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# VIETNAM AFTER THE WAR

Guide to Resources

Dear Teachers,

Thank you for exploring these resources on Vietnam After the War, which invites learners to explore what happened in Vietnam in the years immediately after the end of the “American War” in 1975.

These materials were designed for use in upper-level high school courses on 20<sup>th</sup> century world history or Asian Studies. In the pages that follow, we provide an overview of the resources found on the Asia Pacific Curriculum website at <https://asiapacificcurriculum.ca/learning-module/vietnam-after-war>, in addition to other resources that you may find helpful.

We thank **Dr. Christopher Goscha**, who provided very valuable feedback and suggestions on the background reading. Dr. Goscha is a professor of history at the University of Quebec at Montreal and the author of two recent books on contemporary Vietnam: *The Penguin History of Modern Vietnam* (London, Penguin/Random House, 2016), and *Vietnam, a New History* (New York, Basic Books, 2016), which won the 2017 John K. Fairbank Prize from the American Historical Association. Any errors contained in the background reading are the responsibility of the Asia Pacific Foundation of Canada.

We are grateful to **Ms. Jessica Selzer**, a social studies teacher at Rockridge Secondary School in West Vancouver. Ms. Selzer designed the Activities & Assessments that accompany the reading. In addition, we thank **Ms. Paula Waatainen**, a faculty member and social studies methods expert at Vancouver Island University, who provided constructive and helpful feedback on an earlier version of these activities and assessments.

We welcome your or your students’ questions and suggestions. We encourage you to contact us at [curriculum@asiapacific.ca](mailto:curriculum@asiapacific.ca).

Sincerely,

The Asia Pacific Curriculum Team  
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## GUIDE TO RESOURCES

### OVERVIEW

The background reading focuses primarily on the first decade after the end of the war (1975-85), although it also includes a brief history of the war, and a short section on the reform era, which started with the *doi moi* (“renovation”) policy in 1986. The reading level is appropriate for upper-level high school and first-year university/college students.

One of the main themes covered in the reading is the challenges of building a post-war society, including the possible tensions between the need to consolidate political control, on one hand, and the need for reconciliation, on the other.

As we note in the Introduction, there are many perspectives on life in Vietnam after 1975. Here, we focus on the perspectives of “the southerners who were made to feel that their lives before 1975 were a crime that needed to be punished, or a sin for which they needed to atone” (p. 2). We encourage learners to reflect on the fact that there are other perspectives that are not covered here—for example, the perspective the southerners who welcomed the fall of the Republic of Vietnam (South Vietnam) government, and the perspective of the northerners, who, after 1975, encountered a population in the south that was quite culturally and socially different from them.

### PRIMARY DOCUMENTS

Links and PDFs (where available) to three resources referred to either in the background reading or in the Activities and Assessments booklet.

- Amnesty International Report 1984, for activity about re-education camps.
- UN Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, for activity about Indochinese “boat people.”
- Meeting on Refugees and Displaced Persons in South-East Asia, Convened by the Secretary-General of the United Nations at Geneva (July 20-21, 1979), for activity about Indochinese “boat people.”

### IN THE NEWS

Includes two categories of media coverage:

- “Boat people” crisis
- Re-education camps

## MULTIMEDIA (VIDEOS)

Four short videos, ranging from 1:42 to about nine minutes in length, mostly reinforcing key points made in the background reading. One of the videos, “Vietnam’s New Economy, Old Culture,” focuses on *viet kieu* (overseas Vietnamese) who return to Vietnam. This is mentioned briefly in the reading, but the video provides some elaboration through real-life stories.

## TIMELINE

Useful for looking at some of the cause-and-consequence dimensions of changes that were imposed in the south after 1975, and how people responded.

## QUIZ

Four questions based on information contained in the background reading.

## ACTIVITIES AND ASSESSMENT OPTIONS

Three teacher-designed and teacher-tested activities that can be used to assess comprehension and build and assess core competencies. Links to the B.C. curricular competencies and relevant courses are noted on each activity.

## OTHER TEACHING RESOURCES

- “Terror in Little Saigon,” *Frontline* (PBS) (54:15), takes a look at the “wave of terror that targeted Vietnamese-American journalists” in the 1980s, implicating other members of the Vietnamese-American community. This can be viewed for free at <https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/frontline/film/terror-in-little-saigon/>.
- Thomas R. Gottschang, “Viet Nam’s Economy in Transition: Successes and Challenges,” *Education about Asia*, Vol. 15, No. 1 (Spring 2010), <http://aas2.asian-studies.org/EAA/EAA-Archives/15/1/859.pdf> goes into greater depth on the *doi moi* (reform or “renovation” period), including some successes and remaining challenges (such as corruption and environmental degradation), as well as reform-era contributions by the *viet kieu* (overseas Vietnamese) community.

## RECOMMENDED READING

- Christopher Goscha, *Vietnam: A New History*, New York: Basic Books, 2016. Also by Professor Goscha, *The Penguin History of Modern Vietnam*, 2016. Although better known for his work on contemporary Cambodian history, Ben Kiernan’s *Viet Nam: A History from Earliest Times to the Present* (Oxford University Press) is also excellent.
- Appropriate for upper-level high school students is Shelton Woods, *The Story of Viet Nam: From Prehistory to the Present*, Ann Arbor, MI: Association for Asian Studies, 2013. This is part of the *Key Issues in Asian Studies* series, and is a useful resource for

upper-level high school or first-year university students (and their teachers). The book gives a broad historical context.

- For more information on the reform era and how it has shaped the attitudes of Vietnamese youth, see Long S. Le, "The Politics of the Vietnamese Post-War Generation," *Education about Asia*, Vol. 14, No. 2 (Fall 2009), pp. 43-48, <http://aas2.asian-studies.org/EAA/EAA-Archives/14/2/844.pdf>.
- One of the relatively few readily available sources on how the war is remembered in the north is Elisabeth Rosen, "The Vietnam War, as Seen by the Victors," *The Atlantic*, April 16, 2015, <https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2015/04/the-vietnam-war-as-seen-by-the-north-vietnamese/390627/>. Also by Elisabeth Rosen, "How Young Vietnamese View the Vietnam War," *The Atlantic*, April 30, 2015, <https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2015/04/youth-vietnam-war-fall-saigon/391769/>.

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