

**Title:**

Discovering Oral Histories of the Vietnam War Era

**Grade Level:**

Grades 9-12

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**Abstract:**

“Discovering Oral Histories of the Vietnam War Era” is a capstone activity for any Vietnam War Unit. It requires students to first collect, conduct, and examine the oral histories of various Vietnam War participants and then share and discuss the results of their historical research. After students have completed a general examination of the Vietnam War, the instructor will form collaborative student groups that will investigate the oral histories of one of the defined participants of the Vietnam Era: soldiers, American civilians on the home front, American politicians, and the Hmong people. The teacher will instruct the students on the following: 1) what is oral history and how is it a useful tool in historical study; 2) where they can find completed oral histories to examine and reference; 3) who is an appropriate interviewee and where can they be found; and 4) the process for conducting an oral history interview. With oral histories collected and completed, student groups will share their histories with the other groups. After examining the oral histories, students will discuss the impact of such histories in relation to the study they have completed during their unit. Two important questions to address: 1) How did the oral histories reinforce what you learned about the Vietnam War? and 2) How did the oral histories change your understanding of the Vietnam War?

**State Standards:**

B.12.1—Explain different points of view on the same historical event, using data gathered from various sources, such as letters, journals, diaries, newspapers, government documents, and speeches.

B.12.2 —Analyze primary and secondary sources related to a historical question to evaluate their relevance, make comparisons, integrate new information with prior knowledge, and come to a reasoned conclusion.

B.12.8 —Recall, select, and explain the significance of important people, their work, and their ideas in the areas of political and intellectual leadership, inventions, discoveries, and the arts, within each major era of Wisconsin, United States and world history.

B.12.15 —Identify a historical or contemporary event in which a person was forced to take an ethical position, such as a decision to go to war, the impeachment of a president, or a presidential pardon, and explain the issues involved.

**Essential Historical Question:**

How can oral histories of the Vietnam War enhance student understanding and learning?

**Perspectives on the Question:**

U.S. Military

How did role perception vary among career, volunteer, and inducted soldiers?

Home front

How did the war affect civilians on a personal and professional level?

Politicians

What was the motivation for the stance you took on the war?

Hmong

What was your experience and opinion of American troops in Southeast Asia?

**Learning Targets:**

Knowledge

Geography of Southeast Asia

Refugee

Point of View

Primary Sources v. Secondary Sources

Vietnam War

Skills and Processes

Cooperative Learning

Compare and Contrast

Historical analysis

Interpretation

Interviewing

Opposing Viewpoints

Researching

Reasoning and Creative Thinking

Students will make inferences using oral histories.

Students will understand a single person's relevance to the Vietnam War.

Students will research and obtain primary sources of the various Vietnam War participants and compare that information with their text.

Dispositions and Attitudes

Students will appreciate a variety of perspectives on an event.

Students will make comparisons amongst personal viewpoints.

Instruction:

Preliminary Activities:

The teacher will conduct a review and provide a brief summary of the Vietnam War Era.

The teacher will review the differences and importance of primary and secondary sources.

New Learning Activities:

Students will need to identify and research oral histories of Vietnam War Era.

Students will need to conduct interviews.

Post-Learning Activities:

Students will create presentations that include an evaluation of the essential question.

Students will participate in a sharing session to help peers our understanding of the Vietnam War by using oral histories.

Students will complete individual written analysis of essential question.

**Assessment:**

Generalization/Question Connection:

How did the oral histories reinforce what you learned about the Vietnam War? How did the oral histories change your understanding of the Vietnam War?

Goal of Performance or Product:

Students will demonstrate how the oral histories have enhanced their knowledge of the Vietnam War through presentations to their peers and written analysis.

Role of Student:

Analytical Thinker

Critical Thinker

Historian

Interviewer

Researcher

Audience of Performance or Product:

Teachers, peers, and community members will be the audience for this lesson.

Situation:

Students will compare oral histories of the Vietnam Era to their existing knowledge from class and text use.

Criteria Used to Evaluate Performance or Product:

Evaluation of oral presentations is dependant upon the expectations assigned by the course instructor. Assessments should include evaluation of individual research, completion of interviews, Venn diagram, and student essay.

**Resources:**

*Internet:*

Being Hmong Means Being Free

<http://www.wpt.org/hmong/index.html>

History of the Hmong in America

[http://www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/asia/vietnam/hmong\\_5-4.html](http://www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/asia/vietnam/hmong_5-4.html)

How to Conduct an Oral History on the Vietnam War

<http://www.pbs.org/pov/stories/vietnam/curriculum.html>

Oral Histories from the Vietnam War

<http://www.loc.gov/vets//stories/>

Oral Histories of the Vietnam War's Home Front

<http://www.authentichistory.com/OHP/dfreehafer4.html>

Oral Histories of Vietnamese in the Vietnam War

<http://www.pbs.org/vietnampassage/Stories/index.html>

Oral History Association official Website

<http://omega.dickinson.edu/organizations/oha/>

Oral History Society Official Website

<http://www.oralhistory.org.uk/>

President Lyndon Johnson's White House Tapes About Vietnam

<http://www.whitehousetapes.org/>

U.S. Army Interviews in Vietnam During the War

<http://www.army.mil/cmh-pg/documents/vietnam/vnit/vietoral.htm>

Vietnam Veteran Oral Histories

<http://fas-history.rutgers.edu/oralhistory/orlhom.htm>

*Print:*

Aleckson, Paul, et al. *The Hmong and Their Stories: The Secret Wars, Escape to Laos, the Legends* (2001).

Arendt, Laurie. *Back From Duty: Ozaukee County's Veterans Share Their*

*Stories* (2002).

Reilly, Thomas L. *Next of Kin: A Brother's Journey to Wartime Vietnam* (2003).

Stevens, Michael, et al. *Voices from Vietnam* (1996).

Terry, Wallace. *Bloods: An Oral History of the Vietnam War by Black Veterans* (1984).

McCloud, William. *What Should We Tell Our Children About Vietnam?* (2002).

Williams, Linda, et al. *Leaving Home: Family Stories of Courage and Hope*. (1994)