

Teaching Resource: Courage and Comradeship

The Story of New Zealand's Victor 3 Company, Vietnam 1968–1969

Author: Lt Col (Ret) Bob Kellett

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Overview

This is a structured, multi-session teaching resource for *Courage and Comradeship: The Story of New Zealand's Victor 3 Company, Vietnam 1968–1969* by Lt Col (Ret) Bob Kellett. It is ideal for senior high school or introductory tertiary history courses.

Learning Objectives

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

Contextualise New Zealand's entry into the Vietnam War and alliance politics of the 1960s

Describe Victor 3 Company's formation, training, deployment, and combat operations

Evaluate the human dimensions of war – leadership, morale, fear, brotherhood, and trauma

Critically analyse primary-source excerpts such as diaries and interviews

Investigate how first-hand memoirs shape collective memory and national identity

Lesson Sequence

Session 1 - Introduction to NZ in Vietnam

Focus: Overview NZ's role (1964–1972), troop numbers, casualty figures

Activity: Create a timeline of NZ's military and medical deployments

Discussion: What drove New Zealand's involvement? (Cold War strategy, alliances, internal politics)

Session 2 - From Training to Deployment

Reading: Kellett's sections on pre-deployment training in NZ and Malaysia

Activity: Map training sites and discuss how preparation shaped battlefield performance

Comparative Study: Contrast Victor Company training with other NZ units from 1960s conflicts

Session 3 - Close-Quarter Combat & Tactical Realities

Reading: Vivid combat scenes – ambushes, use of claymores, M60s

Activity: Small-group source analysis: assess tone, narrative voice, and wartime stress

Discussion: How does personal storytelling impact our understanding of war?

Session 4 - Courage, Comradeship & Leadership

Reading/Case Study: Officer recollections; inspect honours and awards

Activity: Role-play a platoon briefing before an operation, focusing on decision-making and ethics

Discussion: What qualities define courage and comradeship under fire?

Session 5 - The Homecoming

Reading: Kellett's reflections on veterans' post-war experiences

Activity: Host a veteran guest speaker or review oral histories

Research: Explore how Victor 3 veterans were recognized (medals, ceremonies) and their broader legacy

Session 6 - Memory, Identity, and Historiography

Reading: Closure chapters + NZ Army News review by Capt Seed

Activity: Write personal-reflection essays: How does this memoir shape understanding of NZ's military identity?

Project: Students curate a digital exhibit – photos, maps, quotes, and documents

Assesement Options

Essay: Analyse how Kellett's memoir contributes to New Zealand's war memory

Creative: Design a multimedia timeline of Victor 3 Company's year (May 1968–May 1969)

Source Analysis: Critique a diary excerpt or operational report (e.g., from December 1968 NZ archives)

Primary-Source Materials

Victor 3 "battle diary" entries (e.g., tales from Nui Dat)

December 1968 deployment papers from the National Archives

Photographs (platoon image, 1968) from digital collections

Excerpts from Kellett and fellow soldiers

Cross-Curricular Connections

Geography: Map Phuoc Tuy province and nearby communities

Literature: Compare memoir writing styles; Kellett's versus other Vietnam accounts

Ethics/Social Studies: Discuss civilian impacts, protests, and NZ's diplomatic choices

Extension Activities

Debate: NZ's participation in Vietnam – were the motivations justified?

Oral History Project: Interview a family member, veteran, or use published interviews

Public History: Create a mini-exhibition or video on Victor 3 Company

Summary for Teachers

Component Description:

Book info – Bob Kellett, platoon commander; NZ infantry unit; Vietnam 1968–1969

Core Themes:

National memory

Training, combat tactics, leadership, impact on soldiers

Activities:

Mapping, role-playing, source work, creative exhibits

Assessment:

Essays, source critique, digital storytelling

Sources:

Kellett's memoir, diaries, archive documents, photographs