



Curriculum Units by Fellows of the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute  
2008 Volume I: Controlling War by Law

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## **Accountability in the My Lai Massacre**

Guide for Curriculum Unit 08.01.05  
by Joseph Corsetti

It lasted just four short hours, but the events of March 18, 1968 have come to represent all that the American public hated about the war in Vietnam. The atrocities of My Lai called into question the conduct of the war. This unit explores the many causes of those atrocities. The first part of the unit explores how men become soldiers and the particular experience of Charlie Company. The second half of the unit details the events that happened at My Lai. Students are asked to determine the relative culpability of the soldiers, and learn about rescuer and bystander behavior through two individuals, Hugh Thompson and Ronald Haeberle. In the end, the goal of the unit is to have students make connections between the past and the current war in Iraq. Two incidents are explored, Haditha and Abu Ghraib.

(Recommended for U.S. History II, grade 11)

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