

UNDERGROUND

By Miranda Burton

CULTURAL SAFETY

Before you begin, carefully consider the steps you can take to ensure that you are providing a culturally safe and inclusive space for everybody in your classroom and school. This may include undertaking cultural competency training, and reading widely and proactively to self-educate yourself.

RECOMMENDED FOR: Ages 14–99 years old

Years 9–12, MID to UPPER SECONDARY

THEMES: YA graphic non-fiction, 20th century history, historical and personal intersections, Vietnam War, activism and protest, civilian war experience, refugee experience, racism, sexism, political, social and art history.

CURRICULUM LEARNING AREAS: 

- **ENGLISH:** Literacy, literature and language
- **HASS:** History and modern history
- **VISUAL ARTS**
- **Cross-curriculum priority: ASIA AND AUSTRALIA'S ENGAGEMENT WITH ASIA**

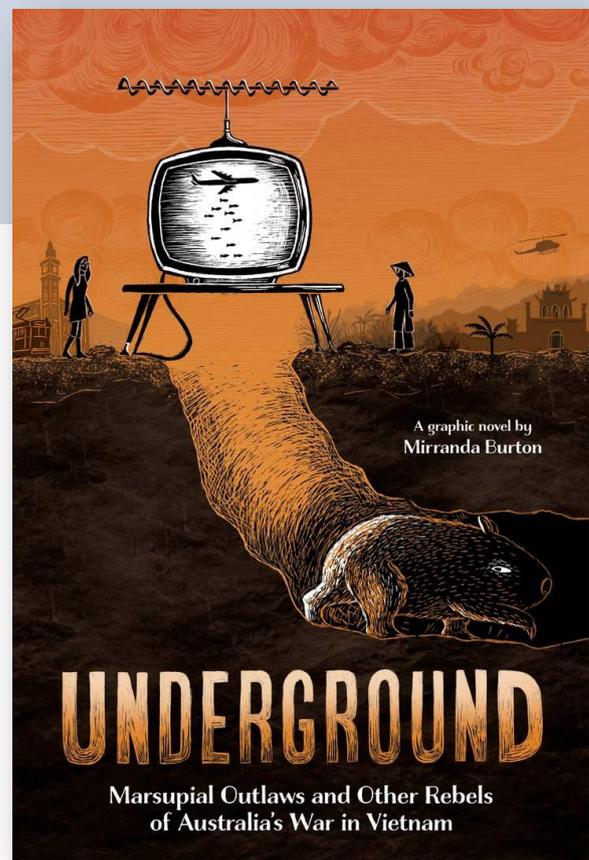
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INTRODUCTION

Underground: Marsupial Outlaws and Other Rebels of Australia's War in Vietnam tells three remarkable true stories from the various frontlines of Australia's war in Vietnam (1962–1972).

The stories that comprise *Underground* are compiled from interviews and research. The book moves from the stories of Jean McLean and the Save Our Sons anti-draft protests, through to the stories of veteran Bill Cantwell, and includes stories from Vietnamese refugee Mai Ho of her experiences of war in Vietnam followed by escape and resettlement in Australia. This turbulent time in Australia's recent past are brought to vivid life in words and images.

The various stories intersect in illuminating ways. All nations on both sides of the Vietnamese conflict exercised governmental control of their populations in order to prosecute that war. These controls included the close management of information, an official rhetoric of fear, press censorship, and punitive legal consequences for dissenters.

The Vietnam War was Australia's longest-running conflict of the 20th century. Between 1965 and 1975, bombs dropped on Vietnam more than doubled the bombs that were dropped on Europe and Asia during World War II. Five hundred Australians and over 50,000 Americans died over the decade. Over two million Vietnamese civilians died, while three million fled from Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia over two decades. Of these refugees, 800,000 fled by boat, becoming known as 'boat people'. Ten to fifteen per cent of those who fled by boat died at sea.

PLOT SUMMARY

In 1962 Australian prime minister Robert Menzies agreed to support the US in their effort to contain the perceived communist threat in Asia by supporting a democratic South Vietnam against incursions by the communist north.

In 1964 Australia began drafting young men of 20 years into military service. The draft had been controversial in Australia since it was first introduced in 1909.

In 1965 artists Clifton and Marlene Pugh lived with a wombat called Hooper in Cottles Bridge, Victoria. Clifton was still suffering from his experiences in WWII. He painted, while Marlene rescued native animals. One day the wombat, Hooper, received his notice to report for military service. How did this happen?

Who drafts a wombat into combat?

Meanwhile, Victorian teenager Bill Cantwell was 17 years old when he enlisted and 19 years old when he was posted to Vietnam. During his tour of duty, Bill lost his right eye and was sent home to Australia. By this time, public opinion on the war had shifted and even the RSL refused to acknowledge the returned soldiers, saying that the Vietnamese campaign was not a 'real war'. Veterans' needs were largely ignored, and many US veterans became involved in the anti-draft and later the anti-war movements. In Australia, the RSL rejection compounded post-traumatic stress disorder suffered by many returned servicemen. Unlike returned soldiers from WWII (the 'good' war), they were associated with an unpopular war. This embittered soldiers and contributed to their attitude to the war. Some suffered alcohol or drug addiction. Some went bush. Some killed themselves. Most buried their experiences and tried to live a 'normal' life.

Elsewhere, in Melbourne, young Jean McLean was organising to stop the draft. With a group of women friends, she started Save Our Sons (SOS), which at first attracted mostly women to the cause but later other protesters too, including draftees resisting the police. SOS began a campaign of protest, letter-writing and debate. One of their strategies was to create bureaucratic confusion by sending the ministry false registrations for the draft. They used the names of dead people, or popular figures – or wombats called Hooper.

Jean and SOS were harassed by authorities but continued their activism, hiding draftees in safehouses and making daring escapes from police. Later their protests broadened to include objections to the war itself, and to propaganda about the North Vietnamese people. Eventually Jean travelled to North Vietnam and met the 'enemy'.

Finally, in 1968 in Saigon, South Vietnam, schoolgirl Mai Ho's country was torn apart by war. Some called it the 'American' war, some the 'Communist' war but, south and north, civilians were dying as well as soldiers. From her Saigon Catholic school, a young Mai wrote letters to US-allied South Vietnamese soldiers and went on school excursions to army barracks. Terrible new weapons were deployed and her country was poisoned by chemicals as well as decimated by bombs.

Mai and her family survived the war but were then targeted by the new communist regime. In 1982, along with her two daughters, Mai crammed into a small boat with 160 other people and headed out into the open sea. Found by a British ship and taken to a Malaysian refugee camp for three months, the family were left with nothing but the clothes they were wearing. Eventually, in December 1982, Mai and her daughters arrived in Melbourne, Australia.

Young soldier Bill Cantwell went on to become a lawyer. He still suffers flashbacks.

SOS organiser Jean Mclean won a seat in parliament and served as Labor member for Boronia/Melbourne West for 14 years.

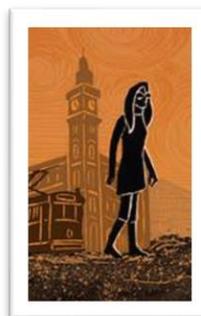
Brave refugee Mai Ho became mayor for Maribyrnong in 1997. One of her daughters, Tan Le, was Young Australian of the Year in 1998.

BEFORE READING *UNDERGROUND*

- Encourage students to talk with older family members about their memories of that decade, 1960–1970. Maybe they have relatives who were combatants in Vietnam, or who protested the war at home.
- View the book trailer for *Underground*: <https://vimeo.com/571956942>.
- Discuss as a class: What do students know about the mid 1960s into mid-70s? Have they seen images from that time? Listened to the music, or seen films? What have they heard from their parents or older relatives?
- What do students know of the 1980s post-war Vietnamese refugees? How do they know what they know?
- Look at a large map of the world together. Where is Vietnam? Where is China? Where is Russia? Where is Australia?

VOCABULARY: Research the meaning of these concepts:

- | | |
|--------------|-------------------------|
| – Communism | – Military conscription |
| – Capitalism | – Refugee |
| – Democracy | – Xenophobia |



Q&A WITH THE AUTHOR: MIRRANDA BURTON

1. What was the seed of *Underground*?

It happened while I was on a two-year residency at Dunmoochin, the former studio of artist Clifton Pugh. It was Shane Pugh, one of Clif and Marlene's sons, who told me the story of their wombat, Hooper, who had once been registered for military service in Vietnam. Why would a wombat be registered for war? That was the start.

2. What was your initial focus in researching *Underground*?

I was more motivated to understand than to judge. My high-school education in the 1980s had delivered nothing on the history of the Vietnam War. After hearing about Hooper the wombat, I found myself on a quest, and with my focus on peace activism I met Jean McLean, whose stories became the glue of the book. By chance, I then found Australian Vietnam veteran Bill Cantwell, and former Vietnamese refugee Mai Ho.

Bill's tales are an invitation to see the unseen, to cut through the silence created by forced forgetting; Mai tells of catastrophic loss in the aftermath of war and of the courage to build a new life; Jean's stories are of passion, wit and a commitment to social justice that extended beyond her war years. As I listened, I realised that the forces that separated them held little meaning in light of the complexity of their experiences.

3. What was your personal interest in writing *Underground*?

I was driven by the urge to imagine a more compassionate world. The stories of Jean, Bill and Mai are of courage, resistance, love, and of transformations. Their weave of stories creates the fabric of human connection.

4. What would you like *Underground* to achieve?

I'd like it to challenge the traditional divides, both real and imagined, that have persisted in both the written and oral history of Australia's military intervention in Vietnam. I'd like the book to open a portal for younger readers into a largely buried history and to illuminate some part of what it means to fight for peace. And I'd like it to acknowledge the long fight of our elders for change.

5. What was difficult in the creating of *Underground*?

Making this book seemed at times such a small thing in the face of the atrocities that happened in Vietnam, and since Vietnam. In a moment of doubt, while standing with a Vietnamese elder during my visit to Vietnam, he looked at me with some urgency and said, 'It's never too late to talk about peace.'

CLASSROOM DISCUSSION AND ACTIVITIES

At the book's beginning, WWII is long over, fascism has been defeated, and the new enemy is communism. Robert Menzies is Australia's Prime Minister and Lyndon B Johnson is President of the USA. Although it is soon to be dismantled, the racist 'White Australia Policy' is still in place and racist fear of an invasion of the 'yellow peril' (Asian people and culture) is still running hot. Democratic, capitalist nations believe that the 'reds' (communist Russia and China) are planning a global takeover in which nation after nation will fall in a 'domino effect'. South Vietnam is fighting a civil war with the communist north, and the USA and its allies are fighting on the side of the south.

The war in Vietnam will last ten years and Australians, at first supportive of the war, will go through an attitude change in no small part brought about by increasing public access to mass media.

LANGUAGE

Hell No, We Won't Go!

Rhetorical devices of the anti-Vietnam War rallies, like protests everywhere, included slogans and chants. Opposition to the draft or the war were reduced to simple phrases that could be painted in large letters on banners, or be shouted in unison by a large crowd and be understood even in small grabs on TV news.

Chants and slogans are one-sided by nature. They sometimes work by challenging established calls, as in the subversion of the military cadence call below, and can therefore alienate some listeners. But a good slogan or chant can also break through disinterest or resistance with its sincerity, humour or ingenuity.

Understand how rhetorical devices are used to persuade and how different layers of meaning are developed through use of metaphor, irony and parody.

Year 8

Year 9

Understand that roles and relationships are developed and challenged through language and interpersonal skills.

Year 10

Understand that people's evaluations of texts are influenced by their value systems, the context and the purpose and mode of communication.

- Search the rally images in *Underground* and locate chants and slogans. Are any of them familiar? Have you heard them in any other context? (p100)
- Research online chants and slogans, [posters and badges](#) of the anti-draft and anti-war movements.
- Watch videos of anti-Vietnam War [protesters chanting](#). What are the benefits of such sloganeering? Can you think of any drawbacks?
- Notice the strong rhythms of chants. They sometimes parodied the military cadence call, or 'sound off' (a rhythmic chant that made military marches easier). Watch videos of soldiers [sound off while drilling](#). Consider the following chants:
Hell no, we won't go
Don't give a damn for Uncle Sam, I ain't going to Vietnam
1, 2, 3, 4. We don't want your dirty war
- Watch videos of [protest chants](#). Think about the rhythm and rhyme of chants, and how information or attitude is condensed. Discuss the uses of parodying military tradition to protest a war.
- Create chants about issues that matter to you. Work in small groups. Keep the chants simple. Give them rhythm, rhyme and other effects.

LITERACY

Us and Them

Most Australians in the 1950s and early 60s knew nothing about Vietnam. Over the years of the war in Vietnam, people learnt about that nation via journalism, and in particular via the writings of war correspondents. In addition, in the case of Russia, journalists worked at turning old WWII 'allies' into new ideological 'enemies'.

Texts in context

Year 9

Analyse how the construction and interpretation of texts, including media texts, can be influenced by cultural perspectives.

- Discuss the following instances of reporting the war in *Underground*. Locate the appeals to cultural bias. What emotion is the news item attempting to exploit? Why?
'Allies kill 5,800 reds!' 'Reds massacre 300 civilians!' (p41)
North Vietnamese people were merely a 'communist threat' (p110)
Post-WWII 'red menace' of communist Russia (p14)

- Search archives and collections online for other examples of journalism from the time of the Vietnam War.
- Investigate their emotional positioning of readers and discuss as a class:
 - What is the textual position on its subject?
 - What is the journalist assuming about the reader?

Minds and Hearts

‘These boys *should* go to war,’ Clifton Pugh says in *Underground*. ‘I did my time. Now it’s their turn.’ (p25). Like many Australians, Clif was initially in agreement with the draft but later changed his mind.

In the 1940s [news](#) from WWII arrived by print press, or radio, or [cinema newsreels](#) that were little more than propaganda. The war in Vietnam was the first that could be watched nightly on the new mass medium of television. These television images profoundly affected the way people felt about the war. Popular opinion between 1965 and 1975 was reflected in and driven by new mass media, as it is today. In addition, public information was controlled and censored. No coverage sympathetic to the ‘enemy’ was allowed. (p95)

Journalist Wilfred Burchett reported the war from enemy positions, covered the suffering of the ‘enemy’, and interviewed Ho Chi Minh, North Vietnam’s communist leader. He was labelled a traitor and refused both UK and Australian passports for some years.

- First read about journalist [Wilfred Burchett](#) and [government censorship](#).

Consider the following question asked by filmmaker David Bradbury of Wilfred Burchett:

‘Can a democracy tolerate opinions it considers subversive to its national interest? How far can freedom of the press be extended in wartime?’

Explore the kinds of images people were being exposed to for the first time, such as the image of the ‘Napalm girl’, Kim Phuc.

- Then watch the documentary [The Power of the Picture: The Napalm Girl](#). Consider and discuss the effects of the image as she runs from a napalm attack in her village. (This documentary includes interviews with the photographer, the editor who had to push to get the photo published, and with Kim Phuc herself as an adult. It also shows a group of 14-year-old students on an educational trip to Vietnam with their teacher, and interviews with Vietnam veterans who discuss some confronting experiences with great moral courage.)

Year 10
Analyse and evaluate how people, cultures, places, events, objects and concepts are represented in texts, including media texts, through language, structural and/or visual choices



ENGLISH ASSESSMENT: War Stories

Explore archives and collections online of voices from the war in Vietnam, eg:

[A South Vietnamese veteran talks about his war](#)

[Men remember the lottery of the draft and their early training](#)

[Short clip of people telling their reasons for being at the Melbourne moratorium](#)

[Letters home from US soldiers in Vietnam](#)

[Interviews with photographers and journalists in Vietnam, with photos](#)

[Interviews with and photos of North Vietnamese veterans](#)

Texts in context

Year 9/10

Approaches to characterisation – the dramatisation of a character's inner life.

Locate various arguments for or against the war and compare their political and personal responses to the war. Imagine yourself into their situation. Consider how they felt, and discuss their perspectives.

- Write three fictional texts from three different first-person perspectives of that war. Some possible perspectives include:
 - A soldier of North Vietnam, South Vietnam, and/or the USA and its allies
 - A journalist and/or photographer
 - A draft resister
 - A draftee
 - A family member at home
 - An anti-war activist

Choose three perspectives that differ from one another in important ways – they do not have to be from three sides of the conflict, they could be from different perspectives within one culture. Give the perspectives a voice and help them become characters.

Consider the form your texts could take:

- Diary entry
- Letter
- Pamphlet
- Poem or song

Imagine that you are in the position of your chosen character. Emote and persuade with appropriate 'wartime' language, and with appropriate cultural bias reflective of the time.

- Share these texts in small groups and explain to others your perspectives and your choices of language. Give and listen to feedback.



Pictures Don't Lie

Underground is a graphic non-fiction text. It tells its story using both words and images. There are two modes of word text:

1. The overview narrator – the voice in the boxes
2. The dramatised voices of the characters – the voices in speech bubbles

Both word texts tend to be direct and spare.

In *Underground*, the work of wordy metaphors (eg emotional imagery and empathetic dramatisation) that are usually used in a novel is done here by the images.

In 1975 (p196) Mai Ho's family has been deemed 'corrupt' by the new communist regime. Her father is a writer and intellectual, and that makes him suspect. Afraid of political reprisals, he asks Mai to burn his work. She does so, after stopping to read a favourite poem one more time. It is a sad story told in words, but it is the image accompanying the word text that expresses the effect.

In the image, flames curl around scraps of text and musical phrases, which fly between image frames and through a hole in Mai's chest. It is the metaphor of the hole that speaks to what has been taken from Mai and her family.

Stories, poems, songs and philosophies are a crucial part of what makes a human, and a community. Her family has had something precious taken from them, and the great loss is represented by the hole in Mai.

As well as dramatising the emotional meanings in the word text, the images can also leave readers with further questions. Questions that may be prompted by the image of that hole in Mai Ho include:

- *What happened to all that writing anyway*
- *Why are our communities' writings so important?*
- Consider the following images in terms of how they dramatise emotional meanings of the word texts and prompt further questions. The overview narrator makes statements of fact but does not *dramatise* the personal experience of any situation. The accompanying images show effect.
 - P17: In the first of two linked images, a boy studies at his desk while behind him two very large balls inscribed 'Viet' and 'Nam' roll and rumble behind him. In the next image, a boy walks dragging leg irons attached to two large balls inscribed with numbers.
 - P21: The word text on this title page announces that Chapter Three is entitled 'Save Our Sons'. The image is of a group of women holding infants, who in turn wear tiny digger hats and clutch large guns. The women's faces express anxiety, bemusement and confusion.
 - P80: In this full-page illustration Bill Cantwell, the Vietnam veteran, is shown underground in a lightless tunnel. As he speaks about the war his legs fuse and begin to grow roots. His being begins to root into the dark earth. His head is eventually shadowed in that darkness.
- As a class, discuss the images in terms of their emotional meanings, as well as any further questions they may prompt.

HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES (HASS)



HISTORY

Vietnamese Refugees

Once the US and its allies left, the Vietnamese fought for a further two years, and finally Saigon was taken by the communist forces. The communists set about dismantling the previous regime and this created a class of people who were democratic in belief and persecuted under the new government through the loss of work, imprisonment, re-education and death. These people looked for ways to escape Vietnam, and many succeeded. More than 80,000 came to Australia in the decade following the fall of Saigon.

Migration experiences 1945–present

Year 10

The waves of post-WWII migration to Australia, including the influence of significant world events

- Mai Ho's section in *Underground* (pp 110–149) describes her post-war experiences and her escape from communist Vietnam. Read the story in Mai's own words, and see the accompanying [pencil drawings by Thomas Le](#), at the Immigration Museum website. Mai was officially resettled from a migration camp in Malaysia, but some Vietnamese people arrived unannounced by boat and this is the genesis of the ultimately derogatory term 'boat people'.
- Find [images of the journeys](#) of [Vietnamese refugees](#) and share what you have found in small groups.

HISTORY ASSESSMENT: Perils, Menaces and Terror

Australian Bill Cantwell was a young man who volunteered at 17 years of age to go to Vietnam.

- Read Bill Cantwell's section in *Underground*. (pp 50–78)

In a [blog post that Bill wrote](#) for his old school Numurkah High, he reflects on the 1960s and the Australian experience. He notes that the 'revolutions' of the 60s had not yet arrived in Katunga, Victoria.

Historical Knowledge and Understanding

Year 10

The nature of the Cold War and Australia's involvement of the Cold War and post-Cold War conflicts (Korea, Vietnam, The Gulf wars, Afghanistan).

The 1960's decade was, for perhaps 'most', the age of dissent, awareness, public protest and individual freedom. If that age reached Katunga or Numurkah – it must have been after I left to join the Army in December 1965. We were the children of 'Returned' men. We were raised on the virtues of conforming – to 'mainstream values' I suppose.

But really, there was only one stream. It was a stream of insecurity (the 'cold war'), McCarthyism (ask me about McCarthyism at Katunga State School), misplaced 'patriotism' and xenophobia (the 'Yellow Peril').

Hatred of Communism was compulsory, and the 'Domino Theory' was an article of faith. The 'Cuban Missile Crisis' attracted more attention than the Melbourne Cup, but still there was no 'debate' – It was still 'us or them'.

In this excerpt from his blog post, and in his chapter in *Underground*, Bill mentions some of the key events and fears of 60s Australia, including:

- The 'yellow peril'
- The 'red menace' and the 'domino theory' (or 'domino effect')
- The Cold War
- National service and the draft
- Napalm and agent orange

- The 1954 Geneva Conference
- Conscientious objection
- Choose one of these aspects of Australia’s war in Vietnam. Research its development and effects. Include at least two perspectives along with their main supporting or non-supporting arguments.
- Write a short report using a chronological arrangement of information using headings and sub-headings (cite your sources).
- What did you find most interesting or mystifying in your research? Share your insight with your class and listen while others share their findings.
- Discuss these texts in small groups and explain to others your perspectives and your choices of language. Give and listen to feedback.

MODERN HISTORY

I Didn’t Bear Him to Carry a Gun

The Gulf of Tonkin incident in August 1964 escalated the conflict in Vietnam, and on 10 November 1964, as part of prime minister Robert Menzies’ commitment to the US, conscription was reintroduced in Australia. A few months later Jean Mclean established the Melbourne branch of Save Our Sons, which began as a non-sectarian, non-political group of women opposed to the drafting of young men still unable to vote.

SOS was initially comprised mostly of middle-class women, specifically mothers, and they began their activism with ‘non-disruptive protest’, such as silent attendance with handmade signs at army barracks, letter-writing and debate. As the war intensified, so too did the activism of SOS intensify, growing into non-compliant civil disobedience and bureaucratic disruptions such as filling in false draft registration forms – including one for the wombat Hooper.

The women of SOS were subjected to abuse as they silently protested, to slander and libel regarding their motives, and later to official harassment. Some of the mainstream objections to SOS grew from strong gender assumptions, but even if objections to the protests were not allied to gender, the verbal abuse was.

- Find and discuss the gender assumptions in the following the excerpts from *Underground*. The quotes are marked with an F or an M depending on whether the comments came from a male or female. All people carry gender assumptions about each other and about themselves.
 - M: *Why are you worrying your pretty head with these stories?* (p8)
 - M: *Go home and cook yer husband’s dinners! (p28) / Shouldn’t you be ironing your husbands’ shirts or something?* (p42)
 - M: *What would you women know about war?* (p29)
 - F: *Come in. I’ll just go and find my husband’s wallet.* (p30)
 - F: *Vote? That’s my husband’s lot.* (p30)
 - F: *MY father went to war. MY husband went to war, and MY son will jolly well defend our country!* (p30)

Movements for change in the 20th century

Year 11/12 Unit 2

The post-war changes in social conditions affecting women ... campaigns against violence, war and discrimination.

MODERN HISTORY ASSESSMENT

- Re-read the sections in *Underground* concerning the experience and activities of SOS. Find their objections to the draft and later to the war in general. Then choose either one aspect of the movement to explore thoroughly, or two or more aspects that interconnect. Phrase questions of most interest to you and use them to shape your research.
- Explore SOS through archives held in the Australian War Museum, the Australian Women's Register and in the Global Non-violent Action Database, using these sites as resources to find further information through their citation lists and bibliographies.
- Explain the position of SOS on the draft and the war. Locate and explain mainstream society's position of the time. Compare and contrast the two positions.
- Research the stories and interviews of SOS further online. Find interviews, documentaries and news items. Note your sources.
- After engaging broadly with the material (quantitative research), focus on the aspects of your research that speak to gender assumption (qualitative research).
- Here are some questions that may help guide the focused research:
 - How was 'motherhood' expressed in SOS? How was it different to notions of mainstream motherhood? Further explore ideas about motherhood in the 50s and 60s
 - Why was SOS keen to hold 'non-disruptive' protests? Consider class as an element of specific gendered behaviour. What behaviours by women were thought to be disruptive in the 60s and 70s? Were working-class women concerned about non-disruption?
 - In what ways did SOS deploy gendered activities to promote their cause, for instance bake sales or using the Melbourne Cup Fashion Day to stage a clothes-based protest?
 - Consider their effects and effectiveness in their time. Would they be as effective now?



The anti-draft protests of the 60s and 70s grew into a movement as part of a general intensification of democratic ideas supporting ‘the individual’ and their ‘right to choose’. The draft took away the individual’s right to choose whether or not they would go to war. In addition, considering the life-or-death choices being made, the use of an old Tattersalls lottery barrel and its balls to choose recruits seemed flippant.

Old Soldiers Never Die

The notion of soldiers being stoic and obedient fighting ‘machines’ was not new to the 60s – this informs many artworks about war from the classical period onwards. It is still the most popular attitude towards soldiers and soldiering. In addition, war art tends to be a repository of nationalistic ideas and propaganda – although there have always been pictures expressing personal distress or moral disgust.

- Explore the world of the soldier in artworks through history, eg:
 - [Battle of Poitiers in 14th century chronicle](#)
 - [Portrait of 19th century Chinese soldier in full military regalia](#)
 - [Posters for and against conscription over time](#)
 - [Picture by German artist Wilhelm Sauter of soldiers in WWI and WWII](#)
 - [Artwork of British soldier and his WWII Russian ally c1940 by British artist Roland Hilder](#)
 - [Portrait of a contemporary digger by Ian Coates](#)
 - [Contemporary art concepts by Alexander Dudar for Soldiers Inc](#)
- Collect four or five images in a folder and note the following basic information for each artwork:
 - The artist’s name
 - The title of the work
 - The year the work was made
 - The army the work depicts
 - The battle the army was marching to or from
- Share these images and their basic information with the class.
- Discuss these representations of armies. Do the soldiers look energetic or tired? Are they wounded? Are their uniforms neat or ragged? Do the soldiers have faces? What are their expressions? Are they proud, or sad, or are they unreadable? Do you feel the artwork is expressing something about war – or about national ‘character’ – or about the feelings of the artist toward the soldiers?
- Do you think the work is a protest or a celebration? Why do you think that?

Where Have All the Young Men Gone?

Pp18–19 of *Underground* show two linked images that, when joined, create a double-page image of marching skeletons with lottery-ball heads. The skeletons march in unison and are identical except for the number on their perfectly round skulls. Among the skeletons are three young men, each an obviously worried individual. The image contains a metaphor for the effect of the draft, an act that symbolically subjected each specific young man's life to the interchangeable anonymity of a lottery.

- Search online websites for artworks depicting armies on the march, eg:
[Jannisaries of the Ottoman Empire on the march](#)
[British troops arriving in Malta during the Crimean War](#)
[‘Gassed’ – a line of WWI soldiers holding on to each other by John Singer Sargent](#)
- Browse a range of different works across time and place. Collect images that you like and save them in a folder.
- Compare and contrast the artworks you've selected with the image of the marching skeletons and their lottery-ball heads.

Mix It Up and Make It New

- Make your own mixed-media artwork celebrating or protesting some aspect of the world, such as celebrating friends or protesting the treatment of animals.
- Collect images you can use from the internet or from magazines and books. Cut or tear them into meaningful pieces. Test layout and juxtaposition but do not affix to a backing as yet. Share the artwork in progress with a friend, and receive feedback on its meanings. Assemble your final layout, and affix it to its backing.
- You may decide to add text or to draw directly onto the artwork.
- Exhibit your works for the class and others to view and discuss. Will you exhibit the works in categories, such as 'Celebration' or 'Protest', or will you show them all together and let people decide their meanings for themselves?



What's Hidden

Exploiting its wombat metaphor for a digger, or Australian soldier, *Underground's* imagery deploys a selection of tunnels. Some are real, such as Hooper the wombat's burrow or the survival tunnels built by the North Vietnamese and South Vietnamese people, and others are visual metaphors for activities and emotions.

Activities associated with these tunnels include hiding from the draft or searching for the truth; and emotional metaphors include the affects of death on the living, the affects of war and post-traumatic stress disorder, and a representation of social withdrawal or 'going underground'.

- Look closely at the images on the pages listed below. Notice what is happening under the ground, and what is happening above ground. List your first impressions: what is the first feature that grabs your attention, are you reminded of other images you have seen or of any written texts, is there something in the image you don't understand? Ask yourself how each image makes you feel.
 - Pp58-59: On p58 soldiers lie under the ground in the dark earth. They are becoming one with tree roots and/or growing their own. On p59 the dead soldiers form a network of roots and limbs reaching up towards a soldier slouching exhaustedly along beside a tank. Two pairs of dead hands grab for his feet.
 - P189: While Jean Mclean explains that the end of conscription for Vietnam didn't mean the end of conscription as a policy, the table at which she sits is splitting. Underneath the table, the earth is shifting. Underground we can see the Tattersals lottery balls that were used to determine the draft in the 1960s and 70s. They are sprouting like seeds and putting up branches bearing missiles. If troops are needed again, Australian politicians still have conscription as a legal option.
 - P223: On the title page for Chapter Three, 'Intersections', Jean, Bill and Mai dig tunnels into the ground. The earth is black all about them, and their tunnels are lit by old-fashioned lanterns. Each digs alone, but unknowingly they are digging towards one another and are in fact about to break through.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Miranda Burton was born in Auckland, New Zealand, in 1973. She became a printmaker at 10, a marimba player in her teens and a stop motion filmmaker at 21. Miranda worked for many years in commercial and independent animation before making her first graphic novel, *Hidden* (Black Pepper Press, 2011). *Hidden* was also released in French under the title *Cachés (La Boîte à Bulles)*. *Underground: Marsupial Outlaws and Other Rebels of Australia's War in Vietnam* is her second graphic novel.

AUTHOR BACKGROUND AND MOTIVATION

In 2011 Miranda became artist in residence for two years at Dunmoochin, Australian artist Clifton Pugh's former studio. During this residency she learned of the Pughs' wombat, Hooper, who had been registered for military service in Vietnam in 1972. This discovery set her on a long investigation into Australia's involvement in the Vietnam War.



ABOUT THE WRITER OF THE NOTES

Ananda Braxton-Smith is a writer of fiction and history. Her publications include YA history *The Death: the Horror of the Plague* (2009), the YA fiction Carrick series: *Merrow* (2010), *Tantony* (2011) and *Ghostheart* (2013); the middle-years fiction *Plenty: a Place to Call Home* (2014) and, with illustrator Lizzy Newcomb, the picture book *Backyard* (2018). *Merrow* is published in the US by Candlewick Press. There is also an Audible audio-book of *Merrow*.

CORRESPONDING LITERATURE

Non-fiction:

Voices from the Vietnam War: Stories from American, Asian and Russian Veterans by Xiaobing Li

Mission Rejected: US Soldiers Who Say No to Iraq by Peter Lauffer

YA Graphic Memoir:

The Best We Could Do by Thi Bui

OTHER RESOURCES

Watch the movie musical *HAIR!*: Available to view on Stan and Amazon Prime streaming platforms

Listen to the song 'I Was Only 19': <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lgmgwx77osw>

Watch *Hell No We Won't Go*, a documentary on the anti-Vietnam War protesters:

<https://www.screenaustralia.gov.au/the-screen-guide/t/hell-no-we-wont-go-2015/32261/>

Read the National Museum pages on the anti-Vietnam War Moratoriums: <https://www.nma.gov.au/defining-moments/resources/vietnam-moratoriums>

See this list of novels about the war in Vietnam, including North and South Vietnamese perspectives:

https://www.goodreads.com/list/show/208.Best_Literature_About_the_Vietnam_War

ONLINE LINKS

Hell No, We Won't Go

Collection of anti-Vietnam War badges from the 60s and 70s, plus overview of the protesters and their aims:

<https://collections.museumsvictoria.com.au/articles/15181>

Eight minutes of protest chants from around the world: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IcGIvH4mwvM>

Young protesters creating chants for contemporary issues such as climate change, and animal habitat:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oNccHp-AV_U

Melbourne Moratorium on *This Day Tonight*, 1970: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3R5zKW3YIU4>

A high school student speaking at one of the Melbourne Moratoriums, 1970:

<https://aso.gov.au/titles/documentaries/or-forever-hold-your-peace/clip2/>

Minds and Hearts

Australian news reel from WWII: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8C9QTKw8iQQ>

Various articles covering the war in Vietnam:

https://www.google.com.au/search?rlz=IT4AWVB_enAU833AU850&q=vietnam+war+newspaper+articles&tbm=isch&chips=q:vietnam+war+newspaper+articles,g_l:australian:Uk6omkFaQQ%3D&usg=AI4_-kSXqbkXshTUKO8y7-xDAaKSb9qQYg&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwjKr7H-tlLxAhUo4zgGHVPEChsQgIoDKAB6BAgDEAY&biw=1366&bih=618#imgrc=HDwo8nhXRKcJPM

Article from *Sydney Morning Herald*, 1 October 1968, announcing new censorship of war reporters:

<https://www.smh.com.au/world/asia/from-the-archives-1968-australia-blanket-censors-vietnam-war-reporting-20190926-p52v85.html>

Overview of the life and work of Wilfred Burchett: <https://halloffame.melbournepressclub.com/article/wilfred-burchett>

Quotes from Wilfred Burchett: <https://www.quotetab.com/quotes/by-wilfred-burchett>

Documentary about the photo of the 'Napalm girl', Kim Phuc, including the story of the photographer and an educational visit to Vietnam by some high school students:

<https://www.bing.com/videos/search?q=the+napalm+girl+footage&docid=608005676587167581&mid=172F00B695C4DAB9F16F172F00B695C4DAB9F16F&view=detail&FORM=VIRE>

War Stories

A South Vietnamese veteran talks about his experiences of war: <https://www.strifeblog.org/2019/05/21/making-a-documentary-south-vietnamese-veterans-tell-their-forgotten-story/>

Men remember the lottery of the draft and their early training:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OCbFKfS9wOY>

Short clip of people telling their reasons for being at one of the Melbourne moratoriums:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Thm03IUj6U>

Letters home from US soldiers in Vietnam: <http://www.vietvet.org/letters.htm>

Interviews with photographers and journalists in Vietnam, with photos: <https://www.stripes.com/news/special-reports/vietnam-stories/1967/war-stories-vietnam-war-journalists-share-examples-of-courage-1.495465>

Interviews with and photos of North Vietnamese veterans: <https://www.bbc.com/news/in-pictures-33408096>

Vietnamese Refugees

A series of artworks showing Mai Ho's escape in a boat from Vietnam:

<https://collections.museumsvictoria.com.au/items/270635>

Photo of Vietnamese refugees on a boat:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vietnamese_boat_people#/media/File:35_Vietnamese_boat_people_2.JPEG, and

<https://borgenproject.org/vietnamese-boat-people/>

Migration to Australia 1965–1990, with overview of Vietnamese refugee program:

<https://www.migrationheritage.nsw.gov.au/exhibition/objectsthroughtime-history/1965-1990/index.html>

Perils, Menaces and Terror

Interview with Vietnam Veteran Bill Cantwell at his old school, Numurkah High:

<https://numurkahpaststudentclub.edublogs.org/2009/11/27/going-to-the-vietnam-war/>

Old Soldiers Never Die

Battle of Poitiers in 14th century chronicle:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Military_art#/media/File:The_battle_of_Poitiers.jpg

Portrait of 19th century Chinese soldier in full military regalia:

<https://www.sciencephoto.com/media/536137/view/chinese-soldier-19th-century>

Posters for and against conscription over time:

https://www.google.com.au/search?q=army+conscription+posters&rlz=1T4AWVB_enAU833AU850&tbm=isch&source=iu&ictx=1&fir=aAbNYhs2HsuhmM%252C_LZ7wTC2PY2LTM%252C_&vet=1&usg=AI4_-kTWCAddIjQLikW3B_I_XKBpEVTz8g&sa=X&ved=2ahUKewjgI5e_3JPxAhXglLcAHULYB5UQ9QF6BAgMEA_E#imgrc=DX7xGopTiIP9ZM&imgdii=QmkQfecw7XxZWM

Picture by German artist Wilhelm Sauter of soldiers in WWI and WWII: <https://research.calvin.edu/german-propaganda-archive/images/militaryart/soldiers.jpg>

Artwork of British soldier and his WWII Russian ally c1940 by British artist Roland Hilder:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:INF3-338A_Unity_of_Strength_A_British_soldier_and_a_Russian_soldier_with_rifles_raised_Artist_Rowland_Hilder.jpg

Portrait of a contemporary digger by Ian Coates: <https://iancoate.com/var%20stand.html>

Contemporary art concepts by Alexander Dudar for Soldiers Inc: <https://www.artstation.com/artwork/K9W3B>

Where Have All the Young Men Gone?

Jannisaries of the Ottoman Empire on the march: <https://hum54-15.omeka.fas.harvard.edu/items/show/1774?>

British troops arriving in Malta during the Crimean War: <https://fineartamerica.com/featured/british-troops-arriving-in-malta-on-the-way-to-the-crimea-cl-doughty.html>

'Gassed' – a line of WWI soldiers holding on to each other by John Singer Sargent:

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gassed_\(painting\)#/media/File:Sargent,_John_Singer_\(RA\)_-_Gassed_-_Google_Art_Project.jpg](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gassed_(painting)#/media/File:Sargent,_John_Singer_(RA)_-_Gassed_-_Google_Art_Project.jpg)