War will always have impacts on society and culture.

While the draft existed at many points across American history, it evolved significantly throughout the Vietnam War, and wide popular opposition led to the creation of an all-volunteer military force, with less than 1% of Americans serving. This lesson plan will involve a review of how the nature of conscription changed over the course of American history. Students will analyze markers of public opposition to various systems of conscription, and will debate the advantages and disadvantages of an all-volunteer military force.

DISCUSSION GUIDE

What Has Been the Evolution of the Draft System?
PRE-VISIT ACTIVITY 1

Mock Draft Lottery

Conduct a mock draft lottery in your classroom as a way of a.) demonstrating the logistics of the post-1969 lottery system and b.) using the chosen results as a way to analyze students’ perspectives on matters relating to the draft.

Place 12 slips of paper, numbered 1 through 12, in a bowl to draw from. Each number corresponds to a month of the year: 1 representing January, 2 representing February, and so on. The first number that is selected will be assigned #1 draft priority. For example, if 11 is the first number chosen from the bowl, all students with a November birthday will be assigned #1 draft priority, the next number/month chosen representing the #2 draft priority, and so on. After making all the selections, announce that only those with draft numbers 1-3 will be drafted. Have students reflect on their status from the mock draft as they consider the events and questions in the rest of the lesson.

PRE-VISIT ACTIVITY 2

Indictment of Dr. Spock

Ask students to read the January 1968 New York Times article about the indictment of Dr. Benjamin Spock, an iconic pediatrician well-known to parents across the country, who became known as a prominent draft resistor:

Ask students to answer the following discussion questions:

1.) What was the basis for Spock’s resistance to the draft?
2.) What was the crime that Dr. Spock was accused of having committed?
3.) Do you agree with Spock’s statement that the defiance of anti-draft youths was “a very patriotic endeavor of courage—the most effective way of opposing the war”? Why or why not?
4.) Do you feel that this source provided you enough information to determine whether Spock should be convicted? If not, what other information would be useful?
5.) What do you imagine your reaction would be if a situation like this happened today, in the context of a current war? Would you support or decry the draft? The draft resistor? Why?
In 1917, Congress passed the Selective Service Act, which required all men aged 20-30 to register for military service, with no possibility for a paid substitute (see slide 2). This marked the first national effort to get individuals registered for times of national emergency. About 10 million men registered, and by 1918 over 2.4 million men had been inducted by the local lottery system (see slide 3). It is estimated that at least 2 million men staged acts of civil disobedience by refusing to register. With the rise of public dissent against the war and against the draft, Congress passed the Sedition Act of 1918, which made it illegal to “willfully utter, print, write, or publish any disloyal, profane, scurrilous, or abusive language about the form of the Government of the United States” or to “willfully urge, incite, or advocate any curtailment of the production” of the things “necessary or essential to the prosecution of the war.” Ask students to observe George Bellows’ 1917 cartoon “Blessed Are the Peacemakers,” shown in slide 4. What details do you notice about the man depicted? In light of the Sedition Act, do you think the drawing and publication of this cartoon can be classified as civil disobedience? What can you infer about the state of free speech from this cartoon?

The outbreak of World War II in Europe and the Far East gave rise to the first ever peacetime conscription in the US with the passage of the Selective Training and Services Act of 1940. This act increased the range of ages for registration to any male between 21 and 35. Those who were drafted by local draft boards would be required to serve for one year somewhere in the Western hemisphere. In 1941 following the attack on Pearl Harbor, the age was lowered to 18, and location of service was changed to anywhere required. Official provisions were made for those who identified as conscientious objectors-- they could be permitted to perform alternative national service in place of military service if drafted. Much of the public dissent against the war came from conscientious objectors, such as those depicted protesting conscription in 1941 in New York in slide 5.

Do you think a draft system is needed?

Begin by asking students: Do you think a draft system is needed in this country? Why or why not? Some form of conscription, or draft, has existed in the US at many points since the nation’s founding, though it has changed in nature over time.

During the Civil War, riots erupted in New York in response to a draft that was enacted in the Union in 1863 (see slide 1). Eligible men aged 25 to 45 were compelled to serve unless they could pay $300 for a substitute. A similar law had been enacted in the South the previous year, in 1862. Much of the opposition to the draft in the Union was closely related to the perception of status and power of working class white Americans (particularly Irish immigrants) in relation to the status of black Americans, who were exempt from service because they were not considered citizens but (in the white perspective) enjoyed some of the same freedoms as citizens in the Union. There were over 1000 deaths in the riots, and one consequence was the 1865 amendment to the Enrollment Act, which punished draft evasion with loss of citizenship.
Ask students to examine the image on slide 6. What is happening in this scene? Students from the University of Washington are burning their draft cards, which are notices sent by the government indicating that a person had been registered with the Selective Service System, and indicated that person’s status in the system. Leading up to and during the Vietnam War, the draft evolved in how individuals could “defer” their service; in the way the draft system worked; and in the growth of popular resistance against a draft system. First, there were several ways in which an individual could receive a deferment of service with changes to draft classifications introduced in 1962, including: being a college student; being a student at a divinity school, or being a clergy leader; having dependent children; being the sole supporter of a parent; various forms of medical exemptions.

Watch the video of the nationally televised draft lottery drawing included on slide 7. If the teacher chose to do the first suggested pre-visit activity, this process will be familiar to the students as they were assigned their own draft numbers within the class. On November 26, 1969 President Nixon signed an amendment to the Military Selective Service Act of 1967 that established conscription based on random selection (lottery). Opposition to the draft during Vietnam was widespread, with some personally opposed to forced military service, some opposed to the war as a whole as illegitimate and immoral, and some opposed to the system of deferments which led to a disproportionately working class force in Vietnam— as many as three quarters of those who served in Vietnam were from either working or lower class families. In 1971, student deferments were ended, and draft boards (who would review other types of deferments which were still allowed) were compelled to revise their makeup if necessary to better reflect the communities they represented. These changes sought to make the process and priorities for induction more transparent and fair by creating a process of random selection, as opposed to the (some would argue) subjective processes of selection that would occur within local draft boards.

Between 1964 and 1973, nearly two million men were drafted. In 1973, in large part due to public opinion, the draft officially ended and, with the support of President Nixon, an all-volunteer military force was established. Ask students to read the excerpt from the Gates Commission report on the establishment of an all-volunteer force that is included on slide 8. Can you point out where opposition to the draft and the anti-war movement of the Vietnam era is subtly referenced in the text?

The all-volunteer force continues today, which has led to significant differences in the composition of the military as compared to American society. For example, recruits today come primarily from the middle and lower classes, with the distribution not reflecting that of the greater American society. Many who choose to enlist cite stable pay, medical benefits, and the possibility of advancement as motivations for joining the military. These are benefits that the military uses in its recruitment efforts (see slide 9). Regardless, opposition to the all-volunteer force exists, for various reasons, from both the general public and the military community. Watch the clip included on slide 10 of a conversation with former Secretary of State Colin Powell and journalist Jim Lehrer, starting at the 2:40 minute mark and ending at the 4:10 minute mark. What are some of the reservations Powell expresses about the all-volunteer force? What are the obstacles to the reinstating of a draft system?

Regardless of public opinion regarding the draft, one of the lessons of Vietnam that has persisted is the need to separate war and warrior—those who serve, whether called or enlisted,

**Opposing Opinions**

Ask students to read two opposing opinion pieces:

**Arguing against the reinstatement of the draft:**
- America Should Dodge Reinstating the Draft, By Doug Bandow
- Our All-volunteer Military Should Stay That Way, By Elliot J. Feldman

**Arguing for the reinstatement of the draft:**
- Reinstate Draft Before We Go Into Syria, By Charles B. Rangel
- It’s Time to Toss the All-Volunteer Military, By Elliot J. Feldman

Have students write a response to either piece, integrating evidence from historical sources to build an argument on what lessons can be drawn from Vietnam regarding the draft.

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*Further Suggested Reading*

Common Core Standards

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.9-10.1
Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources, attending to such features as the date and origin of the information.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.9-10.2
Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary that makes clear the relationships among the key details and ideas.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.9-10.3
Evaluate various explanations for actions or events and determine which explanation best accords with textual evidence, acknowledging where the text leaves matters uncertain.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.9-10.4
Compare the point of view of two or more authors for how they treat the same or similar topics, including which details they include and emphasize in their respective accounts.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.9-10.5
Assess the extent to which the reasoning and evidence in a text support the author’s claims.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.9-10.6
Compare and contrast treatments of the same topic in several primary and secondary sources.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12.1
Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources, connecting insights gained from specific details to an understanding of the text as a whole.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12.2
Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary that makes clear the relationships among the key details and ideas.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12.3
Evaluate various explanations for actions or events and determine which explanation best accords with textual evidence, acknowledging where the text leaves matters uncertain.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12.4
Evaluate authors’ differing points of view on the same historical event or issue by assessing the authors’ claims, reasoning, and evidence.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12.5
Evaluate an author’s premises, claims, and evidence by corroborating or challenging them with other information.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12.6
Integrate information from diverse sources, both primary and secondary, into a coherent understanding of an idea or event, noting discrepancies among sources.

College, Career, and Civic Life (C3) Standards

D2.Civ.2.9-12
Analyze the role of US citizens in the US political system, with attention to various theories of democracy, changes in Americans’ participation over time, and alternative models from other countries, past and present.

D2.Civ.9.9-12
Use appropriate deliberative processes in multiple settings.

D2.Civ.13.9-12
Evaluate public policies in terms of intended and unintended outcomes, and related consequences.

D2.Civ.19.9-12
Analyze the impact and the appropriate roles of personal interests and perspectives on the application of civic virtues, democratic principles, constitutional rights, and human rights.

D2.His.1.9-12
Evaluate how historical events and developments were shaped by unique circumstances of time and place as well as broader historical contexts.

D2.His.2.9-12
Analyze change and continuity in historical eras.

D2.His.10.9-12
Detect possible limitations in various kinds of historical evidence and differing secondary interpretations.

D2.His.16.9-12
Integrate evidence from multiple relevant historical sources and interpretations into a reasoned argument about the past.

D4.7.9-12
Assess options for individual and collective action to address local, regional, and global problems by engaging in self-reflection, strategy identification, and complex causal reasoning.