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HVL LESSON TITLE:

BROTHERLY SACRIFICE

DEVELOPED BY: ERIN COGGINS

BROTHERLY SACRIFICE

GUIDING QUESTION:

**What caused the American
military to make changes to
how siblings serve during
wartime?**

OVERVIEW:

Although they were not allowed to serve in the same unit, all five Miller brothers served in Vietnam. All fought and all returned home. At some point in American military history, brothers were allowed to serve together in the same units or on ships. The death of the Sullivan Brothers in 1942 altered this allowance.



SUBJECT(S):
Social Studies



VIETNAM VETERAN(S):
Miller Brothers



DURATION:
60 minutes

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“My hooch door opened and there he was. He came in my hooch. And I went up and told my first sergeant that my brother that my brother came down and he gave me the night off. ”

Miller Brothers Interview

OVERVIEW:

Although they were not allowed to serve in the same unit, all five Miller brothers served in Vietnam. All fought and all returned home. At some point in American military history, brothers were allowed to serve together in the same units or on ships. The death of the Sullivan Brothers in 1942 altered this allowance.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT:

All five of the Sullivan brothers from Waterloo, Iowa, were tragically killed in action on November 13, 1942 while serving aboard the USS Juneau. The death of the brothers was the biggest blow to any one family in U.S. wartime history.

Four of the Sullivan brothers, Coxswain Francis Sullivan and Seamen 2nd Class Joseph, Madison, and Abel, failed to make it topside in time to abandon their doomed ship. Gunner's Mate 2nd Class George Sullivan, wounded during the night action, managed to get over the side and pull himself onto a raft, but died of his wounds a few hours later. Only ten of approximately 140 were rescued from the ship.

OBJECTIVES:

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

- Understand the impact tragedy has on American military policy.
- Analyze a primary source.

STANDARDS:

ACT COURSE STANDARDS:

Identify and interpret different types of primary and secondary sources of fundamental importance and relevance to topical inquiry and understanding.

AL: 11: 10 Social Studies

Describe the impact of World War II on the lives of American citizens.

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MATERIALS & DOCUMENTS

[HVL Miller Brothers Video](#)

Feelings Video Activity (Doc. A)

[Saving Private Ryan Video Excerpt](#)

Sullivan Brothers Handout (Doc. B)

[Alleta Sullivan's Audio Letter to the Bureau of Naval Personnel](#)

Analyzing Alleta's Letter (Doc C)

PROCEDURES

ACTIVITY 01

- Show the [HVL Miller Brothers Video](#)
- Instruct students to complete the Miller Brothers portion of Feelings Video Activity (Doc A). Discuss.
- Inform students that at one time, siblings could serve together in units and on ships. Show the [Saving Private Ryan Video Excerpt](#).
- Instruct students to complete the Saving Private Ryan portion of Feelings Video Activity (Doc A). Discuss

ACTIVITY 02

- Distribute copies of the Sullivan Brothers Handout (Doc B). Have students read silently or read aloud as students read. **NOTE:** Teacher can ask questions to check for reading comprehension/listening skills.

ACTIVITY 03

- Inform students that the death of the Sullivan Brothers garnered much attention in the newspaper. It also prompted Alleta Sullivan, mother of the five brothers, to speak out on Naval policy.
- Play/Show the [Alleta Sullivan's Audio Letter to the Bureau of Naval Personnel](#)
- Students will answer the questions on Analyzing Alleta's Letter Activity (Doc C). If time permits, discuss.

METHODS FOR EXTENSION

- Extend the activity by having students research other amendments to the Sole-Survivor Policy that affected the Vietnam draft as well as the Hubbard Act.
- Students can research the other siblings cases: Borgstrom, Butehorn, Niland, Hubbard and Wise families.

BROTHERLY SACRIFICE

FEELINGS VIDEO ACTIVITY

DOC A



Directions: While/after watching each video, answer the questions in full sentences.

MILLER BROTHERS

1. List some of the words/phrases, the brothers use when describing why they wanted to fight alongside their sibling(s).
2. What feelings do you think their mother and father felt during this time?
3. Put yourself in the Miller brothers' shoes. Would you have experienced the pull to fight alongside your brother? Why or why not?
4. What were some of the potential consequences that could have happened with all five brothers serving in Vietnam?

SAVING PRIVATE RYAN EXCERPT

1. What emotion do you think the typist felt when she first came across five of the same last names and addresses?
2. How do you think this type of event would impact military policy on siblings serving together?

BROTHERLY SACRIFICE

THE SULLIVAN BROTHERS

DOC B



THE STORY OF THE SULLIVAN BROTHERS

All five of the Sullivan brothers from Waterloo, Iowa, were tragically killed in action on November 13, 1942 while serving aboard USS Juneau (CL-52). The death of the brothers was the biggest blow to any one family in U.S. wartime history.



Juneau initially served in the Atlantic, but was transferred to the Pacific in August 1942. Late in October 1942, she took part in the Battle of the Santa Cruz Islands and, on 12 November fought off Guadalcanal. In that action, a torpedo severely damaged the ship. The following morning, the crippled cruiser, down by the bow and struggling to make 18 knots, retired from the battle area. Handling sluggishly as she limped through the glassy-calm sea, Juneau was an easy target for the nearby Japanese submarine I-26. A torpedo strike hit the damaged cruiser and detonated her magazines. The resulting explosion tore her apart, and she went down in just 42 seconds.

Four of the Sullivan brothers, Coxswain Francis Sullivan and Seamen 2nd Class Joseph, Madison, and Abel, failed to make it topside in time to abandon their doomed ship. Gunner's Mate 2nd Class George Sullivan, wounded during the November 12 night action, managed to get over the side and pull himself onto a raft, but died of his wounds a few hours later. Only ten of approximately 140 were rescued from the ship.

George and Francis Sullivan—the two eldest—enlisted in the U.S. Navy on May 11, 1937, and served on the destroyer USS Hovey (DD-208) into June 1941. At Des Moines, Iowa, on January 3, 1942, George and Francis, accompanied by their younger brothers Joseph, Madison, and Albert, reenlisted to avenge the loss of Seaman 1st Class William V. Ball, a friend, who was killed while serving on the battleship USS Arizona (BB-39) during the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor. After receiving initial training at the Naval Training School in Great Lakes, Illinois, all five brothers, at their expressed request, joined the light cruiser Juneau at the New York Navy Yard on February 3, 1942.

The brothers were survived by their parents, their only sister Genevieve, and the youngest brother's wife and son, Katherine Sullivan and Jimmy.

SOURCE: Naval History and Heritage Command



ANALYZING ALLETA'S LETTER

1. Part 1 (Listening to letter): Why did Mrs. Sullivan write to the Bureau of Naval Personnel?
2. What were Mrs. Sullivan's plans for a ship christening? Describe the tone of the letter.
3. What did Mrs. Sullivan urge others to do?
4. Describe Mr. Sullivan's stance on the responsibilities of others to contribute to the war.
5. The Sullivans continued to travel and advocate on the home front for war contributions. In another appearance, Mrs. Sullivan's words were summarized as: "In part, Mrs. Sullivan declared that sacrifices win wars and the worst kind of hoarding is the hoarding of services from a government that needs them." (The Daily News, Feb. 2, 1943)
6. If you were a member of the Bureau of Naval Personnel, how would this letter make you feel? What type of changes would you suggest to keep something like the Sullivan Brothers tragedy from happening again?
7. As a result of the Sullivan Brothers' tragedy and Alletha Sullivan's activism, the **Sole-Survivor Policy** was enacted in 1948. This exempts the sole surviving son of a family where one or more sons or daughters had been killed in action, died in the line of duty, or subsequently died of injuries or disease incurred while in military service, from being drafted either in peacetime or wartime.

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ANALYZING ALLETA'S LETTER

At the time, the Navy also changed its' policy on allowing siblings to serve on the same ship or command. That has since been amended to state that siblings must obtain authorization to serve on the same ship and cannot serve together in hostile zones.

How do you feel about the Sole-Survivor Policy of 1948?

How do you feel about the amended version of the Sole-Survivor Policy that stands today?