



## TEACHER'S GUIDE

Dear Teacher:

When they were not much older than your students, some 3.2 million young Americans were sent to Southeast Asia to take their part in the Vietnam War. Three decades later *In the Shadow of the Blade* undertook an effort to learn what had become of the veterans of that brutal, controversial war that lasted nearly ten years, killed more than 58,000 Americans, and left the nation divided. An iconic symbol of the war—a UH-1 “Huey” helicopter—was restored, then flown on a 10,000 mile journey across America to carry war veterans and families as a catalyst for collecting their untold stories and reflections.

The experience of being reunited with the machine that had last carried them to war was evocative for the veterans, many of whom had kept their experience silent in a country that had turned against both them and their war. When we asked them the simple question “what does the Huey mean to you?” they answered with powerful stories that capture a wide range of emotions and perspectives.

*In the Shadow of the Blade* offers your students an opportunity to see into the world of a war and its veterans, not from the traditional standpoint of battle maps, geopolitical considerations, or dry recitations of dates and statistics, but from the very real, very human perspective of those who lived it. Infantry soldiers, helicopter crew members, nurses, Prisoners of War—all are represented in this collection of ordinary Americans who served the United States of America in its Vietnam War. Many performed extraordinary feats of valor and endured horrific hardships, and many others paid the ultimate sacrifice, leaving loved ones who still mourned for them decades later.

Though this film is particular to Vietnam veterans, many universal themes of war emerge: the enduring power of love to overcome adversity, the unflagging allegiance between soldiers in a combat zone, the triumphant endurance of the human spirit. Your students will see the lifelong shadow the war cast on the men who fought it, but they will also observe a deep and enduring pride among those who were called upon at a very young age to put their lives on the line for their country. Bonded by that experience in a nation that did not welcome them as heroes, many Vietnam veterans have found *In the Shadow of the Blade* to be a form of long overdue tribute.

This study guide offers a number of suggestions for ways you can incorporate the film into your social studies or language arts classroom. It includes a viewing guide to help focus students’ attention, a discussion guide, and a further studies resource

list, culminating in a research project that incorporates a “real-world” tribute project and a powerful personal connection between your students and their nation’s veterans.

The *In the Shadow of the Blade* study guide was developed with the assistance of master teachers Rebecca Stucky and Sandra Coker of Westlake High School in Austin, Texas. Their use of the film in conjunction with a study of Tim O’Brien’s novel *The Things They Carried* has evolved into an online collection of student tributes to our nation’s Vietnam War fallen. This impressive collection of student work can be seen at [www4.eanesisd.net/~vietnam/](http://www4.eanesisd.net/~vietnam/).

You can use the film in its whole, or choose particular episodes to show your students. Whether you use *In the Shadow of the Blade* as part of a historical unit of study or as enrichment to literature, you can be assured that every participant whose oral history is included in the film was fully vetted through an exhaustive process that included review of official military records. The stories in this film are true, and they really happened to the people who tell them.

We hope that *In the Shadow of the Blade* will help your students make an authentic and lasting connection with those who served, fought and died in the Vietnam War. Should they have the opportunity to visit our nation’s capitol, they will find the film’s “star,” UH-1 10006-091, permanently displayed in the Smithsonian Museum of American History, representing the Vietnam War in the military history exhibit “The Price of Freedom: Americans at War.”

We invite you and your students to share your ideas, projects and impressions at [www.intheshadowoftheblade.com](http://www.intheshadowoftheblade.com) or on the In the Shadow of the Blade Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/pages/In-The-Shadow-of-The-Blade/172721307911>.

We wish you a successful and rewarding unit!

#### NOTICE OF EDUCATIONAL PURPOSE PERMISSION:

Arrowhead Films permits public screening of *In the Shadow of the Blade* by educational institutions for educational purposes. The film is available on DVD for purchase. A school may use the DVD for classroom or group viewing. DVDs may not be reproduced without permission. Printed materials may be reproduced for educational use. The online educational guide is provided for download at no charge. The DVD and printed materials are available at [www.intheshadowoftheblade.com](http://www.intheshadowoftheblade.com).

## IN THE SHADOW OF THE BLADE SUGGESTED UNIT OF STUDY

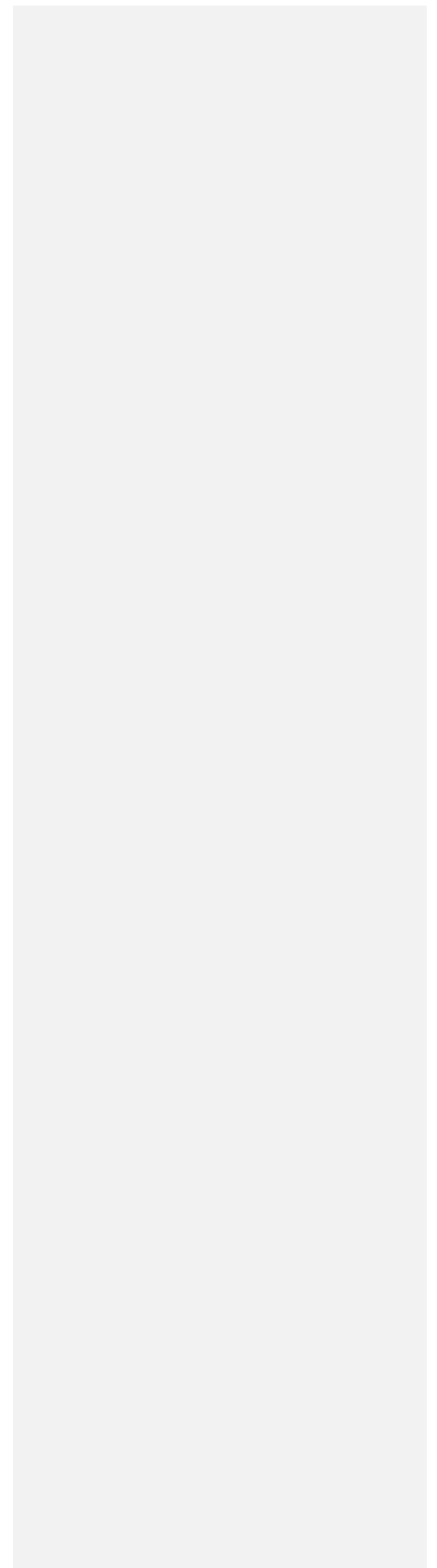
This unit will provide students with the opportunities to use non-fiction film, text, and primary and secondary source information to analyze information, synthesize content, make inferences, and draw conclusions as they produce a source-cited research product. It is designed to work well for history or English students. It assumes that students will have some prior basic knowledge about the Vietnam War.

If you can do so, inviting a Vietnam veteran or a panel of veterans to speak to your classes is an excellent learning experience for your students. Many veterans are very happy to do this, and these people can become “teaching assistants” to help your students with their research. See the section “Vietnam veteran speakers” for suggestions.

A suggested approach is:

1. Use the short non-fiction reading “The UH-1 Helicopter: Icon of the Vietnam War” to help students understand the significance of the Huey helicopter. Check for comprehension using the five-question reading check.
2. Give each student a copy of the viewing guide as they view the film. The discussion guide will also work for this purpose, depending on your particular learning objectives.
3. After the class has finished viewing the film, use the viewing guide or the discussion guide as the framework for a whole class or small group discussions. End the discussion with an introduction to the research project.
4. Conduct the research project. Two research project options are offered: “The Stories Behind The Names” and “Background Vietnam.” You might allow students to choose, or make the assignment yourself, depending on your classroom objectives. Both are designed to get students involved more deeply in the subject; to build their research, writing and presentation skills; and to allow them—through oral presentation—to teach their peers. These activities can be executed through traditional and formal research papers or through multi-media presentations. “Background Vietnam” is more appropriate for traditional research, as more information will be readily available to students for longer paper requirements. The “Stories” option is an excellent multi-media project, and will inherently lead to a more personal connection for the student. Either can be accomplished individually or in small groups.
5. There are many ways for your students to share highlights of their work. They can present to the class, post a synopsis of their work on The Virtual Wall, or share with the *In the Shadow of the Blade* project through its website or Facebook page. If

you have partnered with a Vietnam veteran or group of veterans, consider inviting them to see the presentations. Knowing that their work will have a wider audience than just the teacher is often a great motivator to encourage students to do their best work!



NAME: \_\_\_\_\_ CLASS PERIOD \_\_\_\_\_

***IN THE SHADOW OF THE BLADE* FOCUSED VIEWING GUIDE**

**Answer these questions as you watch the documentary to help you focus your viewing.**

1. The Huey helicopter was the utility helicopter of the Vietnam War. Find three examples of veteran stories that illustrate the different ways the Huey was used in the war.

a.

b.

c.

2. Find two examples of stories that illustrate allegiance between soldiers.

a.

b.

3. Find two examples in the film that illustrate the war's lasting impact on veterans.

a.

b.

4. Find two stories that illustrate the war's impact on military families.

a.

Cheryl Fries 8/15/11 3:24 PM

**Comment [1]:** Ideally, this will be on one page.

b.

5. Note three conclusions you draw about Vietnam veterans from watching the documentary, and provide an example that backs up your conclusion.

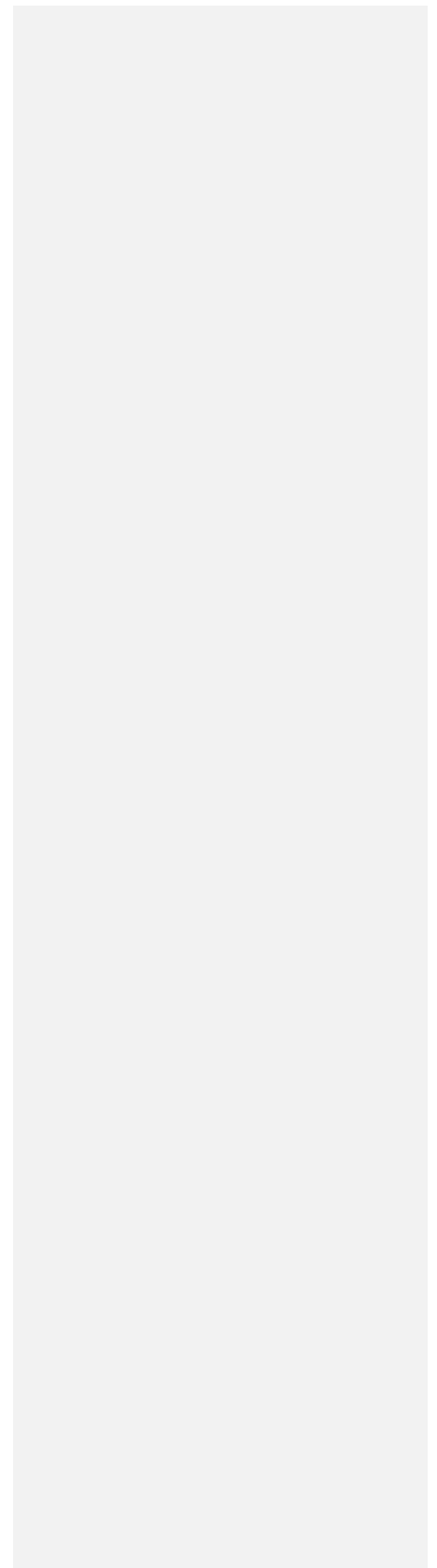
Conclusion

Example

a.

b.

c.



NAME: \_\_\_\_\_ CLASS PERIOD \_\_\_\_\_

***IN THE SHADOW OF THE BLADE* DISCUSSION GUIDE**

**1. Why do you think the Huey helicopter was such a powerful catalyst for the veterans?**

**2. What is your overall impression of Vietnam veterans after seeing this movie?**

**3. What story or stories did you find particularly moving or instructive?**

**4. The word "hero" is often used to describe military veterans. Which of these people illustrates that description to you and why?**

**5. What lessons do you think this film has for us as a nation?**



## **The UH-1 Helicopter: Icon of the Vietnam War**

**"We rode to war in a Huey, and that whop-whop-whop is burned into our brains."--General Harold Moore, commander, Battle of Ia Drang**

**by Cheryl Fries**

Every modern war has its icon, the technological development essential to the conflict, the one that changes the course of battle and becomes, ever after, symbolic of the time. The Civil War's cannon, World War I's machine gun, World War II's tank -- each left its mark on the landscape and the soldier. Vietnam's icon was the helicopter, specifically the UH-1 utility helicopter soldiers referred to as "the Huey."

The geographic and political realities of Vietnam called for a new kind of warfare, one the U.S. Army termed "Airmobile." Remote battle zones, mountains topped in old-growth hardwood jungles, and poorly developed roads eliminated motor vehicles as a means of quickly moving masses of troops and supplies. Helicopters took over. In Airmobile warfare, flocks of helicopters took troops and supplies to strategic locations, monitored operations from the air, engaged in battle, and evacuated forces. The famed U.S. Army 1st Cavalry joined aviation units already in Vietnam to pioneer Airmobile operations, trading its horses for helicopters and creating an archetype followed by the 101st Airborne, the 1st Aviation Brigade, and several other aviation units and smaller detachments.

Many helicopters were used in Vietnam, but none was as widely employed as the Huey. The UH-1 "Iroquois," popularly dubbed the Huey, is known as "the workhorse of the Vietnam War," used by all military forces for troop transport, medical evacuation, and combat assault. Hueys transported soldiers and supplies to the lines as the horses for a modern cavalry. The U.S. Army and Marine Corps made them into gunships, modifying them with machine guns and air-to-ground rocket pods and putting them to work in frontal assaults. Hueys carried officers to develop battle plans, soldiers to battle, nurses to orphanages, and "Donut Dollies" to entertain troops. Outfitted with broadcasting systems, they ferried Psychological Operations (PSYOPS) messengers. And, perhaps most significantly, Hueys were the technology behind "Dustoffs," evacuations of the wounded so-named by a pilot who gave his life doing it. The ability to swoop into the battle, load the Huey with wounded, and fly to evacuation hospitals, started in Korea and refined in Vietnam, has been called "one of the major medical innovations of the Vietnam War." This quick transport meant that more than 90 percent of wounded soldiers who reached a medical facility survived. The medical evacuation technology gained in the Huey experience of Vietnam came home to become the air rescue operations we today take for granted.



The Huey is an enormously versatile helicopter, easily modified for various missions. The interchangeable interiors of the Huey allowed for easy conversion from troop carrier to ambulance. It was also an amazing machine, capable of flying in extreme stress and relatively easy to get in and out quickly--a feature crucial in troop extraction and rescue missions. Those who flew and maintained them, the pilots and crew chiefs, are fiercely loyal to the Huey, even though many have flown many other aircraft.

More than 7,000 Huey helicopters served in Vietnam and nearly half were lost. 2,177 Huey crew members were killed in action. For soldiers on the ground, the distinctive WHOP WHOP of the Huey's 48-foot rotor blades slapping the air was the sound of their lifeline.

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[www.intheshadowoftheblade.com](http://www.intheshadowoftheblade.com).

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_ CLASS PERIOD \_\_\_\_\_

**The UH-1 Helicopter: Icon of the Vietnam War Reading Comprehension Questions**

1. What is the best synonym for the word "icon" as it is used in the first paragraph?

- A. helicopter
- B. symbol
- C. aircraft
- D. tool

2. Which list best describes the conditions that necessitated the use of the helicopter in Vietnam?

- A. strategic operations, supply routes, troop movements
- B. large rivers, vast shoreline, marshy rice paddies
- C. dense jungles, remote battle sites, bad roads
- D. rapid transport, medical evacuation, soldier resupply

3. What name was given to helicopter ambulance missions?

- A. Dustoff
- B. PSYOP
- C. Donut Dollies
- D. Cavalry

4. Read the sentence below, then answer the question.

The interchangeable interiors of the Huey allowed for easy conversion from troop carrier to air ambulance.

Which of these is the best category for this fact?

- A. Safety features of the Huey
- B. Huey crew members
- C. Versatility of the Huey
- D. Effects of the Huey on the enemy force

5. What can be inferred from the last paragraph?

- A. Flying a Huey in Vietnam was dangerous work.
- B. The Huey helicopter was extremely versatile.
- C. Other helicopters were safer than the Huey.
- D. Most military personnel preferred a motor vehicle to a Huey.

**The UH-1 Helicopter: Icon of the Vietnam War Reading Comprehension Questions KEY**

1. What is the best synonym for the word "icon" as it is used in the first paragraph?

- A. helicopter
- B. symbol\*
- C. aircraft
- D. tool

2. Which list best describes the conditions that necessitated the use of the helicopter in Vietnam?

- A. strategic operations, supply routes, troop movements
- B. large rivers, vast shoreline, marshy rice paddies
- C. dense jungles, remote battle sites, bad roads\*
- D. rapid transport, medical evacuation, soldier resupply

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- D. Most military personnel preferred a motor vehicle to a Huey.

***In The Shadow of The Blade* Research Project: Background Vietnam**

**You are the teacher! Choose a sub-topic below or have one approved, and become a “subject matter expert.” Create a multi-media presentation for class presentation. Date due: \_\_\_\_\_.**

The Hanoi Hilton	Operation Babylift
The Battle of the Ia Drang	Lam Son 719
Hamburger Hill	Khe Sahn
War dogs in Vietnam	Swift Boats
Gulf of Tonkin incident	Vietnam war technology
Ho Chi Minh Trail	The Navy Seawolves
The USO in Vietnam	Special Forces in Vietnam
Operation Rolling Thunder	Montagnard tribes in the war
Dustoff	Military medics
The Purple Heart	The Congressional Medal of Honor
Vietnam nurses	Hospital ships
Red Cross Donut Dollies	Gold Star Mothers
Navy SEALs in Vietnam	PSYOPS (propaganda)
POW bracelets	The Battle of Hue
The Tet Offensive	Helicopters in Vietnam
The Vietnam Veterans Memorial	Agent Orange

## **Background Vietnam Multi-Media Requirements**

### **Final project must include:**

1. **At least 10 slides, including:**
  - a. **A title slide**
  - b. **A thesis slide**
  - c. **Supporting information**
  - d. **Appropriate graphics**
  - e. **Complete Works Cited slide**
  - f. **Optional but encouraged: music, audio, art**
2. **Information from at least three written sources. One must be a first-person (primary) source.**
3. **Internal notations for quoted material.**

### **Remember:**

Text is the “meat and potatoes.” Audio and graphics are the salt and pepper. Concentrate on facts first and spices as flavor.

Do not overuse special effects, colors, mixed fonts and gimmicks which can often distract the audience.

Be sure your text is readable. Make sure fonts are large enough and stand out against backgrounds.

Do not type too much on one slide.

Pay attention to Fair Use Guidelines. Cite your sources, including photographs.

Practice your presentation before you give it! Multi-media is a way to support an oral presentation. Do not read to your audience; tell them a story. Use your slide show to support your story. Elaborate!



**TEACHER GUIDE: *In The Shadow of The Blade* Learning Activity:**

**The Stories Behind The Names**

As *In The Shadow of the Blade* illustrates, behind each name on the Vietnam Veterans Memorial (“The Wall”) is the story of a person who left friends and loved ones behind. This learning activity encourages students to connect with—and perhaps help preserve—those stories in a way that will have lifelong meaning for them and others.

1. Students select the name of an American killed in Vietnam, either *through In the Shadow of the Blade*, through personal knowledge, or through Internet listings ([www.virtualwall.org](http://www.virtualwall.org)) or [www.thevirtualwall.org](http://www.thevirtualwall.org).
2. Students research information about the individual, including his or her branch of service, unit, dates of service, military occupational specialty (“job”), family, city, cause of death, and another information that brings the veteran “to life.” Factual information related to the war (places, battles, roles) should be included.
3. Students create a history of the person, ideally including written and graphic components. Students should also be encouraged to create a personal tribute. This project is ideally presented in a multi-media slide show, but can also be an opportunity for students to use their artistic skills in other media.
4. The final product is presented to the class and, if appropriate, to the Virtual Wall, or to the family. Students should be advised that, should they have the opportunity to visit the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, they can leave their tributes, which are collected nightly and stored by the National Archives.

Note: This is a great opportunity for young people to use their individual talents. Those who can write poetry, compose songs, paint, draw, etc. should be encouraged to use their talents in this project.

***In The Shadow of The Blade* Learning Activity:**

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_ CLASS: \_\_\_\_\_

**The Stories Behind The Names**

As *In The Shadow of the Blade* illustrates, behind each name on the National Vietnam Veterans Memorial (“The Wall”) is the story of a person who left friends and loved ones behind. This learning activity encourages you to connect with—and perhaps help preserve—those stories in a way that will have lifelong meaning for them and others.

1. Select the name of an American Killed In Action (KIA) in Vietnam, either through *In The Shadow of The Blade*, through personal knowledge, or through Internet listings ([www.thevirtualwall.org](http://www.thevirtualwall.org)).
2. Research information about the individual, including his or her branch of service, unit, dates of service, military occupational specialty (“job”), family, city, cause of death, and another information that brings the veteran “to life.” Factual information related to the war (places, battles, roles) should be included.
3. Create a history of the person, including written and graphic components in a multi-media presentation, according to the requirements.

**Final project must include:**

**At least 10 slides, or an original artistic creation, including:**

- a. **A title**
- b. **A thesis**
- c. **Supporting information**
- d. **Appropriate graphics**
- e. **Complete Works Cited**
- f. **Optional but encouraged: music, audio, art**

**Information from at least three written sources. One must be a first-person (primary) source.**

**Internal notations for quoted material.**

4. Present your final product to the class and, if you choose, to the Virtual Wall and/or the family. *Should you ever have the opportunity to visit the National Vietnam Veterans Memorial, you can leave your tribute and it will be collected and stored by the National Archives.*

**Appropriate tone and respect are expected of and required from you at all times during this project.**





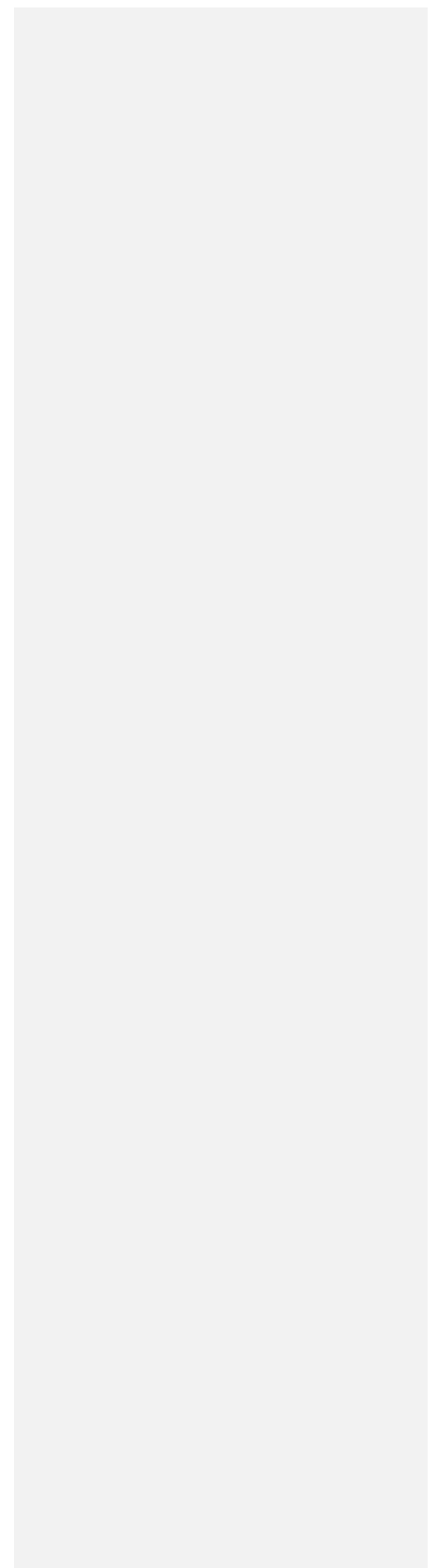
***In The Shadow of The Blade* Learning Activity:  
Multi-Media Project Rubric**

STUDENT'S NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

PRESENTATION TITLE: \_\_\_\_\_

Required slides	10 points	_____
Consistent background	10 points	_____
Readable font	20 points	_____
Substantive content	35 points	_____
Visual enhancements	15 points	_____
Reflects serious work/ Professional look	10 points	_____
Total points earned	100 points	_____

COMMENTS:



## Suggested Websites for Vietnam War Study

*In the Shadow of The Blade* producers recommend....

**The Virtual Wall** [www.virtualwall.org](http://www.virtualwall.org). An online replica of the National Vietnam Veterans Memorial, with multiple search options.

**The Vietnam Helicopter Pilots Association.** [www.vhpa.org](http://www.vhpa.org). An online repository of information about helicopter warfare in Vietnam, including first-person accounts which have been verified by VHPA historians.

**Texas Tech University Vietnam Center and Archive.** [www.vietnam.ttu.edu/](http://www.vietnam.ttu.edu/). Searchable online collection of oral history interviews, photographs, audio, and other digital archives. (Also includes an excellent teacher resource page.)

**Illyria: Women in Vietnam.** [www.illyria.com/vnwomen.html](http://www.illyria.com/vnwomen.html). Historical information, photographs, and first-person accounts, including poetry and personal essays by women who served in the Vietnam War.

**Dustoff Association.** [www.dustoff.org](http://www.dustoff.org). War stories, photographs, and factual information about Army helicopter medical evacuation in Vietnam.

**Military Order of the Purple Heart.** [www.purpleheart.org](http://www.purpleheart.org). Provides a history of this organization for combat wounded troops, and links to local chapters.

**The Vietnam Veterans Memorial.** <http://thewall-usa.com>. Among other features, includes writings by veterans and families, casualty summaries, and information about POW bracelets in addition to information about the memorial.

**Sons and Daughters in Touch.** [www.sdit.org](http://www.sdit.org). Tributes and information from the children of military personnel killed in action in Vietnam.

**Three's In: Nam POWs.** [www.nampows.org](http://www.nampows.org). Website created by former Vietnam Prisoners of War.

**Vietnam Magazine.** [www.historynet.com/vietnam](http://www.historynet.com/vietnam). Magazine dedicated to the history of the Vietnam War.

## Further Reading

*In the Shadow of The Blade* producers recommend....

### **Two books that capture the gritty realities of combat in Vietnam:**

*We Were Soldiers Once and Young*. Harold Moore and Joe Galloway. First-person non-fiction account of the Battle of the Ia Drang.

*Matterhorn*. Karl Marlantes. A fictional account of U.S. Marines in I Corps, written by a Marine veteran.

### **A non-fiction work that develops the contrasting experiences of a generation during the Vietnam War:**

*They Marched Into Sunlight: War and Peace Vietnam and America October 1967*. David Maraniss.

### **A non-fiction collection of stories of 26 American women who served in the Vietnam War:**

*A Piece of My Heart*. Keith Walker.

### **A compilation of excerpted readings from all genres:**

*The Vietnam War Reader*. Steward O’Nan, editor.

### **Family perspectives:**

*Hero Mama: A Daughter Remembers the Father She Lost in Vietnam and the Mother Who Held Her Family Together* by Karen Spears Zacharias (non-fiction)

*In Country*. Bobbie Ann Mason.

### **Individual Heroes:**

*Heart of a Soldier*. James B. Stewart. The story of Vietnam veteran Rick Rescorla, a hero of the Battle of the Ia Drang, who went on to save thousands of lives on 9/11, only to perish himself.

*Medal of Honor: One Man’s Journey From Poverty and Prejudice*. Roy Benavidez. Powerful autobiography of a poor Hispanic boy from rural Texas who grew up to be a hero.

## Vietnam Veteran Speakers in the Classroom

Inviting a Vietnam veteran or a panel of veterans to speak to your classes is an excellent learning opportunity for your students, and one which many veterans are happy to provide.

### Where To Find Veterans

If you don't know anyone personally, check with your community's Veterans of Foreign Wars chapter, Vietnam Veterans of America chapter, Disabled American Veterans or Military Order of the Purple Heart Chapter. Organizations such as the Vietnam Helicopter Pilots Association ([vhpa.org](http://vhpa.org)) can also help.

### Preparing Your Speaker

It will be helpful to your speaker to tell him or her a little about your classes, such as their age range and what they have been studying. Provide as much information as you can about your goals for the session. Be sure to ask him or her to bring visuals—photographs that can be projected, uniforms, medals—these are the things that help bring the story to life for the students. (Be sure to remind them about weapons policies at your school, which might not allow even historic, unarmed weapons.) Be sure to give your speaker(s) information about where to park and check-in or other policies at your school.

### Prepare Your Students

Tell your students that a veteran or veterans will be volunteering time to help them learn about their experiences and to answer questions. Establish clear expectations about the need to demonstrate respect for this person's history as a one who has served the country in war. Students may be naturally curious about things that are uncomfortable for some veterans. For example, "how many people did you kill?" or "do you have PTSD?" are not appropriate questions, but "how do feel your war experience has affected your life since? is.

### Be Present

Your speaker does not have your experience with your students, and likely has limited experience before an audience of any kind, particularly adolescents. It is important that you participate as both a guide and, if necessary, an intermediary to ensure that the discussions stay on topic and that students who might "act out" are reigned in promptly. Moreover, you will not want to miss this: what a wonderful learning experience this will be for both you and your classes!

