

5 Lessons for the Social Studies Classroom

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Subject: Middle School Social Studies

Grade Levels:

Lesson 1: A Child's Life: In Vietnam

Time Required: 60 minutes

Instructional objectives:

Geographic Perspective

Middle School

Diversity of People Places and Cultures: SOC.II.1

All students will describe, compare, and explain the locations and characteristics of places, cultures, and settlements.

Benchmark SOC.II.1.MS.1

Locate and describe the diverse places, cultures, and communities of major world regions.

Background information and introduction:

Students will use photographs as a basis for creative writing and thinking globally. They will research the context of the images and compare it to their own writing. Prepare a PowerPoint that includes the goal of the lesson, (the photo prompt and journal questions are optional), an additional five or so photos from the attachment (choose the number of photos based on the number of small groups). If possible display Vietnamese artifacts and books in the classroom. To introduce the lesson focus on students' prior knowledge; ask them what they've heard about the country of Vietnam. Have a student identify its location on map. Explain goal of lesson and display it on the PowerPoint screen. Make sure students are aware that all children pictured live in different areas of Vietnam, but not all are necessarily "Vietnamese."

Materials required:

- computer and screen for PowerPoint
- student journals
- pens/pencils, paper
- *optional:* *one copy of the journal photograph for each student
- one copy of each additional photograph

Procedures:

*** (Step 1 is optional; use if time allows OR if your classroom needs practice or instruction to write creative responses)*

1. Prior to class, place a copy of the photo of your choice (chosen from those listed here or elsewhere) on each students' desk (or display on PowerPoint), along with photographer name

and date. Students respond to following prompt in their journals (displayed on PowerPoint): “What do you think the child or children in this picture might have to say? Consider what the cultural context of the image might be and the specific moment that it captures, and then write a brief monologue for the child.” After giving student a few minutes to write, have students share their responses with the class. Conduct a brief discussion based on the following questions: Are their similarities or differences between descriptions written by students who have prior knowledge of the country of Vietnam? Do you think the expression “a picture is worth 1,000 words” is true? Why or why not? What emotions, sentiments, or ideas does this picture convey that might not be easily expressed in words?

2. Divide students into small groups and give each group one photograph from the collection attached. Give students five minutes to free-write about their photograph. Encourage them to focus on **imagery**: the specific sights, sounds, smells, physical sensations, tastes and thoughts that they might imagine that this subject or group of subjects is experiencing and **culture**: the child’s way of life, beliefs, values, religion. At the end of the five minutes, have each group pass their photograph to the right and repeat the exercise. Continue until all students have responded to all of the photographs.
3. Allow small groups to get online and look at websites describing basic information about the country of Vietnam to compare to their writing (Appendix 1).
4. Have students choose their favorite photograph as the subject of any type of creative writing piece that they choose: a monologue, a short story, a poem, a short one-act performance, a song, etc. Students should write for the remainder of the class period.
5. Students complete their writing at home.

Assessment:

Students will be evaluated on completion of journals, participation in class discussion and free-writing exercise, and their creative writing piece.

Follow-up options:

1. Students research cultural context surrounding their chosen photograph and write a paragraph or more of explanation.
2. Stage a class discussion regarding the role of “tourists” in a foreign country or culture other than their own (Lakota Sioux of South Dakota). Do you think that tourists should have restricted access to certain cultural ceremonies or should they have free reign? Is it inappropriate for tourists to take certain pictures or take pictures of whatever they want? When might it be inappropriate? (Appendix 2)

Curriculum connections:

English, Social Studies, Art

Additional teacher resources:

Klien, Rachel and Perelman, Andrea. "Image: A Nation – Creative Writing Inspired by Images from International Photographer Rene Burri." 21 May 2004. 1 December 2004

Florence, Mason, and Jealous, Virginia. Vietnam. 7th ed. Victoria, Australia: Lonely Planet Publications Pty Ltd, 2003.

Works Consulted:

Klien, Rachel and Perelman, Andrea. "Image: A Nation – Creative Writing Inspired by Images from International Photographer Rene Burri." 21 May 2004. 1 December 2004

Florence, Mason, and Jealous, Virginia. Vietnam. 7th ed. Victoria, Australia: Lonely Planet Publications Pty Ltd, 2003.

Appendices:

(1)

Two useful websites:

- The Lonely Planet: <www.lonleyplanet.com>
- CIA World Fact Book 2004: <www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/>

(2)

- "Do not photograph without first asking permission – this includes children. Some hill tribes (particularly the Dao people) believe the camera will capture their spirit. Don't photograph altars.
- If you take a picture, please do it quickly and avoid using a flash. It is polite to send copies (if possible) – if you promise to do so keep your word" (Florence, 65). These facts are specifically for the country of Vietnam.

Lesson 2: Comparing Vietnam and the United States

Subject: 7-8 Social Studies

Time Required/Time Allotment: 60 minutes

Instructional objectives:

Geographic Perspective

Middle School

Regions, Patterns, and Processes: SOC.II.4

All students will describe and compare characteristics of ecosystems, states, regions, countries, major world regions, and patterns and explain the processes that created them.

Benchmark SOC.II.4.MS

Compare world regions with respect to cultures, economy, governmental systems, environment, and communications.

Background information and introduction:

Students challenge themselves and think critically about what they already know and what they can assume about the United States and Vietnam. If possible, have a display of Vietnamese artifacts and books set up in the room. Share a little about the items on display to heighten students' interest. Explain to students that they will be learning about Vietnam and required to think critically about similarities and differences between the United States and Vietnam. Give them the overall outline for the class period and discuss expectations because students may be intimidated to do activity without having previously studied the country of Vietnam. The activity sheet will be graded on effort, not the number of correct answers.

Materials:

- computer and screen (for PowerPoint)
- pencil/pen

Procedures:

1. Focus on prior knowledge. Ask students what they've heard about the country of Vietnam. Have a student(s) identify location on map. Explain goal of lesson. Allow students to work on activity sheet (Appendix 2) answers for teacher follow (Appendix 3). (*Alternative option: Instead of having students fill out activity sheet, teacher could prepare each statement on a large strip of paper, laminate it, and attach a magnet. Student could be directed to place their statement under the correct country heading already written on the board to make the activity more experiential and group oriented.*) Go through statements as a class. Hold discussion about the differences in the two regions using included PowerPoint and questions (Appendix 1).

Assessment:

Have sticky notes prepared with each statement. After discussion and PowerPoint, hand out one statement on sticky note paper to each student. As you're handing out have students move to the board to place their statement under the correct country heading written on the board. Have a couple students read answers and allow class to raise hands for correct answers. At the end of class, on a half sheet of paper, have students answer two of the following questions/statements:

1. What would you like to learn more about?
2. If you could talk to a Vietnamese person, what would you like to ask him/her?
3. Vietnam is different from the U.S. because...
4. Vietnam is similar to the U.S. because...
5. The Vietnamese are people who...

These assessments will help determine the effectiveness of the lesson. Students will be evaluated on the completion of activity sheets (which they can and should work on during discussion as well), participation in class discussion, and thought put into answering the final questions or statements.

Follow-up options:

1. Write a description of the U.S. if it only had one political party like Vietnam.

2. Have students choose two other countries to compare; research and present to the class.

Curriculum connections:

Social Studies, English, American History, Civics, Geography

Additional teacher resources:

Banks, James A., et al. *World Regions: Adventures in Time and Place*. New York : MacMillan/McGraw Hill, 1998.

Works Consulted:

Banks, James A., et al. *World Regions: Adventures in Time and Place*. New York : MacMillan/McGraw Hill, 1998.

Florence, Mason, and Jealous, Virginia. *Vietnam*. 7th ed. Victoria, Australia: Lonely Planet Publications Pty Ltd, 2003.

Appendices:

(1) Discussion guide questions

1. These are only 31 statements, how many more ways could you describe our country and culture? (It's important for students to understand that this list is very limited and only gives a glimpse into the country and culture of Vietnam).
 1. What are some similarities between the U.S. and VN?

The most powerful institution in the communist party of Vietnam is the Politburo, which has about a dozen members. There have been no female members of the Politburo since 1945 (Florence, 41).

2. What are some differences?

Candidates of the National Assembly and local People's Committees are elected to office. Everyone of voting age, 18 years, is required to vote. Proxy-voting is allowed and very common; "this permits the government to boast that elections produce 100% voter participation, thus conferring legitimacy on the process." Only party-approved candidates are permitted to run and opposition parties are prohibited. Independents may run, but must have the government's approval to do so (Florence, 41).

3. What is a characteristic of VN that you wish we had more of in the U.S.?
4. What is a characteristic listed under VN that you think also belongs in the description of the U.S.?
5. Is there any fact that you heard about VN that you think is negative? What could be the positive side of that fact?

(2)

Please decide which of the following statements describe the United States and which of following statements describe the country of Vietnam. If you think the statement describes the United States,

write U.S. in the blank. If you think the statement describes Vietnam, write VN in the blank. If you think the statement is true for both, write Both.

1. This country is slightly larger than Italy and a bit smaller than Japan. _____
2. This country borders the countries of Laos, China, and Cambodia. _____
3. The main farm areas of this country are in the Red River Delta and the Mekong Delta.

4. The largest city in this country is Ho Chi Minh City. _____
5. This country is about half the size of Russia. _____
6. This entire county is located in the tropics. _____
7. This country borders the countries of Canada and Mexico. _____
8. This country was ruled by China for 1,000 years. _____
9. Washington D.C. is the nation's capital. _____
10. This country's political system is communist. _____
11. Hanoi is the nation's capital _____
12. In this country, females are underrepresented in the government. _____
13. Everyone of voting age (18 years) is *required* to vote. _____
14. Only party-approved candidates are permitted to run for office. _____
15. The most populated city in this country is New York City. _____
16. Citizens can freely criticize the government. _____
17. This country's political system is a Democratic Republic. _____
18. This country is home to 54 different ethnic groups. _____
19. This country's population is 81 million people. _____
20. 70 to 80 percent of the population lives in rural areas. _____
21. Popular foreign languages are English, French, Russian, and Chinese. _____
22. Guns are illegal in this country unless you are a government official. _____
23. This country is the home of many religions, yet the main religions are Christianity and Catholicism. _____
24. Citizens in this country may not freely criticize the government. _____
25. In this country people usually eat "family style" with family members sharing several dishes in the center of the table. _____

26. Citizens have the right to bear arms. _____
27. Everyone of voting age is given the right to vote. _____
28. This country is home to many religions. A majority of the people practice Buddhism, Daoism, and Confucianism. _____
29. Religion is discouraged in this country. _____
30. Independence is an important characteristic in this culture. _____
31. Can you name the five countries that currently have Communist governments? Please list as many as you can.

(3) Answers

1.VN 2.VN 3.VN 4.VN 5.US 6.VN 7.US 8.VN 9.US 10.VN 11.VN 12.BOTH 13.VN 14.VN 15.US 16.US 17.US 18.VN 19.VN 20.VN 21.VN 22.VN 23.US 24.VN 25.VN 26.US 27.US 28.VN 29.VN 30.US 31.Vientam, Laos, China, Cuba, North Korea

Lesson 3: Freedom of Art

Subject: 7-12 Social Studies

Time Required: one or two 60 minute sessions

Instructional objectives:

Public Discourse and Decision Making

Middle School

Identifying and Analyzing Issues: Standard SOC.VI.1

All students will state an issue clearly as a question of public policy, trace the origins of the issue, analyze various perspectives people bring to the issue and evaluate possible ways to resolve the issue.

Benchmark SOC.VI.1.M.S.3

Explain how culture and experiences shape positions that people take on an issue.

Background information and introduction:

Students consider historic events or movements that may be viewed as controversial by different groups of people, and then create proposals supporting the inclusion of specific art pieces to be displayed in related art gallery exhibit. Prepare a PowerPoint that includes the goal of the lesson, the journal prompt, and research questions. To introduce the lesson, focus on students' prior knowledge; ask them what they've heard about the country of Vietnam. Have a student identify location on map. Explain the goal of lesson and display it on the PowerPoint screen.

Materials required:

- computer and screen for PowerPoint
- student journals
- pens/pencils, paper

- classroom board
- copies of “Hundreds protest Ho Chi Minh in Oakland ” (one per student) (Appendix1)
- computers with Internet access (one per small group)

Procedures:

1. In their journals, students respond to the following prompt (displayed on PowerPoint screen): “What are the different purposes of art? What must be considered about art gallery visitors when an item is put on display? Who decides what will be displayed?” After a few minutes, allow students to share their responses, and discuss the following questions: How might a person’s background affect how he or she perceives a particular exhibit? What examples of controversial exhibits (art or museum) can the students name, and to whom were they controversial?
2. As a class read and discuss the “New York Times” article “Hundreds protest Ho Chi Minh in Oakland,” using the following questions:
 1. Who was Ho Chi Minh?
 2. What does he symbolize?
 3. What does he have a reputation for?
 4. Who was protesting?
 5. In the article Minh is compared to another famous world leader, who is it?
 6. Who was the artist?
 7. What was his response to the protest?
 8. In your opinion, what role does art play in our lives?
 9. Should a person or organization be in charge of regulating what is displayed in museum exhibits or art galleries, given that items displayed are often viewed as controversial? Why or why not?
3. Explain to students that they will be creating art gallery exhibits for items that might be considered controversial to particular groups of people, as was the case for C. David Thomas’ exhibit that featured Ho Chi Minh. As a class, brainstorm a list on the board of historical events, movements or people that are considered controversial to one or more groups of people. Topics may include ethnic cleansing (such as the Holocaust), the trans-Atlantic slave trade, Japanese internment camps, land disputes between Israelis and Palestinians in Israel and between Native Americans and European settlers in the United States, and the Vietnam War or the war in Iraq. People might include Che Guevara or Mao Ze-Dung. Then divide students into small groups and allow each group to choose one of the events or people from the list. Give groups a few minutes to brainstorm works of art that could be created relating to their chosen event or person the might be controversial. They should select one on which to focus.

4. Students will research the circumstances of the event or person to contextualize the work of art, as well as the different opinions that surround the focus of the piece. During the research one or two members of the group can work on a sketch or model of the artwork the group would like to display in the art gallery. (Depending on the size of groups, each student can be assigned a role, e.g. note taker, web surfer, artist, utility, etc.) The research should be guided by the answering the following questions (in PowerPoint presentation):
 - What piece of artwork have you chosen from the brainstorming session?
 - What is its function in describing the event, movement, or person chosen by your group?
 - Why did this event or movement occur? OR What makes this person controversial?
 - What happened as a result of this movement or event? OR What happened as a result of this person's actions?
 - How is this artwork important in relaying the history of the event/movement or person that it represents?
 - What does this work of art mean to different groups of people?
 - How do these groups view the event or movement? Why might these groups have different opinions?
 - Why would an art gallery opt to display your exhibit?

When research is complete, groups should review their information and discuss any controversial issues that naturally arise from the artwork being displayed. Each group member should have a copy of the notes taken during class in order to be able to complete the homework assignment.

5. Homework: Each student writes a proposal explaining how his or her group's selected artwork would be displayed in an art exhibit on the related movement, event, or person. The following should be included in the proposal:
 - A brief explanation of what the artifact is
 - Why it is important that it is displayed
 - If any information will be displayed along with the exhibit. If so, what information?
 - Students may want to describe the room the art will be displayed in and what other related pieces will be included in the display.

Proposals may be presented in a future class or presented to another class, like art. Groups may want to reconvene and create a final proposal using the suggestions generated by individual group members.

Assessment:

Students will be evaluated based on initial journal response, participation in class and group discussion, thorough completion of research, well-thought out art pieces, and thoughtful proposals.

Curriculum connections:

Art, Social Studies

Additional teacher resources:

Ho Chi Minh. Pacific Bridge Contemporary Southeast Asian Art. 1 Dec. 2004.

Ho Chi Minh – A Portrait Home Page. 1 Dec. 2004

Sale, Michelle and Tanya Yasmin Chin. “Public Displays of Contention: Creating Museum Displays of Historical but Controversial Artifacts.” NY Times Daily Lesson Plan 20 Aug. 2003. 22 Dec. 2004.

Works Consulted:

Associated Press. “Hundreds protest Ho Chi Minh exhibit in Oakland.” CNN.com 20 Mar. 2000. 1

December 2004 Sale, Michelle and Tanya Yasmin Chin. “Public Displays of Contention: Creating Museum Displays of Historical but Controversial Artifacts.” NY Times Daily Lesson Plan 20 Aug. 2003. 22 Dec. 2004

Thomas, C. David. “Re: HO CHI MINH – A Portrait.” E-mail to Erin Rumery. 15 Dec. 2004.

Appendices:

(1)

Associated Press. “Hundreds protest Ho Chi Minh exhibit in Oakland.” CNN.com 20 Mar. 2000. 1 Dec. 2004

Lesson 4: The Spirit Catches You

Subject: 7-12 grade Social Studies

Time Required/Time Allotment: one - three 60 minute sessions

Instructional objectives:

Geographic Perspective

Middle School

Diversity of People Places and Cultures: SOC.II.1

All students will describe, compare, and explain the locations and characteristics of places, cultures, and settlements.

Benchmark SOC.II.1.MS.1

Locate and describe the diverse places, cultures, and communities of major world regions.

Background information and introduction:

Students will be exposed to the Hmong refugee communities in the U.S. and will research refugee populations in the United States and the circumstances surrounding their immigration. For the introduction, ask students what they know about refugees in America. Where are they from? Why are they here? Ask if they've heard of the Hmong community before. Explain to students the goal of the day's lesson. Then, give students a brief history of the Hmong people and where they live now based on Chapter 2 of Anne Fadiman's book, *The Spirit Catches You and You Fall Down*.

Materials:

- pen/pencil
- paper
- The Spirit Catches You and You Fall Down, by Anne Fadiman
- *optional*: PowerPoint and screen for writing prompts and directions
- computers for each small group (10 available computers)

Procedures:

1. Teacher will read aloud a section from Chapter 3 of Anne Fadiman's book, The Spirit Catches You and You Fall Down.
2. Hold a discussion with students using the following questions (another option, have students respond to these questions in their journals):
 1. What medical condition do the Hmong refer to when they say "The spirit catches you and you fall down?"
 2. Do Lia Lee's parents see her "disease" as positive or negative? Why?
 3. The American doctors think one way and the Hmong family thinks another way; who is right? Why?
 4. What difficulties can you imagine refugee immigrants might have when they move to America ?
3. Have students break into small groups for research and writing case studies on refugee communities in the United States. Students will describe the ethnic backgrounds, cultural traditions, political circumstances, and geographies in the context of immigrating to the United States to create chapters for a book on American refugee communities. Assign each small group one of the following countries:
 - Burma
 - Laos
 - Vietnam
 - Iraq
 - Kosovo
 - Sudan
 - Rwanda
 - Somalia
 - Bosnia-Herzegovina

- Tibe
4. Each group should include the following information in their refugee profile:
- Why did people leave this country or region?
 - What particular groups from this country sought refuge in the United States (ex: Hmong from Laos)?
 - Where have the majority of the refugees from this country settled in the U.S. (ex: Hmong in Merced, California)?
 - What organizations or community groups are in place to support refugees from this country or region?
 - What cultural traditions or customs has this refugee community converted to its new American home?
 - Find and print/draw at least one map, and at least two photographs, to include in your chapter.

Use all available classroom and library resources, groups should research and answer questions and compile illustrations for their case studies.

5. Once groups have completed research, students will type their case studies and illustrate them with photos and maps. Students will compile case studies to create the book. Students may decide to vote on a standard case study “template,” with standard categories, font, and layout.

Assessment:

Students will be assessed on participation in the classroom discussion of *The Spirit Catches You*, group research, contribution to case study, and thoughtfully and creatively written first-person refugee stories.

Curriculum connections:

Social Studies, Intercultural Understanding, Geography, English

Additional teacher resources:

Florence, Mason, and Jealous, Virginia. *Vietnam*. 7th ed. Victoria, Australia: Lonely Planet Publications Pty Ltd, 2003.

Hambouz, Annissa and Tanya Yasmin Chin. “Hmong Among Us.” *NY Times Daily Lesson Plan* 29 Nov. 2004. 1 Dec. 2004.

“Hmong Refugees Begin Journey to United States.” *National Public Radio*. 24 June 2004. 14 Jan. 2005.

“Refugee Voices.” *U.S. Committee for Refugees*. 2004. 14 Jan. 2005.

Works Consulted:

Fadiman, Anne. *The Spirit Catches You and You Fall Down: A Hmong Child, Her American Doctors and the Collision of Two Cultures*. New York : Farrar, Straus, And Giroux: 1997.

Florence, Mason, and Jealous, Virginia. Vietnam. 7th ed. Victoria, Australia: Lonely Planet Publications Pty Ltd, 2003.

Hambouz, Annissa and Tanya Yasmin Chin. "Hmong Among Us." NY Times Daily Lesson Plan 29 Nov. 2004. 1 Dec. 2004

"Refugee Voices." U.S. Committee for Refugees. 2004. 14 Jan. 2005

Lesson 5: Vietnamese Refugees

Subject: 7-8 grade Social Studies

Time Required/Time Allotment: 60 minutes

Instructional objectives:

Historical Perspective

Middle School

Judging Decisions from the Past: SOC.I.4

All students will evaluate key decisions made at critical turning points in history by assessing their implications and long-term consequences.

Benchmark SOC.I.4.MS.3

Identify the responses of individuals to historic violations of human dignity involving discrimination, persecution and crimes against humanity.

Background information and introduction:

Students will learn about the Vietnamese flight out of Vietnam to the United States after communist North Vietnam won the war in 1975. They will read a recent newspaper article about Vietnamese refugees who came to the U.S. after the war. Students will then write a brief paper from the perspective of a Vietnamese refugee. Begin lesson by telling students the goal of the lesson.

Materials:

- pen/pencil
- paper
- a copy of " Vietnam, 25 year later: Vietnamese immigrants underscore hardship of adjustment"
- for each student

Procedures:

1. Students will respond to the following prompt in their journals: Why does your family live in this country or state? How did your family come to live in this city?
2. Allow students to share from journals and discuss other reasons that families might move to a certain place.
3. Ask students what they know about the Vietnam War (referred to as the "American War" by people in Vietnam). Ask if they know anyone who fought in that war. Give students information

about the Vietnam War (Appendix 1) and Vietnamese refugees (Appendix 2) in the United States at your discretion.

4. Have students read article, " Vietnam, 25 years later: Vietnamese immigrants underscore hardship of adjustment," found at

<<http://www.post-gazette.com/regionstate/20000424viets6.asp>>. Discuss/answer the following questions aloud:

1. Why did many Vietnamese leave their home country of Vietnam ?
2. Why did they choose to immigrate to the United States? Do you think that could be true of people from other countries? What countries (or regions)?
3. Why wasn't life easy for the new Vietnamese immigrants?
5. Students should spend the rest of their class time writing a paper from the first person point of view of a Vietnamese refugee. (Make sure students are aware that many Vietnamese refugees came to the United States in the mid- and late-1970s and early 1980s).

Assessment:

Students will be assessed on completing their journal entry, participation in the classroom discussion, and a thoughtfully and creatively written first-person point-of-view refugee stories.

Follow-up options:

1. Have students research other refugee communities in America.

Curriculum connections:

Social Studies, Intercultural Understanding, Geography, English

Additional teacher resources

Florence, Mason, and Virginia Jealous. Vietnam. 7th ed. Victoria, Australia: Lonely Planet Publications Pty Ltd, 2003.

Hambouz, Annissa and Tanya Yasmin Chin. "Hmong Among Us." NY Times Daily Lesson Plan 29 Nov. 2004. 1 Dec. 2004

"Vietnamese Refugees." Southeast Asia Resource Action Center. 13 Jan. 2005

"Vietnam War." MSN Encarta. 13 Jan. 2005

Works Consulted:

Batz, Bob, Jr.. " Vietnam, 25 Years Later: Vietnamese Immigrants Underscore Hardship of Adjustment." Post-Gazette.com. 24 Apr. 2000. 13 Jan. 2005

Templer, Robert. Shadows and Wind: A View of Modern Vietnam. New York : Penguin Books, 1999.

"Vietnamese Refugees." Southeast Asia Resource Action Center. 13 Jan. 2005

“Vietnam War.” MSN Encarta. 13 Jan. 2005

Appendices:

(1)

The Vietnam War was a military struggle fought in Vietnam from 1959 – 1975, involving the North Vietnamese in conflict with the United States and the South Vietnamese army. From 1946 until 1954, the Vietnamese had struggled for their independence from France. At the end of the war with France, the country was temporarily divided into two separate governments, one in North and the other in South Vietnam. North Vietnam came under the control of the Vietnamese Communists who wanted to unify all of Vietnam under Communist rule. The South was, at that time, controlled by non-Communist Vietnamese.

The U.S. became involved because the American government wanted to stop the spread of Communism. At that time the United States government believed in the “domino theory,” that if one country in Southeast Asia became Communist they would all eventually become Communist. We now know that this did not happen.

In 1965 the United States sent in troops to support the South Vietnamese. Ultimately the North Vietnamese won and in 1975 the country was reunified under the Communist government (Vietnam War).

(2)

The Vietnamese are the largest population of Southeast Asian refugees to have settled in the United States. Many of them come from what was once the Republic of Vietnam, known as “South Vietnam.” Their government, allied with the United States in the Vietnam War, collapsed under military pressure from the communist North Vietnam. Many ex-military and government officials from South Vietnam fled to the United States after the war to escape persecution. As conditions worsened later in the decade more people attempted to leave Vietnam. People fled in boats. The number of people who left in the boats is unknown, but some estimates say that as many as half died at sea. The successful ones reached refugee camps in Thailand, Malaysia, Indonesia, the Philippines, and Hong Kong. From these camps many were admitted into the United States (Vietnamese Refugees).

Additionally, many prisoners of war were held captive by the new, communist Vietnamese government. These political prisoners, including former members of the military and former U.S. government employees, were sent to “reeducation camps.” In these camps, most prisoners were detained for many years under harsh conditions (Vietnamese Refugees). The following is a letter from a man called Cao Ngoc Phuong, published by the Aurora Foundation, a human rights group that printed a report on the Vietnamese reeducation camps.

In my forced labor camp in the highlands, the event that dominates everything is the experience of hunger. We are hungry permanently. All we can think about day or night is eating. Many of us catch lizards to eat, knowing that they provide protein. Very soon the lizards in the whole area were exterminated... Such foods as mice, rats, birds, snakes, and grasshoppers must be caught and eaten secretly. It is forbidden and if the camp guards find out about it, the prisoners will be punished... What

little food is eaten is chewed very slowly. Still it makes no difference. We feel even hungrier after eating (Templer, 53).