

Vietnam napalm bombing assignment



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

VIETNAM NAPALM BOMBING In this essay I am going to be writing about the Vietnam Napalm bombing, which took place in 1972. I will be discussing the history of the world famous picture taken by Nick Ut and what the picture represents. I will also be talking about how and why this picture is was so influential in the way people saw the Vietnam War. The picture was taken in the middle of the action. It's quite amazing how Ut managed to capture this monumental photograph. It is almost as if you as the viewer are automatically connected to the photo when looking at it.

The image is gripping and heartfelt all around the world. It is astonishing that a lot of people at the time did not know the full extent of the corruption involved within the Vietnam War. Here, I have shown the picture, as I continue to explain how it represented worldwide. Nick Ut (real name, Huynh Cong Ut), was born on March 29th, 1951 in the southern Mekong Delta province of Long An and was the younger brother of Vietnamese photographer Huynh Thanh My, who had been killed a few weeks earlier while photographing combat action in the Mekong Delta on October 10th, 1965 on assignment for The Associated Press.

Ut was also a part of the Associated Press, and was only 14 years old when he was introduced to the Associated Press office in Saigon by his mother. Ut was looking for a job and Horst Faas hired him on January 1st, 1966, after a trial period of six weeks. It was exactly ten years after Horst Faas himself had officially joined the AP. At dawn of June 8, 1972, about 5 AM, photographer Nick Ut loaded his camera gear, field survival kit, flak-jacket and steel-helmet into one of the AP's Japanese made minibuses. Nick Ut used

two cameras to photograph the scenes in front of him – his Leica and a Nikon with a long lens.

He was alone on this mission, without a correspondent. Within minutes of the vicious attack it had occurred that most of the villages in sight had been seriously injured during the blast and also had big segments of their skin burnt away. The villagers that were seriously affected by this blast were running down a highway, trying their hardest to be free from the horror which was taking place in their village. In route one the associated press photographer who was present on the scene (Nick Ut) was able to snap one of the most iconic photographs. Nick Ut was present on the scene in the Vietnam War.

Ut spoke in a 1999 interview with a news reporter, “ When we (the reporters) moved closer to the village we saw the first people running. I thought ‘ Oh my God’ when I suddenly saw a woman with her left leg badly burned by napalm. Then came a woman carrying a baby, who died, then another woman carrying a small child with its skin coming off. When I took a picture of them I heard a child screaming and saw that young girl who had pulled off all her burning clothes. She yelled to her brother on her left. Just before the napalm was dropped soldiers had yelled to the children to run but there wasn’t enough time. Nick Ut was present and evidently on the scene in the Vietnam War. This just goes to show how traumatic this must have been for the young children in the centre of this chaos. Freed from their parents and running scared for their lives. In the picture priceless picture captured is black and white image of no more than 5 children and 6 soldiers. The child that draws the viewers’ attention the most is undoubtedly Phan Thi Kim Phuc

<https://assignbuster.com/vietnam-napalm-bombing-assignment/>

crying and running naked down a road, with other children, her clothes burnt from her body by a napalm dropped by US planes.

Phan was only 9 years old at the time. They were attempting their hardest to free themselves from the aftermath of the bomb showers that were taking place in their village. She is still alive today, and still suffers from extreme nightmares and is on anti-depressants. In 1973 Nick Ut had won the Pulitzer Prize for his now, globally known photograph. This is the highest honour which can be achieved in photo journalism. Shock – a sudden or violent disturbance of the mind, emotions, or sensibilities. Confusion – disorder; upheaval; tumult; chaos

Torment – a state of great bodily or mental suffering; agony; misery. Pain – physical suffering or distress, as due to injury, illness, etc. Power – a person or thing that possesses or exercises authority or influence. – great or marked ability to do or act; strength; might; force. Panic – a sudden overwhelming fear, with or without cause that produces hysterical or irrational behaviour and that often spreads quickly through a group of persons or animals.

Looking at this picture I feel that it represents all of the explained words above. The first word that comes to mind is Shock.

The look on the children's faces brings a chill to my spine. You can evidently see the fear on their faces as they run in terror. It's almost unreal as the torment the children are going through, is captured in the same photograph with the South Vietnamese soldiers walking calmly behind them. It was almost as if they didn't experience what just happened. The photo also portrays power, with the soldiers holding their guns and walking

casually behind the children. It comes across as if they do not even care that there are children are running screaming for their lives almost burning to death.

The war in general was at major debate with a large percentage of the U. N parties and the world against the fact that the U. S attacked Vietnam. It also had an effect on the American economy and the Vietnamese people. There is no basis even to suggest that the results from the war affected the United States and Vietnam similarly. While the United States suffered serious losses. * More than 58, 000 of its military were killed in combat and billions of dollars were spent. * Vietnam's losses were astounding.

More than 3 million Vietnamese died during the American war, with at least that many wounded. That nearly totals to an astonishing 6 million people, at least. * More than 15 million Vietnamese, Cambodians and Laotians became refugees. * The Americans dropped over 6. 5 million tons of bombs on Indochina, destroying more than 10, 000 hamlets and 25 million acres of forest in South Vietnam. * United States dropped more than 11. 2 million gallons of Agent Orange and 400, 000 tons of napalm on South Vietnam, a nation roughly the size of New Mexico or Arizona.

At the time, a lot of people around the world did not know the seriousness of the war. It is almost as if this photograph opened up the Vietnam War to the world in its entirety. A large number of people feel that the war had no purpose and that the Americans had no reason to go into Vietnam in the first place. Another reason is that America saw itself as a protector of freedom and democracy and it saw that South Vietnam would soon come under

attack so it sent money and advisors first in the early 60's to "advise" the Vietnamese on how to defend their country.

Later soldiers were sent probably to act as prevention for aggressors but eventually America got involved in the conflict and the rest is history, they lost and the world was shown that an advanced superpower could be beaten as we would later see in Afghanistan with the Russians. This also showed the corruption within the government, and how lowly they valued their peoples' lives. It was not just this photo that showed images for unwatchable truth, there were many pictures that gave the world an insight as in to what was actually going on in the far-east.

Soldiers as well as civilians died, but those who managed to survive through the carnage must be scared for life. There were definitely signs of dimension as some of the troops returned to the U. S. Lost limbs, along with partial hearing and shattering nightmares are just some of the lifelong effects that they have to deal with. A lot of the world didn't know that a large part if not most of the troops were taking high class drugs during the war. It is to be said that the drugs helped the soldiers black out what actually was going. I can imagine the soldiers feeling it was almost as if it was someone else killing all of those innocent people.

Even the children were highly involved in war, in some photos you can see children as young as 7, holding heavy machinery. This photo made the world aware of iconic images; pictures which seem to possess the ability to sum up or symbolise important events, processes, or feelings. Images like these provide important points of reference for us, fixing our sense of identity in

relation to ways of picturing ourselves. Many would believe that the rather shocking image of Phan Thi Kim Oanh has become ‘ a symbol of the civilian suffering in the Vietnam war’.

I feel this goes to show that a photograph can somehow offer a deeper truth about society and history. It shows that picture can show a different source of truth other than information that is disclosed by the government and other social science data. It's almost as if this picture finally revealed the truth to the world about the war. After this photo was transmitted around the globe, more and more people actually started to take note as to what was going on in Vietnam at the time. When this picture first appeared in newspapers and magazines in 1972, it was to be found next to a caption and in many cases a supporting article as well.

The caption text might have been simply descriptive. By 1972 this had reached a point where public opinion throughout the world took the view that this was not a just or honourable war. Its prosecution by the USA and its client regime in South Vietnam was seen widely as oppressing the civilian population of the country. When you think of the Vietnam War, more often than not Nick Ut's Photograph comes to mind. This all suggests that there is immediacy about single images as opposed to passages of film or TV. I felt that helps events or moments stick in the mind.

Along with Raising the Flag at Iwo Jima by Joe Rosenthal, this photo is argued to be the most influential picture taken of all time. If Nick Ut chose to help Kim Phuc first and neglected his role as a photojournalist, Kim Phuc's story would not have been told. If Ut did not take the picture as it was happening,

the world would not have seen the horrible reality of the Vietnam War, and history would not have been the same, for there would have been no recorded evidence or accurate depiction of the tragic events in Trang Bang on June 8, 1972.

Ut did not stop at just photographing Kim Phuc and her family on that morning of June 8, 1972. He actually followed Kim through her stay in the hospital to her eventual homecoming in Trang Bang. By photographing Kim Phuc's recovery, Ut did not simply portray Kim Phuc as a victim or sensationalize her by only capturing images of her in pain. By showing her photographs during a happier time in her life, Nick Ut turned Kim Phuc's tragic story into a complete account of a human being's enduring human spirit in overcoming difficulty.