

Appendix B

Soldier's Dilemma

Duration	40 minutes
Focus	Introduction to War Literature
Materials	Soldier's Dilemma Handout 3 questions on board – variety of subjects

Launch Activity

Please find your place in the room according to the signs “A,” “B,” or “C” located around the room and according to the problems on the board. Do not solve the problems. Merely decide which problem you would wish to solve first and go stand by that letter's sign.

See how students are divided. Are all of them standing by one sign? Are they equally divided? Which problem has the most students standing by it? Which one has the least?

If groups are relatively equal in division, create three groups of students (or as many as needed so that 4-5 students are in each group). If groups are not divided equally, try to create concordant groups according to the problems they chose (or put one of each letter in each group).

Introduction

The next works of literature we will examine involve situations of war, which often raise questions about our morals and what we would do in given situations. What happens when we are faced with a decision that conflicts with our morals? Quietly consider this question as we approach the new activity.

Activity

Soldier's Dilemma

In groups, present activity.

Read story aloud to students.

Groups have 5 minutes to discuss and come up with a unanimous decision of what the soldier should do.

Discussion

What happened in groups? How did you come to a decision? Was it easy to make a unanimous decision? Why or why not? What are the advantages to each outcome?

Homework

Respond to the following question in your journal or on a sheet of loose-leaf paper as a free-write.

What does the word “survivor” mean to you? Define and explain the word.

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Soldier's Dilemma

During the Vietnam War, an infantry squad was patrolling deep in enemy-controlled territory near the Cambodian border. At one point in this operation, the squad leader, Sergeant Johnson, decided to scout along a trail that ran through a valley leading toward a village a short distance away. Johnson told one of his riflemen, a private named Dillon, to stay on a small hilltop as a lookout while the rest of the squad followed along the trail in the valley below. Johnson expressed concern about a possible ambush on the trail and reminded Dillon that their platoon had been ambushed in this same area and had suffered a number of casualties some weeks prior to the present operation. "Don't take any chances," Johnson warned. "Better to kill a few of those murdering villagers than to let any more Americans die."

As Dillon watched the squad make its way along the trail, he saw a Vietnamese woman suddenly appear on the trail just ahead of the squad, but around the bend so they could not see her. From his vantage point, the woman appeared to lean over the edge of the trail and then quickly moved back into the underbrush—out of sight of the squad, but still visible to Dillon.

Dillon was immediately suspicious. This was enemy controlled territory, and the woman could easily be part of the local guerilla forces. On the other hand, many innocent peasants lived in and around the village. Was the woman a guerilla soldier who might set off a mine or booby trap when the squad came around the bend in the trail? Or was the woman simply a peasant who had perhaps dropped something on the trail in her haste to hide from the advancing American soldiers? Also, what about the things Johnson had told him? As a soldier, he was taught to obey all orders of his superiors. To disobey is a crime.

As these thoughts went through Dillon's mind, the squad kept moving and was now almost at the spot where the woman was hiding. The squad was too far away for Dillon to call out to them. Even a warning shot would probably not stop them from proceeding around the bend. Dillon raised his rifle and lined up his sights on the woman in the brush. But as his finger tightened on the trigger, he hesitated.

If he shot the woman and there turned out not to be a mine or booby trap on the trail, he would have murdered an innocent person. But if he didn't shoot her, a number of his friends might be blown to bits if the woman detonated a mine.

Questions

1. What should Dillon do: hold his fire or shoot the woman?
2. Why is that the right thing for him to do?
3. Do you agree with what Sergeant Johnson told Dillon? Why or why not?

Whole Class Discussion Questions

1. If Dillon holds his fire, why does the fact that people in his squad are his "friends" make a difference (or is there a difference)?
2. If Dillon decides to shoot the woman and it turns out that she was just an innocent peasant woman, do you think he has done anything wrong? Why or why not?
3. If Dillon killed an innocent civilian, would you be willing to call him a murderer? Why or why not? If yes, what should his punishment be? Why?
4. If Dillon decides not to shoot the woman, and it turns out that she was a guerilla soldier who sets off a mine or a booby trap, and some of his fellow soldiers are killed and wounded, do you think he has done anything wrong? Why or why not?
5. If Dillon fails to shoot the woman and some of his fellow soldiers are killed and wounded as a result of his failure to shoot, would you be willing to say that he has committed a crime? Why or why not? What crime has he committed and what should his punishment be?
6. What do you think the morals of war are? What guidelines or criteria can someone use to live by in a war?
7. What impact do you think this might have on what people write and what they read?