



#9752

KENT STATE: THE DAY THE WAR CAME HOME

LANDMARK MEDIA, 2000

Grade Levels: 10-13+

47 minutes

DESCRIPTION

Kent State University, Ohio, May 4, 1970; 13 seconds, 67 bullets, 9 wounded, 4 dead. Former students and Ohio National Guardsmen reflect on the events of May 1-4, 1970, that led to the shooting at Kent State University. Archival footage, photos, and individual reminiscences evoke the emotional responses to student protests over the United States' involvement in Southeast Asia.



ACADEMIC STANDARDS

Subject Area: United States History – Era 9 – Postwar United States (1945 to early 1970s)

- ★ Standard: Understands how the Cold War and conflicts in Korean and Vietnam influenced domestic and international politics
 - Benchmark: Understands political and social characteristics of the Vietnam War (e.g., the Vietnam policy of the Kennedy, Johnson, and Nixon administrations and shifts of public opinion about the war; the role of the Nixon administration in the Paris Peace Accord of 1973; early U.S. involvement in Vietnam following World War II and policies of the Truman and Eisenhower administrations) (See Instructional Goal #5.)
 - Benchmark: Understands the social issues that resulted from U.S. involvement in the Vietnam War (e.g., the composition of American forces recruited in the war, why the Vietnam War contributed to a generational conflict and concomitant lack of respect for traditional authority figures) (See Instructional Goal #4.)



Subject Area: United States History – Era 10 –Contemporary United States (1968 to the present)

- ★ Standard: Understands developments in foreign policy and domestic politics between the Nixon and Clinton presidencies

- Benchmark: Understands the impact of the Nixon administration's ideas and policies on American society (e.g., factors that caused so many Americans to support Nixon and his "law and order" stance, Nixon's advocacy of family assistance and employment opportunity programs, the events of Watergate) (See Instructional Goal #3.)

Subject Area: Civics – What are the Basic Values and Principles of American Democracy

- ★ Standard: Understands the character of American political and social conflict and factors that tend to prevent or lower its intensity
 - Benchmark: Knows instances in which political conflict in the United States has been divisive and reasons for this division (e.g., the Civil War, labor unrest, civil rights struggles, opposition to the war in Vietnam) (See Instructional Goal #2.)

INSTRUCTIONAL GOALS

1. To present events leading up to and following the student protests and National Guard response at Kent State University in Ohio.
2. To examine divisive political conflict in the United States stemming from opposition to the war in Vietnam.
3. To introduce factors that caused so many Americans to support the "law and order" stance of the Ohio governor during the crisis at Kent State.
4. To describe why the Vietnam War contributed to a generational conflict and concomitant lack of respect for traditional authority figures.
5. To depict how conflicts in Cambodia and Vietnam and the Nixon administration's policies influenced public opinion.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

In 1970, the long struggle in Vietnam (French Indochina) had dragged on for 25 years with the Vietnamese first struggling to expel the French, and then against themselves in a civil war. Two of the superpowers, the US and the USSR, became involved. After the 1954 Geneva Accords, Vietnam, which was a French colony for 65 years, was divided for administrative purposes into a northern communist-dominated segment, and a southern segment striving towards democracy. North Vietnam and its supporters endeavored to unite the two halves into a communist state. The US became involved in support of South Vietnam's fledgling democracy by sending aid and advisors. The first American military deaths occurred in the Eisenhower presidency and continued through Presidents Kennedy, Johnson, and Nixon.

VOCABULARY

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|-----------------|---------------------|-----------------|
| 1. activists | 10. establishment | 19. outrage |
| 2. agitated | 11. evacuated | 20. paranoia |
| 3. bullhorn | 12. inflammatory | 21. pelting |
| 4. cease fire | 13. law enforcement | 22. perpetrated |
| 5. civil unrest | 14. leaflet | 23. projectiles |
| 6. constituents | 15. martial law | 24. protest |
| 7. disperse | 16. merchant | 25. turbulent |
| 8. eerie calm | 17. militant | 26. vigilant |
| 9. eradicate | 18. milliseconds | 27. vulnerable |

BEFORE SHOWING

1. Locate the following on a map of the world: Cambodia, Vietnam, Ohio, and Kent State University.
2. Review the history of the struggle in Vietnam and Nixon's decision to invade Cambodia.

AFTER SHOWING

► Discussion Items and Questions

1. What prompted the beginning of the Kent State University students' protest on April 30, 1970?
2. Why did the student protest on Friday, May 1, 1970, include a symbolic burying of the Constitution? In what other ways did students express their anti-war sentiments?
3. Why was the National Guard called in? Why were the local merchants grateful for the Guard's presence?
4. Why was the ROTC Building on the Kent State campus a target of anti-war protest?
5. What was the students' response to the ROTC Building burning? The fire department? Campus security? The National Guard? Why were there soldiers on the fire trucks later in the evening?
6. What was symbolic about the National Guard invading Kent State University? How was the initial protest both a military takeover and a party atmosphere? What was the significance of a flower in the gun barrel?
7. What was the response of the Ohio governor? How was the governor's broadcasted speech fuel on the fire? Why were the leaflets distributed by the university regarding dispersing ineffective?
8. What did the students want? How did the students' focus change from war in Asia to the National Guard's "takeover"? How did things escalate between the students and the Guard?
9. What led to the National Guard firing on the students? What resulted from the 13 seconds of shooting? What were the immediate responses and reflections of years later of Guardsmen, students, parents, and locals?
10. What determination was eventually made by the commission that investigated the incidents? Why is it still relevant to look back on the events at Kent State?

► Applications and Activities

1. Debate if the students had a constitutional right to assemble and protest the war in Vietnam and Cambodia. Consider the responsibility of law enforcement in civil protests.
2. Create obituaries, eulogies, or memorials for the four slain students: Sandra Lee Scheuer, Jeffrey Glen Miller, William K. Schroeder, and Allison Beth Krause.
3. Write a newspaper article or editorial regarding the Kent State protest. Assume the role of a student leader, a Guardsman, a local merchant, and a citizen desiring law and order.
 - a. Write separate pieces for each day from April 30 through May 4, 1970.
 - b. Interview members of the community who remember Kent State and other incidents of student unrest.
 - c. Write an anniversary article detailing the lessons learned at Kent State by former students, former Guardsmen, and other American citizens.

RELATED RESOURCES



- [1973: Guerrilla Wars #9020](#)
- [The Vietnam Memorials: All the Unsung Heroes #8577](#)



World Wide Web

The following Web sites complement the contents of this guide; they were selected by professionals who have experience in teaching deaf and hard of hearing students. Every effort was made to select accurate, educationally relevant, and "kid safe" sites. However, teachers should preview them before use. The U.S. Department of Education, the National Association of the Deaf, and the Captioned Media Program do not endorse the sites and are not responsible for their content.

• MIKE AND KENDRA'S MAY 4, 1970 WEBSITE

<http://www.may41970.com/>

In addition to photos, this site includes information regarding the chronology of events at Kent State, related student protests, and personal reflections of Kent State students.

• MAY FOURTH TASK FORCE

<http://dept.kent.edu/may4/>

This searchable site is dedicated to ensuring that the lessons of May 4 will not be forgotten. Includes photos, historical information regarding the task force and May 4, 1970, and extensive related links.

• MAY 4TH JMC ALUMNI WEBSITE

<http://jmc-reunion2000.freesevers.com/>

Initially created as a site for student journalists who covered the Kent State shootings, this site has been revised for the benefit of researchers, students and others. Includes news, commentary, and links for researching the shootings of students by the Ohio National Guard.