**Vietnam War Legacies & Reconciliation Lesson**

**Description:** In this lesson, students will explore war legacy issues through USIP’s Vietnam War Legacies and Reconciliation Initiative, specifically focusing on the search for American MIAs and Vietnamese war dead. Students will research MIAs from their own community and draw conclusions about the importance of this effort within the broader theme of reconciliation. Finally, students will make an argument as to the importance of including postwar legacy issues as part of a complete history of the Vietnam War.

Visit [www.usip.org/public-education](http://www.usip.org/public-education) to find this lesson (with accompanying slides) and others.

**Essential Question:** Why is it important to tell personal stories as part of the effort to heal after war?

**Time:** Approximately 90 minutes

**Standards Addressed:**

Common Core Reading Standards for Informational Text – 9

Common Core College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards for Writing – 7-9

**Lesson Procedures:**

1. **Warm Up:** During war, some service members and civilians are killed in action and their bodies are never recovered. What impact might this have on individuals, families, and communities?
2. **Background:** Use the provided slides to provide a brief overview of the Vietnam War

-Information on the Vietnam War

-Information on the peace (lack of actual reconciliation)

1. **Discussion Question:** What is reconciliation? After the Vietnam War, what groups needed to be reconciled? What kinds of things might need to be reconciled between these groups?  
   Definition: the restoration of friendly relations
2. **Background:** USIP Vietnam War Legacies and Reconciliation Initiative
3. **Watch:** Paul Charvet’s story: <https://youtu.be/wbrLXzRltho>
4. **Discussion Questions:** 
   1. How did Paul’s MIA status impact his family’s ability to grieve his loss?
   2. What impact did the identification of Paul’s remains have on his family?
   3. Paul’s family mentioned that this will help heal the hatred and ugliness of the Vietnam War. Does this healing happen at the family level? The community level? The national level?
5. **Watch:** Vietnamese Families Look for Loved Ones: <https://youtu.be/5Mh1EVZ1CwQ>
6. **Discussion Questions:** 
   1. How has the search for Vietnamese war dead been an important part of the healing in Vietnam?
   2. What are the similarities and differences between American and Vietnamese families who have lost loved ones in the Vietnam War?
7. **Activity:** [Resource 1](#zd24w7edbyq1)

Suggested time: 15-20 minutes

(**Possible Extension Activity:** [Resource 2](#sadfsdafsdaf))

1. **Transfer Task:** [Resource](#rbhdhqxsovfl) 3

Suggested time: 15-20 minutes

1. **Final Debrief:**
   1. How has the accounting of MIA helped the United States and Vietnam heal from the wounds of war?
   2. Where do we go from here? What do you think communities should be doing to support reconciliation? Is it more important for the action to happen at the federal, state, or local level?

**Resources:**

**Websites:**  
[USIP’s Vietnam War Legacies and Reconciliation Initiative](https://www.usip.org/programs/vietnam-war-legacies-and-reconciliation-initiative)

[The Virtual Wall – Vietnam Veterans Memorial](https://virtualwall.org/)

**Community Projects:**

[The 2 Sides Project](https://www.2sidesproject.com/)

**Film:**

PBS documentary about [The 2 Sides Project](https://video.wsre.org/video/the-2-sides-project-ncugi4/)

[“25 Years of U.S.-Vietnam Relations”](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V0LxCuzXsfU&t=2559s) by Vietnam’s M21 media company

[“War Artifact Exchange – Coming Home”](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g3edhAzlw54) by Vietnam Television

PBS Newshour special on [Agent Orange](https://www.pbs.org/newshour/show/will-u-s-stay-committed-to-toxic-agent-orange-cleanup-in-vietnam)

[“Master Hoa’s Requiem”](https://vimeo.com/121510897) by the Vietnamese American Heritage Foundation

**Books:**

“Nothing is Impossible” by Ted Osius

“When Heaven and Earth Changed Places” by Le Ly Hayslip

“The Long Reckoning” by George Black (upcoming publication in 2023)

**Resource 1:**

Research Organizer

1. Visit <https://dpaa-mil.sites.crmforce.mil/dpaaFamWebVietnam> to learn about Vietnam War Accounting.
2. Use the search tool at the bottom of that site to access service member profiles. Use the filter to select your state. Completed Section 1 in the graphic organizer.
3. Select a profile to read. Complete Section 2 in the graphic organizer.

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| --- | --- |
| **Section 1** |  |
| How many profiles are associated with your state? | ALL: Accounted For:  Unaccounted For: |
| **Section 2** |  |
| Biographical Data | Name:  Service:  Status: |
| If unaccounted for, is the status of this case an Active Pursuit? Why or why not? |  |
| Other Important Information:  What did you learn about this person’s service from the profile? |  |
| What is missing?  What questions do you still have? Is there information that family members could share that would be relevant? |  |

Debriefing Questions:

1. What is the value of having these profiles online?
2. What did you learn about your individual state in terms of the accounting effort?
3. Who is missing from this list?
4. How could your community better support the efforts with the accounting effort?

**Resource 2:**

Possible Extension Activity

Background: American soldiers who fought in Vietnam, including MIAs, are commemorated at veterans’ memorials, by DPAA, and online. Vietnamese living in the U.S., including wartime allies in South Vietnam, do not have comparable recognition by the public. This, coupled with other war legacy issues, creates a unique experience for Vietnamese Americans and the Vietnamese immigrant community. Who is telling their story?

Objective: Students will connect with people in the Vietnamese immigrant community to document their experience through the collection of oral histories.

Resources:

-Tips from the Library of Congress on conducting oral history and interview tips: <https://loc.gov/folklife/familyfolklife/oralhistory.html>

Steps:

1. Identify Vietnamese immigrants in your community. Reach out to see if they would be willing to share their stories of their family’s experiences during the Vietnam War and its aftermath.
2. Draft questions as a class. Have students conduct mock interviews with each other to practice asking follow-up questions.
3. Decide how the interviews will be conducted (in person, phone, zoom), and if they will be recorded. The LOC resource includes a consent form. Decide where these interviews will be housed.
4. Schedule and conduct interviews.
5. Create a transcript or edit recording.

Debriefing Questions:

1. What unique perspectives on the Vietnam War and subsequent reconciliation efforts are shared through these interviews?
2. Why is it important to include the perspectives of Vietnamese Americans? How might this further postwar reconciliation efforts?

**Resource 3:**

Transfer Task

Your state is opening a new museum dedicated to the Vietnam War. They would like to include a special exhibit dedicated to the War Legacies and Reconciliation effort, and they have asked for your help in planning the content of the exhibit. Create a proposal to submit to the museum board with your ideas for the exhibit.

**Exhibit Proposal**

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| **Rationale:**  Here you will explain why you think this is an important part of the overall story of the Vietnam War, and how this exhibit might promote healing within the community. |  |
| **Exhibit Title:**  Give your exhibit a catchy title that encapsulates the broad theme of your exhibit. |  |
| **Exhibit Materials/Objects:**  Select 5 items to include in your exhibit. These should be curated to best tell the reconciliation story. For each, explain why you selected this item. | Item 1:  Rationale: |
|  | Item 2:  Rationale: |
|  | Item 3:  Rationale: |
|  | Item 4:  Rationale: |
|  | Item 5:  Rationale: |