

THE NEGOTIATION OF EMOTION AND DUTY

GRADES: 7-12 **SUBJECT:** Civics

OBJECTIVES: Students will:

- Identify reasons people serve in the military
- Explore the relationship between military service and civic responsibility
- Assess the impact of combat on members of the armed forces
- Examine the dissension that occasionally arises between military service and personal feelings regarding combat
- Write a monologue in the voice of an unknown soldier about experiences in a famous battle or war

STANDARDS: Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning (McREL)

• Civics

27: Understands how certain character traits enhance citizens' ability to fulfill personal and civic responsibilities

• United States History

14: Understands the course and character of the Civil War and its effects on the American people

21: Understands the changing role of the United States in world affairs through World War I

25: Understands the causes and course of World War II, the character of the war at home and abroad, and its reshaping of the U.S. role in world affairs

27: Understands how the Cold War and conflicts in Korean and Vietnam influenced domestic and international politics

• National Standards for Civics and Government (Center for Civic Education)

V. What are the Roles of the Citizen in American Democracy?

B. What are the rights of citizens?

C. What are the responsibilities of citizens?

E. How can citizens take part in civic life?

MATERIALS:

- The film American Valor
- Television and VCR
- Chart paper and markers and/or chalkboard and chalk
- Computers with Internet access

ESTIMATED TIME: 5-7 classroom periods (students can conduct some research outside of the classroom)

PROCEDURES: *NOTE: It is assumed that students have viewed American Valor.*

1) Ask students why people serve in the military. They may note reasons that include patriotism, career opportunity, and conscription or selective service, "the draft". Encourage them to share stories of people with whom they are familiar, who have been or are in the armed services. Ask students to identify some of the reasons those interviewed for American Valor joined the armed forces.

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- 2) Discuss with the class what status serving in the armed forces holds in the nation's constitutional democracy. Is it a right or a civic responsibility? Is it a mandated activity for all citizens? When is one required to serve in the military? How does one negotiate being required to serve if he or she has anti-war sentiments? Are certain people exempt from serving? Why do people volunteer to join the military? Provide students background on selective service and those who choose not to serve (conscientious objectors) when required to do so.
- 3) Ask students to discuss their feelings about war. Do they feel it is necessary? How might they respond to being drafted into the military? How might they respond if they had to participate in combat? How might they feel if they came face to face with the enemy? Encourage students to share stories of people with whom they are familiar, who participated in combat.
- 4) Ask students to recollect the feelings American Valor interviewees had regarding their participation in the armed forces and combat. How do most of them balance their military responsibilities and individual feelings about war and combat? For some interviewed, such as Jon Cavaiani, there is a turning point during their term when they have different feelings about the war in which they are fighting. Who else in the film has similar experiences? Describe them. Might all of those interviewed have enlisted if selective service had not existed during their lifetimes?
- 5) Have students review the film segments in which Medal of Honor winner John Baca shares his experience of encountering an enemy soldier and the work he undertook in Vietnam after the war. What do his actions suggest about his involvement in the Vietnam War? How did he negotiate his feelings when encountering an enemy soldier? Why does he return to Vietnam to assist the North Vietnamese? Would students have acted similarly had they been in Baca's shoes?

John Baca:

I walked the point I think Christmas, Christmas morning, I saw this North Vietnamese soldier sitting on a, a trail on a bunker. And I just kinda caught him off guard and surprised him. And I was away from my, I was like, it was just him and I, and his rifle was beside him, and I just knew like, you know, God, I don't want to shoot this guy, and he doesn't want to die, you know, I'm afraid, there's nobody here, what do I do? and I knew what to say to him, surrender, you know, choo hoi, and that was the words he wanted, and I motioned for him to move to another area, say like, covering, so I could run down there and pick him up, and I did. And I had pictures of my mom and my sisters, and I shared them with him, and he had pictures of his family. And I knew, what are we doing, you know? You know, he just, he's happy he didn't, he didn't die. He was 16 years old, fighting for his country. You know, and I think taking that guy and realizing and you know, what, it kind of changed the morale, kind of mellowed people out. It was a, it was a beautiful time, it was like a beautiful Christmas gift.

In 1990 I went back to Vietnam with my friend Art. And there was eight of us that went back, and we stayed for two months. For six weeks we worked, we worked alongside the North Vietnamese out, 12 kilometers outside Hanoi building an American/Vietnamese Friendship Clinic. And somehow you know that, that kid I took alive, you know, 20 years earlier, my Christmas gift, and somehow his, he was there in that crowd working with us. You know, those Vietnamese just befriended us, loved us.

- 6) Have students select a major war or a battle (starting with the Civil War) in which the US was involved (It might be helpful to offer students a list of such battles. It is recommended that each student have a different battle to research.). Instruct students assume the role of an unknown soldier. In their monologues, they should provide accurate historical information on the selected battle and imagine the soldier's emotional state during combat, particularly the negotiation of feelings and civic duty.

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ASSESSMENT: Create a rubric that evaluates student involvement in class discussion and group participation. Students can maintain portfolios that chart the progress of their monologues.

- EXTENDED ACTIVITIES:** **Students can:**
- Write reviews of several books of combat narratives (Refer to these sites for book information: World War II Books Reviewed: First-Hand Accounts and Autobiographies <http://www.jodavidsmeyer.com/combat/bookstore/latest.html>; Military Personal Narratives http://www.slmn.org/products/category.php?browsename=Book_Military+Personal+Narratives)
 - Interview local veterans about their combat experiences
 - Interview enlisted service people yet to fight in war about their feelings and civic duty as military personnel
 - Create timelines of major battles during major wars, with an emphasis on how they altered the course of history

WEBSITES: **United States Army**
<http://www.spartacus.schoolnet.co.uk/FWWusa.htm>

Draft riots
<http://www.factmonster.com/ce6/history/A0816049.html>

Selective service (conscription, the draft)
<http://www.factmonster.com/ce6/history/A0844347.html>

Conscientious objector
<http://www.factmonster.com/ce6/history/A0813284.html>

Famous Battles in Marine Corps History
http://marines.com/about_marines/famousbattles.asp

Wars and Conflicts of the United States Navy
<http://www.history.navy.mil/wars/>

Battles that Changed History
<http://www.factmonster.com/ipka/A0769941.html>

ABOUT THE AUTHOR: From classroom instructor to an executive director, Michele Israel has been an educator for nearly 20 years. She has developed and managed innovative educational initiatives, taught in nontraditional settings in the U.S. and overseas, developed curricula and educational materials, and designed and facilitated professional development for classroom and community educators. Currently operating Educational Consulting Group, Israel is involved with diverse projects, including strategic planning and product development.