



HOANG DINH NAM/AFP/Getty Images

# VIETNAM AFTER THE WAR

Assessment and Activity Options

## ABOUT THESE ACTIVITIES AND ASSESSMENT OPTIONS

The five activities provided in the following pages are intended for us with the *Vietnam after the War* background reading and related materials available on the Asia Pacific Curriculum website (<http://www.asiapacificcurriculum.ca/learning-module/vietnamafterthewar>). They can be used to build and assess the curricular competencies outlined in the new social studies curriculum for British Columbia (B.C.) high schools. These competencies are (<https://curriculum.gov.bc.ca/curriculum/10-12#ss>):

1. Use Social Studies inquiry processes and skills to ask questions; gather, interpret, and analyze ideas; and communicate findings and decisions.
2. Assess the significance of people, locations, events, or developments, and compare varying perspectives on their significance at particular times and places, and from group to group (significance).
3. Assess the credibility of and justification for evidence after investigating the reliability of sources and data, the adequacy of evidence, and the bias of accounts and claims (evidence).
4. Compare and contrast continuities and changes for different groups, at different times and places (continuity and change).
5. Assess how prevailing conditions and the actions of individuals or groups influence events, places, decisions, or developments (cause and consequence).
6. Explain and infer different perspectives on past and present people, places, issues, or events by considering prevailing norms, values, worldviews, and beliefs (perspectives).
7. Recognize implicit and explicit ethical judgments in a variety of sources (ethical judgment).
8. Make reasoned ethical judgments about actions and assess varying responses to events in the past or present (ethical judgment).

These activities and assessment options were designed by Ms. Jessica Selzer, a high school social studies teacher at Rockridge Secondary in West Vancouver (B.C.). We also thank Mr. Chris Pederson, formerly of Rockridge Secondary, for providing the essay marking sheet provided on pages 9 and 10.

These materials are most suitable for use in high school courses such as Asian Studies, 20<sup>th</sup> Century World History, and Social Justice.

Questions and feedback may be directed to the Asia Pacific Curriculum project, an initiative of the Asia Pacific Foundation of Canada, at [curriculum@asiapacific.ca](mailto:curriculum@asiapacific.ca).

## ACTIVITY 1: WERE VIETNAM'S RE-EDUCATION CAMPS EFFECTIVE?

**Courses:** 20<sup>th</sup> Century World History, Asian Studies, Political Studies

**Curricular Competencies:** 1, 5

After reunification in 1975, the Vietnamese government ordered tens of thousands of people in the south to report to “re-education camps.” The official purpose was to teach southerners about socialist ideology. Some people stayed only a couple of days or weeks, and were allowed to go home at the end of the day. They described the experience as similar to attending a class. Others were forced to stay much longer—months, or even many years. Generally, this latter group was treated quite harshly, and some are believed to have died in the camps.

This is a two-part assignment. In the first part, you will think about where people get their ideologies from and what it takes to change one’s ideology. In the second part, you will read a section of a report about the re-education camps and think about why some people were held for much longer periods of time.

For both parts of this assignment, you will work in small groups.

### PART I: WHERE DO IDEOLOGIES COME FROM?

After the Fall of Saigon, the government had the difficult task of establishing its control over the southern part of the country. One way it tried to do this was by imposing its socialist ideology onto all of Vietnamese society.

Read and answer the questions below. First, read and answer individually, and then compare your answers with others in your group.

1. Getting people to accept its socialist ideology was the only way for Vietnam to gain control over the south.

Agree       Disagree

Explain your answer.

2. An ideology is a set of beliefs that guide a person's (or larger group's) thinking and actions. Where do you think people get their ideologies from? Name at least three sources.

a. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

b. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

c. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

3. Under what conditions might people change their ideology? Briefly describe at least two.

a. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

b. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

4. As mentioned above, the official purpose of the re-education camps was to encourage southerners to accept socialist ideology. How would we know whether this approach was effective?

## PART II: THE “RE-EDUCATION” OF SOUTHERN VIETNAM

Amnesty International is an organization focused on ending human rights abuses around the world. In its 1984 annual report, it raised concerns about the people still being held in Vietnam’s re-education camps.

1. Read the “Vietnam” section of the 1984 Amnesty International report, pages 267-270, available at <https://www.amnesty.org/download/Documents/POL1000041984ENGLISH.PDF>.
2. Using the form on the following page, answer two questions:
  - a. According to the report, what kind of people were still being held in the camps (i.e., their jobs, roles in society, etc.)?
  - a. Why do you think the government would want to detain them for so long?

### KEY TERMS

The following definitions may help you as you read the Amnesty International report.

- **Alleged:** Supposed; accused but not proven.
- **Detain/Detention:** Holding people in prisons or prison-like conditions without formally charging them with a crime.
- **Non-retroactive penalization:** The idea that you should not punish people for acts that became illegally *after* people did them.
- **Signatory:** An individual, government, or other body that has signed an agreement.

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**Optional:** To learn about a first-hand account of being in a re-education camp, read “Vietnamese Re-education Camps: A Brief History,” The Choices Program (Brown University), available at <http://www.choices.edu/curriculum-catalog/vietnamese-re-education-camps-brief-history/>.

Type of person (e.g. their job, role in society, etc.)	Possible reason(s) for long detention.

## ACTIVITY 2: CONTROL VS. RECONCILIATION?

**Courses:** 20<sup>th</sup> Century World History, Asian Studies, Political Studies, Social Justice  
**Curricular Competencies:** 2, 5, 6

The background reading describes several actions the Vietnamese government took to consolidate its control over the south. Think about

- a. whether these actions supported its other goals, and
- a. whether or not these actions supported reconciliation.

Here, reconciliation is defined as “healing the wounds and divisions of a society in the aftermath of sustained violence.”

### PART I: CONSOLIDATING CONTROL

In the first decade after the war, what were the Vietnamese government’s top 2-3 goals?

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2. 

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3. 

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**PART II:**

Make a list of actions the government took to consolidate its control over the south. In what ways (if any) did these actions support the goals you mentioned on the previous page?

<b>Action</b>	<b>Support for government's goals (please explain).</b>



## PART II: FROM CONSOLIDATION TO RECONCILIATION?

There are different ways to define “reconciliation.” On a general level, it can mean restoring the harmony in a relationship. It can also mean a person or group coming to accept something (an outcome, a decision, etc.) that they did not want.

The reading borrows a more specific definition of reconciliation in post-conflict societies: “healing the wounds and divisions of a society in the aftermath of sustained violence.”

Which definition of reconciliation do you think is most relevant to the case of post-war Vietnam?

Looking at your list in Part I of actions to consolidate control, think about whether or how or whether these actions impacted the process of reconciliation in southern Vietnam.

1. Action 1:

Impact on Reconciliation:

2. Action 2:

Impact on Reconciliation:

1. Action 3:

Impact on Reconciliation:

### ACTIVITY 3: RESEARCH ESSAY—COMPARING THE VIETNAMESE “BOAT PEOPLE” WITH PRESENT-DAY REFUGEE CRISES

**Courses:** 20<sup>th</sup> Century World History, Asian Studies, Human Geography, Political Studies, Social Justice

**Curricular Competences:** 7, 8

The United Nations (UN) High Commissioner for Refugees defines as refugee as:

“someone who has been forced to flee his or her country because of persecution, war or violence. A refugee has a well-founded fear of persecution for reasons of race, religion, nationality, political opinion or membership in a particular social group. Most likely, they cannot return home or are afraid to do so. War and ethnic, tribal and religious violence are leading causes of refugees fleeing their countries.”

*United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees • “Who is a refugee?”*

Using this definition as a starting point, write an essay focused on answering the following question:

**To what extent do countries have the responsibility (humanitarian and/or legal) to take in refugees?**

To answer this question, you will compare the case of Vietnam’s post-war refugee crisis with a present-day refugee crisis such as Syria. You will find a list of references and sources on the following page.

1. What problems do displaced people face—in the refugee camps, while they are on the move to seek safety, in the new country, etc.?
2. According to the UN, what responsibility do countries have to help people who are displaced by conflict?
3. What challenges do receiving countries face when they accept a large number of refugees (e.g., cultural, economic, political, etc.)?
4. What is the responsibility of the country of origin (that is, the country the refugees are fleeing from)?
5. What was the Government of Canada’s response to either of these refugee situations?
6. Do you think Canada’s response to either or both of these refugee situations was appropriate? Why or why not?
7. How did Canadian citizens respond (whether for or against accepting refugees)? Why did they respond this way?

**Note:** *It is not enough to say “because it’s the right thing to do.” You need to provide evidence.*

## RESOURCES TO GET YOU STARTED:

**Core reading:** “Asylum and the Rights of Refugees,” International Justice Resource Centre, <http://www.ijrcenter.org/refugee-law/>

(UN) Meeting on Refugees and Displaced Persons in South-East Asia, convened by the Secretary-General of the United Nations at Geneva, on 20 and 21 July 1979, and subsequent developments of the Secretary-General, <http://www.refworld.org/docid/3ae68f420.html>. See especially paragraphs 1, 5, and 12.

Canadian Council for Refugees, <http://ccrweb.ca/>

“#welcome refugees”, Government of Canada, 2017, <https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/services/refugees/welcome-syrian-refugees.html>

“Canada’s Syrian Refugee Plan Limited to Women, Children, and Families”, *CBC*, 2015, <http://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/canada-refugee-plan-women-children-families-1.3330185>

“Sizable Minority Says Canada Is Accepting Too Many Refugees: Poll,” *Globe and Mail*, 2017, <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/politics/sizable-minority-says-canada-is-accepting-too-many-refugees-poll/article34087415/>

“Attitudes of Asians Hardens toward Indochina Refugees,” *New York Times*, 1977, <http://www.nytimes.com/1977/06/21/archives/attitude-of-asians-hardens-toward-indochina-refugees.html>

“Vietnamese ‘Boat People’—The News of Asia,” Marc H. Tannenbaum, [http://www.ajarchives.org/AJC\\_DATA/Files/719.PDF](http://www.ajarchives.org/AJC_DATA/Files/719.PDF)

“Refugees Who Fled Vietnam in the 70s Band Together to Help Syrians,” *Vancouver Sun*, <http://www.vancouversun.com/health/refugees+fled+vietnam+band+together+help+syrians/11375355/story.html>

“Syrian Refugee Crisis: Lessons from Vietnamese Boat People,” *CBC*, 2015, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/world/syrian-refugee-crisis-lessons-from-vietnamese-boat-people-1.3224405>

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