

DSST® A HISTORY OF THE VIETNAM WAR

EXAM INFORMATION

This exam was developed to enable schools to award credit to students for knowledge equivalent to that learned by students taking the course. This examination includes the history of the roots of the Vietnam War, including: pre-war developments (1954-1963); American involvement in the Vietnam War; Tet (1968); Cambodia and Laos; and peace, legacies and lessons.

The exam contains 100 questions to be answered in 2 hours.

EXAM CONTENT OUTLINE

The following is an outline of the content areas covered in the examination. The approximate percentage of the examination devoted to each content area is also noted.

- I. Vietnam Before 1940 – 5%**
 - a. Religious and cultural traditions
 - b. Chinese political and cultural domination
 - c. A tradition of resistance to invaders
 - d. French conquest and colonialism
 - e. Development of nationalism and communism
 - f. Ho Chi Minh
- II. World War II, the Cold War, and the First Indochina War (1940-1955) – 9%**
 - a. Vietnam during World War II
 - b. Vietnamese declaration of independence
 - c. Restoration of French rule
 - d. Global containment
 - e. Viet Minhn military strategies vs. French military strategies
 - f. Eisenhower's Vietnam policy
 - g. Dienbienphu
 - h. The Geneva Conference and American response
- III. Diem and Nation-State Building (1955-1963) – 10%**
 - a. U.S. support for Diem
 - b. Diem's inadequacies
 - c. U.S. military and economic assistance
 - d. The growing Southern insurgency
 - e. JFK's commitment to counter-insurgency
 - f. Internal opposition including the Buddhist crisis
 - g. The coup against Diem
- IV. L.B. Johnson Americanizes the War (1964-1965) – 10%**
 - a. Political instability in Vietnam
 - b. Introduction of the North Vietnamese Army
 - c. The Tonkin Gulf Incident & Resolution
 - d. The role of Vietnam in the 1964 Presidential Campaign
 - e. U.S. air campaign over Vietnam: Flaming Dart to Rolling Thunder
 - f. Introduction of U.S. combat troops (March through April 1965)
 - g. Increase in U.S. combat commitment (July 1965)
- V. America Takes Charge (1965-1967) – 10%**
 - a. Westmoreland's strategy of attrition
 - b. Measures of success
 - c. The continuing air war
 - d. The impact of the war on Vietnamese society
 - e. Stabilization of the Saigon regime
 - f. America's army in Vietnam
 - g. War without fronts: the combat experience
 - h. Search and destroy la Drang Valley
- VI. Home Front USA – 8%**
 - a. The Great Society: guns vs. butter
 - b. The credibility gap
 - c. Congressional dissent
 - d. Television and the press
 - e. The civil rights movement
 - f. The genesis of the new Left
 - g. The draft and draft resistance
- VII. Tet (1968) – 9%**
 - a. Vietnamese planning for the Tet offensive
 - b. Communist objectives
 - c. The Tet offensive
 - d. Reactions in U.S. and Saigon
 - e. LBJ decides not to run
 - f. Bombing halt and beginning of peace talks
 - g. The 1968 election
- VIII. Vietnamizing the War (1969-1973) – 10%**
 - a. Nixon, Kissinger, and Vietnamization
 - b. Justifications for Vietnamization (troop withdrawal)
 - c. Pacification and the Phoenix program
 - d. My Lai and the deterioration of the U.S. military
 - e. Secret negotiations (1969-1971)
 - f. The 1972 Spring offensive
 - g. The October agreement
 - h. The Christmas bombing
 - i. Triangular diplomacy: the U.S., the Soviet Union, and China
 - j. Paris Peace Accords (1973)
- IX. The War at Home – 8%**

- a. Campus unrest
- b. Peace activists and moratoria
- c. The Miami and Chicago conventions
- d. The counterculture, antiwar movement, and silent majority
- e. The Pentagon Papers

X. Cambodia and Laos – 8%

- a. The Geneva Accords (1954)
- b. JFK and Laotian neutrality (1962)
- c. Ho Chi Minh Trail
- d. The secret war in Laos
- e. Sihanouk and Cambodia's neutrality
- f. Lon Nol and the U.S. incursion
- g. The secret bombing of Laos and Cambodia
- h. The Khmer Rouge and the fall of Phnom Penh (1975)
- i. The communist victory in Laos

XI. "A Decent Interval" – 8%

- a. The cease-fire violations
- b. Watergate and Nixon's resignation
- c. Congressional passage of the War Powers Act
- d. The Great Spring Offensive
- e. The fall of Saigon

XII. U.S. Legacies and Lessons – 5%

- a. Impact of the war on Vietnam
- b. The impact of the Vietnam Syndrome on American foreign policy
- c. The experience of returning vets
- d. Economic consequences
- e. The impact on the U.S. military
- f. The impact on the media
- g. POWs and MIAs
- h. Collective national amnesia

REFERENCES

Below is a list of reference publications that were either used as a reference to create the exam, or were used as textbooks in college courses of the same or similar title at the time the test was developed. You may reference either the current edition of these titles **or** textbooks currently used at a local college or university for the same class title. It is recommended that you reference **more than one textbook** on the topics outlined in this fact sheet. You should **begin by checking textbook content against the content outline** provided **before** selecting textbooks that cover the test content from which to study. Sources for study material are suggested but not limited to the following:

1. Frankum, Ronald B., Jr. (2011). *Historical Dictionary of the War in Vietnam*. Toronto: Scarecrow Press. Current Edition.

2. Goldfield, David (2011). *The American Journey: A History of the United States*. New York: Pearson. Current edition.
3. Karnow, Stanley (1983). *Vietnam: A History*. New York: Viking Press. Current edition.
4. Lawrence, Mark Atwood (2010). *The Vietnam War*. USA: Oxford University Press. Current edition.
5. Sheehan, Neil (1989). *A Bright Shining Lie: John Paul Vann and America in Vietnam*. New York: Vintage. Current edition.
6. Tucker, Spencer C. (ed).(2001), *Encyclopedia of the Vietnam War: A Political, Social, and Military History*. Current edition

SAMPLE QUESTIONS

All test questions are in a multiple-choice format, with one correct answer and three incorrect options. These are samples of the types of questions that may appear on the exam. Other sample questions can be found in the form of practice exams by visiting our website at www.getcollegecredit.com/testprep.

1. In early 1964, which of the following best describes the Vietnamese Communists' position in South Vietnam?
 - a. They were weakened by the strategic hamlet program.
 - b. They were stronger in the cities than the South Vietnamese.
 - c. They controlled approximately 40% of the countryside.
 - d. Their military successes outweighed their political successes.
2. For which of the following reasons did Ho Chi Minh, a confirmed Communist, seek United States support in 1945?
 - a. He did not trust the Soviet Union.
 - b. He was a pragmatist, principally preoccupied with Vietnam's salvation, and he would accept help where he could get it.

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- c. He knew that he would be turned down by the Americans, and then he could appeal more convincingly to the Soviets.
 - d. He had no hope of United States aid, but others in his administration urged him to appeal to the Americans.
3. When the United States took charge of the war, a major impact on Vietnamese society was a dramatic
 - a. reduction in religious intolerance
 - b. expansion of political democracy
 - c. influx of money and technology
 - d. improvement in education
4. “Credibility gap” was the phrase used to identify the
 - a. victory claims of the Vietnamese Communists
 - b. propaganda of the Vietnamese Communists
 - c. distance between events and official United States statements
 - d. disagreements between the United States and its allies over United States policy in Vietnam
5. What was the immediate reaction of President Johnson’s military and civilian advisors to the outcome of the Tet offensive?
 - I. They were divided over what course of action to follow.
 - II. They presented a united front in support of the President’s policies.
 - III. They were unanimous in recommending the start of negotiations with the Communists.
 - IV. They urged the President to commit more troops to Vietnam.
 - a. I and IV only
 - b. II and III only
 - c. III and IV only
 - d. II, III and IV only
6. Which of the following was one of the important reasons why the United States military effort in South Vietnam was unsuccessful?
 - a. The United States attempted to fight a conventional war against a guerrilla force that avoided large battles.
 - b. The United States measures only attracted the support of the peasant masses and failed to gain the support of the local elites.
 - c. Counterinsurgency could not have been adapted to the terrain in Vietnam.
 - d. Counterinsurgency was unpopular politically in the United States.
7. Who were the Khmer Rouge?
 - a. Supporters of Prince Sihanouk.
 - b. Cambodian Communists.
 - c. The Cambodian non-Communist nationalists.
 - d. The pro-American faction in Cambodia.
8. The Chinese Communist victory in 1949 significantly altered the situation in Indochina because it resulted in
 - a. the introduction of large numbers of Chinese Communist troops into Indochina.
 - b. provisions of war material and equipment to the Viet Minh.
 - c. a shift of French military forces to the northern Indochina border.
 - d. a formal military alliance between the Chinese and Vietnamese Communists.
9. One of the major counterinsurgency programs undertaken by the Diem government and the Kennedy administration was the
 - a. Phoenix program.
 - b. Food-for-Peace program.
 - c. Open Arms program.
 - d. strategic hamlet program.
10. The shooting of students at Kent State University came during demonstrations against the
 - a. war in general.
 - b. renewed bombing in the North.
 - c. mining of Haiphong Harbor.
 - d. invasion of Cambodia.
11. From the American perspective, one advantage of the 1973 Vietnam Agreement was that it
 - a. allowed the return of U.S. prisoners of war.
 - b. allowed some North Vietnamese troops to stay in South Vietnam.
 - c. settled the political issues that caused the war
 - d. ended the war.
12. The War Powers Act was designed to ensure that
 - a. the President would have to obtain congressional support for long-term use of United States troops abroad.
 - b. Congress would decide when and where to send United States troops.
 - c. the President’s power to wage war would be virtually eliminated.
 - d. a national referendum would have to be held before United States troops could be sent abroad.

CREDIT RECOMMENDATIONS

The American Council on Education’s College Credit Recommendation Service (ACE CREDIT) has evaluated the DSST test development process and content of this exam. It has made the following credit recommendations :

Area or Course Equivalent	A History of the Vietnam War
Level	Upper-level baccalaureate
Amount of Credit	Three (3) semester hours
Minimum Score	400
Source	American Council on Education – College Credit Recommendation Service

Answers to sample questions: 1-C; 2-B; 3-C; 4-C; 5-A; 6-A; 7-B; 8-B; 9-D; 10-D; 11-A; 12-A

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