

Student Handout
Oakland Museum of California
What's Going On? California and the Vietnam Era
Lesson Plan #2

1968: Year of Social Change and Turning Point in Vietnam and the U.S.

Discussion Questions for *Hearts and Minds*

Each day discuss and respond to these questions:

Questions for “Why did we go there?”

1. What is the connection between Communism and the U.S. military presence in Vietnam? How does the filmmaker, Peter Davis, address this question?
2. After seeing the various images of Hung Dinh village and listening to several villagers speak about their village, what do you think the village woman meant when she said that every bird must have a nest to return to?
3. What did the combat veterans say about the war and what they did in Vietnam?
4. While Davis does present opposing views, can you see certain stereotypes, for instance, in the quotations he chooses from the veterans? How are the anti-war vets portrayed? The pro-war ones? While this may reflect the reality of the people he interviewed, are there choices the director makes that you would like to change if you were redoing the film?

Questions for “What did we do there?”

1. A number of speakers address the issue of death. What do the speakers you took notes for say about it?
2. What is a football pep talk doing in a documentary about the Vietnam War?
3. Why are some of the combat veterans angry while others are not?

Questions for “What did the ‘doing,’ in turn do to us?”

1. Why is the Tet Offensive at the beginning of 1968 such a powerful event?
2. Walt Rostow and the David Emerson family are clear supporters of the Vietnam War. Who are their counterparts in this documentary and why did they not support the war on reflection?
3. What does the filmmaker reveal about public sentiment displayed at the victory parade celebrating the end of the war?
4. How should the country honor veterans, even in an unpopular war? How should soldiers be accountable, if they have done something against international law?

