

Teaching American History Project
Analyzing Bias and Point of View
A Study of Vietnam through Primary Resources
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Grade: 9-12

Length of Period: 1-2 class periods

Inquiry: This lesson uses primary resources from the Vietnam era to help students identify bias and multiple points of view. Music, photographs, and written documents will be analyzed to recognize competing arguments for and against United States intervention in the Vietnam Conflict. The essential question will be “What steps do historians take when they investigate primary resources?”

Objectives:

Students will know and be able to:

- Compare and contrast current ideas about the Vietnam Conflict.
- Determine the intended audience of primary sources.
- Identify the point of view expressed in primary sources related to the Vietnam Conflict.
- Analyze primary sources.

Materials:

- *Excerpt* from Richard M. Nixon’s Acceptance Speech
- Lyrics from *Ballad of the Green Berets* by SSGT. Barry Sadler
- Song *Ballad of the Green Berets* by SSGT. Barry Sadler
- Packet of photos from Kent State University
-Photos can be found at <http://speccoll.library.kent.edu/4May70/box188/188.html>
- Sound Recording Analysis Worksheet
- Photo Analysis Worksheet
- Written Document Analysis Worksheet

Activities:

- Brainstorm about existing student knowledge of the Vietnam Conflict
- Create three groups out of the class; send each group to a station
Station 1-Nixon’s Acceptance Speech
Station 2-Kent State Photographs
Station 3-Song: *Ballad of the Green Berets*
- Students will complete analysis worksheets while at each station, rotating every 10-12 minutes
- Groups will reconvene as a class after all three stations have been visited
- Teacher led discussion dealing with the primary sources at each station

- Closure: Ask students “What skills did they use to interpret/analyze information presented in these primary sources?” as an exit question and question to reflect on outside of class when dealing with similar primary sources

Assessment:

- Informal assessment comes from observation of the students interacting and working with their group at each station
- Participation in discussions
- Check and monitor progress
- Formal assessment comes from the completion of the analysis worksheets which will be collected at the end of the class period

CT State Standards:

Educational experiences in **Grades 9-12** will assure that students:

- formulate historical questions and hypotheses from multiple perspectives, using multiple sources
- gather, analyze and reconcile historical information, including contradictory data, from primary and secondary sources to support or reject hypotheses
- use primary source documents to analyze multiple perspectives
- identify various parties and analyze their interest in conflicts from selected historical periods

Richard Nixon's Acceptance Speech

1968

Now it is understandable that Vietnam has been a major concern in foreign policy. But we have not allowed the war in Vietnam to paralyze our capacity to initiate historic new policies to construct a lasting and just peace in the world.

When the history of this period is written, I believe it will be recorded that our most significant contributions to peace resulted from our trips to Peking and to Moscow.

The dialogue that we have begun with the People's Republic of China has reduced the danger of war and has increased the chance for peaceful cooperation between two great peoples.

Within the space of 4 years in our relations with the Soviet Union, we have moved from confrontation to negotiation, and then to cooperation in the interest of peace.

We have taken the first step in limiting the nuclear arms race.

We have laid the foundation for further limitations on nuclear weapons and eventually of reducing the armaments in the nuclear area.

We can thereby not only reduce the enormous cost of arms for both our countries, but we can increase the chances for peace.

More than on any other single issue, I ask you, my fellow Americans, to give us the chance to continue these great initiatives that can contribute so much to the future of peace in the world.

It can truly be said that as a result of our initiatives, the danger of war is less today than it was; the chances for peace are greater.

Sound Recording Analysis Worksheet

Step 1. Pre-listening

A.

Whose voices will you hear on this recording?

What is the date of the recording?

B.

Where was this recording made?

C.

Step 2. Listening

Type of sound recording (check one):

A.

Policy Speech

Convention proceedings

Congressional Testimony

Campaign speech

News report

Arguments before a court

Interview

Panel discussion

Entertainment broadcast

Other

Press conference

B.

Unique physical qualities of the recording

Music

Live broadcast

Narrated

Special sound effects

Background sounds

C.

What is the tone or mood of this recording?

Step 3. Post-listening (or repeated listening)

A.

List three things in this sound recording that you think are important:

1.

2.

3.

B.

Why do you think the original broadcast was made and for what audience?

C.

What evidence in the recording helps you to know why it was made?

D.

List two things this sound recording tells you about life in the United States at the time it was made:

1.

2.

E.

Write a question to the broadcaster that is left unanswered by this sound recording.

F.

What information do you gain about this event that would not be conveyed by a written transcript? Be specific.

Written Document Analysis Worksheet

TYPE OF DOCUMENT (Check one):

Newspaper

Map

Advertisement

Letter

Telegram

Congressional Record

Patent

Press Release

Census Report

Memorandum

Report

Other

UNIQUE PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS OF THE DOCUMENT (Check one or more):

Interesting Letterhead

Notations

Handwritten

"RECEIVED" stamp

Other

Typed

Seals

DATE(S) OF DOCUMENT:

AUTHOR (OR CREATOR) OF THE DOCUMENT:

POSITION (TITLE):

FOR WHAT AUDIENCE WAS THE DOCUMENT WRITTEN?

DOCUMENT INFORMATION (There are many possible ways to answer A-E.)

A. List three things the author said that you think are important:

B. Why do you think this document was written?

C. What evidence in the document helps you know why it was written? Quote from the document.

D. List two things the document tells you about life in the United States at the time it was written.

E. Write a question to the author that is left unanswered by the document:

Photo Analysis Worksheet

Step 1. Observation

Study the photograph for 2 minutes. Form an overall impression of the photograph and then examine individual items. Next, divide the photo into quadrants and study each section to see what new details become visible.

Use the chart below to list people, objects, and activities in the photograph.

Activities	People	Objects

Step 2. Inference

Based on what you have observed above, list three things you might infer from this photograph.

Step 3. Questions

What questions does this photograph raise in your mind?

Where could you find answers to them?

Ballad of the Green Berets

by Sgt. Barry Sadler 1965

Fighting soldiers from the sky
Fearless men who jump and die
Men who mean just what they say
The brave men of the Green Beret

Chorus:
Silver wings upon their chest
These are men, America's best
One hundred men will test today
But only three win the Green Beret

Trained to live off nature's land
Trained in combat, hand-to-hand
Men who fight by night and day
Courage peak from the Green Berets

(Chorus) Silver wings upon their chest
These are men, America's best
One hundred men will test today
But only three win the Green Beret

Back at home a young wife waits
Her Green Beret has met his fate
He has died for those oppressed
Leaving her his last request
"Put silver wings on my son's chest
Make him one of America's best
He'll be a man they'll test one day
Have him win the Green Beret"

(Chorus) Silver wings upon their chest
These are men, America's best
One hundred men will test today
But only three win the Green Beret