

Explore the Science of Everyday Life  
with your family this fall!

DOWNLOAD RESOURCES TODAY! 



Subscriber Login

Passcode/New Users

Help

STORE

Administrators

Teachers

Parents

Students

Classroom Resources > Lesson Plan Library

Lesson Plans Library 9-12 > U.S. History

# A Nation's Voice



**Grade Level** 9-12

**Subject Area** U.S. history

**Curriculum Focus**

U.S. government

**Duration** 1-2 weeks

## Objective

Students will:

1. Understand U.S. policy making in times of military conflict by learning about constitutional, statutory, and customary factors that affect policy.
2. Apply their knowledge of policy making to determine if U.S. involvement in one of its 20th century conflicts was warranted.

## Materials

Information sources including Internet sites, magazines and books, electronic encyclopedias and databases; access to the Constitution and the War Powers Act, world political and physical maps.

## Procedure

The Constitution and the War Powers Act have clear instructions regarding the

<http://school.discoveryeducation.com/lessonplans/activities/nationsvoice/>

## ★ Related Materials

### Elements of Biology: Organization in Living Systems DVD

Product Type: DVD  
Price: 69.95

Covering key topics in the high school biology curriculum, this series is an effective overview for the visual learner. Using st....



authority of the president and the Congress. Yet, U.S. presidents have committed troops to battle more than 100 times without a formal declaration of war from Congress. Were they justified?

### 1. Engage

Start by asking your students to consider the following quotation and discuss the questions below.

❖ *Laws are silent in time of war.* ❖  
 Marcus Tullius Cicero (106-43 B.C.E.),  
 Roman orator, poet, and statesman

What examples in U.S. history support or refute Cicero's claim?

What can you conclude from this statement?

### 2. Explore

**i.** Have students use the Constitution and the War Powers Act to determine what the powers of government are in times of conflict (see related links below and be sure to bookmark this page for convenience).

Facts they should arrive at are:

Article I, Section 8 of the U.S. Constitution gives Congress the right to declare war and raise and support military forces.

Article II, Section 2 of the U.S. Constitution states that the president shall be commander in chief of U.S. military forces.

The War Powers Act of 1973 limits the president's ability to use military forces by requiring him to report the use of troops to Congress within 48 hours and allowing him to continue their use for only 60 days without congressional authorization.

**ii.** Have students discuss and cite historic examples for the following customary factors surrounding the committal of military troops:

Few members of Congress will challenge a successful military operation.

The United States often sends troops into hostile situations as part of UN operations.

The views of foreign policy elites and military leaders are very important in shaping policy in times of conflict, as are national security concerns.

Popular opinion is an important influence on the president and Congress in times of conflict, although the government does not always do what the public wants (example: Congress continued to appropriate funds for the conflict in Vietnam even after it became unpopular).

**iii.** Ask students to select one of the following conflicts to investigate further. You may wish to have them work individually or you might break the students into groups that will research each of the conflicts together. To hear the audio files, you need the RealPlayer plug-in. [Download](#) it now.

#### The Declaration of War on Japan

[Franklin D. Roosevelt](#)

**DOWNLOAD RESOURCES TODAY!** 

#### Sponsored Links

##### [Become a Teacher Online](#)

#1 Teacher Ed Program In The Nation for Teacher Quality.  
 Apply Now!  
[www.wgu.edu](http://www.wgu.edu)

##### [Free Math Worksheets](#)

Printable Worksheets for Kids Keep Your Child Ahead of the Curve  
[education.com](http://education.com)

##### [Book Travel for Others?](#)

Earn Up to 75,000 bonus points when you book meetings and events  
[www.ihg.com/BusinessRewards](http://www.ihg.com/BusinessRewards)

##### [Start Download \(Free\)](#)

Instant Free Download. PDF Pronto 100% Full Version!  
[convertpdfpronto.com](http://convertpdfpronto.com)

Ads by Google



14.4 kbps



28.8 kbps

(running time: 7:44)

**The Cuban Missile Crisis**

John F. Kennedy



14.4 kbps



28.8 kbps

(running time: 7:31)

**Operation Desert Storm**

George Bush



14.4 kbps



28.8 kbps

(running time: 6:33)

Other conflict choices include the Korean War, the Vietnam War, President Reagan's invasion of Grenada, President Bush's invasion of Panama, and President Clinton's use of NATO forces in Kosovo.

iv. Students should focus their research on the following questions.

1. Why and how did the conflict begin?
2. What was the role of the United States in the conflict?
3. Did the president and Congress act in accordance with the Constitution and the War Powers Act? Was a formal declaration of war made? Did the president report to Congress?
4. What was the president's view of and role in the conflict?
5. How did Congress view and support the use of troops in the conflict?
6. Were U.S. troops part of UN or NATO forces?
7. Who were the key policy makers in Washington? Who were the key military leaders involved? How did they influence U.S. policies?
8. Were there any U.S. interests or national security concerns that determined U.S. actions?
9. What was popular opinion of the conflict and U.S. involvement in it?
10. How was the conflict covered in the media?

**3. Elaborate**

If students are working individually, ask them to write a legal brief supporting or condemning the president's actions in the conflict they researched. Each legal brief should contain:

**Date** when troops were sent in.

**Parties** those involved in the conflict.

**Background** political and social climate surrounding the incident.

**Discussion** key events that lead to U.S. military involvement and/or continued involvement.

**Decision** the legal and political argument for or against the president's actions in the chosen situation. This should be supported with the research from

actions in the chosen situation. This should be supported with the research from step 2.

If students are working in groups, have some of the group members write a brief supporting the president's actions and some write a brief condemning his actions.

---

### Closure

Student teams should deliver their briefs before a court of their peers. Ask the students sitting as members of the court to assume the following roles: the Supreme Court, the public, Congress, and the media. Once the team has read the brief aloud, those acting as the court may ask questions of the team. After questioning, the court will discuss the verdict briefly and announce it. Was the United States provoked? Were the president's actions legal? Were they justified under the circumstances?

---

### Extension

Have students post their legal briefs on a school Web page.

---

### Background

In 1973 Congress passed the War Powers Act over presidential veto to try to limit presidential use of troops without congressional authorization. However, no president has ever acknowledged the constitutionality of the War Powers Act. And the requirements for the president to report to Congress within 48 hours and limit the use of troops to 60 days have never been tested in the courts. The act's provisions require the following:

- The president must report in writing to Congress within 48 hours after sending troops into a hostile situation.
- Congress must provide for the continuation of the use of troops within 60 days by a formal declaration of war or other statutory authorization.
- If Congress does not authorize the continued use of troops within 60 days, the president must withdraw the troops.
- If Congress passes a concurrent resolution directing the president to remove the troops, he must comply.

Teachers may wish to note that other provisions of the law regarding the use of a legislative veto were struck down by the Supreme Court in the Chadha case. Since the War Powers Act was passed, presidents have reported to Congress a number of times in conflicts with Cambodia, Iran, Lebanon, Grenada, and Panama, for example.

---

### Related Links

[The Constitution of the United States of America](#)  
[The War Powers Act of 1973](#)

---

### Credits

Our thanks to Lara Maupin, a history teacher at Thomas Jefferson High School for Science and Technology in Alexandria, Virginia, for her consultation.

[Terms of Use](#) | [Privacy Policy](#) | [Contact Us](#) | [About Us](#) | [Check Requirements](#) | [Download Adobe Reader](#) | [Online Closed Captioning](#) | [Careers @ Discovery Education](#)

**ADMINISTRATOR RESOURCES**

[Curricular Resources](#)  
[Assessment Resources](#)  
[Instructional Services](#)  
[Customer Success](#)  
[Professional Development](#)  
[Discovery Educator Network](#)  
[Hardware Solutions](#)

**FREE TEACHER RESOURCES**

[K-5 Teacher Resources](#)   [Brain Boosters](#)  
[6-8 Teacher Resources](#)   [Clip Art](#)  
[9-12 Teacher Resources](#)   [Kathy Schrock's Guide](#)  
[Puzzlemaker](#)   [Learning Adventures](#)  
[Lesson Plans](#)   [Science Curriculum Center](#)  
[Featured Programs & Contests](#)   [WebMath](#)  
[Discovery Student Adventures](#)   [Worksheets to Go](#)

**FREE PARENT RESOURCES**

[Motivation Station](#)  
[Homework Help](#)  
[WebMath](#)  
[Featured Programs & Contests](#)  
[Puzzlemaker](#)  
[Clip Art](#)  
[Ready Zone H1N1](#)

**FREE STUDENT RESOURCES**

[Homework Help](#)  
[WebMath](#)  
[Puzzlemaker](#)  
[Clip Art](#)  
[Featured Programs & Contests](#)

**DE SUBSCRIBERS**

[Login](#)  
[Passcode/New User](#)

Copyright © 2013 Discovery Education. All rights reserved.  
Discovery Education is a subsidiary of Discovery Communications, LLC.