

# The Vietnam War: Analyzing Pulitzer Prize Photographs

The Cold War:  
A Teaching American History Grant

Glenn Oney

# Introduction

As a participant in a Teaching American History Grant program, *Traveling America's C's: The Cold War*, I was fortunate enough to travel to Washington, D.C. with a group of Southwest Missouri teachers in July of 2012. As part of our study on the topic of the Cold War, we visited the Newseum, an interactive museum of news and journalism. One of the most powerful exhibits was the Pulitzer Prize Photographs Gallery, the most comprehensive collection of the prestigious winning photographs ever assembled. The exhibit contained photographs that ranged from uplifting to haunting. The purpose of this lesson is for students to analyze primary sources, in this case Pulitzer Prize winning photographs, dealing with the Vietnam War and its aftermath to enrich their understanding of the conflict and its effect on the United States.

Glenn Oney

Neosho R-5 School District

# The Pulitzer Prize

- The Pulitzer Prize is a U.S. award for achievements in newspaper and online journalism, literature and musical composition. It was established in 1917 by provisions in the will of publisher Joseph Pulitzer, and is administered by Columbia University in New York City. Prizes are awarded yearly in twenty-one categories.
- The *Pulitzer Prize for Photography* was one of the Pulitzer Prizes. It was awarded from 1942 until 1967. In 1968, it was split into two separate prizes: the *Pulitzer Prize for Feature Photography* and the *Pulitzer Prize for Spot News Photography*, which was renamed the *Pulitzer Prize for Breaking News Photography* beginning in 2000.

- Sources

<http://www.pulitzer.org/historyofprizes>

<http://www.pulitzer.org/files/josephpulitzer2.jpg>



# The Newseum Exhibit

- The Newseum exhibit features the most comprehensive collection of Pulitzer Prize-winning photographs ever assembled as well as interviews with many of the photographers.
- Some of the photographs have become icons of their time: Marines raising Old Glory on Iwo Jima, the joyful reunion of a returning prisoner of war and his family, a firefighter cradling an injured infant after the Oklahoma City bombing. Those and other images record the defining moments of our world and time.



Source

<http://www.newseum.org/virtual-tour/index.html>

# Sampling of Pulitzer Prize Winning Photographs



# PHOTO 1



**“Saigon Execution”**

**1969 Pulitzer Prize, Edward Adams, Associated Press. January 30. 1968.**

***WRITE DOWN YOUR INITIAL REACTION TO THE PHOTOGRAPH.***



# PHOTO 1

**“Saigon Execution” 1969 Pulitzer Prize.**

**Edward Adams, Associated Press. January 30. 1968.**

- North Vietnamese communists launch their massive Tet offensive, bringing the fighting right into the U.S. Embassy compound in Saigon.
- Thirty-six hours later, Associated Press photographer Eddie Adams, working with an NBC News crew, comes upon two South Vietnamese soldiers escorting a prisoner through the streets of Saigon.
- “They walked him down to the street corner. We were taking pictures. He turned out to be a Viet Cong lieutenant. And out of nowhere came this guy who we didn't know. I was about five feet away and he pulled out his pistol.”
- The man with the pistol is Gen. Nguyen Ngoc Loan, chief of South Vietnam's national police. It all happens very fast: The general raises his pistol. Adams raises his camera. Loan presses his pistol against the prisoner's temple. He fires. Adams releases the shutter.
- Source

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/nostri-imago/4427917755/in/set-72157623484633083>



# PHOTO 1



**“Saigon Execution”**

**1969 Pulitzer Prize, Edward Adams, Associated Press. January 30. 1968.**

***COMPLETE THE “Newseum Photo Ethics” WORKSHEET.  
LEAVE THE LAST QUESTION BLANK FOR NOW.***



# PHOTO 1

**“Saigon Execution” 1969 Pulitzer Prize.**

**Edward Adams, Associated Press. January 30. 1968.**

- Loan "shot him in the head and walked away." Adams remembers. "And walked by us and said, "They killed many of my men and many of our people.""
- For Loan, the shooting is an act of justice: The Viet Cong lieutenant had just murdered a South Vietnamese colonel, his wife and their six children.
- **The American anti-war movement adopts the photograph as a symbol of the excesses of the war, but Adams feels his picture is misunderstood.**
- "If you're this man, this general, and you just caught this guy after he killed some of your people.... How do you know you wouldn't have pulled that trigger yourself? You have to put yourself in that situation----It's a war."
- ***Click Link Below to WATCH INTERVIEW WITH EDWARD ADAMS***

<http://www.newseum.org/exhibits-and-theaters/permanent-exhibits/pulitzer/videos/1969-spot-news-edward-adams--the-associated-press.html>

## Source

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/nostri-imago/4427917755/in/set-72157623484633083>



# PHOTO 1



**“Saigon Execution”**

**1969 Pulitzer Prize, Edward Adams, Associated Press. January 30. 1968.**

**COMPLETE THE LAST QUESTION ON THE “Newseum Photo Ethics”  
WORKSHEET. THEN EXPLAIN HOW LEARNING THE BACKGROUND TO THIS  
PHOTOGRAPH AND ADAMS’ INTERVIEW CHANGED YOUR PERCEPTION OF THE  
IMAGE.**

# PHOTO 2



**“Kent State Massacre”**

**1971 Spot News Pulitzer, John Paul Filo, *Valley Daily News & Daily Dispatch*.**

***WRITE DOWN YOUR INITIAL REACTION TO THE PHOTOGRAPH.***

# PHOTO 2

## “Kent State Massacre”

**1971 Spot News Pulitzer, John Paul Filo, *Valley Daily News & Daily Dispatch*.**

- In the spring of 1970, student activists demonstrated against the Vietnam War on campuses across the United States.
- When President Richard Nixon announced on April 30 that U.S. troops were moving into Cambodia, students at Ohio's Kent State University reacted with a destructive beer bash in downtown Kent.
- Twenty-four hours later, as nearly 800 students watched, the campus ROTC building was burned to the ground.
- On Monday, May 4, photojournalism student John Filo returned after a weekend away to find 500 National Guard troops on campus.
- He grabbed his camera and headed for a student demonstration.



# PHOTO 2

## “Kent State Massacre”

### 1971 Spot News Pulitzer, John Paul Filo, *Valley Daily News & Daily Dispatch*.

- On Monday, May 4, photojournalism student John Filo returned after a weekend away to find 500 National Guard troops on campus.
- He grabbed his camera and headed for a student demonstration.
- There, National Guardsmen ordered protesters to disperse. Students threw rocks and shouted, "Pigs off campus!" The guardsmen fired tear-gas canisters. Students threw more rocks.
- The guardsmen retreated, but then suddenly turned, knelt, aimed and fired. Filo thought they were shooting blanks. They weren't.
- A boy lay in a puddle of blood. "A girl came up and knelt over the body and let out a God-awful scream. That made me click the camera," Filo said.
- Four students died. Eight guardsmen were indicted. No one was convicted.

- ***Click Link Below to WATCH INTERVIEW WITH JOHN FILO***

<http://www.newseum.org/exhibits-and-theaters/permanent-exhibits/pulitzer/videos/1971-spot-news---daily-dispatch.html>

- **Source** <http://www.newseum.org/exhibits-and-theaters/permanent-exhibits/pulitzer/videos/1971-spot-news---daily-dispatch.html>



# PHOTO 2



**“Kent State Massacre”**

**1971 Spot News Pulitzer, John Paul Filo, *Valley Daily News & Daily Dispatch*.**

***COMPLETE THE “Newseum Photo Ethics” WORKSHEET.***

# FINAL PROJECT:

## Compare and Contrast



**“The Terror of War”**

**1973 Pulitzer Prize, Spot News  
Photography, Huynh Cong "Nick" Út,  
Associated Press**



**“POW Returns From Vietnam”**

**1974 Pulitzer Prize, Feature  
Photography, Slava Veder, Associated  
Press**





### **“The Terror of War”**

**1973 Pulitzer Prize, Spot News Photography,  
Huynh Cong "Nick" Út, Associated Press**

On June 8, 1972, a battle rages near Trang Bang, 25 miles west of Saigon. "Really heavy fighting . . . I shot Vietnamese bombing all morning, the rockets and mortar."

Then, South Vietnamese planes dive low, dropping napalm. But one plane misses. Fire rains down on South Vietnamese soldiers and civilians. Women and children run screaming.

"I hear four or five children screaming, Please help! Please help!" As Ut furiously snaps photographs, a young girl runs toward him — arms outstretched, eyes clenched in pain, clothes burned off by napalm. "She said. 'Too hot, please help me.' I say yes," and take her to the hospital."



## **“POW Returns From Vietnam”**

**1974 Pulitzer Prize, Feature Photography, Slava Veder, Associated Press**

Its March 17, 1973, a perfect California day. Associated Press photographer Sal Veder waits on the tarmac at Travis Air Force Base. Around him, a crowd seethes with excitement: Families are about to be reunited with long-absent fathers, husbands, uncles and brothers — American prisoners of war just released from captivity in North Vietnam.

One of those POWs is Col. Robert L Stirm of the U.S. Air Force. Stirm was shot down over Hanoi and badly wounded. His family has waited almost six years, not knowing whether they would see him again.

Veder notices: "There was motion. The family had started to run toward him, and that's what caught my eye." Veder raises his camera, Stirm sees his children running toward him, Veder clicks the shutter: a burst of joy, captured in one frame.

# FINAL PROJECT:

*Construct an essay comparing and contrasting these two iconic Pulitzer Prize winning photographs of the Vietnam War.*



**“The Terror of War”**

**1973 Pulitzer Prize, Spot News  
Photography, Huynh Cong "Nick" Út,  
Associated Press**



**“POW Returns From Vietnam”**

**1974 Pulitzer Prize, Feature  
Photography, Slava Veder, Associated  
Press**

# NEWSEUM PHOTO ETHICS

Date \_\_\_\_\_ Name \_\_\_\_\_

## Visit the Pulitzer Prize Photographs Gallery (Level 1)

This gallery features the most comprehensive collection of Pulitzer Prize-winning photographs ever assembled, as well as interviews with many of the photographers.

Some of the photographs have become icons of their time: Marines raising Old Glory on Iwo Jima, the joyful reunion of a returning prisoner of war and his family, a firefighter cradling an injured infant after the Oklahoma City bombing. Those and other images record the defining moments of our world and time.

Select one photograph from the gallery that strikes you. Choose an image you are drawn to or one you are repelled by — something to which you have an immediate reaction.

What does this image show? A person, a thing, a place? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

When was this image taken? Does it capture a particular time or event? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Where was this image taken? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

How do you think the photographer was able to get this image? Do you think it was dangerous to take this picture? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Why do you think this image was taken? Does it try to convey a message or idea? What emotions does this image elicit? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Do you think this photojournalist followed the ethical guidelines of being accurate, fair and clear? Why or why not? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

## Newseum Photo Ethics Worksheet

### Directions:

Students will complete the “Newseum Photo Ethics” worksheet to analyze Pulitzer Prize winning photographs dealing with the Vietnam War.

### Teachers:

Click the link below to gain access to a printable pdf version of the worksheet from the Newseum website. *(If link is broken, go to [newseum.org](http://www.newseum.org) and type “photo ethics” in the search box.)*

# CLEs

- **3a. Knowledge of continuity and change in the history of Missouri and the United States**
  - **W. Foreign and domestic policy developments**
    - Describe and evaluate the evolution of United States domestic and foreign policies from Reconstruction to the present, including:
      - 7. The Cold War

# CLEs

- **3a. Knowledge of continuity and change in the history of Missouri and the United States**
  - **X. Causes, comparisons, and results of major twentieth-century wars.**
    - Examine the wars of the twentieth-century pertinent to US history including: causes, comparisons, consequences and peace efforts



# CLEs

- **6. Knowledge of relationships of the individual and groups to institutions and cultural traditions.**
  - **O. Causes, effects and resolutions of cultural conflict.**
    - Determine the causes, consequences and possible resolutions of cultural conflicts.



# CLEs

- **7. Knowledge of the use of tools of social science inquiry (such as surveys, statistics, maps and documents).**
  - **C. Understanding fact, opinion, bias and points of view in sources.**
    - Distinguish between fact and opinion and analyze sources to recognize bias and points of view.

# CLEs

- **7. Knowledge of the use of tools of social science inquiry (such as surveys, statistics, maps and documents).**
  - **F. Interpreting various social studies resources.**
    - Interpret maps, statistics, charts, diagrams, graphs, timelines, pictures, political cartoons, audiovisual materials, continua, written resources, art and artifacts.