



FOR MORE INFORMATION:
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HVL LESSON TITLE:

THE WHITE TABLE

DEVELOPED BY: ERIN COGGINS

THE WHITE TABLE

GUIDING QUESTION:

What is needed to properly set
the White Table (table for those
MIA and held as POWs)?

OVERVIEW:

The White Table, also known as the Missing Man Table, is a solemn tradition that emerged after the Vietnam War to honor Prisoners of War (POWs) and Missing in Action (MIA) service members, though its exact origin is debated. In this lesson, students will learn how to set the white table.



SUBJECT(S):

Family and Consumer Science
General Veteran Lesson



VETERAN(S):

Duane Hoffman



DURATION:

50 minutes

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“I was told by a high-ranking officer, that what I did made me just as much of a veteran as those who saw combat.”

Korean War Veteran, Duane Hoffman

OVERVIEW:

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HISTORICAL CONTEXT:

The tradition of the White Table began in the years following the Vietnam War to provide a way for service members and their families to remember and honor those who had been captured, were missing, or had not returned from combat.

The table is a solitary, symbolic display with specific items representing the sacrifices of these soldiers, including a white tablecloth for purity of heart, an empty chair for the absent soldier, and a slice of lemon and salt symbolizing their bitter fate and the tears of their families.

OBJECTIVES:

At the conclusion of this lesson, students will be able to

- Learn the history behind the White Table
- Identify the components of the White Table
- Set a White Table

STANDARDS:

AL: Social Studies Practices

Civic Thinking: Apply civic virtues and democratic principles in school and community settings.

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MATERIALS & DOCUMENTS

[HVL Video of Duane Hoffman](#)

Focus Handout (Doc A)

[The White Table](#)

Components of the White Table (Doc B)

Actual Components for the White Table (See Doc B).



PROCEDURES

ACTIVITY 01

- Distribute the Focus Handout (Doc A) and instruct students that they will be answering the questions as they watch a video.
- Show any a video of your choice from the [HVL Video of Duane Hoffman](#)
- After the video, discuss students' responses on the Focus Handout (Doc A).

ACTIVITY 02

- Show [The White Table](#) video. This is a reading of the book The White Table by Margot Thesis Raven. As students listen to the book read, have them jot down the items they see placed on the table.
- Distribute the Components of the White Table Handout (Doc A). Go over these with the students.
- Have students turn to backside of The White Table Handout (Doc A). Students will practice setting the table on paper.

ACTIVITY 03

- Ask students to demonstrate their knowledge of The White Table by correctly setting the table. NOTE: Refer to

METHOD FOR EXTENSION

- Have the class set up the The White Table at the school's Veterans Day or Memorial Day assemblies.

THE WHITE TABLE

FOCUS HANDOUT



Summarize the veteran(s) story.

What stood out to you the most about his story?

What does Mr. Hoffman say about veterans?

THE WHITE TABLE

COMPONENTS OF THE WHITE TABLE

DOC B



www.history.navy.mil

THE POW/MIA TABLE

A Place Setting For One, A Table For All

The tradition of setting a separate table in honor of our prisoners of war and missing comrades has been in place since the end of the Vietnam War. The manner in which this table is decorated is full of special symbols to help us remember our brothers and sisters in arms.

The POW/MIA table is separate from the others and can be set for one to four place settings to represent each service participating in the event.

The table is smaller than the others

symbolizing the frailty of one prisoner alone against his or her oppressors.

The white tablecloth

draped over the table represents the purity of their response to our country's call to arms.

The empty chair

depicts an unknown face, representing no specific Soldier, Sailor, Airman, or Marine, but all who are not here with us.

The round table

shows that our concern for them is never ending.

The Bible

represents faith in a higher power and the pledge to our country, founded as one nation under God.

The black napkin

stands for the emptiness these warriors have left in the hearts of their families and friends. A Purple Heart medal can be pinned to the napkin.

The single red rose

reminds us of their families and loved ones. The red ribbon represents the love of our country, which inspired them to answer the nation's call.

The yellow candle and its ribbon

symbolize the everlasting hope for a joyous reunion with those yet accounted for.

The slices of lemon

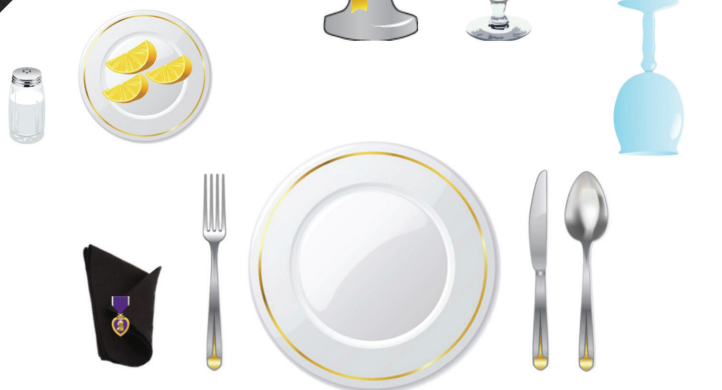
on the bread plate remind us of their bitter fate.

The salt upon the bread plate

represent the tears of their families.

The inverted wine glass

reminds us that our distinguished comrades cannot be with us to drink a toast or join in the festivities of the evening.



Source: OPNAVINST 1710.7A
Department of the Navy Social Usage
and Protocol Handbook.

VETERANS VS MEMORIAL

EVENT PLANNING FORM



DIRECTIONS: Use the Components of the White Table Handout as a guide to draw the items in their proper place on the table below. Be sure to label the drawings.

