might provide free access to these sites.

- Most National Cemetery Administration sites have a home webpage that lists selected Veterans and service members interred at the site under the “Notable Persons” section.

For example: <https://www.cem.va.gov/cems/nchp/cypresshills.asp>

- US Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) resources
 - National Gravesite Locator: <https://gravelocator.cem.va.gov>
 - The National Cemetery Find a Cemetery Administration’s webpage: <https://www.cem.va.gov/find-cemetery/index.asp>
 - Veterans Legacy Memorial: <https://www.vlm.cem.va.gov/>
- Armed Services websites
 - US Army Heritage and Education Center: ahec.armywarcollege.edu/
 - Naval History and Heritage Command: history.navy.mil/
 - Marine Corps History Division: grc-usmcu.libguides.com/marine-corps-archives/main
 - Air Force Historical Research Agency: afhra.af.mil/
- Other useful websites
 - The Library of Congress Veteran History Project webpage: <https://www.loc.gov/collections/veterans-history-project-collection/about-this-collection/>
 - National Archives: archives.gov/research/military/veterans/online
 - Most of the military records at the National Archives are not online, but you may find some useful records here that have been digitized.
 - Military Indexes: www.militaryindexes.com

Community Resources

Contact your local historical societies, Veterans’ organizations, and libraries to assist you in your research. Your local libraries or school librarian or media specialist may have access to newspaper databases to locate news articles about your research subject.

Search your community for memorials, historic sites, and displays that honor local Veterans and service members. Visit one of these locations to identify someone you would like to honor by sharing their story and legacy.