

Overview

Besides the birth of one of the greatest bands ever, the Beatles, the 1960s are perhaps best known for the Civil Rights Movement. Led by one of America's best and most influential leaders ever, Martin Luther King Jr., the Civil Rights Movement showed America at both its best and its worst. As horrific as the discrimination was to both watch and hear about, the number of people who showed up in support of Dr. King for his famous march on Washington was just as awe-inspiring, and in a much more positive way. Of course, the era will be forever colored by the assassination of Dr. King, who unfortunately never lived to see his vision come to life.



Discussion/Questions

1. Unlike Fabian or Jay and the Techniques, the Beatles are still extremely well known and listened to today. Why do you think that is? What is it about their music that has transcended time? Is there a band today that you listen to that you think possesses that same timeless characteristic? What is it about them that makes that the case?
2. How do you think the general population's access to television impacted how the Vietnam War was viewed publicly? How do you think it currently affects our view of the War in Iraq today?

Activities

1. In one of his poems, Allen Ginsberg writes, "If I were doing my Laundry I'd wash my dirty Iran/ I 'd throw in my United States . . . Then I'd throw big Asia in one giant Load & wash out the blood &/ Agent Orange/ Dump the whole mess of Russia and China in the wringer, squeeze out/ the tattletail Gray of U.S. Central American police state/ & put the planet in the drier & let it sit 20 minutes or an/ Aeon till it came out clean." In what ways does the quote above remind you of the 1960's? How do you wish you could "wash it out?"
2. As a class, make a list of the reasons to enter and to not enter Vietnam. Write an essay expressing your point of view. Do you think the America's actions during the war were just? Discuss the issue with friends or family members who lived through the war.

Spotlight: The Vietnam War

The Vietnam War ran approximately from 1957 to 1975, and was, in essence, a war between communist (North Vietnam) and pro-Western (South Vietnam and the United States) forces. It was essentially fought to decide the fate of Vietnam. Would it become a united communist country, or would North and South Vietnam remain divided? Eventually, in 1975, the communist forces prevailed, and Vietnam became unified under the Communist Party of Vietnam.



Convinced of the idea called the “domino effect,” America became involved, sending troops and supplies in 1963, in support of the Army of the Republic of Viet Nam (ARVN), or South Vietnam. Essentially, the U.S. felt that a communist takeover of Vietnam would eventually lead to an entirely communist Southeast Asia.

However, in 1969, as the American people were becoming continually more upset with the high casualty numbers, President Richard Nixon put into effect a program known as “Vietnamization.” Nixon’s goal was to slowly pull out all American troops from Vietnam in order to help South Vietnam and ARVN become less reliant on American troops. Throughout the late 1960s and early 1970s, ARVN responded by expanding and putting itself in good position to defeat the communist army of North Vietnam, or the People’s Army of Vietnam (PAVN). By 1974, U.S. troops were almost completely withdrawn and ARVN was forced to fight on its own. While South Vietnam was able to hold its ground for a while without any direct support from the U.S., it did eventually fold; in 1975, the Northern communist troops invaded the south and ARVN essentially collapsed, finally surrendering to the People’s Army of Vietnam and The Communist Party.

More Information

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Academic Standards

Living History: The 1960s is specifically designed to address the Academic Standards for History as set forth by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. This program supports the successful achievement of standards 8.3 United States History, as defined under grade 12 measurement criteria:

8.3.12: A. Identify and evaluate the political and cultural contributions of individuals and groups to United States history from 1890 to Present

C. Identify and evaluate conflict and cooperation among social groups and organizations in United States history from 1890 to the Present

