

Vietnamese American Experiences Model Curriculum
California Department of Education
Narratives About the Republic of Vietnam
Grades: 10–11

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Area of Study: Social & Political Transformations in Twentieth Century Vietnam

Compelling Question: How did French colonialism, political ideologies and geopolitics shape the internal divisions of Vietnam?

Lesson Question (Supporting Question):

- How is the diversity of culture, society, and politics expressed in the Republic of Vietnam and how do those legacies influence the Vietnamese refugee community today?
- What are key aspects of culture, society, education, civic engagement, and life in the Republic of Vietnam that help us understand the Vietnamese refugee community today?

Materials:

- Supplies:
 - Access to laptop device
- Videos:
 - *There are Men* (Có Những Người Anh or Có Những Người Anh - Hợp Ca Asia (Asia 58)
 - *Me Love You Long Time*
 - *Miss Saigon* Official Trailer
 - *Sài Gòn Đẹp Lắm* (Sài Gòn, the Beautiful)
 - *Vietnam, Vietnam*
- Handouts:
 - Narratives about the Republic of Vietnam Graphic Organizer
 - How to Embed English Subtitles onto Vietnamese-language Youtube Videos
 - Link to handouts: <https://ucdavis.box.com/s/n61y79yi8hdc5ktoef7hbdcunvim85i5>

Lesson Objective: Students will critically analyze narratives about the Republic of Vietnam and its people portrayed through US and Vietnamese media, music, and film and evaluate how these

narratives influence representation and identity-building in the Vietnamese American community in a graphic organizer.

Historical Thinking Skills: This lesson will facilitate student proficiency in *historical perspectives*, one of Seixas' historical thinking skills (Seixas & Morton, 2013). To demonstrate the use of evidence to write historical fiction that accurately conveys the beliefs, values, and motivations of historical actors. Students consider how different historical actors have diverse perspectives on the events in which they are involved. Exploring these is key to understanding historical events

Standards Addressed:

HSS-10.10 Students analyze instances of nation-building in the contemporary world.

HSS-11.9 Students analyze US foreign policy since World War II.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.11-12.7 Integrate and evaluate multiple sources of information presented in different media or formats (e.g., visually, quantitatively) as well as in words in order to address a question or solve a problem.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.11-12.7 Conduct short as well more sustained research projects to answer a question (including a self-generated question) or solve a problem; narrow or broaden the inquiry when appropriate; synthesize multiple sources on the subject, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation.

Lesson Assessment: By the end of the lesson, students will complete a graphic organizer, which involves the students' analysis of the different narratives about the Republic of Vietnam and Vietnamese people living in South Vietnam. This graphic organizer should be the summary of the discussions about power narratives and Vietnamese American identity representation.

Suggested Amount of Time: 55–70 minutes

Lesson Background:

The phenomenon of continuity between Republican Vietnam and Vietnamese America is an absent theme in both the Vietnamese American and the Vietnam War scholarship. Vietnam America has largely emphasized memories of war and the trauma of the refugee journey as the root of Vietnamese American anticommunism. Despite a preoccupation with the Vietnamese past, the omission when it comes to the history of the anticommunist RVN is notable. A reliance on memories rather than historical documentation has prevented empirical exploration into the ways in which the South Vietnamese republic bears—politically, symbolically, institutionally—on the Vietnamese diaspora. This inability of the Vietnamese American scholarship to actually interrogate the structural legacies of the southern Republic is in part the fault of the historiography on the Vietnam War. For much of the period after the war, the American scholarship emphasized the communists' conduct of war and American involvement in the conflict rather than the anticommunist republic that lost that war. Indeed, Republican

Vietnam is all but absent. Because such a documented history did not exist, the scholarship relied primarily on memories, oral histories, and the documentation trauma to provide insight to the relationship that Vietnamese Americans have to their past.

Historical continuity, in a sense, poses a contradiction to the constitution of Vietnamese American identity. On the one hand, Vietnamese Americans often trace their family histories to the South Vietnamese past. Their fathers, uncles, and grandfathers were once military officers of the Army of the Republic of Vietnam or had served in the Republican administration. Many families had lived through the destruction and death of war, are related to men who endured reeducation camps, and had left behind their homeland in hopes of a better life. On the other hand, Vietnamese American politics can be traced to the ideological work of the South Vietnamese republican state. Vietnamese Americans reuse the flag of the RVN, sing the Republican anthem at social and cultural ceremonies, deploy anticommunist terminologies that originated from the war, and publish oeuvres of pamphlets, books, and memoirs reminiscing on the anticommunist struggle, commemorating their fallen, and glorifying the Republican nation.

Sourced from: Nguyen, Y. T. 2021. When State Propaganda Becomes Social Knowledge: Legacies of the Southern Republic (Doctoral dissertation, Northwestern University).

This lesson contains content that may be sensitive for some students. Teachers should exercise discretion in evaluating whether the resources are suitable for their class and provide a content warning to their students at the beginning of the lesson.

Lesson Procedures:

- a. Warm-Up (five minutes)
 - i. Prompt students to think of a community they belong to and ask them: What is something you appreciate about your community?
 - ii. Students will share with a peer, then have a whole class share out.
- b. Introductory Video: Vietnamese American Nostalgia and the Republic of Vietnam (10 minutes)
 - i. Teachers will show a video to students, produced by the Sài Gòn Broadcasting Television Network (SBTN), one of the largest Vietnamese-language TV stations in the US, playing the song, “There are Men”, which is a nationalistic war song during the Republic of Vietnam era. The video can be found, with English subtitles, in the link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mRf3gPXczL4>.
 1. The link without subtitles can be found at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H_3NIVu0ibc
 - ii. After watching the video, the teacher will have students do a think-write-pair-share:

1. The teacher will write down the following discussion questions on the board:
 - a. The song, “There are Men,” is a nationalistic war song during the Republic of Vietnam era from 1954–1975, replayed in the Vietnamese American community.
 - b. Describe the emotions or feelings evoked from the lyrics and music, and describe the reactions of the audience at the end.
 - c. From these reactions, why do you think nationalism in the Vietnamese American community regarding the Republic of Vietnam is still so intense after almost half a century of being in America?
 2. The teacher will then have students write down their own answers individually.
 3. After one to two minutes, the students will share their thoughts with a pair in class.
 4. The class will then come together and discuss for five minutes about the questions with the teacher.
 5. Potential thoughts or answers from students:
 - a. Nationalistic, patriotic, exciting, lots of drums and rhythm, women representing love for the soldiers and the nation, love for South Vietnamese soldiers, etc.
 - b. Many of the Vietnamese American community today were former South Vietnamese soldiers, nationalism gives the community an identity, it makes the community proud of where they come from, it helps the community remember their roots, etc.
 - c. Teachers should guide the discussion into a conclusion that the nation of the Republic of Vietnam is vital to Vietnamese American identity, and that a thorough understanding of the Republic of Vietnam is essential in order to understand the feelings and experiences of the Vietnamese American refugee community.
- c. Interaction with sources: How the US media portrays the Republic of Vietnam (15 min)

- i. The teacher will first pass out a graphic organizer titled “Narratives about the Republic of Vietnam Graphic Organizer” containing discussion questions for the four clips the students are about to watch.
 1. It is important for teachers to preview the videos and provide a content warning. These videos relate to the dynamics of war with the sex industry during this time. Teachers can decide to show some, or all parts of the video.
- ii. The teacher will play two videos in class, explaining the background behind the first two videos:
 1. Video 1: “Me Love You Long Time” from Full Metal Jacket. Full Metal Jacket is a war drama film focusing on the experiences of American soldiers during the Vietnam War. The scene, which has become one of the most well-known lines about Vietnam to average Americans, shows a Vietnamese sex worker in Sài Gòn trying to negotiate with American soldiers about the pay for a night with her. The clip can be found at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=md_WfmSYAuQ
 - a. While watching the video, the teacher will ask the students to take notes (optional: teacher to create graphic organizer).
 - i. How is the Vietnamese woman portrayed? How do you think most Vietnamese Americans would react knowing that this is what most people see when their community is portrayed in the media?
 - ii. How are the two Vietnamese men portrayed? How do you think most Vietnamese Americans would react knowing that this is what most people see when their community is portrayed in the media?
 - iii. Based on the scene, what do you think most average Americans think of when they think of Vietnam, the Vietnam War, or Vietnamese women and men (different perceptions of gender)?
 2. Video 2: Miss Saigon Trailer. Miss Saigon is one of the only and most well-known Broadway musicals about Vietnam and the Vietnam War, which tells the story of an American soldier who falls in love with a peasant girl he pays for in a brothel. After the fall of Sài Gòn, the soldier returns to America and his wife, and tries to find the girl and their son to bring them to America. However, the musical has received major controversy for a number of reasons, including having white people cast in the Vietnamese roles with “yellowface” makeup, having the lines say

“speaking gibberish” in lines where there is supposed to be Vietnamese, and the racist, Orientalist, and sexist imagery used to portray Vietnamese people. The clip can be found at:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Gr4LO9uF-xQ>

- a. While watching the video, the teacher will ask the students to take notes on the following:
 - i. If you knew nothing about Vietnam or the Vietnam War, what images would come into mind about Vietnamese people just from watching this musical clip?
 - ii. What parts do you think may seem controversial or off-putting about the way the Republic of Vietnam and Vietnamese people are portrayed by American society?
 - iii. After students take preliminary notes, students will get into pairs for five minutes and help each other fill out the graphic organizer.
3. For the remaining five minutes, the teacher will bring the class together, and they will share their thoughts on how US media portrays the Republic of Vietnam, and how such portrayals may affect the identity and pride of the Vietnamese American community today.
- d. Shared Learning: How Vietnamese Americans portrays the Republic of Vietnam (20 min)
 - i. Again, it is important for teachers to preview the videos and teachers can decide to show some, or all parts of the video.
 - ii. Video 1: Sài Gòn Đẹp Lắm (Sài Gòn, the Beautiful), one of the most famous songs in the Republic of Vietnam era, emphasizing the beauty and culture of Sài Gòn and the Republic of Vietnam, The music video can be found:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d9TKQWQNbtE>.
 1. Teacher can access lyrics to the song at the following link:
<https://genius.com/Phuong-vy-sai-gon-ep-lam-lyrics>
 2. While watching the video, the teacher will ask the students to take notes on the graphic organizer provided.
 - a. If you knew nothing about Vietnam or the Vietnam War, what images would come into mind about Vietnamese people just from watching this musical clip?

- b. How does this portrayal of the Republic of Vietnam in this video, as well as the lyrics of the song, differ from the two US-based videos you just watched?
 - iii. Video 2: Người Tình Không Chân Dung (Warrior Without a Face) film, with song, “Việt Nam, Việt Nam!” by Phạm Duy. The film "Người Tình Không Chân Dung" (Warrior Without a Face) is a 1971 South Vietnamese film directed by Hoàng Vĩnh Lộc. The film stars Kiều Chinh and celebrates the image of soldiers of the Army of the Republic of Vietnam. The story revolves around Mỹ Lan, a radio host, who goes to the battlefield to search for her missing lover. Initially denied permission, she is eventually allowed to enter the war zone. Despite her efforts, she does not find much information about her missing lover but learns that he is mortally injured.
 1. The song "Vietnam, Vietnam," composed by Phạm Duy in 1966, was a strong contender to become the national anthem of the Republic of Vietnam in 1967, encapsulating themes of freedom, justice, and peace, eventually passed over because it was deemed as not fitting the wartime mood. This song is sung by the Vietnamese soldiers and men as Mỹ Lan attempts to find her husband. The clip can be found: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fn-neEuTuno>.
 - a. While watching the video, the teacher will ask the students to take notes on the graphic organizer provided.
 - i. How is the Vietnamese woman portrayed? How does the film’s portrayal of her differ from Full Metal Jacket’s portrayal of Vietnamese women?
 - ii. How are the Vietnamese soldiers and men portrayed? How does the film’s portrayal of them differ with Full Metal Jacket’s portrayal of them?
 - b. After students take preliminary notes, students will get into pairs for five minutes and help each other fill out the graphic organizer.
 - c. For the remaining five minutes, the teacher will bring the class together, and they will share their thoughts on how Vietnamese living in the Republic of Vietnam themselves viewed their nation, and how these feelings continue in the Vietnamese American community today.
- e. Conclusive Dialogue (10–15 min)
 - i. To conclude the activity, students will address the lesson questions with a partner or small group:

1. How is the diversity of culture, society, and politics expressed in the Republic of Vietnam and how do those legacies influence the Vietnamese refugee community today?
 2. What do traditional US historical narratives tell about the Republic of Vietnam in the context of the Vietnam War?
 3. What are key aspects of culture, society, education, civic engagement, and life in the Republic of Vietnam that help us understand the Vietnamese refugee community today?
 4. Students can share their responses verbally to the class or on a discussion board forum.
- ii. Additional discussion prompts: Why does it differ from the US portrayals, and due to the fact that only the US side is shown in popular culture, how might such portrayals hurt the identity of the Vietnamese American community? How does power in culture and media affect the ways we remember the past?

Scaffolding:

- **Representation:** Consider the following method to support with multiple means of representation:
 - Provide visual and/or emotional description for musical interpretation.
 - Provide descriptions (text or spoken) for all images, graphics, video, or animations.
- **Action and Expression:** Consider the following method to support in presenting their learning in multiple ways:
 - Embed prompts for categorizing and systematizing.
- **Engagement:** Consider the following method to support with lesson engagement:
 - Use activities that include a means by which learners get feedback and have access to alternative scaffolds (e.g., charts, templates, feedback displays) that support understanding progress in a manner that is understandable and timely.

For additional ideas to support your students, check out the UDL Guidelines at CAST (2018) <http://udlguidelines.cast.org>.

Multilingual Learner Supports:

- **Emerging:** Consider the following method to support with emerging students:

- Listening: Restate/Rephrase and use oral language routines
 - Teacher paraphrases student responses as they explain their thinking in effort to validate content learning and encourage the use of precise language.
- **Expanding:** Consider the following method to support with expanding students:
 - Listening: Check comprehension of all students frequently.
- **Bridging:** Consider the following method to support with bridging students:
 - Listening: Extend content vocabulary with multiple examples and non-examples:
 - Students use a Frayer graphic organizer to support understanding of a key word or concept. Place the target word in the center amid four surrounding quadrants to support different facets of word meaning.

For additional guidance around scaffolding for multilingual learners, please consult the following resources:

- *English Learner Toolkit of Strategies*
<https://ucdavis.box.com/s/ujkdc2xp1dqjzrlq55czph50c3sq1ngu>
- *Providing Appropriate Scaffolding*
<https://www.sdcoe.net/educators/multilingual-education-and-global-achievement/oracy-to-olkit/providing-appropriate-scaffolding#scaffolding>
- *Strategies for ELD*
<https://ucdavis.box.com/s/dcp15ymah51uwizpmmt2vys5zr2r5reu>
- *ELA / ELD Framework*
<https://www.caeducatorstogether.org/resources/6537/ela-eld-framework>
- *California ELD Standards*
<https://ucdavis.box.com/s/vqn43cd632z22p8mfzn2h7pntc71kb02>

Enrichment Opportunities:

1. The teacher can also assign this article as a reading, attached in the website link. The article is written from the perspective of a Vietnamese American who watches Miss Saigon and explains why it does not resonate with her experience as a Vietnamese American refugee. *Source:* Tran, D. 2017, April 14. I Am Miss Saigon, and I Hate It. AMERICAN THEATRE.
<https://www.americantheatre.org/2017/04/13/i-am-miss-saigon-and-i-hate-it/>
2. Students can explore more artifacts and resources about the Republic of Vietnam at the following site: Republic of Vietnam. (n.d.). Vietnamese Heritage Museum.
<https://vietnamesemuseum.org/our-roots/republic-of-vietnam/>.

Works Cited:

Note: This lesson contains Youtube videos in Vietnamese that do not have subtitles. If the links below do not work, please refer to the handout “How to Embed English Subtitles onto Vietnamese-language Youtube Videos” for instructions on how to embed the subtitles into the Youtube video using a Chrome extension.

Britt, K. 2020, May 11. *English learner toolkit of strategies*. California County Superintendents.

<https://cacountysupts.org/english-learner-toolkit-of-strategies/>

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<https://www.caeducatorstogether.org/resources/6537/ela-eld-framework>

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Phuong Vy – Sài Gòn đẹp lắm. (n.d.). Genius.

<https://genius.com/Phuong-vy-sai-gon-ep-lam-lyrics>

Sài Gòn Đẹp Lắm (Sài Gòn, the Beautiful). (n.d.). Wwww.youtube.com.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d9TKQWQNbtE>

San Diego County Office of Education. (n.d.). *Providing appropriate scaffolding*.

<https://www.sdcoe.net/educators/multilingual-education-and-global-achievement/oracy-to-olkit/providing-appropriate-scaffolding#scaffolding>

There are Men (Có Những Người Anh). (n.d.). Wwww.youtube.com.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mRf3gPXczL4>

Tulare County Office of Education. (n.d.). *Strategies for ELD*.

<https://commoncore.tcoe.org/Content/Public/doc/Alpha-CollectionofELDStrategies.pdf>

Warrior Without a Name (Người Tình Không Chân Dung) Ending. (n.d.). www.youtube.com.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ErwxT-J26To>

Supplementary Sources

Republic of Vietnam. (n.d.). Vietnamese Heritage Museum.

<https://vietnamesemuseum.org/our-roots/republic-of-vietnam/>

Sài Gòn Broadcasting Television Network (SBTN). 2013, June 9. *Hải Lục Không Quân Việt Nam Cộng Hoà*. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U64U1YBeoE4>

Seixas, P., & Morton, T. 2013. *The big six: Historical thinking concepts*. Nelson Education.

Trần, D. 2017, April 14. I Am Miss Saigon, and I Hate It. AMERICAN THEATRE.

<https://www.americantheatre.org/2017/04/13/i-am-miss-saigon-and-i-hate-it/>