

Overview

Key 'Whys' of the Vietnam War

This revision activity works best if you do it with a friend, and talk about it as you do it.

Cut up the cards. Choose one of the four grey 'question cards' and put it in the middle of a table, or use Blu-tack to stick it to a whiteboard.

From the white 'fact cards', select those that would be helpful in answering the question, and arrange them round the question card to make a visual mind-map/spidergram of 'relevant factors'. For each, discuss as a group HOW that fact/factor helps explain the question.

Next, suggest links between the white fact/factor cards you chose; explain the link.

Repeat for the other three grey question cards.

Why did the USA get involved in Vietnam?	Why did the Americans lose the Vietnam War?
Why was the Vietnam War unpopular?	Why did the Vietcong win the Vietnam War?

French	Ho Chi Minh	Ngo Dinh Diem	1954: Treaty of Geneva
Thich Quang Duc	August 1964: Gulf of Tonkin incident	1965–1968: Operation Rolling Thunder	Domino theory
1965: VC attacks on American airbases	VC guerrilla warfare	VC tactic of 'hanging onto the belt'	Ho Chi Minh Trail
US use of napalm	US use of Agent Orange	American Strategic Hamlets programme	American search and destroy raids

American Zippo raids	Body count	Kill ratio	Vietnamisation
1965: Ia Drang	1968–1972: Operation Phoenix	1968: Tet Offensive	1968: My Lai Massacre
1970: Kent State University demonstrations	November 1963: Kennedy-supported coup murders Diem	1964: Gulf of Tonkin Resolution	1950–1953: Korean War
Hearts and minds	US soldiers who were 'cherries'	US soldiers fragging their officers	US soldiers disobeying orders and 'working it out'
Body bags	Martin Luther King opposed the war	Draft dodging in the USA	Increasing numbers of US troops (500,000 by 1969)
President Johnson	President Eisenhower	President Kennedy	Military 'advisers'
VC network of tunnels	VC booby traps, tripwires, landmines	North Vietnamese SAM-guided missiles	North Vietnamese MiG planes
American B52 bombers	American helicopters ('hueys')	US cluster bombs	December 1972: Huge bombing campaign against North Vietnam
Cambodia	Laos	North Vietnamese army (NVA): experienced and fanatical	South Vietnamese army (the ARVN) weak and corrupt
China	USSR	South Vietnamese peasants	Corrupt and repressive South Vietnamese regime
Cost of the war to the USA, both on money and deaths	US soldiers going AWOL	US soldiers taking drugs	Media coverage