

Open Up the Textbook (OUT)

Events Leading to the Vietnam War

Enlarge

Complicate

Contest

Vivify

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Grade Level: 10th Grade World History

In this OUT analysis, 10th grade students will study the events leading to the Vietnam War in order to better understand the perspective of the Vietnamese prior to the conflict with America. This OUT analysis provides students with documents that are meant to deliberately enlarge, complicate and contest the textbook.

This strategy is implemented most effectively when students collaborate to analyze the texts in small, heterogeneous groups. The texts that accompany the textbook are complex and often include difficult vocabulary and syntax. (For a few words that are likely unknown to students and unidentifiable based upon context clues, helpful synonyms are provided in the footnotes.) Students should first annotate each text and then collaborate to answer the text dependent and specific questions that follow. Questions will highlight sourcing and perspective of the author, close reading of key details from the document that enlarge, complicate, contest, or vivify the textbook, as well as questions that help students corroborate (or not) the accuracy of individual documents. The writing task that follows is an independent activity wherein students will employ evidence from multiple sources to justify their analysis, synthesis, and evaluation.

Source A: The Textbook – *World History- Patterns of Interaction* McDougal Littell, (2007) p. 978.

The Road to War- In the early 1900's, France controlled most of resource rich Southeast Asia. (French Indochina included what are now Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia.) But nationalist independence movements had begun to develop. A young Vietnamese nationalist, Ho Chi Minh, turned to the Communists for help in his struggle. During the 1930's, Ho's Indochinese Communist Party led revolts and strikes against the French...

The Fighting Begins- Vietnamese nationalists and Communists joined to fight the French armies. The French held most major cities, but the Vietminh¹ had widespread support in the countryside. The Vietminh used hit and run tactics to confine the French to the cities. In France the people began to doubt that their colony was worth the lives and money the struggle cost. In 1954, the French suffered a major military defeat at Dien Bien Phu. They surrendered to Ho.

The United States had supported France in Vietnam. With the defeat of the French, the United States saw a rising threat to the rest of Asia. President Eisenhower described this threat in terms of the Domino Theory. The Southeast Asian nations were like a row of dominos, he said. The fall of one to Communism would lead to the fall of its neighbors. This theory became a major justification for U.S. foreign policy during the Cold War era.

Vietnam: A Divided Country- After France's defeat, an international peace conference met in Geneva to discuss the future of Indochina. Based on these talks, Vietnam was divided at 17 degrees north latitude. North of that line, Ho Chi Minh's Communist forces governed. To the south, the United States and France set up an anti- Communist government under the leadership of Ngo Dinh Diem.

¹ Communist fighters whose cause was Vietnamese independence

Source A: Questions for Consideration

1. What reasons are given for Ho Chi Minh's adoption of communism?
2. Who were the Viet Minh? Explain their tactics against the French colonial government.
3. Describe the Domino Theory? In what ways did this thinking influence President Eisenhower?
4. Did the peace conference in Geneva make the possibility of war more or less likely? Explain your thinking.

Source B: The Vietnamese Declaration of Independence (August 1945)

"All men are created equal; they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights; among these are Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness." This immortal statement was made in the Declaration of Independence of the United States of America in 1776. In a broader sense, this means: All the peoples on the earth are equal from birth, all the peoples have a right to live, to be happy and free. The Declaration of The French Revolution made in 1791 on the Rights of Man and the Citizen also states: "All men are born free and with equal rights, and must always remain free and have equal rights." Those are undeniable truths. Nevertheless, for more than eighty years, the French imperialists, abusing the standard of Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity, have violated our Fatherland and oppressed our fellow citizens. They have acted contrary to the ideals of humanity and justice. In the field of politics, they have deprived our people of every democratic liberty. They have enforced inhuman laws; they have set up three distinct political regimes² in the North, the Center, and the South of Viet-Nam in order to wreck our national unity and prevent our people from being united. They have built more prisons than schools. They have mercilessly slain our patriots; they have drowned our uprisings in rivers of blood... For these reasons, we, members of the Provisional Government of the Democratic Republic of Viet-Nam, solemnly declare to the world that Viet-Nam has the right to be a free and independent country and in fact it is so already. The entire Vietnamese people are determined to mobilize all their physical and mental strength, to sacrifice their lives and property in order to safeguard their independence and liberty.

Source B Questions for Consideration

1. When was this document created?
2. Which two countries' founding documents does the Vietnamese Declaration of Independence reference?
3. List the complaints being made against the French Government by the Vietnamese Provisional Government. Of this list, which expression is figurative? How do you know?
4. How does this source enlarge the section of the textbook on Vietnam?

² An authoritarian system of government

Source C: Ho Chi Minh Letter to U.S. President Truman (Nov. 8th, 1945)

I wish to give following information concerning [the] situation of Viet-Nam: (1) When [the] Japanese came to Indo-China from September 1940 to September 1941 France, by protocol... gave up sovereignty³ and took position opposed to [the] Allies. On [the] Japanese drive March 9, 1945 [the] French either fled or surrendered to [the] Japanese contrary to pledges contained in protective treaties [from] March 1874 and June 1884, thus breaking all legal and administrative ties with people of Indo-China. [The] Democratic Republic of Viet-Nam was set up August 19, 1945 after independence of [the] entire country was wrested⁴ from Japanese. After Japanese surrender, while [the] Viet-Nam Provisional Government in capacity of an independent Government was carrying out a building-up program in conformity with Atlantic and San Francisco Charters, [the] French, ignoring deliberately all peace treaties concluded by [the] United Nations at end of World War II, attacked us treacherously in Saigon, September 23, and are planning a war of aggression against Viet-Nam. (2) People of Viet-Nam are willing to cooperate with [the] United Nations in erection of lasting world peace and, having suffered so severely under direct domination of French and much more from bargain made by French with Japan in 1941, are determined never to permit [the] French to return to Indo China... (3) If, therefore, disorder, bloodshed or general conflagration due to causes mentioned above in paragraph (2) break out in Far Eastern Asia [the] entire responsibility must be imputed⁵ to [the] French.

Source C Questions for Consideration

1. What do you learn about this text from the “Source C” information? How long after Vietnam declares their independence (Source B) was this letter written?
2. Throughout the letter, Minh faults France for many things. Reread the text and underline each of these accusations.
3. What claims does Minh make about the people of Viet-Nam and their new government?
4. How does this source enlarge the textbook version of events in Vietnam?

³ rule

⁴ Snatched away

⁵ Attributed to

Source D: The Final Declaration of The Geneva Conference: On Restoring Peace in Indochina, July 21, 1954

Final declaration, dated July 21, 1954, of the Geneva Conference on the problem of restoring peace in Indochina, in which the representatives of Cambodia, the Democratic Republic of Viet-Nam, France, Laos, the People's Republic of China, the State of Viet-Nam, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, the United Kingdom and the United States of America took part.

2. The Conference expresses satisfaction at the ending of hostilities in Cambodia, Laos, and Viet-Nam. The Conference expresses its conviction that the execution of the provisions set out in the present declaration and in the agreements on the cessation of hostilities will permit Cambodia, Laos, and Viet-Nam henceforth to play their part, in full independence and sovereignty, in the peaceful community of nations.

4. The Conference takes note of the clauses in the agreement on the cessation of hostilities in Viet-Nam prohibiting the introduction into Viet Nam of foreign troops and military personnel as well as of all kinds of arms and munitions...

6. The Conference recognizes that the essential purpose of the agreement relating to Viet-Nam is to settle military questions with a view to ending hostilities and that the military demarcation line (17th parallel) should not in any way be interpreted as constituting a political or territorial boundary...

10. The Conference takes note of the declaration of the French Government to the effect that it is ready to withdraw its troops from the territory of Cambodia, Laos, and Viet-Nam, at the request of the governments concerned and within a period which shall be fixed by agreement between the parties except in the cases where, by agreement between the two parties, a certain number of French troops shall remain at specified points and for a specified time.

Questions:

1. What kind of document is this? What is its stated goal?
2. Which nations were involved in the 1954 Geneva Conference?
3. Define the term "cessation of hostilities." What phrases in the text helped you form your definition?
4. Summarize point 6 in your own words.
5. In point 10, how would you describe the action to be taken by the French military: decisive, ambiguous or helpful? Explain your answer.
6. How does this document complicate the textbook version of events in Vietnam?

Source E: Map of Vietnam (1960)



Source E Questions for Consideration

1. What does this map show?
2. Which part of Source D does this map highlight? How do the sources work together?
3. What on this map may be a reason why Ho Chi Minh wanted to keep Vietnam unified?
4. How does this source enlarge your understanding of the events in Vietnam?

Source F: Memorandum from the Board of National Estimates to Director of Central Intelligence John McCone, 9 June 1964

We do not believe that the loss of South Vietnam and Laos would be followed by the rapid, successive communization of the other states of the Far East. . . . With the possible exception of Cambodia, it is likely that no nation in the area would quickly succumb to Communism as a result of the fall of Laos and South Vietnam. Furthermore, a continuation of the spread of Communism in the area would not be inexorable⁶, and any spread which did occur would take time--time in which the total situation might change in any of a number of ways unfavorable to the Communist cause . . . [Moreover] the extent to which individual countries would move away from the US towards the Communists would be significantly affected by the substance and manner of US policy in the area following the loss of Laos and South Vietnam.

Source F Questions for Consideration

1. A memorandum is a written message used in business or diplomacy. When was it written and who wrote it and to whom was it written?
2. What claim is made about communism in South East Asia? Cite at least two examples of evidence that supports this claim.
3. How would "time" affect communism according to this memo?
4. How does this document contest the textbook's account of events in Vietnam?

⁶ Impossible to stop

Source G: “Did the U.S. ‘Lose’ Ho Chi Minh to Communism?” NYT- August 28, 2012

Mr. Logevall⁷, in a recent interview with Jeff Glor of CBS, said that Ho “saw communism as the best path of development for his country, but it was always his country.” Independence from Japanese invaders and French colonialists was his original intent, highest priority and enduring goal.

“But gradually he and his fellow North Vietnamese were viewed as agents of international communism, not admirable rebels against colonialism.” Mr. Logevall bemoans the fact that Ho’s admiration for American political ideals, from his time studying there and French culture did not lead to a “life-sparing compromise.”

Ho was clearly admiring of the Americans in 1945, and he actively sought their help. As a sweetener, he had allowed some of the men under General Giap to rescue downed American pilots.

Source G Questions for Consideration

1. What kind of source is this? If the Vietnam War ended on April 30, 1975, about how much time has passed between then and the day this article was published?
2. According to the Logevall, what was Ho’s number one priority?
3. Describe the different perceptions of Ho Chi Minh’s communist beliefs. How were they understood in Vietnam and how were they understood overseas?
4. How did Ho view his two enemies? How did it affect his policies?
5. How does this source contest the textbook’s version of event in Vietnam?

⁷ Fredrick Logevall is a professor of foreign policy specializing in the Vietnam Wars at Cornell University.

Writing Task

This is an argumentative and/or informational writing task based on NVACS standards
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.9-10.2.

Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas, concepts, and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.9-10.1

Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.

Students will demonstrate their understanding of the texts as well as the ways in which the textbook was enlarged, contested, and complicate.

Chose **ONE** of the following to answer, using your documents as evidence.

Argumentative Prompt: Make a claim that the textbook is missing three essential ideas concerning the events leading to the Vietnam War. Use at least three of the five sources (B-G) and cite evidence and explain (reasoning) why each new detail is important to a more comprehensive understanding of events leading to the Vietnam War. Reasoning can be in the same sentence as the evidence or come before or after the sentence that includes the evidence. After you use a piece of evidence, place the document letter in parentheses, for example (Source C). Choose 3 of the important vocabulary terms from the box below to include in your writing. Add at least two context clues for each term to demonstrate your understanding. Circle your context clues for each term. To fully justify your choices you will need to write at least one full page.

Informational Prompt: Rewrite the section “The Road to War” from the textbook to include a more comprehensive representation of events that led to the Vietnam War. Include evidence from each of the sources (B-G) to show a more wide-ranging understanding of events leading to the Vietnam War. Organize your ideas and transition words that guide the reader through the new textbook section seamlessly. After each piece of evidence used, place the document letter in parentheses, for example (Source C). Choose 3 of the important vocabulary terms from the box below to include in your writing. Add at least two context clues for each term to demonstrate your understanding. Circle your context clues for each term. Your paper should be at least one full page.