

**Vietnamese American Experiences Model Curriculum**  
**California Department of Education**  
**Religion in Vietnamese American Communities**  
**Grades 11–12**

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**Area of Study:** Vietnamese Resettlement and Community Building

**Compelling Question:** What is Vietnamese America?

**Lesson Question (Supporting Question):**

- How has religion, religious identity, and religious values shaped the experiences of diverse groups in Vietnam before 1975?
- What is the role of religion in helping Vietnamese Americans and their children integrate into American society, build community, develop social and political values, and form identity?

**Lesson Materials:**

- Supplies:
  - Access to laptop device
  - Chart: Religious Affiliation of Asian-American Subgroups - Vietnamese Americans
- Videos:
  - Vietnamese Catholic Center, Garden Grove, CA
  - Historical Moment in Orange County: Commemoration of Shrine to Our Lady of La Vang or Shrine to Our Lady of La Vang, Christ Cathedral, Garden Grove, CA
  - Điều Ngự Temple, the First Day of the Mậu Tuất Lunar New Year, Westminster, CA, 2018
  - Vietnamese Baptist Church in Greenville, SC Celebrates Christmas
  - Vietnamese American Buddhists Commemorate the Founding of Hòa Hảo Buddhism (VOA)
  - Cao Đài Temple in Little Saigon (VOA Tiếng Việt)
- Handouts:
  - Religious Persecution Sources

- Religious Youth Organization Sources
- How to Embed English Subtitles onto Vietnamese-language Youtube Videos
- Link to handouts: <https://ucdavis.box.com/s/sv3w42gp1ufbpegfej1kpoe5i9tqs9vg>

**Lesson Objective:** Students will analyze the role of religion in shaping Vietnamese American communities, specifically focusing on its impact on community activism, cultural preservation, and intergenerational relationships, by interacting with various text and video sources and creating a poster.

**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-11.11 Students analyze the major social problems and domestic policy issues in contemporary American society.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.11.7 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.11.2 Conduct short as well as 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:** Students will create an infographic of a religious youth group, demonstrating their understanding of the factors important to the Vietnamese American community.

**Suggested Amount of Time:** 70–90 minutes

**Lesson Background:**

Religion plays a multi-faceted role in Vietnamese American communities, shaping narratives of activism, community engagement, and cultural identity. After escaping religious persecution under Vietnam's Communist regime post-1975, Vietnamese refugees brought their faith and community activism to the United States. Here, they leveraged political initiatives to spotlight ongoing human rights violations in Vietnam and advocate for religious freedom. Building on the associational culture from the Republic of Vietnam—particularly rooted in

Roman Catholic and Buddhist traditions—Vietnamese Americans rapidly founded diverse organizations, from religious lay groups to scouts and business associations. These organizations serve not only as platforms for spiritual development but also as crucibles for broader social contributions, defying the stereotypes often imposed on the Vietnamese diaspora.

The deeply rooted culture of associational life in Vietnam, particularly evident in religious organizations from both Roman Catholic and Buddhist communities, found a new home in the United States when South Vietnamese resettled post-1975. Stemming from a history enriched by the Catholic Action and Buddhist Revival Movements, these religious associations had already established robust networks for mutual aid, community activism, and social engagement in the Republic of Vietnam. Vietnamese American communities rebuilt churches, temples, and shrines dedicated to their Vietnamese religious community as centers for helping new refugees and immigrants assimilate to American society. Both the ongoing religious restrictions in Vietnam and the importance of religious institutions as a community center for Vietnamese Americans contribute to the large differences among Vietnamese who identify as belonging to an organized religion in Vietnam and the US

Religious youth organizations like the Vietnamese Buddhist Youth Association (Gia Đình Phật Tử) and the Vietnamese Eucharistic Youth Movement (VEYM) also play crucial roles in cultural preservation, socialization into a Vietnamese identity for youth, and community building between generations. These organizations not only offer a structured setting for spiritual development but also act as supportive community spaces that help mitigate generational and cultural conflicts. Parents find that their children maintain their Vietnamese language skills better when they attend these youth programs. In addition, these religious youth organizations offer an environment where traditional Vietnamese values and culture are reinforced, thereby helping transmit a unique Vietnamese American identity.

### **Lesson Procedures:**

- a. Warm Up (five minutes)
  - i. Ask students, “What role, if any, does religion play in your life?”
  - ii. Allow students to share with a peer.
- b. Lesson Introduction (10 minutes)
  - i. The teacher will show the following chart: Religious Affiliation of Asian-American Subgroups - Vietnamese Americans (see: <https://ucdavis.box.com/s/4bt4lcq6dk5nn3paf6yg2lz2m63zsyzo> or original source <https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/2012/07/19/asian-americans-a-mosaic->)
  - ii. The teacher will then ask the following question: Why do you think the difference between religious identity in Vietnam and Vietnamese American communities is so great?

- iii. Students will have one to two minutes to share their response with a pair.
  - iv. The class will then come together and discuss.
  - v. The teacher should let students share first.
  - vi. The teacher should then lead the discussion towards two points:
    1. Religious communities and identity offer a way for Vietnamese Americans to integrate well into American society and find community (English classes, fellow co-ethnics, sense of belonging, Vietnamese classes for children, etc.)
    2. Many religious communities had escaped Vietnam due to religious persecution and the inability to practice their religion at home.
- c. Shared Learning - Introduction to Religious Life in Vietnamese American Communities (20 minutes)
- i. The teacher will first handout a source document of three oral histories of Vietnamese Americans: one from a Cao Đài priest, one from a Vietnamese American Catholic bishop, and one from a Buddhist monk (see “Religious Persecution Sources” under handouts section).
  - ii. The teacher will then divide the students into six groups.
  - iii. In the groups, the teacher will assign a question for each group with the same primary source readings.
  - iv. The teacher will post the questions on six slide decks, and will have students answer the questions by creating an extra slide and editing it with their group
    1. Group 1: Write a one to two sentence summary of each of the three oral histories
    2. Group 2: How did the fall of Saigon in 1975 and the subsequent rise of the Communist government impact the lives of individuals and religious communities in Vietnam, as described in these oral histories?
    3. Group 3: What sort of religious discrimination did religious communities face in Vietnam that prompted them to flee to the US?
    4. Group 4: How did individuals and religious institutions respond to government suppression and persecution in Vietnam during this period, and what strategies did they employ to navigate these challenging circumstances?

5. Group 5: Considering the stories of individuals from diverse religious backgrounds, how did these oral histories highlight the resilience, determination, and sacrifices of those who sought to maintain their religious and personal freedoms in the face of adversity?
  6. Group 6: How are Vietnamese American refugees of different faiths and communities connected together in regards to religious rights, both then and today?
- v. The students should have about five minutes of silent reading time.
  - vi. After five minutes, the teacher will allow students to discuss with each other about the readings and begin to answer the questions on the slide.
  - vii. After 15 minutes, the class will come together, and each group will share their response.
- d. Community Collaboration - Life in Vietnamese American Religious Communities (25 minutes)
- i. The teacher will have students make six new groups, each choosing one of the following videos:
    1. Vietnamese Catholic Center, Garden Grove, CA
      - Link (with subtitles):  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tRmhVQrKuhU>
      - a. Link (without subtitles):  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ErZ3tTIirB4>
    2. Shrine to Our Lady of La Vang, Garden Grove, CA
      - Link 1 Historical Moment in Orange County: Commemoration of Shrine to Our Lady of La Vang (with subtitles):  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9ExJnh4NhrQ>
      - a. Link (without subtitles):  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H2dq3ht0fPI>
      - Link 2 (optional watch - with subtitles):  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZjXTMylFKh0>
      - a. Link 2 (without subtitles):  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W4QxvIm9OjA>
    3. Điều Ngự Buddhist Temple, Westminster, CA

- Link (with subtitles):  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Mj5-4NtcFNs>
    - a. Link (without subtitles):  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OOYzuTMO\\_gs](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OOYzuTMO_gs)
  - 4. Baptist Church of Greenville, SC
    - Link (with subtitles):  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AbWCx1D6Vqo>
      - a. Link (without subtitles):  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bp1ciNB1MVc>
  - 5. Hòa Hảo Buddhist Center, Washington D.C.
    - Link (with subtitles):  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mJ9fC7nTq-0>
      - a. Link (without subtitles):  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rHxeKBdGB6M>
  - 6. Cao Đài Temple, Garden Grove, CA
    - Link (with subtitles):  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ISDSuMlb1gY>
      - a. Link (without subtitles):  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cZjhREiFQYc>
- ii. Students will be responsible for one of the six videos and should prepare to share their learnings to the class.
1. Prompt: We will explore the role of religion in building and sustaining Vietnamese American communities. You will be divided into six groups. Each group will choose one of the following six videos to watch (listed above). After watching your chosen video, your group will work together to create a synthesized response to the question below. Use proper grammar and punctuation.
  2. Question: In what ways do Vietnamese American communities use religion as a way to build community? Use specific details from the video you watched.
  3. Criteria for Evaluation: Your teacher will evaluate your response based on the following criteria:
    - Topic Sentence and Argument: Your response should start with a clear topic sentence that outlines your main argument in response to the question.

- Evidence from the Video: Support your argument with specific details and examples from the video you watched.
  - Significance: Explain why religion matters to the Vietnamese American community, drawing from what you have learned from the video.
- iii. In the last five minutes, the class will come together, and each group will briefly share their video and a summary of their response
- e. Cultural Production: Infographic of religious youth group (30 minutes)
- i. The students will create an infographic (digital or on paper) for one organization (the Vietnamese Eucharistic Youth Movement or the Buddhist Youth Family Movement).
1. The infographic should include a combination of text and visual elements.
- ii. Provide the following handout, “Religious Youth Organization Sources” to provide students with additional details about both.
- iii. Infographics should include the following major points:
1. History of the organization from the Republic of Vietnam period.
  2. Connect how the youth organization can serve the needs of Vietnamese Americans.
  3. Show an understanding of the importance of religion as a form of community in the US. Responses should address the question: How is religion and the organization important for Vietnamese American youth to build themselves a cultural and religious community in the US?
- f. If time permits, allow students to share their infographics or conduct a classroom gallery walk.
- i. Reflection Discussion: After seeing other peers' posters, students should reflect on the lesson questions: How has religion, religious identity, and religious values shaped the experiences of diverse groups in Vietnam before 1975? What is the role of religion in helping Vietnamese Americans and their children integrate into American society, build community, develop social and political values, and form identity?
1. This can be done as an exit ticket, or a think-pair-share.

**Scaffolding:**

- **Engagement:** Consider the following method to support with lesson engagement:

- Include activities that foster the use of imagination to solve novel and relevant problems, or make sense of complex ideas in creative ways
- **Representation:** Consider the following method to support with multiple means of representation:
  - Pre-teach vocabulary and symbols, especially in ways that promote connection to the learners’ experience and prior knowledge
  - Provide electronic translation tools or links to multilingual glossaries on the web
- **Action and Expression:** Consider the following method to support in presenting their learning in multiple ways:
  - Use story webs, outlining tools, or concept mapping tools
  - Embed prompts to “stop and think” before acting as well as adequate space
  - Ask questions to guide self-monitoring and reflection

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: Give two step contextualized directions
- **Bridging:** Consider the following method to support with bridging students:
  - Listening: Confirm students’ prior knowledge of content topics
    - With a focus on meaning-making, students are prompted to think about what they already know in effort to help them learn something new.
    - Students find connections between familiar vocabulary related to content learning, explaining how their words are connected. (Our words are connected/linked/related because \_\_\_\_\_.)

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. Students interested in particular religions can consult the following “Additional Sources” worksheet, found at the bottom of the lesson plan.
2. Religion in Socializing Youth Identity and Values - The teacher will show the music video, “Bodak Thiều Nhi” to the class (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HhoLCXgMzpw>). During the video, the teacher will instruct the students to take down as many notes and observations as they can: what is the video about, what imagery is used, where is the location at, what religion, etc. The music video can be introduced as a connection to “Thiếu Nhi Thánh Thể,” or the “Vietnamese Eucharistic Youth Movement,” one of the largest Vietnamese Catholic youth groups in American that is extremely prevalent among those ages 5–18. The class can explore this group and where most Vietnamese Catholic kids spend their weekends (like boy/girl scouts) doing service, socializing, helping younger kids, retreats, learning Vietnamese, and learning Catholic Catechism. Teacher can ask the following question: Based on the video, how is religion and the organization important for Vietnamese American youth to build themselves a cultural and religious community in the US?
3. Religion in Socializing Youth Identity and Values - The teacher will then show “Gia Đình Phật Tử Youth Camp”. The link is attached: (with subtitles) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=roXYkAypNZk>. Link (without subtitles): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0bPVv2ExWxg>. During the video, the teacher will instruct the students to take down as many notes and observations as they can: what is the video about, what imagery is used, where is the location at, what religion, etc. The teacher will introduce this youth organization as the Buddhist Family Youth Organization, also a boy/girl scouts-like youth group aimed at young Vietnamese American Buddhist youth. Like the above video, they do similar activities on the weekends, such as Vietnamese language school, socializing, camps, learning Buddhist theology, and helping the community. Teacher can ask the same question: Based on the video, how is religion and the organization important for Vietnamese American youth to build themselves a cultural and religious community in the US? Follow-up question: What similarities do you see between the Vietnamese Eucharistic Youth Movement and

the Buddhist Family Youth Organization? Despite Buddhism and Catholicism being two totally different religions, why are they so similar in their function for Vietnamese American communities?

4. Shield or Crest - Students can identify a particular religion outlined in this lesson plan, or another religion of interest, and create a digital or paper shield or crest. They should begin by conducting research on common practices, places of worship, traditions, etc. After gathering that information, students can identify symbols, icons, quotes, or theme words that reflect these details and add them to the shield or crest. Students can also be challenged to be strategic in color choice as they put together this crest.
5. Ancestral Worship - Have students learn about ancestral worship. Some Vietnamese members follow ancestral worship and may not identify with a particular individual religion. This is referred to as Dao Ong Ba in South 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 handouts for instructions on how to embed the subtitles into the Youtube video using a Chrome extension.

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