



MINNESOTA REMEMBERS VIETNAM

AMERICA'S SECRET WAR
EDUCATOR TOOLKIT

Additional Secret War & Vietnam War Resources

America's Secret War documentary

In the shadows of the Vietnam War, the CIA organized a secret war in neighboring Laos to prevent communism from spreading deeper into Southeast Asia. The Hmong fought for the U.S. — and for themselves— to keep Ho Chi Minh's regime from destroying their way of life.

<https://www.tpt.org/americas-secret-war/>



America's Secret War Digital Shorts

Lee Pao Xiong's Battle-scarred Childhood

While a brutal war waged in Vietnam, the CIA conducted a clandestine operation in neighboring Laos to prevent the spread of communism deeper into Southeast Asia, a story that's at the heart of our upcoming documentary "America's Secret War," which premieres on October 3. Lee Pao Xiong, the founding Director of the Center for Hmong Studies at Concordia University, St. Paul, tells the story of his family's efforts to flee their mountain home in Laos and their ultimate arrival in Minnesota.

<https://www.mnvietnam.org/story/lee-pao-xiongs-battle-scarred-childhood/>

Xai Nou Serves General Vang Pao to the End

As a child of 10 or 11, Xai Nou Vang became involved in the CIA's clandestine operation in Laos during the Vietnam War. He later became a Special Guerilla Unit Captain and bodyguard to the revered

America's Secret War Educator Toolkit, a partnership of TPT and the Minnesota Humanities Center.

[mnvietnam.org/resources/](https://www.mnvietnam.org/resources/)

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General Vang Pao - but his memories of children fighting and dying in that operation haunts him still. Discover more about this little-known operation by streaming "America's Secret War":
<https://www.mnvietnam.org/story/xai-nou-vang-serves-general-vang-pao-to-the-end/>

Foot Soldier Barely Survives Battle

Former Special Guerilla Unit First Lieutenant Nhiacha Vang relives a punishing hand-to-hand battle and the life-threatening injuries doled out by the Communist military. Decades later, the bullets and shrapnel lodged in Mr. Vang's body continue to threaten his health.
<https://www.mnvietnam.org/story/foot-soldier-nhiacha-vang-barely-survives-communist-battle/>

Dreams Dashed by War

Samao Xiong wanted to become a teacher, but the Secret War killed that dream. He became a soldier and eventually held a leadership position. In addition to witnessing his friends and soldiers die, he had the heartbreaking responsibility of sending the dead back to their families.
<https://www.mnvietnam.org/story/dreams-dashed-by-war/>

Domino Theory

The Red Scare played a huge role in the Vietnam War and the lesser known Secret War, waged concurrently in neighboring Laos. President Dwight D. Eisenhower feared that if Laos fell to Communism, the entire Eastern Hemisphere would become a threat to democracy. To secure the Vietnamese border, the CIA recruited Hmong people to fight as surrogate soldiers of the U.S. armed forces. <https://www.mnvietnam.org/story/history-of-the-domino-theory/>

Lima Site 85

CIA operatives like Jerry Daniels worked hand in glove with General Vang Pao and the Hmong to conduct the Secret War in Laos. Hmong men and boys were recruited as soldiers for Special Guerrilla Units (SGU)—unofficial surrogates of the US armed forces. Many SGUs lost their lives defending US interests in Laos. The US radar facility Lima Site 85, also known as Phou Pha Thi, was one such loss.
<https://www.mnvietnam.org/americas-secret-war/>

Khou Yang- Wrenching Choices in Times of War

At the end of the Secret War, Hmong women and children often surrendered to the Pathet Lao—but trying to survive in Communist villages meant living in constant fear and being faced with difficult choices. Khou Yang was newly pregnant, a sure sign that her husband was hiding in the nearby jungle. She feared that the Pathet Lao would hunt down and kill her husband if her pregnancy was discovered.
<https://www.mnvietnam.org/story/khou-yang-wrenching-choices-in-times-of-war/>

The CIA, The Hmong and the Secret War

Hmong General Vang Pao, a courageous and powerful leader, worked in tandem with the CIA to conduct covert operations in Laos. Among the hardest hit by this "Secret War" were the Hmong of northern Laos. Tens of thousands were killed during the war, and even more lost their lives while attempting to escape to freedom after the war ended.
<https://www.mnvietnam.org/story/the-cia-the-hmong-and-the-secret-war/>

Growing Up in a Thai Refugee Camp

Children in the refugee camps had to grow up fast. Sia Her shares a few of her formative experiences as



a young child in Thai refugee camps.

<https://www.mnvietnam.org/story/growing-up-in-a-thai-refugee-camp/>

Death at Ban Vinai Refugee Camp

Former Special Guerilla Unit Captain Ganghis Khang talks about the poor living conditions at Ban Vinai, the largest of the Thai refugee camps. "Everyone was faced with death and loss," Mr. Khang explains, "there was not one day where we didn't carry the dead to be buried.

<https://www.mnvietnam.org/story/ganghis-khang-death-at-ban-vinai-refugee-camp/>

Dr. Mai Na Lee Escapes the Communist Pathet Lao

As the Secret War ended, Hmong who fought on the side of the United States were hunted by Communist Pathet Lao soldiers in their native Laos. Dr. Mai Na Lee and her family were among the many people who fled the , eventually swimming across the wide and fast-flowing Mekong River into Thailand's refugee camps.

<https://www.mnvietnam.org/story/dr-mai-na-lee-escapes-the-communist-pathet-lao/>

Special Guerrilla Units

Hmong soldiers were trained in guerrilla tactics by American and Thai specialists. They were called "Special Guerrilla Units," or SGUs. In the later years of the war they were often child soldiers. With mere days of training, the SGUs would be sent into battle against the Communist People's Army of Vietnam (PAVN). Battles were fierce and brutal injuries were common.

<https://www.mnvietnam.org/story/sgu/>

PTSD in the Hmong Community

Arriving in the US as refugees brought one level of relief, but it also awakened other tensions. The absence of immediate trauma released long-suppressed fears and emotions. Without a direct translation for "mental health" in the Hmong language, it becomes even harder to talk about PTSD and the lingering trauma of war. <https://www.mnvietnam.org/story/ptsd-in-the-hmong-community/>

Hmong Veterans Not Considered Veterans

Although they were hired and paid by the CIA, the soldiers who fought in the Secret War are not recognized as US veterans, and they receive no associated benefits. More than 35,000 Hmong and Lao soldiers died as surrogates as the US armed forces.

<https://www.mnvietnam.org/story/hmong-soldiers-not-considered-us-veterans/>

SGU Veterans and Families of USA, Inc.

Tong Vang, President of the Board of the SGU Veterans and Families of USA, Inc., explains the role of his organization in helping Special Guerrilla Unit and Hmong soldiers who became refugees in the United States when they escaped from Laos or when the refugee camps closed in Thailand.

<https://www.mnvietnam.org/story/sgu-veterans-and-families/>

Digital Extra: A Father's Assassination

Khou Yang's father, a well-known Hmong soldier, was assassinated by the Communist Pathet Lao in the 1980s. Her mother died at the hands of the Communists when she was a little girl. Decades later, the pain of her parents' deaths still haunts her.

<https://www.mnvietnam.org/story/a-fathers-assassination/>



Related Secret War Video Content



America's Secret War panel | Hope for the Hmong People

Sia Her, Executive Director of the Council on Asian Pacific Minnesotans, shares her hopes for the younger generation of Hmong Americans at a fall 2017 screening of Minnesota Remembers Vietnam: America's Secret War.

<https://www.mnvietnam.org/story/hope-for-the-hmong-people/>

America's Secret War premiere event | Kevin Yang "Cups & Quarts"

Spoken Word artist Kevin Yang performs Cups and Quarts, an original piece about his Hmong heritage, at Twin Cities PBS for the premiere screening of the documentary America's Secret War.

<https://www.mnvietnam.org/story/cups-and-quarts/>

Growing Up Hmong American: One Woman's Story (essay)

A personal story shared on the Story Wall, by Hmong American Kaolee Vang, associate producer of America's Secret War.

<https://www.mnvietnam.org/story/growing-up-hmong-american-one-womans-path/>

Like Father Like Sons: Shu Lor's Story

Hmong musician Shu Lor carries on his family's tradition of blending traditional melodies with modern flair. And he's also the composer behind the TPT-produced documentary "America's Secret War" about the CIA's clandestine operation in Laos during the Vietnam War. Here, he gives us a behind-the-scenes glimpse of his parents' contribution to his score. Make sure to turn on the sound: You'll hear an extended take of the documentary's theme music.

<https://www.mnvietnam.org/story/like-father-like-sons/>

Almanac: Dr. Mai Na Lee on Vietnam War History

University of Minnesota Professor Mai Na Lee reflects on how she helps her students to understand the striking complexities of the Vietnam War - complexities that the Ken Burns/Lynn Novick film series "The Vietnam War" explores in 10 parts. Professor Lee is also featured in the TPT-produced documentary "America's Secret War."

<https://www.facebook.com/tptpbs/videos/10154598168007493/>



Almanac segment: Hmong Veterans' Service Recognition Act

In March 2018, the Hmong Veterans' Service Recognition Act was signed into law, allowing Hmong veterans to be buried in National Cemeteries. Concordia University, St. Paul professor Lee Pao Xiong and Secret War veteran Tong Vang joined Almanac last Friday to talk about this new law and next steps for bringing recognition to Hmong veterans.

<https://www.mnvietnam.org/story/hmong-veterans-service-recognition-act/>

Lifting Up the Fallen

Sia Her, Executive Director of the Council on Asian Pacific Minnesotans, explains what the American Dream means to Hmong refugees. This short video was produced in conjunction with the TPT documentary, Minnesota Remembers Vietnam: America's Secret War.

<https://www.mnvietnam.org/story/lifting-up-the-fallen/>

The Telling Project Documentary

Follow five Vietnam War veterans and family members on a journey as they shape their experiences into a powerful stage performance with the help of The Telling Project, a national performing arts non-profit that uses theater as a tool to deepen civilian understanding of the military experience.

<https://www.tpt.org/the-telling-project-minnesota-remembers-vietnam/>

The Telling Project Performance

Five Minnesotans perform an original play based on their experiences with the Vietnam War. Veterans and family members speak of a loss of innocence, a sense of duty to their country, and a need to find peace. Sharing their history fosters healing and ensures their stories will not be forgotten.

<https://www.tpt.org/the-telling-project-minnesota-remembers-vietnam/video/the-telling-project-performance-minnesota-remembers-vietnam-zmuqin/>

The Telling Project- Kang Vang filmmaker short

The Telling Project, filmmaker Kang Vang reflects on his efforts to capture his father's story about fighting in the CIA's Secret War in Laos.

<https://www.mnvietnam.org/story/kang-vang/>

Minnesota Remembers Vietnam: Epilogue

Honor SGU veterans on stage; Brian Berg History Day winner

<https://www.mnvietnam.org/epilogue/>

Secret War Facebook Live conversation

TPT hosted a live conversation with Lee Pao Xiong, Director of the Center for Hmong Studies at Concordia University, and Lisa Reilein Blackstone, the director of the upcoming documentary "The Secret War." The film focuses on the covert CIA war that unfolded in Laos during the same timeframe as the Vietnam War and the untold stories of the Hmong Special Guerrilla Unit, wives, children and third-generation Hmong Americans who now call the U.S. home.

<https://www.mnvietnam.org/story/the-secret-war-a-conversation/>



Story Wall Suggestions List



MNVietnam.org

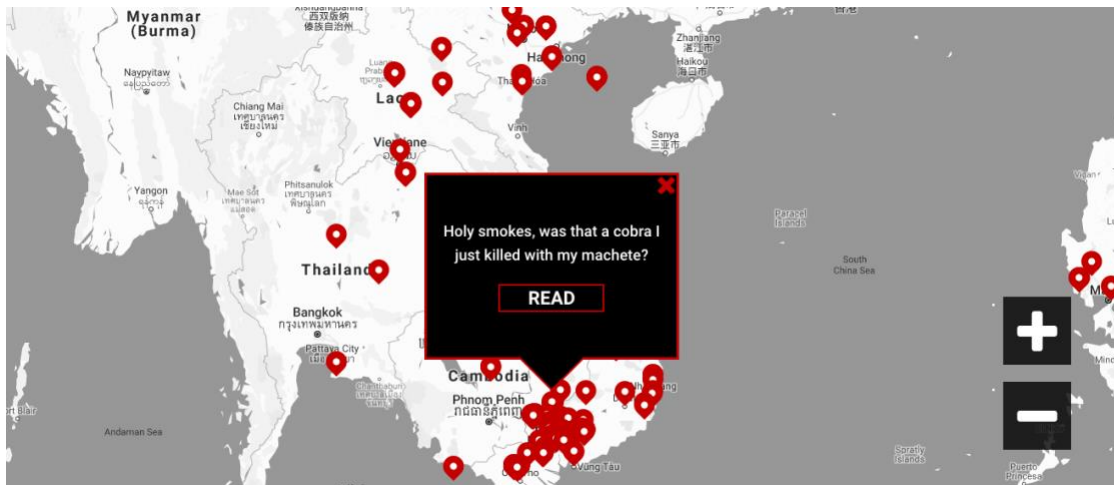
The Story Wall

The Story Wall is an evolving archive of personal memories about the Vietnam War, including photos, narratives, video, artwork, and poetry. Each story in this collection is unique, yet there are some themes that seem to resonate, and seem to connect. Explore Featured Story Collections:

<https://www.mnvtiam.org/story/story-collections/>

The Story Wall- Explore by Map

<https://www.mnvtiam.org/map/>



Hmong in America Story Collection

Minnesota is home to more than 66,000 Hmong people, making it the largest Hmong population in the world. What led to this "Hmong Migration"? Why did the Hmong leave their native Laos and settle in Minnesota? And what exactly does it mean to be Hmong in America? These stories give a bit of insight.

<https://www.mnvtiam.org/story/hmong-in-america/>

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[mnvtiam.org/resources/](https://www.mnvtiam.org/resources/)



Air America: I Carried Many Dead and Wounded

A retired Air America pilot, John Greenway reflects on his time in Vietnam and the surrounding area with memories of both the good times and the tragedies.

<https://www.mnvietnam.org/story/i-carried-so-many-dead-and-wounded/>

Viet Nguyen & Kao Kalia Yang conversation at St. Kate's

This public event with Viet Thanh Nguyen, Pulitzer Prize-winning author of "The Sympathizer," explored how we remember war and its many dimensions.

<https://www.mnvietnam.org/story/an-evening-with-viet-thanh-nguyen/>

- Book List: <https://www.mnvietnam.org/content/uploads/2018/09/17-09-15-Nguyen-event-Resources-handout.pdf>

Why We Fight- From My Parents' Perspective

Kou Xiong regrets not asking his dad about his experience before he passed away. Luckily, it's not too late to ask his mom.

<https://www.mnvietnam.org/story/why-we-fight-from-my-parents-perspective/>

Hmong Culture in Walnut Grove

Learn how the Hmong community in Walnut Grove, MN is preserving their rich cultural heritage while adapting to the American way of life. Traditional music, language, and cooking are featured.

<https://www.mnvietnam.org/story/hmong-culture-in-walnut-grove/>

Kao Kalia Yang's Hmong Memoirs

Author Kao Kalia Yang reads from and talks about writing her award-winning book, The Latecomer: A Hmong Family Memoir.

<https://www.mnvietnam.org/story/kao-kalia-yangs-hmong-memoirs/>

Extraordinary Hmong

Poet and spoken word artist Ka Vang was born at the secret CIA military base in Laos, Long Cheng, at the end of the Vietnam War. She immigrated to the Frogtown neighborhood in St. Paul, MN in 1980 when she was just five years old. Here, Vang performs her spoken word piece Extraordinary Hmong and talks about the importance of keeping Hmong traditions alive.

<https://www.mnvietnam.org/story/extraordinary-hmong/>

History Day Video: The Secret War in Laos Uncovered

This documentary was created by Brian Berg of Salk Middle School for National History Day 2018.

<https://www.mnvietnam.org/story/the-secret-war-in-laos-uncovered/>

Cy Thao

Former Minnesota legislator and Hmong community leader Cy Thao captures the Hmong experience in his paintings.

<https://www.mnvietnam.org/story/minnesota-legislator-and-painter-cy-thao/>

A Hmong Soldier Remembers

Doua Yang was a Hmong soldier who fought in the CIA's secret war in Laos during the Viet Nam war. He tells of his experiences during the war, his escape from the communists after the war and his



eventual immigration to the U.S.

<https://www.mnvietnam.org/story/a-hmong-soldier-remembers-doua-yang/>

Why We Fight- From My Parents' Perspective

Kou Xiong regrets not asking his dad about his experience before he passed away. Luckily, it's not too late to ask his mom.

<https://www.mnvietnam.org/story/why-we-fight-from-my-parents-perspective/>

My Father's Qeej

I can still remember my dad carefully wrapping his qeej with black cloth and carrying it with him, all the way to the United States. At this time, I even wondered why did he even bother bringing this instrument?

<https://www.mnvietnam.org/story/my-fathers-qeej/>

Knowing is Half the Battle

My parents were refugees as a result of the Secret War. My dad was recruited as part of the CIA secret army, when he was a mere teen. I've never felt comfortable enough to ask my dad about his specific experience fighting against the Vietcong or the NVA, but I have heard bits of stories of confronting North Vietnamese soldiers as a teen.

<https://www.mnvietnam.org/story/knowning-is-half-the-battle/>

The Story of My Grandmother

There is nothing that we could do, as the generation that benefited from the courage of our parents and grandparents, to repay them for what they were willing to go through to get to freedom and provide a better life for us. All that we could do is embrace and appreciate life to its fullest potential.

<https://www.mnvietnam.org/story/the-story-of-my-grandmother/>

Liang Xiong

Liang discusses how her family used a stereo to communicate with family members in Thailand after they moved from the Chiang Kham Refugee Camp to the United States.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u23CKCUdnnU>

The Journey

Shue-Qa's father, along with other Hmong men, fought with the Americans during the Vietnam War, and the family was forced to flee Laos after the fall of Saigon in 1975. Shue-Qa's father gave her mother a silver bar when they briefly separated, an item that remains important to her family. The family later reunited and resettled in the United States.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dGfd_MZlCT0

Song Vue

We ran to the jungles and were starving. All we ate were vegetation and roots. Wherever we went, there was no shelter. We hid and took shelter where we could. If we reached a cave, we would hide in the cave. It was a terrible thing, having to escape the same way our elders did. We didn't understand before and then we received the same fate. It's very sad.

We ran until we were hungry.

<https://www.mnvietnam.org/story/song-vue/>



Bee Vue

At that time I was orphaned and devastated. I missed my parents. So, when I saw others playing the flute, I wanted to learn how to play it to express my sorrow.

<https://www.mnvietnam.org/story/bee-vue/>

Manichan Xiong

Manichan and her family helped American soldiers during the Secret War in Laos, and she lost her grandfather after helping an American pilot.

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

Yeng Xiong

Yeng Xiong talks about the baby carrier she used while she, her husband, and three young children escaped across the Mekong River after the communist takeover of Laos. One of her children died in the turbulent waters.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ll4ylxTzR2s>

Lue Lee

Lue talks about his experiences as soldier fight communist forces in Laos during the Secret War.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mpDzMzpOT04>

Project Paj Ntaub

Project Paj Ntaub is a monthly 3-hour workshop that demonstrates traditional paj ntaub stitches: cross-stitch and applique- from Suzanne Thao.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ao2f4KkXaf8>

Storytelling Resources

Story Wall Story-sharing Guide

Share your story

<https://www.mnvietnam.org/content/uploads/2017/03/Vietnam-Storyguide-PDF-3-29-17.pdf>

Documentary Production Tips for Students (video)

In support of History Day students making a documentary, TPT has produced this 8-minute video filled with tips from fellow filmmakers, including *America's Secret War* director Lisa Blackstone and THE VIETNAM WAR filmmaker Lynn Novick.

<https://www.mnvietnam.org/historyday/>

Library of Congress Veterans History Project Field Kit

A great collection of resources including release forms, photo logs, and interview toolkit

<https://www.loc.gov/vets/kitmenu.html>



America's Secret War Bibliography

"Inside CIA's Private World: Declassified Articles from the Agency's Internal Journal, 1955-1992"

Holt Bradford Westerfield

"The most interesting articles from the CIA's ""Studies in Intelligence"" journal. Hugh Tovar wrote one in its section about the (not so) Secret War."

<http://www.worldcat.org/title/inside-cias-private-world-declassified-articles-from-the-agencys-internal-journal-1955-1992/oclc/260182824>

A People's History of the Hmong

Paul Hillmer

Stories from members of the Hmong community

<https://shop.mnhs.org/products/a-peoples-history-of-the-hmong?variant=3232290753>

Tragic Mountains: The Hmong, The Americans, and the Secret Wars for Laos, 1942 - 1992

Jane Hamilton-Merritt

Comprehensive examination of the Hmong experience from 1942 to 1992 by a journalist during the Vietnam War.

<https://www.amazon.com/Tragic-Mountains-Americans-Secret-1942-1992/dp/0253207568>

A Great Place To Have a War: America in Laos and the Birth of a Military CIA

Joshua Kurlantzick

How the Secret War in Laos lead to the militarization of the CIA

<https://www.amazon.com/Great-Place-Have-War-Military-ebook/dp/B01CO34O3Y>

Hmong At The Turning Point

Yang Dao, PhD, edited by Jeanne L. Blake

Dr. Yang Dao's PhD thesis translated from the original French to English about the Hmong. With Addenda from 1974 and 1992.

<https://www.amazon.com/Hmong-Turning-Point-Yang-Dao/dp/0963214993>

Hmong In Minnesota

Chia Youyee Vang, forward by Bill Holm

Accompanies We Are Hmong exhibit at Minnesota Historical Society

<http://www.mnhs.org/mnhspress/books/hmong-minnesota>

The Latehomecomer

Kao Kalia Yang A Hmong family memoir.

Kao Kalia's memoir of her family's life in Laos, Thailand, and the US

<http://coffehousepress.org/shop/the-latehomecomer/>



The Song Poet

Kao Kalia Yang

A portrait of Kao Kalia Yang's father, Bee Yang

<http://www.kaokaliyang.com/the-song-poet/>

The American Agent: My Life in the CIA

Richard Holm

A autobiography of Richard Holm that include his first years in the CIA in Laos.

<https://www.amazon.com/American-Agent-My-Life-CIA/dp/1903608147> And

<http://www.worldcat.org/title/american-agent-my-life-in-the-cia/oclc/249231667?loc=>

At War in the Shadow of Vietnam: US Military Aid to the Royal Lao Government, 1955 - 1975

Timothy N. Castle

Called "the first book to recount the full story in Laos". Timothy Castle is former CIA with direct experience in Laos during the Secret War

<http://www.worldcat.org/title/at-war-in-the-shadow-of-vietnam-us-military-aid-to-the-royal-lao-government-1955-1975/oclc/27146454>

One Day Too Long: Top Secret Site 85 and the Bombing of North Vietnam

Timothy N. Castle

Chronicles the battle at Lima Site 85 or Pho Pha Ti

<http://www.worldcat.org/title/one-day-too-long-top-secret-site-85-and-the-bombing-of-north-vietnam/oclc/315649152>

JFK Press Conference Audio

JFK, US Audio recording of JFK speaking about Laos

<https://www.jfklibrary.org/Asset-Viewer/Archives/JFKWHA-020.aspx>

I Little Slave: A Prison Memoir from Communist Laos

Boumsang Khamkeo

Memoir of Lao government employee/intellectual who survived "seminar" camp aka re-education camp

<https://www.amazon.com/Little-Slave-Prison-Memoir-Communist/dp/1597660078>

CIA secret documents archive

<https://www.cia.gov>

"Our Secret Army" CBS 60 Minutes

The Mike Wallace Sixty Minutes video about the Secret War, Hmong refugees and Ban Vinai.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iFRgOjG-gvU>

Becoming an American Pt I

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6vmFQL0JodY>



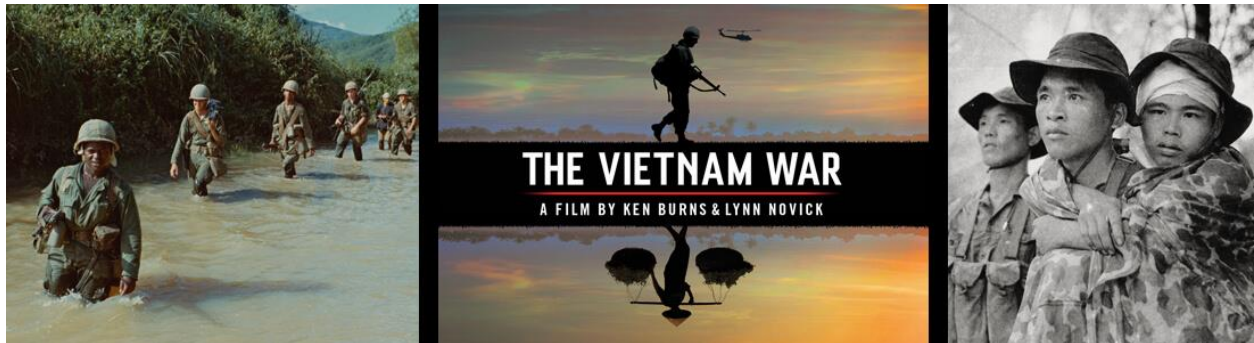
Teaching the War in Vietnam and Southeast Asia



Essential Shorts

To provide a historical context for the thousands personal accounts within the Minnesota Remembers Vietnam initiative, TPT produced a series of three animated short videos focused on the motivations and milestones that defined the era. Ideal for viewing on mobile devices, these short videos can open a channel to greater intergenerational understanding. Select school teachers played a role in developing these shorts.

<https://www.mnvietnam.org/essentials/>



Ken Burns Classroom: The Vietnam War Discussion Guide for Facilitators

Many educators find the Vietnam War to be a challenging topic to discuss in a classroom setting, as it brings up emotionally complex questions. THE VIETNAM WAR filmmaker Ken Burns says, “We think it is crucial for teachers to pose those very difficult and thought-provoking questions, and we believe this webinar helps further that effort.”

Middle and high school educators are invited to log in to access a video and accompanying discussion guide, designed to empower educators to use The Vietnam War— a documentary series by Ken Burns and Lynn Novick- as the basis for facilitating meaningful dialog in a group setting.

<https://kenburnsclassroom.org/the-vietnam-war-discussion-guide-for-facilitators/>

This educational video is a co-production of WETA, TPT and the Minnesota Humanities Center.

America’s Secret War Educator Toolkit, a partnership of TPT and the Minnesota Humanities Center.

mnvietnam.org/resources/

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Absent Narratives

The Absent Narratives Resource Collection is a searchable database of ready-to-use videos, teacher guides, and readings that will support your efforts to include Absent Narratives in your classroom or workplace. Items included in the collection have been created or developed by the Humanities Center and its partners.

<http://www.humanitieslearning.org/resource/>