

The Vietnam War, 1969-1975

Student Worksheet

Historical Context

The Vietnam War took place at the height of the **Cold War** when the military and economic might of both the United States and the Soviet Union dictated world events. After World War II, Vietnam was divided nearly in half along the 17th parallel. A **demilitarized zone** (DMZ) was established along this line, separating the Soviet-supported North from the American-supported South. Originally, U.S. involvement was considered to be a “**police action**” to prevent a communist takeover of South Vietnam. As the North Vietnamese Army and the **Viet Cong** (an **insurgency militia** based primarily in the South) increased pressure on the South Vietnam government, America became more and more involved in the war. The Viet Cong and North Vietnamese Army **infiltrated** South Vietnam through the **Ho Chi Minh Trail** (named after the leader of North Vietnam) and conducted hit-and-run attacks on nearly every U.S. military base in South Vietnam. As the war raged on into the 1970s, it became apparent to many Americans that this was not a winnable war.

Vocabulary

Cold War
demilitarized zone
police action
insurgency
militia
infiltrated
Ho Chi Minh Trail

Map Activity

To do this activity, you will need a blank outline map and access to the “The Vietnam War, 1969–1975” digital map. Starts with all layers except the following turned off: “Cities,” “Gulfs/sea,” “Rivers,” and “Lake.” Complete the tasks below:

1. Identify the following countries on the map and color or outline each of them in a different color: Laos, Thailand, Cambodia, North Vietnam and South Vietnam.
2. Turn on the “Countries” layer. Check your map for accuracy and make any necessary changes.
3. Identify which countries were at war and which countries were neutral. Write your answers in the space below.

4. Draw in the approximate route of the Ho Chi Minh Trail. What was its significance? Write your answer in the space below.

5. Next, turn on the “Ho Chi Minh Trail” layer. Check your map for accuracy and make any necessary changes.
6. How did the U.S. first attempt to stop enemy infiltration along the Ho Chi Minh Trail? Write your answer in the space below.

7. Next, turn on the “Areas bombed” layer. Check your map for accuracy and make any necessary changes.
8. Why they think so much of this first attempt to stop enemy infiltration took place in countries like Cambodia and Laos? Write your answer in the space below.

9. Was the bombing effective? Do you remember what the U.S. and South Vietnam did next? Write your answer in the space below.

10. Turn on the “U.S. and South Vietnamese Offensive” layer. Check your map for accuracy and make any necessary changes.
11. Why do you think U.S. and South Vietnamese forces invaded these neutral countries? Write your answer in the space below.

12. As best as you can remember from your previous study of the Vietnam War, how did the United States bring the war into North Vietnam? Write your answer in the space below.

13. Turn on the “U.S. mines Haiphong harbor” and “Hanoi bombing (1972)” layers. Mark these events on your map.

Assessment

Create a chart or graphic organizer in which you detail the progression of the military tactics the U.S. used against North Vietnam in the last few years of the Vietnam War. Describe each tactic and the reasoning behind it; then, assess how well you think the tactic worked.