

# New Zealand's Involvement in the Vietnam War

## Lesson Plan for New Zealand Secondary Schools

Jungle Green Shadows by Tony Howell

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### **Curriculum Levels**

Year 11–13 (NCEA Levels 1–3)

### **Overview**

This lesson plan explores New Zealand's involvement in the Vietnam War through the personal memoir *Jungle Green Shadows* by Tony Howell, which recounts the experiences of Victor 2 Company, RNZIR, in South Vietnam during 1967–1968. The text provides rich insight into the life of New Zealand infantry soldiers, their operations, challenges, and camaraderie in jungle warfare. The lesson will help students understand the broader political context and human dimension of the war.

### **Curriculum Links**

**Social Sciences – History (NCEA):**

**Level 6:** Understand how the causes and consequences of significant historical events shape people's lives.

**Level 7:** Examine historical relationships between people, places, and events.

**Level 8:** Critically evaluate historical sources and perspectives

### **Key Competencies**

Thinking

Relating to others

Using language, symbols, and texts

Participating and contributing

## ***Learning Outcomes***

By the end of this unit, students will be able to:

Describe New Zealand's political and military involvement in the Vietnam War.

Analyse the lived experiences of New Zealand soldiers during the Vietnam War.

Evaluate primary and secondary sources for bias, perspective, and reliability.

Reflect on the long-term effects of war on individuals and society.

## ***Lesson Duration***

3–5 classroom periods (approximately 50 minutes each)

## ***Materials Required***

Copies of *Jungle Green Shadows* as a hard copy or eBook

Maps of Southeast Asia / Vietnam

Access to Vietnam War timelines, videos, and photographs

NZ History Online and Te Ara resources

Whiteboard, projector, or smartboard

## ***Lesson Breakdown***

### **Lesson 1: Introduction to the Vietnam War**

#### **Objective:**

Provide historical background and situate New Zealand's role.

#### **Activities:**

Class brainstorm: What do you already know about the Vietnam War?

Teacher presentation: Overview of Cold War context and Vietnam conflict.

Map activity: Locate Vietnam, key battle zones, and NZ areas of operation.

Introduce Victor Company's deployment with short video clips or a timeline.

#### **Homework:**

Read pages 1–25 of *Jungle Green Shadows*:

### **Lesson 2: Life in the Jungle: Soldiers' Perspectives**

#### **Objective:**

Understand the daily experiences and challenges faced by New Zealand soldiers.

#### **Activities:**

Group discussion: What stands out in Howell's descriptions (terrain, danger, morale)?

Class reads selected passages (e.g. on ambushes, patrols, monsoon conditions).

Compare and contrast with Australian or US accounts of the war.

Vocabulary review: Military jargon and terminology used in the book.

**Homework:**

Write a journal entry from the perspective of a young NZ soldier.

**Lesson 3: Comradeship, Trauma, and Aftermath**

**Objective:**

Explore the emotional and psychological impacts of the war.

**Activities:**

Class discussion on themes: comradeship, loss, fear, humour in adversity.

Read passages on medical evacuations, rest and recovery, or soldier reflections.

Introduce the concept of PTSD and long-term effects on veterans.

Watch a 5–10 minute interview of NZ Vietnam veterans (available online)

**Homework:**

Interview assignment – students ask a parent or grandparent about public attitudes toward the Vietnam War in NZ.

**Lesson 4: Comradeship, Trauma, and Aftermath**

**Objective:**

Examine New Zealand's home front and public opinion.

**Activities:**

Examine political speeches and newspaper articles from the 1960s–70s.

Debate: Should New Zealand have sent troops to Vietnam?

Students prepare a short speech from either a soldier's, protester's, or politician's perspective.

**Homework:**

Prepare for an assessment task (see below).

**Lesson 5: Assessment and Reflection**

**Objective:**

Consolidate knowledge and assess understanding.

**Assessment Options (teacher-selected based on level):**

**Essay:** Evaluate how *Jungle Green Shadows* helps us understand New Zealand's role in the Vietnam War.

**Presentation:** 5-minute visual presentation on one aspect of Victor 2 Company's service.

**Creative:** Letter home from a soldier, incorporating accurate historical detail.

**Source Analysis:** Compare *Jungle Green Shadows* to another primary or secondary source and discuss reliability and bias.

**Class Wrap-Up:**

Students reflect on key takeaways and legacies of the Vietnam War for New Zealand.

## ***Extension Activities***

Host a Vietnam veteran guest speaker (e.g. a list of ex-soldiers willing to talk to students).

Create a class exhibition with artefacts, maps, quotes, and timelines.

Research NZ's evolving foreign policy in Southeast Asia post-Vietnam

## ***Assesement Criteria***

Demonstrated historical understanding and accuracy.

Ability to interpret and use textual evidence from *Jungle Green Shadows*.

Clear communication of ideas (written and/or oral).

Depth of reflection and critical thinking.