



MINNESOTA REMEMBERS
VIETNAM

AMERICA'S SECRET WAR
EDUCATOR TOOLKIT

Rationale for Secondary English Language Arts Minnesota Remembers Vietnam: America's Secret War

Overview

Unit Rationale

An inclusive curriculum that recognizes plurality over a singular narrative brings to light untold stories that make Minnesota's history and identity more complete. Such curriculum can impel social justice by giving voice to silenced groups, paying homage to the sacrifices and contributions of different groups to Minnesota's diversity and prosperity, and encouraging equity and engagement in the community and classroom.

According to the Council on Asian Pacific Minnesotans 2010 Census and 2008-2010 American Community Survey Report (2012), "The Hmong population is the largest Asian population in Minnesota at 66,181 or 27% of all Asian Pacific Minnesotans" (Executive Summary). The Hmong have settled in Minnesota for the last forty years, where they comprise the second largest Asian group in Hennepin County and first largest Asian group in Ramsey County (CAPM, 2012, p. 9), making Minneapolis and Saint Paul one of the largest urban Hmong population in the United States. At the same time, little is known about the Hmong and their involvement in the United States' Secret War. The effect of this lack of knowledge is widespread with real and long-lasting consequences.

The Hmong community's second and growing third generations all across Minnesota are cultural straddlers who see their growing presence in schools but not their history and culture in their educational system, and they are wondering why. Unlike their first and 1.5 generation predecessors, these generations lack the historical context and background of the Vietnam War and Secret War, which are integral to developing their sense of identity. A people without a past faces an uncertain future. The Hmong are the youngest and fastest growing population in Minnesota, and as the student population continue to change into majority minority, education's traditional one size no longer fits all and it needs to reflect this change to remain relevant. This entails offering a curriculum that includes the Hmong's history and culture, which is important for all students.



Minnesota reflects this nation's legacy of immigration which includes benefitting from its tapestry of cultures, one of which is the Hmong. The Secret War can no longer remain a secret; it should be taught in schools, not merely as a specialized elective but as an essential component of the core curriculum that fulfills graduation standards.

This unit is an interdisciplinary approach to exploring the Hmong's involvement in the US Secret War, beyond understanding how and why the Hmong came to Minnesota; it is an effort to incorporate such history into mainstream pedagogy in order to create a more complete classroom curriculum.

ELA Unit Summary and Suggestions for Approaching the Lessons

The five ELA lessons explore multiple perspectives around the TPT documentary *Minnesota Remembers Vietnam* and other resources, such as the documentary digital shorts and Story Wall. The focus of the unit is two-fold. First, the lessons encourage students to inquire, research, and reflect on what they learn from the various parties touched by the Secret War. The purpose of this is for students to learn about a previously absent narrative. The second focus is to have students apply their learning through various short writing assignments and creative projects, where students' learning progress from text-to-text, text-to-self, and text-to-world. The purpose of this is to encourage students to interact with their learning in order to make such learning real thus relevant. Each lesson will contain essential questions that explore the unit's overarching question.

ELA Overarching Question

How can we incorporate the Hmong's involvement in the United States Secret War into the American experience?

ELA Lesson Objectives: Students will

1. Learn about the United States' Secret War and the Hmong's involvement in the war.
2. Synthesize and evaluate the impact of the Secret War through multiple perspectives.
3. Explore and develop an appreciation for the Hmong's story as part of the American experience.

Recommended Classroom Time:

While this unit can be done in two to three weeks for a 44-50 class period, six-period schedule, each lesson can be taught independently. In this way, teachers may choose to teach the entire unit or a single lesson within another unit. The unit may take longer in an intermediate class, per the teacher's discretion. The first lesson may take up to three days, and lessons two through five may take 2-3 days per lesson, depending on student interaction and if work time is performed during class.



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This unit rationale was prepared by Chong Thao, a high school English Language Arts teacher for Saint Paul Public Schools, in partnership with TPT and the Minnesota Humanities Center.

To access this guide and additional resources to support teaching about America's Secret War, visit mnvietnam.org/resources/

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