



## VETERANS EDUCATING AMERICA'S STUDENTS

### CLASSROOM DISCUSSION POINTS - VIETNAM WAR: HANOI

#### TEACHERS:

Have students answer the questions below based upon their viewing of the film clips. They should draw evidence from the videos to support their responses.

#### 1. PEOPLE & HISTORIC FIGURES:

**GOAL:** This series of questions is designed to measure a student's ability to retain information about the life and impact of North Vietnam's charismatic leader both before and during the Vietnam War.

**BACKGROUND INFORMATION FOR STUDENTS:** Ho Chi Minh wanted to see his native country of Vietnam free of French colonial rule. As a young man, he traveled extensively to multiple countries and continents. While living in France, he witnessed the celebration of the end of World War One and first heard the ideas of Communist Vladimir Lenin, who led the Bolshevik Revolution in Russia in 1917.

**FILM CLIPS:** Have students watch the following video clips: (3:31)

- \* Ho Chi Minh: Revolutionary Genesis (1910's) (:53)
- \* Ho Chi Minh: International Travels (1919-1940's) (1:11)
- \* Ho Chi Minh: Rise to Power in Hanoi (1:27)

#### **QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:**

- How did Ho Chi Minh's travels throughout the world impact his desire to free the Vietnamese people from outside rule?
- When did Ho Chi Minh return to Vietnam and what do you think about the way he presented himself to the Vietnamese people?
- What role did Ho Chi Minh assume within the Vietnamese Communist party?

#### 2. GOVERNMENT & LEADERSHIP:

**GOALS:** This series of questions is designed to explore the impact of and test student knowledge about key Communist leaders in North Vietnam both before and during the Vietnam War.

**BACKGROUND INFORMATION FOR STUDENTS:** Colonized since the mid 1800's, the Vietnamese acquired their independence from France in 1954 after a long and often bloody struggle. But control of the country would be divided at the 17<sup>th</sup> parallel, with Ho Chi Minh at the helm in Hanoi (the north) and the creation of the Republic of Vietnam in Saigon (the South). Shortly afterwards, civil war ensued as the north sought to unify the country under Communist rule.

**FILM CLIPS:** Have students watch the following video clips: (3:11)

- \* Le Duan – First Secretary, Vietnamese Communist Party (:42)
- \* General Giap – Minister of Defense (1:40)
- \* Le Duc Tho – Paris Peace Representative (:49)

#### **QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:**

- While Ho Chi Minh was the public face of Communist North Vietnam, Professor Nguyen suggests that another man may have played a more



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important role. Who is he and why do you think his impact may have been greater?

- General Giap led the military campaign for the Hanoi Communists during the Vietnam War, but his greatest achievement was during the French Indochina War. Describe some things that happened at the battle at Dien Bien Phu and offer your thoughts about its impact on the Vietnamese psyche.
- Le Duc Tho, the top political leader in the North during the Vietnam War, would represent the Communist government during Paris Peace Accord negotiations. What did his American counterpart, Henry Kissinger, think of him?

### **3. INTERNAL CONFLICT:**

**GOALS:** This series of questions is designed to encourage students to explore the implications and unintended consequences of the North's socialist policy to launch a Land Reform Campaign.

**BACKGROUND INFORMATION FOR STUDENTS:** From 1953 to 1956 (after the French Indochina War but prior to the Vietnam War), the Hanoi government conducted a large-scale effort to redistribute land, essentially wealth, throughout North Vietnam.

**FILM CLIPS:** Have students watch the following video clip: (1:39)

- \* Disastrous Land Reform Campaign (1:39)

#### **QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:**

- What do you think was the ultimate purpose of the Land Reform Campaign?
- Why did the effort turn into a total disaster?
- Put yourself in the shoes of a Vietnamese landowner who had lost their family homestead because of this policy. How would you feel about the government taking property away from you?

### **4. MILITARY HISTORY & POLITICAL CONFLICT:**

**GOALS:** This series of questions is designed to promote critical thinking skills in students.

**BACKGROUND INFORMATION FOR STUDENTS:** The Vietnam War began as a civil conflict pitting North Vietnam and Communists in the South (Viet Cong) against the Saigon government. By the early 1960's, the clash had escalated as Hanoi plotted to unify the entire country under Communist rule.

**FILM CLIPS:** Have students watch the following video clips: (5:11)

- \* North Vietnam's Unification Goals (:43)
- \* Communist Military Strategy (1:35)
- \* North Vietnamese Leadership Conflicts (2:09)
- \* Anti-War Sentiment in North Vietnam (:44)

#### **QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:**

- What was the goal of North Vietnam's effort to takeover the South?



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- What was the first real impact of America's combat entry into the war on behalf of South Vietnam in 1964-65?
- Describe the internal conflict within Hanoi's leadership circle and outline at least one dispute that arose over military strategy.
- In what way did the assassinations of both the American and South Vietnamese Presidents cause dissension within the Hanoi regime?
- In the 1960's, young Americans took to the streets and on college campuses to protest U.S. involvement in Vietnam. South Vietnam witnessed anti-war dissent as well. How did Hanoi deal with these kinds of expressions and how do you imagine that impacted the people?

### **5. MAJOR BATTLES:**

**GOAL:** This series of questions is designed to explore the impact of and test student knowledge about several key events during the Vietnam War.

**BACKGROUND INFORMATION FOR STUDENTS:** Two of Hanoi's most well-known military initiatives during the Vietnam War were the Tet Offensive in 1968 and the Easter Offensive in 1972.

**FILM CLIPS:** Have students watch the following video clips: (2:17)

\* The Tet Offensive (1968) (1:01)

\* Easter Offensive (1972) (1:16)

#### **QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:**

- Professor Nguyen said the Tet Offensive was both the greatest tactical victory and greatest strategic error of the North Vietnamese. How can that be?
- General Giap and Le Duan argued over how to conduct the Easter Offensive campaign. How did their strategies differ and who's failed plan was implemented?

### **6. IMPACTS OF THE VIETNAM WAR:**

**GOAL:** This series of questions is designed to encourage students to explore some implications the war may have had on people both internally and in other countries.

**BACKGROUND INFORMATION FOR STUDENTS:** The Vietnam War lasted more than 19 years before Hanoi ultimately toppled the Saigon government in 1975, several years after the U.S. withdrawal. Many lives on both sides were lost, including over 58,000 Americans. The conflict also deeply impacted the neighboring countries of Laos and Cambodia.

**FILM CLIPS:** Have students watch the following video clips: (3:36)

\* Fall of Saigon (:59)

\* Vietnam War Impact on Laos and Cambodia (2:37)

#### **QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:**

- Describe the role America played as Professor Nguyen's family fled South Vietnam when the government in Saigon fell to the North.
- How did the Vietnamese Communists infiltrate and impact the neighboring countries of Laos and Cambodia?