

A Brief History of Vietnam (1858-2004) and Its Evolving Communist System *

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Subject: US History-Recent, World History

Grade: High School Grades 9-12

Time Required: Approximately 3 weeks (30 hours)

Instructional Objectives:

- a. The student will be able to identify the key factors which led to the French occupation and control of Vietnam from 1850-1954. The students will also be able to identify important dates in this time period, key political figures, important events during the brief Japanese Occupation during World War II, the events leading up to and including the final battle at Dien Bien Phu, and the influence of the French on modern Vietnam.
- b. The students will be able to identify the causes of the split of Vietnam into north and south in the mid-1950's, the causes and events which led to the rise of Ho Chi Minh and his major influences, the causes and events which led to the Americans increasing involvement in Vietnam, major dates and events in the war in Vietnam, and the reasons why America failed and eventually pulled out.
- c. The students will be able to identify the major beliefs of Karl Marx regarding capitalism and communism and compare and contrast modern communist Vietnam to the major beliefs he espoused in *The Communist Manifesto*.

Background Information and Introduction

Vietnam has had a turbulent history over the past 150+ years with wars against the French and Americans. These wars have had a major impact on modern Vietnam. Also, the government of modern communist Vietnam has struggled to maintain its core communist principles while infusing elements of capitalism into its economy in order to improve the living conditions of its people and compete in the global economy and world community. This lesson will focus on providing historical facts on Vietnam's modern history and communist system and encourage higher order thinking skills (Bloom's Taxonomy) as required under No Child Left Behind and Education YES! laws and Michigan's Content Standards and Benchmarks. The unit lends itself well to Bloom's Taxonomy. Variations on the essays in this lesson plan could focus on one or several of Bloom's levels (or thought processes) including knowledge, understanding, application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation.

Materials Required

1. Maps of Modern Vietnam (get blank outline maps off the internet or use maps from [Vietnam-An Historical Perspective](#) as noted below).
2. Colored pencils
3. Chapter 5-French Colonization (1858-1954). From [Vietnam-An Historical Perspective](#) by Julie Shackford, Center for Southeast Asian Studies Center, School of Hawaiian, Asian and Pacific Studies. This can be purchased on-line for \$10.00. Type “Julie Shackford Vietnam” under search and follow links to [Vietnam-An Historical Perspective](#).
4. US History Textbook
5. Dear America-Letters Home (HBO Video Special available on VHS tape or DVD)
6. American Government or Civics Textbook

Procedures

Days 1-5: French Colonization of Vietnam

Anticipatory Set: In early American history we have studied about how the Spanish, French, and British colonized much of North, Central, and South America from the 15th-19th century. What is colonization? What advantages does this have for the country that is doing the colonizing and for the area being colonized? What disadvantages does this have for the country that is doing the colonizing and for the country that is being colonized? What would southeast Asia, specifically Vietnam, have that would make it appealing for the French to colonize?

1. Have students locate Vietnam and France on a world map and discuss distances between the two countries and differences in their cultures ie. language, religion, economy, food, customs.
2. Students should fill in a blank political map of Vietnam and indicate adjacent countries, bodies of water, and major cities (including Dien Bien Phu). The maps should be colored with colored pencils. Students should use internet sites or atlases to complete this assignment.
3. The students should provide definitions for the bold words in Chapter 5-French Colonization (1858-1954). This chapter can be photocopied for the students. *See materials required above.*
4. The teacher should briefly outline this chapter on the board and also do a separate timeline with the students while outlining the chapter.
5. Conclusion: “What lessons can be learned from the French colonization of Vietnam?” and how would these lessons apply in today’s world?
6. Teacher should review the matching and multiple-choice test on pp. 217-220 with the students.
7. Assessment: The students will take the matching and multiple choice test on pp217-220.

Days 6-12: The American War

Anticipatory Set: Have any of you known someone who served in the war in Vietnam? What are some of the comments that they have made, if any, about their time in Vietnam? What was America trying to accomplish in the ten year war? Did we accomplish what we set out to?

1. The students should place the following on a blank outline map with the teachers assistance using an overhead projector: Hanoi, Saigon (Ho Chi Minh City), Hue, Da Nang, dividing line between North and South Vietnam, Demilitarized Zone (DMZ), Mekong Delta, Cu Chi Tunnels, China, Laos, Cambodia, South China Sea, Ho Chi Minh Trail, Gulf of Tonkin, Cam Ranh Bay, Khe Sanh
2. The students should complete vocabulary words from their History Text from the chapter on the Vietnam War.
3. The teacher should outline the major points, players, and events of the war on the board including why we were there, our early role as advisors, JFK's, LBJ's, and Richard Nixon's involvement, the escalation of America's involvement, the Tet Offensive, Vietnamization, the Paris Peace Accords, America's withdrawal, and the aftermath.
4. The students will view the HBO video *Dear America-Letters Home* which gives an overview of the war and depicts the major events of the war in chronological order.
5. Conclusion: "What lessons can we learn from the Vietnam War and how can these lessons be applied in today's world?"
6. Assessment: The students will write a three page essay (closed note) which will tell the "who, what, why, when, and where" of the war in Vietnam. The students should include at least ½ page in which they describe the similarities and differences between or war in Iraq and the Vietnam War.

Days 13-15: The Evolving Communist System in Vietnam

Anticipatory Set: What do you already know about communism? What countries other than Vietnam are still communist.

Procedures:

1. The teacher should highlight the basic principles of communism as outlined by Karl Marx and Frederick Engels in the *Communist Manifesto* using Magruder's or another high school American Government or Civics book. The notes should include the government ownership of most of the means of production, distribution and exchange, violent overthrow of bourgeois in capitalist societies, religion being the "opiate of the people", and the dictatorship of the proletariat.

- Basic capitalist principles should be highlighted including private ownership of the means of production, distribution, and exchange, individual initiative, profit, and competition
2. The students should compare and contrast Marxist principles with modern communism in Vietnam by doing a Google search on the internet. The students should place an emphasis on how capitalism is making an imprint on modern Vietnam and what major companies are now making products in Vietnam.
 3. Conclusion: “In your opinion, what are the pros and cons of communism? Capitalism?”
 4. Assessment: The students should compare and contrast communism and democracy/capitalism in a three page closed note essay. At least one of the three pages should discuss the ways in which communism is practiced in modern Vietnam and how it follows or does not follow the basic tenets as outlined by Marx and Engels.

Curriculum Connections (from Michigan Content Standards and Benchmarks)

This unit plan is aligned with several key benchmarks as outlined in Michigan’s Department of Education Curriculum Framework as summarized below:

Historical Perspective

1. Content Standard 1. Postwar United States (1945-1970) and Contemporary United States (1968-Present)
2. Content Standard 2. All students will understand narratives about major eras of American and world history by identifying the people involved, describing the setting, and sequencing events.
3. Content Standard 4. All students will evaluate key decisions made at critical turning points in history by assessing their implications and long-term consequences.

Geographical Perspective

1. Content Standard 1. All students will describe, compare, and explain the locations and characteristics of places, cultures, and settlements.
2. Content Standard 2. All students will describe, compare, and explain the locations and characteristics of economic activities, trade, political activities, migration, information flow, and the interrelationships among them.
3. Content Standard 5. All students will describe and explain causes, consequences, and geographic context of major global issues and events.

Civic Perspective

1. Content Standard 5. All students will understand how the world is organized politically, the formation of American foreign policy and the roles the United States plays in the international arena.

Economic Perspective

1. Content Standard 4. All students will explain how a free market economic system works, as well as other economic systems, to coordinate and facilitate the exchange, production, distribution, and consumption of goods and services.

Inquiry

1. Content Standard 1. All students will acquire information from books, maps, newspapers, data sets and other sources, organize and present information in maps, graphs, charts and timelines, interpret the meaning and significance of information, and use a variety of electronic technologies to assist in managing information.

Public Discourse and Decision Making

1. Content Standard 3. All students will compose coherent written essays that express a position on a public issue and justify the position with reasoned arguments.

* For additional resources relating to this website, visit :
<http://www.isp.msu.edu/asianstudies/>