

Lesson Plan: Causes of the Vietnam War

Grade Level: High School (Grades 10-12)

Subject: U.S. History

Duration: 60 minutes

Lesson Objectives

By the end of this lesson, students will be able to:

1. Identify and explain the primary causes of the Vietnam War.
 2. Analyze the role of Cold War dynamics in escalating the conflict.
 3. Evaluate the U.S. decision to become involved in Vietnam through primary and secondary sources.
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Standards Addressed

- **NCSS (National Council for the Social Studies):**
 - Theme 6: Power, Authority, and Governance
 - Theme 8: Science, Technology, and Society
 - Theme 9: Global Connections
 - **Common Core Standards:**
 - CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12.1: Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources.
 - CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12.9: Integrate information from diverse sources into a coherent understanding.
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Materials

- Presentation slides (e.g., Google Slides or PowerPoint)
 - Handout: Timeline of events leading to the Vietnam War
 - Excerpts from the Domino Theory speech by President Eisenhower
 - Excerpt from the Geneva Accords (1954)
 - Video clip: Overview of the Vietnam War (5 minutes)
 - Whiteboard or digital collaborative tools
 - Exit ticket template
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Lesson Outline

1. Warm-Up Activity (10 minutes)

- **Question:** Ask students, "What do you know about the Vietnam War?" Record responses on the board.
- **Quick Poll:** Use a show of hands or a digital polling tool to ask: "Do you think the U.S. should intervene in conflicts abroad? Why or why not?"
- Briefly introduce the topic: "Today, we're going to explore the causes of the Vietnam War, focusing on the broader Cold War context and the U.S.'s decision to intervene."

2. Direct Instruction (15 minutes)

- Use slides to present the key causes of the Vietnam War:
 - **French Colonialism:** Background on French control of Indochina and Ho Chi Minh's fight for independence.

- **Geneva Accords (1954):** Division of Vietnam into North (communist) and South (non-communist).
- **Cold War Context:** The Domino Theory and containment policy.
- **Role of the Viet Cong:** Insurgency against the South Vietnamese government.
- **U.S. Involvement:** Military and financial aid under Presidents Truman, Eisenhower, Kennedy, and Johnson.
- Show the 5-minute video clip summarizing these points.

3. Guided Practice (15 minutes)

- **Source Analysis:** Divide students into small groups and assign each group one of the following sources:
 1. Excerpt from President Eisenhower's Domino Theory speech.
 2. Excerpt from the Geneva Accords.
 3. An infographic showing U.S. aid to South Vietnam from 1954-1963.
- **Activity:** Each group answers these questions:
 - What does this source reveal about the causes of the Vietnam War?
 - How does this source reflect U.S. goals or concerns?
- Groups share their findings with the class.

4. Class Discussion (10 minutes)

- Facilitate a discussion on the following questions:
 - Why did the U.S. view Vietnam as crucial to its Cold War strategy?
 - Could the U.S. have avoided involvement in Vietnam? Why or why not?

5. Independent Practice/Exit Ticket (10 minutes)

- Distribute the exit ticket with the following prompts:
 1. List two causes of the Vietnam War.
 2. Which cause do you think was the most important and why?
- Students complete the exit ticket individually.

Assessment

- **Formative:** Group analysis of primary sources and participation in class discussion.
- **Summative:** Exit ticket responses to evaluate understanding of the causes of the Vietnam War.

Extension Activities

- **Homework:** Research and write a short essay on how the Vietnam War impacted U.S. domestic politics during the 1960s.
- **Discussion Prompt:** Debate whether the Domino Theory justified U.S. intervention in Vietnam.

Accommodations/Differentiation

- **For ELL Students:** Provide translated excerpts or simplified versions of primary sources.
- **For Advanced Students:** Assign additional reading on the global reaction to the U.S.'s involvement in Vietnam.

- **For Students with Learning Differences:** Allow verbal responses to the exit ticket prompts and provide a note-taking guide for the lesson.
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Reflection

- After the lesson, review student responses to the exit ticket and group activities to assess understanding.
- Reflect on the effectiveness of the discussion and adjust future lessons to ensure all students are engaged.