

*Decision Making in U.S. History*

**The 1960s & the Vietnam War**

By Kevin O'Reilly

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This book is dedicated to the memory of Dick Aieta.

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# HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

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Think of this book, and the other books in this series, not as a text, but as a menu. As a teacher, you select lessons from the menu. It was never intended that you would have everything on the menu—that would be overeating. [Take a look at the table of contents.] When choosing a lesson, look first at the problems on the student handout(s), and then at the student handout describing these problems' historical outcomes. If you like what you see, take a look at the lesson plan for ideas on using the handouts. You can teach all of the lessons by giving students a problem handout, having them discuss what they would do, and finally distributing the outcomes handout. You may also consult the “Quick Motivator” section of a lesson plan to use the handouts as a short introduction to class.

On the other hand, you can think of this book as a “how-to” guide for teaching specific decision-making skills while also covering significant events in United States history. The book posits a general guideline of ten distinct skills, organized under the acronym **P-A-G-E** to help students remember these skills. Take a look at the explanation of **P-A-G-E** in the introduction to this book, under the section titled “Guide to Thoughtful Decision Making.” This section explains each of the ten skills and includes examples.

Every lesson in this series analyzes the historical topic in terms of **P-A-G-E**. Each lesson targets specific skills, letting the content and the actual decision in history determine the skills emphasized in the lesson. Take a look at the skills grid for each lesson on page 1 of this book. Handouts are frequently used to focus students on using specific skills. For example, many lessons include a list of questions designed to provoke more questions from students, as well as to give them ideas of the types of questions to ask. Other lessons give students a list of assumptions and ask which they assumed in making their decisions. The other skills have similar handouts.

Whether you try the problem-discussion-outcome approach or concentrate more on specific decision-making skills, I hope these books will help make you a more effective teacher and help your students learn United States history in a way that will help prepare them to make more thoughtful decisions as citizens.

Kevin O'Reilly

# INTRODUCTION

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## **RATIONALE: Hindsight versus Foresight**

When we study history, it is all too easy to sit in judgment of those who came before us. We read it after the fact; we see it in hindsight. Given the benefit of such 20/20 hindsight, some historical figures seem to have been very misguided or downright silly in their decisions. Why didn't they anticipate the consequences of their choices? How could they have been so shortsighted? Sports enthusiasts call this sort of analysis "Monday morning quarterbacking."

However, it's not so easy to laugh at the follies of past decision makers if we are confronted with decisions in history before we learn the actual results. In such a situation, we find ourselves making some of the same mistakes that historical characters made, and we sometimes commit new errors they did not make. This method of studying history, which we might call "foresight history," is far more challenging—and engaging—than the traditional retroactive method to which we are inured.

In short, when we learn history by hindsight we risk becoming more arrogant and complacent. If, on the other hand, we learn history by *foresight*, by casting ourselves in the role of those historical figures and making decisions as they did—without knowing the outcome—we can learn humility and gain a great deal of empathy for them. Students in my classes constantly exclaim, "This is hard!" as opposed to, "This is boring!"

Foresight history also helps students improve key decision-making skills they will use again and again as citizens. Schools of law, medicine, business, and nursing, along with the military and many other institutions, use case-study methods, where students are forced to make decisions about a particular case and then analyze their thinking. If each of these varied disciplines values decision making so much, shouldn't we be training all our future citizens how to make good decisions?

History provides many benefits for those who study it. Historical knowledge can be liberating all by itself, letting us draw back the veil of ignorance and see the present with eyes enlightened by the past. The more knowledge of history we possess, the better we understand our societies and ourselves. Study and evaluation of primary sources, discussions of motives, debates about significance, analyzing causes and effects, and many other strategies are vital to history courses. The lessons here on decision making are meant to support and enhance these other methods of studying history, not replace them with a more "practical" type of history.

# OVERVIEW

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The lessons in *Decision Making in U. S. History* are to be used independently within a standard U.S. history course in middle school, high school, or college. Each book in this series comprises between eight and thirteen lessons. Each lesson includes the following:

1. Introduction: includes an overview of the topic, content vocabulary, and decision-making skills emphasized in the lesson.
2. Lesson plan: includes suggestions for how to use the handouts, how to focus on decision-making skills, how to connect the decision to the larger historical context, how to use video and other supplementary sources, and how to troubleshoot problems, should any arise.
3. Suggested answers: this section features teacher notes about outcomes (student versions of the outcomes are also provided—see number 6 below), references to historians’ interpretations of the topic, decision-making analysis, and suggestions for further research.
4. Sources: includes the specific sources used in the lesson.
5. Problem(s): reproducible handouts used by students to read and analyze the problem.
6. Historical outcome of the problem: what people in history actually did and the consequences thereof.
7. Primary sources and visuals (if any): these are integrated into the lesson itself and are not included merely as window dressing.

Each individual decision-making challenge is referred to as a “problem.” Some lessons have one problem to challenge students, while others contain numerous problems. The handouts for each lesson are reproducible; teachers can also decide to use only selected parts of the handouts, if so desired.

While decision making is the main point of the books, historical content is also very important. These lessons focus on real historical problems that convey powerful lessons about U.S. history. The problems involve important issues relevant both to America’s past and its present: taxation, foreign intervention, regulation of businesses and individuals, immigration, welfare, war, and so forth. In addition, not all of the problems come from the perspective of political leaders: many ask students to consider the perspectives of ordinary Americans such as workers, voters, farmers, African Americans, business owners, Native Americans, and women. Including problems from the perspectives of ordinary people prepares students for their roles as citizens in a democracy and encourages empathy for unfamiliar groups.

Most of the problems are brief—some as short as one paragraph—and can be used as class warm-ups lasting no more than ten minutes. Even with the shorter problems, however, the outcomes can often be quite complex, running on for several pages. The problems may appear deceptively simple, but analyzing them can be complicated. You can best judge how much analysis to include for each problem, and for how long to run each problem and discussion.

On the other hand, some problems are more complicated. These problems deal with crucial turning points in the nation's history. Students will almost certainly need more background information before making decisions, and analysis of these problems could take several class periods. These more involved problems could form the organization for an entire unit of study. For example, in my classes the problem on the New Deal provides me with the bulk of the time and activities on my unit concerning the New Deal. Students learn about the basic New Deal programs, including their advantages and disadvantages, while simultaneously working to improve their decision-making skills.

## **DECISION MAKING**

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### **What is Decision Making?**

As explained in Student Handout 1, decision making involves making a choice when there is no clearly correct answer. Students can derive important lessons about decision making from encountering "messy" problems like these. Even where outcomes do not show a particular choice to be clearly right or wrong, students will still be surprised by some aspects of the outcomes and thereby gain insight into decision making.

### **Decision Making as Experience**

As argued in Student Handout 1, the most powerful way to teach good decision making is through experience. People learn to make good decisions just by making decisions, period. Bad decisions are more instructive, perhaps, in making us more skeptical decision makers, but that isn't stressed in Student Handout 1. Examples from the teaching profession illustrate this negative-reinforcement aspect of decision making. Teachers who just put students into groups without giving specific directions quickly learn not to do it again. Lessons that don't work well are dropped or modified the next time around. Good teaching is basically good decision making, and good decision making is shaped rapidly by previous decisions.

Ordinary people, including students, have an optimistic tendency simply to assume their decisions will result in positive outcomes, rather than making an estimate of the probabilities of certain outcomes. Decision-making experts, on the other hand, have a much more realistic view of these probabilities, due in part to their greater experience with the types of problem with which they often deal. Experience teaches us to be more realistic about outcomes.

Just encountering the problems and outcomes in these books, therefore, can help students improve their decision-making skills in general.

### **Targeting Decision-Making Skills**

As mentioned in Student Handout 1, these books go beyond just decision-making problems and their outcomes. They also provide teachers with a decision-making model and strategies for teaching the skills involved in decision making. Students learn a simple

model that provides basic guidelines for making decisions. This model goes by the acronym **P-A-G-E** (as explained below and in Student Handouts 2 and 3), and it gives support and guidance for student decisions, allows for communication built around specific skills and a common vocabulary, and provides specific criteria for teachers to evaluate student progress on those skills.

It's crucial for the teacher to act as a coach and guide students as they encounter the decision-making problems, in what Reuven Feuerstein refers to as "mediated learning." The teacher's guidance and questions can help students make sense of what they are thinking when they make decisions about historical situations.

The debate among researchers about the relative power of experience versus instruction on decision making is not crucial to these books. Rather, the problems and lessons in these books allow teachers to combine experience and instruction in the form of mediated learning (coaching).

### **Repetition in Order to Master Skills**

These books are based on the hypothesis that several repetitions of decision-making problems and outcomes help improve decision making. That is, a person who has tried 50 problems will most likely have improved his/her decision-making skills more than a person who has tried only ten problems, simply because he or she has had more experience making decisions. There are many problems included in these books, and teachers are encouraged to use them regularly (once or twice per week, perhaps) as warm-ups to start classes or units. It isn't expected, however, that teachers will necessarily use all the problems.

Having experience with a large number of problems also provides students with more historical analogies upon which they can draw. It is striking how often decision makers base their thinking on an analogy (usually a recent one) in looking for ideas to help decide a problem. Having a broader range of analogies allows students to be more skeptical of any analogy suggested, since students are more likely to think of different analogies than the ones offered.

Though many experiences with decision making will help, it is essential that teachers coach students (mediated learning) and have time to reflect on their thinking during decision-making problems. Metacognition (thinking about our own thinking) is vital for improving thinking skills, according to numerous writers. Teachers should therefore allow "postmortem" time after each experience for students to reflect on their thinking, either verbally or in writing (see the section on evaluation for ideas). Teachers are also encouraged to use some of the lessons for lengthier (1–3 class periods), more in-depth analysis of student thinking and the historical topics involved; perhaps two or three lessons could be used for in-depth analysis per semester.

## Individual Choice Versus Historical Context

Research indicates that students generally view the role of individual choices as critical to historical events (for example, viewing Rosa Parks as an important catalyst for the civil rights movement), while professional historians stress the importance of underlying forces (for example, African Americans fighting in World War II, the Cold War, etc. as important causes of the civil rights movement). Students often miss the significance of these underlying forces and do not always recognize the extent to which historical context has constrained the actions of people in the past.

By focusing on decisions by individuals and by groups, the books in this series may seem to perpetuate an overemphasis on the individual vs. historical forces. However, the lessons in these books help students see more historical context, not less. In order to make good decisions, students need to learn a great deal of historical context. All lessons in this book require students to ask questions about context. Each lesson includes a short outcome and a question about why students think that option was tried (e.g., “The Congress rejected the 1790 petition to end slavery. Why do you think it was rejected? Which historical forces at the time led to this outcome?”). Each problem also asks students to think about the historical forces that made it difficult for the individual to make a good decision. In addition, many problems include multiple points of view, which enrich student understanding of context. Finally, students discuss the ways in which the actual historic decision was similar to or different from the decision they made; this emphasizes the role of context in shaping individual choices.

### STRATEGIES

The basic format of the lessons, as explained in the overview, is problem, decision, outcome, discussion. However, many of the subskills of decision making are difficult for students to master. In order to assist students, many lessons put these subskills in a sort of multiple-choice format. For example, to improve the “asking for more information” skill, some lessons include a list of questions from which students can select the ones they wish to ask. To improve “identifying underlying problems,” some lessons list possible underlying problems. To improve “considering other points of view,” some lessons include handouts that put students into different roles (for example, not just looking at labor strike problems from the point of view of the workers, but from the point of view of the owners as well).

### GOALS

The books in this series have four main goals:

#### 1. **Make history more interesting:**

Simply giving students the problems, having them make decisions, and then telling them what the people involved actually did will keep student interest high. It’s exciting to make decisions before you know what the historical figures actually did. It’s dynamic, open-ended learning. Students enjoy comparing their

decisions to those of their classmates and to the decisions actually made by the historical figures. Even if you decide to use the lessons without giving instruction on how to perform the skills involved in decision making, students will still enjoy learning history this way.

This increased interest should also lead to increased reading comprehension. After all, when students read their texts they will actively search for what actually happened and will want to compare it with what they chose.

**2. Improve decision making through experience:**

The primary way people learn to make better decisions is through the process of making decisions, both good and bad. Students therefore become more sophisticated decision makers with every choice they make. By giving students many chances to make decisions where they can learn from mistakes and surprises, we can speed up the process of making them savvy decision makers. For example, students who decide to have a foreign government overthrown and see many negative consequences will think twice before trying that again, and will be skeptical of such a plan if proposed in the present day. Experience itself becomes the teacher.

**3. More complex ethical thinking:**

Ethical questions will arise regularly, and by discussing their positions students will develop more complex ethical arguments and understandings. Please note, however, that these lessons are not aimed primarily at ethical reasoning. Teachers who want to focus primarily on this should consult *Reasoning with Democratic Values* (2 volumes; by Alan Lockwood and David Harris, New York: Teacher's College Press, 1985).

**4. Improve the use of decision-making skills and reflection on those skills:**

As much as students can improve their decision making through experience, they will develop it that much more if they learn specific subskills, which can then become guidelines for thinking through decision-making problems more carefully. The instruction in these books is based on the skills of the **P-A-G-E** model. The specific elements of **P-A-G-E** are described in the section "Guide to Better Decision Making," and the strategies for teaching those skills are explained below in the section "Teaching Specific Decision-Making Skills."

One of the teaching strategies emphasizes journal writing, in which students reflect on the problems they encounter, including how they could improve their own decision making. If teachers can get them to reflect on how to improve upon decisions they've just made, students will learn to be more reflective in general.

Ideally, we want to train future citizens to approach decision-making problems by asking insightful questions, carefully probing for underlying problems, seeing a problem from a variety of perspectives, setting clear and realistic goals, and imagining consequences.

## **EXPLANATION OF P-A-G-E FOR TEACHERS**

(See Student Handouts 1–3)

Good decision making involves a number of subskills. The more students can use the subskills, the more complex their thinking will be when they make decisions. In order to help students recall the subskills involved in decision making, these books offer a simple acronym—**P-A-G-E**. The acronym is only meant to help students recollect the subskills rather than provide an actual formula for making decisions; decision-making problems are too complex and varied for step-by-step formulas. For instance, in one problem, students will need to focus on envisioning unintended consequences, while in another, historical context will be more important. Research indicates that expert decision makers don't follow step-by-step models. The **P-A-G-E** acronym consists of guidelines only, not specific steps or points that must be followed.

## **PROBLEM**

Student Handout 3, “P-A-G-E Explanations and Examples,” discusses the specific parts of **P-A-G-E**. The first section focuses on analyzing the problem, explaining what some experts call “framing.” Framing seems to have a variety of meanings for different people. The handout emphasizes finding the underlying problem in an attempt to keep things simple for students. It also asks, “What’s really going on here?” in order to help students uncover underlying problems.

According to Gary Klein, experts (people with a great deal of experience in a particular field, such as nursing, firefighting, or chess) “recognize” particular problems as being of one type or another. Once they make this recognition (i.e., once they frame it or represent it a particular way), experts can make very quick and successful decisions—that’s why they’re experts! In making these recognitions, experts draw upon analogies they’ve learned through experience. Thus, the section of the handout that discusses framing is related to the section on analogies. Experiments with expert chess players have shown that recognition is extremely important. When pieces were placed on a board in completely random fashion, experts could remember the placement no better than novices. But when the pieces were arranged in a way similar to placements in a game, experts could remember the placements with a single glance and project ahead several possible moves.

How students see or frame a problem depends partly on how the problem is worded. To help students become more aware of wording, some problems are phrased in two different ways: for example, half the class could get the problem worded using positive language, while the other half gets it worded with negative language. After students make their decisions, the class can discuss the effects of different wording on their decisions. Was it a big factor?

Political Scientist James Voss believes that the way people perceive problems in foreign policy acts as a key variable in the decisions they make. He believes that problem representation (which is similar to framing) constrains what we do thereafter. For

example, if we see a problem as a case of communist aggression, we will make different choices than if we see it as a typical boundary dispute between neighboring countries. Questions included with some problems help students become more attuned to problem representation.

The section on assumptions is greatly simplified compared to the literature on assumptions, which delineates several different types of assumptions (presuppositions, working assumptions, etc.). The primary method used in these books to teach students to recognize their own assumptions is by asking them to identify which of a specific menu of assumptions they made. When they see a list of possible assumptions, they can better recognize which ones they've made. This strategy seems more effective than having students read a lengthy explanation on types of assumptions.

### **ASK FOR INFORMATION**

Asking questions is crucial in good decision making. The more people know about background sources and context, the better they will understand the real problem.

The “Guide to Thoughtful Decision Making” also emphasizes asking questions about analogies (“How is the historical case different from this decision-making problem?”), but you should also encourage students to think of historical analogies in the first place. Students will often think about a problem in terms of a personal analogy: for example, “I don’t like it when people criticize me, so it’s wrong for a country to make a harsh speech against another country.” Probing for personal or historical analogies, teachers should ask students where they got their ideas about what is really going on in a problem.

### **GOALS**

The section on goals includes setting clear, realistic goals and generating numerous options for accomplishing those goals. Questions about ethicality have also been included in this section, since ethics are related to setting goals.

### **EFFECTS**

The section on effects/consequences includes both long-term, unintended consequences and short-term possibilities of what could go wrong. Gary Kline argues that the ability to run mental simulations—that is, to envision what could go wrong and to imagine positive and negative consequences—is a vital skill in decision making. Every decision-making problem in this series emphasizes unintended consequences and things that could go wrong.

## EVALUATING STUDENTS

There are numerous ways to evaluate student progress in both content and decision-making skills. Here are a few examples:

- Quiz students on the vocabulary included in the relevant lesson(s)
- Have each student keep a decision-making log, as outlined in Student Handout 3. It's a good idea to copy the handout onto colored paper: you can then tell students after analyzing the outcome of a problem to turn to their green (for example) decision-making log sheet and record their thoughts. The right column requires students to reflect on their thinking.
- Have students keep a journal in which they comment on:
  - the decision actually made in history
  - what the actual decision makers did well or poorly
  - historical constraints on the decision makers
  - what the outcome of the decision reveals about that time period
  - the decision made by the student and what he/she did well or poorly
  - the "lessons" of this decision-making problem
- Have students write a "history" of an event after the class has participated in a decision-making problem on that event and has discussed the outcome. I've required students to include at least two elements of **P-A-G-E** in their historical analysis.
- As a test question, have students make a decision about a problem you haven't used in class. Give them the problem and instruct them to make a decision and explain their thinking according to **P-A-G-E**. You have criteria in the suggested answers for grading their work.

# EVALUATION TIPS FOR STUDENT HANDOUT 5

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Have students complete Student Handout 5, in which they must evaluate a sample historical decision. Below are eight elements of **P-A-G-E** to consider when grading student responses to this question. Students need only address four out of the eight, and they only need to suggest ideas for the ones they do address. For example, I give full credit to students who suggest any possible underlying problem or ask any reasonable question. As stated in the problem, however, students need to think of two possible consequences of the many involved in President Johnson's decisions regarding immigration reform.

- **Underlying problem:** President Johnson did not really consider any underlying problems with the immigration system.
- **Point of view:** President Johnson should have considered the points of view of several groups and institutions, including labor unions and workers in general, consumers, businesses, schools, and hospitals, as well as cities that would experience increased immigration.
- **Ask about context:** Students often ask questions about outcomes, rather than context. For this problem, students should ask at least one context-related question. Examples: How much did the U.S. economy grow after the enactment of the quota system, which greatly restricted immigration? Which organizations supported or opposed this bill, and why? How did most U.S. citizens feel about making the immigration system more open? What problems had the U.S. had with immigration in the past?
- **Ask about analogies:** In the years just before Congress enacted the 1924 quota system, the country might have experienced more economic growth and industrial expansion than in 1965. Perhaps industries had a greater demand for manual labor in 1924 than in 1965. If so, new immigrants in 1965 might not have had as great a potential to spur economic growth. Consequently, unemployment levels among immigrants might have increased.
- **Goal:** The problem clearly states a realistic goal: providing a fairer system.
- **Options:** Students should consider if the U.S. could have achieved a fairer system in other ways. For example, Congress could have simply raised the quotas for countries the Immigration Act of 1924 had discriminated against, rather than setting general hemispheric quotas.
- **Play out the option:** After President Johnson allowed family members of immigrants to come to the U.S., millions of people entered the country. President Johnson did not foresee the huge increase in immigration that resulted from this act, which has, over the past four decades, changed the United States profoundly.
- **Unintended consequences:** President Johnson should have considered the long-term consequences of the new immigration system, some of which were:
  - The strain an increase in immigration places on government resources
  - The implications of the U.S. becoming a more diverse, multicultural society

- Increased immigration would upset many Americans, who would then vote against the Democratic Party
- Naturalized immigrants helped by the new act would probably vote for the Democratic Party

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# GUIDE TO THOUGHTFUL DECISION MAKING

## Student Handout 1

### Welcome to “Foresight” History!

The problems in the *Decision Making in U. S. History* series will challenge you to make choices about events in United States history before you know what actually happened in those events. This is learning history in a foresighted way—first you decide, then you find out what really happened—rather than as hindsight history, where you just find out what happened. You will get at least two benefits from this method of learning history: First, you will improve your decision-making skills. Someday, when you avoid buying a “lemon” used car that would have wasted thousands of dollars, you can thank your history teacher for helping you build up your decision-making skills. Second, it’s fun to learn history as though it’s a cliffhanger mystery, where you’re eager to find out if your decision worked or ended in disaster. But don’t forget to concentrate on the actual historical decision that was made and how it turned out. You can learn a lot about your own decision making through these problems, but you’re mainly in class to learn history and to understand what really happened, not what could have happened.

### What is Decision Making?

You’ve learned about problem solving in other courses such as math and science, and you’ve encountered problem solving when you’ve tried to build something or fix something. Decision making resembles problem solving in some ways (for example, it involves defining a problem and thinking of alternatives), but it’s different from problem solving in that there is no one right answer. The lessons in this book involve “messy” problems: even long after the event, people often disagree about what the best decision was or should have been.

### Decision Making as Experience

Experience teaches you how to make good decisions. Every decision that you make—whether good or bad—better equips you to make good decisions in the future. For example, you would probably feel safer being treated by a doctor who had a lot of experience than by a brand new doctor. The historical problems your teacher gives you will provide you with experience in making decisions in general, and will help you become a better decision maker in your role as a citizen. You won’t just have learned about history, you will have experienced it! For some of these lessons, you will feel that you made good decisions; for others, you may feel that you’ve made errors in judgment. As you go along, try to reflect on your experiences as well as on your thinking about decision making.

## **P-A-G-E Guide to Decision Making**

While experience is the most important way to learn to make better decisions, it's also helpful to learn some basic decision-making skills so that you know what areas to target in order to improve your overall decision making. Handout 2 contains an acronym, **P-A-G-E**, that provides you with guidelines for making better decisions. These aren't rules you have to follow; they are just meant as helpful tips you can use to improve your thinking about decision making.

Handout 3 explains and gives examples for each part of the **P-A-G-E** guide to decision making. Keep it in your notebook for reference as you make decisions about situations in U.S. history. Every single **P-A-G-E** guideline will not necessarily apply to each decision-making problem you encounter. You (with the assistance of your teacher) will have to determine which guidelines will work best with which problems.

# P-A-G-E ANALYSIS FOR DECISION MAKING

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## Student Handout 2

### Decision-Making Analysis

#### **P=Problem:**

- Identify any **underlying problem**: What's really going on here?
- Consider **other points of view**: How do others see this situation?
- What are my **assumptions**? **Emotions**?

#### **A=Ask for information (about):**

- **Historical context**: What is the history and context of this issue?
- **Reliability of sources**: Does my information come from experts on this topic? Do the sources have a reason to lie? Is the information supported by evidence?
- **Historical analogies**: What has been done in the past about situations like this? In what ways do these other situations differ from this situation?

#### **G=Goals:**

- What are my main **goals**? Are they **realistic**?
- Generate **options** to help achieve these goals. Are they **ethical**?

#### **E=Effects:**

- Predict **unintended consequences**. What are some long-term effects?
- **Play out the options**. What could go wrong?

# P-A-G-E EXPLANATIONS AND EXAMPLES

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## Student Handout 3

### PROBLEM

#### **Underlying problem:**

Sometimes a decision-making situation will seem very difficult until you recognize that an underlying problem exists. For example, suppose two people come in for marriage counseling because they have been arguing a lot about money. The counselor is going to look for an underlying problem (such as unfulfilled needs) that might have led to spending more money. A student doing poorly in school might turn things around by discovering she needs glasses—the underlying problem. Please remember that you should not just repeat or rephrase the problem: instead, you need to look for what's behind it, for what's causing it. Underlying problems are not openly given as part of the decision-making situation—you have to figure them out on your own.

Another way to think of this skill is “the ability to see what is really going on.” Some people call this “framing” the problem: in other words, by putting a “frame” around the heart of the problem and excluding unimportant parts, you discover what's really important. You need to call on your own personal experiences in order to see what's really significant. In history, you do this by making analogies. In a sense, you need to say, “The problem we are facing now is like a problem people faced before [this is an analogy], so I'd better do *this*.” The way you see (or frame, or represent) a problem influences the decision you eventually make.

#### Example:

*Bob's grades have been much lower for the last three months in history class. He says he's bored in class, and that he'll improve his grades when he really needs to.*

List at least two possible underlying problems for Bob's lower grades. What's really causing his problems?

#### **Other points of view:**

Other people are always involved in decisions in history. We need to consider their points of view as we make decisions about history, just as we need to consider other points of view in our own lives today.

Example:

*My brother Mark is angry with me for borrowing his car three times. But he's wrong to be angry. I needed to get to work each time I borrowed the car.*

Rewrite this problem from Mark's point of view.

**What are my assumptions? Emotions?**

Sometimes after we make a decision, we realize that we had made an assumption that we didn't even know we were making until it was too late.

Emotions are part of being human, so they represent a legitimate part of the decision-making process. We do, however, need to be aware of our emotions during the decision-making process. Emotions, especially frustration and anger, can sometimes lead us to make irrational choices. People frequently become frustrated and say, "I've had enough of this situation. Let's just do something!" But they often come to regret the rushed choices they made under such circumstances. They would have benefited from saying to themselves, "Okay. I'm getting frustrated, but I still need to take the time necessary to make a good decision."

Studies have shown that when people feel pessimistic or are in a bad mood, they exaggerate the possible negative consequences of decisions; similarly, when they feel optimistic or are in a good mood, they overestimate positive consequences.

Emotions and gut feelings are unavoidable and natural, but thinking the situation through is crucial to making good decisions. We wouldn't want the President to decide about nuclear missiles in Cuba based solely on his gut feeling—we'd want him to gather information, consider several options, predict the possible consequences for millions of people, and so forth. As decision makers, we need to account for the role of emotion and gut feelings in our decisions and be aware of them as we choose.

Example for assumptions:

*Player to teammate: "We'll have no trouble beating Central. After all, Central lost to Suburban, and we beat Suburban the first game of the year."*

What is this player assuming?

Example for emotions:

*Suppose you have two children and are trying to decide whether to buy life insurance. An insurance ad shows a boy who can't go to college because his father died and had no life insurance.*

To what emotion does the ad appeal?

**ASK****Ask about historical context (history of the issue; context in the world):**

Asking questions about both the historical background and the present context of a problem are both essential for getting the information necessary to make a good decision. If you don't know the background, you will have difficulty deciding on the best solution. Every problem has a backstory, and we need to find out what that story is. The key is to ask questions that will help you obtain the necessary information.

Example:

*You are 17 years old, and you have been thinking about buying a car. You work part time after school, about ten hours per week. Your parents have told you that you'll have to pay for the car yourself. You go to a used car dealership and the salesman shows you a used car that costs \$2000.*

What questions should you ask before you buy it?

**Ask about reliability of sources:**

Information is crucial to making good decisions, but we need know what the sources of our information are and consider the reliability of those sources. Basing a decision on bad information from questionable sources is a recipe for disaster. You can evaluate sources by asking if the person giving the information has a reason to lie, if the person is a primary source, if other sources support this information, if the person is an expert on the topic, what the person's bias is on the topic, or if the person has been reliable in the past.

You should always be probing for disagreements among sources. Be wary if no disagreements seem to exist. It might mean your advisers are engaging in "groupthink," where they all get pulled to the same option without thoroughly thinking through other options or considering what could go wrong. Always try to find people who disagree with a proposed option. If you can't find one, ask tough questions yourself.

Example:

*The car salesman says this used car is in perfect condition.*

How reliable is the salesman? What reasons might you have to distrust him?

**Ask about historical analogies:**

It's natural to compare the problems we encounter to other, similar situations that have occurred in the past. In fact, one reason we study history in the first place is to build a deeper understanding of our world today through learning about historical events/analogies. You should try to think of analogies to the problems you encounter. As mentioned above in the section on underlying problems, you derive your understanding of what is important in a problem (framing) from analogies. (Example: "This problem is

like that situation George Washington was in at Trenton during the American Revolution.”) The more you draw on your knowledge of history, the more likely you are to fully understand a decision-making problem.

However, analogies are tricky because important differences often exist between the problems we encounter now and the historical cases we use to guide our decisions. We should always evaluate analogies by asking, “How do the two cases differ? In what ways are they similar? Are they similar enough to justify the conclusion?” We should also consider whether other, more appropriate analogies exist that could provide us with better guidance.

Example:

*Suppose you drove in a race at a parking lot near a mall a month ago. You raced your five-year old Toyota Corolla, and your time was 36.8 seconds. Margaret told you that she drove in a race last Sunday and her time was 28.2 seconds. She says this proves she is a better race driver than you are.*

What are two questions you could ask to determine whether Margaret is really a better driver?

## GOALS

### **What are my main goals? Are they realistic?**

We can't make good decisions if we are unclear about our goals. Once we establish goals, we can more easily set priorities and use them as a basis for choosing between options.

However, establishing goals isn't enough. The goals we set need to be realistic. Some decisions in history have been catastrophic because the decision makers didn't notice that they had unrealistic goals. It didn't matter how carefully they exercised their other decision-making skills—because their goals were unrealistic, they would never achieve them.

Example:

*You're out of school and need a job, since you live on your own and have expenses (rent, car payments, food, heat, insurance, etc.). You've got two offers. The first one is close to where you live and pays a lot more money, but it's doing work you wouldn't like. The second job is farther away and pays less money (but enough to cover your expenses), but it's doing something that you really like.*

What do you do? After you decide, list your goals and ask how realistic they are.

### **Generate options to help achieve my goals. Are they ethical?**

After you've made a decision, you don't want to be stuck thinking, "Oh, I wish I'd thought of that option before I decided!" At the same time, though, you don't want to become paralyzed trying to think of every possible option, no matter how remote. Nevertheless, important decisions should spur us to take the time to consider a number of options. We should also consider whether the options we come up with are ethical.

Example:

*You are 25 years old, single, work full-time ten miles from where you live, and drive your compact car to work. In recent months, gas prices have risen to very high levels. Your main goal at this point is to save money.*

What options do you have for coping with these price increases?

## EFFECTS

### **Predict unintended consequences:**

Most of the time, predicting unintended consequences will be more important than any other thinking you do about a problem. For some problems, it may be enough just to see the situation from other points of view or to ask questions about background or context. However, considering consequences will do more to help you avoid that awful feeling you get when you've made a bad decision.

Example:

*Suppose you are 35 years old and have a son and a daughter, ages five and two. The company you work for is asking you to move to a different state. You can refuse and take a pay cut.*

If you make the move, what unintended consequences might it have on you and your family in ten years? Guess at what the effects of the move might be.

### **Play out the option. What could go wrong?**

Here, you need to think about short-term effects, as opposed to predicting unintended consequences, which focuses more on long-term effects. For example, say you're playing the role of president and decide to get a law passed to help solve a problem. You have to take into account the fact that Congress has the constitutional power to pass laws, and thus to get your law enacted you need to convince Congress to approve it. By noticing that the approval of Congress is vital to the success or failure of your decision, you've identified something that could go wrong, and need to plan accordingly (overcoming opposition by talking to individual members of Congress, thinking of another option as backup, etc.).

Example:

*Suppose you are 30 years old and working at a job you like pretty well. You get an offer to work at a job for higher pay that is further away.*

If you take the job, what might happen? List two or more things that could go wrong.

# DECISION-MAKING LOG

## Student Handout 4

Topic	Actual decision	My decision	Why different/similar?	What I learned about P.A.G.E. from this topic (2 examples)

# EVALUATING DECISION MAKING

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## Student Handout 5

In 1965, President Lyndon Johnson signed the Immigration and Nationality Services Act. This legislation made major revisions to the Immigration Act of 1924, which had used quotas to limit immigration from certain countries, particularly ones in Asia and eastern Europe. The 1965 act discarded the quotas in favor of annual ceilings on visas: the U.S. could only issue 120,000 visas to people from the Western Hemisphere and 170,000 to people from the Eastern Hemisphere. In addition, no more than 20,000 people from one individual country could enter the U.S. in a single year. The act also allowed relatives of naturalized citizens to enter the U.S. regardless of quota restrictions. In 1964, Johnson had signed the Civil Rights Act, which had aimed to end discrimination against African Americans; similarly, the 1965 Immigration Act represented an attempt to end discrimination against immigrants who came from places other than western Europe. Johnson also hoped that enacting a fairer immigration policy would improve other countries' view of America and encourage them to support the U.S. in the Cold War against the Soviet Union. He claimed the immigration act would not dramatically increase the number of new immigrants to the U.S. and was intended only to send a positive message regarding immigration. The new act would also make it easier for the U.S. to acquire skilled workers from countries restricted by the old quota system. Before 1924, when the U.S. had an open immigration policy, many immigrants had entered the U.S. and helped fuel the country's economy. Johnson felt the U.S. needed immigrant workers to provide a similar boost in 1965 and help increase U.S. economic growth.

**Evaluate President Johnson's thinking according to P-A-G-E.** You should list at least two things under "E":

P:

A:

G:

E:

# THE 1960S & THE VIETNAM WAR

## Introduction

### OVERVIEW

This volume has eight lessons on the 1960s: four on foreign policy and four on domestic issues. Two of the lessons focus on the Vietnam War: one focuses upon early U.S. involvement in Vietnam (mostly in the 1950s), the second on 1964–1965. These lessons appear consecutively, since many teachers organize all their lessons on Vietnam into one unit. Thus, the lesson on the march on Birmingham is chronologically out of order and comes after the second lesson on Vietnam, in order to keep the two Vietnam lessons together. As with the other volumes in the *Decision Making in U.S. History* series, this book does not cover all the major topics for this time period; instead, the lessons center on a few thought-provoking decision-making problems from the era.

### SKILLS GRID FOR THIS VOLUME

X = part of lesson

E = emphasized in the lesson

Skill	Lesson							
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Underlying problem		X	X	X	X	X		
Point of view		X	X	X	X	E	X	
Assumptions/emotions			X			X		
Ask—context	X	E	X	X	X	E	X	X
Ask—sources		X	X			X		
Ask—analogies		X	E		E	X		
Goals? Realistic?	E	X	X		E	X		E
Options. Ethical?		X	X				E	
Unintended consequences		X	X	E	X	X		
Play out option		E	E				X	

# LESSON 1: ELECTION OF 1960

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## Teacher Pages

### OVERVIEW

The 1960 U.S. presidential election was important not only for the candidates who ran, but also for the expansion of television coverage of presidential campaigns. This election featured the first televised presidential debates.

### VOCABULARY

This lesson has no specialized vocabulary.

### DECISION-MAKING SKILLS EMPHASIZED

- Ask about context
- Reflect on goals

# LESSON PLAN

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## A. IN-DEPTH LESSON (30 minutes)

### Procedure:

Give students the handout on the candidates and ask them to vote and predict who actually won the election. After the discussion, tell them who the candidates were and that John F. Kennedy (Candidate B) won, as noted in Handout 2. Ask students whether they think Kennedy will be a good or bad president for the country based on this description. Was there anything in the description of Kennedy that would indicate how he might handle the Cuban missile crisis?

After you give students Handout 2 (which lists the outcome), ask students why they think the televised presidential debates were important. If possible, show them the photograph of Vice President Nixon wiping his face during the debate. (You can find the photograph at The Museum of TV, available at <http://www.museum.tv/debateweb/html/history/1960/photo3.htm>.) How do students react to this photograph? Should this sort of visual make a difference in the outcome of a political race?

### Reflecting on Decision Making:

Ask students what they learned from this outcome. Next, ask students what decision-making skills they found especially important when deciding for whom they would vote. Which of the letters of **P-A-G-E** applied especially to this election? (See the “Decision-Making Analysis” section below for ideas.) You may want to ask students if they based their votes primarily on character, decision-making skills, or the candidate’s positions on important issues. Discuss their answers, or ask students to write their answers in their journals or in their decision-making logs.

### Placing the Actual Decisions Into Historical Context:

Ask students what the 1960 election showed about the U.S. at the time (possibilities: the effects of the Cold War, the influence of television, the ongoing civil rights movement). Why did they vote differently or the same as voters at the time?

### Connecting to Today:

On what should people generally base their votes in presidential elections: character, skills, or issues? What does the 1960 election show about how to choose candidates in general?

Troubleshooting:

Some students may need to review how the 1960 election fit into the context of the Cold War. You might want to use a map to explain the political and social situations in both Berlin and Formosa.

**B. QUICK MOTIVATOR (10 minutes)**

As homework, have students decide on a candidate from Handout 1. In class the next day, ask them to vote individually and to predict the overall results of the election. Next, tell students the results or give them Handout 2, which describes what happened. Keep the discussion short by focusing only on whether students based their votes more on personal characteristics or on issues.

# TEACHER NOTES FOR EXPANDING DISCUSSION

(For outcomes for students, see Handout 2.)

## WHAT ACTUALLY HAPPENED:

Handout 2 explains John F. Kennedy's victory in the 1960 election and also discusses the role of the televised debates.

## DECISION-MAKING ANALYSIS:

### P = Problem

- Identify any underlying problem
- Consider other points of view
- What are my assumptions? Emotions?

### A = Ask for information (about)

- \* - **Historical context (history of this issue; context in the world)**
- Reliability of sources
- Historical analogies

### G = Goals

- \* - **What are my main goals? Are they realistic?**
- Generate options to help achieve these goals. Are they ethical?

### E = Effects

- Predict unintended consequences
- Play out the options. What could go wrong?

\* Denotes topics emphasized in this lesson

- **Ask about context:** A key factor in the election was the number of people who owned or had access to televisions. By 1960, 88% of households had televisions, and about 65–70 million Americans watched the first televised presidential debates.
- **Reflect on your goals:** Is the primary goal to elect someone with strong character, strong decision-making skills, or the right positions on important issues? In this election, the candidates differed greatly in terms of both character and temperament, and they held very different positions on key issues.

Further Research:

The platforms of the Republican and Democratic Parties are available at The American Presidency Project: <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/platforms.php>. This site also includes the full transcripts of the four televised debates.

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# LESSON 1: ELECTION OF 1960

## Student Handout 1



You are a voter in the 1960 U.S. presidential election. The nation has experienced a decade of peace and prosperity, and looks optimistically to the decade ahead. However, the U.S. is still involved in the Cold War with the Soviet Union.

Choose the candidate who will be best for the country.

Who do you predict will win the election?

### CANDIDATE A:

#### Positions on Important Issues:

This candidate is the current vice president of the U.S. The summary below of his views on the issues comes from his party's platform and from his speeches:

1. Foreign policy—He argues that his party has stopped the Soviets in Formosa (off the coast of China) and in Berlin. He believes that the U.S. must stand firm with the communists but must be careful not to overspend on the military. He argues that Candidate B is too young and inexperienced to lead the free world against the Soviets. In contrast, Candidate A has met and debated Nikita Khrushchev, the premier (leader) of the Soviet Union.
2. Taxes and spending—Wants to reform taxes to expand business; wants no deficit spending; wants to reduce the national debt
3. Economy—Favors a higher minimum wage as well as private initiatives instead of government programs to improve the economy. He wants to reduce the high cost of living.
4. Trade—Favors free trade, not tariffs
5. Farmers—Supports government aid (subsidies) for farmers in order to keep prices up
6. Labor—Supports the Taft-Hartley Act, which limits the power of unions
7. Medical care—Favors government medical insurance along with private insurance for the elderly. The elderly could choose the type of insurance they want.
8. Civil rights—When Martin Luther King was arrested during the campaign, this candidate did nothing

#### Personal Characteristics:

Candidate A grew up in a very poor Quaker family in California and had five brothers. He wanted to play football in high school but couldn't because he had to take the bus home each day before practice and his family was too poor to get him home another way.

He did not get along with his father but was very close to his mother. He served in the Pacific during World War II and went to Whittier College and Duke Law School. He was a U.S. congressman, senator, and vice president. He is 47 years old, is married, and has two daughters. He enjoys watching football games. He prefers to be alone when he has major decisions to make, and he can be moody—sometimes sad, sometimes outgoing and warm when he feels comfortable with people. He can be very folksy and has shown an ability to connect with ordinary Americans, especially ones who live in small towns. He’s a fighter who doesn’t give up on issues he considers important.

### **CANDIDATE B:**

#### Positions on Important Issues:

The summary below of this candidate’s views on the issues comes from his party’s platform and from his speeches:

1. Foreign policy—He claims that a “missile gap” exists with the Soviet Union, saying that the Soviets are ahead of the U.S. in missile technology, as evidenced by the Soviet launch of the Sputnik satellite in 1957. Over the past few years, the U.S. has experienced several missile launch failures. According to Candidate B, the U.S. must spend more on the military in order to catch up with the Soviets.
2. Taxes and spending—Wants to close loopholes so that the wealthy pay their fair share; believes the government should make a commitment to reducing unemployment and providing aid to depressed areas of the country; favors federal aid for education, mortgages, and housing
3. Economy—Favors a higher minimum wage; wants to strengthen the Food and Drug Administration’s ability to enforce federal laws
4. Trade—Favors free trade, not tariffs; believes the government should give aid to people hurt by lower-priced imports that result from free trade.
5. Farmers—Supports government aid (subsidies) for farmers in order to keep prices up
6. Labor—Opposes the Taft-Hartley Act, which limits the power of unions
7. Medical care—Favors government medical insurance for the elderly under Social Security
8. Immigration—Favors ending the quota system in order to allow for more and fairer immigration
9. Civil rights—Favors civil rights for African Americans. When Martin Luther King was arrested, he called Mrs. King to express his concern. He also telephoned the Georgia judge involved to plead for Dr. King’s release.

#### Personal Characteristics:

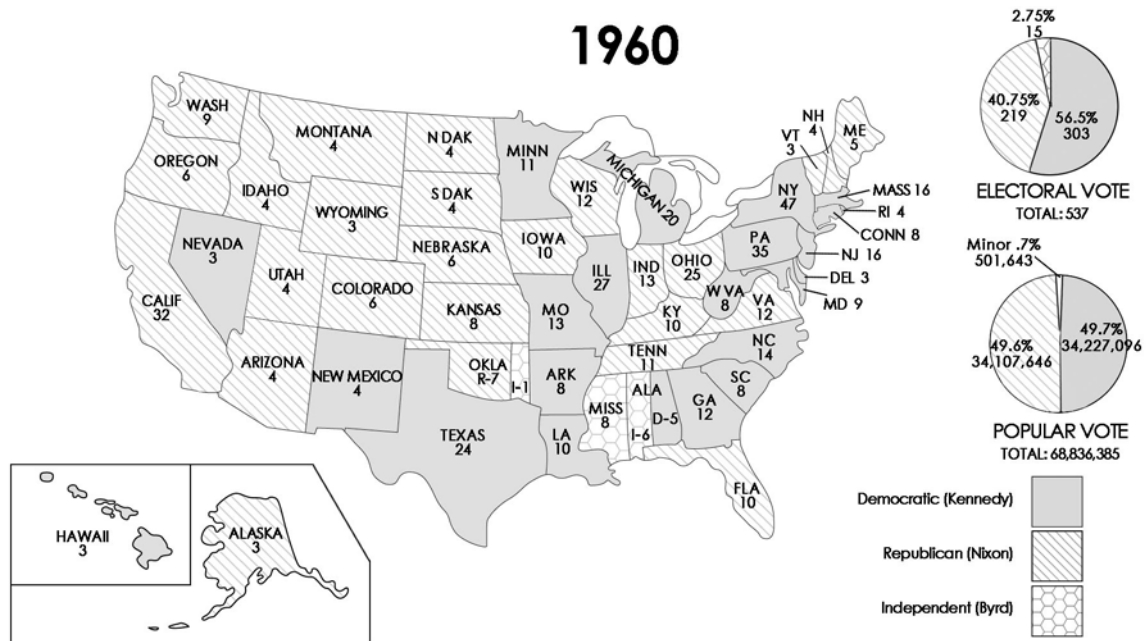
Candidate B grew up in a wealthy Catholic family. He was sickly as a child and still suffers chronic back pain. His father, the U.S. ambassador to Britain from 1938 to 1940, supported appeasement (compromising) with Nazi Germany as well as U.S. neutrality. This candidate is 43 years old. He fought in the navy in World War II and heroically rescued fellow sailors in battle. He is a senator with a poor congressional attendance record. He is married with one child, and his wife is pregnant with a second child. He wrote the book *Profiles in Courage*, which won the Pulitzer Prize for history. He is well liked by the public and has an easygoing manner. He is handsome and witty.

# LESSON 1: ELECTION OF 1960

## Student Handout 2

### WHAT ACTUALLY HAPPENED:

Candidate B, Democrat John F. Kennedy, defeated Candidate A, Republican Richard M. Nixon by 49.9% to 49.6% (303 electoral votes to 219).



The race was extremely close, with Kennedy winning a plurality (more votes than any other candidate but less than 50%) of the popular vote by a mere 100,000 votes. Had a few people voted differently in key states, Nixon would have won the election.



John F. Kennedy



Richard M. Nixon

One of the factors that might have helped Kennedy win this election was his warm personality, which helped him connect with voters, especially during the televised debates. In these debates, Kennedy came off better to viewers in several ways that had nothing to do with the issues. First, he made eye contact with the audience—and the camera—when answering questions; Nixon, who had a well-deserved reputation as a champion debater, often addressed his comments to Kennedy instead of the audience (or the camera), which made a poor impression with viewers. Nixon’s physical appearance also ended up working against him: he had recently had surgery for a knee injury and had just gotten out of the hospital. He had lost weight, so he appeared scrawny in his oversized shirt and suit. In addition, the surgery had physically weakened him, so he did not appear as energetic as Kennedy did and he perspired heavily during the debate. Nixon also looked nervous in contrast to the calm, confident Kennedy, and he refused to wear makeup, so his “five o’clock shadow” showed, making him appear disheveled and unshaven.

Nixon had also made a key error in agreeing to the debates in the first place. As vice president, he was the more experienced, well-known leader. The simple act of allowing his opponent to step on to the same stage with him in effect elevated Kennedy to same level as Nixon. In addition, Kennedy was taller, so to many viewers he appeared more “presidential.” Historians disagree about the extent to which the debates (particularly the first debate) influenced the outcome of the election. Other factors were at work as well: for example, Nixon’s Republican base (i.e., loyal Republican voters) was smaller than Kennedy’s Democratic base. However, Nixon believed the debates hurt him. The lesson stayed with him through the rest of his political career: during his 1968 and 1972 presidential campaigns he decided to avoid debating his opponents.



Nixon-Kennedy debate, 1960

# **LESSON 2: CUBAN INVASION PLAN, 1961**

## **Teacher Pages**

### **OVERVIEW**

The Bay of Pigs invasion represents one of the worst examples of U.S. foreign policy in the 20th century. Most students don't know much about it, so they won't realize how badly the invasion will turn out if they choose to launch it. Because some students might recognize the name "Bay of Pigs," the operation is called "Cuban Invasion Plan" in this lesson.

### **VOCABULARY**

- Fidel Castro—Communist leader of Cuba who seized power in 1959
- CIA—Central Intelligence Agency; spy agency for the U.S.
- Bay of Pigs—Area where Cuban refugees attempted an unsuccessful invasion of their homeland in 1961
- Platt Amendment—Rider to the 1901 U.S. Army Appropriations Act; among other things, it gave the U.S. the right to have a naval base in Guantánamo Bay, Cuba. The U.S. later pressured Cuba to incorporate the amendment's provisions into its own constitution.

### **DECISION-MAKING SKILLS EMPHASIZED**

- Identify any underlying problem
- Consider other points of view
- Ask questions about context
- Ask about reliability of sources
- Ask about analogies
- Set realistic goals
- Generate options
- Predict unintended consequences
- Play out options

# LESSON PLAN

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## **A. IN-DEPTH LESSON (one 40-minute class period)**

### Procedure:

Distribute Handout 1 and ask students to read it silently before deciding what they will do. Divide students into groups and have them discuss their choices. Allow time for students to ask questions. Bring the class back together and have each group explain its decision. After the groups have reported, distribute Handout 2 (which lists the outcomes) or tell the class what actually happened.

You can focus on analogies by distributing Handout 3 (suggested analysis of these analogies appears in the “Reflecting on Decision Making” section below) and focus on questions by distributing Handout 4. Make copies of Handout 5 in advance, cut them into strips (with one answer per strip), and place them on your desk so students can obtain answers only for the questions they choose to ask. After students have learned the outcomes, you can also ask them, “What questions might have helped the U.S. avoid a disaster at the Bay of Pigs?” List these questions on the board and discuss which might have been most helpful.

### Reflecting on Decision Making:

As described above, you can focus on the skills of evaluating analogies and asking questions by using Handouts 3 and 4, respectively. Ask students what they might have done differently, if anything, now that they know the outcomes. Which decision-making skills were especially important in making decisions about these issues? Which of the letters of **P-A-G-E** applied especially to this problem? (See the “Decision-Making Analysis” section below for ideas.) Ask students what they did well or poorly in terms of the **P-A-G-E** analysis. Discuss their answers, or have students write their answers in their journals or in their decision-making logs.

### Placing the Actual Decisions Into Historical Context:

Ask students the following: Did historical factors cause the disaster at the Bay of Pigs, or did the disaster occur as a result of poor choices made by President Kennedy and a small group of advisors? (Historical forces at the time included the Cold War, the upcoming congressional elections, and the historical background of U.S.-Cuban relations. The argument regarding key decision makers, particularly Kennedy, could highlight the mistakes Kennedy might have made.)

### Connecting to Today:

Ask students the following: Does the Bay of Pigs fiasco offer lessons that apply today? If so, what are they? One possibility concerns the power of the professional and permanent

“military-industrial complex” (a term coined by President Eisenhower) and the importance of civilian oversight of military and intelligence agencies.

Troubleshooting:

Make sure the class understands that the CIA is different from the military, since students need to recognize that the Bay of Pigs plan came from the CIA. Students need to know the extent to which the military agreed with the plan.

**B. QUICK MOTIVATOR (10–20 minutes)**

Assign Handout 1 as homework. In class, ask students to pair up and discuss their decision for three minutes or so. Ask for a show of hands for each option and briefly discuss students’ reasoning. Distribute Handout 2; for homework, ask students to comment on what they learned from these outcomes.

# TEACHER NOTES FOR EXPANDING DISCUSSION

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(For outcomes for students, see Handout 2.)

Allen Dulles, head of the CIA, had the agency perform a psychological profile of President John F. Kennedy using files from the FBI. He found out that while serving in Naval Intelligence in 1942, the president had had a sexual affair with a woman who was suspected of being a Nazi spy. Kennedy knew the FBI had this material and might have been nervous about someone leaking it to the press.

The president appeared to oppose the Bay of Pigs operation until the day he ordered it, just after a weekend vacation. When he returned on Monday, he told his advisors that the U.S. would launch the invasion. Historian Michael Beschloss speculates that Kennedy discussed the invasion with his father and two other informal advisors who convinced him to go ahead with the plan.

According to historian Thomas Paterson, a few months after the Bay of Pigs invasion, Castro sent Che Guevara to the White House with a box of cigars to request that the U.S. and Cuba settle their disputes. However, Kennedy refused.

You could point out to students that U.S. considered sending guerrilla fighters into the mountains of Cuba, but ultimately rejected the idea. Also, President Kennedy was the one who rejected the initial landing site at Trinidad, which led to the disastrous landing at the Bay of Pigs.

Historian Irving Janis believes that President Kennedy and his advisors were victims of “groupthink.” According to Janis, these men felt invulnerable, suppressed any doubts within their group, and failed to ask enough tough questions. They made numerous assumptions and didn’t fully examine them.

## DECISION-MAKING ANALYSIS:

### P = Problem

- \* - **Identify any underlying problem**
- \* - **Consider other points of view**
  - What are my assumptions? Emotions?

### A = Ask for information (about)

- \* - **Historical context (history of this issue; context in the world)**
- \* - **Reliability of sources**
- \* - **Historical analogies**

### G = Goals

- \* - **What are my main goals? Are they realistic?**
- \* - **Generate options to help achieve these goals. Are they ethical?**

### E = Effects

- \* - **Predict unintended consequences**
- \* - **Play out the options. What could go wrong?**

\* Denotes topics emphasized in this lesson

- **Underlying problem:** This situation had several underlying problems, including the Cold War and decolonization. The context of the Cold War may make students view the problem with Castro worse than it really was. They may not consider that perhaps Castro wasn't that important to the world's strategic balance. In terms of decolonization, students could consider that since other countries had relinquished control of their colonies, perhaps the U.S. was simply upset about losing most of its control over Cuba. If that was the case, then the U.S. needed to be careful not to overreact. Several historians (including Paterson and Freedman) believe Kennedy acted as he did because he felt Cuba was slipping away from U.S. control. On the other hand, Cuba lies very close to the U.S., and many people had concerns that the Soviet Union might use its relationship with Cuba to undermine U.S. security.
- **Other points of view:** Students should consider the problem from the point of view of the Cubans. Why was Castro so popular? How might people around the world have viewed the example of the U.S. helping to overthrow the government of a sovereign country?
- **Assumptions:** U.S. advisors made several assumptions: (1) No one would find out that the U.S. was involved in the invasion; (2) The Cuban air force was weak and could be easily defeated; (3) Castro's army was weak, and a small force could hold out against it; (4) the invasion would spark a popular uprising against Castro; and (5) U.S. forces would have an escape route to the mountains.
- **Ask about history:** Handout 4 has some questions, for which Handout 5 offers suggested answers.

- **Reliability of sources:** Many U.S. advisors had personal reasons to defend the proposed invasion. Some had been involved in planning the invasion for more than a year, and others opposed Castro so strongly that they wanted to approve any plan that had even the slightest chance of overthrowing him. Also, a great deal of U.S. information about Cuba came secondhand from anti-Castro Cuban exiles who were likely to overestimate the strength of opposition to Castro within Cuba. The U.S. had no hard evidence, so advisors had very little idea of what was really going on in Cuba.
- **Historical analogies:** Handout 3 contains possible analogies for students to consider. The first two (Guatemala and Iran) influenced the thinking of many of Kennedy's advisors—especially those in the CIA—during the Bay of Pigs. The plans for the apparent success of these operations (the long-term negative consequences hadn't become obvious yet) became blueprints for Cuba. The idea was that if the U.S. had a problem with a government, it could use CIA agents to start a rebellion that would topple that government. It could then install a government friendlier to the U.S. The men who planned the Bay of Pigs invasion often cited Guatemala as an analogy: there, the U.S. had sent a small rebel force to invade the country, and the CIA then used propaganda to scare the government into surrendering. These two analogies are weak, however, since both Guatemala and Iran had strong militaries open to the possibility of starting coups against their respective governments. In each case, convincing the army to oppose the government proved key. The Cuban army, however, lay firmly under Castro's control. An opposition group of rebels existed, but the U.S. could not convince the Cuban army to join the rebels.

Kennedy's advisors didn't consider the analogy regarding Indonesia, but they should have. The Indonesian case offered an example of a failed CIA attempt to overthrow a government. Had the advisors considered Indonesia, they might have realized what could go wrong during the Cuban invasion.

The analogies to Russia and World War II (analogies 4 and 5) are weak because the situations differed so greatly from that concerning the Bay of Pigs. In the Russian example, the U.S. had to deal with a large country torn asunder by civil war; Cuba's problems, by comparison, were not as severe. In addition, U.S. intervention in Russia didn't work, so the analogy definitely doesn't hold for the Bay of Pigs invasion. In World War II, Japan attacked the U.S. directly, which provided justification for fighting, whereas in Cuba, the U.S. hadn't been attacked or even directly provoked.

The Hungary analogy was very much on the mind of President Kennedy in the weeks before the Bay of Pigs invasion. He feared that the U.S. might experience what the Soviets did after invading Hungary and suffer condemnation for crushing an independent country. This analogy contributed to Kennedy's view that U.S. forces should play no direct combat role in the Bay of Pigs. Therefore, the plan went ahead without the U.S. military support needed to ensure its

success. The Hungary analogy unfortunately didn't persuade the president to cancel the operation.

President Kennedy also had concerns about what might happen in Berlin (analogy 7). He feared the Soviets might attack Berlin if he sent U.S. soldiers to Cuba, so he instead sent Cuban exiles to fight there.

- **Are the goals realistic?** In this case, they were not. Such a small force couldn't feasibly land in Cuba, fight off the army, and then begin a revolt against Castro. However, students may focus on why President Kennedy might have viewed the invasion's military objectives as realistic. Advice he received from President Eisenhower's advisors might have helped convince him, since all these men had more military planning experience than he did.
- **Generate options:** Kennedy had another option regarding the rebels training in Guatemala. His advisors told him if he postponed launching the Bay of Pigs invasion, he would have to move the rebels from Guatemala to the U.S. Actually, Kennedy could have moved them to a different country.
- **Play out the option:** This problem focuses on playing out the option (invading Cuba) to see what might go wrong. Handout 2 shows exactly what went wrong with this invasion. Students might consider what President Kennedy and his advisors thought would happen. (They thought they could establish a guerrilla force, which would lead to a general uprising in Cuba against Castro.)
- **Predict consequences:** Handout 2 describes some long-term consequences.

#### Further Research:

You can find Castro's speeches at the "Fidel Castro History Archive," available at <http://www.marxists.org/history/cuba/archive/castro/>.

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# **LESSON 2: CUBAN INVASION PLAN, 1961**

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## **Vocabulary**

- Fidel Castro—Communist leader of Cuba who seized power in 1959
- CIA—Central Intelligence Agency; spy agency for the U.S.
- Bay of Pigs—Area where Cuban refugees attempted an unsuccessful invasion of their homeland in 1961
- Platt Amendment—Rider to the 1901 U.S. Army Appropriations Act; among other things, it gave the U.S. the right to have a naval base in Guantánamo Bay, Cuba. The U.S. later pressured Cuba to incorporate the amendment's provisions into its own constitution.

# LESSON 2: CUBAN INVASION PLAN, 1961

## Student Handout 1: Problem



It is the spring of 1961, and you are President John F. Kennedy. You took office in January of this year. As the youngest person ever elected President of the United States, you have brought an air of optimism to the nation, and the American people anticipate a brighter future. Your advisors, most of whom are extremely experienced and savvy, share this optimism.

You have serious concerns about Cuba, which has recently become a communist country. Fidel Castro, a brutal dictator who has violated human rights and executed hundreds of Cubans, leads the communists there. Many middle-class Cubans have chosen to leave the country (several have moved to Miami and other places in the U.S.) rather than live under communism. Cuba also has established strong ties with the Soviet Union, and having a Soviet-friendly country only 90 miles away poses a grave threat to U.S. security.



Fidel Castro

About a month ago, a top CIA official, Richard Bissell, briefed you and your advisors on a secret plan to overthrow the communist government in Cuba. In his presentation, he outlined the plans' key points:

- Approximately 1400 Cuban exiles will invade Cuba and start a rebellion against the communist government. Although the group is small, it will have the advantage of surprise. By the time the Cuban government realizes what has happened, the exiles will have dispersed throughout the countryside and gathered rebels to fight Castro's forces; eventually, the rebels should be able to set up a rival government. The U.S. would then recognize and support the rival government. Castro will not be able to defeat the new U.S.-backed government and will face uprisings from the thousands of Cubans who oppose communism.
- A previous plan outlined a different strategy, in which smaller groups would land in Cuba, head directly for the mountains, and engage in guerrilla fighting. This plan seems much more effective since it provides "shock value": reports of an invasion would show that Castro cannot stop a small force, more Cubans will join the rebel side, and Castro's government would soon fall.
- Whichever invasion force you select will land in an area surrounded by swamps with only two roads leading out. Therefore, all the force has to do is block these two roads, and the Cuban army won't be able to attack them. The landing site lies about 80 miles from the mountains, so the rebels can escape there if things go badly.
- The communist government in Cuba is very unpopular. Once the rebel group gains momentum, they will quickly win the support of the many Cubans who despise living under communism. On the other hand, Castro still enjoys a great deal of personal popularity and the fact that the Soviets are supplying him with weapons means that he is becoming increasingly stronger. Soon, he will have jet fighters piloted by Cubans trained in Czechoslovakia. If the U.S. does not strike soon, Castro may become too powerful to overthrow.
- The exiles that the U.S. will send to Cuba left the island when Castro seized control of the government in 1959. The Cuban exiles have very high morale and will fight hard to liberate Cuba from both Castro and communism. However, the rainy season in Cuba starts next month, so the U.S. needs to strike now. If it doesn't, it will have to wait many months until the rainy season ends. The exiles' morale will diminish if they have to wait.
- The exiles have been training in Guatemala as a military unit (called a brigade) to prepare for the invasion. Although this was supposed to be a secret, many U.S. newspapers found out and have reported on this training. This embarrassed the Guatemalan government, which subsequently asked the Cuban exiles to leave their country. If we disband the group, they will become very angry and will accuse the U.S. of lacking the courage to pursue the invasion. It may also prove very difficult to disarm the exiles. If the U.S. postpones the invasion and brings the exiles to live in the U.S., they may reveal the secret plan to invade Cuba. The only alternative is to launch the invasion now.
- The U.S. has received reports that the Cuban military is weak. Their air force has only a few planes and is unreliable. The U.S. has B-26 planes that can take out the Cuban planes by bombing them while they're still on the ground.

- The Cuban army is also small and unreliable. Morale runs low, since most Cubans don't want to live under communism or fight for it. The army is poorly equipped and trained, and has suffered from mutinies and dissension.
- The U.S. will mask all evidence of its involvement in order to make the world believe that the Cuban exiles attacked on their own. For example, no one will be able to trace the B-26 planes to the U.S.: they're left over from World War II and won't have U.S. markings. The out-of-date planes will look similar to those used by the Cuban air force.
- The U.S. has a backup plan. If the Cuban exiles don't succeed, they will retreat to the Escambray Mountains to help the rebel guerrillas in their fight against Castro.

Your advisors were very impressed with the CIA report. Mr. Bissell has worked on this plan for more than a year, and his hard work shows in this briefing. He attended Groton School and Yale, and taught several of your advisors. Many people respect him.

You have the CIA report on the invasion plan. You can show that you're as tough on the communists as the Republicans are by ordering the invasion against the communists in Cuba. During the 1960 election, you supported the freedom fighters in Cuba and harshly criticized Castro. You and your advisors come from elite prep-school backgrounds, and many members of the U.S. military and CIA view your group as "Harvard intellectuals," so you need to be careful that people don't see you as thinkers rather than doers.

What will you do about the invasion plan?

1. Go along with Bissell's plan (send in the 1400 exiles and have them disperse, gather supporters, and start a rebellion) and have the U.S. help coordinate, support, and equip the mission. For example, U.S. ships would bombard the area where the exiles would invade.
2. Approve Bissell's plan but keep the U.S. almost entirely out of it: no U.S. planes, no ships for bombardment, no weapons that could be traced back to the U.S., and no U.S. personnel to help coordinate the attack.
3. Approve the previous plan (send in smaller groups and have them engage in guerrilla warfare).
4. Cancel the invasion.

# LESSON 2: CUBAN INVASION PLAN, 1961

## Student Handout 2: Outcomes

### THE BAY OF PIGS DISASTER

President Kennedy decided to launch the invasion at the Bay of Pigs. The attack, however, proved to be one of the worst disasters in 20th-century U.S. foreign policy. After the invasion force landed in a swamp, 20,000 well-armed Cuban troops quickly surrounded them. All the exiles were either killed or captured. During the attempt to bomb the Cuban air force, Cuban planes shot down half the American B-26s. The Cubans then bombed the exiles and sank several ships the U.S. sent to supply the invasion force.



#### Unintended consequences:

- Most people realized that the U.S. had backed the invasion, and many countries throughout the world consequently criticized America as imperialistic. Also, in the past the U.S. had condemned the Soviets for overthrowing the governments of other countries. The Bay of Pigs invasion—an attempt to overthrow a government—thus made the U.S. seem hypocritical. In all, the invasion damaged America's reputation, leading other countries to view the U.S. as both immoral and incompetent.
- The disaster weakened the Kennedy administration and led to formal military agreements between Cuba and the Soviet Union in which the Soviets agreed to send troops and nuclear missiles to Cuba
- The attack garnered international sympathy for Castro, thus strengthening his hold over Cuba. It also drove Castro closer to the Soviets so he could prevent another attack.
- The fiasco seriously injured many Cuban rebels, as shown in the following photograph:



Wounded Cuban from the Bay of Pigs listening to President Kennedy speak, December 1962

President Kennedy approved the plan to invade Cuba at the Bay of Pigs but kept the U.S. almost entirely out of the operation so as not to tarnish America's reputation and also to prevent a retaliatory Soviet attack on Berlin. Unfortunately, as the level of U.S. involvement in the invasion decreased, the possibility of success also dropped. Without significant U.S. assistance, the invasion force had no chance. However, some historians believe the Bay of Pigs invasion would have failed with or without U.S. support. The invasion did not take the Cubans by surprise, the rebel force was just too weak compared to the Cuban army, and the landing site offered the exiles little chance of escaping to the countryside to start a rebellion. Secretary of State Dean Rusk concurred, saying that the small rebel force had almost no chance of success, with or without U.S. help.

The CIA launched the invasion but did not send U.S. military forces to support the Cuban exiles. Historian Michael Beschloss speculates that the CIA leaders might have believed that when the actual invasion occurred, the president would change his mind and send U.S. forces to Cuba to prevent a disaster. President Kennedy, however, withheld U.S. involvement, and the disaster unfolded.

After the Bay of Pigs failure became obvious, President Kennedy asked, "How could I have been so stupid to let them go ahead?" His top advisors also regretted the decision and felt they had given the president bad advice.

Part of the problem was that Kennedy had only taken office a few months earlier and did not want to appear weak by canceling a plan that took tough action against the communists. His advisors also had a flawed decision-making process: the group shared an optimism that they could accomplish anything they put their minds to, and thus didn't encourage dissenting opinions. Senator William Fulbright and presidential advisor Arthur Schlesinger had expressed serious reservations about the plan. Although President Kennedy had read memos from these two men, the larger group of advisors at the planning meetings never discussed these contrary views. In fact, the CIA consulted few outside experts because they wanted the plan to remain secret. As a result, some very

knowledgeable people—those who could ask tough questions—never attended the meetings.

In addition, no one asked questions about the accuracy of the available information or assumptions that the CIA had made about the operation. For example, the CIA believed that the Cuban military was weak, but in reality the Cuban army had 200,000 well-equipped soldiers. The Cuban air force was also strong enough to fight off the old B-26 bombers. At the last planning meeting, President Kennedy asked each advisor for his overall judgment of whether to go ahead with the invasion. The pressure to conform was intense, and no one explored what could go wrong—which was plenty. The president ended the meeting before everyone could answer; it turned out that two of the men who hadn't answered held dissenting opinions from the rest of the group.

In light of the press reports about the invasion that appeared before the scheduled attack, it seems amazing that the advisors went ahead with the invasion anyway. How could anyone believe the invasion was secret if newspapers had already reported it? In addition, the Kennedy administration overlooked some obvious questions: Wouldn't the Cubans be readily able to shoot down the out-of-date B-26s? Was the invasion's landing site close enough to the mountains, where the exiles could retreat if things went wrong? (No.) Couldn't the U.S. have transferred the Cuban exiles from Guatemala to another country, rather than choosing between invading Cuba or moving the exiles to the U.S.? Could the U.S. have secreted the exiles into Cuba in small groups, rather than as a single large invasion force? Finally, why did the U.S. need to invade Cuba at all?

# **LESSON 2: CUBAN INVASION PLAN, 1961**

## **Student Handout 3: Analogies**

Evaluate each of these historical analogies in terms of the 1961 situation in Cuba. How helpful is each one?

1. The CIA successfully overthrew the Guatemalan government in 1954 by organizing a small group of rebels to invade the country. Therefore, this rebel attack will also succeed.
2. The U.S. successfully overthrew the Iranian government by organizing a group of rebels to persuade the army to take control of the country. Therefore, this invasion will also succeed.
3. The CIA tried to overthrow the government in Indonesia in 1958 by backing a rebellion there, but it failed.
4. The U.S. sent troops into Russia in 1919 to overthrow the country's communist government, but did not succeed in doing so.
5. After Pearl Harbor, the U.S. successfully sent its army to defeat Japan and make changes to its government.
6. In 1956, the Soviet Union sent troops to Hungary to quash a revolution for independence. People worldwide condemned the Soviets as cruel oppressors and sympathized with the Hungarians. Newspapers around the world published photographs of tanks crushing Hungarian civilians.
7. Cuba is vulnerable to U.S. attack, and because the Soviets are so far away, they can't do much to protect it. However, U.S.-controlled West Berlin, which lies completely within Soviet-controlled East Germany, is vulnerable to a Soviet attack. If the U.S. attacks Cuba, the Soviets may attack West Berlin in retaliation.

## **LESSON 2: CUBAN INVASION PLAN, 1961**

### **Student Handout 4**

#### **QUESTIONS:**

1. How strong is the Cuban military? How strong are the anti-Cuban forces?
2. If the U.S. attacks Cuba with its own forces, how many troops would it need, and what kind of military support would they require?
3. If the plan works and the U.S. overthrows Castro, how will Cuba change?
4. What do the critics say? What arguments have they made?
5. How much of the “secret” training in Guatemala has been reported? Does Castro know an invasion is imminent? Does Khrushchev (the leader of the Soviet Union) know anything about the invasion? Will the invasion really come as a surprise?
6. Can the Cuban exiles really pull off the invasion and defeat the Cuban army? Do the exiles get along with one another? Are they well trained?
7. What is the history of U.S.-Cuban relations?

# LESSON 2: CUBAN INVASION PLAN, 1961

## Student Handout 5: Suggested Answers

### QUESTIONS:

- 1. How strong is the Cuban military? How strong are the anti-Cuban forces?**

The Cuban military has about 32,000 standard forces and 200,000 reserves. They have a small number of planes and several tanks they received from the Soviet Union. Morale may be low, as the CIA has suggested, but no sign of disloyalty exists within the Cuban military. The CIA estimates that about 3000 Cubans are actively resisting Castro, with another 20,000 sympathizers.
- 2. If the U.S. attacks Cuba with its own forces, how many troops would it need, and what kind of military support would they require?**

A Pentagon report stated that the U.S. would need at least 5000 troops, plus extensive air power, for a successful invasion. In addition, the invasion requires huge quantities of supplies over an extended period of time.
- 3. If the plan works and the U.S. overthrows Castro, how will Cuba change?**

Of course, the U.S. wants the island to become democratic. Cuba, however, did not have a democracy before Castro—dictator Fulgencio Batista led Cuba's government. If the rebels overthrow Castro, the country may revert to a dictatorship. More likely, Castro's supporters would fight to continue the revolution, so the country would likely fall into civil war and end up worse off than it is now. As a result, countries throughout the world would probably condemn the U.S. for its actions in Cuba.
- 4. What do the critics say? What arguments have they made?**
  - The joint chiefs believe the invasion has only a relatively low chance of success (no more than 30%)
  - Theodore Mann, Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs, stated that a popular uprising against Castro is unlikely, which would leave the U.S. with terrible alternatives: abandoning the Cuban exiles, trying to transport them to the mountains (which would lead to the logistical problem of having to supply them there), or involving U.S. forces directly, which other countries would consider an outright attack (and which would increase sympathy for Castro)
  - Advisor McGeorge Bundy feels the various rebel groups do not get along very well at all. If this is true, how can these groups pull off a complicated invasion and move to the mountains as a cohesive guerrilla force? How will they be able to set up a successful provisional government?
  - Senator Fulbright, Chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee, feels the political costs of the invasion would be too great, given the small threat posed by Castro

- Secretary of State Dean Rusk believes it will be impossible to keep the operation secret and prevent people from learning of the role the U.S. played in the invasion

**5. How much of the “secret” training in Guatemala has been reported? Does Castro know an invasion is imminent? Does Khrushchev (the leader of the Soviet Union) know anything about the invasion? Will the invasion really come as a surprise?**

Many U.S. newspapers have reported on the training in Guatemala, including *The New York Times*, *Hispanic American Report*, *the Nation*, *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, *Los Angeles Times*, *Miami Herald*, *Washington Post*, *U.S. News & World Report*, and *The New Republic*. The *New York Times* report stated that the rebels were training for a Cuban invasion that would take place very soon. If Cuban leaders didn't hear about the rebels through their own agents, they could have learned about them through American papers. Khrushchev told one of your advisors that he knows about a possible invasion. How could anyone think the invasion will be a surprise?

**6. Can the Cuban exiles really pull off the invasion and defeat the Cuban army? Do the exiles get along with one another? Are they well trained?**

The exiles have trained for regular combat, the kind they might encounter during an invasion. They have not received training in guerrilla warfare. It remains unclear whether they can defeat the Cuban army, which is much larger and has tanks, which the exiles do not. Air power is crucial: without it, the exiles can't defeat the Cubans. According to several sources, the exiles consist of several groups that do not get along particularly well. Each faction tends to focus on its own interests, not the interests of the group as a whole.

**7. What is the history of U.S.-Cuban relations?**

In the late 1800s, the U.S. invested in Cuban sugar plantations. In the Spanish-American War of 1898, the U.S. drove Spain from Cuba and then made Cuba dependent on the U.S. with the Platt Amendment, which stated that the U.S. could intervene in Cuba any time it felt it necessary. The U.S. intervened at least five times in the following decades, during which a series of dictators ran Cuba. By the 1950s, the U.S. owned 40% of Cuban sugar crops, 80% of utilities (heat, telephone, electricity, etc.), and 90% of the country's mining industry.

# **LESSON 2: CUBAN INVASION PLAN, 1961**

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## **Student Handout 6: Primary Source**

### **Inspector General's Survey of the Cuban Operation October 1961 (excerpt) (Report after the failed invasion)**

This is only a small excerpt from the Inspector General's report. The full report can be found at <http://www2.chass.ncsu.edu/slatta/hi453/cuba61.htm>.

#### **Existence of Warnings**

34. The latest United States Intelligence Board, Office of National Estimates, and Office of Current Intelligence studies on Cuba available at that time provided clear warning that a calm reappraisal was necessary.
35. But the atmosphere was not conducive to it. The chief of the project and his subordinates had been subjected to such grueling pressures of haste and overwork for so long that their impetus and drive would have been difficult to curb for such a purpose. The strike preparations, under the powerful influence of the project's paramilitary chief, to which there was no effective counterbalance, had gained such momentum that the operation had surged far ahead of policy. The Cuban volunteers were getting seriously restive and threatening to get out of hand before they could be committed. The Guatemalan Government was urging the Agency to take away its Cubans. The rainy season was hard upon the Caribbean. The reappraisal never happened, though these very factors that helped prevent it should have warned the agency of its necessity.
36. These adverse factors were compounded and exacerbated by policy restrictions that kept coming one upon another throughout a period of weeks and right up until the point of no return. These caused successive planning changes and piled up more confusion. Rapidly accumulating stresses, in our opinion, caused the Agency operators to lose sight of the fact that the margin of error was swiftly narrowing and had even vanished before the force was committed. At some point in this degenerative cycle they should have gone to the president and said frankly: "Here are the facts. The operation should be halted. We request further instructions."

#### **Consequences of Cancellation**

37. Cancellation would have been embarrassing. The brigade could not have been held any longer in a ready status, probably could not have been held at all. Its members would have spread their disappointment far and wide. Because of multiple security leaks in this huge operation, the world already knew about the preparations, and the Government's and the Agency's embarrassment would have been public.

38. Cancellation, however, would have averted failure, which brought even more embarrassment, carried death and misery to hundreds, destroyed millions of dollars worth of U.S. property, and seriously damaged U.S. prestige.
39. The other possible outcome—the one the project strove to achieve—was a successful brigade lodgment housing the Revolutionary Council but isolated from the rest of Cuba by swamps and Castro's forces. Arms were held in readiness for 30,000 Cubans who were expected to make their way unarmed through the Castro army and wade the swamps to rally to the liberators. Except for this, we are unaware of any planning by the Agency or by the U.S. Government for this success.
40. It is beyond the scope of this report to suggest what U.S. action might have been taken to consolidate victory, but we can confidently assert that the Agency had no intelligence evidence that Cubans in significant numbers could or would join the invaders or that there was any kind of an effective and cohesive resistance movement under anybody's control, let alone the Agency's, that could have furnished internal leadership for an uprising in support of the invasion. The consequences of a successful lodgment, unless overtly supported by U.S. armed forces, were dubious.

### **The Choice**

41. The choice was between retreat without honor and a gamble between ignominious defeat and dubious victory. The Agency chose to gamble, at rapidly decreasing odds.
42. The project had lost its covert nature by November 1960. As it continued to grow, operational security became more and more diluted. For more than three months before the invasion the U.S. press was reporting, often with some accuracy, on the recruiting and training of Cubans. Such massive preparations could only be laid to the U.S. The Agency's name was freely linked with these activities. Plausible denial was a pathetic illusion.
43. Insistence on adhering to the formalities imposed by a non-attributability, which no longer existed produced absurdities and created obstacles and delays. For example, the use of obsolete and inadequate B-26 aircraft, instead of the more efficient A-5s originally requested, was a concession to non-attributability, which hampered the operation severely. A certain type of surgical tent requested for the landing beach was not supplied because it could be traced to the U.S. A certain modern rifle was not supplied, for the same reason, although several thousand of them had recently been declared surplus. In the end, as could have been foreseen, everything was traced to the U.S.
44. U.S. policy called for a covert operation and assigned it to the agency chartered to handle such things. When the project became blown to every newspaper reader the Agency should have informed higher authority that it was no longer operating within its charter. Had national policy then called for continuation of the overt effort under a joint national task force, vastly greater manpower resources would have been available for the invasion and the Agency could have performed an effective supporting role. The costly delays experienced by the Agency in negotiating for support from the armed services would have been avoided.

**QUESTIONS FOR ANALYSIS**

1. According to the Inspector General, what factors led to the fiasco at the Bay of Pigs?
2. How reliable is this document as a source?

# LESSON 3: CUBAN MISSILE CRISIS, 1962

## Teacher Pages

### OVERVIEW

The Cuban missile crisis is one of the most analyzed decision-making problems in U.S. history. It was a high-stakes situation, involving the risk of nuclear war. Fortunately, a complete documentary record of the U.S. decision-making process during this crisis exists. The meeting transcripts provide us with the immediacy of the subject and give us a glimpse into what many people were thinking during those 13 frightening days. Many advisors later said that the crisis was emotionally exhausting for them. This lesson, which includes all ten decision-making skills, provides numerous options for helping students understand the crisis as they hone their ability to make decisions. Thirteen handouts appear in this lesson; however, unless you're teaching an entire course on the missile crisis or the 1960s, don't try to use all of the handouts. The discussions that come from these handouts can go on for many classes.

### VOCABULARY

- U-2—U.S. spy plane
- Nikita Khrushchev—Premier (leader) of the Soviet Union who placed nuclear missiles in Cuba
- CIA—Central Intelligence Agency; U.S. spy and information-gathering agency that collected information on the Soviet missiles in Cuba
- Sphere of influence—A geographical area or region over which a country indirectly exerts some form of political, military, economic, or social control
- SAM—Surface-to-air missile; used to shoot down planes
- Fulgencio Batista—Dictator of Cuba until Castro overthrew him in 1959
- Fidel Castro—Dictator who took over Cuba in 1959 and remained in power throughout the terms of ten U.S. presidents
- Operation Mongoose—unsuccessful U.S. operation to overthrow Castro
- EXCOMM—Executive committee that President Kennedy organized to determine U.S. action in response to the Cuban missile crisis
- Blockade—Naval action to prevent ships from entering or exiting a specified area
- ICBM—Intercontinental ballistic missile, which, as the name implies, can be launched from one continent to another. These missiles have a longer range than MRBMs (medium-range ballistic missiles) and IRBMs (intermediate-range ballistic missiles).

### DECISION-MAKING SKILLS EMPHASIZED

- Identify underlying problem
- Consider other points of view
- Recognize assumptions
- Ask questions about context
- Ask about reliability of sources

- Ask about analogies
- Set realistic goals
- Generate options
- Predict unintended consequences
- Play out options

# LESSON PLAN

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## A. IN-DEPTH LESSON (one to two 40-minute class periods)

### Procedure:

Distribute Handout 1; ask students to read it silently and then meet in groups to decide what they will do.

**OPTIONAL:** You might want to emphasize the “generating options” skill by deleting the last paragraph of Handout 1 (this paragraph describes six options generated at the time). Ask students what they will do and why, and list their decisions on the board. Show the class the options generated during the actual crisis and then ask what students learned by comparing their list to the actual list.

**OPTIONAL:** After discussing for 10–15 minutes what students will choose to do based on Handout 1, you can distribute Handout 2, which has the same options but includes arguments some advisors made at the time. After they’ve read through these arguments, give students time to reevaluate their decisions and then resume the class discussion on what to do.

After groups have reported their decisions, distribute Handout 3, which lists the outcomes for the first decision. Next, distribute Handout 4, which discusses the diplomatic phase of the crisis after the U.S. implemented the blockade. Again, students can discuss and decide in groups and then ask you two questions. Bring the class back together and discuss their choices. Distribute Handout 5, which lists the outcomes of the second crisis.

**OPTIONAL:** At some point during the lesson, distribute Handout 6, which asks students to make decisions from Khrushchev’s point of view. After discussing their choices, distribute Handout 7, which lists the outcomes of the Soviet decision. Ask students how (or if) these handouts changed their perceptions of the Soviet point of view. Would students now make different decisions? If so, what would they do?

**OPTIONAL:** You could set a time limit for one or more of the decisions to help students feel the pressure the decision makers felt during the actual crisis. For example, you could tell the class, “Your advisors, and the entire country, are all looking to you for a decision, and it must be made immediately—you have 13 minutes to decide what to do.”

**SKILLS OPTIONS:** Handout 8 focuses on underlying problems and assumptions. Handout 9 focuses on analogies, which decision makers considered at length during the actual crisis.

### Reflecting on Decision Making:

Ask students what they would have done differently, if anything, now that they know the historical outcomes. Which decision-making skills were especially important in making decisions about these issues? (Skills handouts are mentioned above in the lesson plan.) Which of the letters of **P-A-G-E** applied especially to this problem? (See the “Decision-Making Analysis” section below for ideas.) Ask students what they did well or poorly in terms of the **P-A-G-E** analysis. Discuss their answers, or have students write their answers in their journals or in their decision-making logs.

### Placing the Actual Decisions Into Historical Context:

Ask students the following: Did certain historical factors cause the missile crisis and its outcome, or did the crisis occur as the result of the choices of a few individuals? (The decisions of key individuals greatly influenced the crisis, but students should also consider the Cold War context, the development of nuclear and missile technology, the context of U.S.-Cuban relations, public opinion in both countries, and the upcoming U.S. congressional elections.)

### Connecting to Today:

Ask students the following: Do any situations exist today in which leaders have to—or should—put themselves in the shoes of their adversaries? To what extent do the lessons of the Cuban missile crisis apply to today, especially in terms of nuclear proliferation? Are nuclear weapons more or less dangerous to the world than they were in 1962?

### Troubleshooting:

Remind students that the city of Berlin lay entirely in East Germany, so it would have been difficult—and perhaps impossible—for the U.S. to defend the city against a Soviet attack. Make sure students don’t get confused between SAMs (surface-to-air missiles) and nuclear missiles (ICBMs, MRBMs, IRBMs).

## **B. QUICK MOTIVATOR (20–30 minutes)**

For a shortened lesson, use Handouts 10 and 11. Assign Handout 10 as homework. In class, ask students to pair up and discuss their choices for three minutes or so. Ask for a show of hands for each choice and briefly discuss students’ reasoning. Distribute Handout 3, which gives the outcomes of the initial decision. Next, distribute Handout 11 and repeat the process of having students decide, vote, and discuss their choices. Distribute Handout 5, which lists the outcomes of the crisis. For homework, ask students to comment on what they learned from this lesson.

# TEACHER NOTES FOR EXPANDING DISCUSSION

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(For outcomes for students, see Handouts 3, 5, and 7.)

Several historians believe that Robert McNamara suggested the implementation of a blockade on the second day of the EXCOMM meetings, while others say he suggested it on the first day. The transcripts of the first day's meetings (see Chang) indicate that he suggested the blockade on the first day.

Historian Michael Beschloss has argued that President Kennedy's September 1962 warning speech was a major mistake, as explained in "Point of view," under the "Decision-Making Analysis" section below.

Theodore Sorensen's summary of options presents four potential courses of action. This lesson lists six options because advisors discussed all of them at various points during the deliberations.

Khrushchev feared the Turks might seize control of the U.S. nuclear missiles in Turkey. (He was wrong—he probably did not know that the U.S. maintained control over the nuclear warheads.) He seemed especially concerned that a rogue officer might launch the missiles on his own. Thus, Khrushchev wanted very much for the missiles to be removed from Turkey.

In the 1962 novel *Fail Safe*, failures in nuclear safety systems lead to the destruction of large cities. It remains unclear whether Kennedy, Khrushchev, or Castro had read this novel before the onset of the Cuban missile crisis.

Historian Irving Janis believes Kennedy's advisors had learned a great deal from the Bay of Pigs fiasco. According to Janis, they asked many questions, examined their assumptions, changed their minds, and tried to avoid stereotyping or making generalizations about their enemy.

## DECISION-MAKING ANALYSIS:

### P = Problem

- Identify any underlying problem
- Consider other points of view
- What are my assumptions? Emotions?

### A = Ask for information (about)

- Historical context (history of this issue; context in the world)
- Reliability of sources
- \* - **Historical analogies**

### G = Goals

- What are my main goals? Are they realistic?
- Generate options to help achieve these goals. Are they ethical?

### E = Effects

- Predict unintended consequences
- \* - **Play out the options. What could go wrong?**

\* Denotes topics emphasized in this lesson

- **Identifying underlying problems:** Handout 8 (part A) addresses this skill, and this section of the handout could lead to a thought-provoking discussion about possible frameworks for the crisis. Many students will likely select #1 (“This crisis is really about the strategic [nuclear] balance of power in the world.”). However, evidence from the meetings shows that several advisors openly discounted the idea that the crisis was about any strategic balance. Some generals who advocated an airstrike felt that removing Castro from power was the number-one goal. President Kennedy chose to stick to a single goal: removing the Soviet missiles from Cuba. A great deal of discussion went on during the meetings regarding the possible effects on allies (#3, prestige) if the U.S. allowed the Soviets keep the missiles in Cuba, as well as the strain on allies if the U.S. attacked Cuba. According to historian Alexander George, President Kennedy believed the crisis was partly about manhood (#4). He felt he had to show Khrushchev that he was man enough to stand up to him or the Soviet leader would continue to make risky choices that would endanger the world. Secretary of Defense McNamara stated that the crisis was really about domestic politics (#5), rather than strategic balance.
- **Point of view:**
  1. According to historian Michael Beschloss, President Kennedy’s September 1962 warning speech was a major mistake. The speech committed the U.S. to act if the Soviets placed offensive weapons in Cuba, thereby forcing the president down a more dangerous path than he might have preferred. Beschloss believes the president gave the speech for

domestic political reasons, feeling he would never have to carry out the warning because Khrushchev would never actually place offensive weapons in Cuba. Kennedy, however, misjudged Khrushchev's fear of U.S. nuclear dominance and therefore his willingness to place short-range missiles in Cuba. In this case, Kennedy seriously misjudged Khrushchev's point of view.

2. Ask students whether they predicted the Soviets would stop at the blockade or run (break through) the blockade. Students who predict the former might reason that the Soviets would stop because being so close to the U.S. and so far from the Soviet Union put them at a military disadvantage. However, there is another reason that one U.S. advisor at the time considered: the Soviets worried that if the U.S. captured their ships, it would provide the Americans with a full view of Soviet weaponry and technology. Did any of your students think of this reason?
  3. Both Kennedy and Khrushchev felt the other was being pressured by their military to take excessively strong stands. Kennedy empathized with Khrushchev for having to deal with military leaders who wanted to push for dangerously strong action. When Robert Kennedy told a Soviet leader that his brother was being pressured to launch an airstrike within days, Khrushchev felt that the military might overthrow President Kennedy. However, clear evidence exists that some U.S. military leaders actually wanted to launch an attack. When the president told his Joint Chiefs of Staff that he had resolved the crisis peacefully, one of them said, "We've been *had* [cheated]!" Another said, "It's the greatest defeat in our history, Mr. President... *We should invade today!*"
  4. The change in the second letter Khrushchev sent occurred because Soviet leaders read an article by Walter Lippmann in *The New York Times* proposing that the U.S. trade its missiles in Turkey, and they assumed Lippmann spoke for the Kennedy administration. Thus, Soviet leaders apparently thought they could add the demand for the U.S. to trade the missiles in Turkey; this demand then appeared in the second letter.
- **Identify assumptions:** Handout 8 (part B) addresses this skill. Did students make either of these assumptions? Some U.S. generals made the first one, and nearly all U.S. advisors made the second one.
  - **Ask questions about context:** Students need to ask many questions about the context of the Cold War and the relations between the U.S., Cuba, and the Soviet Union. During the EXCOMM meetings, the advisors asked each other many questions, resulting in a great deal of probing and rethinking. Kennedy specifically asked why Khrushchev would place missiles in Cuba; he concluded (correctly) that Khrushchev felt the Soviets' long-range missiles were weak. Another key question involved whether the missiles in Cuba changed the strategic balance between the U.S. and the Soviet Union. Advisors disagreed. Some believed it did not, since the U.S. maintained a decided advantage in long-range missiles—even with the Soviet missiles in Cuba. Others felt the missiles represented a dangerous addition to Soviet nuclear power and did alter the strategic balance.

- **Ask about reliability of evidence:** The members of EXCOMM kept asking for more reliable evidence in order to make sure they understood the situation correctly. They put off making a decision for four or five days so that they could gather more evidence to back up the information they already had. This proved crucial to making informed decisions during the crisis.
- **Ask about analogies:** Handout 9 addresses analogies. Remind students that they should look for differences and similarities between each analogy and the Cuban missile crisis.
  1. Regarding the Boer War analogy: Cuba lies closer to the U.S. than South Africa does to Britain, so the U.S. might have had an easier time fighting in Cuba there than the British did in South Africa. However, the British encountered guerilla fighting in the Boer War, and the U.S. might also have had to face guerrillas in Cuba. Regarding the Russia-Finland example: the cold climate represented a major reason for the Russian defeat, but climate wouldn't have posed much of a problem in Cuba. Regarding the Korean War example: the Chinese got involved in the Korean War largely because it threatened their border; the Soviets faced no similar threat with Cuba, although it remains possible that had the U.S. invaded the island, the Soviets might have sent in ground troops to counter the American forces.
  2. A U.S. attack in Cuba would not necessarily be analogous to the Japanese sneak attack on Pearl Harbor. At the time of Pearl Harbor, the U.S. had not entered the war and posed only a possible threat—not a direct one—to the Japanese. However, the missiles in Cuba did pose a direct threat to the U.S., so Kennedy could plausibly have portrayed an airstrike on the missile sites as self-defense.
  3. Europeans lived in the shadow of nuclear weapons because they had no other choice. The U.S., however, did have the ability to do something about the presence of enemy nuclear missiles just miles away from its borders. America's Cold War ideology also required the U.S. to maintain the perception that it could stand strong against communism, so simply allowing the Soviets to place missiles 90 miles from American shores would not have been a realistic option. This analogy goes to the heart of whether the missiles altered the strategic balance of power between the U.S. and the Soviet Union. Do students think the missiles made a difference in this regard?
  4. The U.S. publicly announced that it had missiles in Turkey; the Soviets did not do the same regarding their missiles in Cuba. Also, Cuba and the U.S. were more hostile to each other than were Turkey and the Soviet Union; thus, the Cuban missiles posed more of a threat to the U.S. than the missiles in Turkey did to the Soviet Union. However, the fact remains that both the U.S. and Soviet Union did place missiles in close proximity to their enemy. Khrushchev emphasized this analogy in his letters to Kennedy, who ineffectively argued against it in the EXCOMM meetings. Kennedy said that the Soviets placing missiles in Cuba would be like the U.S. placing missiles in Turkey today. Advisors pointed out that the U.S.

had placed missiles in Turkey, but Kennedy said that this had occurred years ago, when the U.S. lagged in the missile race. He argued that the U.S. needed to correct the imbalance. However, the existence of U.S. missiles in Turkey provided one of Khrushchev's motivations for placing Soviet missiles in Cuba. Overall, this is a strong analogy.

5. This was a helpful analogy that reminded U.S. advisors and leaders to keep open communications with the enemy and not to assume how the enemy might act. Both cases involved tense diplomatic activity amidst the looming threat of war, and both placed a premium on maintaining careful communications.
  6. FDR used the term "quarantine" in a general way, not to describe a blockade against a specific country. Despite the poor analogy, however, the use of a softer term than "blockade" might have helped keep the situation from escalating.
  7. The U.S. did not deliberately sink the *Maine* in 1898; in addition, manufacturing an incident to justify war is completely unethical, making this an absurd analogy. However, Robert Kennedy did suggest it. Thankfully, he only mentioned the idea once and then abandoned it.
- **Goal:** As noted above, President Kennedy stuck to his goal of getting the Soviet missiles out of Cuba and resisted the suggestion to remove Castro from power
  - **Generate options:** If you deleted the last paragraph from Handout 1 (see lesson plan above), you focused on this skill. Did your students generate the same options that advisors generated during the actual crisis?
  - **Play out the option:**
    1. Khrushchev did not thoroughly consider the consequences of placing nuclear missiles in Cuba. No evidence exists that the Soviets made any plan for what to do if the U.S. discovered the missiles before the Soviets completed construction of the missile launch sites.
    2. Robert McNamara and his deputy apparently did not thoroughly consider the consequences of an airstrike versus those of a blockade. They spent just a few hours imagining the moves and countermoves for each option, after which McNamara took a strong stand in favor of the blockade.
    3. President Kennedy struggled with the difficulty of trading the U.S. missiles in Turkey for those in Cuba. As he did, he imagined what might happen if the U.S. did not make the trade and instead launched an air strike or extended the blockade to include all materials coming into Cuba. Such actions might have ultimately led to war.
    4. One feature of playing out an option thoroughly is having a backup plan. President Kennedy wasn't convinced that Khrushchev would accept the informal offer for the U.S. to remove its missiles in Turkey at a later date. He therefore formed a backup plan in which Secretary-General of the United Nations U Thant would publicly suggest that the U.S. withdraw its missiles from Turkey in exchange for the Soviets' removing their missiles from Cuba.
    5. McNamara wanted to do something quickly, because as he played out the option of waiting, he feared that the Soviets would find out that the U.S.

knew about the missiles in Cuba. The U.S. would then no longer have the element of surprise on its side if it decided to take action against the Soviets.

- **Predict unintended consequences:** The “Play out the option” section above examines short-term, “if we do this, they might do that” consequences. The long-term consequences of nuclear war obviously would have been horrendous. However, EXCOMM also considered the consequences of giving up Berlin or allowing the Soviet missiles to remain in Cuba. Had the U.S. chosen either of these options, the Soviets might have implemented more severe measures, which could have resulted in war or in a loss of power and prestige for the U.S.

#### Further Research:

Both the *Thirteen Days* Web site (listed in the “Sources” section) and the John F. Kennedy Presidential Library offer several primary sources and also list many helpful audio resources and videotapes.

The *New York Times* Web site contains many excellent articles from the *Times* on the crisis; available at <http://www.nytimes.com/books/97/10/19/home/missile.html> (registration required).

The National Security Agency has numerous articles and documents on the crisis available at <http://www.nsa.gov/cuba/cuba00007.cfm>.

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# LESSON 3: CUBAN MISSILE CRISIS, 1962

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## Vocabulary

- U-2—U.S. spy plane
- Nikita Khrushchev—Premier (leader) of the Soviet Union who placed nuclear missiles in Cuba
- CIA—Central Intelligence Agency; U.S. spy and information-gathering agency that collected information on the Soviet missiles in Cuba
- Sphere of influence—A geographical area or region over which a country indirectly exerts some form of political, military, economic, or social control
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- Operation Mongoose—unsuccessful U.S. operation to overthrow Castro
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# LESSON 3: CUBAN MISSILE CRISIS, 1962

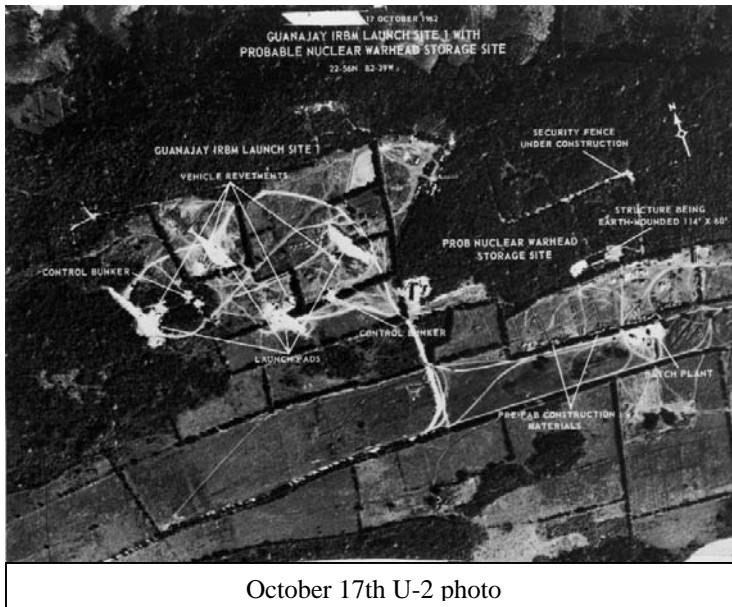
## Student Handout 1: Problem

### FIRST DECISION, OCTOBER 21ST



October							1962
Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	
30	1	2	3	4	5	6	
7	8	9	10	11	12	13	
14	15	16	17	18	19	20	
<b>21</b>	22	23	24	25	26	27	
28	29	30	31	1	2	3	
4	5	6	7	8	9	10	

It is October 21, 1962, and you are President John F. Kennedy. Five days ago (October 16th), you learned that the Soviet Union has been constructing nuclear missile sites in Cuba. This photograph, one of several taken by a U-2 spy plane over Cuba, shows one such missile site.



You and your advisors had already discussed the possibility that the Soviets might place nuclear missiles in Cuba, since they have shipped other types of weapons to the island for months. Still, almost every advisor (except for the CIA director) felt that Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev would not try such a move because it would clearly provoke the U.S. In a speech in September, you explicitly warned the Soviets that placing offensive (nuclear)

missiles in Cuba would be unacceptable, and that if they did, the U.S. would take action.

Khrushchev reassured you that the Soviets would not send missiles to Cuba—an obvious lie. In fact, the Soviets probably had begun construction of the missile sites before you gave your speech in September. In recent U.S. polls, 62% of those questioned disagreed with the current U.S. policy regarding Cuba, and about 70% of Americans wanted the U.S. to take a stronger stance. Republicans have portrayed the Democrats as soft on communism and have accused them of failing to maintain America's sphere of influence in Latin America. Unless the U.S. takes stronger action, the Republicans may win enough seats to take over the House or the Senate in the next election, which will take place in a few weeks.

The CIA director estimated that the Soviet missiles “could be fully operational within two weeks,” but one or more of the missiles “could be operational much sooner.” On Saturday, October 20th, as you and your advisors tried to decide upon a course of action, the CIA reported that four of the launch sites had probably become operational. All U.S. military personnel who examined the photos agree that the launch sites are for about 40 nuclear missiles, some of which have a range of 600 miles. Others have a range of more than 1000 miles and can reach many major U.S. cities (see the chart at right). Overall, the U.S. has a huge advantage compared to the Soviet Union in nuclear missiles. The U.S. has about 170 modern ICBMs (intercontinental missiles capable of striking the Soviet Union from the U.S.), while the Soviets have only about 24 older ICBMs. Putting 40 missiles into Cuba helps the Soviets make up some of their disadvantage in numbers.

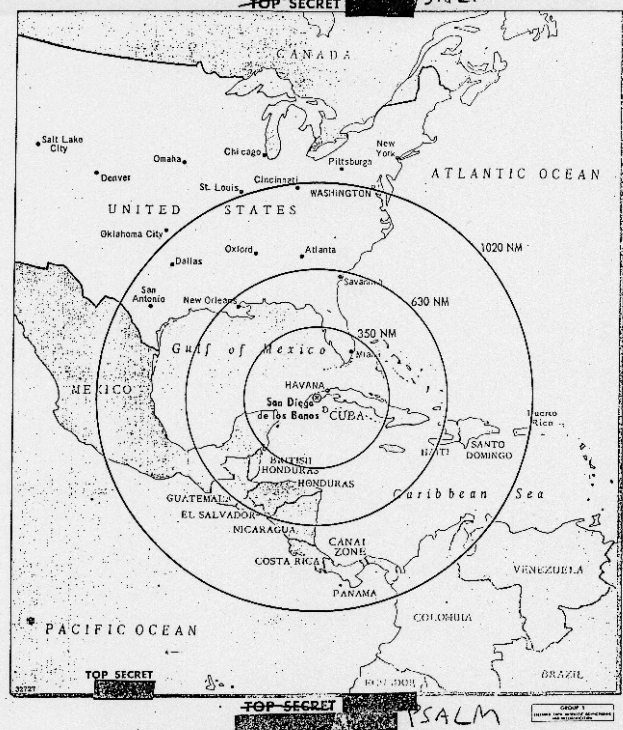


Chart showing ranges of missiles in Cuba, October 16, 1962

In Cuba, the Soviets are also building sites for SAMs—surface-to-air missiles, capable of shooting down U.S. planes. A week ago, the CIA reported that the Soviets had shipped in large crates that may contain airplane parts and missile components. The CIA concluded that the speed of the Soviet buildup amounts to “the most extensive campaign to bolster a non-bloc country ever undertaken by the USSR.” (“Bloc” refers to eastern European countries under communist control.)

The background of U.S.-Cuban relations is important to understanding the missile crisis. Since the Spanish-American War in 1898, the U.S. has dominated Cuba both politically and economically. The U.S. also sent troops there five times in the early 20th century and

had close ties with Cuban dictator Fulgencio Batista, until Fidel Castro overthrew him in 1959. Castro, a communist, confiscated the private property of wealthy Cuban landowners and divided it up among poor peasants. He also ordered the Cuban government to take over and run many private companies, including some owned by U.S. citizens. The U.S. government took measures to retaliate and stop the communists: in 1960, it ordered an end to the importation of sugar from Cuba, which crippled the Cuban economy. Unfortunately, this sugar embargo pushed Cuba to sell sugar to the Soviet Union, driving the country closer to communist leaders in Moscow. Since 1959, the U.S. has made a number of unsuccessful attempts to remove Castro from power, including plotting his assassination, a plan to overthrow him called “Operation Mongoose,” and a 1961 CIA-backed invasion by Cuban exiles. In response, Castro sought help from the Soviets, who sent missiles to Cuba.

The Cold War provides the context for this crisis. Since the 1917 Russian Revolution, communist leaders have stated repeatedly that they want to overthrow the governments of capitalist countries—especially that of the United States. For many years, the U.S. has tried to contain the expansion of communism. As part of that strategy, it placed nuclear missiles in Turkey (which borders the Soviet Union) in 1959. In 1961, the Cold War grew even tenser when the Soviets threatened to restrict Western access to Berlin. Soon afterward, they built a wall that separated U.S.-controlled West Berlin from Soviet-controlled East Berlin. The entire city lies 100 miles inside communist East Germany, making West Berlin particularly vulnerable to Soviet attack.

Your advisors have given you six options for dealing with the Cuban crisis:

1. Negotiate with the Soviets, demanding that they withdraw their missiles from Cuba. If they refuse, the U.S. will take military action.
2. Bomb the Cuban missile sites without warning.
3. Bomb the Cuban missile sites and additional military targets in Cuba without warning.
4. Bomb Cuba heavily without warning. Follow up with a U.S. ground troop invasion.
5. Set up a full blockade of the island (i.e., no goods or products can go in or out) and threaten the Soviets with further military action if they do not withdraw the missiles.
6. Set up a partial blockade to prevent the Soviets from shipping any offensive weapons to Cuba.

Which of these options will you choose? Explain why your choice is better than the other options.

# LESSON 3: CUBAN MISSILE CRISIS, 1962

## Student Handout 2: Arguments for and Against First Decision, October 21st



October						1962
Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
30	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
<b>21</b>	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30	31	1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10

It is still October 21, 1962. As President Kennedy, you have convened the Executive Committee of the National Security Council (known as EXCOMM), a group of key U.S. officials, to help advise you what to do about the missiles. You now must consider some arguments that the EXCOMM advisors (shown in the photograph below) have made both for and against the various options for dealing with the crisis. Read through these arguments and see if they change your decision.



EXCOMM meeting on the missile crisis, October 29, 1962

**Negotiating with the Soviets:**

**FOR:**

- A. This is the only safe option to prevent a nuclear war.
- B. Negotiating gives Khrushchev a chance to back down once he learns that the U.S. knows about the missiles.
- C. The Cuban missiles aren't that significant. Europeans and Soviets have lived with nuclear missiles on their borders for years. Is this matter really worth risking nuclear war? The U.S. should talk instead of fight.

**AGAINST:**

- A. If the U.S. confronts Khrushchev about the missile sites, it will lose the element of surprise. If the U.S. then has to fight, the Soviets will be more prepared and the U.S. may suffer greater casualties.
- B. Once the U.S. tells Khrushchev it knows about the missiles, Khrushchev will threaten retaliation in response to any U.S. action.
- C. The U.S. can't resolve the problem by negotiating through the UN, since the Soviets can veto any action there.

**Limited airstrike on just the missile sites:**

**FOR:**

- A. The U.S. needs to destroy these sites before they become operational and pose a threat to millions of Americans.
- B. If the U.S. does not take a strong stand, it will look weak to the world, which will undermine its relationship with its allies and embolden its enemies.
- C. The Cuban missiles add 40 missiles to the Soviet arsenal that could strike the U.S. This addition alters the strategic (nuclear) balance between the U.S. and the Soviet Union, so the U.S. needs to eliminate them.
- D. If the missiles become operational, U.S. defenses will only have a few minutes to react to a missile launch from Cuba.
- E. While a limited airstrike will eliminate the missile sites, it will not kill very many people. Thus, it is less likely to cause a Soviet military response.
- F. Countries around the world will view a limited strike more positively than a general airstrike. The U.S. could claim self-defense, saying that the missiles posed a grave threat to its security and that its actions concentrated only on that threat.

**AGAINST:**

- A. In order to attack the missile sites the U.S. must first attack the surface-to-air missiles, or it will lose many planes.
- B. Any airstrike will certainly kill many Cubans and Russians and will therefore escalate the situation to all-out war. The Soviets will not sit by passively and let the U.S. kill their men in a surprise attack. They will retaliate in some way.
- C. Since the Soviets don't have enough military force in Cuba to counter a U.S. attack, they will likely retaliate by striking in areas where they have a military advantage. Thus, they may attack U.S. missiles in Turkey, or they may try to take West Berlin, which will be difficult—and perhaps impossible—for the U.S. to defend.
- D. Attacking a small country without warning will damage the reputation of the U.S. as a country that respects the independence of all nations (even its enemies). Riots

could break out in Latin American countries, which could then lead to the overthrow of several U.S.-friendly governments.

- E. The U.S. won't be able to take out all the Cuban missiles: some of them can be moved, and some can be launched within 20 minutes of the order to fire. Many thousands of Americans may die in a counterattack.

**Expanded airstrike that includes military targets:**

FOR:

(A–D are the same as the arguments for a limited airstrike.)

- E. Only attacking the missile sites won't work. If the U.S. launches a limited air strike, it may fail to hit some of the missiles. Also, in order to take out the missile sites the U.S. must first attack Cuba's surface-to-air missiles to prevent them from striking down U.S. planes.

AGAINST:

- A. An expanded airstrike will kill many more Cubans and Soviets—including civilians—than a limited strike would, which may escalate the situation to all-out war. The Soviets will not sit by passively and let the U.S. kill their men in a surprise attack. They will retaliate in some way.
- B. Since the Soviets don't have enough military force in Cuba to counter a U.S. attack, they will likely retaliate by striking in areas where they have a military advantage. Thus, they may attack U.S. missiles in Turkey or they may try to take West Berlin, which will be difficult—and perhaps impossible—for the U.S. to defend.
- C. Attacking a small country without warning will damage the reputation of the U.S. as a country that respects the independence of all nations (even its enemies). The U.S. will also have a difficult time justifying a large-scale strike, since this kind of attack may kill many civilians. Riots could break out in Latin American countries, which could then lead to the overthrow of several U.S.-friendly governments.
- D. The U.S. won't be able to take out all the Cuban missiles: some of them can be moved, and some can be launched within 20 minutes of the order to fire. Many thousands of Americans may die in a counterattack.

**Heavy bombing and invasion of Cuba:**

FOR:

- A. If the U.S. bombs the missile sites along with general military targets in Cuba and then follows up with an invasion, it will definitely eliminate all the missile sites.
- B. By invading, the U.S. can eliminate the communist government of this island nation, which sits only 90 miles from U.S. shores. Since Cuba lies so close to America, the U.S. has a tactical advantage over the Soviets and thus has an opportunity to take advantage of a difficult situation. The U.S. should therefore try to remove Castro from power.

AGAINST:

- A. Heavy bombing will kill a large number of Cubans and Soviets—including thousands of civilians—which may escalate the situation to all-out war. The Soviets will not sit by passively and let the U.S. kill their men in a surprise attack. They will retaliate in some way.

- B. Since the Soviets don't have enough military force in Cuba to counter a U.S. attack, they will likely retaliate by striking in areas where they have a military advantage. Thus, they may attack U.S. missiles in Turkey or they may try to take West Berlin, which will be difficult—and perhaps impossible—for the U.S. to defend.
- C. If the U.S. invades Cuba, it will suffer a great number of casualties. The USSR has sent approximately 40,000 Soviet soldiers to Cuba in order to support the Cuban army. The military estimates that the U.S. may suffer as many as 18,000 casualties if it invades Cuba.
- D. Attacking a small country without warning will damage the reputation of the U.S. as a country that respects the independence of all nations (even its enemies). The U.S. will also have a difficult time justifying a large-scale strike, since this kind of attack may kill many civilians. Riots could break out in Latin American countries, which could then lead to the overthrow of several U.S.-friendly governments. People around the world will claim that the U.S. took advantage of the nuclear threat so that it could overthrow the government of Cuba. Many will also accuse the U.S. of “Yankee imperialism.”
- E. The U.S. won't be able to take out all the Cuban missiles: some of them can be moved, and some can be launched within 20 minutes of the order to fire. Many thousands of Americans may die in a counterattack.

**Full blockade:**

FOR:

- A. Blockades don't kill people; thus, initiating a blockade won't escalate the situation to all-out war, as an airstrike may.
- B. A blockade allows time for both sides to settle the matter diplomatically, rather than militarily.
- C. A full blockade will eventually force Cuba and the Soviet Union to settle the crisis, since the island's economy and military will eventually grind to a halt without trade and necessary supplies.

AGAINST:

- A. Technically, a blockade is an act of war; countries around the world may therefore condemn the U.S. for taking such drastic action.
- B. A blockade does nothing about the missiles already in Cuba, nor would it prevent the Soviets from making them operational, which is the very threat the U.S. hopes to avoid.
- C. A blockade will reveal that the U.S. has learned about the missiles, which will take away the element of surprise if the U.S. later decides to take out the missiles in an airstrike or an invasion. Thus, the Soviets will have time to prepare, and the U.S. may suffer greater casualties.

**Limited blockade (missiles only):**

FOR:

- A. Blockades don't kill people; thus, initiating a blockade won't escalate the situation to all-out war, as an airstrike may.

- B. A blockade allows time for both sides to settle the matter diplomatically rather than militarily.
- C. A blockade of incoming missiles will put the squeeze on Cuba and the Soviet Union to settle the crisis.

AGAINST:

- A. Technically, a blockade is an act of war; countries around the world may therefore condemn the U.S. for taking such drastic action.
- B. A blockade does nothing about the missiles already in Cuba.
- C. A blockade will reveal that the U.S. has learned about the missiles, which will take away the element of surprise if the U.S. later decides to take out the missiles in an airstrike or invasion.

Advisors who favor heavy bombing accompanied by an invasion argue that bombing alone won't guarantee that American forces will destroy all the missiles, some of which can be moved. They argue that only way to reach all the missiles is to invade Cuba and demolish them on the ground. Besides, if the U.S. invades, it can permanently remove Castro from power and eliminate a communist threat so close to U.S. shores. U.S. military planners say they are ready to commence the bombing missions and launch a ground attack.

What will you do about the missiles in Cuba?

# LESSON 3: CUBAN MISSILE CRISIS, 1962

## Student Handout 3: Outcomes of First Decision

When President Kennedy learned that Khrushchev had shipped missiles to Cuba, he took it personally. The previous month, Kennedy had given a speech in which he clearly warned the Soviet Union not to send nuclear missiles to Cuba. In response, Khrushchev gave assurances but lied: the Soviets were doing precisely what Kennedy had warned them not to. EXCOMM's first discussion focused on different forms of an airstrike. Secretary of Defense McNamara also suggested a blockade. The committee ruled out negotiating with the Soviets. On the second day, McNamara more forcefully urged that the U.S. blockade Cuba. The rest of the discussion mostly revolved around implementing a blockade versus launching an airstrike. (Handout 2 summarizes the EXCOMM advisors' arguments.) Kennedy eventually decided on a limited blockade (Option 6) to give both the U.S. and the Soviet Union time to resolve the situation peacefully. Eventually, the U.S. moved the blockade closer to Cuba to allow for more



President Kennedy and Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara

negotiating time before Soviet ships approached U.S. ships. Kennedy never believed the U.S. should launch a limited airstrike, and he opposed the option of heavily bombing Cuba. In a speech on October 22, six days after learning about the missiles, he announced that the U.S. would institute a “quarantine” (in essence, a blockade) of Cuba.



JFK signing the Cuban quarantine proclamation

Military advisors argued that the U.S. should launch a full air attack followed by an invasion in order to remove Castro from power. Kennedy resisted this idea, saying the U.S. should focus on the single goal of getting the Soviet missiles out of Cuba. The president wanted to avoid a nuclear war at all costs.

On Wednesday, October 24th, Soviet ships and submarines approached the U.S. blockade, creating tremendous tension and fear that fighting might begin as a result of a Soviet attempt to pass through the blockade. However, just when the situation looked most desperate, the Soviet vessels turned around and left. Meanwhile, the Soviets worked furiously to complete the construction of the missile sites.

# LESSON 3: CUBAN MISSILE CRISIS, 1962

## Student Handout 4: Problem

### DIPLOMACY AFTER THE BLOCKADE, OCTOBER 27TH

October						1962
Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
30	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30	31	1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10

It is now October 27th; you are President John F. Kennedy. With the blockade holding, Premier Khrushchev sent you a letter on Thursday, October 25th, which provided a glimmer of hope for resolving this crisis. He said the Soviets would stop shipping weapons to Cuba if the U.S. promised not to invade the island nation. He added that he would remove Soviet military specialists from Cuba (hinting that he would withdraw the missiles eventually). Advisors agreed that the emotional tone of the letter showed that Khrushchev was under strain (possibly because of stress from the crisis, or perhaps because the military was pressuring him to take a strong stand against the Americans) when he wrote it. Meanwhile, in a speech before the UN, U.S. Ambassador Adlai Stevenson presented convincing evidence of the existence of Soviet missiles in Cuba. Stevenson's speech strengthened the U.S. decision to implement a blockade. During this time, however, Soviet work on the missile sites continued.

On Friday, October 26th, as you considered how to respond to Khrushchev's letter, you received news that an official from the Soviet embassy in Washington, D.C. told an ABC news reporter that the Soviets would withdraw the missiles from Cuba if the U.S. pledged not to invade the island. The following day, however, a second letter arrived, in which Khrushchev demanded that the U.S. both pledge not to attack Cuba and also withdraw its



nuclear missiles from Turkey. Khrushchev's overnight change of mind puzzled many advisors. They wondered why Khrushchev might have changed his mind so suddenly.

The situation regarding the U.S. missiles in Turkey is complicated. The missiles

have been in Turkey for only a couple of years. Removing the missiles may make the U.S. look weak. The Turks also might feel insulted if the U.S. withdraws the missiles from their country. Since the missiles are old (one advisor said the missiles were so out of date that American leaders weren't sure which way they would fly), they probably will not help the U.S. deter a Soviet attack on American soil. U.S. long-range missiles (ICBMs) pose the greatest threat to the Soviets, rather than the older U.S. missiles in Turkey. In fact, a year ago you requested an end to the agreement on the missiles in Turkey. In about six months, the U.S. will place submarines, loaded with nuclear missiles (SLBMs—submarine-launched ballistic missiles) in the waters near Turkey. These missiles will be much more effective should the U.S. decide to attack the Soviet Union, and Turkish leaders said the U.S. could remove its missiles from Turkey after the SLBMs become completely operational. *The New York Times* published an article on Thursday (October 25th) in which journalist Walter Lippmann argued that the U.S. should trade its missiles in Turkey for the Soviet missiles in Cuba. Lippmann argued that both countries could therefore dismantle their respective missile sites without altering the strategic balance of power.

October						1962
Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
30	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30	31	1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10

Today, as you and your advisors discussed the U.S. response to Khrushchev's letters, you received a report that an American U-2 plane was shot down (either by the Cubans or Soviets) over Cuba and the pilot died. Remember that four missile sites are now operational (according to the CIA), which means the Soviets could fire 24 missiles at U.S. targets. In fact, these missiles could launch within eight hours after the order to fire. The CIA also reports that it would be easier for the U.S. to take out all the missiles in an airstrike than previously thought.

What actions will you take in response to these developments?

## **LESSON 3: CUBAN MISSILE CRISIS, 1962**

### **Student Handout 5: Outcomes of the Crisis**

President Kennedy and his advisors, trying to avoid escalating the crisis further, decided to ignore the loss of the U-2 plane. They also ignored Khrushchev's second letter and merely responded to his first letter. The U.S. agreed to pledge not to invade Cuba in exchange for the removal of Soviet missiles from the island. President Kennedy, however, thought this compromise would not be enough, so he had his brother, Attorney General Robert Kennedy, tell the Soviets that the U.S. would secretly remove its missiles from Turkey at some later point. American leaders did not want to appear to be trading missiles in Turkey for the Soviet missiles in Cuba. If the Soviets publicized this agreement, the U.S. would not remove its missiles from Turkey.

U.S. advisors discussed the possibility of expanding the blockade in order to prevent not only weapons but also oil and other key products from entering Cuba. One U.S. advisor said, "Let's turn the screw another notch." President Kennedy rejected tightening the blockade at this point, hoping diplomacy would work.

On Saturday, October 27th, Khrushchev urged his military advisors to avoid starting a nuclear war that might kill upwards of 500 million people. These advisors argued that withdrawing Soviet missiles from Cuba would mean giving in. It would be better for the U.S. to destroy the Soviets, they said, than to back down.

The following day, Khrushchev accepted Kennedy's terms and the crisis ended. The Soviets agreed to remove the missiles from Cuba, and the U.S. pledged not to invade the island nation. In the secret unwritten deal, the U.S. said it would withdraw its missiles from Turkey within a reasonable period of time, most likely six months. The entire crisis lasted 13 days.

Several long-term consequences resulted from this crisis:

- The U.S. gained a boost of confidence regarding its political role in the world
- President Kennedy became much more popular, partly because the American public felt he had handled the crisis very well

#### **Unintended consequences:**

- U.S. leaders felt they had found a way to blend military force with diplomacy. The idea that the U.S. could win small conflicts with regular military forces (not nuclear) became more attractive. The idea of using smaller, conventional forces (called "flexible response") was one factor that led the U.S. into the Vietnam conflict.
- Khrushchev was forced out of power two years later for a variety of reasons, but the humiliation of the Soviets backing down in the missile crisis certainly figured heavily in his downfall. Other leaders in Moscow asked him, "If you were going to back down, why did you put missiles in Cuba in the first place?"

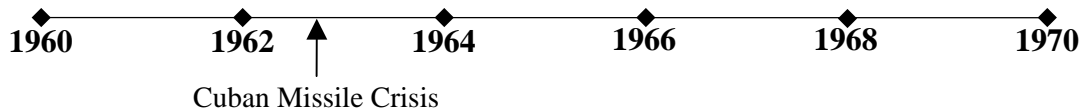
- Both China and Cuba criticized the Soviets as poor allies and weak-willed in a crisis. The Chinese called Khrushchev a “capitulationist” (someone who gives in to capitalists) and claimed he wasn’t fit to be a communist leader.
- Since the U.S. choice to take a tough stance during the missile crisis apparently worked, Americans began to favor taking strong measures regarding international crises, rather than negotiating
- U.S. civilian leaders had less respect for U.S. military leaders. They felt military leaders clung too rigidly to the invasion option, even though the blockade had proven effective.
- Since many critics believed the Soviets had backed down, the USSR felt the need to take a tough stance in future crises, especially since the Soviet military had called Khrushchev an appeaser
- The Soviets concluded that they needed to have as many ICBMs (long-range missiles) as the U.S. had so that they would be an equal in future confrontations. The Cuban Missile Crisis helped spark a nuclear arms race, and by 1968 the Soviets had more ICBMs than the U.S. did.
- America’s allies felt abandoned and unimportant because the U.S. had not included them in its deliberations during the crisis. After the crisis, the U.S. and Soviet Union both became more likely to take unilateral action instead of consulting with allies.
- The importance of international law declined: even though its blockade had violated international law, the U.S. suffered no consequences. The U.S. also only used the United Nations as a platform to present its case, not as a body to resolve the crisis.
- The U.S. felt justified in assuming the role of global watchdog, standing up for causes it believed to be right

# LESSON 3: CUBAN MISSILE CRISIS

## MAY 1962

### Student Handout 6: Problem

#### SOVIET PERSPECTIVE



It is 1962, and you are Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev. Fidel Castro, the communist leader of Cuba, has asked for Soviet assistance in defending his country against U.S. invasion. The threat of U.S. attack is real, since last year the U.S. sponsored and organized the “Bay of Pigs” invasion of the island by anti-Castro Cuban exiles. The Americans bungled the operation, however, and Castro easily crushed the invasion. Next time, though, the Americans may do the job right. The Soviet Union does not want to see a communist nation wiped out. Cuba represents a toehold in the Western Hemisphere for communism, as well as a setback for the American policy of containment.



Nikita Khrushchev

Meanwhile, the U.S. has a huge advantage over the Soviet Union in nuclear missiles. The U.S. has about 170 modern ICBMs (intercontinental ballistic missiles, capable of striking the Soviet Union) while the Soviets have about 24 older ICBMs. The imbalance is so great that the U.S. might at some point consider a first-strike nuclear attack against the USSR. If the USSR placed short-range missiles in Cuba, it could correct some of the imbalance, since it would allow the Soviet Union to strike the U.S. with up to 40 more missiles, all of which are modern and reliable.

The strategy involves placing the missiles in Cuba secretly. If the missiles can be set up before the Americans discover them, the U.S. won't be able to attack Cuba without risking a retaliatory nuclear attack on American cities. The missiles in Cuba will also give the USSR an advantage in any future negotiations with the U.S.

Other Soviet leaders know that the nuclear imbalance is partly your fault for not investing more money in the missile program. The Cuban situation represents an opportunity to correct the problem.

However, placing missiles in Cuba is risky. Several of your advisors argue that the U.S. will take strong action to remove the missiles—including attacking Cuba. However, other advisors believe that Kennedy won't do anything about the missiles because in previous

instances where you deceived him, he took no action. For example, when you resumed nuclear testing after assuring Kennedy that you would not, he didn't complain.

To summarize: Castro has asked for conventional military weapons (tanks, planes, surface-to-air missiles, guns, etc.). You can send the conventional weapons, and you could also send nuclear missiles to Cuba. Which of these options will you choose?

Here are three options:

1. Don't provide Castro with military aid or missiles, since the Soviet Union can't defend the island if the U.S. really wants to take it. A military buildup might provoke the U.S. to attack Cuba or take action elsewhere.
2. Give Castro conventional military weapons to defend himself from the Americans. After all, any country has the right to defend itself—especially when the U.S. so recently organized an invasion of the island
3. Send both nuclear weapons and conventional weapons to Cuba. The Soviet Union can probably set up the missile sites before the U.S. finds out about them. Kennedy didn't react strongly to other aggressive actions or deceptions the Soviets have taken, so he probably won't react strongly to these weapons. Adding 40 short-range missiles to Cuba will help correct the advantage the U.S. has over the USSR in nuclear missiles.

## **LESSON 3: CUBAN MISSILE CRISIS, 1962**

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### **Student Handout 7: Outcomes for Soviet Perspective**

Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev secretly placed nuclear missiles in Cuba, which led to the high-stakes Cuban missile crisis. If he had announced in advance that he planned to place missiles in Cuba, the U.S. could not have cited Soviet deception as a reason for taking action to stop the missiles or to attack. However, since the U.S. had already sponsored an invasion at the Bay of Pigs, Khrushchev believed the U.S. would attack Cuba again whether or not it knew about the missiles, so he decided to send them to Cuba secretly. If he could get the missiles operational before the Americans discovered them, then Cuba would have a real threat that could prevent a U.S. attack. For a while, it looked as if his gamble would work. However, when the U.S. learned about the missiles, an enormous crisis ensued that threatened to end in nuclear war and the possible loss of hundreds of millions of lives.

## **LESSON 3: CUBAN MISSILE CRISIS, 1962**

### **Student Handout 8: Underlying Problem and Assumptions**

#### **A. What is the real problem? (Underlying problem; framing the problem)**

When we look for an underlying problem, we try to “frame” it by showing what’s really important. Looking at this problem from the U.S. perspective after the discovery of the missile sites, which of these frames fits best?

1. This crisis is really about the strategic (nuclear) balance of power in the world.
2. This crisis is really about removing Castro from power.
3. This crisis is really about U.S. prestige in the world compared to Soviet prestige. If American prestige is tarnished, it will affect the way other countries deal with the U.S. Nations may not feel that they have to respect or support the U.S. and may even become more inclined to take actions that defy America outright.
4. This crisis is really about personal manhood. Khrushchev doesn’t think Kennedy will stand up to him. Until he sees Kennedy as strong, he’ll keep taking risks that might kill millions of people. There’s no sense in negotiating until he sees the U.S. take strong action. Unless he thinks the U.S. is equal to the Soviet Union, negotiating will not work.
5. This crisis is really about domestic politics. If the U.S. allows the Soviets to get away with this outrageous action, Democrats (whom Republicans portray as being soft on communism) will appear weak and unable to stand up to the Soviets, and consequently the Republicans will make significant gains in the upcoming congressional elections. The Republicans publicly announced that they would make Cuba a top issue in the November elections.

#### **B. Which of the following assumptions did you make when deciding what to do?**

1. No matter what happens, the U.S. will have to fight the Soviets, so it might as well attack by surprise to gain the greatest advantage in the war.
2. Khrushchev is a rational person who will respond logically to U.S. decisions. Since Cuba lies so close to America, the U.S. has a tactical military advantage over the Soviets. If the U.S. takes a tough stance on Cuba, Khrushchev will back down because he can’t win.

## LESSON 3: CUBAN MISSILE CRISIS, 1962

### Student Handout 9: Analogies

Evaluate each of these historical analogies. How helpful are they in determining of a course of action in response to the Cuban missile crisis? Which one do you find the most helpful?

1. If U.S. troops invade Cuba, they will have difficulty preventing Cuban nationalists from waging a guerrilla war against them. U.S. troops will get bogged down in Cuba, just as the British did in the Boer War of 1900 (the British fought against Dutch farmers in South Africa), as the Russians did in their 1939–1940 war against Finland (the Russians were stalled by a brutal winter), and as the U.S. did in the Korean War (the Chinese intervened and pushed the U.S. into South Korea).
2. Many will view a surprise attack on Cuba as similar to the Japanese sneak attack on the U.S. at Pearl Harbor during World War II. The Pearl Harbor attack created international sympathy for the U.S.; similarly, a U.S. attack on Cuba will create sympathy for Castro and will also tarnish America’s reputation throughout the world.
3. People in Europe live in the shadow of nuclear missiles—why should the U.S. get upset over the missiles in Cuba?
4. The U.S. installed missiles in Turkey, right on the Soviet border—why shouldn’t the Soviets then be able to install missiles in Cuba?
5. In 1914, the leaders of Germany, Austria-Hungary, and Russia made decisions based on their perceptions of how other leaders might react. They guessed wrong, and the world plunged into the tragedy of World War I. Their actions boxed in other leaders, giving them no choice but to respond with military action. In this crisis, the U.S. needs to make sure that it communicates with the Soviets and gives them the flexibility to choose to compromise.
6. The U.S. could call the blockade a “quarantine,” as President Franklin Roosevelt did in a speech in the 1930s when he said the U.S. should quarantine fascist nations. Since the word “quarantine” sounds much softer than “blockade,” other countries might not criticize the U.S. as severely.
7. In 1898, the U.S.S. *Maine* blew up in Havana harbor. Most blamed Spain for this, although years later an investigation discovered that the blast came from an internal explosion rather than a Spanish bomb. The incident unified the country against Spain and also provided a justification for the U.S. to go to war. The U.S. could create a similar incident now by deliberately sinking one of its own ships near Cuba (for instance, in Guantánamo Bay) and blaming it on the Soviets in order to justify military action in Cuba.

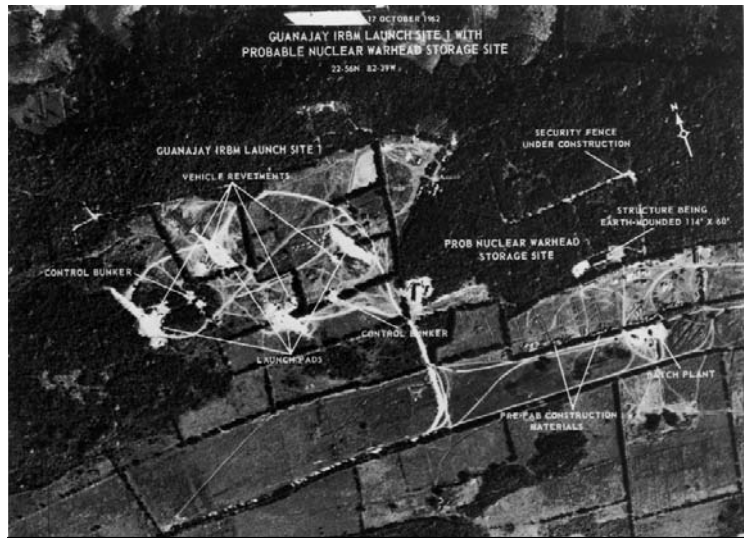
# LESSON 3: CUBAN MISSILE CRISIS, 1962

## Student Handout 10: Short Problem

### FIRST DECISION, OCTOBER 17



It is October 17, 1962, and you are President John F. Kennedy. You learned yesterday that the Soviets have secretly placed nuclear missiles in Cuba. In a speech in September, you clearly warned the Soviets not to place offensive (nuclear) missiles in Cuba, and that if they did, the U.S. would take military action. Khrushchev reassured you that the Soviets would not send missiles to Cuba, so he clearly lied. According to recent U.S. polls, about 70% of Americans want the U.S. to take a stronger stance in general regarding Cuba and its communist government.



U.S. surveillance photo showing Cuban missile sites

The CIA director estimates that Soviet missiles “could be fully operational within two weeks,” but one or more of the missiles “could be operational much sooner.” The U.S. military estimates that the Soviets plan to set up 40 missiles, including 20–25 long-range missiles (ICBMs). However, sources say that these ICBMs are out of date. Currently the U.S. has approximately 170 modern ICBMs.

Since 1959, the U.S. has made a number of unsuccessful attempts to remove Castro from power, including plotting to have him assassinated, a plan to overthrow him called “Operation Mongoose,” and a 1961 CIA-backed invasion by Cuban exiles. In response, Castro sought help from the Soviets, who sent missiles to Cuba.

The Cold War provides the context for this crisis. Since the 1917 Russian Revolution, communist leaders have stated repeatedly that they want to overthrow the governments of capitalist countries—especially that of the United States. For many years, the U.S. has tried to contain the expansion of communism. As part of that strategy, it placed nuclear missiles in Turkey (which borders the Soviet Union) in 1959. In 1961, the Cold War

grew even tenser when the Soviets threatened to restrict Western access to Berlin. Soon afterward, they built a wall that separated U.S.-controlled West Berlin from Soviet-controlled East Berlin. The entire city lies 100 miles inside communist East Germany, making West Berlin particularly vulnerable to Soviet attack.

Your advisors have given you four options for dealing with the Cuban crisis:

1. Negotiate with the Soviets and demand that they withdraw their missiles from Cuba. If they refuse, the U.S. will take military action.
2. Bomb the Cuban missile sites without warning.
3. Bomb Cuba heavily without warning. Follow up with a U.S. ground troop invasion.
4. Set up a partial blockade that prevents the shipment of any offensive weapons to Cuba.

Which of these options will you choose? Explain why you think your choice is better than the other options.

# LESSON 3: CUBAN MISSILE CRISIS, 1962

## Student Handout 11: Short Problem

### DIPLOMACY AFTER THE BLOCKADE

You are President Kennedy during the Cuban Missile Crisis. With the blockade holding, Premier Khrushchev sent you a letter on Thursday, October 25th, stating that the Soviets would stop shipping weapons to Cuba if the U.S. promised not to invade the island nation. The following day, as you were considering a U.S. response to the letter, a second letter arrived in which Khrushchev said that the U.S. must not only pledge not to attack Cuba but also withdraw nuclear missiles it had previously placed in Turkey. This change in position in only one day puzzled many advisors.



Removing the missiles may make the U.S. look weak. Also, the Turks may feel insulted if the U.S. withdraws the missiles from their country. Since the missiles are old (one advisor said the missiles were so out of date that American leaders weren't sure which way they would fly), they probably will not help the U.S. deter a Soviet attack on American soil. U.S. long-range missiles (ICBMs) pose the greatest threat to the Soviets, rather than the older U.S. missiles in Turkey.

On Saturday, October 27th, as you and your advisors were discussing the U.S. response to Khrushchev's letters, you received a report that an American U-2 plane was shot down (either by the Cubans or Soviets) over Cuba and the pilot died. Meanwhile, the Soviets continue to work on the missile sites, and the missiles may become operational within days.

What actions will you take in response to these developments?

# **LESSON 3: CUBAN MISSILE CRISIS, 1962**

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## **Student Handout 12: Primary Source**

**Radio and Television Report to the American People on the  
Soviet Arms Buildup in Cuba (excerpt)  
President John F. Kennedy  
The White House, October 22, 1962**

Good evening my fellow citizens:

This Government, as promised, has maintained the closest surveillance of the Soviet Military buildup on the island of Cuba. Within the past week, unmistakable evidence has established the fact that a series of offensive missile sites is now in preparation on that imprisoned island. The purpose of these bases can be none other than to provide a nuclear strike capability against the Western Hemisphere.

Upon receiving the first preliminary hard information of this nature last Tuesday morning at 9 a.m., I directed that our surveillance be stepped up. And having now confirmed and completed our evaluation of the evidence and our decision on a course of action, this Government feels obliged to report this new crisis to you in fullest detail.

The characteristics of these new missile sites indicate two distinct types of installations. Several of them include medium range ballistic missiles capable of carrying a nuclear warhead for a distance of more than 1,000 nautical miles. Each of these missiles, in short, is capable of striking Washington, D.C., the Panama Canal, Cape Canaveral, Mexico City, or any other city in the southeastern part of the United States, in Central America, or in the Caribbean area....

But this secret, swift, and extraordinary buildup of Communist missiles—in an area well known to have a special and historical relationship to the United States and the nations of the Western Hemisphere, in violation of Soviet assurances, and in defiance of U.S. and hemispheric policy—this sudden, clandestine decision to station strategic weapons for the first time outside of Soviet soil—is a deliberately provocative and unjustified change in the status quo which cannot be accepted by this country, if our courage and our commitments are ever to be trusted again by either friend or foe.

The 1930s taught us a clear lesson: aggressive conduct, if allowed to go unchecked and unchallenged, ultimately leads to war. This nation is opposed to war. We are also true to our word. Our unswerving objective, therefore, must be to prevent the use of these missiles against this or any other country, and to secure their withdrawal or elimination from the Western Hemisphere....

Acting, therefore, in the defense of our own security and of the entire Western Hemisphere, and under the authority entrusted to me by the Constitution as endorsed by

the resolution of the Congress, I have directed that the following initial steps be taken immediately:

First: To halt this offensive buildup, a strict quarantine on all offensive military equipment under shipment to Cuba is being initiated. All ships of any kind bound for Cuba from whatever nation or port will, if found to contain cargoes of offensive weapons, be turned back. This quarantine will be extended, if needed, to other types of cargo and carriers. We are not at this time, however, denying the necessities of life as the Soviets attempted to do in their Berlin blockade of 1948.

Second: I have directed the continued and increased close surveillance of Cuba and its military buildup....

Third: It shall be the policy of this Nation to regard any nuclear missile launched from Cuba against any nation in the Western Hemisphere as an attack by the Soviet Union on the United States, requiring a full retaliatory response upon the Soviet Union.

Fourth: As a necessary military precaution, I have reinforced our base at Guantánamo, evacuated today the dependents of our personnel there, and ordered additional military units to be on a standby alert basis.

Fifth: We are calling tonight for an immediate meeting of the Organ of Consultation under the Organization of American States, to consider this threat to hemispheric security and to invoke articles 6 and 8 of the Rio Treaty in support of all necessary action. The United Nations Charter allows for regional security arrangements—and the nations of this hemisphere decided long ago against the military presence of outside powers. Our other allies around the world have also been alerted.

Sixth: Under the Charter of the United Nations, we are asking tonight that an emergency meeting of the Security Council be convoked without delay to take action against this latest Soviet threat to world peace. Our resolution will call for the prompt dismantling and withdrawal of all offensive weapons in Cuba, under the supervision of U.N. observers, before the quarantine can be lifted.

Seventh and finally: I call upon Chairman Khrushchev to halt and eliminate this clandestine, reckless and provocative threat to world peace and to stable relations between our two nations. I call upon him further to abandon this course of world domination, and to join in an historic effort to end the perilous arms race and to transform the history of man. He has an opportunity now to move the world back from the abyss of destruction—by returning to his government's own words that it had no need to station missiles outside its own territory, and withdrawing these weapons from Cuba—by refraining from any action which will widen or deepen the present crisis—and then by participating in a search for peaceful and permanent solutions....

The path we have chosen for the present is full of hazards, as all paths are—but it is the one most consistent with our character and courage as a nation and our commitments

around the world. The cost of freedom is always high—and Americans have always paid it. And one path we shall never choose, and that is the path of surrender or submission.

Our goal is not the victory of might, but the vindication of right—not peace at the expense of freedom, but both peace and freedom, here in this hemisphere, and, we hope, around the world. God willing, that goal will be achieved.

Thank you and good night.

### **QUESTIONS FOR ANALYSIS**

1. Did President Kennedy do a good job of explaining both the situation and the reasons the U.S. intended to take its chosen course of action?
2. Evaluate the analogy President Kennedy used (i.e., comparing the situation to that of Europe in the 1930s).
3. Do you think this speech helped to accomplish the goals President Kennedy had in dealing with the Cuban Missile Crisis?

## **LESSON 3: CUBAN MISSILE CRISIS, 1962**

### **Student Handout 13: Primary Source**

#### **Department of State Telegram Transmitting Letter From Chairman Khrushchev to President Kennedy, October 26, 1962**

Moscow, October 26, 1962, 7 p.m.

Dear Mr. President:

I have received your letter of October 25. From your letter, I got the feeling that you have some understanding of the situation which has developed and (some) sense of responsibility. I value this....

If you are really concerned about the peace and welfare of your people, and this is your responsibility as President, then I, as the Chairman of the Council of Ministers, am concerned for my people. Moreover, the preservation of world peace should be our joint concern, since if, under contemporary conditions, war should break out, it would be a war not only between the reciprocal claims, but a world wide cruel and destructive war....

Let us therefore show statesmanlike wisdom. I propose: We, for our part, will declare that our ships, bound for Cuba, will not carry any kind of armaments. You would declare that the United States will not invade Cuba with its forces and will not support any sort of forces which might intend to carry out an invasion of Cuba. Then the necessity for the presence of our military specialists in Cuba would disappear.

Mr. President, I appeal to you to weigh well what the aggressive, piratical actions, which you have declared the U.S.A intends to carry out in international waters, would lead to. You yourself know that any sensible man simply cannot agree with this, cannot recognize your right to such actions.

If you did this as the first step towards the unleashing of war, well then, it is evident that nothing else is left to us but to accept this challenge of yours. If, however, you have not lost your self-control and sensibly conceive what this might lead to, then, Mr. President, we and you ought not now to pull on the ends of the rope in which you have tied the knot of war, because the more the two of us pull, the tighter that knot will be tied. And a moment may come when that knot will be tied so tight that even he who tied it will not have the strength to untie it, and then it will be necessary to cut that knot, and what that would mean is not for me to explain to you, because you yourself understand perfectly of what terrible forces our countries dispose.

Consequently, if there is no intention to tighten that knot and thereby to doom the world to the catastrophe of thermonuclear war, then let us not only relax the forces pulling on the ends of the rope, let us take measures to untie that knot. We are ready for this....

These thoughts are dictated by a sincere desire to relieve the situation, to remove the threat of war.

Respectfully yours,

[s] N. Khrushchev

**QUESTIONS FOR ANALYSIS:**

1. Is the tone of this letter hostile or compromising? Does it show an attempt to understand the position of the leader of the other side?
2. How exactly did Khrushchev propose to solve the crisis?

# LESSON 4: THE GREAT SOCIETY

## Teacher Pages

### OVERVIEW

The Great Society, like the New Deal, was a complex reform package that included many government programs in a variety of areas. This lesson helps students learn about most of the major programs by asking which they would choose to adopt.

### VOCABULARY

- *The Other America*—A book about poverty in America; influenced Presidents Kennedy and Johnson to enact measures designed to reduce poverty
- Ghettos—Slum areas of cities usually occupied by minority groups
- “Culture of poverty”—Idea that poverty that results more from the social environment in poor areas than from individual choices
- Great Society—The nickname for President Johnson’s reform program to improve U.S. society and reduce poverty
- Community Action Program—Program that offered government grants to community groups in order to improve neighborhoods
- Job Corps—Government training program to help poor people get better jobs
- Negative income tax—Plan in which poor people would receive money from income tax revenue rather than from other poverty programs
- Affirmative action—Policy designed to increase the number of minorities in jobs or schools from which they had previously been excluded
- Head Start—Preschool program for children from poor families; designed to help them gain the skills needed to succeed in school
- Medicare—Government medical insurance for the elderly
- Medicaid—Government medical insurance for the poor
- Food stamps—Government-funded coupons to help the poor buy food

### DECISION-MAKING SKILLS EMPHASIZED

- Identify underlying problem
- Consider other points of view
- Ask questions about context
- Predict unintended consequences

# LESSON PLAN

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## A. IN-DEPTH LESSON (One to two 40-minute class periods)

### Procedure:

Distribute Handout 1. Have students read it silently and then decide what they will do. Next, divide students into groups and assign each group one of the 13 proposals. Allow time for students to ask questions, then bring the class back together. Have each group report on its decision regarding its assigned proposal and explain its reasoning. After all groups have reported, distribute Handout 2 (which lists the outcomes) or tell the class what actually happened. This is a simple lesson plan, but the discussions of the proposals can become long and heated, and often bring out students' liberal/conservative perspectives on the role government should play in addressing social issues.

OPTIONAL: You may want to use Handouts 3 and 4, which offer shortened versions of Handout 1 (problems) and Handout 2 (outcomes).

OPTIONAL: Distribute Handout 5, which describes underlying problems in order to help students focus on the skill of framing the problem.

### Reflecting on Decision Making:

Ask students what they might have done differently, if anything, now that they know the outcomes. Which decision-making skills were especially important in making decisions about these issues? Which of the letters of **P-A-G-E** applied especially to this problem? (See the "Decision-Making Analysis" section below for ideas.) Ask students what they did well or poorly in terms of the **P-A-G-E** analysis. Discuss their answers, or have students write their answers in their journals or in their decision-making logs.

### Placing the Actual Decisions Into Historical Context:

Ask students whether they think historical forces or President Johnson's individual actions were more important in leading to the creation and implementation of Great Society programs.

### Connecting to Today:

Tell students that since 1900, many people have debated the proper role of government in regard to levying taxes and instituting social programs. What lessons do the Great Society programs offer for us today?

### Troubleshooting:

Some students may have difficulty understanding the concept of a negative income tax. This lesson explains it by using a hypothetical example, but students may have a hard time comprehending the fact that some people might actually get paid at income tax time. The main difficulty students tend to have in these discussions is listening to contrary opinions about the role government should play in society. Tell students that this lesson offers them an opportunity to understand points of view with which they may not agree. To help them think about and understand other arguments, you may wish to have speakers repeat, in summary form, the arguments of previous speakers.

### **B. QUICK MOTIVATOR (10–20 minutes)**

Choose three or four programs for students to focus on from Handout 1 as homework. In class, ask students to pair up and discuss their choices for three minutes or so. Ask for a show of hands for the first assigned proposal and briefly discuss students' reasoning. Repeat this process for the other two or three proposals. Next, distribute Handout 2 and for homework ask students to comment on what they learned from the outcomes.

# TEACHER NOTES FOR EXPANDING DISCUSSION

(For outcomes for students, see Handout 2 or 4.)

This lesson presents greatly simplified descriptions of Great Society problems, proposals, and outcomes. For example, the topic of affirmative action, which could take an entire semester to study, is described in a few lines. The problems and programs as outlined here function primarily as short introductions; hopefully, they can serve as springboards to further study.

As stated in Proposal 12, the Great Society didn't create the program for low-income housing; it merely expanded it. Low-income housing had started in the previous decade, and some of the problems with it had begun to emerge in the 1960s. The lesson includes the program so that students can grapple with the issue of public housing, even though the program did not originate with the Great Society.

## DECISION-MAKING ANALYSIS:

### P = Problem

- \* - **Identify any underlying problem**
- \* - **Consider other points of view**
  - What are my assumptions? Emotions?

### A = Ask for information (about)

- \* - **Historical context (history of this issue; context in the world)**
  - Reliability of sources
  - Historical analogies

### G = Goals

- What are my main goals? Are they realistic?
- Generate options to help achieve these goals. Are they ethical?

### E = Effects

- \* - **Predict unintended consequences**
  - Play out the options. What could go wrong?

\* Denotes topics emphasized in this lesson

- **Underlying problem:** Students should consider possible underlying trends, as outlined in Handout 5
- **Other points of view:** Students should think about how other people might feel about these proposals (for example, big-city mayors or middle-class, suburban residents)

- **Ask about context:** Students should ask several questions about the background of these issues. For example, if this proposal expands public housing, how effective has public housing been until now? (It has run into many problems, including poor maintenance, gangs, and drugs.) Will people who graduate from the Job Corps be able to find work? Does the program really have a chance of reducing unemployment, or is the unemployment rate only affected by larger factors such as interest rates, changing technology and industries, imports and exports, and overall economic growth? (The topic remains open to debate, but Job Corps training at least had the potential to affect employment prospects and earnings of graduates, as data on education and employment have shown.) How effective were jobs programs in the 1930s? (This question remains under debate. Most economists think these programs lowered unemployment somewhat, but they cost the government a fortune.) Have tax cuts created economic growth in the past? (Economic growth usually results from a combination of factors, but the tax cuts of the 1920s seemed to play a significant role in spurring the tremendous growth that occurred during the decade.) What has happened in countries that offer health care programs? (In general, people live longer and taxes go up.)
- **Predict consequences:** This entire lesson focuses on predicting consequences. Handout 2 (or Handout 4 if you choose to use the shortened version of this lesson) outlines many unintended consequences.

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# LESSON 4: THE GREAT SOCIETY

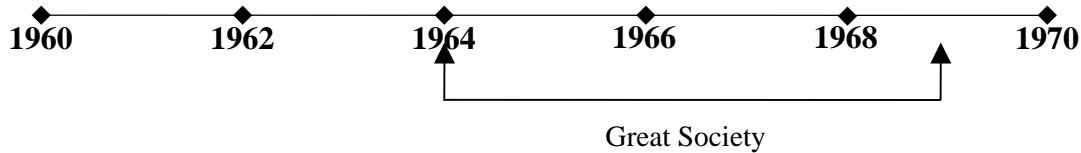
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## Vocabulary

- *The Other America*—A book about poverty in America; influenced Presidents Kennedy and Johnson to enact measures designed to reduce poverty
- Ghettos—Slum areas of cities usually occupied by minority groups
- “Culture of poverty”—Idea that poverty that results more from the social environment in poor areas than from individual choices
- Great Society—The nickname for President Johnson’s reform program to improve U.S. society and reduce poverty
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- Affirmative action—Policy designed to increase the number of minorities in jobs or schools from which they had previously been excluded
- Head Start—Preschool program for children from poor families; designed to help them gain the skills needed to succeed in school
- Medicare—Government medical insurance for the elderly
- Medicaid—Government medical insurance for the poor
- Food stamps—Government-funded coupons to help the poor buy food

# LESSON 4: THE GREAT SOCIETY

## Student Handout 1: Problem



### BACKGROUND:

The year is 1964, and you are President Lyndon Johnson. You took office after the tragic assassination of President Kennedy in November 1963. A recent popular book titled *The Other America* has highlighted the problem of poverty in the U.S. A long article on this book in *The New Yorker* magazine influenced President Kennedy to make reducing poverty one of his main goals. Poverty afflicts a higher percentage of African Americans than whites, and the civil rights movement in recent years has brought the problems of racial discrimination and black poverty to the forefront.



President Lyndon Johnson

Recently, you made a speech in which you argued that America should become a “Great Society.” You said, “[I]n our time we have the opportunity to move not only toward the rich society and the powerful society, but upward to the Great Society. The Great Society rests on abundance and liberty for all. It demands an end to poverty and racial injustice, to which we are totally committed in our time.” You then went on to explain how America could move toward becoming a “Great Society.”

Between World War I and World War II, hundreds of thousands of African Americans migrated from Southern farms to Northern cities, largely to find better economic opportunities and to escape segregation and racist “Jim Crow” laws. However, many African Americans in Northern cities live in poverty in blighted sections known as “ghettos.” Many blacks in urban areas can’t afford to live anywhere but public housing projects. In addition, a lot of white people don’t want to live next to African Americans, so when blacks moved into previously all-white neighborhoods, many of the whites ended up moving away. “White flight” (as many call this), public housing projects, and black poverty, have all combined to keep African Americans almost as segregated in Northern cities as they are in the South.

Many sociologists believe two types of poverty exist. Sometimes poverty results from bad personal decisions, while other times it results from a “culture of poverty” in which surroundings affect individuals. African Americans who moved to Northern cities from the rural South provide a strong example of a group of people influenced by a “culture of

poverty”: they live in environments with high levels of unemployment, out-of-wedlock births, crime, poverty, and poor education. Sociologists believe the government can help people who live in “cultures of poverty” by preparing children for school, giving them nutritious food, and teaching them strong work skills.

**Which of the following will you do?**

The Great Society aims to reduce poverty and provide opportunities for a greater number of U.S. citizens. The problem of poverty encompasses several areas, including employment, education, health, and housing. Below are 13 proposals addressing the four areas related to poverty. You can choose to enact all, some, or none of these proposals.

## EMPLOYMENT

**Proposal 1: Community Action Program (CAP).** CAP gives power directly to people living in ghettos. This program offers money in the form of grants to community groups, rather than to city leaders (mayors, city council members, etc.). The community groups could use the grant money for job training, learning techniques for organizing community members, improving housing, or other community goals. The Council of Economic Advisors, the Budget Bureau, and Robert Kennedy support the CAP proposal. One advisor, Dick Boone, believes the government can help the poor the most by giving them political power. He calls this “maximum feasible participation.” This program is fairly inexpensive and will avoid having to go through the government’s bureaucracy because it will have its own separate agency to handle the money it gives out. Elizabeth Wickendon, a personal friend of yours, says that the Community Action Program will upset congressmen who want to keep control of government programs within their districts.

**Will you support this proposal? Explain.**

**Proposal 2: Job Corps.** Job Corps could train poor people to get better jobs, as people need stronger skills to take advantage of employment opportunities. Participants would learn a trade and receive counseling to help them find jobs. **Will you support this proposal? Explain.**

**Proposal 3: Government jobs.** The Department of Labor wants to create job programs to help the poor. These would be large programs under the control of the federal government, similar to those offered by President Franklin Roosevelt’s New Deal. The government would hire people to clean parks, construct government buildings such as post offices, and improve national parks. It will cost a lot of money, but it will give the poor what they need most—jobs. **Will you support this proposal? Explain.**

**Proposal 4: Negative income tax.** Many economists and Budget Bureau officials have called for a negative income tax, which means that people who earn below a certain income would receive money from the government, even though they didn’t pay income taxes. For example, if a family of four earned no income during a particular year, it would receive \$1600 from the government at tax time; if it made \$1000, it would receive \$1200; if it made \$2000, it would receive \$800, and so on. Someone making \$5000 or more would not be eligible to receive the negative income tax. Thus, every family of four

in the country would be guaranteed at least \$1600 per year. Economists who support the negative income tax want to eliminate all other welfare programs, such as food stamps and housing subsidies. This would eliminate the welfare bureaucracy and thus reduce the government's administrative costs. The program would also be direct, since the most obvious way to help poor people is to give them more money. **Will you support this proposal? Explain.**

**Proposal 5: Tax cut.** Many people believe the best way to help the poor and create jobs is to offer a tax cut in order to help the economy grow. A tax cut will place more money in the hands of consumers and businesses. Consumers will spend more, and businesses will hire more workers, thus reducing unemployment without increasing welfare. The Council of Economic Advisors supports this proposal. **Will you support this proposal? Explain.**

**Proposal 6: Affirmative action.** Discrimination represents a significant cause of poverty among African Americans. Many employers in the past have refused to hire African Americans or have denied them promotions. If the government requires employers to give preference to African Americans or other minorities when two qualified people apply for a job, it can help reduce discrimination. **Will you support this proposal? Explain.**

## EDUCATION

**Proposal 7: Head Start.** Many lower-income children and teenagers drop out of or do poorly in school. Supporters of this proposal argue that poor children need help before they get to school so they can learn the skills they need to succeed academically. If given this helping hand, they will be much more likely to graduate from high school and eventually obtain a steady job with a better income. The Department of Health, Education, and Welfare supports this program. **Will you support this proposal? Explain.**

**Proposal 8: Federal help for low-income schools.** Currently, local (town or city) and state governments bear the responsibility for funding schools. Under this program, the federal government would financially assist schools attended by low-income students. Better schools will help equalize opportunities for poor students. The Department of Health, Education, and Welfare supports this program. **Will you support this proposal? Explain.**

## HEALTH

**Proposal 9: Medicare.** Many people favor having the government pay for all health care (a policy known as "universal coverage"). However, the American Medical Association (AMA) opposes universal coverage. Your advisors have proposed that the government only pay for health care for elderly Americans. In general, the elderly have more health problems than other people, and many live on small fixed incomes and need assistance with their medical bills. **Will you support this proposal? Explain.**

**Proposal 10: Medicaid.** Other advisors of yours have proposed that the government cover medical expenses for the poor. These people often have many health problems and can't afford insurance. People without coverage often postpone vital doctor visits and end up with more severe and costly health problems. As a result, the rest of Americans end up paying more for their care. **Will you support this proposal? Explain.**

**Proposal 11: Food stamps.** Under a food stamp program, the government would issue paper vouchers that poor people could use to purchase food. Recipients could only purchase food with the vouchers; thus, they wouldn't be able to waste them on foolish or unnecessary purchases, as they might with cash aid. Food stamps also will help the poor (especially children) live healthier lives. **Will you support this proposal? Explain.**

## HOUSING

**Proposal 12: Low-income housing.** The federal government could expand its low-income housing program to build and run (in cooperation with local governments) more housing for the poor. The poor can't afford high rents, and currently there is a shortage of low-income housing. The government could provide more housing and offer it at low rents. **Will you support this proposal? Explain.**

**Proposal 13: Low-income housing subsidies.** The federal government could help the poor pay for housing. The poor could afford higher rents if the government helped them pay their rent. People would pay a portion of their rent based on their income (perhaps 25% of their monthly income), and the government would cover the rest. Only the poor would qualify for the rent subsidies. **Will you support this proposal? Explain.**

# LESSON 4: THE GREAT SOCIETY

## Student Handout 2: Outcomes

### EMPLOYMENT

**Proposal 1: Community Action Program (CAP).** President Johnson went forward with program, which was intended to reduce juvenile delinquency and poverty.

Negative consequences:

1. The mayors of Baltimore, St. Louis, Philadelphia, and Chicago criticized the program to fund community groups within cities instead of distributing money to the poor through city governments. One said, “We ought not to be in the business of organizing the poor politically.” Vice President Hubert Humphrey wrote, “What disturbs the Mayors is their belief that OEO [the Office of Economic Opportunity, which administered the War on Poverty] is building and funding in the community action committees opposition elements to the city administration.”

Groups submitted proposals to the OEO in order to obtain federal funding. Not all proposals received funding. Chicago Mayor Richard Daley submitted a program to the OEO that he would control. A leader of the OEO told Mayor Daley that the program had to include community participation. Daley called the White House and said, “What in the hell are you people doing? Does the president know he’s putting M-O-N-E-Y in the hands of subversives? To poor people who are not a part of the organization [Democratic Party]? Didn’t the president know they’d take that money to bring him down?”



Chicago Mayor  
Richard Daley

2. None of the community action programs succeeded in reducing juvenile delinquency or poverty. In fact, street crime committed by teenagers increased dramatically and most ghettos became poorer. Critics wondered what good the CAPs were if they couldn’t prevent crime or poverty from increasing.
3. The Community Action Program ended up hurting the Democratic Party. Many working-class whites felt that with both the Community Action Program and many other Great Society programs, the Democrats were giving preferential treatment to African Americans. Consequently, these people began to vote Republican instead of Democratic.

**Proposal 2: Job Corps.** Only three out of ten people who enrolled in these employment programs actually completed them. Those who did complete the programs raised their incomes by an average of only 18%, which wasn’t enough for them to get out of poverty.

Negative consequences:

Over the years, spending for employment programs increased: for example, the government spent ten times as much on such programs in 1973 as it had in 1964.

**Proposal 3: Government jobs.** President Johnson opposed a large government jobs program because it would be expensive and because labor unions felt these programs would threaten their members' jobs. However, he did authorize the OEO to create as many as 850,000 jobs for African Americans. The heads of the cabinet departments (labor, housing, transportation, etc.) resented the OEO because it drew funds away from their departments.

**Proposal 4: Negative income tax.** President Johnson did not go forward with this idea, but President Richard Nixon later enacted a form of it called the Family Assistance Plan. Liberal critics felt that the program did not provide recipients with enough money to really help them.

Negative consequences:

Conservatives criticized the Family Assistance Plan for a number of reasons. First, they felt it created a disincentive to work: that is, they believed that poor people felt no need to work because the government paid them some money anyway (even though it was a lot less than they could make by working). Second, they believed the payments to single mothers encouraged out-of-wedlock births and single-family households. Conservatives linked higher crime to families without fathers, since boys without fathers lacked an important role model. Third, they felt the program cost too much, since it required a great deal of money to monitor recipients and to catch individuals who tried to defraud the program.

Social scientists conducted experiments in four cities, the results of which seemed to show that people who received a guaranteed income worked less than those who did not. The studies also revealed that families receiving welfare had a higher rate of divorce.

**Proposal 5: Tax cut.** President Johnson approved a tax cut. The next year the economy grew by 5%, which is very good. The government also managed to balance the budget for one year (1965). This growth created more jobs, but only temporarily. President Johnson and those who had supported the tax cuts argued that reducing taxes constituted the main reason for the economic growth; critics argued that the growth had resulted from a number of factors—not just the tax cut.

**Proposal 6: Affirmative action.** The government implemented a policy of affirmative action to help African Americans, women, and other minorities secure jobs.

Negative consequences:

Although affirmative action improved employment prospects for some minorities, some whites characterized it as “reverse discrimination.” The Supreme Court dealt the policy a blow in the 1978 *Bakke* case when it ruled against the use of fixed racial quotas in affirmative action programs. However, affirmative action policies still exist today.

## EDUCATION

**Proposal 7: Head Start.** This government adopted this measure, and many people consider it the most successful of the Great Society programs. Some studies showed that poor children who had been in Head Start performed better in school for many years afterward. Compared to a control group, Head Start students were 20% more likely to graduate from high school, twice as likely to go to college, and twice as likely to obtain a job. One study concluded that society as a whole saved between \$3.50 and \$7 for each \$1 spent on Head Start. However, other studies seem to show that the gains from Head Start only last for a few years in elementary school and then fade after that. In 2005, the Department of Health and Human Services released the first-year findings of the “Head Start Impact Study,” which showed small to moderate gains for three-year olds and lesser gains for four-year olds.

**Proposal 8: Federal help for low-income schools.** President Johnson increased federal aid to low-income schools in an act called “Title I.” According to one historian, this extra spending led to significant gains in educational achievement for students in those schools. President Johnson did not place many restrictions on how local schools could spend the extra federal money, partly because teachers’ unions opposed restrictions. The Title I program still exists today.

## HEALTH

**Proposal 9: Medicare.** President Johnson did enact Medicare for the elderly, as shown in the photograph below:



President Johnson signing Medicare into law

Death rates in the U.S. have dropped since the government enacted Medicare, but death rates had declined for decades before Medicare, so the program might not have affected the overall level of mortality. Medicare also ended segregated health care for the elderly, since the program had no racial restrictions.

Negative consequences:

Costs of Medicare have expanded greatly, increasing 14% per year for hospitals and 7% per year for doctor fees for the next decade. The American Medical Association (AMA) opposed government cost controls (characterizing them as “socialized medicine”); Congress and President Johnson didn’t want to fight the AMA, so they didn’t push for any such controls.

**Proposal 10: Medicaid.** The government adopted this program, but it only provided a small amount of assistance per family or individual. The program comprised a very small part of the federal budget, especially compared to Medicare. Costs for Medicaid have grown tremendously, and Congress has debated options for controlling them. The AMA and hospitals supported Medicaid because prior to the program, many poor people who didn’t have insurance simply wouldn’t pay their doctor and hospital bills. Medicaid meant that doctors and hospitals would now receive payment for their services. Medicaid still exists today.

**Proposal 11: Food stamps.** This is another program expanded significantly under President Johnson. Evidence has shown that this program helps poor people and boosts nutrition—something especially important for infants and young children.

Negative consequences:

Some people resented the food stamp program. For example, sometimes relatively low-income people who did not qualify for food stamps saw other people using food stamps to buy food (such as steak) that they themselves could not afford. (The government reduced this problem of resentment by giving recipients food stamp cards, which look like credit cards, rather than food stamp coupons.) Overall, however, the program is effective and continues to this day.

## HOUSING

**Proposal 12: Low-income housing.** The federal government expanded funding for low-income housing.

Negative consequences:

Unfortunately, many of the new building projects became centers of crime, drug use, gang wars, and other problems. Conditions in some housing projects were so bad that residents abandoned them. Few people wanted to live there—even with the low rents. One huge housing project, Pruitt-Igoe in St. Louis, proved such a disaster that the government closed it down and demolished the buildings.

**Proposal 13: Low-income housing subsidies.** Government leaders eventually decided to focus mainly on giving subsidies to poor people for housing, rather than building and running government housing. To this day, these subsidies (known as “Section 8”) help many poor people afford the cost of housing.

**Overall:** In general, the African American middle class expanded greatly during the 1960s. However, almost all African Americans who increased their income moved out of the ghettos, which left these areas increasingly poor and desperate.

Charles Murray, among other conservative analysts, greatly influenced the administration of President Ronald Reagan. Murray argued that the Great Society welfare programs hurt the poor by reducing incentives to work and by breaking up families. The Reagan Administration and Congress pushed for a “workfare” system that would require people to work in order to receive government assistance.



Demolition of the Pruitt-Igoe projects in St. Louis

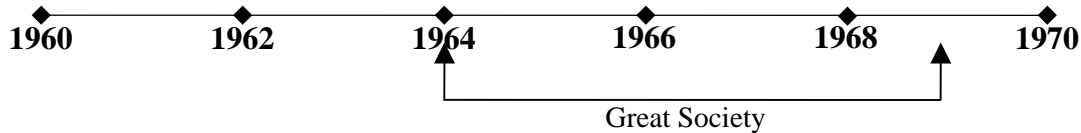
President Reagan cut income taxes by 25% and reduced the aid offered by most welfare programs, including food stamps, workers’ compensation, low-income housing, and AFDC (Aid to Families with Dependent Children, an assistance program that began in 1935). He wanted to reduce the size of the government bureaucracy, and he also wanted to cut down on government regulation of businesses, which he felt increased business costs and bureaucracy. In one speech, Reagan said, “Government is not the solution to our problem. Government is the problem.” However, Reagan did not reduce the amount of aid offered by large programs such as Medicare and Social Security, and he greatly increased military defense spending. Overall, increased government spending along with tax cuts led to large budget deficits during the 1980s. President George H.W. Bush continued Reagan’s policies to reduce the amount of money that went to federal programs to assist the poor, but he also signed a law that increased taxes in order to end the budget deficits.

President Clinton tried to enact universal health coverage (at the time, 15% of Americans had no health insurance), but the bill was defeated. Clinton also signed the Welfare Reform Act of 1996, which forced people on welfare to find work within two years and placed a five-year limit on how long individuals could receive welfare. Workfare had become law. President George W. Bush signed a law to expand Medicare coverage to include prescription drugs. There have been no major changes in workfare.

According to one historian, from 1968 to 1980 the percentage of Americans in poverty remained at 13% while the amount of social spending to reduce poverty increased by 400%. Many people asked what good all that spending had done. However, other historians have argued that poverty rates decreased from 1968 to 1980, especially among the elderly.

# LESSON 4: THE GREAT SOCIETY

## Student Handout 3: Short Problem



### BACKGROUND:

The year is 1964, and you are President Lyndon Johnson. You took office after the tragic assassination of President Kennedy in November 1963. A recent popular book titled *The Other America* has highlighted the problem of poverty in the U.S. Poverty afflicts a higher percentage of African Americans than whites, and the civil rights movement in recent years has brought the problems of discrimination and black poverty to the forefront.

You made a recent speech in which you argued that America should move toward a “Great Society” based on improving cities and helping the poor and disadvantaged.



President Lyndon Johnson

Many sociologists believe two types of poverty exist. Sometimes poverty results from bad personal decisions, while other times it results from a “culture of poverty” in which surroundings affect individuals. African Americans who moved to Northern cities from the rural South provide a strong example of a group of people influenced by a “culture of poverty”: they live in environments with high levels of unemployment, out-of-wedlock births, crime, poverty, and poor education. Sociologists believe the government can help people who live in “cultures of poverty” by preparing children for school, giving them nutritious food, and teaching them strong work skills.

### Which of the following will you do?

The Great Society aims to reduce poverty and provide opportunities for a greater number of U.S. citizens. The problem encompasses several areas, including employment, education, health, and housing. Below are five proposals that address these four areas. You can choose to enact all, some, or none of these proposals.

### EMPLOYMENT

**Proposal 1: Community Action Program (CAP).** CAP gives power directly to people living in ghettos. This program offers money in the form of grants to community groups, rather than to city leaders (mayors, city council members, etc.). The community groups could use the grant money for job training, for learning techniques for organizing community members, for improving housing, or for other community goals. The Council

of Economic Advisors, the Budget Bureau, and Robert Kennedy support the CAP proposal. One advisor, Dick Boone, believes the government can help the poor the most by giving them political power. He calls this “maximum feasible participation.” This program is fairly inexpensive and will avoid having to go through the government’s bureaucracy because it will have its own separate agency to handle the money it gives out. Elizabeth Wickendon, a personal friend of yours, says that the Community Action Program will upset congressmen who want to keep control of government programs within their districts. **Will you support this proposal? Explain.**

## EDUCATION

**Proposal 2: Head Start.** Many poor children and teenagers drop out of or do poorly in school. Supporters of this proposal argue that poor children need help before they get to school so that they can learn the skills they need to succeed academically. If they get this helping hand, they will be much more likely to graduate from high school and eventually obtain a steady job with a better income. The Department of Health, Education, and Welfare supports this program. **Will you support this proposal? Explain.**

## HEALTH

**Proposal 3: Medicare.** Many people favor having the government pay for all health care (a policy known as “universal coverage”). However, the American Medical Association (AMA) opposes universal coverage. Your advisors have proposed that the government only pay for health care for elderly Americans. In general, the elderly have more health problems than other people, and many live on small fixed incomes and need assistance with their medical bills. **Will you support this proposal? Explain.**

**Proposal 4: Medicaid.** Other advisors of yours have proposed that the government cover medical expenses for the poor. These people often have many health problems and can’t afford insurance. People without coverage often postpone vital doctor visits and end up with more severe and costly health problems. As a result, the rest of Americans end up paying more for their care. **Will you support this proposal? Explain.**

## HOUSING

**Proposal 5: Low-income housing.** The federal government could expand its low-income housing program to build and run (in cooperation with local governments) more housing for the poor. The poor can’t afford high rents, and currently there is a shortage of low-income housing. The government could provide more housing and offer it at low rents. **Will you support this proposal? Explain.**

# LESSON 4: THE GREAT SOCIETY

## Student Handout 4: Short Outcomes

### EMPLOYMENT

**Proposal 1: Community Action Program (CAP).** President Johnson went forward with program, which was intended to reduce juvenile delinquency and poverty. However, the mayors of Baltimore, St. Louis, Philadelphia, and Chicago criticized the program because it circumvented city governments and instead used community groups to distribute money to the poor.

The Community Action Program did not seem to work well, since both juvenile delinquency and poverty increased after the proposal was implemented.

The Community Action Program ended up hurting the Democratic Party. Many working-class whites felt that with both the Community Action Program and many other Great Society programs, the Democrats were giving preferential treatment to African Americans. Consequently, these people began to vote Republican instead of Democratic.

### EDUCATION

**Proposal 2: Head Start:** This government adopted this measure, and many people consider it the most successful of the Great Society programs. Some studies showed that poor children who had been in Head Start performed better in school for many years afterward. Compared to a control group, Head Start students were 20% more likely to graduate from high school, twice as likely to go to college, and twice as likely to obtain a job. One study concluded that society as a whole saved between \$3.50 and \$7 for each \$1 spent on Head Start. However, other studies seem to show that the gains from Head Start only last for a few years in elementary school and then fade after that. In 2005, the Department of Health and Human Services released the first-year findings of the “Head Start Impact Study,” which showed small to moderate gains for three-year olds and lesser gains for four-year olds.

### HEALTH

**Proposal 3: Medicare:** President Johnson did enact Medicare for the elderly, as shown in the photograph:

Death rates in the U.S. have dropped since the government enacted Medicare, but death rates had declined for decades before Medicare, so the program might not have affected the overall level of



President Johnson signing Medicare into law

mortality. Medicare also ended segregated health care for the elderly, since the program had no racial restrictions.

Negative consequences:

Costs of Medicare have expanded greatly, increasing 14% per year for hospitals and 7% per year for doctor fees for the next decade. The American Medical Association (AMA) opposed government cost controls (characterizing them as “socialized medicine”); Congress and President Johnson didn’t want to fight the AMA, so they didn’t push for any such controls.

**Proposal 4: Medicaid:** The government adopted this program, but it only provided a small amount of assistance per family or individual. The program comprised a very small part of the federal budget, especially compared to Medicare. Costs for Medicaid have grown tremendously, and Congress has debated options for controlling them. The AMA and hospitals supported Medicaid because prior to the program, many poor people who didn’t have insurance simply wouldn’t pay their doctor and hospital bills. Medicaid meant that doctors and hospitals would now receive payment for their services. Medicaid still exists today.

## HOUSING

**Proposal 5: Low-income housing:** Government leaders eventually decided to focus mainly on giving subsidies to poor people for housing rather than building and running government housing. To this day, these subsidies (known as “Section 8”) help many poor people afford the cost of housing.

# **LESSON 4: THE GREAT SOCIETY**

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## **Student Handout 5: Underlying Trends**

How might the following underlying trends affect the Great Society proposals made by President Johnson? How many of these underlying trends did you consider?

1. By the 1960s, many Americans were moving to suburbs. The populations of many cities decreased, while those of the suburbs exploded.
2. In general, Americans were living longer.
3. Education became a requirement for more jobs, so those without good educations fell further behind in income compared to the well educated.
4. Divorce rates were rising, so the traditional family was becoming less common. Birth control methods became more widespread, and sex outside of marriage became more common.
5. Fewer Americans lived on farms.
6. Television had become common in almost all households, so the media became more influential. More and more people watched TV as part of their normal routines.
7. Americans traveled more, which led to an increase in the use of hotels, gas stations, and restaurants.

# LESSON 4: THE GREAT SOCIETY

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## Student Handout 6: Primary Source

### Great Society Speech, May 22, 1964 (excerpt) President Lyndon B. Johnson's Remarks at the University of Michigan

President Hatcher, Governor Romney, Senators McNamara and Hart, Congressmen Meader and Staebler, and other members of the fine Michigan delegation, members of the graduating class, my fellow Americans:

...I have come today from the turmoil of your Capital to the tranquility of your campus to speak about the future of your country....

...[I]n your time we have the opportunity to move not only toward the rich society and the powerful society, but upward to the Great Society.

The Great Society rests on abundance and liberty for all. It demands an end to poverty and racial injustice, to which we are totally committed in our time. But that is just the beginning.

The Great Society is a place where every child can find knowledge to enrich his mind and to enlarge his talents. It is a place where leisure is a welcome chance to build and reflect, not a feared cause of boredom and restlessness. It is a place where the city of man serves not only the needs of the body and the demands of commerce but the desire for beauty and the hunger for community.

It is a place where man can renew contact with nature. It is a place which honors creation for its own sake and for what it adds to the understanding of the race. It is a place where men are more concerned with the quality of their goals than the quantity of their goods.

But most of all, the Great Society is not a safe harbor, a resting place, a final objective, a finished work. It is a challenge constantly renewed, beckoning us toward a destiny where the meaning of our lives matches the marvelous products of our labor.

So I want to talk to you today about three places where we begin to build the Great Society—in our cities, in our countryside, and in our classrooms.

Many of you will live to see the day, perhaps 50 years from now, when there will be 400 million Americans—four-fifths of them in urban areas. In the remainder of this century urban population will double, city land will double, and we will have to build homes, highways, and facilities equal to all those built since this country was first settled. So in the next 40 years we must rebuild the entire urban United States.

Aristotle said: “Men come together in cities in order to live, but they remain together in order to live the good life.” It is harder and harder to live the good life in U.S. cities today.

The catalog of ills is long: there is the decay of the centers and the despoiling of the suburbs. There is not enough housing for our people or transportation for our traffic. Open land is vanishing and old landmarks are violated.

Worst of all expansion is eroding the precious and time-honored values of community with neighbors and communion with nature. The loss of these values breeds loneliness and boredom and indifference.

Our society will never be great until our cities are great. Today the frontier of imagination and innovation is inside those cities and not beyond their borders.

New experiments are already going on. It will be the task of your generation to make the American city a place where future generations will come, not only to live but to live the good life....

A second place where we begin to build the Great Society is in our countryside. We have always prided ourselves on being not only America the strong and America the free, but America the beautiful. Today that beauty is in danger. The water we drink, the food we eat, the very air that we breathe, are threatened with pollution. Our parks are overcrowded, our seashores overburdened. Green fields and dense forests are disappearing.

A few years ago we were greatly concerned about the “Ugly American.” Today we must act to prevent an ugly America.

For once the battle is lost, once our natural splendor is destroyed, it can never be recaptured. And once man can no longer walk with beauty or wonder at nature his spirit will wither and his sustenance be wasted.

A third place to build the Great Society is in the classrooms of America. There your children’s lives will be shaped. Our society will not be great until every young mind is set free to scan the farthest reaches of thought and imagination. We are still far from that goal.

Today, 8 million adult Americans, more than the entire population of Michigan, have not finished five years of school. Nearly 20 million have not finished eight years of school. Nearly 54 million—more than one-quarter of all America—have not even finished high school.

Each year more than 100,000 high school graduates, with proved ability, do not enter college because they cannot afford it. And if we cannot educate today’s youth, what will we do in 1970 when elementary school enrollment will be five million greater than 1960?

And high school enrollment will rise by five million. College enrollment will increase by more than three million.

In many places, classrooms are overcrowded and curricula are outdated. Most of our qualified teachers are underpaid, and many of our paid teachers are unqualified. So we must give every child a place to sit and a teacher to learn from. Poverty must not be a bar to learning, and learning must offer an escape from poverty.

But more classrooms and more teachers are not enough. We must seek an educational system which grows in excellence as it grows in size. This means better training for our teachers. It means preparing youth to enjoy their hours of leisure as well as their hours of labor. It means exploring new techniques of teaching, to find new ways to stimulate the love of learning and the capacity for creation....

The solution to these problems does not rest on a massive program in Washington, nor can it rely solely on the strained resources of local authority. They require us to create new concepts of cooperation, a creative federalism, between the National Capital and the leaders of local communities....

For better or for worse, your generation has been appointed by history to deal with those problems and to lead America toward a new age. You have the chance never before afforded to any people in any age. You can help build a society where the demands of morality, and the needs of the spirit, can be realized in the life of the Nation.

So, will you join in the battle to give every citizen the full equality which God enjoins and the law requires, whatever his belief, or race, or the color of his skin?

Will you join in the battle to give every citizen an escape from the crushing weight of poverty?

Will you join in the battle to make it possible for all nations to live in enduring peace—as neighbors and not as mortal enemies?

Will you join in the battle to build the Great Society, to prove that our material progress is only the foundation on which we will build a richer life of mind and spirit?

There are those timid souls who say this battle cannot be won; that we are condemned to a soulless wealth. I do not agree. We have the power to shape the civilization that we want. But we need your will, your labor, your hearts, if we are to build that kind of society.

Those who came to this land sought to build more than just a new country. They sought a new world. So I have come here today to your campus to say that you can make their vision our reality. So let us from this moment begin our work so that in the future men will look back and say: It was then, after a long and weary way, that man turned the exploits of his genius to the full enrichment of his life.

Thank you. Goodbye.

**Source:** *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Lyndon B. Johnson, 1963-64*. Volume I, entry 357, pp. 704–707. Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1965.

### QUESTIONS FOR ANALYSIS

1. What are the three areas of the Great Society, according to this speech?
2. Did President Johnson shape his speech to fit the audience?
3. Evaluate the three goals of the Great Society in terms of their potential for success.

# LESSON 5: VIETNAM—EARLY U.S. INVOLVEMENT, 1945–1963

## Teacher Pages

### OVERVIEW

This lesson goes back to 1945 in order to examine the origins of U.S. involvement in Vietnam. The handouts provide students with many different perspectives on why the U.S. entered the Vietnam War. Students who complete this lesson will bring a more experienced perspective to the following lesson (Lesson 6), which covers decisions made during the war and other issues of the mid-1960s.

### VOCABULARY

- Indochina—French colonies of Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos
- Guerrillas—Small paramilitary forces, without uniforms, who fight few traditional battles. Guerrillas blend in with the local population or hide in the countryside, usually in small groups.
- Atlantic Charter—Statement of war aims the U.S. and Britain issued at the beginning of World War II
- Ho Chi Minh—Communist who led Vietnam against the French and then against the South Vietnamese government and the U.S.
- Vietminh—Vietnamese rebel soldiers who fought against the French
- Senator Joseph McCarthy—Senator from Wisconsin who claimed communists had infiltrated American government
- Dien Bien Phu—A major battle that the French lost, which eventually led to their withdrawal from Vietnam
- Operation Vulture—U.S. plan to rescue the French at Dien Bien Phu
- Constituent—A voter in a congressman’s district or a senator’s state
- Geneva Agreement—1954 pact under which the French would withdraw from Vietnam, the country would be divided temporarily, and a national election would take place in two years to reunify the country
- Ngo Dinh Diem—Leader of South Vietnam, whom the U.S. supported from 1954 to 1963
- SEATO—Southeast Asian Treaty Organization; military alliance created in 1954 that included (among other nations) South Vietnam and the U.S.
- Vietcong—Vietnamese soldiers who fought against the government of South Vietnam; also known as the National Front for the Liberation of South Vietnam
- Domino theory—The theory that a political event in one country will cause similar events in neighboring countries; most often used to imply that if one country fell to communism, other nearby countries would also fall to communism

### DECISION-MAKING SKILLS EMPHASIZED

- Identify underlying problem

- Consider other points of view
- Ask questions about context
- Ask about analogies
- Set realistic goals
- Predict unintended consequences

# LESSON PLAN

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## **A. IN-DEPTH LESSON (one 40-minute class period)**

### Procedure:

Distribute Handout 1. Have students read Problem 1 silently and then decide what they will do. Next, ask students to pair up and discuss their decisions. Allow time for students to ask questions (the “Decision-Making Analysis” section for this lesson outlines possible questions and answers). Bring the class back together and discuss their answers. Repeat for the other problems. After the class has discussed all of the problems, distribute Handout 2 (which lists the outcomes) or tell students what actually happened.

**OPTIONAL:** After the class has discussed all of the problems and outcomes, use Handout 3, which lists possible analogies for actions in Vietnam. Suggested analyses of the analogies appear in the “Decision-Making Analysis” section for this lesson. To save time, you might want to discuss only the first and last analogies on the sheet.

### Reflecting on Decision Making:

Ask students what they might have done differently, if anything, now that they know the outcomes. Which decision-making skills were especially important in making decisions about these issues? Which of the letters of **P-A-G-E** applied especially to this problem? (See the “Decision-Making Analysis” section below for ideas.) Ask students what they did well or poorly in terms of the **P-A-G-E** analysis. Discuss their answers, or have students write their answers in their journals or in their decision-making logs.

### Placing the Actual Decisions Into Historical Context:

Ask students the following: Which played a more important role in influencing the decisions of Truman, Eisenhower, and Kennedy regarding Vietnam—historical factors or the personal choices made by these presidents and their advisors? (Containment policy, the fall of China to communism, and the Korean War helped shaped several decisions regarding Vietnam. The American system of checks and balances probably prevented U.S. intervention at Dien Bien Phu. In 1963, electoral politics influenced decisions regarding Vietnam, as explained in Handout 2. However, some students may argue that personal choices played more of a key role.)

### Connecting to Today:

Ask students what lessons the Vietnam conflict might offer to American leaders today who have to determine whether the U.S. should involve itself in the affairs of other countries. Can studying the U.S. intervention in Vietnam shed light on how perceptions (both of the U.S. and of other countries) affect decision making? Can it give us insight

into the role of electoral politics, or the need for information on other societies and cultures, or the balance between diplomacy and force?

Troubleshooting:

Students may encounter several difficulties when studying the Vietnam War: unfamiliar, hard-to-pronounce names; a long time frame; shifting alliances; and unfamiliar geography. You may want to consider copying and distributing the vocabulary list so that students can refer to it throughout the lesson. The timeline on Handout 1 will help them keep track of the chronology of events, and the map will help them keep track of locations.

You may want to give a quiz on the vocabulary terms before students start the decision-making process. When you review the terms with students before the quiz, some of them may expression confusion. (For example: “Oh, so the U.S. wasn’t fighting the Vietminh.”) Some students may confuse the Vietminh with the Vietcong. You may want to spend some time going over the distinction between these two several times during this lesson.

**B. QUICK MOTIVATOR (20 minutes)**

Use the shortened problems on Handout 4 along with the outcomes on Handout 5. Distribute Handout 4; ask students to read Problem 1 silently and then decide what they will do. Ask students to vote on which decision they will make and discuss their decisions. Repeat this process for the other problems. After students have discussed all of the problems, distribute Handout 5 (which lists the outcomes) or tell the class what actually happened.

# TEACHER NOTES FOR EXPANDING DISCUSSION

(For outcomes for students, see Handout 2 or 5)

According to historian George Kahin, an important event in early U.S. involvement in the Vietnam conflict occurred in 1954, when the U.S. announced its support of the South Vietnamese government. Kahin argues that U.S. involvement did not result from domestic politics, since, as a Republican (the party that had taken the stronger anti-communist stance), President Eisenhower was not likely to be accused of being soft on communism. Nor did it stem from economic issues, since the U.S. had no economic ties with Vietnam. However, President Eisenhower once argued that Vietnam was the key to Southeast Asia's economic resources (in particular, tin and tungsten). While some historians see this statement as proof that an economic connection existed between the U.S. and Vietnam, Kahin instead views it as a rationalization designed to garner public support for the real reason behind U.S. involvement in Vietnam: preventing the expansion of communist China.

## DECISION-MAKING ANALYSIS:

### P = Problem

- \* - **Identify any underlying problem**
- \* - **Consider other points of view**
  - What are my assumptions? Emotions?

### A = Ask for information (about)

- \* - **Historical context (history of this issue; context in the world)**
  - Reliability of sources
- \* - **Historical analogies**

### G = Goals

- \* - **What are my main goals? Are they realistic?**
  - Generate options to help achieve these goals. Are they ethical?

### E = Effects

- \* - **Predict unintended consequences**
  - Play out the options. What could go wrong?

\* Denotes topics emphasized in this lesson

- **Underlying problem:** Was this a primarily a nationalist movement to gain independence or a case of communist expansion? If the U.S. had framed the situation as a nationalist movement, it might have not become involved in the conflict.

- **Consider other points of view:** Many—perhaps most—of the Vietnamese believed they should have formed their own government under Ho Chi Minh after 1954. Any move to prevent that outcome would have met fierce resistance by nationalists and communists.
- **Ask about context:** Students should ask numerous questions regarding the context of the conflict. Did most Vietnamese want the French to take back Vietnam after World War II? (No.) Did the French have a good chance of defeating the Vietminh in 1950? (American experts differ on this issue.) Could the French have won in 1954? (No, according to almost all American advisors at the time.) Could the South Vietnamese government have provided enough stability to defeat the Vietcong in 1963? (No, according to most American advisors at the time.)
- **Ask about analogies:** Handout 3 focuses on analogies. Here are analyses of each analogy:
  1. **Korea:** This analogy differs from the situation in Vietnam in almost every way possible. The Soviet Union, a communist power, had occupied North Korea after World War II; no communist power ever occupied Vietnam. The Soviet Union provided North Korea with aid; it did not provide the North Vietnamese with aid. A clear boundary separated North and South Korea; no such boundary existed in Vietnam. North Korea used a conventional army to attack South Korea; North Vietnam largely used small guerrilla forces. The UN backed the U.S. in Korea, so other countries viewed American participation as legitimate; in Vietnam, the U.S. had no international backing and many other countries viewed American participation as illegitimate. Even the geography was different—open terrain (Korea) versus large areas of jungle (Vietnam) where air power could not work as effectively.
  2. **China:** No evidence exists that, had the nationalists in China concentrated on holding onto only part of the country rather than all of it, they could have kept it from falling under communist control. The nationalists lost because of corruption and low morale, not because they tried to hold onto the whole country.
  3. **Greece:** Other countries viewed the government of Greece as legitimate, as opposed to the South Vietnamese government, which the U.S. helped to create in order to prevent an election that most Vietnamese expected Ho Chi Minh to win. Many Vietnamese viewed the South Vietnamese government as an artificial imperialist creation. Thus, the effort to support the South Vietnamese government was more likely to fail, no matter how much aid the U.S. sent.
  4. **Iran:** Iran did not experience any serious communist threat in 1953, and the overthrow turned out to be a disaster for the U.S. in the long run. The Iranian overthrow should serve as a warning to students that a coup could make the situation in Vietnam much worse. Of course, students should also consider the moral questions of overthrowing a government, whether doing so would be effective or not, and the possible positive and negative consequences for the U.S. and the other country.
  5. **Malaya:** The Chinese were a different ethnic group than the Malaysians, so the British easily identified them and isolated them from the Malayan population.

Isolating the insurgents would not have worked in Vietnam because no easy way existed to identify the communists—they blended into the general Vietnamese population.

6. **Philippines:** Similarities exist here: both situations involved insurgencies against colonial rule and the installation of a leader to galvanize an anti-communist movement. Most Vietnamese, however, did not view Ngo Dinh Diem as a legitimate leader, especially since the South Vietnamese government had prevented an election the people felt they had earned in the war against the French. Also, communist forces were much stronger in Vietnam than in the Philippines.
- **Set realistic goals:** Students should be clear about their goals. Is the goal to demonstrate America's commitment to prevent the expansion of communism? To avoid hurting the Republican or Democratic Party in the next election? To obtain resources (tin, tungsten, oil, iron)? To help France hold onto Vietnam (1950, 1954)? To prevent the communists from taking control of South Vietnam (1954, 1963)? If students specify either of these last two, they should ask whether these goals are realistic. Even people at the time wondered whether the U.S. could accomplish these things. If these goals weren't realistic, the U.S. had no good reason to get involved in the conflict.
  - **Predict consequences:** Numerous consequences resulted from U.S. involvement in the Vietnam conflict, as noted in Handouts 2 and 5. In 1954, several advisors anticipated one major consequence when they noted that if the U.S. sent planes or soldiers to Vietnam, the outcome of the conflict would affect U.S. prestige. Indeed, U.S. prestige suffered when the communists eventually took over South Vietnam.

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# LESSON 5: VIETNAM—EARLY U.S. INVOLVEMENT, 1945–1963

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## Vocabulary

- Indochina—French colonies of Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos
- Guerrillas—Small paramilitary forces, without uniforms, who fight few traditional battles. Guerrillas blend in with the local population or hide in the countryside, usually in small groups.
- Atlantic Charter—Statement of war aims the U.S. and Britain issued at the beginning of World War II
- Ho Chi Minh—Communist who led Vietnam against the French and then against the South Vietnamese government and the U.S.
- Vietminh—Vietnamese rebel soldiers who fought against the French
- Senator Joseph McCarthy—Senator from Wisconsin who claimed communists had infiltrated American government
- Dien Bien Phu—A major battle that the French lost, which eventually led to their withdrawal from Vietnam
- Operation Vulture—U.S. plan to rescue the French at Dien Bien Phu
- Constituent—A voter in a congressman’s district or a senator’s state
- Geneva Agreement—1954 pact under which the French would withdraw from Vietnam, the country would be divided temporarily, and a national election would take place in two years to reunify the country
- Ngo Dinh Diem—Leader of South Vietnam, whom the U.S. supported from 1954 to 1963
- SEATO—Southeast Asian Treaty Organization; military alliance created in 1954 that included (among other nations) South Vietnam and the U.S.
- Vietcong—Vietnamese soldiers who fought against the government of South Vietnam; also known as the National Front for the Liberation of South Vietnam
- Domino theory—The theory that a political event in one country will cause similar events in neighboring countries; most often used to imply that if one country fell to communism, other nearby countries would also fall to communism

# LESSON 5: VIETNAM—EARLY U.S. INVOLVEMENT, 1945–1963

## Student Handout 1: Problems



### PROBLEM 1: PUSH FOR INDEPENDENCE FOR VIETNAM IN 1946?

It's early 1946, and you are President Harry Truman. Vietnam has asked for its independence from France, which had ruled Vietnam as part of French Indochina (Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos) since the 1880s. During World War II, Japan took control of Vietnam. The Vietnamese fought guerrilla-style against the Japanese; during the war, the U.S. provided the guerrillas and their leader, Ho Chi Minh, with funds and training. Now that the Vietnamese have defeated the Japanese, Vietnam wants to become an independent country, but France wants its colony back.



Throughout World War II, the United States supported independence for colonies around the world. For example, in the 1940s of all peoples to choose the form of government under which they will live.” On the other hand, the U.S. needs France as an ally in defending western Europe against communism. The U.S. has adopted a policy of containment to stop the communists and needs to maintain good relations with western European nations to make this policy work. If the U.S. sides with the Vietnamese and supports their claim for independence, U.S. relations with France and Britain will suffer. One French leader stated, “If the public here comes to realize that you [the U.S.] are against us in Indochina there will be terrific disappointment, and nobody knows to what that will lead. We do not want to become communist; we do not want to fall into the Russian orbit, but I hope that you do not push us into it.”

Ho Chi Minh is now the leader of Vietnam’s nationalist movement. Last September, he gave a speech before thousands in Hanoi in which he formally declared Vietnam’s independence from France. Ho greatly admires the United States, and even cited passages

from the Declaration of Independence in his speech. He has appealed to you to help his country.

What will you do with regard to Vietnam and France?

- A. Side with the Vietnamese.
- B. Side with the French.
- C. Stay neutral; France and Vietnam should decide this issue themselves.



Ho Chi Minh

**PROBLEM 2: AID THE FRENCH IN THEIR WAR AGAINST THE COMMUNISTS IN VIETNAM IN 1950?**

It's 1950, and you are President Truman. When the Vietnamese sought their independence from the French in 1946, you decided to stay neutral. Later that year, Vietnamese leader Ho Chi Minh and the French came to an agreement under which Vietnam would become a free state with its own government, but the French, secretly hoping to regain control of their former colony, would station 15,000 troops in the country. When Vietnamese troops refused a French order in late 1946 to hand over their weapons, the French bombarded the harbor city of Haiphong, killing 6000 people and wounding 25,000 others. The casualties included many civilians.

For more than three years now the French and Vietnamese have been at war, with several hundred thousand troops fighting on each side. Your advisors remind you that the Vietnamese fighters, called the "Vietminh," are communists. However, one French general claims that the Vietminh have popular support because they're fighting for independence, not because they're communists. Your advisors also tell you that because the French have experienced and well-trained troops, they will probably win this war. The U.S. does not have economic ties with Vietnam; its economic stake in southeast Asia lies more with Indonesia. However, the forces of communist leader Mao Zedong took over China in 1949, so preventing Vietnam from becoming communist may help contain the expansion of communism in Asia. The U.S. does not want to see communist China expand and become stronger. It also does not want the Vietnamese to defeat the French. A defeat in Indochina would be very unpopular, and the French people may blame the current leaders and vote them out of office. The communists, who have the largest party in France at this point, might then be able to take control of the government. French communists are pro-Soviet, so the U.S. could lose France as a Cold War ally.



Mao Zedong

Wisconsin Senator Joseph McCarthy and other Republicans have accused your administration of doing nothing to prevent China from falling to communism last year. This charge of being "soft" on communism has hurt the Democratic Party. If Vietnam now becomes communist, Democrats may lose even support among American voters.

This year, the Korean War broke out when communist North Korea attacked the Republic of South Korea. The U.S. has taken a strong stand on stopping communist expansion in Korea. This means, however, that a large part of the U.S. army is tied up in Korea, and it may not be prudent to send another large U.S. military contingent to Vietnam. France, however, has only asked the U.S. for economic and military aid, not troops. If the U.S. sends aid, it may reach more than \$1 billion for this year only. The French have several

hundred thousand troops, and the Vietminh have defeated the French troops repeatedly over the past year. It will be expensive to turn the tide in France's favor. Clearly, the French cannot continue to fight in Vietnam without U.S. aid.

What will you do about the French request for economic and military aid to fight the communists in Vietnam?

- A. Give them the aid.
- B. Don't give them the aid.

**PROBLEM 3: WILL YOU BOMB THE VIETNAMESE IN ORDER TO HELP THE FRENCH AT DIEN BIEN PHU IN 1954?**

It is 1954, and you are President Dwight D. Eisenhower. The war between the Vietminh and the French has reached a climax, and it looks like the French will lose. French forces have had to give up a lot of territory over the past year, so rather than fighting a war of attrition they decided to draw the Vietminh into a major battle. The battle is taking place right now, and the Vietnamese appear to have the upper hand. The French army holds a defensive position (covering about 20 square miles) in a remote part of Vietnam called Dien Bien Phu.

The Vietminh have captured more than half the area and have bombarded the French airfield. The Vietnamese have surrounded the French, who have run short of food. The Vietnamese have also destroyed the French airport. If the U.S. doesn't do something to help them, the French troops may have to surrender.

Dien Bien Phu



The American military has planned a rescue mission called Operation Vulture, in which the U.S. would bomb the Vietminh, possibly using tactical (small) nuclear weapons. The U.S. has a large, effective air force that can inflict great damage on the Vietminh. However, one U.S. general and several advisors believe that in addition to the bombing, the U.S. will need to send in ground troops to rescue the French army. Once the U.S. sends in troops, however, it will put America's reputation on the line. The U.S. would be much more committed, and a loss for the French would then represent a major blow to American prestige. Other advisors think the French will lose whether or not the U.S. bombs the Vietminh or sends in troops, since the bulk of the population does not support the French. The French have about 500,000 soldiers under their command in Vietnam, 400,000 of whom are Vietnamese. The Vietminh troops number about 300,000. However, the Vietminh have much higher morale and draw new recruits to their side every day.

Just a year ago, the U.S. finished fighting in the Korean War, which lasted three years and resulted in 50,000 American casualties. As commander-in-chief, you can send U.S. soldiers into Vietnam without Congress's approval. However, if you do this you may lose the support of key members of Congress, who will likely resent that you did not include them in your decision to send the sons of their constituents (the citizens in their districts and states) into combat.

What action, if any, will you take to rescue the French in Vietnam?

- A. Order the bombing of Vietminh troops surrounding the French at Dien Bien Phu.
- B. Order the bombing and also send U.S. ground troops to Vietnam.

- C. Attack the Vietminh and also attack China. The Chinese are weak right now, and the U.S. will never have a better chance to defeat them.
- D. Go to Congress and urge it to support U.S. military action to rescue the French.
- E. Do nothing and allow the French to go down in defeat.

### PROBLEM 4: GO ALONG WITH THE GENEVA AGREEMENT OF 1954?



Members of the Soviet and Chinese delegations to the Geneva Conference

You, President Eisenhower, decided not to bomb the Vietnamese or send troops to rescue the French in the Battle of Dien Bien Phu. The French lost the battle but worked out a peace agreement (called the Geneva Agreement) with the Vietnamese later that year.

The Geneva Agreement stated that (1) the French would withdraw from Vietnam within a year; (2) Vietnam would be

temporarily divided in order to allow the French and Vietnamese soldiers to regroup and avoid fighting (the French will regroup south of the temporary line, while the Vietminh will withdraw to the area the north of the line; the agreement states that the dividing line is to be “provisional [temporary] and should not in any way be interpreted as constituting a political or territorial boundary”); and (3) in July 1956, under the supervision of the International Control Commission (the group set up to supervise the Geneva Agreement), an election will take place in which the Vietnamese will choose a government for the reunified country. You believe that Ho Chi Minh, a communist, will win about 80% of the vote if this election takes place.

The U.S. didn’t sign the Geneva Agreement, so it has no obligation to abide by its terms. Your advisors remind you that losing Vietnam to communism would represent a terrible defeat for the U.S. policy of containment. The U.S. cannot do much about the northern part of Vietnam, which lies under communist control, but it can take action to prevent the southern part of Vietnam from falling to the communists. First, the U.S. could bring in and support a strong Vietnamese leader to transform the southern part of Vietnam into a separate country—South Vietnam. That leader could then refuse to hold the election in 1956. Second, the U.S. could form a military alliance and make South Vietnam a member of that alliance. The American public would be more likely to support U.S. involvement in Vietnam to help an ally.

Will you take the following actions to prevent the loss of South Vietnam to the communists? You can do both, one, or neither.

- A. Install and support a strong leader in South Vietnam to oppose the 1956 elections outlined by the Geneva Agreement.
- B. Form an alliance to let the American public and the world know that the U.S. will defend South Vietnam from communism.

**PROBLEM 5: WILL YOU HAVE DIEM OVERTHROWN IN 1963?**

It is 1963, and you are President John F. Kennedy. A lot has happened in the past nine years. President Eisenhower helped install a new leader in South Vietnam (Ngo Dinh Diem) and formed an alliance called SEATO (the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization), which includes South Vietnam and the U.S., among others. The alliance was tricky because it was technically illegal under international law to include only a part of a country (South Vietnam) and not the entire country. However, the U.S. circumvented the issue by claiming that the democratic territory of the southern part of Vietnam could join the alliance as an honorary member. The U.S. is committed to defending South Vietnam, since at this point there are 16,300 American “advisors” (soldiers who help train South Vietnamese soldiers, but who also fight when involved in combat) in South Vietnam.



Ngo Dinh Diem

Ngo Dinh Diem quickly took control of the South Vietnamese government, declared South Vietnam a separate country, and cancelled the election scheduled for July 1956. An opposition group (which eventually became known as the “Vietcong”) rebelled against the new government. Unfortunately, Diem turned out to be a repressive leader. According to *Life* magazine, the government imprisoned people they considered “dangerous to national defense” in concentration camps, without trials. In 1957, an article in *Foreign Affairs* said, “South Vietnam is today a quasi-police state characterized by arbitrary arrests and imprisonment, strict censorship of the press and the absence of effective political opposition....” In an effort to crush the Vietcong, Diem order the execution of thousands of suspected rebels and imprisoned about 50,000 people.

Diem also supports Catholics (who compose about 10% of the Vietnamese population) over Buddhists (who compose about 70%), and landlords (about 2–3% of the population) over peasants (the vast majority of the population). The Diem government helped landlords reclaim ownership of their property from the communists. Peasant farmers—especially those who received land from the Vietcong—resented having to give up their land and pay rent. After 1960, the rebellion grew stronger, supported by thousands of fighters from North Vietnam (many of whom had lived in the south before 1954). By 1961, the communists exerted some degree of control over 58% of South Vietnam, according to a report by a U.S. task force. In 1961, the U.S. State Department released a report to the American public arguing that North Vietnam intended to conquer South Vietnam. However, most of your advisors believe that while North Vietnam supports the Vietcong, the majority of the insurgent forces is composed of Vietcong soldiers, not North Vietnamese ones.

A few months ago, Diem (a Catholic) ordered troops to enforce a ban on Buddhist flags, even though Catholic flags were allowed. Diem called in the South Vietnamese army to

suppress the resulting Buddhist protests. During one protest, nine people—including some children—were killed. Diem insists that a Vietcong hand grenade killed these people, even though films show government troops firing into the crowd. In response, several Buddhist monks publicly burned themselves to death. Diem's sister-in-law has callously referred to these protests as "barbecues." The army has continued to use force to shut down the protests, and Diem has instituted martial law. Diem's brutal policies have disgusted the American public.

At your request, three U.S. senators went to Vietnam on a fact-finding mission. When they returned, they released a report stating that South Vietnam, despite all the U.S. aid it has received over the past eight years, is less stable than before and "more removed from, rather than closer to, the achievement of popularly responsible and responsive government." The senators feel that the people of South Vietnam—and not the U.S.—must assume the responsibility of defeating the communists. They say that continuing the present U.S. course of sending in military advisors and providing massive aid is not in the best interest of the United States or the people of Vietnam. The senators feel that the U.S. should reduce its commitments in or entirely withdraw its support from Vietnam.

The U.S. ambassador in South Vietnam says that some Vietnamese army generals have devised a plan to overthrow Diem and install a government that will fight the communists instead of the Buddhists. These generals have asked the U.S. to support their plot.

What will you do about the plot to overthrow Diem?

- A. Support the plot with information (about the location of presidential guards, daily routines, etc.) and financing.
- B. Tell the Vietnamese generals that the U.S. won't oppose the overthrow, but it won't get involved either.
- C. Tell the Vietnamese generals not to go ahead with the plot.
- D. Tell Diem about the plot so that he can arrest the generals and avoid being overthrown.
- E. Don't do anything about the plot. Withdraw all 16,300 U.S. advisors from Vietnam and let the country determine its own fate. Put an end to U.S. involvement in Vietnam.

# LESSON 5: VIETNAM—EARLY U.S. INVOLVEMENT, 1945–1963

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## Student Handout 2: Outcomes

Earlier, you learned about some of the outcomes for the problems in Handout 1 when you read about the other problems. For example, you learned the outcome for Problem 1 when you read Problem 2. Here is some additional information regarding the outcomes:

In 1946 (**Problem 1**), U.S. leaders were concerned about helping western Europe recover economically from World War II. The French played on this concern, arguing that if they lost Vietnam as a colony, the French economy would collapse. They also hinted that if the U.S. did not allow them to reassert control over Vietnam, they would not support U.S. efforts to contain the spread of communism in Europe. The U.S. under President Roosevelt during World War II had favored a policy of decolonization and wanted to encourage its European allies to allow their colonies to become independent. However, the U.S. needed France as an ally in western Europe. Thus, President Truman stayed neutral, allowing the French to go back into Vietnam to reclaim it as a colony, and allowing the French to use American aid to France to fight in Vietnam. Unfortunately, the war in Vietnam had **negative consequences**: It divided France politically and weakened the army, making France a less effective ally against Soviet expansion. Furthermore, Ho Chi Minh, who had considered the U.S. as something of an ally, instead sought support from China and the USSR—America’s Cold War enemies.

By 1950 (**Problem 2**), the situation in Vietnam had changed significantly. The fall of China, the Korean War, and the “Red Scare” sparked by Senator Joseph McCarthy’s accusations that communists had infiltrated the federal government led the U.S. to place much more emphasis on containing communism in Asia. The U.S. sent large-scale aid to the French, contributing 33% of total funds for the war for France in 1953 and 78% in 1954. **Negative consequences**: The French lost the war, and aiding a colonial power hurt America’s reputation as a champion of freedom and self-determination (the right of a country’s people to choose its own government). Also, the French might have been better off not receiving any aid and losing the war or negotiating an end to the war years earlier.

**Problem 3** (rescuing the French during the Battle of Dien Bien Phu) revealed President Eisenhower’s respect for the American political system. Eisenhower considered bombing the Vietnamese and sending in troops, but he decided to go to Congress to get approval (Option D). Congress subsequently placed conditions on the plan that made it almost impossible for the U.S. to get involved. Congressmen wanted France to promise that it would grant independence to Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos; they also wanted Britain to promise that it would send troops to Vietnam. However, British leaders felt the war was a losing proposition and would not agree to get involved militarily. In retrospect, the U.S. probably avoided a major mistake in 1954. As stated in the problem, bombing alone probably would not have rescued the French, and many congressmen believed that bombing would inevitably lead to the involvement of U.S. troops, even though President

Eisenhower claimed this wouldn't happen. Believe it or not, one American general actually suggested Option C—attacking China. The best option was probably E (leaving the situation alone), but going to Congress ended up having the same effect as not supporting the French.

The U.S. decided to undermine the Geneva Agreement (**Problem 4**) in order to contain the spread of communism and avoid what President Eisenhower called the “domino effect” (i.e., if South Vietnam fell to communism, other countries in Southeast Asia would also fall to communism). The U.S. supported a new leader in South Vietnam (Ngo Dinh Diem) to prevent the election, and it made South Vietnam part of an alliance called SEATO. This new policy greatly increased the level of U.S. involvement in the Vietnam War. Up until this point, the U.S. had backed the French. Now, it directly supported a South Vietnamese government designed to undo much of what had been negotiated at Geneva.

Ngo Dinh Diem had been living in exile in New Jersey before the U.S. installed him as South Vietnam's leader, and the CIA played a crucial role in helping Diem achieve power. Thus, people all over the world viewed Diem as a puppet of the U.S. government. Many Vietnamese saw Diem as a nationalist who had opposed the French and therefore viewed him as more legitimate than the previous ruler, who was obviously pro-French. However, Diem did not relate well to ordinary people (especially in rural areas) and many people viewed him as being power hungry. When Diem initially took power in 1954, President Eisenhower only gave him conditional support. The president said Diem had to give political rights to his people. However, Diem figured that the U.S. needed him to defeat the communists, so he felt he didn't need to change his policies. He guessed right: the U.S. kept increasing its aid to South Vietnam and became more and more entangled with both Diem and the South Vietnamese government.

In 1963, the U.S. gave the green light to the plot to overthrow Diem (**Problem 5**), telling the Vietnamese generals it would not stand in their way (Option B). The situation was so bad in Vietnam that it's difficult to tell which action would have worked out well. **Unintended consequences:** The overthrow led to great instability in the South Vietnamese government. Over the next two years, numerous coups (overthrows) took place. President Kennedy actually listened to the three senators' advice that the U.S. reduce or abandon its commitment to South Vietnam (Option E). He said he would withdraw U.S. troops from Vietnam but that he couldn't do it before the 1964 presidential election. He said that if the U.S. abandoned South Vietnam, another Red Scare might develop and cause him to lose the election. Kennedy felt that after he had won reelection he would be able to weather the political fallout that withdrawing from Vietnam would cause. However, his assassination in 1963 made all of this meaningless, and American politics would end up affecting Vietnam in a different way during the 1960s.

# LESSON 5: VIETNAM—EARLY U.S. INVOLVEMENT, 1945–1963

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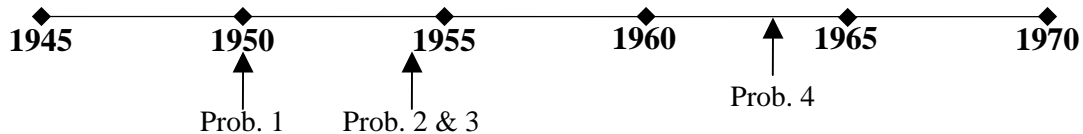
## Student Handout 3: Analogies

In deciding what to do in Vietnam to stop the expansion of communism, you may consider analogies to shed light on the situation and its possible outcomes. However, some analogies are helpful, while others may be misleading. Evaluate each of these analogies in terms of how similar they are to the situation in Vietnam:

1. In 1950, North Korea attacked South Korea. The U.S. took a strong military stand and stopped the expansion of communism there. Thus, if the U.S. takes a strong military stand in Vietnam in 1950 by giving aid to the French, it will stop the expansion of communism again.
2. In China in the 1940s, Nationalist leader Chiang Kai-shek might have held out against Mao had he concentrated on holding onto half the country instead of the whole country. If he had tried that strategy, half the country would now be free. Therefore, the U.S. should concentrate on forming a stable government in South Vietnam, which will limit communist expansion to just North Vietnam.
3. In Greece in 1946, the U.S. sent a great deal of aid to the Greek government, which stopped a communist insurgency in that country. Therefore, a large amount of aid will stop the communists in Vietnam also.
4. In Iran in 1953, the CIA used secret operations to overthrow the government there. The U.S. could use the CIA again to install a South Vietnamese government favorable to U.S. policies, thereby stopping the communists.
5. In Malaya in 1953, the British had achieved some success against an insurgency of ethnically Chinese Malaysians by forcing all ethnic Chinese in Malaya to relocate to government-controlled villages. The U.S. could use a similar strategy in Vietnam and force communists to relocate to government-controlled areas.
6. In the Philippines in 1953, the CIA helped a strong leader get elected president. He then organized a strong defense to defeat a communist insurgency. The U.S. could do the same in Vietnam.

# LESSON 5: VIETNAM—EARLY U.S. INVOLVEMENT, 1945–1963

## Student Handout 4: Short Problems



### PROBLEM 1: AID THE FRENCH IN THEIR WAR AGAINST THE COMMUNISTS IN VIETNAM IN 1950?

It is 1950, and you are President Harry Truman. In Vietnam, the French have been fighting against a rebel group called the “Vietminh” in order to reclaim control of the colony. Here is some information on the situation:

- A dispute in 1946, in which Vietnamese and French troops fired at each other, started the war. The French then bombarded the harbor city of Haiphong, killing 6000 people and wounding 25,000 others. The casualties included many civilians.
- The Vietminh are a mixture of communists and nationalists (people who want independence from the French)
- The French should win the war, since their troops are experienced and well trained
- Preventing the fall of Vietnam to communism would help stop the spread of communism from China, which came under communist rule in 1949. It would also help to keep France strong in Europe as an ally against communism.
- The U.S. has little economic stake in Vietnam, which has few natural resources
- Senator Joseph McCarthy and other Republicans have accused your administration of allowing China to fall to communism last year. This charge that you’re “soft” on communism has hurt the Democratic Party. If Vietnam falls to the communists, Democrats may lose the support of many American voters.
- The U.S. is currently fighting a war in Korea to stop the expansion of communism
- The French have requested a large amount of economic and military aid from the U.S.; they say they can’t continue to fight the war without it



**What will you do about the French request for U.S. economic and military aid to fight the communists in Vietnam?**

- A. Give them the aid.
- B. Don’t give them the aid.

**PROBLEM 2: WILL YOU BOMB THE VIETNAMESE IN ORDER TO HELP THE FRENCH AT DIEN BIEN PHU IN 1954?**

It is 1954, and you are President Dwight D. Eisenhower. The war between the Vietminh and the French has reached a climax in a huge battle in an area of Vietnam called Dien Bien Phu. The Vietnamese have surrounded the French, who have run short of food. If the U.S. doesn't do something, the French may have no choice but to surrender.



The American military has planned a rescue mission called “Operation Vulture,” in which the U.S. would bomb the Vietminh, possibly using tactical (small) nuclear weapons. The U.S. has a large, effective air force that can inflict great damage on the Vietminh. However, one U.S. general and several advisors believe that in addition to the bombing, the U.S. will need to send in ground troops to rescue the French army. Once the U.S. sends in troops, however, it will put America’s reputation on the line. The U.S. would be much more committed, and a loss for the French would then represent a major blow to American prestige. Other advisors think the French will lose whether or not the U.S. bombs the Vietminh or sends in troops, since the bulk of the population does not support the French. Just one year ago, the U.S. finished fighting the Korean War, which lasted three years and resulted in 50,000 American casualties. The American public won’t want you to commit to another war without having very good reasons for doing so.

**What action, if any, will you take to rescue the French in Vietnam?**

- A. Order the bombing of Vietminh troops surrounding the French at Dien Bien Phu.
- B. Order the bombing, and send American troops to Vietnam to rescue the French.
- C. Attack the Vietminh and also attack China. The Chinese are weak right now, and the U.S. will never have a better chance to defeat them.
- D. Do nothing and allow the French to go down in defeat.

### **PROBLEM 3: GO ALONG WITH THE GENEVA AGREEMENT OF 1954?**

You, President Eisenhower, decided not to bomb the Vietnamese or send troops to rescue the French in the Battle of Dien Bien Phu. The French lost the battle but worked out a peace agreement (called the Geneva Agreement) with the Vietnamese later that year. The agreement states that the French will eventually withdraw from Vietnam. It also temporarily divides the country and then allows for reunification to take place after holding a nationwide election in 1956, which the communist leader Ho Chi Minh more than likely will win. The U.S. does not like the agreement because it does nothing to contain the expansion of communism.



Members of the Soviet and Chinese delegations to the Geneva Conference

The U.S. cannot do much about the northern part of Vietnam, which the communists control, but it could convert the southern part of Vietnam into a separate country and install and support a strong Vietnamese leader named Ngo Dinh Diem. Diem could then refuse to hold the election in 1956.

**Will you form a separate South Vietnamese government and install a strong Vietnamese leader who will oppose the 1956 election? Explain your decision.**

**PROBLEM 4: WILL YOU HAVE DIEM OVERTHROWN IN 1963?**

It is 1963, and you are President John F. Kennedy. A lot has happened in the past nine years. President Eisenhower helped install a new leader in South Vietnam (Ngo Dinh Diem), who quickly took control of the South Vietnamese government, declared South Vietnam a separate country, and cancelled the elections scheduled for July 1956. However, Diem turned out to be a repressive leader: he has ordered mass arrests and denied these people trials, he had the government take control of the press, and he has had thousands of people executed. Diem has also returned landlords' property that the communists had taken from them and given to poor peasant farmers. An opposition group known as the "Vietcong" has rebelled against the new government, assassinating hundreds of landlords and government officials and using violence to intimidate Vietnamese civilians. The U.S. is committed to defending South Vietnam, since at this point there are 16,300 American "advisors" (soldiers who help train South Vietnamese soldiers, but who also fight when involved in combat) in South Vietnam.



Ngo Dinh Diem

A few months ago, Diem (a Catholic) ordered troops to enforce a ban on Buddhist flags even though Catholic flags were allowed. Diem called in the South Vietnamese army to suppress the resulting Buddhist protests. During one protest, nine people—including some children—were killed. In response, several Buddhist monks burned themselves to death.

Diem's sister-in-law has callously referred to these protests as "barbecues." The army has continued to use force to shut down the protests, and Diem has instituted martial law. Diem's brutal policies have disgusted the American public.

After visiting Vietnam, three U.S. senators released a report arguing that the U.S. needs to reduce its commitment to South Vietnam or end it entirely. The senators feel that the people of South Vietnam—and not the U.S.—must assume the responsibility of defeating the communists. They say that continuing the present U.S. course of sending in military advisors and providing massive aid is not in the best interest of the United States or the people of Vietnam.

The U.S. ambassador in South Vietnam has informed you that some Vietnamese army generals have devised a plan to overthrow Diem and install a government that will fight the communists instead of cracking down on the Buddhists. The Vietnamese generals have asked the U.S. to support this plan.

**What will you do about the plot to overthrow Diem?**

- A. Support the plot with information (about the location of presidential guards, daily routines, etc.) and financing.
- B. Tell the Vietnamese generals that the U.S. won't oppose the overthrow, but it won't get involved either.
- C. Tell the Vietnamese generals not to go ahead with the plot.
- D. Tell Diem about the plot so that he can arrest the generals and avoid being overthrown.
- E. Don't do anything about the plot. Withdraw all 16,300 U.S. advisors from Vietnam and let the country determine its own fate. Put an end to U.S. involvement in Vietnam.

# LESSON 5: VIETNAM—EARLY U.S. INVOLVEMENT, 1945–1963

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## Student Handout 5: Brief Outcomes

Earlier, you learned about some of the outcomes for the problems in Handout 1 when you read about the other problems. For example, you learned the outcome for Problem 1 when you read Problem 2. Here is some additional information regarding the outcomes:

In 1950 (**Problem 1**), the U.S. began sending large-scale aid to the French, contributing 33% of total funds for the war for France in 1953 and 78% in 1954. However, the French still lost the war, and aiding a colonial power hurt America's reputation as a champion of freedom and self-determination (the right of a country's people to choose its own government). Unfortunately, the war in Vietnam had **negative consequences**: It divided France politically and weakened the army, making France a less effective ally against Soviet expansion. Also, the French might have been better off not receiving any aid and losing the war or negotiating an end to the war years earlier.

In **Problem 2**, historians generally agree that Option D probably represented the best decision. Trying to rescue the French in 1954 would not have worked: British leaders estimated that it would have taken 500,000 U.S. ground troops—in addition to the bombing—to change the outcome of the war. Believe it or not, one American general actually suggested Option C—attacking China.

Creating a separate South Vietnamese government and supporting Diem (**Problem 3**) greatly increased the level of U.S. involvement in Vietnam. Up until this point, the U.S. had backed the French. Now, it directly supported a South Vietnamese government designed to undo much of what had been negotiated at Geneva. Diem, however, proved a disastrous leader, as you found out in Problem 4.

In 1963, the U.S. gave the green light to the plot to overthrow Diem (**Problem 4**), telling the Vietnamese generals it would not stand in their way (Option B). However, the overthrow led to great instability in the South Vietnamese government. Over the next two years, numerous coups (overthrows) took place. President Kennedy actually listened to the three senators' advice that the U.S. reduce or abandon its commitment to South Vietnam (Option E). He said he would withdraw U.S. troops from Vietnam but that he couldn't do it before the 1964 presidential election. He said that if the U.S. abandoned South Vietnam, another Red Scare might develop and cause him to lose the election. Kennedy felt that after he had won reelection he would be able to weather the political fallout that withdrawing from Vietnam would cause. However, his assassination in 1963 made all of this meaningless, and American politics would end up affecting Vietnam in a different way during the 1960s.

**Overall:** You can see from all these decisions that except for not rescuing the French in 1954 (**Problem 2**), the U.S. became gradually more involved in supporting a weak, unpopular government—a position that, in the end, hurt the U.S. significantly.

# LESSON 5: VIETNAM—EARLY U.S. INVOLVEMENT, 1945–1963

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## Student Handout 6: Primary Source

### Final Declaration of the Geneva Conference on Indochina, 1954 (excerpt)

1. The Conference takes note of the agreements ending hostilities in Cambodia, Laos and Viet Nam and organizing international control and the supervision of the execution of these agreements....
4. The Conference takes note of the clauses in the agreement on the cessation of hostilities in Viet Nam prohibiting the introduction into Viet Nam of foreign troops and military personal as well as all kinds of arms and munitions....
5. The Conference takes note of the clauses in the agreement of the cessation of hostilities in Viet Nam to the effect that no military base under the control of a foreign State may be established in the regrouping zones of the two parties [above and below the seventeenth parallel], the latter having the obligation to see that the zones allotted to them shall not constitute part of any military alliances and shall not be utilized for the resumption of hostilities or in the service of an aggressive policy....
6. The Conference recognizes that the essential purpose of the agreement relation to Viet Nam is to settle military questions with a view ending hostilities and that the military demarcation line [at the 17th parallel] is provisional and should not in any way be interpreted as constituting a political or territorial boundary. The Conference expresses its conviction that the execution of the provisions set out in the present declaration and in the agreement on the cessation of hostilities creates the necessary basis for the achievement in the near future of a political settlement in Viet Nam.
7. The Conference declares that, so far as Viet Nam is concerned, the settlement of political problems, effected on the basis of respect for the principles of independence, unity, and territorial integrity, shall permit the Vietnamese people to enjoy the fundamental freedoms, guaranteed by democratic institutions established as a result of free general elections by secret ballot. In order to ensure that sufficient progress in the restoration of peace has been made, and that all of the necessary conditions obtain for free expression of the national will, general elections shall be held in July 1956, under the supervision of an international commission composed of representatives of the Member States of the International Supervisory Commission, referred to in the agreement on the cessation of hostilities. Consultations will be held on this subject between the competent representative authorities of the two zones from July 20, 1955, onwards....
12. In their relations with Cambodia, Laos, and Viet Nam, each member of the Geneva Conference undertakes to respect the sovereignty, the independence, the unity, and the territorial integrity of the above-mentioned States, and to refrain from any interference in their internal affairs.

**QUESTIONS FOR ANALYSIS**

1. What were the key provisions of the Geneva Agreement? Summarize them in your own words.
2. Which of the provisions proved most important in causing the conflict that would arise between the communists and South Vietnamese government after 1954? Explain your answer.

# LESSON 6: VIETNAM, 1964–1965

## Teacher Pages

### OVERVIEW

Lesson 5 focused on U.S. involvement in the conflict from 1946 to 1963. This lesson focuses on one key decision in 1964 (whether to ask for congressional support for action) and two key decisions in 1965 (whether to bomb North Vietnam and whether to send U.S. combat troops to Vietnam). Note: The vocabulary for this lesson reveals that Richard Nixon won the 1968 election. If you plan to teach Lesson 8, which focuses on that election, you will want to keep this information from students.

### VOCABULARY

- Gulf of Tonkin Incident—Alleged attacks by North Vietnamese torpedo boats on two U.S. destroyers off the coast of North Vietnam
- Gulf of Tonkin Resolution—Congressional resolution authorizing the president to use force to repel attacks on U.S. forces in Vietnam
- John F. Kennedy—Democratic U.S. president (1961–1963)
- Lyndon B. Johnson—Democratic U.S. president (1963–1969)
- Guerrillas—Small paramilitary forces, without uniforms, who fight few traditional battles. Guerrillas blend in with the local population or hide in the countryside, usually in small groups.
- Vietminh—Vietnamese rebel soldiers who fought against the French
- Senator Joseph McCarthy—Senator from Wisconsin who claimed communists had infiltrated American government
- Vietcong—Vietnamese soldiers who fought against the government of South Vietnam; also known as the National Front for the Liberation of South Vietnam.
- Containment—U.S. policy during the Cold War designed to stop the expansion of communism
- Domino theory—The theory that a political event in one country will cause similar events in neighboring countries; most often used to imply that if one country fell to communism, other nearby countries would also fall to communism.
- Joint Chiefs of Staff—The heads of the army, navy, and air force who advise the U.S. president
- Rolling Thunder—U.S. bombing campaign of North Vietnam
- General William Westmoreland—U.S. commander in Vietnam in the mid-1960s
- Appeasement—Failed policy European leaders employed in the 1930s under which they ceded land to Germany in return for a promise from Hitler that he would not take any more territory
- Korean War—Conflict that began in 1950 after North Korea invaded South Korea. U.S. troops defended South Korea until the war's end in 1953.
- Great Society—President Lyndon Johnson's U.S. programs to help the poor, build better cities, improve education, and enact other reforms
- Richard Nixon—Republican who won the 1968 U.S. presidential election

- Post-traumatic stress disorder—A condition of persistent mental and emotional stress, often producing vivid nightmares, that occurs after someone has experienced severe psychological shock. Many Vietnam veterans suffered from this disorder as a result of their wartime experiences.
- “Fragging”—To deliberately kill an unpopular senior officer with a hand grenade. In the Vietnam War, some U.S. soldiers “fragged” their own officers rather than follow dangerous orders these officers had given. The soldiers sometimes used fragmentation grenades, from which the term derives.
- Vietnam syndrome—Term describing American leaders’ hesitancy to involve the U.S. in foreign conflicts following the end of the Vietnam War

### **DECISION-MAKING SKILLS EMPHASIZED**

- Identify underlying problem
- Consider other points of view
- Recognize assumptions
- Ask questions about context
- Ask about reliability of sources
- Ask about analogies
- Set realistic goals
- Play out options
- Predict unintended consequences

# LESSON PLAN

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## **A. IN-DEPTH LESSON (two 40-minute class periods)**

### Procedure:

Distribute Handout 1, which has students decide whether they will ask Congress to give President Johnson the authority to attack the North Vietnamese. Have students read it silently and then ask them to choose what they will do. Divide students into groups and have them discuss their choices. Bring the class back together and have groups tell what they decided and explain the reasoning behind their decisions. Have the whole class vote on which course of action to take. Read the outcome (Handout 2), which tells them what Congress did, but not the effects of that decision (which would give away many of the outcomes for other decisions students have to make in this lesson).

Distribute Handout 3, which has students consider whether to initiate a large-scale bombing of North Vietnam. Have students read it silently and then ask them to decide what they will do. Because of its length, you might want to assign the handout as homework. Divide students into groups and ask them to discuss their choices. Next, have them look over the list of questions and choose two they would like to ask you. When each group has chosen its questions, they will come to you for the printed responses (Handout 5), which you will have copied and cut into individual answers in advance. Next, bring the class back together and ask each group to report on and explain its decisions. After all groups have reported, distribute Handout 6 (which lists the outcomes) or tell the class what actually happened.

Repeat this same procedure for Handout 7 (whether to send large numbers of combat troops to Vietnam). Use Handout 9 for suggested answers to student questions related to U.S. troops, or use Handout 13 for shorter answers. At the end of this part of the lesson, read or distribute Handout 10 (which lists the outcomes).

**OPTIONAL:** Before dividing students into groups, ask them whether anything seems unclear to them. My students generally do ask questions, since this can be a very confusing topic. (You can eliminate some of this confusion by going over Lesson 5 on early U.S. involvement in the Vietnam conflict.) Spend some time going over the maps on the handouts to clarify geography. Students also often get confused about which side the U.S. supported; you may want to take a few minutes to clarify for them who the various players on each side were. You may want to give them a quiz on the vocabulary that applies to Handout 3 before moving to the decision-making phase of the lesson. See the “Troubleshooting” section of the teacher pages for this lesson for more information.

**OPTIONAL:** As mentioned in the Quick Motivator Lesson, you could use the shortened version of the problems in Handout 4 (instead of Handout 3) and Handout 8 (instead of Handout 7). Using the same format as above, students might have an easier time with these simpler, shorter handouts, and you will be able to complete the lesson more quickly.

OPTIONAL: To focus on point of view, distribute Handout 11, which discusses the North Vietnamese and Vietcong perspectives. The “Decision-Making Analysis” section of the teacher pages for this lesson offers analyses of these points of view.

OPTIONAL: To focus on analogies, use Handout 12. Analogies were central to decision making in the Vietnam War. In fact, an entire book in the sources list (see Khong) analyzes the analogies used. The “Decision-Making Analysis” section of the teacher pages for this lesson offers analyses of the analogies.

OPTIONAL: Use the primary source (Handout 14) to get students to focus on President Johnson’s thinking during the Vietnam War; use the questions that follow the source to get students to analyze that thinking.

### Reflecting on Decision Making:

Ask students what they might have done differently, if anything, now that they know the outcomes. Which decision-making skills were especially important in making decisions about these issues? Which of the letters of **P-A-G-E** applied especially to this problem? (See the “Decision-Making Analysis” section below for ideas.) Ask students what they did well or poorly in terms of the **P-A-G-E** analysis. Discuss their answers, or have students write their answers in their journals or in their decision-making logs.

Ask students one or more of the following questions to get them to reflect further on the causes of U.S. intervention in Vietnam:

- Did U.S. security interests—especially the goal of containing communism—lead to U.S. intervention?
- Was the Vietnam War a test of U.S. credibility regarding helping its allies?
- To what extent did American misunderstanding of Vietnamese society and politics lead to the decisions to intervene?
- Did U.S. officials mistakenly view Vietnamese communism and nationalism as controlled by the Soviet or Chinese?
- Did U.S. intervention result from an American desire for global hegemony (e.g., an attempt to obtain markets, military bases, and political influence)?

### Placing the Actual Decisions Into Historical Context:

Ask students the following question: “Is the term ‘Mr. Johnson’s War’ fair?” That is, did U.S. involvement in the war result more from individual choices made by President Johnson and his advisors, or did it result from certain historical factors? If the war resulted from historical forces, were these forces economic, political, ideological, or social in nature?

### Connecting to Today:

Ask students what lessons they think U.S. and foreign leaders today can draw from the Vietnam War. (A great many articles have been written about this subject of the “lessons” of the Vietnam War. You could assign students to read one article, evaluate the

lessons discussed in the article, and compare the lessons with their own experiences in this activity.)

### Troubleshooting:

Many students find the Vietnam War one of the most confusing topics in U.S. history. Some students will have difficulty understanding many aspects of this lesson, as mentioned in the first option in the lesson plan. The geography and names may be unfamiliar, the war lasted for a very long time, and the groups involved changed over time (Vietnam versus Japan, the Vietminh versus France, the Vietcong and North Vietnam versus the South Vietnamese government, etc.). If you have students complete Lesson 5 on early U.S. involvement in the Vietnam conflict, you can eliminate a great deal of confusion. As mentioned earlier, use maps to clarify geography and Handout 11 to explain the different groups involved. Students often get confused about which side the U.S. supported. You might want to give them a quiz on the vocabulary that applies to Handouts 1 and 5 (or Handouts 2 and 6, if you use the shorter versions) before moving on to the decision-making phase of the lesson.

Every year, some of my students ask why the U.S. might bomb North Vietnam if the war occurred in South Vietnam. I answer that since North Vietnam supported the Vietcong in South Vietnam, some advisors at the time thought the U.S. should bomb North Vietnam in order to weaken this support, as the arguments state in Handout 1. I also say that the U.S. was already bombing South Vietnam, at which point someone usually asks why the U.S. would bomb a country it wanted to save. I respond that the U.S. bombed suspected enemy locations in South Vietnam. However, this tactic had its drawbacks—U.S. bombs sometimes ended up killing civilians.

## **B. QUICK MOTIVATOR (25–40 minutes)**

Assign Handout 3 (whether to bomb North Vietnam) as homework. In class, ask students to pair up and discuss their choices for three minutes or so. You can decide whether to allow students to ask questions. If you do, have the class vote on which questions they would like to ask. Each student can vote twice (once for each question they would like to ask). Read the answers (Handout 5) aloud for the questions that receive the most votes. Next, ask students to make their decisions. Ask for a show of hands regarding the question of bombing North Vietnam. Briefly discuss students' answers. Distribute Handout 6 (outcomes) and as homework have students comment on what they learned from these outcomes.

Repeat this process for the problem regarding whether to send large numbers of U.S. combat troops to Vietnam (the shortened version, which appears in Handout 8). If you choose to have students ask you questions from Handout 8, have them vote on their top two choices. Read the shortened answers aloud to the class from Handout 13, not the longer answers from Handout 9. Next, distribute Handout 10. As homework, have students comment on what they learned from these outcomes.

# TEACHER NOTES FOR EXPANDING DISCUSSION

(For outcomes for students, see Handouts 2, 6, and 10)

Many still debate the outcomes and lessons of the Vietnam War, as shown in a number of the sources listed. Teachers will undoubtedly supplement this lesson with readings they choose on their own. The U.S. made many other crucial decisions during the war. This lesson focuses on just two of these decisions and is not meant to be comprehensive.

On Handout 9 (which provides answers to students' questions about the decision to escalate the U.S. troop commitment in Vietnam), part F of the answers to Question 1 is a transcript of a TV broadcast; this comes from "The People of South Vietnam: How They Feel About the War" in *Vietnam: Anatomy of a Conflict*, pp. 652–659.

## DECISION-MAKING ANALYSIS:

### P = Problem

- \* - **Identify any underlying problem**
- \* - **Consider other points of view**
- \* - **What are my assumptions? Emotions?**

### A = Ask for information (about)

- \* - **Historical context (history of this issue; context in the world)**
- \* - **Reliability of sources**
- \* - **Historical analogies**

### G = Goals

- \* - **What are my main goals? Are they realistic?**
  - Generate options to help achieve these goals. Are they ethical?

### E = Effects

- \* - **Predict unintended consequences**
  - Play out the options. What could go wrong?

\* Denotes topics emphasized in this lesson

- **Identify any underlying problem:** The way in which they frame the problem plays a key role in what students might decide to do in this case. If they see the Vietnam War primarily as an important event in the Cold War, they will more likely get involved in order to counter the expansion of communism. On the other hand, if they view the Vietnam War primarily as a nationalist movement to gain independence, they will more likely shy away from U.S. involvement.
- **Consider other points of view:** Handout 11 focuses on the enemy point of view.

- **Bombing:** In reaction to the bombing, the North Vietnamese took all of the actions listed except the last one (option G). Students should see that the bombing probably wouldn't have influenced the North Vietnamese to compromise. By 1967, the North Vietnamese had a very extensive air defense system that shot down hundreds of American planes over the next few years. Handout 6, which describes the outcomes of the bombing, also describes the outcomes of the North Vietnamese actions to counter the bombing.
- **Troops:** The Vietcong took all the actions listed except options B and G. Strategically, an all-out attack on U.S. troops would have been a disaster. The possibility of the Vietcong negotiating a settlement was extremely unlikely, according to historians such as John Roche (see "Sources"). Many Vietcong soldiers felt the South Vietnamese government had robbed them in the 1950s after the defeat of the French, so they had strong motivation to overthrow that government. Handout 10 (which discusses the outcomes of sending U.S. troops to Vietnam) includes the results of Vietcong actions to counter U.S. forces.
- **Identify assumptions:** Did students make any of these assumptions? (1) The U.S. will win if it gets involved; (2) the American public will support a war in southeast Asia; (3) the war will be short; (4) the North Vietnamese have invaded South Vietnam, and North Vietnam is the primary enemy; (5) if the U.S. increases its bombing and sends more troops, the communists will negotiate a compromise settlement; (6) the Vietcong is primarily a communist organization; (7) if the U.S. kills enough Vietcong and North Vietnamese, it will win the war; (8) the South Vietnamese population supports the U.S., not the Vietcong; and (9) communists in China, Russia, and Vietnam all work together to achieve the same goals and don't have disagreements with one another. (Many Americans at the time saw communism as monolithic.)  
**Emotions:** How many students got so frustrated by all the arguments that they said, "Just pick something," or "Whatever"? Were students annoyed by what they perceived as their classmates' stubbornness? Should people make decisions based on emotions ("I'm in a bad mood today") when those decisions may affect the lives of thousands of people?
- **Ask about background:** Handouts 3, 4, 7, and 8 all list questions for students to ask. Handouts 5, 9, and 13 provide suggested answers.
- **Ask about reliability of sources:** Students should consider the expertise of the people offering the advice. Unfortunately, in this case the leading advisors (both military and civilian) were divided regarding the decisions, so it may be hard for students to distinguish the reliable and wise from the others. Students should also consider whether the U.S. should have entered a conflict in a country with a society and culture it did not fully understand.
- **Ask about analogies:** Handout 12 focuses on analogies. Here are analyses of these analogies:
  1. **Munich in the 1930s:** The situations differed greatly in some respects. Nazi Germany was a major military power; North Vietnam was not. Germany wanted to take territory from other countries, whereas the conflict in Vietnam initially involved only a single country. However, if

one views the conflict in Vietnam as part of a larger effort to spread communism throughout the world, then the analogy seems stronger.

2. **Bogged down like the French:** Many similarities exist: Both situations entailed western countries using military force to stop revolutionaries from taking control of the government. There was no reason to think that the U.S. would necessarily deal any better with the geography of Vietnam and the guerrilla tactics of the communists. As democracies, both the U.S. and France depended upon public support to carry out their policies. However, the situations differed in that the U.S. had more wealth, troops, and more sophisticated weapons to use in Vietnam.
  3. **Situation not like the French:** Some advisors argued against analogy #2 by highlighting differences between the U.S. and France. Unfortunately, these advisors overlooked important similarities. Note how analogy #3 compares the Americans at the start of the U.S. military campaign in Vietnam with the French at the end of their military campaign in Vietnam. Comparing the U.S. in 1965 with France in 1946 yields more similarities than comparing it with France in 1954. In 1946, the French army took the offensive more often, the war had more support from the French citizenry, and France had a high degree of political unity—just as the U.S. had in 1965. However, by 1954 the conflict in Vietnam had undermined all those things. American leaders should have seen this as an ominous warning sign and asked themselves if the U.S. might also be reduced to defensive tactics, lose the public’s support, and face political instability.
  4. **Korea:** Both cases involved a military attack launched by communists to take over the other part of what had been a single country. However, the North Koreans had fought a conventional war, whereas the Vietcong in 1965 employed guerrilla tactics. The jungle environment of Vietnam (another important difference) further compounded the difficulties of defeating the communists. Also, unlike the North Koreans, the North Vietnamese had not committed most of their army to South Vietnam by 1965, so they had the forces to counter a U.S. troop buildup, which thus led to a long war.
  5. **Bombing in World War II:** Strategic bombing aims to destroy the enemy’s ability to produce war materiel, interfere with supply lines, and break the will of the enemy. Unlike Germany and Japan during World War II, North Vietnam was a very poor country, so it did not offer many valuable targets for the U.S. to strike. The thick jungle foliage also made it difficult to target specific locations. Both indiscriminate American bombing and the use of “Agent Orange” to defoliate the jungles resulted in many civilian deaths and played a significant role in undermining support for the U.S. in Vietnam. Therefore, this analogy seems accurate.
- **Set realistic goals:** Many historians believe the U.S. did not set realistic goals regarding Vietnam. Some have argued that the Johnson administration never discussed its overarching goals in Vietnam, and instead simply reacted to situations as they arose. Other historians have criticized Johnson for embracing an unrealistic goal—saving South Vietnam from communist control. Given that Ho

Chi Minh would probably have won the 1956 election, and given the unpopularity of the South Vietnamese government, was it realistic to think that the Vietcong and North Vietnamese would have settled for anything less than full control of South Vietnam? Was it reasonable to think the South Vietnamese government could stop the communists? U.S. leaders should have seen that a long, drawn-out war would erode public support for U.S. involvement. The U.S. wasn't under direct attack, so why did it need to sacrifice so much to fight the North Vietnamese? An unachievable goal is a bad goal, no matter how noble the intentions behind it.

- **Play out the option:** Handouts 6 and 10 offer short-term consequences as well as long-term intended and unintended consequences.
- **Predict consequences:** Students will most likely have trouble thinking of all the consequences of U.S. involvement in Vietnam, as listed in Handouts 6 and 10. Reading about the numerous consequences will open the eyes of many students.

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# LESSON 6: VIETNAM, 1964–1965

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## Vocabulary

- Gulf of Tonkin Incident—Alleged attacks by North Vietnamese torpedo boats on two U.S. destroyers off the coast of North Vietnam
- Gulf of Tonkin Resolution—Congressional resolution authorizing the president to use force to repel attacks on U.S. forces in Vietnam
- John F. Kennedy—Democratic U.S. president (1961–1963)
- Lyndon B. Johnson—Democratic U.S. president (1963–1969)
- Guerrillas—Small paramilitary forces, without uniforms, who fight few traditional battles. Guerrillas blend in with the local population or hide in the countryside, usually in small groups.
- Vietminh—Vietnamese rebel soldiers who fought against the French
- Senator Joseph McCarthy—Senator from Wisconsin who claimed communists had infiltrated American government
- Vietcong—Vietnamese soldiers who fought against the government of South Vietnam; also known as the National Front for the Liberation of South Vietnam.
- Containment—U.S. policy during the Cold War designed to stop the expansion of communism
- Domino theory—The theory that a political event in one country will cause similar events in neighboring countries; most often used to imply that if one country fell to communism, other nearby countries would also fall to communism.
- Joint Chiefs of Staff—The heads of the army, navy, and air force who advise the U.S. president
- Rolling Thunder—U.S. bombing campaign of North Vietnam
- General William Westmoreland—U.S. commander in Vietnam in the mid-1960s
- Appeasement—Failed policy European leaders employed in the 1930s under which they ceded land to Germany in return for a promise from Hitler that he would not take any more territory
- Korean War—Conflict that began in 1950 after North Korea invaded South Korea. U.S. troops defended South Korea until the war’s end in 1953.
- Great Society—President Lyndon Johnson’s U.S. programs to help the poor, build better cities, improve education, and enact other reforms
- Richard Nixon—Republican who won the 1968 U.S. presidential election
- Post-traumatic stress disorder—A condition of persistent mental and emotional stress, often producing vivid nightmares, that occurs after someone has experienced severe psychological shock. Many Vietnam veterans suffered from this disorder as a result of their wartime experiences.
- “Fragging”—To deliberately kill an unpopular senior officer with a hand grenade. In the Vietnam War, some U.S. soldiers “fragged” their own officers rather than follow dangerous orders these officers had given. The soldiers sometimes used fragmentation grenades, from which the term derives.
- Vietnam syndrome—Term describing American leaders’ hesitancy to involve the U.S. in foreign conflicts following the end of the Vietnam War

# LESSON 6: VIETNAM, 1964

## Student Handout 1: Problem

### ALLEGED ATTACK BY NORTH VIETNAM



It is August 1964, and you are President Lyndon Johnson. The country of Vietnam has experienced an ongoing conflict since the end of World War II. After the Vietnamese defeated the Japanese, the French moved back into the country, hoping to reclaim it as a colony. A nationalist group, the Vietminh, fought the French from 1946 to 1954, and finally defeated the French in the battle of Dien Bien Phu. Some of your advisors claim the communists controlled the Vietminh. The French and the Vietnamese reached a peace settlement under which Vietnam was supposed to be temporarily divided, then reunited after a special election in 1956. However, the U.S. did not want to see Vietnam reunited because Vietnamese communist leader Ho Chi Minh would most likely have won that election. Therefore, the U.S. helped to create a separate South Vietnamese government. In South Vietnam, a group known as the Vietcong is currently fighting a guerrilla war against the South Vietnamese government. The Vietcong are communists, and they have the support of North Vietnam, as well as communist China and the Soviet Union. The U.S. has become involved in the conflict because it wants to stop the expansion of communism, a policy known as “containment.”

The U.S. has some 16,500 military advisors (well-armed American soldiers supported by U.S. air power and artillery) in Vietnam to help the South Vietnamese army fight the communists. These advisors don’t initiate battles, but help train the South Vietnamese troops and fight alongside them when attacked. To date, about 150 U.S. soldiers have lost their lives in combat in Vietnam.

You have recently received reports that North Vietnamese torpedo boats attacked the U.S. ships *Maddox* and *Turner Joy* in the Gulf of Tonkin off the coast of North Vietnam. Allegedly, two separate attacks occurred—one on August 2nd and one on August 4th. It remains unclear whether the U.S. ships were inside North Vietnam’s territorial waters (closer than 12 miles from shore, in which case the attack by North Vietnam would be legally justified) during the first attack on August 2nd, or in international waters (in which case the attacks would not be legally justifiable). The second incident on August 4th occurred about 60 miles



offshore, but some question exists as to whether an attack actually occurred.

The U.S. ships were on a top-secret mission to pinpoint the locations of North Vietnamese radar installations. The August 2nd attack came right after South Vietnamese ships bombarded two North Vietnamese islands in the same area as part of Operation 34-A, an ongoing CIA plan under which South Vietnamese troops have conducted covert military operations against North Vietnam. The North Vietnamese probably thought the U.S. destroyers were part of the attack force of 34-A. Of course, the public doesn't know any of this.

If you play up the incident to the press, you can portray it as an act of aggression by a communist dictatorship against the forces of the United States. The American public will probably be outraged and will most likely support stronger U.S. military action in Vietnam.

You could use this public support to get Congress to pass a resolution that the U.S. should take military action against the communists to defend freedom in South Vietnam and protect U.S. forces. The resolution would be a blank check allowing you, as commander-in-chief, to send combat troops into Vietnam and to bomb the North Vietnamese as well. Your advisors tell you that legally you may not need the resolution, but politically it would be a good idea to get the support of the American people's representatives in Congress before taking strong military action. You don't want to make the mistake the President Truman made in Korea—starting military operations without congressional approval.

Another option is to get Congress to declare war against North Vietnam. This would force the country to decide one way or the other about what to do in Vietnam. If the Congress votes for war, it will formally commit the U.S. to fighting. A formal declaration of war will more likely get the American people focused on and united behind the U.S. military effort in Vietnam.

However, most of your advisors feel that while it's important to prevent the communists from taking over all of Vietnam, the situation does not warrant a declaration of war. It would look strange for the strongest nation in the world to declare war on such a small country—especially when much of the world sees the war as an internal struggle between the Vietcong and the South Vietnamese government, not a case of communist aggression. Your advisors also point out that North Vietnam does not pose a serious military threat to the U.S. (as Japan and Germany did during World War II). The U.S. may bomb the North Vietnamese or send in combat troops for a while, but it wouldn't make sense to mobilize for full-scale war.

There is another problem with asking for a declaration of war. Congress may choose to investigate the incidents in the Gulf of Tonkin before taking the drastic step of declaring war. Embarrassing details may come out. For example, the public might find out that U.S. ships were spying on North Vietnam and helping the South Vietnamese conduct raids there. People will see that you haven't been entirely honest about U.S. involvement

in Vietnam. This type of political blunder is the last thing you need with elections coming up in November. Also, suppose Congress doesn't pass the declaration of war. You'll look like a fool, and you won't be able to take lesser actions such as bombing North Vietnam or sending in a smaller contingent of U.S. soldiers, since Congress would be on record against military action.

Moreover, a declaration of war on North Vietnam might lead China and the USSR to send their troops into the war. This is exactly what China did in the Korean War when it sent hundreds of thousands of soldiers into Korea to fight against U.S. troops; the move increased American casualties and ended up prolonging the war. Many people believe the U.S. should avoid a land war in Asia if at all possible.

Another problem with declaring war is that it will probably put an end to your Great Society reforms. A war will divert funds from social programs, and the attention of both Congress and the American people will be focused on Vietnam, not on domestic reforms.

No top advisor has argued that the U.S. should declare war, not even the Joint Chiefs of Staff. To most people, a declaration of war seems too dramatic for such a minor conflict. Nevertheless, proposing that Congress declare war would force the country to decide one way or the other about U.S. involvement in Vietnam: either stay out of the conflict entirely, or fight all-out to victory and unite behind the war effort.

**What will you do about getting Congressional support for military action in Vietnam?**

1. Ask for a Congressional resolution in favor of military action. This will give you public support, but it won't be as drastic as a declaration of war.
2. Ask for a declaration of war to unite the country behind the war effort.
3. Do neither. If you make a big issue out of it, you may be forced to take military action later in Vietnam.

# LESSON 6: VIETNAM, 1964

## Student Handout 2: Outcome

### ALLEGED ATTACK BY NORTH VIETNAM

President Johnson asked for and received a congressional resolution supporting military action in Vietnam. Congress voted in August to pass the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution by a vote of 416–0 in the House and 82–2 in the Senate. The key part of the resolution stated: “The Congress approves and supports the determination of the President as Commander in Chief, to take all necessary means to repel any armed attack against the forces of the United States and to prevent further aggression.” This show of congressional support gave President Johnson the authority to take any military actions he felt necessary against the North Vietnamese.

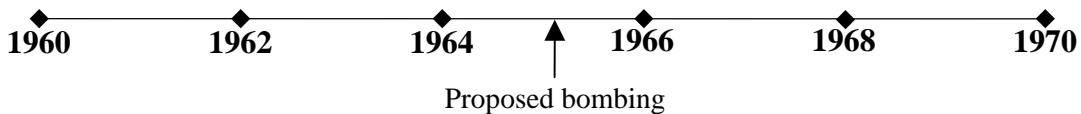


President Johnson signing the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution

# LESSON 6: VIETNAM, 1965

## Student Handout 3: Problem

### BOMBING OF NORTH VIETNAM



National Security Advisor  
McGeorge Bundy

It is April 1965, and you are still President Johnson. On February 7th, the Vietcong attacked several U.S. bases, killing eight Americans and wounding 126 others. Three days later, Vietcong guerrillas blew up the U.S. barracks at Quinhon, killing 23. National Security Advisor McGeorge Bundy was in Vietnam at the time, and he feels the U.S. must launch some sort of bombing strike in reaction to these attacks.

U.S. advisors estimate that 34% of villages in Vietnam are under South Vietnamese government control; 24% are neutral; and 42% are under Vietcong (communist) control. The South Vietnamese government appears to be losing the war. If trends continue this way, the communists may eventually control the entire country. President Eisenhower said that if Vietnam falls to the communists, other countries in the area and throughout Southeast Asia might also fall to communism (an idea known as the “domino theory”).

Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara recently gave a major speech in which he made the following points:

1. The situation in South Vietnam has deteriorated.
2. The U.S. has very little reliable information on the situation.
3. The Vietcong have widespread support from the Vietnamese population, so any solutions proposed to remedy the situation in Vietnam must be political and economic as well as military.
4. The road ahead in Vietnam will be long, difficult, and frustrating.
5. Communist China has called the U.S. a “paper tiger” (meaning that it looks strong but actually is not) and thinks that “wars of national liberation” (i.e., converting countries to communism) will work. Chinese leaders see Vietnam as a test case for these ideas.



McNamara at a press conference on Vietnam

The CIA's Board of National Estimates has stated that the fall of South Vietnam to communism will:

1. Damage U.S. prestige regarding its ability to prevent the spread of communism in Asia and elsewhere
2. Cause other countries to become friendlier to communists
3. Increase the prestige of communist China and encourage the Chinese to initiate future wars of national liberation in poor countries

The U.S. has bombed North Vietnam, but only a few targets and only a few times. For the most part, the attacks have succeeded, but they haven't put an end to the communists' fight against the South Vietnamese government. In fact, communist attacks have increased over the past year. Your advisors have spent a great deal of time discussing a proposal to begin a full-scale bombing campaign against North Vietnam. (The U.S. has already used bombing campaigns in South Vietnam to support U.S. and South Vietnamese soldiers in combat.) The Vietcong draw most of their military support from the North Vietnamese, including equipment, training, and several thousand soldiers. You have called a meeting to make a decision.

Below are arguments from your advisors about whether the U.S. should bomb North Vietnam:

### ARGUMENT A

The National Security Council Working Group (NSCWG) favors bombing North Vietnam. Bombing won't cost a lot of American lives, will raise the morale of the South Vietnamese government, and might help the U.S. avoid getting drawn into a ground war. The group outlined three bombing options:

1. **Reaction strikes:** When the communists launch major attacks, the U.S. will bomb targets in North Vietnam. This will make the communists hesitant to attack.
2. **Fast/full squeeze:** The U.S. should bomb all military and industrial targets in North Vietnam, including transportation. If the U.S. is going to bomb, it should go all out and quickly bring the North Vietnamese leaders to their knees.
3. **Gradual squeeze and talk:** The U.S. should gradually bomb more and more military and industrial targets in North Vietnam while negotiating with North Vietnamese leaders to persuade them to withdraw from South Vietnam.

### ARGUMENT B

Most of the civilian members of the NSCWG favor Option 3, a gradual increase in bombing. They feel this option is in line with the limited objectives the U.S. has for Vietnam. Limited bombing wouldn't get the U.S. too deeply involved in the war and it won't risk drawing China into the war. China sent a huge army to help the North Koreans during the Korean War, and they have threatened to do the same now if the U.S. heavily bombs North Vietnam. Finally, limited bombing may encourage the North Vietnamese to negotiate, and the U.S. can threaten to intensify the bombing if they don't cooperate.

**ARGUMENT C**

The Joint Chiefs of Staff strongly favor Option 2, the fast/full squeeze. They think the civilians who favor Option 3 have made misguided arguments. Rather than proceed gradually, the Joint Chiefs feel the U.S. should go all out and do the job right, using all the power at its disposal to inflict whatever damage it can on the enemy. They believe that the object of war is to defeat the enemy and then negotiate from a position of strength.

**ARGUMENT D**

A recent public opinion poll showed that 60% of Americans favor bombing specific targets (factories, bridge, etc.) in North Vietnam, while 26% oppose it.

**ARGUMENT E**

George Ball, a U.S. State Department advisor, believes bombing will not work in North Vietnam. During World War II, Ball was a member of the Strategic Bombing Survey, which concluded that strategic bombing (i.e., bombing factories, cities, and bases not currently under attack by ground forces) had not been effective during the war. In fact, the cost (in lost airmen and planes) to the country doing the bombing, as well as the economic costs of the bombing missions, was greater than the damage done. Ball says strategic bombing won't work in Vietnam either. Also, bombing North Vietnam may end up providing a cause for North Vietnamese to rally around and end up strengthening their will to fight.



George Ball (left) and LBJ

**ARGUMENT F**

The State Department Policy Planning Agency submitted a summary stating that bombing North Vietnam would be disastrous: it wouldn't hurt North Vietnam that much, it would draw the U.S. deeper into the conflict, it would increase South Vietnam's dependence upon the U.S., it would turn world opinion against the U.S., and North Vietnam would likely retaliate by sending more troops into South Vietnam and intensifying the war.

**ARGUMENT G**

Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara reported that your advisors in Saigon debated whether the U.S. should bomb North Vietnam. They recognized that the air attacks may draw China into the war and may not break the will of the North Vietnamese nor reduce their ability to aid the communists in South Vietnam. However, the majority of your advisors favored air attacks anyway, since they could not come up with a better alternative.

**ARGUMENT H**

The Special Intelligence Estimate Study (SIES) reported that bombing would probably force North Vietnam to end its war with South Vietnam, so this group favors the U.S. bombing North Vietnam.

Will you approve a bombing campaign against North Vietnam, and if so, which one?  
(Reaction strikes, fast/full squeeze, gradual squeeze and talk)

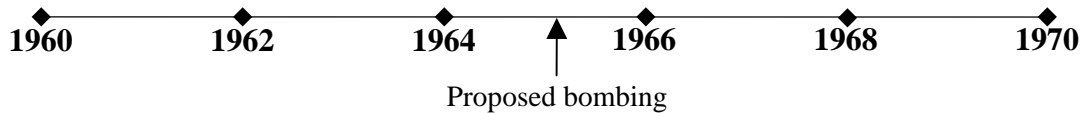
**You can ask two of the following questions:**

1. How effective is the U.S. air force? Can it hit the targets it chooses? Do the North Vietnamese have an air defense system? How skilled are they at shooting down planes? Will the U.S. lose many pilots and planes?
2. What does the U.S. know about North Vietnam's will to continue fighting? Will the Vietcong surrender or compromise if the U.S. bombs them and hurts the North Vietnamese economy?
3. Are there many good targets (such as factories) in North Vietnam?
4. Will China or the Soviet Union get involved in the war if the U.S. bombs North Vietnam?

# LESSON 6: VIETNAM, 1965

## Student Handout 4: Short Problem

### BOMBING OF NORTH VIETNAM



It is April 1965, and you are President Lyndon Johnson. In South Vietnam, a group known as the Vietcong is currently fighting a guerrilla war against the South Vietnamese government. The Vietcong are communists, and they have the support of North Vietnam as well as communist China and the Soviet Union. The U.S. has become involved in the conflict because it wants to stop the expansion of communism, a policy known as “containment.” The South Vietnamese government appears to be losing the war. If trends continue, the communists may eventually control the entire country.

The U.S. has bombed North Vietnam, but only a few targets and only a few times. Now, it must decide whether to initiate a full-scale bombing campaign against North Vietnam. (The U.S. has already used bombing campaigns in South Vietnam to support U.S. and South Vietnamese soldiers in combat.) The Vietcong draw most of their military support from the North Vietnamese, including equipment, training, and several thousand soldiers.

You have called a meeting to make a decision. Below are arguments your advisors have made about whether the U.S. should bomb North Vietnam:

1. Bombing won't cost a lot of American lives, will raise the morale of the South Vietnamese government, and may help the U.S. avoid getting drawn into a ground war.
2. Limited bombing may encourage the North Vietnamese to negotiate.
3. The Joint Chiefs of Staff strongly favor all-out bombing. They feel the U.S. should use all its power to inflict whatever damage it can on the enemy. They believe that the object of war is to defeat the enemy and then negotiate from a position of strength.
4. Sixty percent of Americans favor bombing targets (factories, bridges, etc.) in North Vietnam.
5. A government study shows that strategic bombing (i.e., bombing factories, cities, and bases not already under attack by ground forces) didn't work well in World War II. In fact, the cost (in lost airmen and planes) to the country doing the bombing, as well as the economic costs of the bombing missions, was greater than the damage done. Strategic bombing won't work in Vietnam either. Bombing North Vietnam may end up providing a cause for North Vietnamese to rally around and end up strengthening their will to fight.
6. Bombing could draw the U.S. deeper into the conflict, increase South Vietnam's dependence on the U.S., bring China into the war, and turn world opinion against

the U.S. Also, North Vietnam would likely retaliate by sending more troops into South Vietnam and intensifying the war.

Will you approve a bombing campaign against North Vietnam, and if so, which one?

- Reaction strikes (bombing only if North Vietnam attacks first)
- “Fast/full squeeze” (all-out bombing)
- “Gradual squeeze and talk” (bombing first, then stopping to negotiate)

**You can ask two of the following questions:**

1. How effective is the U.S. air force? Can it hit the targets it chooses? Do the North Vietnamese have an air defense system? How skilled are they at shooting down planes? Will the U.S. lose many pilots and planes?
2. What does the U.S. know about North Vietnam’s will to continue fighting? Will the Vietcong surrender or compromise if the U.S. bombs them and hurts the North Vietnamese economy?
3. Are there many good targets (such as factories) in North Vietnam?
4. Will China or the Soviet Union get involved in the war if the U.S. bombs North Vietnam?

# LESSON 6: VIETNAM, 1965

## Student Handout 5: Answers to Questions

### BOMBING OF NORTH VIETNAM

- 1. How effective is the U.S. air force? Can it hit the targets it chooses? Do the North Vietnamese have an air defense system? How skilled are they at shooting down planes? Will the U.S. lose many pilots and planes?**

The U.S. has the best air force in the world and should be able to hit nearly any target it chooses. However, the North Vietnamese do have an air defense system that could threaten U.S. planes in certain areas. If the Chinese or Soviets provide North Vietnam with more sophisticated air defense weapons or surface-to-air missiles, it may become too dangerous to attempt to bomb certain targets.

- 2. What does the U.S. know about North Vietnam's will to continue fighting? Will the Vietcong surrender or compromise if the U.S. bombs them and hurts the North Vietnamese economy?**

The North Vietnamese are determined to seize control of South Vietnam. They have been fighting since 1941, first against the Japanese, then the French, and now the South Vietnamese government. In addition, they believed Ho Chi Minh would have won the election of 1956, which would have given them control of the entire country. Thus, they feel entitled to have all of Vietnam under their control. The government surveys about strategic bombing during World War II showed that a people's will to fight strengthens after a country has been bombed, so that the North Vietnamese will to fight may increase as well.

- 3. Are there many good targets (such as factories) in North Vietnam?**

No. North Vietnam does not have a developed, modern economy and has just a few factories, oil tankers, and other easily identifiable targets. North Vietnam does have some railroads and bridges the U.S. could bomb to cut off transportation, but the supply of obvious targets will run out after a few months.

- 4. Will China or the Soviet Union get involved in the war if the U.S. bombs North Vietnam?**

No direct evidence exists that China and the Soviet Union will get involved. However, indirect evidence shows that if the U.S. bombs North Vietnam, China and the Soviet Union will likely provide more support to North Vietnam or even send troops. These countries have already given North Vietnam a lot of economic aid, and an increase in this will make the situation more difficult for the U.S. More air defense equipment would pose a particular problem because it would

give the Vietcong a better chance to shoot down U.S. planes. Also, China sent troops into the Korean War when it felt its border was threatened, and it may do the same in Vietnam.

# LESSON 6: VIETNAM, 1965

## Student Handout 6: Outcomes

### BOMBING OF NORTH VIETNAM

President Johnson decided to approve the “gradual squeeze and talk” plan for bombing North Vietnam. The bombing campaign, called “Operation Rolling Thunder,” did not succeed.

President Johnson and his advisors failed to look at the situation from the perspective of the North Vietnamese. Had they done so, they would have seen that the North Vietnamese could counter all bombing actions by the U.S. The North Vietnamese had an extensive air defense system, (including surface-to-air missiles) to shoot down U.S. planes.

Since North Vietnam was mainly an agricultural society, it had few factories to begin with. In addition, the North Vietnamese relocated industrial production, warehouses, barracks, and other likely targets next to hospitals and schools, practically daring the U.S. to bomb them. (In the 1960s, bombs were not as accurate as they are today, so bombing a target meant bombing an entire area.) Often, the bombs the U.S. dropped cost more to build than the targets bombed, and each U.S. plane shot down cost more than dozens or hundreds of North Vietnamese targets. In 1967, a special military report stated that the U.S. bombing cost ten times as much as the property the bombs destroyed. The North Vietnamese also organized repair brigades that could quickly fix bombed bridges (within 48 hours in some cases).

The Institute for Defense Analysis issued a report in 1966 stating that U.S. bombing of North Vietnam had no measurable effect on that country since few rewarding targets existed and North Vietnam’s will to fight seemed to remain just as strong. The bombing didn’t affect the Vietcong in South Vietnam either, since the Vietcong procured most of their supplies from local areas.

President Johnson didn’t realize it, but the U.S. military had played a war game (an exercise which tests the outcomes of a hypothetical scenario) involving bombing North Vietnam before going ahead with the actual bombing. The war game produced the same results that the actual bombing did: the North Vietnamese countered all U.S. attacks. Despite the negative results of the war game, the military went ahead with the bombing anyway.

The U.S. dropped three times as many bombs during the Vietnam War as it dropped during all of World War II. Most of the bombs (about two-thirds) were dropped on South



U.S. bombers over Vietnam

Vietnam. The United States used air power to support its soldiers in combat, and the combat took place in South Vietnam. The heavy bombing left craters that made parts of North and South Vietnam look like the moon. Unfortunately, the craters filled with stagnant water that increased the mosquito population, which led to the spread of malaria.

# LESSON 6: VIETNAM, 1965

## Student Handout 7: Problem

### TROOPS

It is July 1965, and you are still President Johnson. The U.S. has about 23,300 military advisors in Vietnam to help the South Vietnamese army fight the communists. However, the South Vietnamese are losing to the Vietcong. You now have to decide whether to send large numbers of regular U.S. combat forces to Vietnam to defeat the Vietcong.

In the U.S., people have protested against U.S. involvement in the Vietnam conflict, but polls repeatedly show that a majority of Americans support a stronger U.S. military role in Vietnam.

This past June, General William Westmoreland (the U.S. military commander in Vietnam) and Maxwell Taylor (the U.S. ambassador to South Vietnam) reported that if the North Vietnamese continue to defeat the South Vietnamese in battle, the will of the South Vietnamese to continue to fight will erode. Westmoreland requested up to 100,000 additional U.S. combat troops to prevent defeat and create a more active U.S. role in the war. You've called a meeting to decide once and for all whether to send large numbers of troops to Vietnam.

The following are summaries of arguments made in the meeting:



Maxwell Taylor (left) and LBJ

### ARGUMENT A:

Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs William Bundy says that the lessons of the 1930s and the Korean War show that the U.S. must take a stand to stop communist expansion. In the 1930s, Britain and France failed to take a strong stand against Nazi Germany—especially when Britain gave away part of Czechoslovakia to Hitler. This policy of “appeasement” only led to further German expansion and ultimately to World War II. Henry Cabot Lodge, Jr. (the former ambassador to South Vietnam) claims that if the U.S. does not fight in Vietnam, it risks getting pushed into World War III.

In the Korean War, the U.S. stood up to communist North Korea's attempt (which China and the Soviet Union backed) to conquer South Korea. Some of your advisors tell you that the U.S. made the right move in using military force to save South Korea, and that the Korean War probably deterred further communist aggression.

**ARGUMENT B:**

U.S. State Department advisor George Ball argues that the conflict in Vietnam is not like the Korean War, and has offered the following reasons to back up his assertion:

1. The Korean War began with a massive invasion across an international border. The conflict in Vietnam is a civil war. The Vietcong have garnered a great deal of support from the people of South Vietnam, so the war is more of an internal rebellion than an invasion.
2. In 1950, the South Korean government under leader Syngman Rhee was stable and had widespread support. The current South Vietnamese government is in chaos and does not have broad support from the people of South Vietnam.
3. The Korean War started just two years after Korea gained its independence. Ball claims that “The Korean people were still excited by their newfound freedom, they were fresh for the war” and willing to fight. In contrast, the South Vietnamese have been fighting for almost 20 years, first against the French and now against the North Vietnamese. According to Ball, “they are tired of conflict.”

**ARGUMENT C:**

The experience of the French from 1945 to 1954 shows that the Vietcong will take heavy punishment rather than give up their objective of taking South Vietnam. As a result, the U.S. may not be able to defeat the Vietcong without suffering unacceptable costs. The French fought in Vietnam for seven years with 250,000 combat-hardened veterans supported by an army of 205,000 South Vietnamese—and they couldn’t win. Moreover, if the U.S. sends a large number of troops to Vietnam, it may give the appearance of a “white man’s war”—that is, a war against non-whites that would turn international opinion against the U.S.

The U.S. would encounter the same problems in Vietnam that the French did: difficulty in collecting intelligence, overestimating the usefulness of sophisticated weapons in jungle warfare, and experiencing serious dissent within its ranks.

George Ball feels the U.S. should emphasize negotiations and push for a coalition government in South Vietnam that would include the communists. He argues that the U.S. should not escalate its military involvement in the war, but instead should negotiate an end to it.

**ARGUMENT D:**

National Security Advisor McGeorge Bundy and Secretary of State Dean Rusk argue that the present situation in Vietnam is unlike that the French faced in 1954. Unlike the French army, the U.S. won’t use defensive tactics that give the initiative to the communists. The war lacked popular support in France, and the country had an unstable political situation. In contrast, the U.S. has a stable, unified government (with your party, the Democrats, in control of both houses of Congress) and widespread support for its

policy of keeping South Vietnam independent. One additional difference: the French fought in Vietnam to prevent independence; the U.S. will fight to defend independence.



McGeorge Bundy (left) and LBJ

### **ARGUMENT E:**

Former President Eisenhower says that your first duty is to prevent a communist takeover of Vietnam. If the communists do win, other countries in southeast Asia will fall like dominoes to communism. Communist China will expand its influence in the region and may even try to take over some countries.

### **ARGUMENT F:**

Army Chief of Staff Harold Johnson, who has recently returned from Saigon after you sent him there to appraise the situation, reports that it would take 500,000 U.S. troops five years to win the war. He says that normally the U.S. would need a ten-to-one numerical superiority to defeat the Vietcong (who have an estimated 200,000 soldiers at this point), but the powerful weaponry the U.S. has would make up the difference.

### **ARGUMENT G:**

You called together a group of World War II leaders (including General Omar Bradley and former Secretary of State Dean Acheson) to get their advice on whether to send large numbers of troops to Vietnam. This group, referred to as “the wise men,” brings with them the historical perspective of the 1940s. All of them except one told you that the U.S. should send all troops necessary to prevent South Vietnam from falling to communism.

### **ARGUMENT H:**

Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara believes the U.S. needs to send the troops General Westmoreland requested in order to prevent defeat and turn the tide in favor of South Vietnam. When the U.S. has a stronger position on the battlefield, it can persuade North Vietnam to end the war. According to McNamara, if the U.S. doesn’t send these troops it would lead to “surrender on the installment plan.”

**ARGUMENT I:**

Secretary of State Rusk says that your advisors almost unanimously agree that the U.S. must honor its commitment and fight to save South Vietnam. “The integrity of the U.S. commitment,” Rusk says, “is the principal pillar of peace throughout the world. If that commitment becomes unreliable, the communist world would draw conclusions that would lead to our ruin and almost certainly to a catastrophic war.” It may take a long time, but the U.S. can defeat the Vietcong.



Dean Rusk, LBJ, and Robert McNamara

**ARGUMENT J:**

Clark Clifford, a longtime informal advisor, believes that sending troops is a bad idea that could turn into a major problem: an open-ended commitment of U.S. troops without a realistic hope for victory. The terrain (geography) and political situation in Vietnam make this war fundamentally different than the war in Korea.



Clark Clifford

**ARGUMENT K:**

Senator Richard Russell

Senator Richard Russell, whom many regard as the most influential and widely respected member of the Senate and who was chiefly responsible for your selection as Democratic leader when you served in Congress, speaks to you four or five times a week in person or on the phone. He says that sending troops to Vietnam would hurt the U.S. and help the communists. The jungles of Vietnam are terrible places to fight a war, and the Vietcong would easily be able to use guerrilla tactics to pin down U.S. troops. Russell says that Vietnam has no strategic, economic, or tactical value, and the U.S. can never win there.

Will you approve sending large numbers of American combat troops into Vietnam?

**You can ask two of the following questions:**

1. How popular is the South Vietnamese government?
2. What is the military situation in South Vietnam? How strong are the two sides?
3. What do leading experts say about the stability and popularity of the South Vietnamese government?
4. Can the U.S. get advice from a political scientist about a difficult situation like this?

# LESSON 6: VIETNAM, 1965

## Student Handout 8: Short Problem

### TROOPS

It is July 1965, and you are still President Lyndon Johnson. The U.S. has about 23,300 military advisors in Vietnam to help the South Vietnamese army fight the communists. However, the South Vietnamese are losing to the Vietcong and your commander in Vietnam has called for the U.S. to send in 100,000 combat troops. Polls repeatedly show that a majority of Americans support a stronger U.S. military role in Vietnam. You've called a meeting to decide whether to send large numbers of troops to Vietnam.

Here are some arguments your advisors have made regarding this important decision:

- If the U.S. does not take a strong stand against the communists in Vietnam now, it will be like when the European powers failed to take a strong stand against Hitler in the 1930s. If the communists win, other countries in southeast Asia will fall like dominoes to communism. Communist China will expand its influence in the region and may even take over some countries.
- In the Korean War, the U.S. stood up to communist aggression by North Korea (which China and the Soviet Union backed) in its attempt to conquer South Korea. The U.S. should also stand up against the communists again in Vietnam.
- One advisor says that the situation in Korea differed from the one in Vietnam: the Korean War involved conventional warfare, whereas in Vietnam guerrilla warfare is taking place. The terrain (geography) and political situation in Vietnam also make this war fundamentally different than the war in Korea.
- The French fought the Vietnamese for seven years with a large army and couldn't defeat them. The U.S. may not be able to defeat the Vietcong without suffering unacceptable losses.
- Two advisors feel that the present situation differs from that the French faced in Vietnam. The French army used defensive tactics that gave the initiative to the communists, and the war lacked public support in France. In contrast, the U.S. will take the initiative militarily, and the American public currently supports U.S. military action in Vietnam.
- One general estimates that it would take 500,000 U.S. troops five years to win the war.
- One advisor tells you, "The integrity of the U.S. commitment is the principal pillar of peace throughout the world. If that commitment becomes unreliable, the communist world would draw conclusions that would lead to our ruin and almost certainly to a catastrophic war."
- A senator who is a close advisor of yours says that Vietnam has no strategic, economic, or tactical value, and that the U.S. can never win there. Sending troops there would hurt the U.S. and help the communists, since the jungles of Vietnam are terrible places to fight a war.

Will you approve sending large numbers of American combat troops into Vietnam?

**You can ask two of the following questions:**

1. How popular is the South Vietnamese government?
2. What is the military situation in South Vietnam? How strong are the two sides?
3. What do leading experts say about the stability and popularity of the South Vietnamese government?
4. Can the U.S. get advice from a political scientist about a difficult situation like this?

# LESSON 6: VIETNAM, 1965

## Student Handout 9: Answers to Questions

### TROOPS

#### 1. How popular is the South Vietnamese government?

- A. Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara says that the Vietcong control more of the countryside than the South Vietnamese government does. Landowners, Catholics, and some people in cities support the South Vietnamese government. Landless peasants and renters (70% of the population) generally do not support the government because the government supports landowners. The Vietcong let the peasants own land, but the current government does not, since much of its support comes from large landowners who make money renting their land to peasants. Buddhists don't like the government because it is closely linked to the Catholic Church. Many South Vietnamese don't like the government because it's corrupt and because many of its leaders worked for the French when Vietnam was a French colony. In addition, some South Vietnamese oppose the government because the Vietcong has terrorized them (through threats and assassinations) into doing so.
- B. American military officers conducted a study known as "PROVN." Based on interviews with returning U.S. officers in which they discussed their travels to the countryside of South Vietnam, the study concluded that:
- The number-one issue for many villagers is security. The Vietcong provide a higher level of security than the South Vietnamese government.
  - Most villagers believe that the South Vietnamese government doesn't care about their welfare, and they view government officials as arrogant. Most officials don't come from villages, so they have little understanding of or sympathy for the villagers.
  - The Vietcong (also known as the NLF, the National Liberation Front) seem to care about the villagers and help them with their problems. For example, NLF members live in the villages in order to help with farm work, such as planting and harvesting.
- C. From a former military officer in the Vietcong (date unknown):
- "I was poor. I had lost my land. I didn't have enough money to take care of my children. In 1961 propaganda cadres of the Front [the NLF or Vietcong] contacted me... They came to all the poor farmers and made an analysis of the poor and rich classes. They said that the rich people had always served the French and had used the authority of the French to oppress the poor... Without any other means to live, the poor had become slaves to the landlords. The cadres told us that if the poor people don't stand up to the rich people, we would be dominated by them forever.

The only way to ensure freedom and a sufficient life was to overthrow them.... When I heard the cadres, I thought that what they said was correct... I knew that the rich oppressed the poor [in our village]... So I joined the Liberation Front. I followed the V.C. [Vietcong] to fight for freedom and prosperity for the country. I felt this was right.”

D. From a founder of the Vietcong (date unknown):

“In the countryside he [Diem, former President of South Vietnam] destroyed at a blow the dignity and livelihood of several hundred thousand peasants by canceling the land-redistribution arrangements instituted by the Vietminh in the areas they had controlled prior to 1954. He might have attempted to use American aid to compensate owners and capitalize on peasant goodwill; instead he courted the large landholders. Farmers who had been working land they considered their own, often for years, now faced demands for back rent and exorbitant new rates. It was an economic disaster for them... The result of all this was a frustrated and indignant peasantry, fertile ground for anti-Diem agitation.”

E. In 1964, the village chief of Duc Lap told an American researcher that about 70% of his villagers supported the NLF, about 30% were neutral, and about 1% openly supported the south Vietnamese government.

F. From a television broadcast:

“The survey of the attitudes of the people of South Vietnam is the subject of this broadcast....”

“The overwhelming desire for peace permeates our findings. Asked what they would choose if they could be given three wishes for their country, four out of five named peace as their first choice....”

“Another indication of the difference between unity of purpose and disagreement over method is found toward the Vietcong. In the secure areas of South Vietnam where the interviews took place, there was an intense dislike for the Vietcong. As we shall see later in detail, the people blame the V.C. more than anyone else for the continuation of the war. They find little to like and much to dislike about the V.C. and when asked whether they think life would be easier in their district under V.C. or Nationalist control, nobody—not one in 1500—feels they’d be better off under the Vietcong.”

“Despite this 46% of the people feel we should stop bombing and burning hamlets in the South even though they are suspected of harboring V.C. Nevertheless, almost as many, 37%, feel we should continue to bomb and burn where V.C. are hiding. It becomes clear from a study of the data that South Vietnam has its own distinct set of hawks and doves....”

“In general, the people indicated approval of Americans as people... In the countryside, our medical and food assistance and our sweeps to make areas secure were mentioned in a favorable light. But in the cities, our image suffers from the usual problems of soldiers on the town. Nevertheless, even in the cities, the majority sentiment expressed is pro-American.”

“The Vietnamese view their own government in Saigon with a mixture of approval and suspicion.”

“Throughout the survey, two undercurrents are in constant evidence. One is a desire for peace, the other for economic improvement...more and better jobs, lower prices, lower taxes, better business conditions. Peace and economic well-being, of course, are closely related, and it is fair to say that yearnings for peace are motivated as much perhaps by a desire for a decent life as an escape from the miseries of war...”

## **2. What is the military situation in South Vietnam? How strong are the two sides?**

The South Vietnamese army has about 500,000 troops, supported by about 23,000 U.S. soldiers. According to current intelligence, the Vietcong have about 300,000 guerrilla fighters, supported by a few thousand North Vietnamese troops. The entire North Vietnamese army consists of about 500,000 soldiers, so North Vietnam can send many more troops to support the Vietcong. According to military doctrine regarding guerrilla warfare, U.S. forces would need to outnumber the Vietcong by a ratio of ten to one in order to ensure victory, which would mean approximately three million South Vietnamese/American troops. However, the U.S. has supplied the South Vietnamese with sophisticated weapons that may make up the difference in numbers. In addition, American forces are highly trained and have great firepower, so the U.S. may not need to achieve a ten-to-one ratio in order to defeat the Vietcong.

On the other hand, morale runs low within the South Vietnamese army, while the Vietcong appear to have high morale. The Vietcong have managed to capture larger and larger areas of the countryside, which indicates that they have taken the offensive. The CIA reports that the communists control more of the villages in South Vietnam than the South Vietnamese government does—a bad sign.

## **3. What do leading experts say about the stability and popularity of the South Vietnamese government?**

Your political advisors (including the secretary of state, secretary of defense, and the U.S. ambassador to South Vietnam) tell you that the South Vietnamese government stands on the verge of collapse—possibly in the next six months. The government has enough military equipment, but it has terrible political leadership. One coup (overthrow) after another has taken place. Corruption also runs rampant within the South Vietnamese government.

There's another problem: the U.S. has few experts on Vietnam. Most of the leading U.S. State Department experts on Asia were fired during Senator McCarthy's anti-communist purge in the 1950s. Since many people blamed the U.S. State Department for failing to prevent China from falling to communism in 1949, many of Senator McCarthy's anti-communist attacks targeted State Department experts on Asia. In general, the U.S. does not have a good understanding of Vietnamese society.

**4. Can the U.S. get advice from a political scientist about a difficult situation like this?**

Yes. The political scientist advises that you focus on goals. What do you want to accomplish in Vietnam? Is Vietnam important to the national interest of the U.S.? Are your goals realistic? That is, does the U.S. have a reasonable chance of accomplishing its goals?

# LESSON 6: VIETNAM, 1965

## Student Handout 10: Outcomes

### TROOPS

President Johnson and his advisors met every day for a week to discuss whether to send large numbers of U.S. soldiers to Vietnam. In the end, Johnson decided to send the troops. This proved to be a major turning point in the war, as the U.S. escalated its position from “advisor” to the South Vietnamese government to taking over the main combat role and directly fighting the Vietcong and North Vietnamese. By January 1966, the U.S. had 186,000 troops in Vietnam, and by 1968 it had more than 500,000. The war did not go well for the U.S.

- More than 50,000 American soldiers lost their lives, and hundreds of thousands were wounded as a result of the war. More than a million Vietnamese died in the war, millions more were wounded, and still millions of others became refugees.
- The Vietcong used guerrilla warfare, attacking surreptitiously and then blending in afterwards with civilians in villages. Therefore, it was very difficult to fight the Vietcong without killing civilians. Naturally, U.S. commanders used air power to assist their troops. However, pilots found it difficult to distinguish Vietcong positions from civilian encampments or villages. A congressional report estimated that the U.S. killed two civilians for every Vietcong killed in the fighting. Civilian deaths led to more Vietnamese to hate the U.S.; many consequently joined the Vietcong, thus leading to an endless cycle of violence. In effect, the U.S. helped the Vietcong recruit more guerrilla fighters. The Vietcong also used terrorist tactics (such as threats and assassinations) to intimidate South Vietnamese civilians into supporting them.
- The North Vietnamese had an army of about 500,000 soldiers, but only a few thousand of these were in South Vietnam in 1965. However, as the U.S. raised the number of troops it committed, the North Vietnamese countered by sending more of their soldiers to South Vietnam.
- U.S. soldiers, frustrated by fighting guerrillas and by losing comrades to booby traps and ambushes, sometimes committed atrocities and killed civilians.



American soldiers help a wounded comrade



The most well-known case became known as the “My Lai massacre,” after the village in which it occurred. Lieutenant William Calley, who led a platoon that killed hundreds of civilians in the village, was later convicted of a war crime. No one knows exactly how many atrocities U.S. soldiers committed during this war, but the mere fact that American soldiers killed civilians hurt the reputation of both the U.S. and its army.

- The war raised questions about the racial composition of American troops. Some African Americans felt they endured higher casualty rates than whites. Other African Americans questioned why they should fight for the U.S. abroad when they were deprived of rights at home. Leaders of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), an important civil rights group, stated their opposition to U.S. involvement in Vietnam and declared their support for draft resisters. Civil rights leader Stokely Carmichael characterized the draft as nothing more than “white people sending black people to make war on yellow people in order to defend the land they stole from red people.”



- The war also raised questions about social class. Some critics claimed that the war hit poor Americans especially hard: the wealthy received college deferments and desk jobs in the military, while the poor were twice as likely both to get drafted and to see combat.
- Fighting in Vietnam—especially after the troop escalation—cost a great deal of money. President Johnson either had to raise taxes, cut spending for his Great Society programs, or deficit-spend (i.e., have the government spend more than it takes in through taxes and borrow the rest). Johnson chose to deficit-spend, which led to inflation—a major **unintended consequence**. In addition, the war did eventually lead to cutbacks in Great Society programs.
- As the war dragged on, public opinion turned against it—especially as casualties increased. Many Americans had trouble understanding why the U.S. was fighting in Vietnam and losing so many young Americans. By 1968, President Johnson’s approval rating had dropped to only at about 40%.

The war led to many protests at home; some became angry with the protesters, criticizing them for not supporting their country in a time of war. The war not only divided the public, it also split the Democratic Party into a peace wing and a “pro-war” wing. President Johnson decided not to run for reelection, and the internal division of the Democratic Party allowed the Republicans to win the presidency in 1968. The Republican presidential candidate, Richard Nixon, ran a campaign based on “law and order.” This theme connected with many voters who saw the Vietnam protests as a symptom of the country falling into anarchy. Nixon supporters felt people should obey the law and respect those in the military who

risked their lives. Protesters' tactics—such as flying Vietcong flags or chanting, “Hey, hey LBJ! How many kids did you kill today?”—shocked these voters. The protesters, meanwhile, felt that it was their duty as loyal Americans to oppose the government and question an immoral war that was hurting the country.

- As U.S. soldiers returned home, they were generally ignored and sometimes criticized. For the most part, the American public did not welcome them home as heroes. The war had become so divisive that many people did not want to do anything that reminded them of it, including parades and other ceremonies welcoming veterans



An anti-war protest

home. Many soldiers had not just physical scars from the war but also psychological ones as well, and many suffered from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Vietnam veterans also often fell into alcohol and drug abuse. Unfortunately, the government did not provide enough services to help the returning veterans readjust, so their psychological needs often went unmet.

- The war hurt the military's image, since many Americans associated the unpopular war with the armed forces. Even some veterans criticized the war, forming a group called the Vietnam Veterans Against the War. U.S. soldiers in Vietnam had generally low morale, and sometimes troops even shot at their own officers (a practice called “fragging”) rather than follow an order they considered unreasonably dangerous. In the 1970s, many military leaders wanted to pull the army out of Vietnam because the war was hurting the military—and its reputation—so much.
- As American soldiers took over much of the fighting, the South Vietnamese government and military became of secondary importance; the conflict became more of an American war than a South Vietnamese one. Consequently, the morale and performance of the South Vietnamese soldiers dropped. Relations between U.S. and South Vietnamese troops began to deteriorate, as some American soldiers became disgusted by what they saw as a lack of effort on the part of the South Vietnamese.
- Leaders in the U.S. government (including President Johnson) did not always tell the truth about how badly the war was going or about changes in strategy. As the

press began to find out about and publish articles revealing these lies, a “credibility gap” began to emerge. Many people took the attitude that “you can’t believe anything the government tells you,” and a large portion of the American public became cynical about the government in general. After the Vietnam War and the Watergate scandal, many people used the word “politician” as a pejorative (i.e., a very negative) term.

- The U.S. used chemicals in Vietnam to defoliate jungle areas and to deny food to the Vietcong, including the infamous “Agent Orange.” These chemicals caused illness among U.S. soldiers as well as among the people of South Vietnam.
- The war took a tremendous psychological toll on President Johnson. The president seemed to age 20 years during the five years he was in the White House.
- American prestige diminished because the U.S. involved itself in a prolonged war that it did not win.
- The tragedy in Vietnam made many U.S. leaders more hesitant to involve the U.S. in other foreign conflicts, an attitude that some referred to as the “Vietnam syndrome.”



U.S. plane spraying defoliant over Vietnamese jungle

# LESSON 6: VIETNAM, 1965

## Student Handout 11: Enemy Point of View

In making a decision, it can often be helpful to look at the situation from another point of view—especially from the perspective of one’s enemy or opponent. This handout asks you to make decisions about the Vietnam conflict from the perspective of the North Vietnamese and Vietcong.

**North Vietnam and U.S. bombing:** You are Ho Chi Minh, the leader of North Vietnam. The U.S. may start a sustained bombing campaign against North Vietnam, so you need to bring in more air defense weapons to shoot down their planes. The Americans will focus on crippling the North Vietnamese economy. However, since North Vietnam doesn’t have many factories, the Americans won’t have a lot of targets to hit. They will probably focus on transportation, bombing railroad tracks, roads, and bridges. They might also try to blockade Haiphong, North Vietnam’s only port, to prevent you from trading by sea. The Americans don’t want to kill North Vietnamese civilians, so that might limit their bombing. For example, they most likely won’t bomb the dams around Hanoi, since that would cause a flood that would kill tens of thousands of civilians. China and the Soviet Union have provided North Vietnam with aid, and they will probably give more in the future in order to weaken the United States.

### 1. What actions will you take to counteract the U.S. bombing of North Vietnam?

You can choose as many options as you’d like.

- A. Ask for more air defense weapons from China and the Soviet Union.
- B. Move civilians near targets (such as railroad tracks or airports) or place moveable targets (such as storage tanks or soldiers) in civilian areas.
- C. Make sure (by scheduling deliveries and delaying ships from leaving) that there are always foreign ships in the harbor at Haiphong, so that if the Americans try to bomb the harbor, they run the risk of hitting ships from other countries. Also, if the U.S. tries to place mines in the harbor, this will prevent other countries’ ships from leaving.
- D. Improve land transportation from China, in case the U.S. mines the harbor at Haiphong.
- E. Create repair brigades to fix bridges and other transportation. These groups will go out after a bombing and repair things as quickly as possible.
- F. Send more North Vietnamese soldiers into South Vietnam. This will let the Americans know that if they bomb North Vietnam, you will step up your military attacks on South Vietnam.
- G. Compromise with the U.S. Tell them that North Vietnam will stop helping the Vietcong if the U.S. stops the bombing.

**Vietcong and U.S. troops:** You are a Vietcong leader. You have heard that the U.S. may send large numbers of troops to South Vietnam to defeat your forces. U.S. troops have sophisticated weapons and will be almost impossible to defeat in any large battles. However, they do have a couple of weak points. First, the American public’s support for a small war that doesn’t seem directly related to the well-being of the U.S. may not last

long. If the war drags on long enough, Americans may start to insist that the troops be brought home, or they may vote President Johnson out of office and elect a new president who promises to end the fighting. Second, a guerrilla war will cause problems for the Americans, since Vietcong fighters can easily mix in with and hide among the general population. The U.S. won't have an easily identifiable target to attack, and if they try to use their powerful, large-scale weapons, they will kill many South Vietnamese civilians. Moreover, the jungle will provide many places to hide and limit the effectiveness of American weapons. Meanwhile, North Vietnam is willing to increase support, in terms of soldiers and weapons, for your efforts against the South Vietnamese government and the Americans.

**2. What actions will you take to counteract the U.S. decision to send large numbers of troops to South Vietnam? You can choose as many options as you would like.**

- A. Focus on weakening the South Vietnamese government. For example, you could assassinate government officials. With no one to administer the government in rural or contested areas, the Vietcong will be able to gather strength and grow, while the South Vietnamese government will gradually weaken. The Americans can never win if the South Vietnamese government becomes too weak or unstable.
- B. Soon after the American troops arrive, have the Vietcong surprise them with an all-out attack. Combined Vietcong and North Vietnamese forces will outnumber U.S. soldiers by perhaps a five-to-one ratio if they attack within a couple of months after the American troops arrive.
- C. Fight a guerrilla war. Don't come out into the open. Blend in with the civilian population and set ambushes to kill a few Americans at a time. Use booby traps to inflict casualties on U.S. troops without risking the lives of Vietcong or North Vietnamese soldiers. As the number of casualties goes up, public support for the war in the U.S. will go down. If you avoid fighting big battles, you can drag the war out for a long time.
- D. Ask North Vietnam for more troops and more weapons.
- E. Try to win over the South Vietnamese people to your side by treating them with respect, giving them land and helping them with their problems (getting supplies, irrigation, etc.). You could actually help recruit even more people to your side if you can draw the Americans into attacking villages. If U.S. troops and planes destroy houses and kill civilians, this will definitely turn the South Vietnamese against the Americans and make them more likely to support the Vietcong.
- F. Terrorize the South Vietnamese. For example, if a village does not contribute ten men to serve in the Vietcong, threaten to execute some of the villagers. You could also just wipe out all villages that don't cooperate with you. You can send the message that if people don't cooperate with the Vietcong they will suffer the consequences.
- G. Negotiate with the U.S. Since they have better equipped soldiers and more sophisticated weapons, you should compromise. You can give up your rebel war against the South Vietnamese government and instead become a political party and run candidates for office in the next election in South Vietnam. Why not settle this matter peacefully?

# LESSON 6: VIETNAM, 1965

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## Student Handout 12: Analogies

U.S. leaders used numerous analogies when they made decisions during the Vietnam War. Evaluate the analogies below by asking, “In what ways are the two cases similar and different?”

1. The U.S. can't back down in the face of aggression in Vietnam, as Neville Chamberlain did when he gave in to Hitler at Munich in 1938. If the U.S. allows the communists take over, they will keep taking more territory and expanding, just as Hitler did.
2. If the U.S. gets involved militarily, it will get bogged down in a long war it can't win, just as the French did in Vietnam.
3. The situation for the U.S. in 1965 is not like the situation the French faced in 1954 at the end of their war in Vietnam. The French army used defensive tactics, which gave the initiative to the communists. The war lacked popular support in France, and the country had an unstable political situation. In contrast, the U.S. has a stable, unified government (with your party, the Democrats, in control of both houses of Congress) and widespread support for its policy of keeping South Vietnam independent.
4. The U.S. can stop the expansion of communism in Vietnam as it did in Korea. When the North Koreans invaded South Korea, the U.S. sent in troops and prevented them from taking over all of Korea.
5. Just as in World War II, strategic bombing (of North Vietnam) won't be worth the effort. In World War II, strategic bombing provided a cause for the bombed country to rally around and ended up strengthening their will to fight. In addition, the cost (in lost airmen and planes) to the country doing the bombing, as well as the economic costs of the bombing missions, was greater than the damage done. Bombing diverted resources that could have been used more effectively, such as to directly support U.S. troops in combat. The same will happen in Vietnam. The U.S. will spend more economic resources on conducting the bombing than the damage it will cause.

# LESSON 6: VIETNAM, 1965

## Student Handout 13: Short Answers to Questions

### 1. How popular is the South Vietnamese government?

- A. Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara says that the Vietcong control more of the countryside than the South Vietnamese government does. Landowners, Catholics, and some people in cities support the South Vietnamese government. Landless peasants and renters (70% of the population) generally do not support the government because the government supports landowners. The Vietcong let peasants own land, but the current government favors large landowners, who make money from renting land to peasants. Buddhists don't like the government because it is closely linked to the Catholic Church. Many South Vietnamese don't like the government because it's corrupt and because many of its leaders had worked for the French when Vietnam was a French colony. In addition, some South Vietnamese oppose the government because the Vietcong has terrorized them (through threats and assassinations) into doing so.
- B. American military officers conducted a study known as "PROVN." Based on interviews with returning U.S. officers in which they discussed their travels to the countryside of South Vietnam, the study concluded that:
- The number-one issue for many villagers is security. The Vietcong provide a higher level of security than the South Vietnamese government.
  - Most villagers believe that the South Vietnamese government doesn't care about their welfare, and they view government officials as arrogant. Most officials don't come from village, so they have little understanding of or sympathy for the villagers.
  - The Vietcong (also known as the NLF, the National Liberation Front) care about the villagers and help them with their problems. For example, NLF members live in the villages in order to help with farm work such as planting and harvesting.
- C. A survey found that the people of South Vietnam really just want peace. In the secure areas of South Vietnam where the interviews took place, the people intensely dislike the Vietcong and blame them more than anyone else for the continuation of the war. Despite this finding, 46% of the people in South Vietnam feel the U.S. should stop bombing and burning villages suspected of harboring Vietcong, while 37% feel the U.S. should continue the bombing.

### 2. What is the military situation in South Vietnam? How strong are the two sides?

In terms of numbers, the Vietcong are very strong. According to military doctrine regarding guerrilla warfare, U.S. forces would need to outnumber the Vietcong by a

ratio of ten to one in order to ensure victory, which would mean approximately three million South Vietnamese and American troops. However, the U.S. has supplied the South Vietnamese with sophisticated weapons that might make up the difference in numbers. In addition, American forces are highly trained and have great firepower, so the U.S. may not need to achieve a ten-to-one ration in order to defeat the Vietcong.

On the other hand, morale runs low within the South Vietnamese army, while the Vietcong appear to have high morale. The Vietcong have managed to capture larger and larger areas of the countryside, which indicates that they have taken the offensive. The CIA reports that the communists control more of the villages in South Vietnam than the South Vietnamese government does—a bad sign.

### **3. What do leading experts say about the stability and popularity of the South Vietnamese government?**

Your political advisors (including the secretary of state, secretary of defense, and the U.S. ambassador to South Vietnam) tell you that the South Vietnamese government stands on the verge of collapse—possibly in the next six months. The government has enough military equipment, but it has terrible political leadership. One coup (overthrow) after another has taken place. Corruption also runs rampant within the South Vietnamese government.

There's another problem: The U.S. has few experts on Vietnam. Most of the leading U.S. State Department experts on Asia were fired during Senator McCarthy's anti-Communist purge in the 1950s. In general, the U.S. does not have a good understanding of Vietnamese society.

### **4. Can the U.S. get advice from a political scientist about a difficult situation like this?**

Yes, and he advises that you focus on goals. What do you want to accomplish in Vietnam? Is Vietnam important to the national interest of the U.S.? Are your goals realistic? That is, does the U.S. have a reasonable chance of accomplishing its goals?

## LESSON 6: VIETNAM, 1965

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### Student Handout 14: Primary Source

**President Johnson questions U.S. State Department Advisor George Ball,  
Morning Meeting of July 21, 1965**

*The President:* Is there anyone here of the opinion we should not do what the [Joint Chiefs of Staff] memorandum says [increase U.S. troops in Vietnam by 100,000]? If so, I want to hear from him now, in detail.

*Ball:* Mr. President, I can foresee a perilous voyage, very dangerous. I have great and grave apprehensions that we can win under these conditions. But let me be clear. If the decision is to go ahead, I am committed.

*The President:* But, George, is there another course in the national interest, some course that is better than the one McNamara proposes? We know it is dangerous and perilous, but the big question is, can it be avoided?

*Ball:* There is no course that will allow us to cut our losses. If we get bogged down, our cost might be substantially greater. The pressures to create a larger war would be inevitable. The qualifications I have are not due to the fact that I think we are in a bad moral position.

*The President:* Tell me then, what other road can I go?

*Ball:* Take what precautions we can, Mr. President. Take our losses, let their government fall apart, negotiate, discuss, knowing full well there will be a probable takeover by the Communists. This is disagreeable, I know.

*The President:* I can take disagreeable decisions. But I want to know can we make a case for your thoughts? Can you discuss it fully?

*Ball:* We have discussed it. I have had my day in court.

*The President:* I don't think we can make any full commitment, George. You have pointed out the danger, but you haven't really proposed an alternative course. We haven't always been right. We have no mortgage on victory. Right now, I am concerned that we have very little alternatives to what we are doing. I want another meeting, more meetings, before we take any definitive action. We must look at all other courses of possibility carefully. Right now I feel it would be more dangerous to lose this now, than endanger a greater number of troops. But I want this fully discussed.

### Afternoon Meeting of July 21, 1965

*Ball:* We cannot win, Mr. President. The war will be long and protracted. The most we can hope for is a messy conclusion. There remains a great danger of intrusion by the Chinese. But the biggest problem is the problem of the long war. The Korean experience was a galling one. The correlation between Korean casualties and public opinion showed support stabilizing at 50 percent. As casualties increase, the pressure to strike at the very jugular of North Vietnam will become very great. I am concerned about world opinion. If we could win in a year's time, and win decisively, world opinion would be all right. However, if the war is long and protracted, as I believe it will be, then we will suffer because the world's greatest power cannot defeat guerrillas. Then there is the problem of national politics. Every great captain in history was not afraid to make a tactical withdrawal if conditions were unfavorable to him. The enemy cannot be seen in Vietnam. He is indigenous to the country. I truly have serious doubts that an army of Westerners can successfully fight Orientals in an Asian jungle.

*The President:* This is important. Can Westerners, in the absence of accurate intelligence, successfully fight Asians in the jungle rice paddies? I want McNamara and General [Earle] Wheeler [Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff] to seriously ponder this question.

*Ball:* I think we all have underestimated the seriousness of this situation. It is like giving cobalt treatment to a terminal cancer case. I think a long, protracted war will disclose our weakness, not our strength. The least harmful way to cut losses in SVN [South Vietnam] is to let the government decide it doesn't want us to stay there. Therefore, we should put proposals to the GVN [government of South Vietnam] that they can't accept. Then, it would move to a neutral position. I have no illusions that after we were asked to leave South Vietnam, that country would soon come under Hanoi control....

*The President:* But George, wouldn't all these countries say that Uncle Sam was a paper tiger, wouldn't we lose credibility breaking the word of three presidents, if we did as you proposed? It would seem to be an irresponsible blow. But I gather you don't think so?

*Ball:* No, Sir. The worse blow would be that the mightiest power on earth is unable to defeat a handful of guerrillas.

### QUESTIONS FOR ANALYSIS

1. Evaluate the thinking of President Johnson and advisor George Ball in this document. How did they do in terms of **P-A-G-E**?
2. Why do you think President Johnson decided to send large numbers of U.S. troops to Vietnam after this discussion?

# LESSON 7: CIVIL RIGHTS

## Teacher Pages

### OVERVIEW

The 1963 demonstrations in Birmingham, Alabama constituted a turning point in the U.S. civil rights movement. This lesson places students in the roles of civil rights leaders as they decide which strategies to adopt for these demonstrations. The Birmingham demonstrations are also worth studying because Martin Luther King, Jr., wrote one of the great documents in U.S. history, “Letter from a Birmingham Jail,” during this crisis.

### VOCABULARY

- Martin Luther King, Jr.—Civil rights leader who stressed the importance of nonviolent demonstrations and protests
- Eugene “Bull” Connor—Police chief of Birmingham, Alabama, who took violent actions to enforce segregation
- FBI—Federal Bureau of Investigation
- Boycott—To refuse to buy products from a business in order to pressure that business into changing a particular policy
- Bail—A sum of money paid to release someone from jail after an arrest, prior to trial. If the person doesn’t appear for trial, he or she forfeits the bail money.
- Black Power—Philosophy that advocated a more violent, confrontational method of achieving civil rights for African Americans. Those who believed in black power rejected integration as a goal and stressed that African Americans needed to help themselves rather than rely on outside help.

### DECISION-MAKING SKILLS EMPHASIZED

- Consider other points of view
- Ask questions about context
- Generate options
- Play out options

# LESSON PLAN

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## **A. IN-DEPTH LESSON (one 40-minute class period)**

### Procedure:

Distribute Handout 1. Have students read it silently and then ask them to decide whether they will go ahead with the demonstrations. Discuss their reasoning. Next, distribute Handout 2, ask students to read it silently and generate options, then ask them to decide what they will do. Next, divide students into groups and have them discuss their options and choices. Allow time for students to ask questions. Bring the class back together and list the options they generated on the board. Discuss the arguments for and against each option.

Distribute Handout 3 and ask students to place a checkmark next to any option they did not think of themselves. Have the groups meet again to discuss whether they now want to change any of their decisions. You may want to ask them to imagine how the options they chose may play out. Bring the class together again, ask them to vote on what they will do, and have them explain their decisions.

Distribute Handout 4 and discuss the decisions and outcomes with students.

### Reflecting on Decision Making:

Ask students what they might have done differently, if anything, now that they know the outcomes. Which decision-making skills were especially important in making decisions about these issues? Which of the letters of **P-A-G-E** applied especially to this problem? (See the “Decision-Making Analysis” section below for ideas.) Ask students what they did well or poorly in terms of the **P-A-G-E** analysis. Did they do well in anticipating other points of view? Did they anticipate what might go wrong? Discuss their answers, or have students write their answers in their journals or in their decision-making logs.

### Placing the Actual Decisions Into Historical Context:

Ask students the following: Did certain historical factors cause the Birmingham demonstrations to turn out the way they did, or did the outcomes result more from the actions of individuals? (Martin Luther King, Bull Connor, and others played key roles. Historical forces, however, such as press reports of arrests of children and attacks by police dogs, the changing political situation in Birmingham, the Cold War, and political factors considered by President Kennedy [such as retaining the political support of Democratic Congressmen from the South] were also very important. Students need to discuss these different interpretations and make up their own minds.)

### Connecting to Today:

Ask students: Do any groups today conduct demonstrations to further their causes? Where would you draw the line regarding demonstrations? Is it irresponsible to have children march in a potentially violent situation? What can people today learn from the Birmingham demonstrations?

### Troubleshooting:

Some students may have difficulty understanding the historical context of the Birmingham demonstrations. I recommend using this lesson only if you have already covered the civil rights movement in the 1950s. You might consider having students first do the lesson on civil rights in the *Cold War & 1950s* volume of the *Decision Making in U.S. History* series. This lesson includes a general overview and also covers the Montgomery Bus Boycott and the Little Rock crisis.

Clarify what the terms “reverend,” “preacher,” and “minister” (which this lesson uses interchangeably) mean.

You might also want to review what the terms “segregation” and “integration” mean.

## **B. QUICK MOTIVATOR (10–15 minutes)**

Assign Handouts 1, 2, and 3 as homework. In class, ask students to pair up and discuss their choices for three minutes or so. Ask for a show of hands for each option. Distribute Handout 4 and as homework, have students comment on what they learned from these outcomes.

# TEACHER NOTES FOR EXPANDING DISCUSSION

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(For outcomes for students, see Handout 4.)

You could add to the comment on “Bombingham” (Handout 1) by mentioning that people referred to an African American neighborhood as “Dynamite Hill” because so many bombings took place there.

You could also add some details to Handout 1 about the Albany failure. The Albany police chief, Laurie Pritchett, outmaneuvered the demonstrators. He arranged for jail cells to be available in neighboring counties so that he could arrest all the demonstrators. One civil rights leader said, “We ran out of people before they ran out of jail cells.” Pritchett also made sure the police took no violent action so that the press wouldn’t have anything to cover. He even prayed with protestors before putting them in jail.

Dr. King had two men in his organization whom the FBI believed had ties to communism. FBI agents argued that the men didn’t just have Marxist beliefs, but that one was “a paid agent of the Soviet Communist apparatus.” King kept his distance from the two men, but FBI agents decided to spy on the leader anyway.

The actual events at Birmingham ran through many more phases than portrayed in this lesson. For example, in Problem 1, students face the question of whether to protest at all. In reality the demonstrators also had to decide whether to delay protesting until after a city election runoff took place in April. This lesson omits these types of complications in order to keep students focused on just a few questions.

This lesson also does not include details of the decision-making process regarding the inclusion of children in the demonstrations. Civil rights leaders felt they needed something dramatic. They discussed the possibility of using nonviolent tactics similar to those employed in the Nashville sit-ins. However, the two cases differed significantly. In Nashville, the city had no legal injunction against marching, thus no one got arrested; in Birmingham, a legal injunction did exist and the police arrested many individuals. Still, many of the demonstrators in Nashville were college students, and the leaders of the Birmingham protests decided to also use college students in their demonstrations, but gradually allowed younger students (some as young as six) to march and get arrested. In conducting this lesson, you might want to include an analysis of the analogy comparing the Birmingham demonstrations to those that took place in Nashville.

Civil rights leader James Bevel gave a memorable speech to children preparing to march the next day. You may want to read an excerpt of this speech to your students. “I want everyone to listen to me,” Bevel said. “You get an education in jail, too. In the schools you’ve been going to, they haven’t taught you to be proud of yourselves and they haven’t taught you good history—they haven’t taught you the price of freedom... As long as one Negro kid is in jail, we all want to be in jail. If everybody in town would be arrested, everybody would be free, wouldn’t they?”

## DECISION-MAKING ANALYSIS:

### P = Problem

- Identify any underlying problem
- \* - **Consider other points of view**
- What are my assumptions? Emotions?

### A = Ask for Information (about)

- \* - **Historical context (history of the issue; context in the world)**
- Reliability of sources
- Historical analogies

### G = Goals

- What are my main goals? Are they realistic?
- \* - **Generate options to help achieve these goals. Are they ethical?**

### E = Effects

- Predict unintended consequences
- \* - **Play out the options. What could go wrong?**

\* Denotes topics emphasized in this lesson

- **Point of view:** Students should consider the points of view of whites in Birmingham, including Bull Connor (in terms of strategy), white businessmen, white residents, and the city government.
- **Ask about context:** Although the lesson doesn't provide any context questions, students should ask background questions. Some examples: What percentage of whites were moderate and willing to compromise or outright end segregation? (A very significant percentage, since Bull Connor lost the mayoral election that year. A majority of whites in Birmingham were willing to compromise on segregation. They might not have been willing to end it, but they didn't oppose integration as much as they had before.) How did white business owners feel about segregation in Birmingham? (They were ready to compromise on the issue, but they did not want compromise forced upon them. They had been negotiating secretly with African American leaders.)
- **Generate options:** This lesson focuses primarily on generating options. How many of the options laid out in Handout 3 did students consider? Which options might students consider once they know other options exist? (This question examines the relative merit of the options generated.) What options did students generate that do not appear on Handout 3?
- **Play out the option:** Handout 4 (which lists the outcomes of the decisions) focuses on playing out the options, since all the outcomes involve short-term effects. Students need to ask what may happen after they have chosen an option. Where could things go wrong? As mentioned earlier, students need to consider

Bull Connor's point of view. This strategy will help them anticipate what may happen after they have chosen an option.

Further Research:

The Alabama Department of Archives and History Web site has a lesson on the Birmingham crisis that includes six primary sources from the state archives, available at <http://www.archives.state.al.us/teacher/rights/rights3.html>.

Students could follow up this lesson on Birmingham by focusing on the role of the media in the demonstrations. A useful article to begin research is Thomas William's "Television News and the Civil Rights Struggle: Birmingham and Danville, 1963," available at <http://www.southernspaces.org/contents/2004/thomas/4d.htm>.

The full text of "Letter from a Birmingham Jail" can be found at the Historical Text Archive at <http://historicaltextarchive.com/sections.php?op=viewarticle&artid=40>; it exists on a number of other Web sites as well.

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# LESSON 7: CIVIL RIGHTS

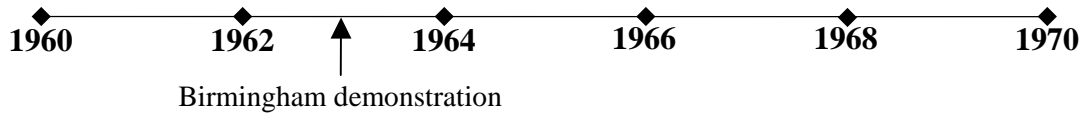
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## Vocabulary

- Martin Luther King, Jr.—Civil rights leader who stressed the importance of nonviolent demonstrations and protests
- Eugene “Bull” Connor—Police chief of Birmingham, Alabama, who took violent actions to enforce segregation
- FBI—Federal Bureau of Investigation
- Boycott—To refuse to buy products from a business in order to pressure that business into changing a particular policy
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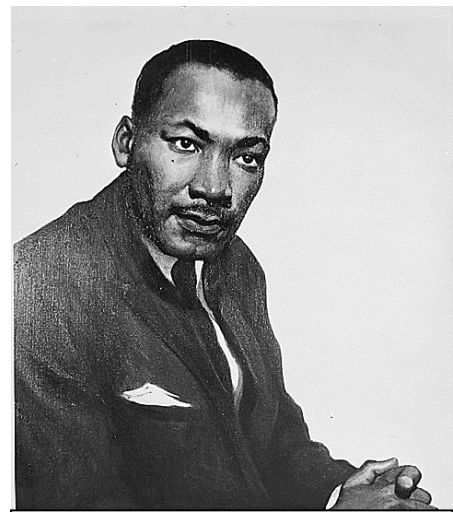
# LESSON 7: CIVIL RIGHTS

## Student Handout 1: Problem— Birmingham, 1963



### PROBLEM 1: SHOULD AFRICAN AMERICANS DEMONSTRATE?

It is January 1963. You are Martin Luther King, Jr., a key leader of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), a civil rights group. The civil rights movement had a disappointing year in 1962. For example, in Albany, Georgia, African Americans held numerous demonstrations but failed to make much progress. The general lack of success has caused newspapers and television stations to lose interest in civil rights protests. You and other SCLC leaders have decided to draw up plans for a major protest to desegregate businesses in Birmingham, Alabama, a city you have described as “by far the worst big city in race relations in the United States.” The Reverend Fred Shuttlesworth has asked you and the SCLC to join him and



Martin Luther King, Jr.

his organization (the Alabama Christian Movement for Human Rights) to organize demonstrations in Birmingham.

The protests are well planned and have a limited, realistic goal: to desegregate downtown businesses. Protest leaders have organized the demonstrations into phases: (a) draw in the media by staging small-scale sit-ins and bringing in well-known demonstrators; (b) organize an economic boycott of downtown businesses; and (c) overwhelm the jails with arrests of African Americans from Birmingham and outside the city.

Reverend Shuttlesworth's work on behalf of civil rights has made him the target of violence: he has suffered beatings by segregationist mobs, his wife was stabbed in the leg when a group of Klansmen attacked them, and his home was bombed. There have been 18 unsolved bombings of African Americans in the city, earning it the nickname of "Bombingham." The city's police chief, Eugene "Bull" Connor, allows whites to beat African Americans while the police do nothing. Segregation dominates the city, with African Americans and whites separated in most businesses. Last year, the city closed 68 parks, 38 playgrounds, six swimming pools, and four golf courses, rather than integrate them. On average, African Americans earn \$3000 per year—less than half of what whites make.

The Birmingham city government is in upheaval right now. A dispute has arisen over the mayoral election between Bull Connor and his more moderate opponent, Albert Boutwell. There will be a special run-off election in March. In the meantime, Bull Connor is still police chief.

You must decide whether to go ahead with the civil rights protests in Birmingham. Here are arguments for and against the protests:

**For the protests:**

1. About 200 protesters have received training in nonviolent resistance and have signed pledge cards not to become violent during the demonstrations. These trainees have committed themselves to the Birmingham protests.
2. It will cost the city more to jail the protesters than it will for the SCLC to bail them out of jail after they have stayed there for a few days. The SCLC is a large organization that has the funds to outspend the city. By leaving protesters in jail a few days, the SCLC can clog the jails.
3. Many Birmingham businesses (especially steel companies) are based in the North, so they might be vulnerable to pressure regarding civil rights. If they are seen as supporting segregation in the South, people in the North (where the companies' headquarters are located) may not like it and choose not to do business with them.
4. A boycott by African Americans has the potential to seriously affect white-owned businesses in Birmingham. Last year, such a boycott forced white businesses to integrate lunch counters, drinking fountains, and restrooms. Some white businesses also began to take down their "Colored Only" signs.
5. President Kennedy has made several favorable decisions regarding African Americans. It's not clear just how much he supports the civil rights movement,

- but at least he listens to African Americans. Two years ago, Kennedy sent federal marshals to Birmingham to report on segregation in the city and to possibly protect protesters. This move brought unfavorable local and national press coverage to the city regarding its segregation policies. The coverage, in turn, caused a decline in business activity (some customers didn't want to shop where there was obvious segregation, while others feared violence), hurting the city's economy.
6. The city government itself is changing, which reflects the willingness of many whites to end—or at least reduce—segregation. The white-run city government is divided at this point between factions that support and oppose segregation.

**Against the protests:**

1. If the SCLC loses this protest (after failing to win any major concessions from the city government in Albany, Georgia), it will severely cripple the civil rights movement. More radical elements of the civil rights movement, who favor using violence and/or encourage separation from whites rather than integration, may take control of the movement.
2. The danger exists that African American demonstrators may ultimately commit violent acts, especially if the protests drag on for months without any dramatic success. It's not clear that the SCLC has the ability to maintain control over such a large group of protesters.
3. African American ministers from Birmingham may oppose radical actions in their city, such as demonstrations. These ministers don't want to see people injured or killed, and they may resent outside agitators coming to their city to stir up trouble. They especially dislike Reverend Shuttlesworth, whom they call a dictator. However, Reverend Shuttlesworth says that he can handle the preachers.
4. Large steel companies and other large businesses in Birmingham will not agree to end segregation. They benefit too much from it because it allows them to prevent unionization and keep wages low by playing off white workers against African American workers.
5. Police chief Bull Connor has repeatedly ordered the police to use violence to repress any sort of dissent (including that by labor unions in Birmingham), so he will likely have the police react with force against any civil rights demonstrations.
6. White-run newspapers (especially the *Birmingham News*) will do everything they can to destroy the image of the SCLC. As a result, the protests will not get fair coverage by the local press.
7. The Alabama state government opposes integration. The new governor, George Wallace, said in his inaugural address this month, "Segregation now! Segregation tomorrow! Segregation forever!"

# LESSON 7: CIVIL RIGHTS

## Student Handout 2: Problem— Birmingham, 1963

### **PROBLEM 2: WHAT SHOULD AFRICAN AMERICANS DO ABOUT THE DISAPPOINTING DEMONSTRATIONS?**

It is April 1963, three months later, and you are still Martin Luther King, Jr. You decided to go ahead with the sit-ins and protests, but they have not gone well. Storeowners responded to the sit-ins by closing their lunch counters. A judge ordered 133 African Americans (including all the leaders of the SCLC) not to engage in or encourage parades, demonstrations, boycotts, trespassing, picketing, or “kneel-ins” in churches. The Birmingham police have prevented such demonstrations from taking place and feel little pressure to change their tough stand. The national press hasn’t paid much attention to the events and developments in Birmingham. After eight days of protest, only 150 protesters have been jailed, and the boycott of city businesses hasn’t pressured whites to give in to your demands. African American business leaders in Birmingham have tried to work behind the scenes to improve the day-to-day lives of African Americans in a peaceful way. They resent that you and the SCLC have come into their city and made it more difficult for them to negotiate with white business leaders.

The Alabama legislature recently passed a bill to increase the maximum bail amount for protesters from \$300 to \$2500, which will force protesters to stay in jail much longer than a few days. The SCLC simply doesn’t have enough money to bail everyone out of jail within a few days of being arrested.

Come up with at least four options for actions you could take at this point, and explain which of them (it could be any or all of them) you will take.

# LESSON 7: CIVIL RIGHTS

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## Student Handout 3: Options— Birmingham, 1963

Here are some options for you to consider. Which will you choose?

1. Arm African Americans with guns to defend themselves. So far, peaceful protest has not helped African Americans achieve equal rights. They must earn the respect of whites by fighting.
2. Have African American preachers (except for you) march and get arrested. People will react strongly against such arrests and be more likely to support you and the SCLC.
3. You (Martin Luther King) will march and get arrested, which will gain publicity and support for the civil rights movement.
4. Write letters and telegrams to President Kennedy urging get him more involved in the situation in Birmingham.
5. Suspend the demonstrations and negotiate a compromise with white business leaders and the city government for whatever rights you can get. If you and your leaders don't like the city's final offer, you can start marching again.
6. Have children, ranging from ages six to 18, march in the demonstrations. If the police arrest them, it will gain publicity and support for the civil rights movement.
7. Write letters to the editors of newspapers about the evils of segregation and the reasons behind the Birmingham demonstrations.
8. Bring in movie stars and other celebrities from outside Birmingham to join the demonstrations. Most of these will probably be African Americans, but white celebrities could join the fight too.
9. Make appeals (through phone calls, letters, and speeches) around the country to raise money to bail protesters out of jail.
10. Continue the demonstrations but negotiate with white business leaders and the city government to see if you can come to a peaceful settlement.

# LESSON 7: CIVIL RIGHTS

## Student Handout 4: Outcomes— Birmingham, 1963

As described in Problem 2, Dr. King did go ahead with the protests, but they didn't go well. The leaders of the civil rights movement in Birmingham then met to decide what to do. Dr. King and the SCLC decided to move forward with all of the options listed in Handout 2 except #1 (arm African Americans) and #5 (suspend the demonstrations and negotiate). Having preachers arrested (#2) didn't make much difference. However, Dr. King's arrest (#3) made a huge difference. It revived the demonstrations by encouraging more people to march and get arrested themselves, it brought in more celebrity help (#8), and it raised a great deal of money (#9). While in jail, Dr. King wrote a letter to the editor in response to criticisms made by other ministers (#7). The ministers, along with the press, had claimed that it was a bad time to demonstrate in Birmingham, and they argued that African Americans should give the new city leaders a chance to make changes before continuing the demonstrations (the demonstrations had started the day after the new city leaders took over). Dr. King's letter explained why African Americans could not wait. His "Letter from a Birmingham Jail" is one of the greatest documents in U.S. history, according to most historians.

Nevertheless, Dr. King's arrest and letter did not bring about the turning point in the protests. This occurred when children, ages six to 18, joined the marches (#6). It was a difficult decision to have them march, because the injunction not only made the children subject to arrest, but also made the protest leaders subject to arrest for contributing to the delinquency of minors. Civil rights leaders took the risk partly out of desperation, based on little more than the hope that events would go their way. It turned out that they did. Children provided a flood of marchers that overwhelmed the jails. Without places to put the arrestees it became difficult for police to make enough arrests to control the crowds. Police Chief Bull Connor tried to control the demonstrators by using fire hoses and police dogs, but the sight of police officers using these on young children (as well as adults, as shown in the photograph) garnered a great deal of sympathy for the protesters.



Police dogs attack a civil rights marcher  
New York Public Library

Photographs and television coverage of police intimidating African American children influenced people around the United States and the world to sympathize with the

demonstrators. That sympathy brought in more money for bail as well as more celebrities, such as Ella Baker, Dick Gregory, and Joan Baez, to support the cause.

According to many historians, Bull Connor's actions helped the civil rights demonstrations achieve success. Connor wanted to stop the crowd from marching, especially to city hall. If he hadn't tried to stop them, there would have been no major publicity.

Press coverage also made the U.S. look bad in the eyes of people around the world, which posed a major problem for President Kennedy's foreign policy. American leaders had argued that communism was evil because it denied its citizens many rights. Photographs of policemen with attack dogs arresting children made the U.S. look hypocritical. Soviet newspapers even reprinted the photographs. President Kennedy was concerned about America's image; Alabama Governor George Wallace took a different view. He said that since foreigners accepted aid from the United States (about 25% of which came from Southern tax dollars) they had no right to criticize Southern policies in regard to African Americans. He added, "In the first place, the average man in Africa or Asia doesn't know where he is, much less where Alabama is."

The protests, rejuvenated by the inclusion of children in the marches, led to two key turning points in the civil rights movement. First, one of the marches led to a confrontation in which African Americans knelt and prayed in the road in the face of fire hoses. The Birmingham fire fighters refused to turn on their hoses, defying the orders of Bull Connor. The marchers then rose to their feet and walked calmly through the ranks of firefighters and police. Such bravery influenced many people to change their views on civil rights. Second, in a later demonstration in the downtown business section, white businessmen saw children demonstrating and decided it was time to settle. They quickly agreed to the demands of the African American leaders. Bull Connor said he wouldn't abide by the agreement, but the new mayor agreed to do so.

Meanwhile, appeals by African American leaders to President Kennedy (option #4) proved effective. A representative from the president's office helped bring about a favorable conclusion of the crisis for the demonstrators. The protests in Birmingham turned out to be a great success for the civil rights movement.

The SCLC stuck to its commitment to nonviolent confrontation and chose not to advocate violence (option #1). However, people on both sides of the civil rights movement later committed acts of violence.

The success in Birmingham had numerous consequences, some intended and some unintended:



Civil rights march, September 1963

- The events in Birmingham sparked the so-called “Negro revolution of 1963.” The U.S. government counted more than 750 demonstrations in 186 cities in the ten weeks following the Birmingham victory. The triumph at Birmingham injected new life into the civil rights movement.
- Media coverage of the demonstrations and police reactions showed white Americans what it was like for African Americans to live in the South.
- President Kennedy submitted a civil rights bill to end segregation in public places, which eventually became the Civil Rights Act of 1964. It cut off federal aid to any state that discriminated against African Americans or any racial group.
- Donations to the SCLC and other civil rights groups increased, strengthening these groups financially.
- Unfortunately, violence followed the Birmingham victory. A bomb blew up Dr. King’s motel room at the Gaston Motel in Birmingham. No one was there at the time, so no injuries resulted. A few months after the demonstrations, a bomb killed four African-American girls in Sunday school. Other acts of violence not directly connected to the Birmingham demonstrations soon followed, including the assassination of civil rights leader Medgar Evers, who was shot and killed in the driveway of his Mississippi home soon after the victory in Birmingham.
- The bombing of the Gaston Motel and a bombing directed at Dr. King’s brother led to violence and riots by African Americans in Birmingham.
- Within two years, some African Americans rejected the nonviolent approach as ineffective. New voices such as Stokely Carmichael and Malcolm X advocated a more militant method for African Americans to attain rights. These individuals rejected integration and blatantly criticized whites in America, leading to a new movement known as “Black Power.”
- “Letter from a Birmingham Jail” was printed in a number of journals at the time and has been reprinted in many history books since, providing inspiration for many people over the ensuing decades.
- Birmingham stores were desegregated, and storeowners hired more African Americans to work at those stores. A special committee composed of both African Americans and whites was set up to promote local racial cooperation.



Bomb damage at the Gaston Motel

# LESSON 7: CIVIL RIGHTS

## Student Handout 5: Primary Source

*Letter From a Birmingham Jail, 1963 (excerpt)*

My Dear Fellow Clergymen:

While confined here in the Birmingham city jail, I came across your recent statement calling my present activities “unwise and untimely.” Seldom do I pause to answer criticism of my work and ideas...But since I feel that you are men of genuine good will and that your criticisms are sincerely set forth, I want to try and answer your statement in what I hope will be patient and reasonable terms.

I think I should indicate why I am here in Birmingham...I am here...because injustice is here...I am cognizant of the interrelatedness of all communities and states...Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere...Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly...Anyone who lives inside the United States can never be considered an outsider anywhere within its bounds.

You deplore the demonstrations taking place in Birmingham...It is unfortunate that demonstrations are taking place...but it is even more unfortunate that the city’s white power structure left the Negro community with no alternative.

We know through painful experience that freedom is never voluntarily given by the oppressor; it must be demanded by the oppressed. Frankly, I have yet to engage in a...campaign that was “well timed” in the view of those who have not suffered unduly from the disease of segregation. For years now I have heard the word “Wait!”...Perhaps it is easy for those who have never felt the sting of segregation to say “Wait.”... There comes a time when that cup of endurance runs over, and men are no longer willing to be plunged into the abyss of despair....

You express a great deal of anxiety over our willingness to break laws...there are two types of laws: just and unjust...A just law is a man-made code that squares with the moral law of God. An unjust law is a code that is out of harmony with the moral law... Any law that uplifts human personality is just. Any law that degrades human personality is unjust. All segregation statutes are unjust because segregation distorts the soul and damages the personality....

Human progress never rolls in on wheels of inevitability; it comes through the tireless efforts if men willing to be co-workers of God, without this hard work, time itself becomes an ally of the forces of social stagnation...Now is the time to lift our national policy from the quicksand of racial injustice to the solid rock of human dignity...

Before closing I feel impelled to mention one other point in your statement that has troubled me profoundly. You warmly commended the Birmingham police for keeping

“order” and “preventing violence.” I doubt that you would have so warmly commended the police force if you had seen its dogs sinking their teeth into unarmed, nonviolent Negroes. I doubt that you would so quickly commend the police if you were to observe their ugly and inhumane treatment of Negroes here in the city jail; if you were to watch them push and curse old Negro women and young Negro girls; if you were to see them slap and kick old Negro men and young Negro boys; if you were to observe them, as they did on two occasions, refuse to give us food because we wanted to sing grace together. I cannot join you in your praise of the Birmingham police department.

It is true that the police have excised a degree of discipline in handling the demonstrators. In this sense they have conducted themselves rather “nonviolently” in public. But for what purpose? To preserve the evil system of segregation...I wish you had commended the Negro sit-inners and demonstrators of Birmingham for their sublime courage and their amazing discipline in the midst of great provocation....

If I have said anything in this letter that overstates the truth and indicates unreasonable impatience, I beg you to forgive me. If I have said anything that understates the truth and indicates my having patience that allows me to settle for anything less than brotherhood, I beg God to forgive me....

Yours for the cause of Peace and Brotherhood,

Martin Luther King, Jr.

### QUESTIONS FOR ANALYSIS

1. Given the circumstances in Birmingham (the defeat of Bull Connor in the mayoral election, new officials taking office), do you think the demonstrations were well timed?
2. Do you agree that freedom is never given by the oppressor and must instead be demanded by the oppressed?
3. Do you think this letter deserves its reputation as one of the greatest documents in American history? Why or why not?

# LESSON 8: ELECTION OF 1968

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## Teacher Pages

### OVERVIEW

The 1968 presidential election was one of the most controversial in U.S. history. In some respects, it symbolized many of the conflicts and divisions within the country. This lesson touches upon some of the election's distinguishing characteristics, such as the riots during the Democratic National Convention in Chicago and the presence of a third-party candidate who won electoral votes.

### VOCABULARY

- Inflation—General rise in prices

### DECISION-MAKING SKILLS EMPHASIZED

- Ask about context
- Reflect on goals

# LESSON PLAN

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## A. IN-DEPTH LESSON (30 minutes)

### Procedure:

Distribute Handout 1, which provides information on the candidates. Ask students to vote for a candidate and then to predict who won the actual election. Ask students whether they think Candidates A, B, and C would be good or bad presidents for the country based on these descriptions. After the discussion, tell the class who the candidates were and that Richard Nixon (Candidate A) won, as noted in Handout 2. Was there anything in the description of Nixon that might help us understand how he would handle the Vietnam War or that would help us predict the Watergate scandal? (The description of Nixon on Handout 1 characterizes him as a loner who doesn't get along with the press. Does that indicate a willingness to cover up criminal behavior?)

### Reflecting on Decision Making:

Ask students what they learned from this outcome. Then ask which decision-making skills were especially important as they decided for whom to vote. Which of the letters of **P-A-G-E** applied especially to this problem? (See the "Decision-Making Analysis" section below for ideas.) You might want to ask students directly if they voted primarily on character, decision-making skills, or the candidates' positions on important issues. Discuss their answers, or have students write their answers in their journals or in their decision-making logs.

### Placing the Actual Decisions Into Historical Context:

Ask students what the election shows about the U.S. at the time. (Possibilities: the importance of the Vietnam War, civil rights, or counterculture/protesting.) Why did students vote differently or the same as the voters at the time? What does the election show about changing trends in the U.S. in the late 1960s? (Handout 2 explains the rise of "Reagan Democrats." The entire reactionary movement of the country in a more conservative direction is described in Micklethwait, listed in "Sources.")

### Connecting to Today:

How should people vote in general during presidential elections: based on character, skills, or issues? What does the 1968 election show about how to choose candidates in general?

### Troubleshooting:

Some students may need a quick review of the major events and developments of the Vietnam War. You may also want to review how party conventions work, since the riot

that took place during the Democratic National Convention in Chicago greatly affected this election.

**B. QUICK MOTIVATOR (10 minutes)**

As homework, have students decide on a candidate. Ask them to vote on their candidates and predict the results. Next, distribute Handout 2, which lists the results. Keep the discussion short by focusing only on whether students selected a candidate more because of personal characteristics or because of positions on the issues.

# TEACHER NOTES FOR EXPANDING DISCUSSION

(For outcomes for students, see Handout 2.)

Some historians argue that Nixon had a “back channel” of communications open to the leader of the South Vietnamese government, Nguyen van Thieu, and used it to ask Thieu to resist negotiating an end to the war until after the 1968 presidential election. According to this theory, Nixon knew he stood a better chance of winning the election if the war continued. The analysis in this lesson of the election does not include this controversial theory.

## DECISION-MAKING ANALYSIS:

### P = Problem

- Identify any underlying problem
- Consider other points of view
- What are my assumptions? Emotions?

### A = Ask for information (about)

- \* - **Historical context. (history of the issue; context in the world)**
- Reliability of sources
- Historical analogies

### G = Goals

- \* - **What are my main goals? Are they realistic?**
- Generate options to help achieve these goals. Are they ethical?

### E = Effects

- Predict unintended consequences
- Play out the options. What could go wrong?

\* Denotes topics emphasized in this lesson

- **Ask about context:** Students should ask if crime was a problem at this time. (The crime rate was high and continually increasing. Moreover, riots had become more common, and many voters believed the country had become less safe. Some people felt that liberal Democratic policies had contributed to urban riots. When a riot broke out at the Democratic National Convention in Chicago, voters associated Hubert Humphrey with the riot, partly because television stations interspersed coverage of the convention with riot footage. Some of the protestors carried Vietcong flags, but none carried the American flag. People wondered why Humphrey didn't take a stand against the demonstrators. Some people felt the police, who used excessive force, caused the riot. However, many other voters felt

- the Democrats had been too lenient with criminals. Thus, Nixon’s theme of “law and order” appealed to them.)
- **Reflect on your goals:** Is the primary goal to elect a president with strong character, good decision-making skills, or the right positions on important issues? The candidates differed significantly regarding issues, character, and temperament.

Further Research:

The platforms of the Republican and Democratic Parties can be found at The American Presidency Project, available at <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/platforms.php>. This Web site also includes the full transcripts of the four televised debates.

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# LESSON 8: ELECTION OF 1968

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## Vocabulary

- Inflation—General rise in prices

# LESSON 8: ELECTION OF 1968

## Student Handout 1



You are a voter in the 1968 U.S. presidential election. The country has been fighting an increasingly unpopular war in Vietnam and currently has more than 500,000 troops there. Many people have protested the war. In addition, race riots have taken place across the country over the past few years. On the positive side, government programs for the poor, the elderly, and minorities have expanded over the past four years. Choose the candidate who you think will be best for the country.

Who do you predict will win the election?

### CANDIDATE A

#### Positions on Issues:

This candidate's views on the issues come from his party's platform and from his speeches:

1. Vietnam—Feels the war is not going well. He has condemned Candidate B's party for lying, which he claims got the U.S. involved in the war in the first place. Candidate A believes the Vietnamese need to fight the war themselves and that the U.S. should withdraw its troops.
2. Crime—Believes that law and order has broken down in the country, and that the U.S. must counter this by more strictly enforcing the law
3. Taxes and spending—Wants to cut government spending in order to reduce the high inflation rate; he also wants to reduce the high cost of living
4. Economy—Wants to lower the excessive inflation rate through cutting social programs and wants to cut welfare to reduce some people's dependency on government handouts. He believes that private initiatives, not government programs, will improve cities and improve the entire economy.
5. Health care—Wants to cut hospital costs and reduce government involvement in doctor-patient decisions

#### Personal Characteristics:

Candidate A grew up in a very poor family in a small town, went to public school, served in the military in World War II, and has a law degree. After law school, he started a business that sold frozen orange juice. Unfortunately, that business failed. He was a congressman, senator, and former vice president. He is 55 years old, is married, and has two daughters. He doesn't like the press, and most reporters don't like him. He can be moody and a loner, but he is also a fighter. He has refused to participate in televised

debates with the other candidates. He appeals to and feels a kinship with ordinary Americans in small towns.

## **CANDIDATE B**

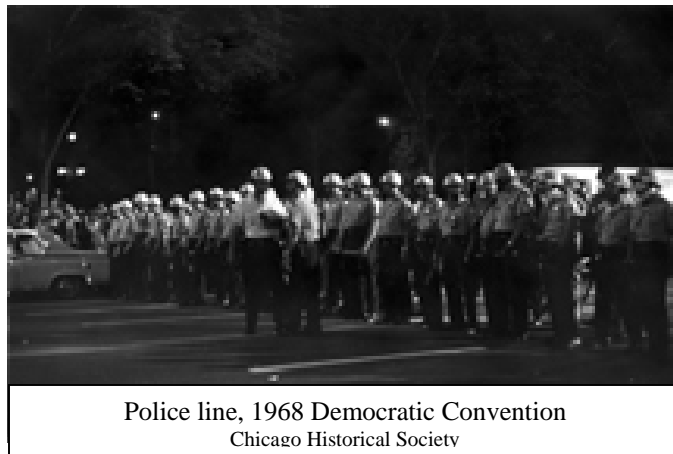
### Positions on Issues:

This candidate is the current U.S. vice president. His views on the issues come from his party's platform and from his speeches:

1. Vietnam—Favors a halt to the bombing of North Vietnam if it doesn't endanger U.S. troops and if North Vietnam shows a willingness to negotiate
2. Crime—Favors gun control
3. Taxes and spending—Wants to continue the policy of cutting taxes in good times and raising them when shortfalls occur
4. Economy—Wants to continue government programs to help the poor, the elderly, and the inner cities
5. Health care—Supports government medical insurance programs for the elderly (Medicare) and the poor (Medicaid) that his party passed four years ago, while he was vice president. He wants to add a drug benefit for the elderly.

### Personal Characteristics:

Candidate B grew up in a small town in South Dakota. During the Great Depression, Candidate B dropped out of college to help out his family financially. Later, he finished his degree at the University of Minnesota and received a master's degree from Louisiana State University. He has been a professor of political science, the mayor of Minneapolis, and a senator from Minnesota. He also championed civil rights and social welfare programs for the poor. His family was religious, so he uses a lot of phrases from the Bible in his speeches. He is 57 years old and is married. This year, outside the hall where his party held its convention, many demonstrations against the Vietnam War took place. When police took strong action against the demonstrators, a riot broke out. Some blamed the police for causing the riot, saying that the officers used excessive force; others blamed the demonstrators. Hundreds of people were injured and arrested. Candidate B didn't make any statements against the demonstrations.



Police line, 1968 Democratic Convention  
Chicago Historical Society

## CANDIDATE C

### Positions on Issues:

This candidate's views on the issues come from his party's platform and from his speeches:

1. Vietnam—Favors negotiating with North Vietnam to end the war. If that fails, he thinks the U.S. should go on the offensive in order to defeat the Vietcong and North Vietnam. He believes the U.S. must win in Vietnam.
2. Crime—Favors full enforcement of the law and no gun control. He feels that communists and demonstrators are taking over the country and points to the riots that occurred outside Candidate B's convention as evidence. He characterizes demonstrators as "militants" and criticizes them for not showing respect for the police, the government, or the law. He advocates arresting demonstrators, and says that if protesters lie in front of his car, he will run over them. He also doesn't like the youth counterculture movement—especially the hippies (people who grow their hair long and wear strange, colorful clothing; don't care about money or possessions; listen to rock music; believe in drug use and free love; and protest the Vietnam War). He once responded to hippies' criticism by saying, "You shout four-letter words at me, well, I have two for you: W-O-R-K and S-O-A-P."
3. Taxes and spending—Proposes a 60% increase in Social Security for the elderly, including cost-of-living adjustments
4. Economy—Wants to reduce or eliminate government programs (such as the Model Cities program, which focused on urban aid) to cities
5. Health care—Supports government insurance for the poor and elderly. Wants to preserve doctor-patient privilege without government interference.
6. Government in general—He claims that the federal government has taken away legitimate state powers by enforcing school integration and voting rights, and by taking away property owners' rights to decide to whom to sell or rent. According to Candidate C, this is equivalent to socialism. He also says that the 1964 Civil Rights Act has pitted blacks against whites.

### Personal Characteristics:

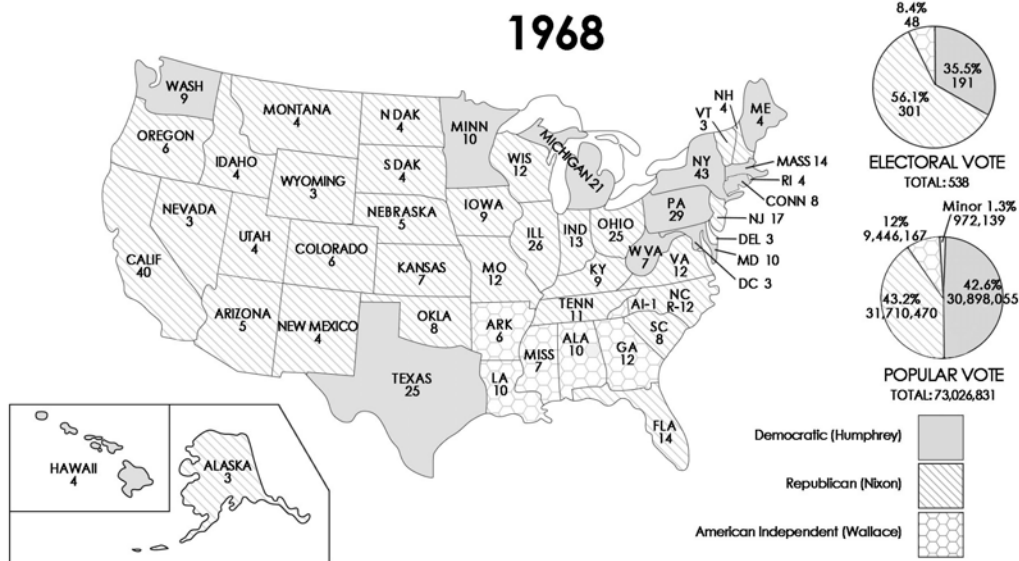
Candidate C grew up in a farming family in Alabama. He was a state boxing champion, earned a law degree from the University of Alabama, and served as an officer in World War II. He worked his way through law school by boxing professionally, waiting tables, serving as a kitchen helper, and driving a taxi. He served in the state legislature of Alabama for six years, then went on to become a judge. Most recently, he served as the governor of Alabama. In his first speech as governor, he said, "Segregation now, segregation tomorrow, segregation forever!" As governor, he stood in the doorway of the University of Alabama in order to prevent integration there. His wife died of cancer two years ago. He has four children and is 49 years old.

# LESSON 8: ELECTION OF 1968

## Student Handout 2

### WHAT ACTUALLY HAPPENED:

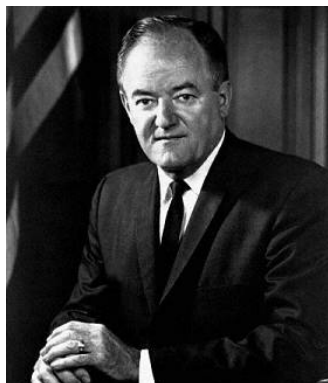
Candidate A, Republican Richard Nixon, defeated Candidate B, Democrat Hubert Humphrey, by a margin of 43.4% to 42.7% (301 electoral votes to 191). Candidate C, the Independent Party's George Wallace, received 13.5% of the popular vote and 46 electoral votes.



Nixon led Humphrey by a wide margin throughout most of the campaign in September and October, due largely to the disastrous riots outside the Democratic National Convention in Chicago in August. However, late in the campaign Humphrey closed the gap. The final vote was extremely close, with Nixon winning by only about 500,000 votes (just .5%).



Richard Nixon



Hubert Humphrey



George Wallace

Wallace was one of the few third-party candidates to win electoral votes in a U.S. presidential campaign. He appealed to many Southern white voters with his states rights/ anti-civil rights stand. Had Wallace not run, most of these voters probably would have voted for Nixon. However, outside the South Wallace appealed to white, traditionally Democratic voters who probably would have supported Humphrey. Thus, it's not entirely clear if Wallace hurt one candidate more than the other, since he took votes from both Nixon and Humphrey. Wallace's popularity revealed the discontent many people had with traditional liberal policies, and foreshadowed the emergence of "Reagan Democrats," who helped elect Republican Ronald Reagan president in 1980.

When Nixon lost the presidential election in 1960, many felt his televised debate with John F. Kennedy had played a key role in his defeat. Thus, when he ran for president in 1968, Nixon refused to debate. After the election, Nixon began to withdraw U.S. troops from Vietnam and later made a historic trip to China, which helped to ease tensions during the Cold War.