



Red Haze: Australians and New Zealanders in Vietnam

by Leon Davidson

black dog books
The Drum Series

Teacher Notes prepared by Joy Lawn, Children's Literature Consultant.

Rationale

Red Haze finds a niche in historical writing about the Vietnam War. It focuses on Australian and New Zealand involvement. These teacher notes have been written to send students back to the text and other sources, actively engage in learning and provide a creative learning experience, where possible.

How to use

Learning activities suggested in one KLA (Key Learning Area) may also be applicable to another KLA.

Readership

Middle school and older, for class study and wider reading.

Genre - Factual

KEY LEARNING AREAS

SOSE / HSIE

Title

Discuss why the book is entitled Red Haze? (Suggested answers: It is an interesting, more appealing title than simply Australians and New Zealanders in Vietnam).

'Red Haze' – references and interpretations: Communism is symbolised by the colour red (P23); 'red dust' (P34, 50, 51, 55); 'red soil' (P6); 'monsoonal haze' (P7); 'red haze' missions – 'These missions were ordered after infra-red photos of jungle in Vietcong areas showed red spots, indicating body heat...' (P35-36).

Why is the subtitle also important?

The chapter headings are appropriate and thoughtful, such as 'Dying for Peace'. In eight groups, analyse a chapter each, considering the appropriateness of the chapter heading and the content, interest-level and clarity. Report your findings to the whole class.

International Involvement

Outline the reasons for involvement by America, Australia and New Zealand. See Chapter Two: 'The Long Path to War'.

When the New Zealanders joined the Australians in Vietnam, 'The Anzac tradition forged in Gallipoli in the First World War was to continue on the shores of yet another country' (P29) How did the ANZAC tradition continue in Vietnam? (P49) Does it continue today? If so, how?

**War**

1. What reasons or principles do you think justify sending Australian or New Zealand troops to war in another country?
2. Comment on the irony of the first Australian killed in Vietnam being shot by fellow Australians (P48).
3. History should make us ask questions about the present and future. Is Australia likely to have a civil war? If so, what could be possible causes?
4. Is there such a thing as 'a right war for the times'?
5. What is a 'just war'? Read page 113 and other sources.
6. Read Chapter Five: 'The Other Side' to gain an insight into the Vietnamese view. Why did some become Vietcong? (P67)
7. Is the following a reasonable view? 'I never felt guilty about the killing I did. It was war... if I went to America and killed people there, I would feel very sorry and guilty. Since the Americans came to my country, I don't feel guilty.' (P76)
8. An outcome of war is refugees. Read accounts of refugees from a range of sources, including from Red Haze (P33-34). Compare and contrast with contemporary refugees.
9. Critique the behaviour of some of the drunken soldiers (P90-94).
10. After reading the final chapter, 'Dying for Peace' and the Conclusion, find a way to deter people from war. This could involve multimedia, print media or the arts.
11. See further questions about civil war and invasion in the KLA ENGLISH: Speaking and Listening.

Democracy versus Communism

The Vietnam War is reputed to have been caused by the conflict between democracy and communism (P1). Show the differences between these as a comparison table. Use Red Haze and other sources. Eg. Communism could unite the poor with promises of land (P18).

Guerilla Warfare

Trace the descriptions of guerilla warfare as implemented by the Vietcong, including booby-traps, tunnels and links with the peasants (P39, 40, 48, 51, 52, 59, 61, 68, 71, 74, 76, 77-83).

American and Australian fighting tactics

Make an animation or short movie showing the difference between the American and Australian fighting tactics.

Eg. The Americans lit up their base with flares and played music loudly whereas the Australians relied on stealth and ambush (P36). The Americans didn't want to hold territory but the Australians did (P40-41). Look at body counts (P41), and WW1 charges (P64).

Which style of fighting was more successful? Support your view. Were both appropriate? (P49)

Dissension and anti-war feeling

Read Chapter 7: 'One Side Right, One Side Wrong'. After reading the chapter and watching some television footage of the times, in small groups role-play the protesters, such as:

1. the "Free Zarb" campaign (P110).
2. the opposing groups, such as those within the peace movement (P106-107).
3. ASIO (P107).
4. the roles of Muhammad Ali and Martin Luther King (P119).
5. putting the daisy in the barrel of the gun (P120).

No physical contact is necessary. Remember to debrief.



Australia, New Zealand and Vietnam: the present

Australia and Vietnam have cordial relations today. Consider tourism and migration. Investigate whether Vietnam's relationship with New Zealand and America is similar.

Australia, New Zealand and America: the relationship

Summarise America's role as 'protector of Australia', Australia's role as ally (P104-105, 122) and New Zealand's role as ally and independent (P106, 108) - from the text and since the Vietnam War.

Prisoners of War

WIAs (Wounded in Action) were converted to KIAs (Killed in Action) P89-90.

Compare the treatment of POWs in Vietnam with those in past wars such as WWII and with recent wars, such as the invasion of Iraq.

Brainstorm known treatment of POWs. Classify into humane and inhumane. Research international guidelines for treatment of POWs.

Agent Orange and napalm

Use the glossary, index and other sources to understand the impact of these

Terrain

1. The Vietnamese terrain is described incidentally, such as the rubber trees (P5, 10). Find more clues in the written text to build a profile of the landscape, such as on pages 55-56. The photographs provide a visual picture, such as the rubber plantation (P13).

2. Kokoda: Compare and contrast the terrain, and its

effects, in Vietnam and on the Kokoda Track in WW2. See Chapter 4: 'In Country'.

3. Extension: make a model of the South Vietnamese terrain.

Life and Culture

Cook a Vietnamese dish, possibly using fish sauce or paste (P33, 52).

See also KLA CREATIVE ARTS: Art and Craft

ENGLISH

Reading and Writing

Media

The impact that the media had on the war is reputed to have extended it (P112). View film footage and photographs. What impact do you think the media had on civilian response to the war? Use examples to explain.

Collect visual and/or written images from the contemporary media about a war or skirmish. Explain the impact of the media today by presenting one or more of these images. Consider what response the creator is trying to achieve.

Literature Circle

Read other titles in The Drum series, including *Scarecrow Army: The Anzacs at Gallipoli* (shortlisted CBCA 2006), to complete a factual Literature Circle. 'The Drum' is defined as 'Inside information: reliable, confidential, or profitable: to give someone the drum'. After reading each book, evaluate if it meets these criteria.



Visual Literacy

Cover

The cover shows a partially obscured, intriguing photo from the Australian War Memorial archives. What is happening? Why has this photo been selected?

Comment on content (landscape, helicopters, soldiers) and layout and positioning (foreground, position and angle of title).

Comment on the font type, size and colour. Comment on the colours used on the cover, particularly with reference to the title, Red Haze.

Compare with Leon Davidson's first book, Scarecrow Army, with particular reference to complementing colours, use of the foreground and titles on an angle.

Download other photos showing the Vietnam War. Select a photo to substitute for the one on the cover. Justify your choice.

Internal Repeated Photographs

Two of the internal photographs are used to create repeated motifs – the helicopter and the marching soldiers. Make your own photo-montage based on one or two photos of the Vietnam War. Use cropping, repeated motifs, different angles, changing and zooming focus.

Optional: Include one or a few words of text to highlight a reality or reaction to war, such as 'No return', 'Why?'.

Other Photographs

Skim through the book by looking at the photographs. (This could be completed as part of KLA SOSE / HSIE: Overview of Chapters and Chapter Headings)

Author profile

Read more about the creator, Leon Davidson on the black dog books website. What should Leon Davidson write about next? (Kokoda?) Why?

Author's View

In the Introduction, Leon Davidson clearly tells the reader his aim.

'This book doesn't try to tell the whole story. What I've tried to do is present a balanced view of the war from both an Australian and New Zealand perspective. Even so, it's not possible to tell that story completely in one book. In many ways this war is as divisive now as it was back then... there were at least two versions of the war, and if you made a pile of books for each version, there'd be few books that didn't belong on either of those piles.' (P2)

Has the author succeeded in his aim to give a balanced view? Cite examples, including primary sources where possible.

Take up the author's challenge and decide for yourself if the war was right or wrong (P3).

Language

In Chapter One, the author has used words in an interesting way by writing non-fiction as a recount and bringing it to life. Find examples, such as, 'Withering machinegun and small-arms fire whacked into tree trunks and bodies, as rocket-propelled grenades tore trees to pieces.' (P6).

Rewrite another chapter (or part of) in this immediate style.

Extension: re-enact the rewritten chapter.



Speaking and Listening

Civil War: Debate 'The Vietnam War was an invasion, not civil war'. See pages 2, 26 and elsewhere.

Discuss

With knowledge of what has happened since the Vietnam War, has history vindicated one or both sides – civil war or invasion?

Why were the returning Australian and New Zealand soldiers regarded as scapegoats and denied a heroic return?

All countries have divergences of race, religions and other characteristics. What causes some countries to engage in civil war and others not? Why hasn't Australia had a civil war?

Enemies

Whom, if anyone, do you consider to be your enemy – personal or national? Why? How could this situation be rectified? Private Bodey from A Company's account of his first personal sighting of the enemy personalises the enemy:

'...as the second one bolted he looked back over his shoulder, and gave me a look that was filled with terror. I am positive I looked back at him with the same expression on my face.' (P11)

Discuss the pros and cons of personalising the enemy.

Book features and Format

Red Haze has many features that are important in factual texts:

1. Table of Contents
2. Index
3. Glossary

Additional features that improve the usability of this book are the:

1. Timeline
2. Acknowledgements / Bibliography
3. Maps (see Contents page)
4. Photographs
5. Illustrations
6. Quotes (at each chapter beginning)
7. Subheadings
8. Break-out boxes / Information panels

Select one or more of these features and write an analysis of their effectiveness.

Show pros and cons.

CREATIVE ARTS

Drama

Street Theatre

Protestors created street theatres to show the situation in South Vietnam (P104). In groups, create street theatres



to show what you know of this situation. Avoid physical contact. Perform in the playground. Debrief.

Music

Khe Sanh

Khe Sanh was the location of an American base (P85-86). The Australian band, Cold Chisel song, wrote a song, Khe Sanh. Listen to a recording of this song. Discuss the lyrics. How do they corroborate what you have learned from the book text? This song rates highly on popularity polls. Why is it so popular? Study lyrically and musically.

Art and Craft

Life and Culture

Aspects of Vietnamese life and culture are described during the book. Find examples of these and make a multi-sensory display using, for example, silhouettes for the 'black pyjamas' (P32), and the smell of fish sauce (P33). Discover other features of Vietnamese life and incorporate.

Cartoons

Michael Leunig (P101, 117), uses art to express his views, including those against war. He was conscripted during the Vietnam War but responded by registering himself as a conscientious objector. He has taken an anti-war stance on other wars, including the invasion of Iraq.

Discover his anti-war cartoons in his book compilations or on the internet. The Michael Leunig tribute website may be useful www.leunig.com.au. How is the cartoon a useful medium to express opinions? Draw an anti-war cartoon.

About the author

Leon Davidson's grandfather served in occupied Germany after the First World War, then, after settling in New Zealand, was wounded in the Second World War.

His father volunteered for Vietnam but was turned down because he had unpaid parking fines. He went on to join the territorials. When Leon was eight, he went into the New Zealand Army Headquarters and asked what he had to do to become a soldier.

In the years since, he has become strongly opposed to war, most recently travelling 2,500 kilometres across the Australian desert to protest against an American surveillance base.

Before moving to Australia, Leon studied Classics. He is now living back home in New Zealand, though he enjoyed the six years he lived in Melbourne — not least because it made him realise how much of a New Zealander he is. *Scarecrow Army: The Anzacs at Gallipoli* is his first book — a story "that's not just about names and dates, or myths, but about the lives of the Anzacs who fought there."