

## The Vietnam Experience: Human Stories, Human Voices

*Lesli Dabney*

### INTRODUCTORY DISCUSSION

As a Language Arts teacher, I have learned the value in threading history throughout my literature lessons. Students always ask “Why?” when reading a piece of literature. “Why is the author so concerned with this topic?” and “Why are we reading this?” are common, valid questions. Besides teaching literary elements and creative writing techniques through literature, I want the students to take the stories they read to heart. In doing so, they must be led “through” the story, so to speak.

In order to feel the full effect of a story, one must “step inside” it. What better way to walk through a story than to virtually live it, to understand what it was like to be that character in that time period? That’s where history takes its place in the literature classroom. There is a reason why we study history: to reflect on how we got where we are today, and to look forward to where we are going. There is a reason why we study literature: to take a journey through a character’s learning experiences, and in the process, learn about ourselves. Thus, the parallel of history and literature becomes apparent.

When I joined the Spring 1999 Houston Teachers Institute, I wanted to study a time period that many of my students find interesting, yet seem to know almost nothing about: the Sixties. More specifically, I decided to concentrate on the Vietnam War since war seems to be a sort of fascination for some students, particularly males. Sixties music, especially songs that make reference to the Vietnam War, are very popular among teenagers--maybe the music sparked their curiosity of war? Or, as Philip Caputo says in his book *A Rumor of War*, “War is always attractive to young men who know nothing about it.” Whatever the case may be, the fact that I discovered something the students find interesting was enough to get me started on this unit.

In studying the Vietnam War, I’ve discovered it to be a symbol of a tumultuous decade. A child of the Seventies, I did not know much about the war’s history. I had to rely on movies like *Platoon* to show me what it was like to be a soldier in combat. Maybe my generation (Generation X) was “too close to the real thing,” and that’s one reason why the war was never discussed in my history or literature classes. After reading David Steigerwald’s book *The Sixties and the End of Modern America*, I now see the complexities of this war which made me realize that I cannot possibly teach everything there is know about it, nor do I want to with eighth graders. *This unit is designed to highlight the history of the Vietnam War as it relates to the literature we read.* Teaching the history of Vietnam was not my intent, although some history is necessary. Instead, I wanted to focus on the literature product that developed from the war. Even more particularly, *I wanted to use the*

*literature as a vehicle for studying a specific aspect: real human emotions in war.*

What was it like to be in Vietnam as an American soldier, medic, nurse, or Vietnamese soldier? What was it like to be a family member, girlfriend, grandparent, or friend waiting at home while someone you love is 10,000 miles away fighting a war in a strange land? Who can't relate to fear, love, confusion, anger, or any emotion associated with war?

I am touched by the human stories as I want my students to be when we read real accounts of what it was like to be directly or indirectly involved in the Vietnam War conflict. War is not glamorous. As we "take a walk" through the stories, I will let the students judge for themselves.

## **GOALS OF THE CURRICULUM UNIT**

As I said previously, my main goal for this unit is **to expose the students to the many different human experiences of the Vietnam War**. I don't want them to just know the history behind the war, although I know that is important. I want them to get as close as possible to feeling as the participants in the war felt. The soldiers were not the only "participants." There were nurses, medics, and families also involved. There were young American men waiting to be drafted, some of them full of dread, some of them anxious to fight, some of them literally running away. There were girlfriends and wives watching their husbands and boyfriends leave for Vietnam, not knowing if they would ever see the men again.

In order to accomplish this large goal, I have decided to break down the unit into mini-manageable goals that I plan to accomplish in four to six weeks:

### **Goal Number One**

First of all, the students will need *to know some background information about the war*. What were some of the problems happening in Vietnam? Why did the United States get involved?

We will locate Vietnam in atlases so the students can see how far away it is from the United States. Why did a country so far away interest us?

Possible film component: *The Vietnam Experience*-PBS documentary series

(See Lectures and Discussions strategy for an example of how to teach this goal.)

### **Goal Number Two**

After we discuss background information about the war, the students will need *to understand the draft system*. We will discuss its pros and cons.

Steigerwald says that the draft system preyed “overwhelmingly on working-class 18- and 19-year olds, who were smart enough to get through high school but who were not, could not, or did not want to attend college.” Steigerwald goes on to say that the draft system seemed to benefit upper-middle class, or affluent males who had the means to seek a higher education. Why? Draft deferments. If you were in good standing at a college, you could avoid the draft. Thus, many African-Americans, Hispanics, poor whites, and other members of the working class made up the majority of those who served in Vietnam. That’s not to say that there were no men from the middle and upper classes who served, but they definitely did not make up the vast majority of those who fought in the war. Besides being in good standing in college, there were many other ways to avoid the draft such as medical excuses, being a defense-related worker, eldest son, husband, father, member of National Guard, Coast Guard, or even enlisting. At this point, we will discuss whether or not we think the draft system was fair.

I will also mention that a lottery system was later developed which made the draft “more fair.” In the lottery system, a man was given a number according to his birthday. For example, those who were born on February 2 may have been given the number 50. The higher the lottery number, the better his chances of not going to Vietnam. The lottery dissolved class bias and this seemed to have sparked more American interest in the war since more middle and upper class males had their numbers drawn.

(See Lectures and Discussions strategy (the draft system) for an example of how to teach this goal.)

### **Goal Number Three**

My third goal is *to show the students what it was like to be a soldier in Vietnam*. I want to do this because I feel that since the students I teach have not experienced war, they are out of touch with it. Some seem to think that war is patriotic, heroic, and macho, but they fail to realize that it is devastating to the human spirit. Ask any war veteran and he’ll tell you. I realize that showing the students what it was like to be a soldier is impossible. How would anyone know exactly what it was like unless he or she were there? I cannot bring those fearful moments to life, nor do I want to; however, I think it is important for the students to read what soldiers have written and to watch film documentaries about what soldiers have said about their experiences-- good and bad. The soldiers’ testimonies are powerful-- so much more than what I could tell them as a teacher-- and the students will be able to analyze them and draw their own conclusions.

I will also have them read accounts from nurses and medics who were in Vietnam. Many of these people were in just as much danger as the soldiers, and their stories deserve to be read.

Possible film components: *Platoon* (1986), *Dear America: Letters Home from Vietnam* (1988)

(See Reading and Writing (poetry, annotation) strategy for an example of how to teach this goal.)

### **Goal Number Four**

My fourth goal is to bring the students “back home,” so to speak, *to show them the many different reactions from Americans about our involvement in Vietnam*. We will discuss and analyze the following domestic points of view:

- President Johnson’s ethical struggles with the war.
- College protests against the war that led to violence on some campuses.
- The 26th amendment, giving 18-year-olds the right to vote, which developed as result of the war. The argument was if 18-year-olds were old enough to fight for their country, weren’t they old enough to vote?
- The antiwar movement and how it escalated following the Tet Offensive.
- The American people who supported the war in Vietnam and why.

In order to teach this goal, the teacher should research the points mentioned above. The following resources are helpful:

“At War With War.” *All Politics-Back in TIME*. <http://cnn.com/ALLPOLITICS/1996/analysis/back.time/9605/20/index.shtml>, (11 Apr. 1999).

Herring, George C. *America’s Longest War: The United States and Vietnam, 1950-1975*. 2nd ed. New York: McGraw-Hill, Inc., 1996.

Lewis, Jerry M. and Thomas R. Hensley. “The May 4 Shootings at Kent State University: The Search for Historical Accuracy.” *Kent State University Libraries and Media Services May 4 Chronology*. <http://www.kent.edu/sociology/lewis/LEWIHEN.htm>, (7 June 1999).

Steigerwald, David. *The Sixties and the End of Modern America*. New York: St Martin’s Press, 1995.

Possible film component: *Born on the Fourth of July* (1989), *Platoon* (1986)

(See Lectures and Discussions/ Reading and Writing (song lyrics) strategies for examples of how to teach this goal.)

### **Goal Number Five**

My fifth goal is *to discuss and analyze America’s recovery from the war in Vietnam*,

and more specifically, how the Vietnam combat veterans and those directly involved adjusted to their lives back in the United States after living in primitive, isolated, and dangerous conditions while in Vietnam.

Again, several resources are available for research before teaching this goal:

Herring, George C. *America's Longest War: The United States and Vietnam, 1950-1975*. 2nd ed. New York: McGraw-Hill, Inc., 1996.

Caputo, Philip. *A Rumor of War*. New York: Ballantine Books, 1977.

O'Nan, Stewart, ed. *The Vietnam Reader*. New York: Anchor Books, Doubleday, 1998.

Possible film components: *Born on the Fourth of July* (1989), *Coming Home* (1978)

(See Lectures and Discussions (speaker) for an example of how to teach this goal.)

## **STRATEGIES**

Since the main purpose of this unit is to get as close as we can to understanding the level of human sacrifice, emotionally and physically, during this war, it is essential that we study different human perspectives in a variety of ways: poetry, prose, song lyrics, lectures and discussions, and films. Not everyone involved in one way or another in the war has the same tale to tell; however, everyone from President Johnson to "John Doe" who fought in the rice fields of South Vietnam has *a* story, which is what we will explore.

### **Lectures and Discussions**

To open the unit, I will ask the students what they know about the Vietnam War. Most of them will know very little, if anything. Usually someone in class is fairly knowledgeable on the subject and can tell us what he or she knows. After we discuss what we know, I will ask them what they would *like to know*, and use their questions as a guide for giving them background information on the war.

*The following are typical questions the students might ask:*

- How did the war start?
- Why did we get involved?
- How long did the war last?
- Did we win?
- Where is Vietnam?

## ***Background Information on the Vietnam War***

*The following are concepts I will briefly discuss with the students:*

- Vietnam and Containment-the United State's fear of the spread of communism
- Ho Chi Minh and the Communist Party in North Vietnam
- Ngo Dinh Diem in South Vietnam-ARVN
- Vietcong Movement
- Problems with Diem
- LBJ and the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution
- Tet Offensive
- Nixon and Vietnamization

The teacher should research the following sources before discussing the above concepts with students:

Herring, George C. *America's Longest War: The United States and Vietnam, 1950-1975*. 2nd ed. New York: McGraw-Hill, Inc., 1996.

Steigerwald, David. *The Sixties and the End of Modern America*. New York: St Martin's Press, 1995.

In addition, we will locate Vietnam in atlases and on an overhead map so that the students will have an idea of where the country is located in relation to the United States and other countries.

From there, we will discuss our opinions of the following statements:

- “. . . every generation is doomed to fight its war, to endure the same old experiences, suffer the loss of the same old illusions, and learn the same old lessons on its own” (Caputo 77).
- “A man needs many things in war, but a strong imagination is not one of them” (Caputo 80).
- “. . . ordinary men sometimes performed extraordinary acts in the stress of combat, acts of bravery as well as cruelty” (Caputo 129).
- “. . . there are [were] good ways to die in war” (Caputo 153).
- War can “age” a person.
- Sometimes you can get so caught up in a fight that you forget what you're fighting for.
- War can make a “habit of atrocities” (Caputo 216).

## ***The Draft System***

Although there is no way to experience what it was like to be a young man waiting to be drafted, we can read those experiences and draw our own conclusions.

One way to help students understand the draft system is to put them into groups of three or four and give each group a reading dealing with a specific perspective on the draft. For example, one reading could be by someone who wanted to enlist. Another reading could be by someone who resisted the draft, and so on. After a group reads its assigned piece, it will present the perspective to the class.

A discussion may follow on the attitudes of the writers and which one(s) we identify with the most and why.

### ***America's Reactions to the War***

Divide the students into groups of three or four and give each group an excerpt relating to an American reaction to the war in Vietnam. Each group will present its excerpt to the class, using visual representations, notes, etc. Each group will also have to come up with a question about the excerpt to present to the class that will lead to a discussion.

At the end of the lesson, we will write or discuss which reaction(s) we identify with the most and why. (See also Reading and Writing (song lyrics) and film strategies)

### ***Speaker***

Still another important part of the "lectures and discussions" strategy is to bring in a Vietnam War veteran to talk to the students about his experiences. The students will already know the basic historical background of the war, and we will have already read and discussed several other human accounts. I would like the students to ask the speaker questions that deal with his experiences before, during, and after the war. We will talk about our questions before the speaker's visit. Some of our questions might be the following:

- How was he drafted? How did he feel when he was drafted? How did the United State's military prepare him for combat?
- What was it like in Vietnam, where the soldiers lived primitively, eating C-rations, suffering from the sweltering heat and dysentery, raking through the thick jungles, fearing that their next step would be on a mine, dealing with deaths in their battalions, confusing the enemy with civilians, etc.
- What was it like to be "shoved" back home? What was it like to be pushed back into a lifestyle that seemed so foreign, as Philip Caputo says in the prologue of *A Rumor of War*, ". . . the civilian world seemed alien. We did not belong to it as much as we did to that other world where we had fought and our friends had died."

## Reading and Writing

Reading and writing will play an extensive role in this unit as they do in all of my units. I do not have one specific reading assignment for the students. Rather, I will pull excerpts from several of the following sources:

- Butler, Robert Olen. *A Good Scent from a Strange Mountain*. New York: Penguin Books, 1992.
- Caputo, Philip. *A Rumor of War*. New York: Ballantine Books, 1977.
- Edelman, Bernard. *Dear America: Letters Home From Vietnam*. New York: Pocket Books, 1985.
- Myers, Walter Dean. *Fallen Angels*. New York: Scholastic Inc., 1988.
- O'Brien, Tim. *The Things They Carried*. New York: Broadway Books, 1990.
- O'Nan, Stewart, ed. *The Vietnam Reader*. New York: Anchor Books, Doubleday, 1998.
- Walker, Keith. *A Piece of My Heart*. New York: Ballantine Books, 1985.
- Vietnam poetry and song lyrics taken from Internet sites (see **Materials for the Classroom**)

After each reading, I always ask the students to write, although the assignment varies. I may ask the students to do one or more of the following writing tasks after a reading, or as they read:

### *Ten-minute-timed personal response to the reading*

This is a “free-writing” exercise where the students are told they have ten minutes to write down whatever comes to mind in response to what they have read. I have found that this activity is a wonderful way for students to “write in the moment” without formal writing restraints. Later, these same writings may be polished into meaningful pieces.

Sometimes I give the students a question, topic, or word that relates to what we've read, and I ask them to write about it for ten minutes. This technique works for the more reluctant writers who want more guidance. A sample lesson follows:

1. Handout the excerpt “Ambush,” pgs. 147-150 from *The Things They Carried* by Tim O'Brien.
2. If you haven't asked the students to free-write before, tell them the rules: you must write the entire ten minutes; do not be concerned with organization, mechanics, does this make sense?, etc. The objective of this exercise is to get as much as you can written down on paper so that you have the option to revise the piece later. The students need to feel comfortable writing spontaneously. It is also important that the teacher model this activity and write with the students.
3. Tell the students to read the excerpt silently. When most of them have



- finished, either the students or teacher should read the excerpt again aloud.
4. If you want to give the students a guide for writing, tell them to write about the word “guilt” for ten minutes; if you would rather take a less structured approach (especially if your students are used to free-writing) tell them to write a reaction to the excerpt.
  5. After ten minutes, ask the students to share what they’ve written. If they seem reluctant, offer to read your writing. Be patient. They will soon grow fond of this activity, and many of them will eventually want to share their thoughts.
  6. Pick up the writing pieces. I do not grade these writings because they are not in final form. A completion grade may be a good idea, especially if you have students who are not following the rules.

*Note: As with all writing assignments, students keep this in their working portfolio folder in the classroom where they can pull out a “best” piece, revise it (if necessary), and put it in their End-of-Year Portfolio for final assessment.*

### **Essays**

A good way to assess the students at the end of the unit is to ask them to reflect on their responses to the statements we discussed at the beginning. (See **Lectures and Discussions**). They will choose one of the statements and either defend or disagree with it, citing evidence from other sources to support their belief. First, they will develop a graphic organizer as well as a first draft to be revised. I will either conference with them about their first draft, or they will work with a partner on revisions and editing. They will turn in all copies of the writing process: graphic organizer, first draft (with revision corrections), revision draft (with revision and editing corrections, and final draft.

This is a wonderful “persuasive writing” assignment.

*Note: As with all writing assignments, students keep this in their working portfolio folder in the classroom where they can pull out a “best” piece, revise it (if necessary), and put it in their End-of-Year Portfolio for final assessment.*

### **Poetry**

Poetry is something I integrate throughout the entire year. It is very easy to do, and I introduce many different poem formats to the students throughout the school year. There are two books I use with many different poetry writing activities: *Poetry Everywhere* and *Getting the Knack*. It is easy to adapt the exercises in these books to fit the needs of any unit.

For example, I may have the students read an excerpt from *A Piece of My Heart*. After the reading, I will teach the students how to write a pantoum poem, using their own thoughts in the process. A pantoum is a four line stanza poem with

specific lines repeated throughout. It has no required length.

I often begin my poetry exercises by showing the students an example of the type of poem I want them to attempt. We read the example silently and aloud, noting anything that stands out, or a pattern we notice. After our discussion, I tell them the pattern (if they haven't noticed it already). Then, the students try writing their own poems. The best way to do this is to tell them to write down four lines (they don't have to rhyme) with 5-7 words on each line (this makes them think about word choice). Once they have four lines, they can follow the pattern for the rest of the poem (pattern found in *Poetry Everywhere*).

I give them approximately fifteen minutes, depending on how long the poem is, to develop a first draft. I also encourage them to write more than one poem so that they can choose their favorite one to revise later on.

*Note: As with all writing assignments, students keep this in their working portfolio folder in the classroom where they can pull out a "best" piece, revise it (if necessary), and put it in their End-of-Year Portfolio for final assessment.*

### ***Annotation***

This is an excellent way to get students to "read actively." It requires a lot of modeling, but it is well worth it.

By the time we begin this Vietnam War Unit, the students will already have a good idea of how to annotate a piece of text. At the beginning of the year, I give them a small excerpt to read. Before reading it, we discuss the qualities of a good reader: being "involved" with the text, questioning as you read, highlighting important information, making notes, etc.

The first strategy we practice is "questioning." After reading an excerpt (an excerpt from a short story is good to use for practice as long as it's a small piece, preferably a paragraph), I ask them to write down three questions they have about what they read. The students share their questions aloud. We talk about different levels of questions. A level one question can be answered by going back to the text. A level two question requires inferencing, or predicting, which is the kind of question I encourage because it means that the student is actively reading.. Then, I ask the students to look at their own questions and label them as level one or level two.

The next strategy we practice is writing responses/comments/notes in the margins of the text. As they read, I tell them to note things they don't understand, things that stand out, words they are unsure of, etc. This strategy is very important to model several times. I always show them on the overhead what I would write in the margin as I read.

The last strategy we practice is highlighting. Students like to highlight

everything, which defeats the purpose of this technique. I explain to them that “less is more” when highlighting. I encourage them to stay away from highlighting entire sentences and especially paragraphs. Sometimes one word is enough to highlight. This strategy is also extremely important to model. I always put a piece of text on the overhead and highlight important words and/or phrases. The teacher should model good highlighting several times before asking the students to attempt this technique on their own.

A good excerpt to annotate for this unit is the first two pages of Chapter One from *A Rumor of War* beginning with, “At the age of twenty-four, I was more prepared for death than I was for life,” through, “Recovery has been less than total.” The students will find it easy to question Caputo’s description of what it was like to return to the “real world” after being in Vietnam.

By showing the students these active reading strategies at the beginning of the year, you can use these skills with any unit you teach. I would definitely ask the students to annotate many of the excerpts associated with this unit. The students will be better analyzers and critical thinkers which is important when studying something as complex as human emotions in war.

### ***Song Lyrics***

One way to examine America’s reaction to Vietnam is to listen to some of the music written during the era. I found some great antiwar song lyrics on the Internet site *War Time* (<http://www.clarkson.edu>). Creedence Clearwater Revival wrote several songs about the Vietnam War. “Fortunate Son,” “Bad Moon,” and “Run Through the Jungle” all explore the Vietnam experience. Crosby, Stills, Nash, and Young wrote “Ohio,” which is a tribute to the four students killed during the Kent State University protest. Buffalo Springfield’s song “For What It’s Worth” will probably be familiar to some students, and it’s an excellent description of the social confusions going on in the United States during the war. A more modern song is Alice In Chains’ “Rooster,” which talks about a son’s observance of what his father went through in Vietnam. There are several more songs about the war on this Internet site that you might find useful. A sample lesson using one of the songs follows:

1. Ask the students, “Why do people write songs?” There will be a variety of answers, but acknowledge all of them. Write the responses on the board or overhead and discuss. Ask the students, “Why do people like music?” Discuss those responses.
2. Next, ask the students to think of one song that is very meaningful to them. Tell them to write down the title of the song. Can they remember some of the words to the song? Write down the words. Why are they able to remember those words? Talk to them about theme. If they could state the theme of their favorite song in only one word, what would it be?

3. Explain that during the late Sixties and early Seventies, some Americans were very vocal in expressing their opinions of the war in Vietnam. The peace movement was at its peak during this time and many popular antiwar songs were written that were symbolic of the social changes happening at home as well as the tragedies on Vietnamese soil. This would be a good time to discuss again why songs become popular.

4. Hand out copies of the song “I Feel Like I’m Fixin’ To Die Rag” by Country Joe McDonald. Tell the students to read the song lyrics silently, underlining any lines that stand out to them.

5. Read the song lyrics aloud, discuss the different lines that stand out, and why. Student should notice that the song seems to trivialize war and death. Ask the students if they have any questions about the song before you play it.

6. Before you play the song, tell the students to pay attention to its rhythm and how it sounds. This is a good time to talk about mood. Mood is the feeling created in the reader by a piece of writing. How do the sounds of the song create a mood for the listener? If they could state the theme of the song in one word, what would it be (there will be different answers)? Why did they choose that word?

7. A good reinforcement activity is to choose some letters for the students to read from *Dear America: Letters Home From Vietnam*. After reading several letters (choose some letters written by nurses, too), talk to the students about how they would feel if they were fighting for their country, risking their lives, and heard the song we just discussed. How would they react? Would they agree with the message, or be defensive?

8. Have the students write a song from the point of view of one of the soldiers or nurses whose letter we read. If that soldier or nurse could write a song for the people back home, what would he or she say?

9. Another good reinforcement activity is to have the students find recurring themes/moods in Vietnam songs. Tell them to find a current song with the same theme/mood. They will have to turn in the lyrics to the song along with a written explanation of the theme and/or mood, or they could turn in the song lyrics with annotations in the margins.

### **STUDENT READING LIST**

Butler, Robert Olen. *A Good Scent from a Strange Mountain*. New York: Penguin Books, 1992.

Excellent collection of Vietnamese stories about history and family.

Caputo, Philip. *A Rumor of War*. New York: Ballantine Books, 1977.

This book explains in vivid detail what it was like to be an American soldier in combat.

Edelman, Bernard. *Dear America: Letters Home From Vietnam*. New York: Pocket Books, 1985.

A collection of real letters sent from American soldiers to loved ones that speak for themselves about the hardships of war. This is also a good source for Vietnam poetry.

Myers, Walter Dean. *Fallen Angels*. New York: Scholastic Inc., 1988.

A fiction story about young men who go to Vietnam and experience more in a few months than many people experience in a lifetime.

O'Brien, Tim. *The Things They Carried*. New York: Broadway Books, 1990.

A fiction story that reads like a memoir--extremely poetic. Beautifully written, this tells the story of several men and their experiences in Vietnam.

O'Nan, Stewart, ed. *The Vietnam Reader*. New York: Anchor Books, Doubleday, 1998.

This is an excellent anthology of Vietnam literature told from the American soldier's perspective.

Walker, Keith. *A Piece of My Heart*. New York: Ballantine Books, 1985.

Testaments from nurses who served in Vietnam. This is very insightful to those who don't know or forget that women were in Vietnam serving their country, too.

---

## TEACHER READING LIST

Butler, Robert Olen. *A Good Scent from a Strange Mountain*. New York: Penguin Books, 1992.

This is an excellent collection of stories and Vietnamese history and family.

Caputo, Philip. *A Rumor of War*. New York: Ballantine Books, 1977.

This book explains in vivid detail what it was like to be an American soldier in combat.

Collom, Jack and Sheryl Noethe. *Poetry Everywhere*. New York: Teachers and Writers Collaborative, 1994.

This book is a wonderful resource for teaching poetry within a unit.

Dunning, Stephen and William Stafford. *Getting the Knack*. Illinois: National Council of Teachers of English, 1992.

This is an excellent book of poetry exercises that works well with any unit.

Edelman, Bernard. *Dear America: Letters Home From Vietnam*. New York: Pocket Books, 1985.

A collection of real letters sent from American soldiers to loved ones that speak for themselves about the hardships of war; this is also a good source for Vietnam poetry.

Herring, George C. *America's Longest War: The United States and Vietnam, 1950-1975*. 2nd ed. New York: McGraw-Hill, Inc., 1996.

This book contains a detailed explanation of the events prior to, during, and after the Vietnam War.

Myers, Walter Dean. *Fallen Angels*. New York: Scholastic Inc., 1988.

A fiction story about young men who go to Vietnam and experience more in a few months than many people experience in a lifetime.

O'Brien, Tim. *The Things They Carried*. New York: Broadway Books, 1990.

A fiction story that reads like a memoir--extremely poetic. Beautifully written, this tells the story of several men and their experiences in Vietnam.

O'Nan, Stewart, ed. *The Vietnam Reader*. New York: Anchor Books, Doubleday, 1998.

This is an excellent anthology of Vietnam literature told from the American soldier's perspective.

Steigerwald, David. *The Sixties and the End of Modern America*. New York: St Martin's Press, 1995.

This book has several chapters that explain the Vietnam War. It's easy to read and informative.

Walker, Keith. *A Piece of My Heart*. New York: Ballantine Books, 1985.

Testaments from nurses who served in Vietnam. This is very helpful to those who don't know or forget that women were in Vietnam serving their country, too.

## **MATERIALS FOR CLASSROOM**

The following Internet Sites are recommended for research and classroom materials:

"At War With War." *All Politics-Back in TIME*. <http://cnn.com/ALLPOLITICS/1996/analysis/back.time/9605/20/index.shtml>, (11 Apr. 1999).

This site gives a lot of information on the antiwar protests during the Nixon administration.

"Dusty's Poetry Page." *Women Poets of the Vietnam Webring*. <http://www.illyria>.

com/dustyhp.html, (5 June 1999).

This site offers many different poems written by a nurse who served in Vietnam. The poems are an excellent source for discussions about women who served in Vietnam.

Marciano, Vic. "Poetry of War." *Vietnam Veterans Webring*. <http://members.tripod.com/~SkySoldiers/warpoems.html>, (5 June 1999).

A "sky soldier" of the Vietnam War tells of his experiences through poetry.

Carlson, R.S. "Extraction." *R.S. Carlson's Poetry Pages*. <http://members.aol.com/QuangTri71/Extraction.htm>, (5 June 1999).

This site has poems written by a veteran of the Vietnam War.

Taylor, Mark. "It Don't Mean Nuthin'." *Voices in the Night*. <http://members.aol.com/voicesvn/mean.htm>, (5 June 1999).

This is another Internet site with poems written by a veteran.

Musgrave, John. "Nightmare #7.62." *The Poems of John Musgrave*. <http://grunt.space.swri.edu/jmnightm.htm>, (5 June 1999).

This is another Internet site with poems written by a veteran.

"Vietnam Veteran's Terminology and Slang." *Vietnam Veteran's Home Page*. <http://grunt.space.swri.edu/glossary.htm>, (5 June 1999).

This site is a great source for slang terms found in much of the literature written by those who served in the Vietnam War.

*War Time*. <http://www.clarkson.edu/~winklebh/vietnam2/wartime.html>, (2 June 1999).

This is an excellent source for song lyrics about the Vietnam War.

Lewis, Jerry M. and Thomas R. Hensley. "The May 4 Shootings at Kent State University: The Search for Historical Accuracy." *Kent State University Libraries and Media Services May 4 Chronology*. <http://www.kent.edu/sociology/lewis/LEWIHEN.htm>, (7 June 1999).

This site contains research paper on the Kent State University shootings.

- TV/VCR
- CD/ cassette player
- The following songs are excellent to use with this unit. All of the lyrics are located on the *War Time* Internet site:

"Run Through the Jungle" by Creedence Clearwater Revival

"Bad Moon" by Creedence Clearwater Revival

"Fortunate Son" by Creedence Clearwater Revival

“I Feel Like I’m Fixin’ To Die Rag” by Country Joe McDonald  
“Draft Morning” by The Byrds  
“Ohio” by Crosby, Stills, Nash, and Young  
“For What It’s Worth” by Buffalo Springfield  
“I Do Not Want to be a Soldier” by John Lennon  
“Give Peace a Chance” by John Lennon and Paul McCartney  
“Rooster” by Alice In Chains

- Videos

This goes without saying, but please view these videos before you show them to your students. You will know whether or not they are appropriate:

*Hearts and Minds* (1974) is an excellent Vietnam documentary about U.S. attempts to win the support of Vietnam villagers by giving medical and technological aid to them.

*Coming Home* (1978) is about an injured Vietnam soldier who returns home and struggles getting back into the mainstream of life.

*Platoon* (1986) is a movie that focuses on both combat and America’s reaction to the Vietnam War.

*Dear America: Letters Home From Vietnam* (1988) is a documentary film produced by HBO based on the book.

*Born on the Fourth of July* (1989) is the story of Ron Kovic, a Vietnam veteran who is injured in the war. He comes home, struggles with the Veterans Administration, and becomes a political activist.

*The Vietnam Experience*-PBS Documentary Series is a twelve-video collection (you can also buy the videos individually) that is a wonderful historical resource. You can order the videos through PBS on the Internet-[www.pbs.org](http://www.pbs.org).