



NATIONAL VIETNAM VETERANS
Art Museum

Teacher Packet

PURPLE HEARTS

VETERANS OF THE WAR IN IRAQ

The National Vietnam Veterans Art Museum would like for your class visit to be as enlightening and as effective as possible, and we are pleased to offer you our Teacher Packets to aid and prepare your class for their visit. This material is designed to be used both before and after your visit, and we hope it will maximize the impact of your class' experience here. We welcome any feedback or suggestions you may have on how to improve this teacher packet. Thank you for giving us the opportunity to be a part of your educational process. We look forward to your visit.

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Viewing the Vietnam War and war experience in general through art helps forge a link between the student, soldier, art and history. The students participate in multi-dimensional learning that focuses on analyzing how art relates to historical themes and issues, interpreting and understanding art as a tool of communication, synthesizing and assimilating information from different disciplines into demonstrated comprehension, and further developing abstract and critical thinking that can be applied throughout the learning process. The Vietnam War and its impact on those who fought in it on both sides are brought to the immediate grasp of each student as they become true first-hand witnesses to the war experience.

About the Purple Heart

The story of the Purple Heart medal starts with President George Washington, who was also a general. Being a military man, General Washington understood and appreciated what his men, the soldiers, experienced on the battlefield, and the relationships forged there. Whenever any soldier distinguished himself through valor or any other meritorious actions,

General Washington was quick and happy to grant the individuals a commission or an advance in rank. In 1782, however, General Washington was ordered by the Continental Congress of the United States to desist from this because there wasn't enough money to pay the soldiers, let alone the newly-ordered officers. In response, General Washington presented his alternative in his General Orders of August 7, 1782, in which he says:

The General, ever desirous to cherish ambition in his soldiers as well as foster and encourage every species of military merit, directs that whenever any singularly meritorious action is performed, the author of it shall be permitted to wear on his facings, over his left breast, the figure of a heart in purple cloth or silk edged with narrow lace or binding....The name and regiment of the persons so certified are to be enrolled in a Book of Merit which shall be kept in the orderly room....The order to be retroactive to the earliest stages of the war, and to be a permanent one.¹

These records were lost for 150 years in the War Department, and this award slipped out of history. Then in 1932 these records (minus the *Book of Merit*, which has never been recovered) were found during a search for Washington's papers generated by Washington's bicentennial. On February 22, 1932, the War Department reissued a form of the medal, stating:

The PURPLE HEART is awarded to members of the armed forces of the U.S. who are wounded by an instrument of war in the hands of an enemy and posthumously awarded to the next of kin in the name of those who are killed in action or die of wounds received in action. It is specifically a combat decoration. Concurrently, the Military Order of the Purple Hearts was formed. It is composed only of Purple Heart recipients. Wives, mothers, and daughters are eligible to join the Ladies' Auxiliary of the Military Order of the Purple Hearts.²

The Purple Heart is the world's oldest military decoration still in use, and was the first American award available to the common soldier.³

¹ "An American Decoration," www.purpleheart.org, retrieved November 4, 2005.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

The War in Iraq

Rumors of weapons of mass destruction, terrorists, lack of cooperation and transparency with United Nations' inspectors...whatever the catalysts, on March 20, 2003, President George W. Bush commanded U.S. troops in the Middle East to commence the invasion of Iraq under Operation Iraqi Freedom. U.S. and allied forces (among them Great Britain and Australia) commenced air strikes and the securing of key objectives (like oil fields) while contending with Iraqi units and Ba'ath Party militia members⁴ and other rebel combatants. In April 2003, U.S. troops made their way into Baghdad, and on April 9, 2003, Baghdad fell to U.S.-led forces.⁵ U.S. and Kurdish fighters also took control of Kirkuk, Mosul and Tikrit. U.S. Marines started their withdrawal from nearby Fallujah on April 30 (and retook it November 15, 2005). In May 2003, Saddam Hussein's government, party and administration were declared officially dismantled. Allied troops in Iraq encountered guerrilla warfare from various insurgency fighters, but by April 14, 2003, U.S. Major General McChrystal declared that "major combat operations have ended in Iraq,"⁶ a statement reiterated by President Bush on May 1. Since then, U.S. and allied troops have been kept busy responding to fierce insurgency and rebel opposition to the U.S.' occupation of Iraq while the new Iraqi government is being established.

Chronological Timeline of Iraqi Purple Heart Soldiers' Injuries

April 3, 2003

Sgt. Jeremy Feldbusch near the Hadithah Dam

On the Euphrates River, 125 miles NW of Karbala. The dam was one of the strategic key objectives that needed to be secured—damage to the dam if the area was not secured would have flooded the city of Hadithah and surrounding towns. After the fall of Saddam Hussein, Hadithah became a center of insurgent activity.⁷

April 5, 2003

Spc. Jose Martinez in Karbala

U.S. troops encountered very heavy firing from Iraqi paramilitary fighters (Fedayeen) in this city SW of Baghdad. The Iraqis fired down on U.S. troops from rooftop vantage points throughout the city's streets. The U.S. called in air support, and fighting went on through the afternoon and in the evening as well. Karbala later made headlines when thousands of Shi'ite Muslims made a pilgrimage to this holy city on April 22, 2003, a pilgrimage that had been illegal under Saddam Hussein's rule for over 30 years. On March 2, 2004, almost 200 Shi'ite Muslims were killed by bombs during a religious celebration here.

May 5, 2003

Spc. Luis Calderon in Tikrit

Although Spc. Calderon was injured in an accident, Tikrit was Saddam Hussein's native city and fiercely loyal to him throughout much of the war. In April 2003, Tikrit was bombed repeatedly in preparation for ground forces to go in and attempt to take the city, which was guarded by Special Republican Guards of Hussein's, as well as the paramilitary Fedayeen and Ba'ath party loyalists.⁸ Saddam Hussein was captured from his hiding place in Tikrit on December 13, 2003.

May 18, 2003

Spc. Sam Ross in Baghdad

As Iraq's capital city, Baghdad has been on the top of the allied forces' list for this war. Starting with air raids on 21 March, 2003, it has seen much fighting. On April 9, 2003, Baghdad fell to U.S.-led forces.⁹ Since then, it has been a focus of suicide bombers and insurgent activity. Though President Bush announced major combat had ended in Iraq on May 1, 2003, most of the United State's casualties have occurred in the occupation of Iraq, which has been the allied forces' task since the declared end of combat.

⁴ www.historychannel.com/thcsearch/thec_resourceDetail.do?encyc_id=219006, retrieved November 29, 2005.

⁵ news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/middle_east/country_profiles/737483.stm, retrieved November 8, 2005.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ "Haditha", en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Haditha, retrieved November 30, 2005.

⁸ Monita Rajpal, "Stronghold of Tikrit may be Saddam's last stand," *CNN.com* April 11, 2003 retrieved November 30, 2005.

www.cnn.com/2003/WORLD/meast/04/11/sprj.irq.tikrit

⁹ news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/middle_east/4192189.stm, retrieved November 8, 2005.

The War in Iraq continued

June 1, 2003

Sgt. Wasim Khan in downtown Baghdad

June 2003 sees the start of Operation Desert Scorpion, in which allied forces used country-wide raids to eke out enemy forces and weapon caches throughout Iraq. Ambushes and attacks are encountered all over Iraq, including Baghdad.^a

July 13, 2003

Spc. Robert Acosta in Baghdad

The Iraqi governing council has its first meeting on this date, a first step toward establishing a new government to take over after the occupation is over.

July 16, 2003

Pfc. Alan Jermaine Lewis in Baghdad

In July 2003, a commander of U.S. forces in Iraq states that allied troops are meeting with “low-intensity guerilla-style war”^b tactics from rebels and insurgents throughout Iraq.

July 16, 2003

Spc. Adam Zaremba in Baghdad

On the home front, UK Prime Minister Tony Blair spoke to the U.S. Congress on the 17th of this month to reaffirm that allied forces had gone into Iraq based on weapons of mass destruction intelligence.

July 16, 2003

Cpl. Alex Presman outside of Baghdad

Later this month, on July 22, Saddam’s two sons Uday and Qusay are killed by US troops in the northern city of Mosul. They have each terrorized Iraqis themselves.

August 25, 2003

Pfc. Tristan Wyatt in Fallujah

At the beginning of this month, a police station in Fallujah is bombarded by RPGs (rocket propelled grenades). Almost a week prior to this date, suicide bombers destroyed the United Nation’s headquarters in Baghdad, killing at least 20 and injuring more than 100.^c

August 29, 2003

Sgt. John Adams in Ramadi

This city is in the Sunni Triangle, a Sunni area, and the name of the sect of which Saddam Hussein was a member. Though a minority group in Iraq, under Saddam the Sunnis enjoyed more privileges under his regime. This area, along with Tikrit in the north and Baghdad and Fallujah in the south remain a hotbed of insurgents and fighters still loyal to Saddam Hussein.

September 12, 2003

Spc. Carl Sampson in Fallujah

On this date, a firefight erupted between U.S. troops and Fallujah police when the police responded to gunfire coming from a BMW that was targeting the police station. In the confusion of unmarked police pursuers exchanging fire with the suspects, U.S. forces fired on both the suspects and police.

September 20, 2003

Cpl. Tyson Johnson in Abu Ghraib

The mortaring on the now-famous Abu Ghraib prison that injured Cpl. Johnson killed 2 U.S. soldiers and wounded 12 others. An assassination attempt resulted in the later death of a member of the Governing Council, Dr. Aquila al-Hashimi on this same date.^d

December 8, 2003

Spc. Jose Martinez in a suicide bomber attack

While the fighting waged on in Iraq for Allied forces, an Iraqi officer came forward as the source of Britain’s intelligence about Saddam Hussein’s weapons of mass destruction, which was President Bush’s main argument for the second Gulf War.^e

December 16, 2003

Sgt. Joseph Mosner in Khalidya

Just a few days prior to this, on December 14, Saddam Hussein was captured in Tikrit. In the days following, there are reactions from many of the world’s leaders on Hussein’s capture. On this same date, the UN urges its member nations to consider the UN’s role in Iraq.

^a “Occupation of Iraq timeline,” en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2003_-_2004_occupation_of_Iraq_timeline#June, retrieved December 1, 2005.

^b news.bbc.co.uk

^c Ibid.

^d “September 2003” timeline, en.wikipedia.org/wiki/September_2003, retrieved December 13, 2005.

^e “Iraqi: I’m Source For WMD Claim,” www.cbsnews.com/stories/2003/12/08/iraq/main587251.shtml, retrieved December 14, 2005.

Map of Iraq



This map adapted from original at *Atlas of the Orient* made by Tore Kjeilen (from www.mideastweb.org/miraq.htm)

Student Activities

ACTIVITY 1

Notice that most of the soldiers are photographed in civilian clothes and backgrounds/situations. Why do you think the photographer and/or subjects have chosen to do this?

ACTIVITY 2

Art has proven an extremely effective form of therapy. Mostly, it is the process of making art that proves so helpful to the traumatized, or looking at artwork to help trigger therapeutic discussion. In Nina Berman's photographs, however, the veterans are the subjects of the art. How might the Iraqi War Veterans have found this particular role in the artwork helpful to them personally, or in their readjustment to civilian life and in reconnecting with civilians, family and friends?

ACTIVITY 3

Photographs can offer great insight into people, places, and even time. In this exhibit, the viewer sees the veteran now, with a narrative of the event that brought them to this point

in their lives. Have the students bring in a photograph of themselves that they feel represents them well as an individual and write their own narrative to further explain what decisions, people, and events in their lives brought them to the moment in the photograph. Or, have them bring in a photograph from a magazine, newspaper, or the web, and write a narrative that they think would help explain what events or people led to the moment in the picture.

ACTIVITY 4

How might the students' impressions of the photographs be altered if the photographs had been in black and white—would they have made the veterans and their stories seem less real/more distant, or more dramatic perhaps?

ACTIVITY 5

Have the students look at any of the Purple Heart photographs, while keeping in mind photographs such as Laszlo Kondor's *Wounded Buddy*, *America's Division* and Dean Sharp's *Waiting for Medevac* or *Carried on My Back*, on the

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