

# **VIETNAM WAR**




**BY COLLIN BARNES**

# OBJECTIVES

By the time you finish this SIM, you will be able to:

- Name the countries involved in the Vietnam War.
- Identify reasons for American involvement in the Vietnam War.
- List major battles fought in the Vietnam War.
- Understand some differences between the Vietnam War and other wars that the United States fought with regards to tactics.

# DIRECTIONS

Follow the instructions on the page, and inform the teacher when you are finished. Read the provided materials so that you feel comfortable with the information. When you feel comfortable, turn to the next section if there is a ,



and stop when you see the



And most of all... **HAVE FUN!**



# PRE-TEST

Before you get started with this SIM, you will take a pre-test. There are six questions pertaining to the Vietnam War. Answer these multiple choice questions to the best of your ability without looking through the rest of the SIM. Write your answers on a separate piece of paper.

- 1) Why did the United States get involved in the Vietnam War?
  - a- To stop Communism
  - b- To end slavery in South Vietnam
  - c- To help China conquer North Vietnam
  - d- North Vietnam had nuclear missiles
  
- 2) America fought against the South Vietnamese Army.
  - a- True
  - b- False
  
- 3) Who did *not* fight in the Vietnam War?
  - a- Viet-Cong
  - b- United States
  - c- North Vietnamese Army
  - d- French
  
- 4) What major event prompted the United States to leave Vietnam?
  - a- Battle of Saigon
  - b- Eastertide Offensive
  - c- Tet Offensive
  - d- Siege of Khe Sanh



- 5) What mode of transportation was used in the Vietnam War more than any war before?
- a- Tanks
  - b- Helicopters
  - c- Boats
  - d- Jeeps
- 6) Who was **not** a US president during the Vietnam War?
- a- Woodrow Wilson
  - b- Dwight D. Eisenhower
  - c- John F. Kennedy
  - d- Lyndon B. Johnson



(Review your answers, then turn the page)



# ANSWERS

Please mark the questions you got wrong on the paper that you wrote your answers on. Then set it aside and continue reading.

1) A

2) B

3) D

4) C

5) B

6) A



# BEGINNING OF THE WAR

Throughout this SIM, we are going to follow the story of one American soldier that fought in the Vietnam War named David Stafford. Try to put yourself in his shoes as we work through this together. Read the story and information, then fill out the comprehension check at the end.

**August, 1967.** It was just a few weeks past my 20th birthday and I had just completed my second year at the local community college when the "good news" arrived in my mailbox. I clearly remember holding the unopened manila envelope in my hand, knowing full well what was inside. It's difficult to fully explain my feelings at that fateful moment, but I guess numb would suffice. Dozens of thoughts started racing through my mind. I would have to quit my job and put school on hold. How will I tell my girlfriend and parents? As silly as it seemed, I even wondered what would happen to my car (I still had a few payments left). It was a very strange feeling to suddenly realize that I was now a conscript and my life would not be my own for the next couple of years or so.

Many Americans were angry about having to go to Vietnam because they were forced to go against their will, just like David was. They were drafted, and if they did not show up for duty, they could be thrown in jail.

The Vietnam War began to build slowly, and really escalated when Dwight D. Eisenhower was the President of the United States. After John F. Kennedy (the president after Eisenhower) was assassinated during his term, the new president (Lyndon B. Johnson) got a declaration of War from Congress after several American destroyers were fired upon by North Vietnamese ships. This led to outright war, and American troops were almost immediately deployed.



American soldiers fought against the North Vietnamese Army (NVA), and the Viet-Cong. They tried to protect South Vietnam from falling into the hands of the Communists that had taken over North Vietnam.

# COMPREHENSION CHECK

## #1

- 1) What would happen to somebody that tried to evade the draft?
  - a- They would be fined
  - b- Their homes would be taken away
  - c- They would go to jail
  - d- Nobody tried to evade the draft
  
- 2) Which president actually got a declaration of war from Congress?
  - a- Lyndon B. Johnson
  - b- Dwight D. Eisenhower
  - c- John F. Kennedy
  - d- Woodrow Wilson
  
- 3) Who took over North Vietnam?
  - a- The French
  - b- The Americans
  - c- The Viet-Cong
  - d- The Communists

(Review your answers and continue to the next page)



# COMPREHENSION CHECK

## #1 → ANSWERS

- 1) C → If Americans tried to avoid the draft, they would be taken to jail. Some people tried to flee to other countries like Canada to get out of serving in Vietnam, while others simply accepted the consequences of their actions.
- 2) A → While some of the other presidents were involved in the Vietnam War, Lyndon B. Johnson was the one who actually got permission from Congress to send more troops to Vietnam to fight. He is quoted as saying, “We fight because we must fight if we are to live in a world where every country can shape its own destiny, and only in such a world will our own freedom be finally secure.”
- 3) D → The Communists, typically associated with the Soviet Union during this time, took control of North Vietnam and wanted to take South Vietnam as well. Our presidents feared this would cause a “domino effect,” and that if South Vietnam fell to the Communists, many other countries in Asia would fall to them as well.





# IMPORTANT BATTLES & TURNING POINTS

"A Day at Loc Giang," by David Stafford:

"Incoming!", someone screams. In an instant I'm awake. My heart starts racing as I grope for my helmet, M-16 and flak-vest in the darkness. I hear that unmistakable whistling noise as another rocket passes overhead. A second or two later I hear the explosion. That all-too-familiar feeling of fear starts to grip me again, but I do my best to fight it off. Everyone in our tent dives for the adjacent bunker....

**Operation Chopper—December 1961** → This was the first time helicopters were used as a main form of troop transportation in Vietnam, and they became a key part to America's strategy; more-so than in any previous war. During this operation, approximately 1,000 South Vietnamese paratroopers were dropped on a Viet-Cong headquarter site. Since the Viet-Cong were unaware of the capabilities of this new technology, they were soundly defeated. However, they learned their lesson and did not underestimate the power of the helicopter again.

**Operation Rolling Thunder—1965-1968** → This was a continuous bombing raid by the United States Air Force against key locations in North Vietnam. It did not have any clear objective, but rather it focused on simply weakening the North Vietnamese and building the moral of the American and South Vietnamese soldiers. It ended up not working out as well as the Americans had hoped, and did not prevent the North Vietnamese Army or Viet-Cong fighters from continuing their attacks on South Vietnam.

**Turning Point:**

**The Tet Offensive—January 30-31, 1968** → The Tet Offensive is



considered by many to be the final straw in American involvement in Vietnam. On the Tet holiday, North Vietnamese forces executed a plan that had been months in the making. Simultaneously, the Vietcong attacked over 100 villages and cities in an effort to excavate the American forces from the area. The Vietcong lost approximately 37,000 fighters, while the United States had 2,500 casualties. However, although the American losses were far less, it was considered a major blow to the United States not necessarily militaristically, but with public support. American forces were pulled out soon afterward.

# COMPREHENSION CHECK

## #2

- 1) What was a new troop transportation method that was implemented during the Vietnam War more than in any other war?
  - a- Helicopter
  - b- Tanks
  - c- Jeeps
  - d- Boats
  
- 2) What group was used during Operation Rolling Thunder?
  - a- Ground Infantry
  - b- Tank Units
  - c- Artillery Units
  - d- Bombers
  
- 3) What was a major turning point in the Vietnam War?
  - a- Operation Rolling Thunder
  - b- Tet Offensive
  - c- Operation Chopper
  - d- Loc Giang

(Review your answers, then continue to the next page.)



# COMPREHENSION CHECK

## #2 → ANSWERS

1) A → Helicopters became an essential part in troop activities because soldiers could quickly move from their bases to parts of the Vietnamese jungle that would take days or weeks to travel by foot. The “Huey” could fly from their base to the battlefield, drop off soldiers, pick up the wounded, fly back to base, and repeat the process. If the soldiers were being overwhelmed, they could get on the helicopters and be out of the war-zone in minutes.

2) D → Operation Rolling Thunder was a continuous bombing raid on key North Vietnamese outposts and factories. Again, just like with the helicopters, these planes could fly in across enemy lines, attack their target, then fly back to the airfield quickly. These quick raids would have taken much longer if bombers were not available.

3) B → The Tet Offensive, due to the fact that so many American lives were lost in two days, tipped the American outlook on the war to the point where the president was under a vast amount of pressure to bring the troops home. Although the Vietcong lost infinitely more troops than the United States did, it was enough to break the moral of the soldiers and general public.



# **SOCIETY & AMERICAN PROTESTS**

At the beginning of the Vietnam War, there was a lot of government support by the American public. After seeing what was happening in Vietnam, and after the threat of the Communist Soviet Union, many Americans believed that what they were doing in Vietnam was justified. However, as time went on, support dwindled, then drastically plummeted. By the end of the war, not only were many Americans not in favor of the war, but they openly opposed it in the streets and would shun or spit on soldiers if they passed by.

One of the reasons public support dropped was because the Vietnam War was, for the first time ever, brought into the American living room through the television and radio. Reporters in Vietnam would film the carnage of war, give daily statistics of American deaths, then send it directly to America so that people that do not necessarily understand war could see it for the first time. This shocked many people and, after seeing so much death every day, they began to disagree with the government's decision to send troops to Vietnam.

Once support started to decline, many young people began to revolt against the government in an attempt to promote peace and end the war in Vietnam. These protests were portrayed through songs, clothing, and outright riots (which, ironically, could be violent in nature). As these revolts escalated, the already dwindling government support began to fall even more.



# COMPREHENSION CHECK

## #3

- 1) In the early years of the Vietnam War, most of the American public was opposed to the fighting.
  - a- True
  - b- False
  
- 2) What was the major contributor to falling support by the public?
  - a- Raise in taxes
  - b- Lack of working men in the States
  - c- The Media
  - d- Corruption in the government
  
- 3) How did people protest the war in Vietnam?
  - a- Songs
  - b- Riots
  - c- Clothing
  - d- All of the above
  
- 4) Soldiers were always respected when they came back from Vietnam.
  - a- True
  - b- False

(Review your answers, then continue to the next page)



# COMPREHENSION CHECK

## #3 → ANSWERS

1) B → At the beginning of the Vietnam War, many Americans were in favor of sending troops to Vietnam because it would help slow or stop the flow of Communism coming from the Soviet Union.

2) C → Many people had never seen war before, so they were in favor of it without really knowing what it entailed. However, once the media began sending footage to peoples' television sets, they saw first-hand what war meant and their support began to decline.

3) D → Peace symbols and anti-war slogans were printed on clothing, riots broke out to show the public's opposition, and songs were written to let the government know that they wanted the troops out of Vietnam, and that it was not our war to fight.

4) B → A lot of times, if an American saw a soldier that had been in Vietnam, they would spit at them or call them names like “Baby Killers.” They were not respected for putting their lives on the line for their country, because many Americans believed that we were never supposed to be there in the first place.



# END OF THE WAR

"Going Home" By David Stafford:

We loaded our gear into the  $\frac{3}{4}$  ton truck and then made the 25 click (kilometer) drive back to the base camp for the last time. It was a bit weird. I wouldn't go so far as to say that I had been casual in the past when we traveled the roads, but today I felt much more nervous than usual. Maybe more alert would be a better description. The thought of getting whacked on my last day in the field made me quite tense. I had my steel pot (helmet) cinched down tight, my flak-jacket zipped up and my M-16 rifle resting across my lap. It seemed like an eternity before we arrived at the base camp.... All of a sudden, the war for us was over. I looked up the aisle at my buddy and he was looking at me with the biggest grin I think I've ever seen. I gave him a thumbs up and he returned the gesture. We made it! Sometimes, though, a certain smell or noise would instantly take me back for a moment. Initially, a loud noise such as a car backfiring would make me jump.

After the Tet Offensive and American troops were sent back home, many soldiers had a very difficult time readjusting to civilian life. After being in the jungle for so long, many soldiers picked up habits that civilians simply could not understand. They would often want to be alone with their thoughts, and avoided loud and flashy places because it would bring them back to the times when they were fighting in the jungle, trying to avoid being hit by bullets or bombs. Because of these habits, many people that were not involved in the military believed these soldiers to be crazy and (if they did not already do it) avoided them if at all possible.

Once the war was over and the casualty count came back, it was determined that one out of every ten Americans serving in Vietnam was a casualty. Of the soldiers that survived, many of them endured sustaining injuries that would affect them for the rest of their lives. It was discovered that there were approximately 300% *more* amputations



or crippling wounds in the Vietnam War than there were in World War II. That means that today, there are about 75,000 Vietnam veterans who are considered severely disabled.

Out of the 2.59 million Americans that served in the Vietnam War, about 58,148 were killed in combat, and roughly 304,000 were wounded. This was considered unacceptable to many people in the American general public, even though the death counts are similar to previous wars fought by the United States.

# COMPREHENSION CHECK

## #4

- 1) Why were many soldiers avoided after the Vietnam War?
  - a- People thought they were crazy
  - b- Soldiers would tell people not to come near them
  - c- People thought they were armed
  - d- Soldiers were not avoided
  
- 2) How many more amputees and cripples came out of the Vietnam War compared to World War II?
  - a- 100%
  - b- 200%
  - c- 300%
  - d- 400%
  
- 3) After the war, many veterans
  - a- Went to parties all the time
  - b- Reenlisted in the military
  - c- Moved to Canada
  - d- Avoided crowds

(Review your answers, then continue to the next page)





# COMPREHENSION CHECK

## #4 → ANSWERS

- 1) A → Due to some of the soldiers' nervous habits that they developed during the war (ie- twitching, yelling, cold sweats), people thought that they were crazy and wanted to avoid going near them.
- 2) C → Since most of the fighting was in the jungle far away from American aid, resources were not readily available for soldiers that were suffering from war wounds. Medical supplies was difficult to ship in to the base camps, and even more difficult to send out to the front lines where people needed them the most. Since this was the case, many limbs could not be saved, and there were a lot more amputations in the Vietnam War than previous wars.
- 3) D → After being used to solidarity, it was an extreme shock for many soldiers to be constantly surrounded by people once they flew back to America. Loud noises and flashing lights would sometimes trigger memories of battle, so many of them preferred to stay by themselves or surrounded by only a couple of close family and friends.



# FINAL EVALUATION

- 1) Why did the United States get involved in the Vietnam War?
  - a- To stop Communism
  - b- To end slavery in South Vietnam
  - c- To help China conquer North Vietnam
  - d- North Vietnam had nuclear missiles
  
- 2) Who did *not* fight in the Vietnam War?
  - a- Vietcong
  - b- French
  - c- North Vietnamese Army
  - d- United States
  
- 3) What major event prompted the United States to leave Vietnam?
  - a- Tet Offensive
  - b- Eastertide Offensive
  - c- Battle of Saigon
  - d- Siege of Khe Sanh
  
- 4) What mode of transportation was used in the Vietnam War more than any war before?
  - a- Tanks
  - b- Jeeps
  - c- Boats
  - d- Helicopters
  
- 5) Who was *not* a US president during the Vietnam War?
  - a- Ronald Reagan
  - b- Dwight D. Eisenhower
  - c- John F. Kennedy
  - d- Lyndon B. Johnson



# FINAL EVALUATION ANSWERS

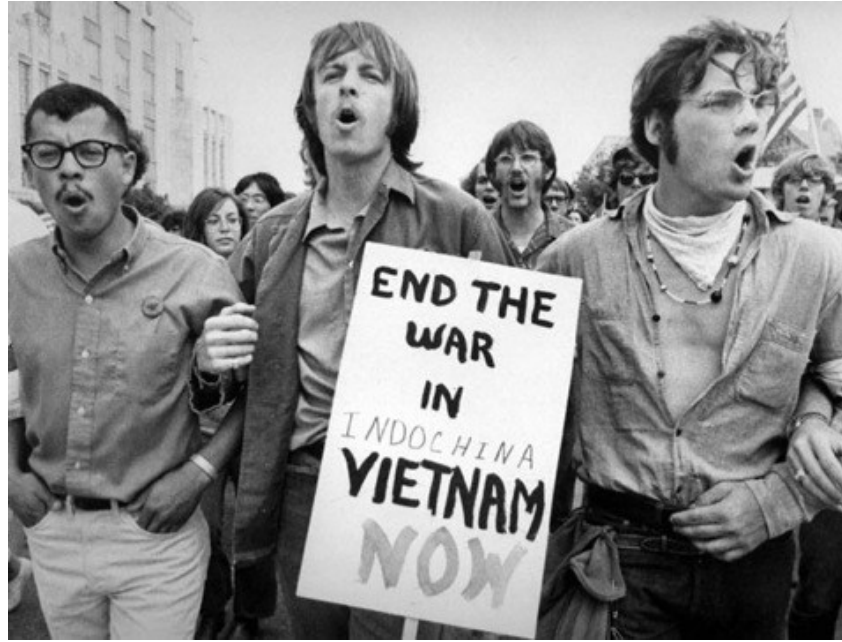
1) A

2) B

3) A

4) D

5) A



## EXTRA CREDIT

Write a letter as if you were David Stafford and you were currently fighting in Vietnam. This letter can be addressed to anyone you want (your spouse, the president, your parents, etc...), but it needs to contain information from some of his personal accounts, and information from the SIM should also be evident as you write. It can be as long as you would like, but it needs to be *at least* two paragraphs long. Points will be awarded based on effort, information, and grammar.

(YOU'RE DONE!)



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