ABC CLIO

DEFINING MOMENTS

The Tet Offensive

COMPLETE LESSON AND ACTIVITY GUIDES

Stimulating lessons that bring two of the most powerful and engaging research tools to the classroom: the analysis of primary documents and the revealing speculation of alternative history.

ABC-CLIO

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COVER PHOTO: Black smoke from fires set during the Tet Offensive clouds the air over Saigon in 1968. The Viet Cong set the fires during attacks on the city during the Tet holiday, which is the celebration of the Vietnamese lunar new year.

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Series Introduction

This packet is part of a 34-part series of primary source—based lessons for high school American History courses. Each packet focuses on one defining moment in our history, with specific background information and key concepts to help teachers become more knowledgeable in the history they are charged with teaching. To help with classroom lessons, two activities are included in the packet: one based on the real history, the other on a "counterfactual"—alternate—history. Both activities are rooted in student analysis of primary source material, and both will help teachers meet standards-based requirements through varied and stimulating teaching methods.

Every packet is arranged in the same manner. Teachers need to read the Introduction, which provides a "big picture" survey of the period of history in question. The Defining Moment is a short passage that focuses on a single, key event that was a turning point in history—a fork in the road after which the behaviors and fortunes of individuals, peoples, and places changed. The Need to Know section provides a more detailed discussion of the events leading up to and including the Defining Moment; this is followed by a short Timeline of events. These first several pages are concerned entirely with history as it actually happened. The What If? section supposes what might or could have taken place if events within the Defining Moment turned out differently.

The final components are the two Activities, each based on primary source documents. Activity 1 is based on the real history and is intended to help students learn the facts and understand the concepts—enabling teachers to meet the requirements of standards-based lessons. Activity 2 is based on the counterfactual history. Both lessons require creative, analytical thinking and include work across the spectrum of Bloom's Taxonomy. To help teachers, each lesson also includes explicit lesson objectives, materials needed, and specific instructions.

Introduction

By the end of 1965, there were 184,000 U.S. troops in Vietnam. By 1966, this number had grown to 385,000, and by 1967, there were 486,000. But whatever the strength of the U.S. forces at the start of the war, they were ill prepared for what they were to confront later. The commander of U.S. forces in Vietnam, Gen. William Westmoreland, hoped to draw the North Vietnamese Army (NVA) and Vietcong onto a conventional battlefield, fighting in the open where U.S. firepower was overwhelming. To achieve this, the United States employed an operational strategy of placing U.S. units to encourage large-scale attacks by the NVA.

For the overall war effort the American offensives had little immediate impact on winning the war. However, neither did it appear to the North Vietnamese leadership that their guerrilla campaign was winning either. It was in late 1967 and early 1968 that the leaders in Hanoi devised a plan to finally bring about the great—they believed—long-suppressed uprising of procommunist forces in the South. If the NVA and Vietcong could achieve even the perception of success, it would motivate these assumed, latent forces.

The Tet offensive has become synonymous for the problems of fighting a guerrilla war in the modern age of nationalism. The NVA and Vietcong were to suffer crippling losses and their hoped for people's uprising never materialized a clear military defeat. However, American news media, both television and newsprint, shocked at even an initial setback, reported the offensive as if it were a defeat. Popular support for the war, followed by political will to fight on, quickly eroded. From that point forward, Tet would define the notion of a military victory becoming a political disaster.

Defining Moment

Intelligence, however, had been gathered that indicated a massive attack was coming. Unfortunately, both U.S. and South Vietnamese top-ranking officials found the idea of an attack on Tet doubtful because it would be a sacrilege on such a sacred holiday. In addition, almost half the South Vietnamese forces were on leave for the holiday. Another factor was that peace talks were under consideration at the time, so military action was reduced. But the situation was ripe for a surprise attack.

Unknown to the U.S. forces, underground tunnels were being used to support a massive attack plan in the making, one that was also supposed to lead to an uprising against the South Vietnamese government and the United States. Supplies, troops, and instructions were being moved through these tunnels to NVA and **Vietcong** units all over the country. The plan was to be enacted during a time when there was a lull in the fighting and when the United States and South Vietnamese would least expect any attack. The time was Tet, the Lunar New Year festival celebrated by the Vietnamese. A cease-fire had been announced for the holiday so that people could forget the ongoing war for a while and observe their tradition in peace.

Meanwhile, as preparations for the Tet attacks went on, Westmoreland continued the search-and-destroy policy, directing his forces to draw the enemy out into the open. But time and again the Vietnamese would continue to use their guerrilla doctrine and very often elude their pursuers. Even when the **Cu Chi tunnels** were dis-

Vietcong: The Vietcong was a communist army based in South Vietnam that fought the U.S. and South Vietnamese governments during the Vietnam War (1958–1975). It had both guerrilla and regular army units as well as a network of cadres who organized peasants in the territory it controlled.
Cu Chi tunnels: These tunnels were a vast underground complex constructed in the vicinity of Saigon by the Vietcong to allow for the undetected movement of troops and supplies.

Members of the press question U.S. general William Westmoreland and U.S. ambassador to South Vietnam Maxwell Taylor (speaking into the microphone). (National Archives)

Black smoke from fires set during the Tet Offensive clouds the air over Saigon in 1968. (National Archives)

covered, U.S. forces destroyed only the end portions of the system, while the more vital sections and many other tunnel systems were never found.

Back in the home front in late 1967, President Lyndon Johnson stepped up a propaganda campaign to inform the American people that the United States was winning the war. Thus, at this stage, the American public expected that the war was going well—and that there would be no surprises.

On January 30, 1968, the eve of Tet, the Lunar New Year, around 84,000 NVA and Vietcong troops staged simultaneous attacks all over South Vietnam. Mortar and shellfire opened up on the cities of Saigon, Khe Sanh,

Hue, and other major urban centers, and at bases like those at Da Nang. The eve of Tet was usually celebrated with firecrackers, so when people heard the first gunshots, they dismissed them as firecrackers. But as the shots continued and the differences in the sounds became apparent, the people realized that they were under attack—in their own hometowns.

U.S. and South Vietnamese forces scrambled to defend against this surprise attack. Some skirmishes resulting from the Tet Offensive lasted until the next year. After the offensive, although it was declared a victory by the allies and a reason to escalate U.S. involvement, the American public was shocked by images of their embassy in Saigon damaged and a South Vietnamese police officer summarily executing a whimpering Vietnamese prisoner, among other reports from the battle. All this was made worse by promises made months earlier that the enemy was near the brink of giving up. U.S. political and military leaders had assured the public that the end was near. This made the public perceive that the war was being fought unsuccessfully, and some demanded a withdrawal of U.S. forces.

The turning point here depended on whether the U.S. government saw the invasion attempt as a reason for escalating the war or for pulling out of it. Had the American people and government believed that they had actually won the Tet Offensive and fewer had protested the war, and had the American press presented the Tet Offensive differently, U.S. forces could have made the offensive a reason to push escalation to the ultimate level and conduct an invasion of North Vietnam.

Need to Know

As the NVA and Vietcong forces almost simultaneously launched their attacks on the eve of the Tet celebrations, U.S. and South Vietnamese forces found themselves poorly prepared for such a massed offensive, although they would recover quickly.

Among the primary targets was the capital of South Vietnam, Saigon itself. Within Saigon, six targets were swarmed over by the communist forces: the presidential palace; the U.S. embassy in Saigon; Tan Son Nhut Air Base; the Vietnamese Navy Headquarters; and the national broadcasting station. The NVA sent 35 battalions to claim these targets. Some of the members of these battalions worked as cab drivers in the city. Some disguised themselves as local Saigon police who deployed themselves near the radio station. They carried a tape of Ho Chi Minh's speech meant to arouse the people to revolt against the United States. This attack failed, however, as an **ARVN** officer at the station cut power to it, preventing the broadcast.

ARVN: The Army of the Republic of Vietnam, the official armed forces of South Vietnam. The force dissolved with the collapse of the South Vietnamese state in 1975.

Numerous U.S. bases came under direct attack. All in all, 8 provincial capitals, 5 of the 6 autonomous cities, and 58 other major towns were stormed in the Tet Offensive. The base at Khe Sanh was one of the places where Westmoreland had predicted an attack would come. While it had been under siege days before, intelligence had hinted at a coming offensive, so Westmoreland ordered the defenses of Khe Sanh to be increased. However, as Khe Sanh was farther off in the country, in hindsight it was believed that the attacks here were one of the distractions to draw forces away from Saigon and other major targets. Khe Sanh was also one of the most media-covered events during this crucial time in the war.

The attack on the U.S. embassy was to be the most publicly visible part of the Tet Offensive. In the middle of the night of January 31, 1968, Vietcong soldiers blew a hole in the embassy wall and overpowered the guards. Contrary to what was communicated in the news, the Vietcong entered the compound but never entered the building. Thus the communist forces were trapped on the embassy grounds, unable to take their objective;

President Lyndon B. Johnson with a model of the Khe Sanh area in Vietnam on February 15, 1968, in the White House situation room. With the president are Press Secretary George Christian, General Robert Ginsberg, and Special Assistant for National Security Affairs Walt Rostow. (National Archives and Records Administration)

then U.S. and ARVN forces arrived and wiped them out some hours later. Reporters who were at the scene during the recapturing efforts had the impression that the embassy itself was taken and that this reflected incompetence on the part of the U.S. and ARVN forces. Along with the other factors leading to the battle, such as the Vietcong buying a nearby house for the operation and smuggling arms through supposedly secure checkpoints in Saigon, the embassy battle was perceived to be a microcosm of the whole war.

Among the more significant battles of the offensive was at Hue City, which was to be immortalized as one of the bloodiest battles of the war. Ten NVA battalions attacked Hue City and carried on what would later be discovered as a brutal massacre of civilians in the area. The NVA forces took over, and U.S. forces fought for almost a month to clear the city of them. U.S. marines had to work the NVA out, house by house, because of the ban on artillery strikes to prevent heavy damage to the sacred city of Hue. The NVA massacre of civilians, estimated to have cost about 3,000 lives, gained little publicity after the offensive; thus it was generally missed in the news because of other more sensational events.

However, despite the pressure applied all over the country by the communist forces, none of them succeeded in the end. All attacks were eventually repulsed, and the NVA and Vietcong lost. Communist forces suffered about 45,000 casualties, according to U.S. estimates. The Vietcong were almost annihilated, and they would never play a major role in the war again. Most of the work now had to be done by the NVA. The communists never got the uprising in South Vietnam that they hoped to incite through the offensive.

A U.S. Marine carries a Vietnamese woman to safety during the Battle of Hue City, the longest and bloodiest of all the Tet Offensive battles. (National Archives)

After the embassy battle, reporters and news people were called in by Westmoreland for a press conference. Westmoreland's announcement was one of victory. But television reports of ruined buildings, bodies of Vietnamese on the streets, and battered, weary soldiers stood in contrast to the general's announcement.

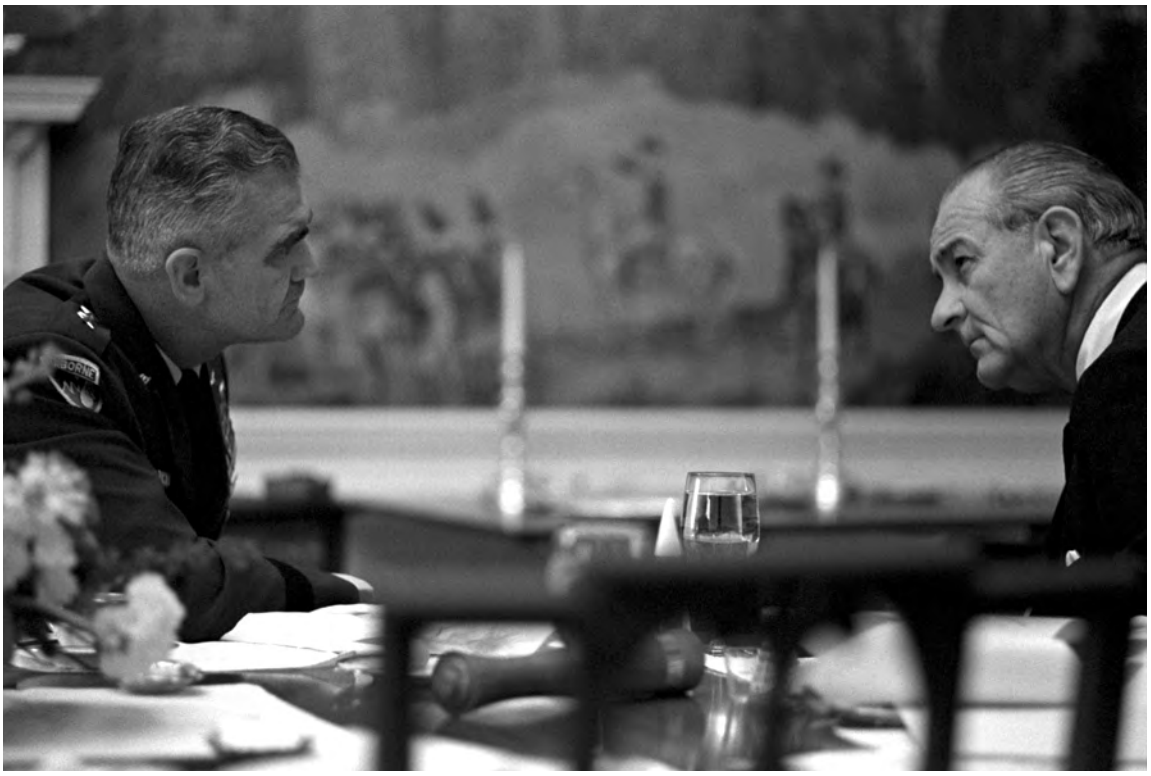
Protests against the war mounted. The soldiers who fought in the Vietnam War were portrayed by antiwar activists as cruel, cold-blooded killers of a defenseless people. When the public was leaked confidential documents about the war (the Pentagon Papers), with information that included decision-making processes during the Tet Offensive and the whole war, the American public became convinced that the Vietnam War was a losing proposition. Reports continued coming in of high casualties, and Vietnam veterans found themselves increasingly alienated from a public that saw them in a negative light.

One of the most reputable reporters of the time, Walter Cronkite, went to Saigon immediately after the Tet Offensive, and his visit impressed on him that the United States was losing the war. On February 27, 1968, he told the world on his news broadcast that the Vietnam War was likely to end in a stalemate. Cronkite's report, along with the constant barrage of photojournalism and television reporting, increased American horror at the war and contributed to a growing disillusionment with the war's goals.

The Tet Offensive ended with 3,895 U.S. troops dead and the South Vietnamese losing 4,954. The civilian casualties were much greater, with 14,000 dead, 24,000 wounded, and 800,000 who lost their homes to the offensive.

Westmoreland used the incident as a reason for bringing in reinforcements, sending in a request for 200,000 troops. But his request ran into a brick wall; U.S. senators and legislators saw the issue as the public did and

Vietnam War protestors at the March on the Pentagon in 1967. (Lyndon Baines Johnson Library)



General William Westmoreland meets with President (left) Johnson following the Tet Offensive in 1968. (Lyndon Baines Johnson Library)

decided that Vietnam was not worth fighting for. No new troops came. With the Tet Offensive and the Vietnam War's negative impact, Lyndon Johnson declined to run for president again. In 1968, Richard Nixon, a former supporter of the war, became his successor. Seeing the unpopularity of the war, Nixon promised to pull all American troops out of Vietnam.

Many battles could claim to have affected the war greatly, but the point where the downhill run began was the Tet Offensive. While actually a combat victory for the United States, it was at the same time a political failure.

TIMELINE

1965–1967: American troop presence in South Vietnam almost triples.

1967: Intelligence sources indicate communist buildup in South Vietnam.

1967, fall: President Johnson expresses confidence to American public that the war will soon end in American victory.

1968, January: Cease-fire for Tet lunar New Year declared; North Vietnamese soldiers and infiltrators prepare for attack.

1968, January 30: Communist forces attack targets across South Vietnam, catching ARVN and US forces by surprise.

1968: Winter—late summer: Sporadic fighting continues, resulting in massive losses by VC and NVA forces.

1968: U.S. public opinion progressively turns against war, despite clear indications of military progress against Tet Offensive.

What If?

What if the aftermath of the Tet Offensive had been interpreted differently—instead of a call for reduction, there could have been a call for further escalation of U.S. involvement. One key was the presentation of the event in the American press. If the press had reported that the Tet Offensive was a success despite the losses and that the embassy was not really taken, the American people's view of the war might not have been so negative, and they might still have approved of the war's prosecution.

The Tet Offensive could have been interpreted as a patriotic call for escalation, and the press and Walter Cronkite could have presented the event as an alert to the threat of communism, pointing out that it was a powerful and surprising menace but could be crushed any time the democratic powers choose to do so.

If the victory after the Tet Offensive had been interpreted in this way, Lyndon Johnson would have been seen in a positive light and could have been reelected president in the next election. Nixon would have never have stepped into office, and "Watergate" would not have become a part of our vocabulary. Congress would have granted Westmoreland's request for more than 200,000 men and more weapons and war materiel. Angry at the damage and surprise caused by the Tet Offensive, Johnson and his advisers would have decided to mount an invasion of North Vietnam.

With more men coming in and more reports being studied more carefully, a change in American tactics would have been necessary. While Westmoreland would still not get the large-scale conflicts that he had hoped for, he would have had the forces needed to mount an invasion of North Vietnam itself. A study of the enemy's tactics would have revealed that the search-and-destroy missions would have had to be supplanted with counter-guerrilla tactics—turning the guerrilla tactics around on the communist forces.

The plan would have probably involved the U.S. Special Forces (Green Berets) and the Special Operations Group (SOG) doing covert probing missions into North Vietnam to report on the enemy's forces. With the true purposes of the Cu Chi and other tunnels discovered, some military experts would have suggested that instead of destroying them, U.S. forces should take them and use them for U.S. purposes. Part of the battle for North Vietnam would have involved a lot of tunnel fighting, and "tunnel rats" would have gained prestige in these conflicts.

With things looking better for the United States in the war, many peripheral events would have never happened or would have happened differently. For example, the My Lai massacre would not have been a part of our history. Hamburger Hill, one of the most wasteful incidents of the war in terms of lost lives—and apparently for nothing—would have been most carefully rethought, and the hill would have been captured in a different, less costly way. Had the Vietnam War ended at this point, the reception of Vietnam veterans at home would probably have been vastly different from what it was.

With the large forces gathered and new tactics applied, the invasion of North Vietnam would have been under way by November 1968. While it moved forward, the Soviets and Chinese would definitely have been disturbed by the American advance.

China would have decided to participate to help North Vietnam as it had North Korea in the Korean War, although the assistance would have been minimal. Russia, conversely, would have considered the U.S. invasion

a serious threat and would have sent a small amount of troops to assist in defense of the country, although a full commitment of troops would not have been made at this time.

Later, the Vietcong would have been eliminated or disbanded by North Vietnam to consolidate manpower into the NVA. The NVA would have borne the brunt of all the assaults, as in actual history, except this time they would have been overwhelmed and certainly would have gone to their allies for help. The Chinese, seeing the Vietnamese as ancient enemies that could lure them into an entanglement with the West, would have withdrawn their support and stayed quiet, unwilling to force the heavy hand of the Americans. The Russians would have seen the American threat in Vietnam as significant and would have stepped up support, both in materiel and advisers. Ho Chi Minh would have perceived a growing threat not just in the American invasion but also the Russian presence in Vietnam, akin to colonial interference of past days.

At this point, Ho Chi Minh would have died and the spirit of the NVA would have been crushed, so dependence on the Russians could have increased. Yet the Soviets, after the Cuban Missile Crisis, would have been wary of U.S. actions and would have tended to avoid any more direct confrontation. Peace talks would have been called between the two superpowers with their Vietnamese partners beside them. Hints of nuclear war would have come up in the talks, but none of the two superpowers would have been willing to continue such threats after their experience in the Cuban Missile Crisis. The two parties could have reached an agreement that would have resulted in a Korea-like partition, with a line dividing the two countries, leaving a communist North and democratic South.

The Vietnam War would have ended in a stalemate between the two Vietnams, and they would have reverted to their status before the war. The Soviets would have withdrawn from North Vietnam and left the North Vietnamese to their own devices. But U.S. forces would have stayed in South Vietnam and set up large bases to prepare for any threat from the Soviets or the North Vietnamese. A constant buildup would have occurred with new and advanced equipment being positioned there. Equipment such as the F-15 Eagle, F-16 Falcon, and AH-64 Apache would have been deployed in Vietnam and would have had their first taste of combat in skirmishes in that country.

With Vietnam becoming another pivot for the Cold War after Korea, it would also have become one of the watch posts of the Southeast Asian region. While an uneasy peace would have settled between the North and South Vietnams, the two Koreas would have continued with the same type of uneasy balance they had lived with for years. The 1980s would have been filled with tension over the potential dangers of the Asian front.

Activity 1

OBJECTIVE:

Students will evaluate the strategic strengths and weaknesses of the North Vietnamese Army, the Viet Cong, the U.S. Armed Forces, and the Army of the Republic of Viet Nam during the Tet Offensive.

OVERVIEW:

The students will pair up to play a strategic board game that simulates the Tet Offensive of 1968. Students will evaluate what strategy the North Vietnamese could have followed to ensure military success.

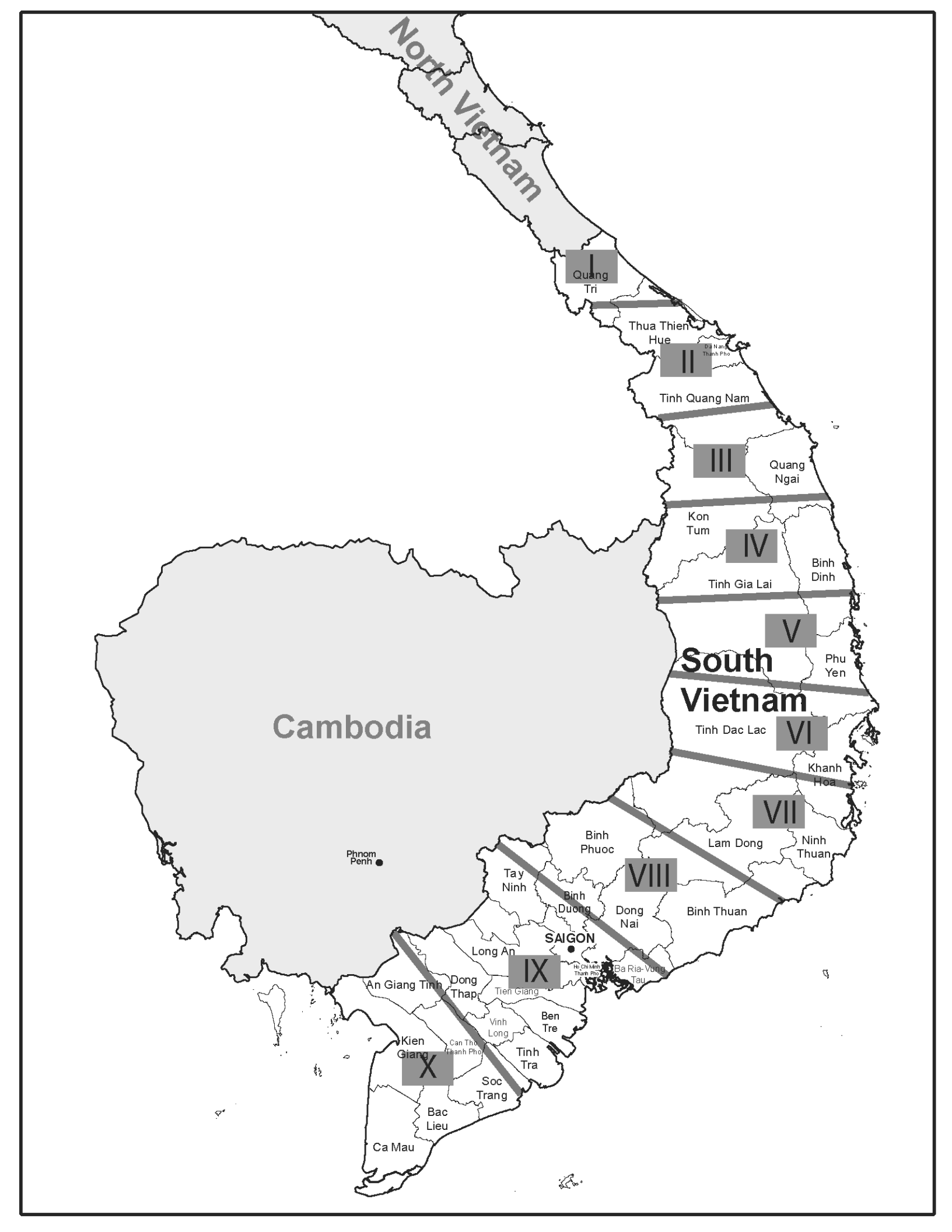
MATERIALS NEEDED:

a class set of the Vietnam game board
a class set of the troop markers
a class set of the Tet Offensive Simulation Game Rules

TEACHER DIRECTIONS:

Divide the students into pairs or into small teams. Each player or small team will represent either the United States or the North Vietnamese. Provide each small group or pair with a game board, the *Tet Offensive Simulation Game Rules* and a ***Game Pieces*** sheet. After the students have chosen sides and cut out their individual game pieces, read through the rules with the class. Let the games begin.

After the games have been completed, debrief the class about what were successful and unsuccessful strategies for both sides. Let the students know that the Tet Offensive was actually a military disaster for the North Vietnamese, primarily because they spread themselves out too thin, trying to attack everywhere. Furthermore, after the Tet Offensive, the VC were no longer a powerful force in the war. Nevertheless, the Tet Offensive victory was a terrible public relations disaster back home primarily because the American public thought the war was close to being over.


North Vietnam
I
Quang Tri
Thua Thien Hue
II
Da Nang Thanh Pho
Tinh Quang Nam
III
Quang Ngai
Kon Tum
IV
Binh Dinh
Tinh Gia Lai
V
South Vietnam
Phu Yen
Cambodia
Tinh Dac Lac
VI
Khanh Hoa
VII
Binh Phuoc
Lam Dong
Ninh Thuan
Phnom Penh
Tay Ninh
VIII
Binh Duong
Dong Nai
Binh Thuan
SAIGON
Long An
IX
Ho Chi Minh Thanh Pho
Ba Ria-Vung Tau
An Giang Tinh
Dong Thap
Tien Giang
Ben Tre
Vinh Long
Kien Giang
Can Tho Thanh Pho
X
Tinh Tra
Soc Trang
Bac Lieu
Ca Mau

TET OFFENSIVE SIMULATION GAME RULES

Tet Offensive Simulation

South Vietnam has been divided into 10 sectors, each worth one ***Victory Point*** (***VP***) except Sector IX, which contains Saigon and is worth 2 ***Victory Points***.

The players in this game are the ***United States*** versus ***North Vietnam***.

The goal of the game is to remove your opponent's pieces and gain as many victory points (***VPs***) as possible. At the end of each round, players will count the number of sectors they control and add the appropriate number of ***VPs*** to their cumulative score. Students will combine the total ***VPs*** they have earned in all 10 rounds to see who is the winner.

There are 4 types of markers in this game:

The United States player has control of two types:

10 United States (***US***) markers each worth 3 attack points

10 Army of the Republic of Viet Nam (***ARVN***) markers each worth 2 attack points

The North Vietnam player has control of two types:

20 Viet Cong (***VC***) markers each worth 1 attack point

10 Northern Vietnamese Army (***NVA***) markers each worth 2 attack points

Playing the Game:

Round One:

Step A) At the start of round one, the player who represents the United States places 1 ***ARVN*** in each of the 10 regions, then places all 10 ***US*** markers in whichever regions he or she chooses. He or she may place multiple ***US*** pieces in a single sector or none if he or she prefers.

Step B) Once the US player has deployed ALL of his or her troops, the North Vietnamese player deploys all of the ***VC*** and ***NVA*** markers. He or she can deploy as many of each in any region or none at all.

Step C) Now that the players have positioned their troops, the US player can make minor adjustments to his or her troop layout. The US player may, if he or she wishes move up to four ***US*** makers 1–2 spaces from their starting positions. NOTE: If a US marker is moved 2 spaces, it may NOT travel through a sector containing only an ***NVA*** or ***VC*** marker. ***ARVN*** pieces cannot be moved at any time except to remove them from game play.

Step D) After all markers have been deployed, the two players compute the wins and losses in each sector, adjust markers accordingly (see: **Computing wins and losses**) and tally the number of ***VPs*** each receives.

VP Note:

If a sector is unoccupied at the end of a round, neither player receives a ***VP***.

If the battle results in tie, the ***VP*** goes to the United States.

After round one is complete, players will move onto round two.

Round Two:

Step A) In this round, the North Vietnamese player begins by removing ALL of his or her pieces from the game board and redeploys them for best strategic effect as he or she did in Round 1. The U.S. player leaves all markers where they were at the end of the previous round.

Step B) As in round one, the U.S. player can now shift up to four U.S. markers 1–2 sectors if he or she chooses.

Step C) After all markers have been deployed, the two players compute the wins and losses in each sector, adjust markers accordingly (see: **Computing wins and losses**) and tallies the number of ***VPs*** each player receives.

Rounds 3–10

Repeat the steps from Round 2 until 10 rounds have been completed. Continue to tally ***VPs*** for all rounds.

Computing wins and losses:

After all troop movements have been made in each round, the players must look at the outcome, remove troops, and tally ***VPs***. In each sector, whichever player has the greater total attack point value is the winner and receives 1 ***VP*** (or 2 ***VPs*** for Sector IX). The losing player must remove from that region pieces equal to the number by which he or she has lost. If the losing player loses by more attack points than he or she possesses in a region, he or she only needs to remove whatever troops are there.

Sample Attacks:

Scenario 1: If the United States has deployed a +5 attack point value in a region and the North Vietnamese player has deployed a +7 attack point value, the United States must remove a +2 marker from that region. The piece is removed from the game for good but the United States can still leave their remaining +3 points in the sector.

Scenario 2: If the U.S. player has deployed a +6 attack point value and the North Vietnamese player has deployed a +2 attack point value, although the United States has won by +4 attack points, the North Vietnamese player needs only remove his or her remaining +2 piece(s).

Scenario 3: If the North Vietnamese player deployed a +7 attack point value and the U.S. player has deployed a +6 attack point value, the U.S. player will still have to remove a +2 attack point value because the U.S. player does not have any +1 pieces to remove. Furthermore, if the U.S. player contains only +3 U.S. pieces in this sector, he or she will have to remove one, even though he or she only lost by +1 attack point.

Winning the Game:

At the end of each round, players tally the number of ***VPs*** they have acquired. After they have completed the 10th round, they add together the number they earned in all 10 rounds combined. Whoever receives more ***VPs*** is the winner!

Advantages, Disadvantages, and Strategy:

Advantages for North Vietnam: The North Vietnamese have more troops (30 versus 20) and they are more flexible about distributing troops. Furthermore, the North Vietnamese can attack after seeing where the United States has deployed.

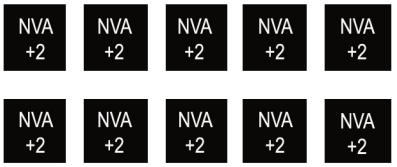
Advantages United States: The U.S. player has fewer troops and lacks the element of surprise but overall has more attack capability (+50 versus +40 which can make up for its disadvantages. Likewise, the United States initially occupies all 10 regions and will acquire ***VPs*** each round unless the North Vietnamese can take them away. Finally, the U.S. player has the ability to make a slight final shift once he or she sees the lay of the land.

Strategy: Try to get your opponent to commit a lot of attack points in a spot where you have, or intend to have, few attack points. Remember, if you lose by +7 attack points but have only a +2 piece that is all you have to remove. Your opponent could have better used his or her attack points in a different sector.

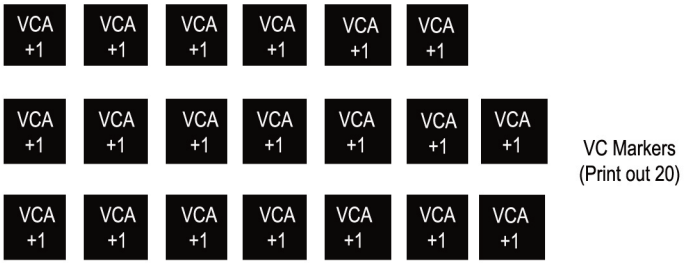
Focus on acquiring ***VPs*** each round while simultaneously wearing down your opponent's numbers. The game is won or lost on the ***VP*** count at the end; you may find yourself winning battles but ultimately losing the war.

North Vietnam will lose if they try to take too much at any given time. Spreading out troops too thin in an attack round can result in losses everywhere.

The United States will lose if they do not make good use of the final adjustments once they see the North Vietnamese attack. They should move doomed pieces out of a sector to minimize losses as well as to come to the aid of sectors where the fighting is close. The United States should make sure that the North Vietnamese do not cut holes in contiguous land sectors, thus blocking movement.

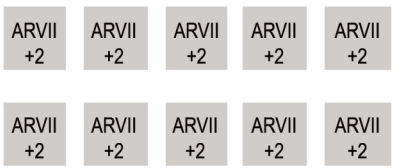


NVA Markers
(Print out 10)



VC Markers
(Print out 20)

UC Markers
(Print out 10)



ARVN Markers
(Print out 10)

Activity 2

OBJECTIVE:

Having learned the strategic and political nuances of the Tet Offensive during Activity 1, students will now discover the powerful influence of the media on public opinion by exploring various interpretations of Tet as well as other aspects of the war through three short activities.

OVERVIEW:

First students will analyze a political cartoon by Herblock from just before the Tet Offensive to discover its presuppositions and agenda. Then students will work in pairs to dissect (and rewrite, converting the wording to reflect the opposite sentiment) one phrase from Walter Cronkite's February 1968 news broadcast in which he assesses America's chances of winning in light of this new offensive. Finally students will read excerpts from the Pentagon Papers leaked in June 1971 to *The New York Times* and will play the role of a journalist writing an analysis for the newspaper of a leaked memorandum.

MATERIALS NEEDED:

-Copies of Student Handout (one per student)
-Copies of Herblock cartoon (one per student)
-Copies of 13 phrases from Walter Cronkite's broadcast of February 27, 1968, transcription (one copy of each excerpt)
-Copies of *New York Times* article on Pentagon Papers(one per student)

TEACHER DIRECTIONS:

Begin by discussing the importance of the Tet offensive and its ultimate military outcome. Then introduce students to the problem of public opinion (i.e., that public perception of the realities can be more important than facts) and explain that public opinion is highly subject to the influence of the media. Explain that the following short activities will incorporate three key documents from the 1960s and 1970s: a Herblock political cartoon; a news broadcast by the most influential reporter of the time, Walter Cronkite; and a newspaper article exposing government actions and knowledge during the entire span of the war released in 1971 through *The New York Times*. Provide a copy of the Student Handout and the Herblock cartoon (or simply project the image) to each student. Walk students through the questions and give them time to write their answers on the handout. Next, arrange the class so that there are 13 groups or pairs (for small classes, some students may have to work on their own). Provide each group with one numbered section of Walter Cronkite's speech and explain that students should work together but must record their own answers on the handout. Finally, provide each student with copies of the "Covert War" article and explain the background to this report. Students may stay in small groups or work individually.

In conclusion, discuss the biases and viewpoints of each of these three sources and the various pros and cons of each medium (for example, political cartoons are quicker and easier to understand than pages of newspaper analysis). Then connect this event and aftermath (Tet) to any current events in which the media has played a role in influencing public opinion.

Herblock Cartoon—Washington Post—January 28, 1968
Uncle Sam carrying a machine gun over his head while caught in a swamp labeled ASIA
Published in *The Washington Post*, January 28, 1968. Herblock. 1968.

(Herb Block Foundation)

Transcript of CBS News (Feb. 27, 1968)—Report from Vietnam—Walter Cronkite

WALTER CRONKITE'S "WE ARE MIRED IN STALEMATE" BROADCAST, FEBRUARY 27, 1968

1. "Tonight, back in more familiar surroundings in New York, we'd like to sum up our findings in Vietnam, an analysis that must be speculative, personal, subjective. Who won and who lost in the great Tet offensive against the cities? I'm not sure."

2. "The Vietcong did not win by a knockout, but neither did we. The referees of history may make it a draw. Another standoff may be coming in the big battles expected south of the Demilitarized Zone."

3. "Khesanh could well fall, with a terrible loss in American lives, prestige and morale, and this is a tragedy of our stubbornness there; but the bastion no longer is a key to the rest of the northern regions, and it is doubtful that the American forces can be defeated across the breadth of the DMZ with any substantial loss of ground."

4. "Another standoff. On the political front, past performance gives no confidence that the Vietnamese government can cope with its problems, now compounded by the attack on the cities. It may not fall, it may hold on, but it probably won't show the dynamic qualities demanded of this young nation. Another standoff."

5. "We have been too often disappointed by the optimism of the American leaders, both in Vietnam and Washington, to have faith any longer in the silver linings they find in the darkest clouds."

6. "They may be right, that Hanoi's winter—spring offensive has been forced by the Communist realization that they could not win the longer war of attrition, and that the Communists hope that any success in the offensive will improve their position for eventual negotiations."

7. "It would improve their position, and it would also require our realization, that we should have had all along, that any negotiations must be that—negotiations, not the dictation of peace terms."

8. "For it seems now more certain than ever that the bloody experience of Vietnam is to end in a stalemate. This summer's almost certain standoff will either end in real give-and-take negotiations or terrible escalation."

9. "And for every means we have to escalate, the enemy can match us, and that applies to invasion of the North, the use of nuclear weapons, or the mere commitment of one hundred, or two hundred, or three hundred thousand more American troops to the battle. And with each escalation, the world comes closer to the brink of cosmic disaster."

10. "To say that we are closer to victory today is to believe, in the face of the evidence, the optimists who have been wrong in the past. To suggest we are on the edge of defeat is to yield to unreasonable pessimism."

11. "To say that we are mired in stalemate seems the only realistic, if unsatisfactory, conclusion."

12. "On the off chance that military and political analysts are right, in the next few months we must test the enemy's intentions, in case this is indeed his last big gasp before negotiations."

13. "But it is increasingly clear to this reporter that the only rational way out then will be to negotiate, not as victors, but as an honorable people who lived up to their pledge to defend democracy, and did the best they could. This is Walter Cronkite. Good night."

Source: *Reporting Vietnam*. Part One: American Journalism 1959–1969 (1998), pp. 581–582.
http://facultystaff.richmond.edu/~ebolt/history398/Cronkite_1968.html
Article excerpted from the *New York Times*, Sunday June 13, 1971

Student Handout

Media Influence during the Vietnam War

Herblock Cartoon: This cartoon appeared in the Washington Post in January 1968, just days before the Tet Offensive suggesting various ideas about America's war in Vietnam. Herblock (actually Herbert Block) had established himself as a premier satirist in the 1930s and was highly influential by the 1960s. His cartoon would have been reprinted and appeared across the nation in 1968. Look closely at the cartoon and answer the following questions.

1. Describe the look on Uncle Sam's face?

2. What is the significance of the level of the water labeled "Asia"?

3. Write three possible captions for this cartoon.

4. If you were living at this time, how might this cartoon impact your views and thoughts on America's actions in Vietnam?

Walter Cronkite Report: Next, you will be given a short excerpt from a very important news report by Walter Cronkite in February 1968 in which he analyzes the status of the war immediately following the Tet Offensive and America's potential for winning or losing it. Work in your pair or group to answer the following:

1. What is Cronkite saying in this excerpt? Rewrite in your own words here:

2. Now that you have written the actual meaning of his words, write the sentiment or feeling behind the words. What is Cronkite really trying to get at in this excerpt?

3. Imagine that you are a news reporter in Cronkite's position and with his notoriety, except that you have an entirely different take on the war. Suppose you see our troops' quick and efficient response to the offensive as evidence that we can win this war, and the outcome of Tet as a great blow to the communists. Rewrite this same excerpt to mean the opposite, converting the meaning and feeling to support the war effort.

Pentagon Papers: Finally, in June 1971, three years after the Tet Offensive, Americans opened their newspapers to discover pages of a top secret government report titled "The Pentagon Papers" which revealed a pattern of deception and misleading on the part of the government regarding the conduct of the war. You will receive one of the articles done by the *New York Times* analyzing the Pentagon Papers. Your task is to dissect and study the article.

1. Identify the main points. Which parts would be most shocking to readers at the time? What do you find most surprising?

2. Is the evidence convincing? Why?

3. What is the tone of the article?

The Covert War

The Pentagon papers disclose that in this phase the United States had been mounting clandestine military attacks against North Vietnam and planning to obtain a Congressional resolution that the Administration regarded as the equivalent of a declaration of war. The papers make it clear that these far-reaching measures were not improvised in the heat of the Tonkin crisis.

When the Tonkin incident occurred, the Johnson Administration did not reveal these clandestine attacks, and pushed the previously prepared resolution through both houses of Congress on Aug. 7.

Within 72 hours, the Administration, drawing on a prepared plan, then secretly sent a Canadian emissary to Hanoi. He warned Premier Pham Van Dong that the resolution meant North Vietnam must halt the Communist-led insurgencies in South Vietnam and Laos or "suffer the consequences." [See text, Page 36.]

The section of the Pentagon study dealing with the internal debate, planning and action in the Johnson Administration from the beginning of 1964 to the August clashes between North Vietnamese PT boats and American destroyers—portrayed as a critical period when the goundwork was laid for the wider war that followed—also reveals that the covert military operations had become so extensive by August, 1964, that Thai pilots flying American T-28 fighter planes apparently bombed and strafed North Vietnamese villages near the Laotian border on Aug. 1 and 2.

Moreover, it reports that the Administration was able to order retaliatory air strikes on less than six hours' notice during the Tonkin incident because planning had progressed so far that a list of targets was available for immediate choice. The target list had been drawn up in May, the study reports, along with a draft of the Congressional resolution—all as part of a proposed "scenario" that was to build toward openly acknowledged air attacks on North Vietnam.

Simultaneously, the papers reveal, Secretary McNamara and the Joint Chiefs of Staff also arranged for the deployment of air strike forces to Southeast Asia for the opening phases of the bombing campaign. Within hours of the retaliatory air strikes on Aug. 4 and three days before the passage of the Congressional resolution, the squadrons began their planned moves. [See text.]

The accompanying article, as well as the rest of the series on the Pentagon's study of the Vietnam war, was a result of investigative reporting by Neil Sheehan of The New York Times Washington bureau. The series has been written by Mr. Sheehan, Hedrick Smith, E. W. Kenworthy and Fox Butterfield. The articles and documents were edited by Gerald Gold, Allan M. Siegal and Samuel Abt.

'Progressively Escalating Pressure'

What the Pentagon papers call "an elaborate program of covert military operations against the state of North Vietnam" began on Feb. 1, 1964, under the code name Operation Plan 34A. President Johnson ordered the program, on the recommendation of Secretary McNamara, in the hope, held very faint by the intelligence community, that "progressively escalating pressure" from the clandestine attacks might eventually force Hanoi to order the Vietcong guerrillas in Vietnam and the Pathet Lao in Laos to halt their insurrections.

In a memorandum to the President on Dec. 21, 1963, after a two-day trip to Vietnam, Mr. McNamara remarked that the plans, drawn up by the Central Intelligence Agency station and the military command in Saigon, were "an excellent job."

"They present a wide variety of sabotage and psychological operations against North Vietnam from which I believe we should aim to select those that provide maximum pressure with minimum risk," Mr. McNamara wrote. [See text.]

President Johnson, in this period, showed a preference for steps that would remain "noncommitting" to combat, the study found. But weakness in South Vietnam and Communist advances kept driving the planning process. This, in turn, caused the Saigon Government and American officials in Saigon to demand ever more action.

Through 1964, the 34A operations ranged from flights over North Vietnam by U-2 spy planes and kidnappings of North Vietnamese citizens for intelligence information, to parachuting sabotage and psychological-warfare teams into the North, commando raids from the sea to blow up rail and highway bridges and the bombardment of North Vietnamese coastal installations by PT boats.

These "destructive undertakings," as they were described in a report to the President on Jan. 2 1964, from Maj. Gen. Victor H. Krulak of the Marine Corps, were designed "to result in substantial destruction, economic loss and harassment." The tempo and magnitude of the strikes were designed to rise in three phases through 1964 to "targets identified with North Vietnam's economic and industrial well-being."

The clandestine operations were directed for the President by Mr. McNamara through a section of the Joint Chiefs organization called the Office of the Special Assistant for Counterinsurgency and Special Activities. The study says that Mr. McNamara was kept regularly informed of planned and conducted raids by memorandums from General Krulak, who first held the position of special assistant, and then from Maj. Gen. Rollen H. Anthis of the Air Force, who succeeded him in February, 1964. The Joint Chiefs themselves periodically evaluated the operations for Mr. McNamara.

Secretary of State Dean Rusk was also informed, if in less detail.

The attacks were given "interagency clearance" in Washington, the study says, by coordinating them with the State Department and the Central Intelligence Agency, including advance monthly schedules of the raids from General Anthis.

The Pentagon account and the documents show that William P. Bundy, the Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs, and John T. McNaughton, head of the Pentagon's politico-military operations as the Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs, were the senior civilian officials who supervised the distribution of the schedules and the other aspects of interagency coordination for Mr. McNamara and Mr. Rusk.

The analyst notes that the 34A program differed in a significant respect from the relatively low-level and unsuccessful intelligence and sabotage operations that the C.I.A. had earlier been carrying out in North Vietnam.

New York Times, "The Covert War," Sept. 13, 1971

Air Raids Were Planned Jointly

The 34A attacks were a military effort under the control in Saigon of Gen. Paul D. Harkins, chief of the United States Military Assistance Command there. He ran them through a special branch of his command called the Studies and Observations Group. It drew up the advance monthly schedules for approval in Washington. Planning was done jointly with the South Vietnamese and it was they or "hired personnel," apparently Asian mercenaries, who performed the raids, but General Harkins was in charge.

The second major segment of the Administration's covert war against North Vietnam consisted of air operations in Laos. A force of propeller-driven T-28 fighter-bombers, varying from about 25 to 40 aircraft, had been organized there. The planes bore Laotian Air Force markings, but only some belonged to that air force. The rest were manned by pilots of Air America (a pseudo-private airline run by the C.I.A.) and by Thai pilots under the control of Ambassador Leonard Unger. [See text.]

Reconnaissance flights by regular United States Air Force and Navy jets, code-named Yankee Team, gathered photographic intelligence for bombing raids by the T-28's against North Vietnamese and Pathet Lao troops in Laos.

The Johnson Administration gradually stepped up these air operations in Laos through the spring and summer of 1964 in what became a kind of preview of the bombing of the North. The escalation occurred both because of ground advances by the North Vietnamese and the Pathet Lao and because of the Administration's desire to bring more military pressure against North Vietnam.

As the intensity of the T-28 strikes rose, they crept closer to the North Vietnamese border. The United States Yankee Team jets moved from high-altitude reconnaissance at the beginning of the year to low-altitude reconnaissance in May. In June, armed escort jets were added to the reconnaissance missions. The escort jets began to bomb and strafe North Vietnamese and Pathet Lao troops and installations whenever the reconnaissance planes were fired upon.

The destroyer patrols in the Gulf of Tonkin, code-named De Soto patrols, were the third element in the covert military pressures against North Vietnam. While the purpose of the patrols was mainly psychological, as a show of force, the destroyers collected the kind of intelligence on North Vietnamese warning radars and coastal defenses that would be useful to 34A raiding parties or, in the event of a bombing campaign, to pilots. The first patrol was conducted by the destroyer Craig without incident in February and March, in the early days of the 34A operations.

Separate Chain of Command

The analyst states that before the August Tonkin incident there was no attempt to involve the destroyers with the 34A attacks or to use the ships as bait for North Vietnamese retaliation. The patrols were run through a separate naval chain of command.

Although the highest levels of the Administration sent the destroyers into the gulf while the 34A raids were taking place, the Pentagon study, as part of its argument that a deliberate provocation was not intended, in effect says that the Administration did not believe that the North Vietnamese would dare to attack the ships.

But the study makes it clear that the physical presence of the destroyers provided the elements for the Tonkin clash. And immediately after the reprisal air strikes, the Joint Chiefs of Staff and Assistant Secretary of Defense McNaughton put forward a "provocation strategy" proposing to repeat the clash as a pretext for bombing the North.

Of the three elements of the covert war, the analyst cites the 34A raids as the most important. The "unequivocal" American responsibility for them "carried with it an implicit symbolic and psychological intensification of the U.S. commitment," he writes. "A firebreak had been crossed."

The fact that the intelligence community and even the Joint Chiefs gave the program little chance of compelling Hanoi to stop the Vietcong and the Pathet Lao, he asserts, meant that "a demand for more was stimulated and an expectation of more was aroused."

Warning by the Joint Chiefs

On Jan. 22, 1964, a week before the 34A raids started, the Joint Chiefs warned Mr. McNamara in a memorandum signed by the Chairman, Gen. Maxwell D. Taylor, that while "we are wholly in favor of executing the covert actions against North Vietnam . . . it would be idle to conclude that these efforts will have a decisive effect" on Hanoi's will to support the Vietcong. [See text.]

The Joint Chiefs said the Administration "must make ready to conduct increasingly bolder actions," including "aerial bombing of key North Vietnam targets, using United States resources under Vietnamese cover," sending American ground troops to South Vietnam and employing "United States forces as necessary in direct actions against North Vietnam."

And after a White House strategy meeting on Feb. 20, President Johnson ordered that "contingency planning for pressures against North Vietnam should be speeded up."

"Particular attention should be given to shaping such pressures so as to produce the maximum credible deterrent effect on Hanoi," the order said.

The impelling force behind the Administration's desire to step up the action during this period was its recognition of the steady deterioration in the positions of the pro-American governments in Laos and South Vietnam, and the corresponding weakening of the United States hold on both countries. North Vietnamese and Pathet Lao advances in Laos were seen as having a direct impact on the morale of the anti-Communist forces in South Vietnam, the primary American concern.

This deterioration was also concealed from Congress and the public as much as possible to provide the Administration with maximum flexibility to determine its moves as it chose from behind the scenes.

The United States found itself particularly unable to cope with the Vietcong insurgency, first through the Saigon military regime of Gen. Duong Van Minh and later through that of Gen. Nguyen Khanh, who seized power in a coup d'état on Jan. 30, 1964. Accordingly, attention focused more and more on North Vietnam as "the root of the problem," in the words of the Joint Chiefs.

Walt W. Rostow, the dominant intellectual of the Administration, had given currency to this idea and provided the theoretical framework for escalation. His concept, first enunciated in a speech at Fort Bragg, N.C., in 1961, was that a revolution could be dried up by cutting off external sources of support and supply.

Where North Vietnam was concerned, Mr. Rostow had evolved another theory —that a credible threat to bomb the industry Hanoi had so painstakingly constructed out of the ruins of the French Indochina War would be enough to frighten the country's leaders into ordering the Vietcong to halt their activities in the South.

'No Longer a Guerrilla Fighter'

In a memorandum on Feb. 13, 1964, Mr. Rostow told Secretary of State Rusk that President Ho Chi Minh "has an industrial complex to protect: he is no longer a guerrilla fighter with nothing to lose."

The Administration was firmly convinced from interceptions of radio traffic between North Vietnam and the guerrillas in the South that Hanoi controlled and directed the Vietcong. Intelligence analyses of the time stated, however, that "the primary sources of Communist strength in South Vietnam are indigenous," arising out of the revolutionary social aims of the Communists and their identification with the nationalist cause during the independence struggle against France in the nineteen-fifties.

The study shows that President Johnson and most of his key advisers would not accept this intelligence analysis that bombing the North would have no lasting effect on the situation in the South, although there was division — even among those who favored a bombing campaign if necessary—over the extent to which Vietcong fortunes were dependent on the infiltration of men and arms from North Vietnam.

William Bundy and Mr. Rusk mentioned on several occasions the need to obtain more evidence of this infiltration to build a case publicly for stronger actions against North Vietnam.

New York Times, "The Covert War," Sept. 13, 1971

Ready Reference:

William Westmoreland: William Childs Westmoreland was instrumental in planning and executing American strategy during the Vietnam War. He was born in South Carolina in 1914 and attended the U.S. Military Academy at West Point beginning in 1932. During World War II, he served in North Africa, Sicily, and Normandy. He served in the Korean War and in 1964 was appointed by President Lyndon B. Johnson to head the U.S. Military Assistance Command in South Vietnam, the most daunting challenge faced by any American general of the 20th century.

As communist forces used guerrilla tactics in response to Westmoreland's search-and-destroy methods, the general found himself frustrated by Johnson's refusal to allow U.S. forces to pursue the communists into sanctuaries in Cambodia and Laos. By 1967, public support for the war eroded in the face of mounting American losses, and Westmoreland asserted that his conventional tactics were succeeding. In January 1968, however, North Vietnamese forces staged the furious Tet Offensive, hitting virtually every major city in South Vietnam. Westmoreland's forces recovered quickly and severely punished communist units caught out in the open, but North Vietnam had cleverly orchestrated a psychological triumph.

In 1968, Johnson decided to negotiate for a peace settlement, suspend the air war, and begin withdrawing U.S. forces from South Vietnam. He refused Westmoreland's request for additional troops, and by June 1968, Westmoreland was replaced by Creighton Abrams.

Ho Chi Minh: Although he never lived to see the final victory, Ho Chi Minh's three decades of uncompromising leadership placed Vietnam on the path to national unity under a communist government.

Ho was born Nguyen Sinh Cung in 1890 in Vietnam, then under French supervision. He came to resent colonialism and dedicated his life to ending it in Vietnam. World War II brought chaos to Southeast Asia as Japanese troops invaded and expelled the French troops from their colonial empire. Nguyen regarded Japanese colonialism with the same antipathy that he felt toward the French and he adopted the name Ho Chi Minh ("He Who Enlightens").

Ho organized communist sympathizers into an effective guerrilla movement and following the Japanese surrender of 1945, declared the creation of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam with himself as president. The French were determined to revive their Asian empire and returned in force but withdrew from Indochina after eight years of fighting.

In 1960, Ho initiated a concerted guerrilla strategy to give support to the communists in South Vietnam and the U.S. government intervened with ground troops in 1961. Ho was successful in convincing his countrymen that the very presence of U.S. forces constituted a new imperialist force to be defeated. Throughout the conflict with U.S. forces, he was able to maintain a delicate political balance with ideological rivals China and the Soviet Union, who both provided material and military assistance. Ho died of a heart ailment on September 2, 1969. When the southern capital of Saigon fell to a final communist onslaught in 1975, it was renamed Ho Chi Minh City in his honor.

Pentagon Papers: By 1967, Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara was questioning the course of the Vietnam War, so he created a task force within the Defense Department to investigate the history of U.S. policy in Vietnam. The result was a narrative accompanied by the original texts of many of the documents on which it had been based. Formally titled *United States—Vietnam Relations, 1945–1967,* it is commonly referred to as the Pentagon Papers.

Dr. Daniel Ellsberg, one of the study's authors, became convinced that U.S. involvement in Vietnam was immoral and should be ended. In March 1971, after failing to persuade several U.S. senators to make the mate-

rial public, he delivered it to *The New York Times*, which produced a series of articles accompanied by original documents. The study revealed that the John F. Kennedy and Lyndon B. Johnson administrations had authorized a massive military buildup in Vietnam at the same time that they were publicly promising a gradual removal of troops.

The U.S. Justice Department demanded that the newspaper cease publication and return the documents to the Department of Defense. It sought an injunction forbidding the publication of further installments and filed suit against *The Washington Post*, which also had begun publishing articles based on the material.

After a series of filings and appeals, the U.S. Supreme Court finally ruled that given the constitutional protection of freedom of the press, a request by the government for prior restraint of publication "carries a heavy burden of showing justification," and the government had not met that burden.

Ultimately, the evidence that the public had been deceived on such an important issue and on such a large scale resulted in a national loss of confidence in the federal government, spurring President Richard Nixon to attempt to end U.S. involvement in Vietnam.

Walter Cronkite: Walter Cronkite is among the first of his profession to use television as his primary broadcast medium. He was the anchor of the popular *CBS Evening News* from 1962 until he retired in 1981.

Walter Leland Cronkite Jr. was born in 1916 in St. Joseph, Missouri, and as a high school student worked on the school yearbook and newspaper. He took journalism classes at the University of Texas at Austin but dropped out of school in his junior year to work full time at the *Houston Post*. As a reporter for United Press during World War II, he covered such major events as the Battle of the Atlantic and the Battle of the Bulge. In 1950, he was hired by CBS to develop the news department of the network's television station in Washington, D.C., and in 1952, led CBS' coverage of the national nominating conventions. In 1962, Cronkite began anchoring the *CBS Evening News*.

Critics attributed Cronkite's success to his straightforward, objective reporting; confident delivery; and ability to make complex events easy for the average person to understand. He was a strong advocate of the newsperson's role as an objective reporter, not a commentator. He never broke that rule himself, with the exceptions of his emotional reports on the John F. Kennedy assassination, several manned missile launchings, and Washington's suppression of the truth during the Vietnam War. Some historians attribute President Lyndon B. Johnson's decision not to run for a second term in 1968 to Cronkite's condemning report on the Vietnam War.

***The New York Times*:** *The New York Times* is the United States' preeminent newspaper, the so-called paper of record, known for its thorough and accurate reporting. It began publication on September 18, 1851, and supported Whig Party and Republican Party politicians. Its timely and accurate reporting of the Civil War greatly raised its standing, and it would later expose the corruption of New York City political boss William Marcy Tweed.

In the heated journalism wars of the early 20th century, the *Times* managed to triple its circulation while avoiding blatant partisanship and sensationalism. The newspaper broke the story that the great ship *Titanic* had sunk on April 15, 1912, far earlier than other publications confirmed the news, further establishing its reputation as the most reliable news source.

In 1964, a libel suit brought against it resulted in the U.S. Supreme Court's landmark *New York Times v. Sullivan* ruling, which narrowed the definition of libel in cases involving public figures. In 1971, the paper was back in court to secure permission to publish the so-called Pentagon Papers, a secret record of the Vietnam War leaked to the press by Pentagon analyst Daniel Ellsberg. Once again, the U.S. Supreme Court's ruling in favor of the *Times* had great implications for the continued protection of freedom of the press.

National Standards Correlations

EDSTD1642842380: Challenge arguments of historical inevitability by formulating examples of historical contingency, of how different choices could have led to different consequences.

EDSTD2097113490: United States History: Era 9 Postwar United States (1945 to early 1970s): How the Cold War and conflicts in Korea and Vietnam influenced domestic and international politics: The student understands the foreign and domestic consequences of U.S. involvement in Vietnam. (NCSS)

EDSTD1642821830: Assess the Vietnam policy of the Kennedy, Johnson, and Nixon administrations and the shifts of public opinion about the war. (Analyze multiple causation).

EDSTD1642821850: Evaluate how Vietnamese and Americans experienced the war and how the war continued to affect postwar politics and culture. (Appreciate historical perspectives).

EDSTD1642840560: Assess the influence of television, the Internet, and other forms of electronic communication on the creation and diffusion of cultural and political information worldwide. (Formulate historical questions).