

Possible approaches for teachers using New Zealand and the Vietnam War in their programme

A. Society and conflict

While this material relates specifically to New Zealand and the Vietnam War teachers can use it to explore broader concepts such as:

- Why do we go to war?
- Do people have a say in the decision to go to war?
- When war breaks out who should be sent to fight?
- How do governments influence our attitudes to war and fighting?
- How would we behave in combat?
- What do 'we' as a society owe those who go to war?
- What role does our military history play in our heritage and sense of national identity?

These concepts are all important when exploring the wider concepts of civics and citizenship that underpin the social studies curriculum.

B. New Zealand and the Vietnam War

Key questions to explore:

- Why did the Vietnam War occur?
- Why did New Zealand become involved in the Vietnam War?
- What were the different opinions of New Zealanders to the Vietnam War?
- What were some of the social and political consequences of the war for New Zealand and New Zealanders?

C. Vietnamese people in New Zealand

Many social studies units explore migrant/settler groups. The arrival of Vietnamese refugees here in 1977 is an excellent case study that considers another consequence of this war for New Zealand.

After the defeat of South Vietnam in 1975 there was a mass exodus of Vietnamese people. The social upheaval and adverse economic conditions arising from the war, combined with the fear and uncertainty of living under a new Communist government, led many people to flee Vietnam during the late 1970s and early 1980s. These refugees were often called 'boat people' because they fled in crowded, dangerously unfit boats.

In 1977 New Zealand accepted 412 Vietnamese refugees. By the end of 1980 there were approximately 2000 Vietnamese refugees in New Zealand.

For more information on [Vietnamese in New Zealand](#) go to the New Zealand Peoples section of Te Ara – The Encyclopedia of New Zealand.

New Zealand and the Vietnam War – where it fits in the curriculum

History

New Zealand's involvement in the Vietnam War is an ideal broad context for the research standards offered at Levels 1-3 of NCEA. There are any number of broad historical themes and ideas that could be explored, including the Cold War, New Zealand's search for security in the period after 1945, and changing attitudes to war and warfare. This topic is also an ideal extension to a number of existing history topics.

- Year 12/NCEA Level 2

Vietnam and the conflict in Indo-China 1945-1975 is one of the most popular topics in Year 12 history. As part of Theme D it examines *imperialism, indigenous peoples and the emergence of new nations*. New Zealand's role and participation in this conflict is not really addressed. Teachers could consider introducing this to give the existing topic a little more relevance to New Zealand students. The exploration of this country's role could be used as an extension of this topic and is a good option for the Level 2 research standards.

The Year 12 topic *Search for security in the nuclear age 1945-present* would also present an opportunity to examine New Zealand's participation in the Vietnam War as a case study of the wider issue of post Second World War security.

- Year 11/NCEA Level 2

Many schools study *New Zealand's search for security 1945-1985*. Primarily the focus is not on how the war affected New Zealanders. This material would offer classes the opportunity to take a closer look at this aspect of our post-war search for security by looking at some of the consequences for New Zealand and New Zealanders of our involvement in the war.

Social Studies

The new social studies curriculum offers a number of opportunities to explore this topic from Levels 4-8.

Level 4

Students will gain knowledge, skills, and experience to:

- Understand that events have causes and effects.
- Understand how formal and informal groups make decisions that impact on communities.

Level 5

Students will gain knowledge, skills, and experience to:

- Understand how the ideas and actions of people in the past have had a significant impact on people's lives.
- Understand how people define and seek human rights.

Level 6 - History

- Understand how the causes and consequences of past events that are of significance to New Zealanders shape the lives of people and society.
- Understand how people's perspectives on past events that are of significance to New Zealanders differ.

Level 7 - History

- Understand how historical forces and movements have influenced the causes and consequences of events of significance to New Zealanders.
- Understand how people's interpretations of events that are of significance to New Zealanders differ.

Level 8 - History

- Understand that the causes, consequences and explanations of historical events that are of significance to New Zealanders are complex, and how and why they are contested.
- Understand how trends over time reflect social, economic, and political forces.