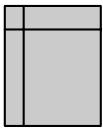


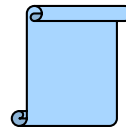
## **Directions:**

**Pages 5 & 6 of this pdf have an assignment sheet for you to print.**

**As per directions on the assignment page, fill in the left column upon studying the three pages of the handout, “England’s Vietnam.” However, you’d better seriously understand the directions...**



**Take me to the assignment page.**



**Take me to the first page of the handout.**

# England's Vietnam:

## THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION

*A domino theory, distant wilderness warfare, the notion of "defensive enclaves," the motivation to continue the fight, possible intervention by hostile powers, a little trouble telling friendly natives from unfriendly---George III went through the whole routine.*

It is true that those who cannot remember the past are doomed to repeat it. The Presidents of the 1960's and 70's might have profited by examining the ghostly footsteps of America's last king before pursuing their course in Vietnam. And elements of the quagmires in Vietnam and the American Revolution may be rearing their head in Iraq. History seldom repeats itself exactly, and it would be a mistake to try to equate the ideologies that motivated all governments in the Vietnam war and the American Revolution. Yet in the military and social realities that were born in both wars, many have wondered if Presidents Kennedy, Johnson, and Nixon had their ears closed while the class was studying the American Revolution. At the time of this writing, it is unclear how many similarities will ultimately come to pass in 21<sup>st</sup> Century Iraq. Certainly the specter of Vietnam is on the minds of President Bush and his advisors. For now, let us look to the political and military decisions of the British Administration during its own Vietnam.

### British Military Might...

Britain on the eve of that war, was the greatest empire since Rome. Never before had she known such wealth and power. In the midst of such British prosperity was the spreading sore of discontent in the American colonies, that after festering for a decade and more, finally erupted in violence at Lexington and Concord on April 19, 1775. With the ensuing violence at Breed's and Bunker's hills outside of Boston, King George III and his ministers concluded that there was no alternative to using force to put down the insurrection. King George announced he was filled with "high moral purpose" in his course and was certain that "when one these rebels have felt a smart blow, they will submit..."

In British political and military circles there was general agreement that the war would be quickly and easily won. Speeches from the House of Commons reflect the confidence in the mighty British Army over the "American rabble" of farmers with pitchforks. The battle reports of Lexington, Concord, and Breed's Hill brought visions of Americans as raw, undisciplined, cowardly men. Optimism bred more optimism, arrogance more arrogance. One can dub Parliamentarian William Innes as an armchair strategist as he insinuated that troops could

be withdrawn from Boston and the mighty British Navy could pulverize the city at will, knocking the rebels into the trees and bringing many to plead for a submissive end. What was more, Innes went on, "it was more than probable you may find men to recruit in your armies in



**King George III**

America." There was a good possibility, in other words, that the British Regulars could be replaced after a while by Americans who were loyal to their king, so that the army keeping a lid on the Rebels would be "Americanized," so to speak, and the Irish and English lads sent home. General James Robertson also believed that success lay in this scheme of "Americanizing" the combat force: "I never had an idea of subduing the Americans," he said, "I meant to assist the good Americans in subduing the bad."

Before taking the final steps into full-scale war, however, the King and his ministers had to be certain they had the support of the English people. On several occasions they read public opinion through their representatives in Parliament. The King's address to both Houses on October 26, 1775, in which he announced plans to suppress the uprising in America, was followed by weeks of angry debate; but when the votes were counted, the majority was overwhelming. Most members agreed that the colonials must be put in their place and taught a lesson. Highly principled and content in the belief that the King and the ministry must be right, none of them seem to have asked what would be best for the empire; they simply went along with the vindictive measures that were being set in motion. Eloquent voices—those of Edmond Burke, Charles James Fox, the Earl of Chatham, John Wilkes, among others—were raised in opposition to the policies of the Crown, but as Burke said, "...it was almost in vain to contend, for the angry gentlemen had placed an implicit confidence in the King's court." Burke's resolution for peace was voted down 271 to 78. The words of sanity and moderation went unheeded because the men who spoke them were out of power and out of public favor. After the atrocities of sniper fire were heaped on the badly embattled retreating British force from Concord, no one seriously considered peace. Instead the government — like so many governments before and since—took what appeared to be the easy way out and settled for war.

George III was determined to maintain his empire, intact and undiminished, and his greatest fear was that the loss of the American colonies would set off a reaction like a line of dominoes falling. The country, insisted King George, can never submit to the rebel goal of American independence. Should America succeed in their goal, "the West Indies must follow, as they are dependant on American trade. Ireland would follow, and this island reduced to itself, would be a poor island indeed."



### **GEOGRAPHY...**

Despite George's unalterable determination, strengthened by his domino theory; despite the wealth and might of the British empire; despite all the odds favoring a quick triumph, the problems facing the King and his ministers and the armed forces were formidable ones indeed. Surpassing all others in sheer magnitude was the immense distance between the mother country and the rebellious colonies. As Edmond Burke described the situation in his last appeal for conciliation, "Three thousand miles of ocean lie between you and them. No contrivance can prevent the effect of this distance in weakening government. Seas roll and months pass between the order and the execution..." Often the westerly passage took three months, and every soldier, every weapon, every button and gaiter and musket ball, every article of clothing and quantities of food had to be shipped across those three thousand miles of the Atlantic. Ships sank, blown off course, animals and men died on these crossings.

Beyond the water lay the North American land mass itself. Many British military men felt that certain ruin lay in fighting an enemy on any large scale in the savage wilderness. Noted the Duke of Richmond, "America abounds in vast rivers that provide natural barriers to the progress of troops." It was a country which every bush might conceal an enemy, a land whose cultivated parts would be laid to waste, so that "the army would be obliged to draw all provisions from Europe.

Other Parliamentary nay-sayers questioned the enormity of subjugating the entire American population. Lord Barrington ventured the opinion that a war in the wilderness of North America would cost Britain far more than she could ever gain from it; that the size of the country and the colonials' familiarity with firearms would make victory achievable only at the cost of enormous suffering; and finally the cost of maintaining the colonies in any state of subjection would be staggering. John Wilkes, taunting the majority on the matter of military conquest, suggested that even if every cavalryman and infantryman in the entire British empire were to venture into the American woods, colonists would find horrific ways to

dispute every inch of territory with you, every narrow pass, every strong defile, every Thermopylae, every Bunker Hill."

### **Guerrillas...**

Three years into the Revolution, which had seen harbors shut down, entire cities burned, thousands of colonists killed, the venerable, old feisty William Pitt continued this point: "What you have sent there are too many to make peace, too few to make war. You cannot make them respect you. You cannot make them wear your cloth. You will plant and invincible hatred in their breast against you..." "My lords," he went on, "you have been the aggressors from the beginning. I say again, this country has been the aggressor. You have made descents upon their coasts. You have burnt their towns, plundered their country, made war upon the inhabitants, confiscated their property, proscribed and imprisoned their persons... The people of America look upon Parliament as the authors of their miseries." If a decisive surrender were ever gained from General George Washington, how could a colonial population ever truly be at peace with their British masters?



A year into the Revolution, after Americans experienced disasters around Manhattan, George Washington had determined not to risk his army in a major engagement for some time. He began moving away from European battle style in which two armies confronted each

other head to head. His tactical method became that of the small, out-weighted prizefighter who depends on his legs to keep him out of range of this opponent and who, when the bigger man begins to tier, darts in quickly to throw a quick punch. In the Southern Colonies, the colonial general, Nathaniel Greene, short of money, troops, and supplies, won a major campaign without ever really winning a battle. Observed one military tactician: After fighting off several hit and run battles, Lord Cornwallis has conquered his troops out of provisions and hope. Of course, these mid-term tactics by Washington and Greene became known as "guerrilla warfare."



The difficulty, noted one British general in Canada, was the seemingly unending availability of colonial militiamen who rose up out of nowhere to fight in support of the nucleus of “regular” American troops called the Continental Army. The moment the British concentrated in large force to fight the Continental Army, guerrilla warfare burst out like so many small brush fires on their flank and rear.



Naturally, these guerrilla forces came from the nearby population. But the regular British Army had an impossible job trying to get a handle on such a problem. No British regular could tell if an American was friend or foe, for loyalty to King George was easy to attest; and the man who was a farmer or merchant when a British battalion marched by his home was a militiaman as soon as it had passed by.

As to the indefinable firepower of guerrilla militia, British strategists faced a similar problem from the Colonists lack of central leadership. There was no equivalent of a Paris or London, whose loss might have been demoralizing to all the American forces. Indeed, Boston, New York, and Philadelphia, all strong seats of government, were all held at one time or another by the British without irreparable damage to the rebel cause. The fragmented political and military structure of the colonies was often a help to the rebels, rather than a hindrance, for there was no chance of the enemy striking a single crushing blow.

### **Motivating the Soldiers...**

When a quick, decisive victory did not come, the size of British forces in America and the recruiting of more forces became problematic for Britain. As the war moved on, the large armies in America became hideously expensive as well as vulnerable; an insatiable consumer of supplies, food, and money. The “Loyalists,” on many Englishman had placed such high hopes, were never well organized, not placed evenly throughout the colonies, and were forced to support the Revolution through the convincing of their neighbors as well as from their experiences with British forces. It was impossible for an initial loyalist to continue to hold feelings of loyalty and reason toward Britain when British troops burned his city or when the British navy wrecked his livelihood.

As to replenishing their forces by pulling more men across the Atlantic, Britain faced more problems with recruitment the longer the war dragged on. In England and Ireland, the war became very unpopular with a lot of people who would have to fight it. Not believing in the cause for which one’s government is promoting, has a definite negative effect on one’s performance.

The Rebels had all the reasons in the world to fight against all odds: The cause of independence, their own country, the protection of their families and homes, their futures, their ideals. Such reasons would cause civilians and military men alike to fight viciously against any odds, taking great risks, and continuing to hope in the face of defeats. In Boston, James Warren wrote the news of home to John Adams in Philadelphia and told him: “Your Declaration of Independence came on Saturday and diffused a general joy. Every one of us feels more important than ever; we now

congratulate each other as Freemen.” Such winds of change ere strong, and by contrast all Britain had to offer was a return to the status quo. With everything to gain from victory and everything to lose by defeat, the Americans fought on against unreasonably long odds because of the slim hope of attaining the goal of freedom, of independence.

### **Foreign Powers...**

Finally, Britain found herself unhappily confronted with a military problem it had dreaded from the start: With her armies tied down, rival European maritime powers—France and Spain—formed a coalition against her. When the American war began, the risk of foreign intervention was regarded as minimal due to the belief of a quick and complete victory. But as the war continued without any definite signs of American collapse, France and Spain seized the chance to embarrass and humiliate their old antagonist. At first, France and Spain supported the rebels simply with shipments of weapons and other supplies. Then, as the Americans proved they were not to be defeated in a year by a crushing British blow, France in particular furnished active support in the form of military advisors, commanders, thousands of French troops, and the French Navy; all with catastrophic results for Great Britain.

After the peace treaty was signed with the new United States, Lord North commented sadly that the weary English population had tired of the years of misfortune and calamities set upon the British military and the American colonists. The uninterrupted ill-success, the destruction and loss of life compelled the population and Parliament of Britain “to call out as loudly for peace as they had formally done for war.”

# ASSIGNMENT: COMPARE TO VIETNAM

**Directions:** Read the following quotes from the documentary “Vietnam.” Look for similar instances in the handout, “England’s Vietnam.” Then copy down the sentence(s) from the handout next to these quotes about the Vietnam War that mean the same thing.

As an example, you should copy into the top of the left column the first two sentences under the heading “British Military Might...” These two sentences match the essence of the first item in the right column.

**Caution:** Copy exact sentences from the handout, do not simply reword the Vietnam sentences. (This shows you have read and studied the handout.)

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## Britain Fighting In America

## The U.S. In Vietnam

After WWII, the United States was the most powerful military in the world; they were large and undefeated.

With the moral purchase of being the champion of democracy (stopping Communism at all costs), many Americans believed that once the Vietnamese Communist forces felt the mighty blow of superior American weaponry, they would submit.

American strategists worked toward a policy of “Vietnamization”: Gradually bringing in tough U.S.-trained Vietnamese to replace the ranks of American soldiers for combat.

One proposed reason the U.S. sent forces to the other side of the world to a tiny Asian country — which was far from a threat to the U.S.—was because of the “Domino Theory”; that once one nation in a region fell to communism, others in that region would fall too; like a series of dominoes...

over... →

U.S. forces could not fight “their kind of war”:

- The dense, strange jungle was often unfavorable to tanks.
- Using the roads brought the risk of mines and snipers.
- Often the “enemy” was unseen, making it difficult for U.S. soldiers to tell exactly what they were up against.

If U.S. troops received “sniper-fire” from somewhere in a village, sometimes they saw little choice but to burn down most of the village to insure troops would not be killed again. Of course, villagers were faced with immense hardship and a new hatred for U.S. troops.

Throughout the war, China and the Soviet Union supplied powerful weapons and advisors to the Communist forces fighting the Americans in Vietnam. Without the Russian surface-to-air missiles, trucks, AK-47s, and more, it is doubtful the communists could have effectively resisted U.S. forces.

Communist forces in Vietnam had everything to gain from victory and everything to lose by defeat. By the end of U.S. involvement, a significant number of U.S. servicemen had no desire to fight for any “cause” in Vietnam, and many had the simple goal of staying alive for their tour of duty.