



LESSON PLAN: MEMORIALIZING THE COLD WAR

High School (9-12)

OVERVIEW

There is no national memorial for the Cold War. The National Mall in Washington, D.C. contains memorials for World War I, World War II, the Korean War, and the Vietnam War ... but no overall Cold War memorial.

In this lesson, students will analyze what and how we memorialize. They will discuss why no national Cold War memorial exists and design their own Cold War memorial based on their knowledge of the Cold War. In this lesson, the words “monument” and “memorial” are used interchangeably – although at Arlington National Cemetery, a memorial generally denotes a site that includes remains, while a monument honors groups or individuals who are not necessarily buried at the cemetery. This lesson should be delivered at the end of a Cold War unit or as part of an end-of-year review.

This lesson is split into two different lessons:

- Lesson One: How We Memorialize (pages 4-9)
- Lesson Two: Designing a Cold War Memorial (pages 10-13)

We highly recommend teaching these lessons together; however, they can also be taught separately. See below for more information on each lesson.

REQUIRED BACKGROUND FOR STUDENTS

For this lesson to be successful, students should already be familiar with the major events and themes of the Cold War and discussed how the Cold War is different from other wars they studied. Before teaching this lesson, consider discussing the question “What is a war?” We recommend the following lesson on TeacherVision: <https://www.teachervision.com/historic-wars-military-action/what-war>.

For teaching the Cold War itself, we recommend using our Cold War Timeline Lesson Plan. In that lesson, students organize events related to the Cold War on a timeline and explain the relationships between events leading up to, during, and/or after the period of the Cold War, including causes, effects, and the possibility of different outcomes. Find this lesson at <https://education.arlingtoncemetery.mil/ColdWar>.

STANDARDS

Content standards vary by state. This lesson can be used to teach the following state standards and similar wording may be found in your state standards.

- NCSS.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.



- NCSS.D2.His.5.9-12: Analyze how historical contexts shaped and continue to shape people’s perspectives.
- NCSS.D2.His.16.9-12: Integrate evidence from multiple relevant historical sources and interpretations into a reasoned argument about the past.
- NCSS.D4.3.9-12: Present adaptations of arguments and explanations that feature evocative ideas and perspectives on issues and topics to reach a range of audiences and venues outside the classroom using print and oral technologies (e.g., posters, essays, letters, debates, speeches, reports, and maps) and digital technologies (e.g., Internet, social media, and digital documentary).

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Students can explain why nations/communities create memorials and how memorials connect to nationalism and historical memory
- Students can explain the meaning of “imagined community” and identify their own “imagined communities”
- Students analyze how memorials on the National Mall in Washington, D.C. create meaning and interpret the past
- Students interpret Cold War history (events, actors, and themes) to design a new Cold War memorial
- Students explain how their memorial’s design/symbolism represents the Cold War

RESOURCES NEEDED

- PowerPoint presentation
- *Monument Wars* student handout
- Memorial Flipbook
- Symbolism Cheat Sheet
- Cold War Memorial worksheet

BACKGROUND INFORMATION FOR TEACHERS

While the United States and the Soviet Union were allies during World War II, the end of that war made it clear that conflict between the two emerging superpowers was brewing. What followed would be a 45-year geopolitical struggle in which the two superpowers never directly engaged in military conflict. Instead, the conflict played out through espionage, economic sanctions, proxy wars in other nations, and technological competition (in particular, the nuclear race and the space race).

The Cold War began in the aftermath of World War II (1939-1948) and ended with the collapse of the Soviet Union and Eastern European communist regimes in the late 1980s and early 1990s – marked, most dramatically, by the fall of the Berlin Wall on November 9, 1989.

The United States and the Soviet Union, the two dominant postwar superpowers, never directly went to war with one another. Yet numerous proxy wars around the globe, involving U.S. and Soviet support, destroyed millions of lives. Mostly fought in the so-called “Third World” of Asia, Latin America, and Africa, these wars included, most prominently for the United States, the Korean War and the Vietnam



War. Yet the Cold War's "hot" wars also involved superpower-backed coups and military interventions in such nations as Guatemala, Iran, Chile, Angola, and Afghanistan (to name just a few).

Although the United States and the Soviet Union emerged, after World War II, as "super-states", the Cold War was truly global in scope. It led to the creation of new international alliances, including the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the Warsaw Pact (the alliance of communist, Soviet-backed states in Eastern Europe). Beyond the "iron curtain" divide of western Europe, other geopolitical powers also emerged—most significantly, China, which tested its first nuclear weapon in 1949 and played a key role in both the Korean and the Vietnam Wars.¹

Within the United States, the Cold War shaped everyday life. The nuclear threat prompted an idealization of the nuclear family — suburban, middle-class households with traditional gender roles — as an escape from a world in peril. Children participated in "duck and cover" nuclear attack drills at school; many families built fallout shelters in their backyards; and a notion of the "American way of life" emerged, which valorized material consumption and conformity to mainstream cultural norms.² Meanwhile, fears of communism escalated into a wide-ranging "red scare" — exemplified, most notably, in Senator Joseph McCarthy's 1953-1954 hearings, which accused members of the State Department, the U.S. Army, and other government offices of being influenced by communism.³

Additional background information can be found at:

- https://www.trumanlibrary.gov/sites/default/files/TrumanCIA_Timeline.pdf
- <https://www.britannica.com/event/Cold-War>

¹ Westad, *The Global Cold War*; Cindy Ewing, "The Third World and the United States," <https://www.history.utoronto.ca/research-publications/faculty-publications/third-world-and-united-states>; Mark Philip Bradley, *Imagining Vietnam and America*; Michael E. Latham, *The Right Kind of Revolution*; Erez Manela, *The Wilsonian Moment*; Melani McAlister, *Epic Encounters*.

² Examples: Elaine Tyler May, *Homeward Bound: American Families in the Cold War Era* (New York: Basic Books, 1999); Joanne Meyerowitz, ed., *Not June Cleaver: Women and Gender in Postwar America* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1994); Robert D. Dean, *Imperial Brotherhood: Gender and the Making of Cold War Foreign Policy* (Boston: University of Massachusetts Press, 2001); Andrew Friedman, *Covert Capital: Landscapes of Denial and the Making of U.S. Empire in the Suburbs of Northern Virginia* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2013).

³ <https://www.senate.gov/about/powers-procedures/investigations/mccarthy-and-army-mccarthy-hearings.htm>; Campbell Craig and Frederik Logevall, *America's Cold War: The Politics of Insecurity* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009); Walter LaFeber, *The American Age: U.S. Foreign Policy at Home and Abroad, Vol. 2, Since 1986* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1999), 509-511.



LESSON ONE: HOW WE MEMORIALIZE

In this lesson, students will examine examples of monuments and memorials and discuss why we memorialize and how memorials make meaning. Students will read passages from Kirk Savage’s secondary source book *Monument Wars* and use the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, D.C. as a case study for their analysis.

By the end of this lesson, students should understand how memorials make meaning, and the role memorials play in society.

While this lesson is intended to be taught as the first part of the Memorializing the Cold War lesson, it can also be taught on its own.

Estimated time: 1-2 class periods, 90 minutes

RESOURCES NEEDED

- PowerPoint presentation
- *Monument Wars* student handout

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Students can explain why nations/communities create memorials and how memorials connect to nationalism and historical memory
- Students can explain the meanings of “imagined community” and identify their own “imagined communities”
- Students analyze how memorials on the National Mall in Washington, D.C. create meaning and shape interpretation of the past

Slides:	Script:
<p>Slides 2-10</p> <p><i>*Consider adding examples of memorials local to you that students may have visited. Many towns or counties have local Civil War and/or World War I memorials.</i></p>	<p>Ask: What do we memorialize? (Slide 2)</p> <p>Answers may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Individual people – service members, politicians, changemakers, “heroes” - Historical events - Groups of people - People who lost their lives in an event or historic circumstance <p>Ask: What types of memorials have you visited or learned about?</p> <p>Answers may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Washington Monument, Washington, D.C.



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Lincoln Memorial, Washington, D.C. - The Civil Rights Memorial, Montgomery, Alabama - Mount Rushmore National Memorial, South Dakota - 9/11 Memorial, New York City - Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial, Washington, D.C. - National Native Veterans Memorial, Washington, D.C. - African American Civil War Memorial, Washington, D.C. - Vietnam Women’s Memorial, Washington, D.C. <p>Let’s look at some examples of famous memorials on the National Mall in Washington, D.C. and at Arlington National Cemetery. (Slides 3-10)</p> <p><i>As students share answers to the above questions, consider writing down their responses on a whiteboard or shared document so that you can refer to their answers throughout the lesson.</i></p>
Slide 11	<p>Ask: Why do we memorialize?</p> <p>Answers may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To remember - To mourn - To honor - To define a narrative - To create collective meaning - To reflect - To gain closure - To learn from the past so as not to repeat it <p>Let’s look at two quotes from historian Kirk Savage’s book <i>Monument Wars</i> on the purpose of public monuments and memorials.</p>
Slides 12 & 13	<p>Read the quotes aloud as a class, one at a time. After reading each quote, discuss what the quote means as a class or as a “pair and share” with a partner.</p> <p>Potential questions for the first quote:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Let’s break down the term “imagined community.”⁴

⁴ The term “imagined community” was originally developed by scholar Benedict Anderson, in his highly influential book *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (New York: Verso, revised edition, 1991). Savage and many other historians have utilized and built upon Anderson’s theoretical framework. You can find a digital version of this book on Internet Archive: <https://archive.org/details/imaginedcommunit0000ande>.



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What is a community? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o “a group of people living in the same place or having a particular characteristic in common”⁵ o “a feeling of fellowship with others, as a result of sharing common attitudes, interests, and goals”⁶ - What are some examples of a community? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Classroom/school o Neighborhood/town o Church/synagogue/mosque o Sports team/choir/club o Workplace/volunteer organization - Given this definition and examples, what do you think “imagined community” means? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o A community that you consider yourself part of, even if you cannot and will never meet the majority of its members o A community where you can imagine who is included and how they understand their membership o A community imagined by the people who consider themselves part of that group - Can you think of some examples of imagined communities? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o National community (American, Mexican, Puerto Rican, Chinese, Korean, Indian, etc.) – When you identify as a member of a national community, you <i>imagine</i> who is in that community and what social values, traditions, and histories they may share, including ones that are debated or contested. You’ll meet many people of that national community, but you will never meet and understand every member. o Religious community (Jewish, Protestant, Baptist, Sunni, Sikh, etc.) that includes people of the same faith, but you do not know and will never meet all. o Sports fandom (Washington Nationals Major League Baseball team, National Football League, U.S. Women’s Soccer, etc.) – Perhaps you follow
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⁵ Oxford Languages definition

⁶ Oxford Languages definition



a specific professional or college-level sports team, or even just a type of sport; if so, you form an imagined community with other fans of that team or sport.

- Fandoms for books, movies, video games, musical artists, etc. (Taylor Swift fans “Swifties,” K-Pop fans, Marvel fans, etc.)
- How might public memorials inspire people to imagine communities?
 - National communities –Lincoln Memorial, Washington Monument, World War II Memorial
 - Veteran and military communities –Vietnam Veterans Memorial, Air Force Memorial, Tomb of the Unknown Soldier
 - Communities based on ethnic, racial or gender identity – MLK Memorial, Civil Rights Memorial, National Native Veterans Memorial, Military Women’s Memorial
- Why would the “existence of the nation” need confirming?
 - To build a sense of community
 - To build nationalism
 - Since a national community is “imagined,” cultures and governments find ways to make the imagined feel real—to make people understand their identities as Americans, Russians, Japanese, etc.
- What do you think Savage means when he writes that public monuments offer a “face-to-face” encounter? Face-to-face encounter with what or whom? Individual members of the public with each other? With the monument? The ideas conveyed by the monument?
- Do you agree that a physical site is necessary to form connection with an event, a person, a group of persons, etc.? Why? Do you have physical places that make a community or activity feel more real or more meaningful?

Potential questions for the second quote:



- What does Savage mean by “relic”? What is a historical “relic”? Examples might include:
 - o Sites where historical events occurred – White House, The Alamo, Ellis Island, Ford’s Theatre, etc.
 - o Material artifacts or historical documents – [Declaration of Independence](#), [Abraham Lincoln’s top hat](#), [Apollo 11 Command Module](#), [Muhammad Ali’s boxing robe](#).
 - o Sites of commemoration – Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, other war memorials in DC, presidential memorials, etc.
- How do monuments convey the historical importance of those individuals or events memorialized? What types of physical features might prompt people to interpret monuments in particular ways?
 - o Answers may include inscriptions or other texts to read (such as interpretive signs), statues or artistic design, space for people to gather together, physical scale and geographic placement (monuments on the National Mall signify particular importance), ceremonies or events that are held at the site (e.g., changing of the guard and wreath ceremonies at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier).

Potential general questions to ask:

- Do you agree with Savage’s claims in the two quotes?
- Do you feel part of a community (or communities) when you visit monuments or memorials? How so?
- Do these quotes change how you understand memorials and why we memorialize?
- How might memorials make people feel included or excluded? Have the memorials or monuments you’ve visited felt inclusive?
- Should memorials convey a message, or should they prompt visitors to ask questions? Both?
- Does a memorial need to take a physical form?



	<p>Take the discussion a step further (optional): Encourage students to think back to the memorials they listed earlier (refer to the full list of answers) – Why do they think those memorials were created? What value do they offer? Who were they made for?</p>
<p>Slides 14 & 15</p>	<p>We're now going to look specifically at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, D.C. This memorial was dedicated in 1982 and changed how many people in the United States understood and interacted with memorials.</p> <p><i>Break students into groups of 2-4 students. Pass out the Monument Wars quote handout. Students should read the quotes and discuss the questions on Slide 15 in their groups. After ~15 minutes, reconvene as a class and ask students to share their analyses with the class.</i></p> <p>Discussion Questions about the VVM:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Who does Vietnam Veterans Memorial honor? Who does it leave out? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The Vietnam Women's Memorial, dedicated in 1993, honors the women who served in Vietnam – as nurses and physicians, air traffic controllers, communications specialists, intelligence officers, and more. • What stories does the VVM tell about the Vietnam War? • Did the quotes from <i>Monument Wars</i> change your understanding of the VVM? The Vietnam War? How so? <p>Discussion Questions about memorials:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What makes an effective or meaningful memorial? • What do you think should be the purpose of a memorial? Who should decide the purpose of a memorial? • Do the memorials we have discussed today make political statements? Why or why not?



LESSON TWO: DESIGNING A COLD WAR MEMORIAL

In this lesson, students review the Cold War (major events, players, and themes), discuss why no national Cold War memorial exists in the United States, and design their own Cold War memorials. This lesson is intended to be taught as the culmination of a Cold War unit or as Cold War review.

For teaching the Cold War itself, we recommend using our Cold War Timeline Lesson Plan. In that lesson, students organize events related to the Cold War on a timeline and explain the relationships between events leading up to, during, and/or after the period of the Cold War, including causes, effects, and the possibility of different outcomes. Find this lesson at

<https://education.arlingtoncemetery.mil/ColdWar>.

Estimated length: 1 class period (45 minutes) + homework or 2 class periods

RESOURCES NEEDED

- PowerPoint presentation
- Memorial Flipbook
- Symbolism Cheat Sheet
- Cold War Memorial worksheet

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Students interpret Cold War history (events, actors, and themes) to design a new Cold War memorial
- Students explain how their memorial's design/symbolism represents the Cold War

<p>Slide 16 & 17</p>	<p>The United States has no national Cold War memorial.</p> <p><i>As students share answers to the below questions, consider writing down their responses on a whiteboard or shared document so that they can refer to their answers as they design their memorial.</i></p> <p>Ask: Before we jump into why there are no Cold War memorials, let's think about Cold War-era memorials that do exist. Any ideas?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, D.C. - Korean War Memorial in Washington, D.C. - Berlin Wall Memorial in Berlin, Germany <p>Ask: What do these memorials have in common?</p>
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - They are all memorials to specific events that honor discrete groups of people: actors, victims, and/or casualties. - Potential follow-up: Who do these memorials commemorate? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o VVM: U.S. Vietnam War veterans o Korean War: U.S. Korean War veterans o Berlin Wall: Berlin citizens <p>Ask: Now, why do you think we do not have a national Cold War memorial?</p> <p>Answers might include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Too large of a conflict - No simple narrative - There are already memorials to the various “hot wars” that the Cold War involved - Many different events and actors - No clear “victims” to memorialize <p>Ask: Who were the casualties of the Cold War?</p> <p>Answers might include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - U.S. service members who fought in hot wars - Korean soldiers and civilians - Vietnamese soldiers and civilians - Those who died in coups, revolutions, and insurgencies in the “Third World” - Citizens of authoritarian regimes, in the Soviet bloc and elsewhere - Defectors and those killed as a result of espionage activities - Casualties of nuclear accidents - Casualties of space exploration (astronauts and technicians)
<p>Slide 18</p>	<p>Your task today is to design a Cold War memorial.</p> <p>Ask: Who (people/groups/nations) was involved?</p> <p>Answers might include:</p>



- United States, Soviet Union, China, Vietnam, North/South Korea, Afghanistan, Iran, Cuba, East and West Germany, Poland, etc.
 - o Key point: Cold War was a global conflict that involved not only the superpowers but also smaller nations around the world
 - o [This map](#) provides a good visual for the global nature of the Cold War
- Service members – both U.S. and non-U.S. – fighting in the various hot wars
- Everyday citizens – in war zones and in non-war zones
- Policymakers and diplomats
- Spies
- Protestors
- Scientists and workers involved in defense industries
- Astronauts

Ask: What events took place?

Answers might include:

- Vietnam War
- Berlin Wall (and Berlin Wall being torn down)
- Nuclear threat
- Red Scare/McCarthyism
- Bay of Pigs Invasion and the Cuban Missile Crisis
- Space race/first man on the moon
- Kitchen Debate
- NATO and Warsaw Pact
- Proxy wars in Latin America, Asia, Middle East, Africa
- Rosenbergs convicted of espionage

Ask: What are the major themes from this period?

Answers might include:

- Nuclear proliferation and fear/“mutually assured destruction”
- Communism vs. capitalism



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - U.S. and allied nations attempted to “contain” the global spread/influence of communism (containment) - Covert warfare (espionage, coups) - “Hot” wars in multiple nations, despite no direct nuclear war between U.S. and USSR - Social and political protests - Space race/technological competition <p>Ask: What/who should be honored and remembered?</p>
<p>Slide 19</p>	<p>You get to decide what this memorial looks like and who/what it honors and remembers. Your design should be intentional.</p> <p>It must:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Reference to 1-3 major themes related to the Cold War - Include references to at least three specific people/groups and/or events from the Cold War <p>You must also submit the Cold War Memorial worksheet to explaining your design and why you made the decisions you made (why you chose certain symbols, the memorials shape or size, etc.).</p> <p>We have a few resources to help inspire you: Symbolism Cheat Sheet and Memorial Flipbook.</p>

LESSON EXTENSIONS

- Assign sections of Kirk Savage’s *Monument Wars: Washington, D.C., the National Mall, and the Transformation of the Memorial Landscape* to discuss the role of monuments and memorials in our society and how monuments and memorials are defined by the period of their creation. We particularly recommend the Introduction and Chapters Six and Seven. Find *Monument Wars* free on Internet Archive at this link: <https://archive.org/details/monumentwarswash0000sava>.
- "What is a War?" lesson on TeacherVision: <https://www.teachervision.com/historic-wars-military-action/what-war>. When considering why no national Cold War memorial exists and determining how to memorialize the Cold War, it is important to unpack our understanding of the term “war.” This lesson plan is a great way to examine the question, “How do we define war?” If you plan to teach the “What is a War?” lesson, we recommend teaching it as part of your Cold War unit and before teaching this lesson.



PLANNING A VISIT TO ARLINGTON NATIONAL CEMETERY?

The Cold War impacted individuals and families throughout the United States and around the world. Stories of individuals who shaped and were shaped by the Cold War can be found in our Cold War School Walking Tour. The tour tells the stories of policy makers like President John F. Kennedy and John Foster Dulles as well as those of lesser-known individuals, including a female journalist who reported from the frontlines of the Korean War, a soldier who was designated Missing in Action from 1953 to 2017 when his remains were identified using DNA testing, a victim of a nuclear accident, and more. The tour is available on the ANC website at <https://education.arlingtoncemetery.mil/ColdWar>.

We love to see how our materials are being used in the classroom! Connect with us on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. @ArlingtonNatI #ANCEducation

LESSON SOURCES

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