

- In 1946, craving independence and with war against the French looming, Ho Chi Minh warned, "You can kill ten of my men for every one I kill of yours, yet even at those odds, you will lose and I will win." Ask students to research and define terms such as *nationalist*, *patriot* and *communist*. Which of these terms best describes Ho Chi Minh? Ask students to write brief essays evaluating his leadership characteristics and legacy.

### Suggested Internet Resources

Periodically, Internet Resources are updated on our web site at [www.LibraryVideo.com](http://www.LibraryVideo.com)

- [www.fordham.edu/halsall/mod/1967-vietnam-letters1.html](http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/mod/1967-vietnam-letters1.html)  
Fordham University provides a letter exchange between President Johnson and Ho Chi Minh regarding peace negotiations in 1967.
- [vietnam.vassar.edu/overview.html](http://vietnam.vassar.edu/overview.html)  
Vassar College presents a wealth of information on the Vietnam War.
- [www.campbell.edu/faculty/Slattery/dien\\_bien\\_phu.htm](http://www.campbell.edu/faculty/Slattery/dien_bien_phu.htm)  
Campbell University has a scholarly account of the battle at Dien Bien Phu.

### Suggested Print Resources

- Caputo, Philip. *10,000 Days of Thunder: A History of the Vietnam War*. Atheneum Books for Young Readers, New York, NY; 2005.
- Duiker, William. *Ho Chi Minh: A Life*. Hyperion, New York, NY; 2000.
- Shipway, Martin. *Road to War: France and Vietnam, 1944-1947*. Berghahn Books, Providence, RI; 2002.

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#### TEACHER'S GUIDE

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GREATEST SPEECHES  
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## HO CHI MINH

Grades 9–12

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## Historical Overview

By the twentieth century, powerful forces challenged the deeply entrenched colonial system that for centuries had allowed great powers to dominate distant peoples. Inspired by the basic message of the Declaration of Independence and the French revolutionary doctrine of “liberte, egalite and fraternite,” Ho Chi Minh spoke passionately about the independence of Vietnam, a nation that had been exploited and occupied for thousands of years. Inspired by their national hero, and united in a common purpose, the Vietnamese people endured long and devastating conflicts with France and the United States to become a free and autonomous country.

## Time Line

- 1860s — France begins to take control of Vietnam.
- 1890 — Ho Chi Minh is born as Nguyen Van Thanh in Vietnam.
- 1945 — Ho Chi Minh delivers his Vietnamese Declaration of Independence.
- 1946 — The French Indochina War begins.
- 1954 — France is defeated at Dien Bien Phu.
- 1961 — The Strategic Hamlet Program is initiated.
- 1963 — President John F. Kennedy is assassinated.
- 1964 — The Gulf of Tonkin incident increases U.S. presence in Vietnam.
- 1964 — Operation Rolling Thunder begins.
- 1969 — Ho Chi Minh dies at age 79.
- 1975 — American forces withdraw from Saigon.
- 1975 — Vietnam is reunified as an independent nation.

## Vocabulary

**colonialism** — The policy of a dominant country conquering and ruling a weaker country, usually for the purpose of exploiting the weaker country’s natural resources.

**communist** — One who advocates an economic system in which all property and the means of production are publicly owned.

**nationalist** — A member of a political group fighting for national independence.

**Vietnam Revolutionary League (Vietminh)** — A revolutionary group founded in 1925 by Ho Chi Minh while he lived in China.

**World War II** — The second major war of the 20<sup>th</sup> century that involved the Allied Powers led by England, France, the Soviet Union and the United States and their opponents, the Axis Powers, which included Germany, Japan and Italy.

**Pearl Harbor** — An American military base in the Pacific that was attacked by Japan on December 7, 1941. The United States declared war on Japan the next day.

**guerrilla** — An independent fighter who is not part of a regular military force but engages in warfare.

**Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen** — France’s charter of human rights, which was adopted in 1789 and served as the preamble to the 1791 constitution.

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**putsch** — The forcible change of a government, or a coup d’etat.

**Cold War** — An intense hostile rivalry during the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century between communist nations, particularly the Soviet Union, and the democratic-capitalist nations of the world, led by the United States.

**Marshall Plan** — An aid program initiated by U.S. Secretary of State George C. Marshall in 1947 to reduce hunger and poverty in war-ravaged Europe.

**Dien Bien Phu** — A decisive 1954 battle in which Vietnamese forces defeated the French that resulted in French withdrawal from Vietnam.

**Vietcong** — A Communist-led army and guerrilla force in South Vietnam that fought its government and was supported by North Vietnam.

**Strategic Hamlet** — A failed program to prevent communist influence by placing Vietnamese peasants into protected villages.

**Operation Rolling Thunder** — A series of bombing attacks started in 1965 that were conducted by the United States in North Vietnam in an attempt to cut supply lines to the Vietcong in South Vietnam.

## Discussion Questions

1. Why is it said that Ho Chi Minh was born into “a culture of revolution”?
2. About what did Ho Chi Minh lecture to fellow students in school?
3. Why did Ho Chi Minh move to China?
4. Why were many French people growing weary of the war in Vietnam?
5. Who was Ngo Dinh Diem?
6. What was the purpose and effect of the Strategic Hamlet program?
7. What was Operation Rolling Thunder?

## Discussion Questions & Activities

- After helping the Allies defeat Japan in World War II, Ho Chi Minh delivered his famous Vietnamese declaration of independence, which expressed his nation’s collective desire to be forever free from French colonialists. However, the power of French financial interests vastly outweighed romantic notions of freedom and justice among the Vietnamese. Ask students to read Ho’s declaration and analyze his rhetoric on the effects of French control over Vietnam’s economy. As a follow-up, ask students to research and describe the extent of France’s colonial interests in the natural resources and products of Indochina, especially rubber. Ho’s Vietnamese declaration of independence may be found at the following web site: [coombs.anu.edu.au/~vern/van\\_kien/declar.html](http://coombs.anu.edu.au/~vern/van_kien/declar.html)
- Ho Chi Minh presented a list of grievances against the French to President Wilson at Versailles in 1919, and often wrote to President Truman and the United States government asking for America’s help in winning independence for Vietnam from French control — only to be ignored. Ask students to read a telegram Ho wrote to Truman in 1946 that pleaded for U.S. aid against the French. What does Ho mean by the “principles of the Atlantic and San Francisco Charters”? Students may follow-up by speculating about why the United States didn’t respond to Ho’s messages. The telegram may be found at the following web site (point cursor to bottom left corner to enlarge): [killeenroos.com/5/hcminhmemo.jpg](http://killeenroos.com/5/hcminhmemo.jpg)

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