

## Medal of Honor Lesson Plans for Secondary

### Colorado Standards Addressed in the following lessons:

**History Standard 1: Students understand the chronological organization of history and know how to organize events and people into major eras to identify and explain historical relationships.**

- Know the general chronological order of events and people in history. (H1.1)
- Use chronology to examine and explain historical relationships. (H1.3)

**History Standard 2: Students know how to use the processes and resources of historical inquiry.**

- Know how to formulate questions and hypotheses regarding what happened in the past to obtain and analyze historical data to answer questions and test hypotheses. (H2.1)
- Know how to interpret and evaluate primary and secondary sources of historical information. (H2.2)
- Apply knowledge of the past to analyze present-day issues and events from multiple, historically objective perspectives. (H2.3)

**History Standard 5: Students understand political institutions and theories that have developed and changed over time.**

- Know how political power has been acquired, maintained, used, and/or lost throughout history. (H5.3)
- Know the history of relationships among different political powers and the development of international relations. (H5.4)

**Civic Standard 1: Students understand the purposes of government, and the basic constitutional principles of the United States republican form of government.**

- Students understand the principles of the United States Constitutional government. (C1.3)

**Civic Standard 2: Students know the structure and function of local, state, and national government and how citizen involvement shapes public policy.**

- Students know how power, authority, and responsibility are distributed, shared, and limited through federalism as established by the United States Constitution. (C2.2)

**Civic Standard 3: Students know the political relationship of the United States and its citizens to other nations and to world affairs.**

- Students know how and why governments and nongovernmental agencies around the world interact politically. (C3.1)
- Students understand the domestic and foreign policy influence the United States has on other nations and how the actions of other nations influence politics and society of the United States. (C3.3)

**Civic Standard 4: Students understand how citizens exercise the roles, rights and responsibilities of participation in civic life at all levels – local, state, and national.**

- Students know how citizens can fulfill their responsibilities for preserving the constitutional republic. (C4.2)

### Lesson Ideas

- ★ Provide a brief background of the award and recipients. Allow students several minutes to generate questions. For question starter examples visit [http://www.sci.tamucc.edu/~eyoung/4382/question\\_matrix.html](http://www.sci.tamucc.edu/~eyoung/4382/question_matrix.html)

Students record their questions on strips of construction paper  
Sort and categorize these questions as those which the class believes can be answered quickly and those which will require more extensive research. Select quick

questions to investigate. Identify strategies and brainstorm useful resources that students could use if time allowed for approaching the more complex questions.

- ★ Have students individually or in pairs read the stories and background information about one individual MOH recipient. Students and or partners will than join with other groups and/or partners and compare a number of different recipients. Example: Partner Group A studies a Naval recipient from WWI, Partnership B studies an Army Civil War recipient, and Partnership C, studies a Marine recipient from the Vietnam Conflict. During the second phase of the assignment A, B and C come together to compare the three MOH recipients. The work of the expanded group focuses on these questions. What common traits do the recipients share? How do their individual acts of bravery and the wars they served in compare? How are their backgrounds similar and different? Information could be put into a chart. Have a handful of students present their discoveries and share what they have learned about the Medal of Honor. End with a discussion about the common traits that most or all MOH recipients likely possess.
  
- ★ Follow a similar pattern to the above lesson but have students place information on a large matrix in the classroom or in a computer program for projecting. Possible categories could include:

Name	War	Military Branch	Reason for Joining Service	Action	Personal Traits

After students have added information to the matrix, they discuss the following questions in small groups as they examined the matrix. What patterns do you see in the data? What common traits do the recipients share? How do their individual acts of bravery and the wars they served in compare? Have small groups briefly report out about their insights to the class.

- ★ Have students review Coloradoans who have been recognized with the Medal of Honor <http://www.homeofheroes.com/moh/states/co.html>  
What wars or conflicts have produced the greatest number of recipients from Colorado? What geographic, social or economic patterns can be discovered concerning these recipients?
  
- ★ Focus lessons on the four recipients from Pueblo and modify the lessons from this link. <http://www.beyondthemedal.com/index>
  
- ★ Compare recipients from different eras or wars, such as the Civil War, WWI, WWII, Korea, Vietnam, Iraq, etc. This could be done individually, with a partner or in small groups.

- ★ Research the recipient who will be attending your school and prepare questions and thank you cards prior to their presentation.
- ★ As students are introduced to new terms and concepts an interactive note taking format such as the model suggested by Robert Marzano can be helpful. See the lessons section of the <http://congressionalmedalofhonor.pbwiki.com/> for the Marzano Vocabulary template.
- ★ Recently a group of MOH recipients established the The Above and Beyond Citizen Honor. This new award recognizes a select number of American citizens each year that have demonstrated valor and spirit reflective of the military Medal of Honor requirements. See the links in the resource section of the <http://congressionalmedalofhonor.pbwiki.com/> . Discuss the requirements for both the Medal of Honor and the Above and Beyond Award. Are the awards working as intended? Do changes need to be made? If so what should be altered or added?

## **American Valor Lessons**

Modified from the PBS lessons designed for use with the film *American Valor*, to see full lesson <http://www.pbs.org/weta/americanvalor/teachers/lesson1.html>  
 Suggestions for using these lessons without the video have been provided.

### ★ **Awarding Valor Lesson**

Grades: 7-12      Subjects: American History, Civics

Materials:

- The film American Valor ([www.pbs.org/shop](http://www.pbs.org/shop))  
<http://www.shoppbs.org/sm-pbs-american-valor-dvd--pi-1428833.html>
- Television and VCR or DVD player
- Chart paper and markers
- Sticky notepads (one each per discussion group)
- Picture, drawing, or actual Medal of Honor
- Computers with Internet access
- Lists of and/or access to Medal of Honor minority recipients
- Medal of Honor fact sheet
- Medal of Honor statistics

Background:

To become acquainted with the Medal of Honor's history and parameters, refer to Medal of Honor: History and Issues [http://www.mishalov.com/Medal\\_Honor\\_History\\_Issues.html](http://www.mishalov.com/Medal_Honor_History_Issues.html).

This piece might be a good primer for students (with some modification for younger grades). Additional sites providing essential background information are The Official Site of the Medal of Honor <http://www.cmoths.org/> and Home of the Heroes <http://www.homeofheroes.com/>.

Procedures:

### Activity 1

1) Divide students into small groups. Distribute one sticky note pad to each. Write VALOR on the chalkboard or chart paper. Ask students to discuss the term, writing one-word or short-phrase associations on separate note pad sheets (one word/phrase per sheet). For example, heroism, bravery, saving a life, etc. Have one person from each group post the terms on a classroom wall or the chalkboard.

2) Invite the class to review the postings, removing overlapping terms/phrases. As they review the collection, have students brainstorm umbrella categories under which associations might be grouped. For example, one category might be service to the public, under which students would, after discussion, group select terms/phrases from those posted. Based on the terms/phrases, have students offer a definition of valor.

3) Building on student associations and definitions, provide a definition of valor. (If desired, provide synonyms, which include gallantry, heroism, valiance, valiancy, bravery, courage, and courageousness.) Some definitions follow:

- Strength of mind in regard to danger; that quality which enables a man to encounter danger with firmness; personal bravery; courage; prowess; intrepidity.
- The qualities of a hero or heroine; exceptional or heroic courage when facing danger (especially in battle).
- A soldierly compound of vanity, duty and the gambler's hope.

Students should create their own definition and create a quick visual that helps them to understand the term.

4) Invite students to briefly present stories of valor with which they are familiar and/or to name any awards for heroic acts. Introduce students to the Medal of Honor, displaying the award (actual or a visual representation). Probe student familiarity with it (what it is, who receives it, etc.). Provide background on the medal. Distribute the Medal of Honor fact sheets and statistics for students to review. Students should jot down questions they have about the medal or additional information they would like to know.

5) Instruct students to conduct additional research on the Medal of Honor (and make sure they find answers to the questions they noted in Step 4). Students may work individually, in pairs or small groups, on sets of questions from their generated lists and/or with questions from the list below. For example Group 1 works on questions a, b and c, while Group 2 works on c, d, and e, and so forth. Have groups report out to the class, during the reports students make brief notes about the questions and what each group discovered. A jigsaw format is another option. With a jigsaw, students would meet in expert groups to work on questions and then report out to their jigsaw group on their findings.

- a) When was the award established, by whom, and why?
- b) Who typically receives the award? How is the recipient identified?
- c) How many award recipients are there, to date?
- d) How many women have received the medal?
- e) How many people of color have received the award?
- f) Under what special circumstances is the award issued? Describe several of these situations.
- g) Can civilians helping to fight in combat be eligible for the medal? Explain.
- h) What changes have been made to medal provisions over the years? Why have these changes been made?
- i) What mistakes have been made when awarding the medal? How were these errors corrected?
- j) Describe instances in which the medal was used abused.
- k) Has the medal ever been awarded to the same person more than once? List examples. Can this still occur?
- l) What privileges do medal recipients receive?
- m) Have there ever been controversies concerning the award and its recipients? Explain and describe.
- n) Have there been situations when a medal has not initially been awarded but then is issued later on? Provide examples of when this has occurred and successes and challenges involved in this reconsideration process.
- o) Describe situations when the award was taken away from a recipient and then reinstated.
- p) What are some of the issues around awarding the Medal of Honor to people of color?

7) If time allows watch clips from American Valor, a film based on interviews with medal awardees. Explain that most award recipients are no longer living, and that of those surviving, only several agreed to be interviewed for the film. Create an American Valor viewing chart that students can complete as they watch the film, with space for recipient names, wars in which they fought, each individual's act, story similarities and differences and things learned about the Medal of Honor. If American Valor is not available use the video clips of interviewed recipients listed in the resource section of the <http://congressionalmedalofhonor.pbwiki.com/>

8) Have students share their thoughts and feelings about the film, discussing what stood out for them. Invite them to discuss the similarities and differences among the narratives. What is the most common sentiment regarding the medal among the interviewees?

9) Applying their research on the Medal of Honor, the various facts and statistics regarding the award, and the stories presented in American Valor, have students discuss whether the award's current parameters are inclusive of all potential acts of bravery. If they believe so, have them present an argument supporting this premise. If not, instruct them to add or revise provisions to make the award more inclusive (i.e., perhaps civilians assisting in combat might merit a medal). Invite students to share their arguments and/or revised parameters.

## Activity 2

1) Have students review the American Valor segments that highlight Vernon Baker and George Sakato or watch and read the following links

<http://www.pbs.org/weta/americanvalor/stories/baker.html>

<http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/21134540/vp/21695410#21695410>

<http://www.pbs.org/weta/americanvalor/stories/sakato.html>

Inform students as they watch or read, they should note the experiences these soldiers had as people of color in the armed forces during World War II.

Engage students in discussion about Sakato and Vernon, using some or all of the following questions to prompt reflection. Why were they treated differently from their White counterparts? How were people of color being treated nationally prior to and during the war? When did these and other soldiers of color receive their medals? What prompted this action? Probe students about this treatment and its connection to the essence of civic duty and racial equality as stated in the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution. In what ways was this treatment contradictory to democratic principles?

2) Point out to students that, because of racial discrimination, it took nearly 60 years for 29 African-American and Asian-American heroes to be recognized for their actions in World War II. They were finally honored, many posthumously, at ceremonies at the White House in 1997 and 2000. Discuss with students why it took so long for these heroes to receive their awards.

3) Divide students into small groups representing the various arms of the military -- Navy, Air Force, Army, and the Marine Corps (depending on the number of students, there could be at least three groups per category). Assign to each group per category an ethnic group to research-African American, Asian American/Pacific Islander, Latino, Native American (these are the primary groupings; students may opt to select other underrepresented parties).

4) Instruct the groups to research and chronologically chart (perhaps an annotated timeline) the treatment of their ethnic groups, within their assigned military divisions, during major wars in which the US was involved (Civil War, World Wars I and II, and the Korean and Vietnam Wars. This list can be extended, if desired. Refer to Lesson II for additional wars.) Their findings should include the following (students should be encouraged to add additional categories as they conduct research):

- Units in which these groups fought (Segregated? Integrated?)

- Specific duties to which they were assigned
- Treatment they received (from rank to awards)
- The policy units of the armed forces established regarding minorities
- Who received the Medal of Honor and when
- Steps minorities took to establish equality in the armed forces

5) Invite groups to share their chronologies/findings. Have groups discuss any differences and similarities in the way the groups were treated during the armed forces; during which time periods racial equality seem to be addressed and established; whether there are other minorities who served in the armed forces who merit a Medal of Honor; and what they believe the present status of racial relations is in the armed forces.

6) Instruct students to research the present-day treatment of minorities in the military. One way to begin is to review the Armed Forces Equal Opportunity Survey ([www.dod.mil/prhome/docs/r97\\_027.pdf](http://www.dod.mil/prhome/docs/r97_027.pdf).) Have students write an official military report or a journal essay on current racial relations in the armed forces.

Assessment:

Students can quiz each other on their understanding of the Medal of Honor's provisions and history. (Or, issue a teacher-created questionnaire that quizzes students on their knowledge of the medal.) Use a rubric to assess level of student participation in group activities and class discussion. Students can critique each other's arguments in favor of keeping the award's parameters as is or their proposed changes to the award's provisions.

Extended Activities:

- Create a pamphlet of other military awards (history, what it honors, who receives it, visual representations, etc.)
- Redesign the Medal of Honor
- Conduct research to determine whether anyone in their community has ever received the Medal of Honor and establish a memorial in their honor

Web sites:

Home of the Heroes

<http://www.homeofheroes.com/>

Official Site of the Medal of Honor Society

<http://www.cmoHS.org/>

Military Awards

<http://facstaff.uww.edu/rambadtd/homepage/legion.htm>

Medal of Honor Citations

<http://www.army.mil/cmh-pg/moh1.htm>

The Medal of Honor: The Bravest of the Brave

<http://www.medalofhonor.com/>

Air Force Magazine Online: Valor

<http://www.afa.org/magazine/valor/>

### ★ **Voices of Heroism**

Modified from the PBS Lesson designed for use with the film *American Valor*, to see full lesson <http://www.pbs.org/weta/americanvalor/teachers/lesson2.html>

**Note:** You can find another version of this lesson developed by Iowa Educators at [http://www.iowahistory.org/museum/exhibits/medal-of-honor/suggested-research/lesson\\_plan.htm](http://www.iowahistory.org/museum/exhibits/medal-of-honor/suggested-research/lesson_plan.htm)  
In this plan, teams of students (3-6 on a team) gather information on a particular Medal of Honor recipient of their choice or the teacher's choice. Each team assigns one or more people to gather information specifically on the recipient with a brief biographical summary and a summary of the action recognized by the Medal citation. Another person or persons are assigned to establish the historical context. They "set the scene" by writing a short summary of the military action, conflict or campaign connected to the recipient. One or two people on the team are assigned to write the short-term and long-term consequences of the heroic action. What happened to the recipient and to the people he or she helped? Why do you think he/she was able to act with such heroism? Was there a historical significance in this action? Was there a personal significance – how did this change the recipient's life?

Grades: 7-12      Subjects: American History, Civics, Language Arts

Materials:

- The film *American Valor* ([www.pbs.org/shop](http://www.pbs.org/shop))
- Television and VCR or DVD player
- Chart paper and markers and/or chalkboard and chalk
- Computers with Internet access
- Background information on the Medal of Honor (refer to the lesson "Awarding Valor" and recommended Web sites)
- Picture or drawing of actual Medal of Honor
- Online and print materials that provide information on Medal of Honor awardees and their specific citations
- Online and print resources on major wars in which the United States was involved

Procedures

1) Invite students to share stories about acts of bravery. (Encourage students to share stories reflecting personal acts of heroism. Students may also focus on the heroes of 9/11.) Instruct the class to jot down key aspects of the stories that highlight heroic qualities. Ask students to share their thoughts. Chart their ideas and facilitate student discussion as they group qualities under umbrella headings. For example, “duty to humanity” might head a category of qualities that reflect reasons for helping others.

2) Based on their stories and associations with heroism, have students come up with a composite profile of someone who is heroic.

3) Ask students if they are familiar with the Medal of Honor. Build on student knowledge with appropriate background on the medal, being sure to note that it is also given for non-combat acts of valor.

4) Tell students they will have the opportunity to listen to actual stories from Medal of Honor recipients as they watch the film *American Valor*. Create a *Voices of Valor* study guide. In Part A students should list the medal honorees, their acts of valor and reactions about receiving the award. In Part B, they should list five commonalities among the recipients' heroic acts. Instruct students to complete Part A as they watch the film, and Part B, after they have viewed it.

5) Invite students to first share their thoughts about the film, particularly what stood out for them and one important thing that they learned. Then, have them discuss their study guide notes and responses, especially how those interviewed responded to receiving the medal and what the common characteristics (as they relate to their heroic deeds) are among the interviewees.

6) Divide students into small group representing one of the following:

- Civil War
- Indian War Campaigns
- 1871 Korean Campaign
- War with Spain
- Philippine Insurrection
- China Relief Expedition (Boxer Rebellion)
- Action against Outlaws--Philippines 1911
- Mexican Campaign (Vera Cruz)
- Haiti 1915
- Dominican Campaign
- World War I
- Haiti Campaign 1919-1920
- Second Nicaraguan Campaign
- World War II
- Korean War
- Vietnam
- Somalia

(Source: U.S. Army Center of Military History-Full-text Listings of Medal of Honor Citations <http://www.army.mil/cmh-pg/moh1.htm>)

Instruct each group to research its war, synthesizing key information that includes: dates it occurred; nations involved; reasons for the war; where it was fought; allies and enemies; the end result of the war; casualties; who won the war; and key military and political figures, etc. (Students can brainstorm additional categories.) Groups can organize the data into a format of their choice (graphic organizers, charts).

7) Once the groups have completed their research on the wars, instruct them to research the war's Medal of Honor awardees. Their lists will include the honorees' names and specific citations. Have each student per group select one honoree whose heroic deed is of particular interest to them. (Encourage students to be diverse in their choices, selecting, where possible, people of color and women.)

8) Tell the students to assume the role of their honorees and create a first-person narrative that reflects the act of bravery he or she undertook. They can model these narratives after the stories presented by the American Valor interviewees. Built into their monologues should be direct references to the wars in which their honorees fought and the range of emotions they might have had when given the medal.

9) Invite the students to present their narratives. They can then create a compilation of narratives, each accompanied by the relevant background data on the war in which their honorees fought.

Assessment:

Create a rubric that evaluates student involvement in class discussion and group involvement, as well as the level of creativity and imagination applied towards their individual monologues.

Extended Activities:

- Assume the roles of witnesses who reported a specific act of valor during battle and recount it in a monologue or essay.
- Create first-person (awardees) or third-person (witnesses) narrative reporting on non-combat acts of valor that occurred during interim periods between wars. Refer to U.S. Army Center of Military History Full-text Listings of Medal of Honor Citations <http://www.army.mil/cmh-pg/moh1.htm>
- Take on the role of journalists reporting on Medal of Honor awardees in their local communities

Web sites:

Home of the Heroes

<http://www.homeofheroes.com/>

Official Site of the Congressional Medal of Honor Society

<http://www.cmohs.org/>

Medal of Honor Citations

<http://www.army.mil/cmh-pg/moh1.htm>

The Medal of Honor: The Bravest of the Brave

<http://www.medalofhonor.com/>

Medal of Honor Breakdown

<http://www.army.mil/cmh-pg/mohstats.htm>

Medal of Honor Master Resource Guide

<http://members.aol.com/veterans/moh.htm>

United States Department of Defense:

Information about the Medal of Honor

<http://www.defenselink.mil/faq/pis/14.html>

★ **In the Community: Honoring Those Among Us**

**Grades:** 7-12    **Subject:** Civics

**Materials:**

- The film *American Valor* ([www.pbs.org/shop](http://www.pbs.org/shop))
- Television and VCR or DVD player
- Chart paper and markers and/or chalkboard and chalk
- Computers with Internet access
- Information on local/community awards, voluntarism, civic duty, heroism, and other prizes of a similar nature
- Newspaper accounts, photographs, lists, and other archival information (perhaps from award sponsors) of local community members who have received citations for an outstanding act of heroism, voluntarism, civic duty, public service, etc.

**Procedures:**

**NOTE:** It is assumed that students have viewed *American Valor* and/or have read and heard stories of recipients and are familiar with the Medal of Honor's provisions.

1) Ask students to share stories of people they know (average citizens) who have committed outstanding acts of public service—saving a life, risking their life to help someone else, volunteering in a nursing home, standing up for a friend, establishing a fund to help children, etc. Perhaps students can consider something they have undertaken. Encourage them to consider broad examples of such acts, from those that gain much attention to smaller endeavors of which only a few are aware. This is to demonstrate that these acts can be large or small and that, because of intent and outcomes, are equally meritorious.

2) Write CIVIC DUTY on chart paper and ask students to discuss what they believe this means and involves. Facilitate student discussion and describe what they, as citizens, have the right and are expected to do. Provide a list of these rights and acts. The Center for Civic Education provides a list at <http://www.civiced.org/index.php?page=58erica#10>

3) Ask students what is expected of them in terms of civic and personal responsibility to their nation and community. Probe with them, based on their understanding of these responsibilities, why an act of public service, as identified in step 1, would be considered civic-minded. In what ways have Medal of Honor awardees fulfilled their civic responsibilities?

4) Ask students if they are aware of any awards given to community members who have committed an outstanding act of public service. Have them identify these awards. Divide the class into small groups to conduct additional research on the various community awards presented to individuals who have done something worthy. (To avoid overlap in findings, students might first brainstorm categories of public service for which awards are probably given.) Encourage them to contact places such as the chamber of commerce, scouting programs, universities, civic agencies, schools, libraries, etc. To save time the instructor can predetermine the awards students will research and have the resources gathered for the research.

5) Instruct each group to draw and post an annotated list of awards, providing background on who sponsors it, what it awards, and a brief history on its origins. Have each group select one award and a recipient of that award to research. The group provides a quick breakdown of the award for the rest of the class (who, when, for what, maybe some background on the recipient). Ask students to note the range of acts undertaken, where there are similarities, and the types of awards given and by whom.

6) Ask students whether there are -- based on their review of the awards and recipients -- gaps in the awards available to deserving citizens. Are there other types of public service acts that merit recognition? Have students generate a list of acts they believe should be rewarded. (The recommended Web sites may prompt ideas.)

The Above and Beyond Citizen Honor was recently established by MOH recipients. This new award recognizes a select number of American citizens each year that have demonstrated valor and spirit reflective of the military Medal of Honor requirements. See the links in the resource section of the <http://congressionalmedalofhonor.pbwiki.com/>

7) In small groups, invite students to establish an award for one category (a different one per group) that they would present annually. They should be sure to indicate the parameters for receipt of the award. After they have shared their ideas with the class, students might consider how to make this an official community award.

**Assessment:**

Create a rubric that evaluates student involvement in class discussion and group participation, as well as the level of creativity and imagination applied to the design of the award.

**Extended Activities:**

Students can:

- Arrange a presentation by sponsoring organizations and individuals of the various awards given to community members.
- Convene a panel of community members who have received a special award to share their stories and views on civic involvement and duty.
- Produce and publish a brochure that lists and describes various community awards for notable acts of valor, voluntarism, public service, civic duty, etc.
- Design a “wall of heroes” in a local public venue(library, bank) highlighting individuals—with pictures, stories, etc.-- in their community who have committed an act of bravery.
- Research major international awards for acts of public service with far-reaching impact, such as the Nobel Peace Prize.

**Web sites:**

United Nations Public Service Awards

[http://www.unpan.org/dpepa\\_psaward.asp](http://www.unpan.org/dpepa_psaward.asp)

Highest Public Safety Award

<http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/medalofvalor/archive.htm>

Point of Lights Foundation Awards

<http://www.pointsoflight.org/awards/awards.cfm>

National Park Service/U.S. Department of the Interior:  
60th Annual Honors Convocation

<http://data2.itc.nps.gov/release/Detail.cfm?ID=87>

[http://www.doi.gov/news/08\\_News\\_Releases/080513a.html](http://www.doi.gov/news/08_News_Releases/080513a.html)

President’s Volunteer Service Award

<http://www.presidentialserviceawards.org/>

## ★ The Negotiation of Emotion and Duty

**Grades:** 7-12

### Materials

- The film *American Valor* ([www.pbs.org/shop](http://www.pbs.org/shop))
- Television and VCR or DVD player
- Chart paper and markers and/or chalkboard and chalk
- Computers with Internet access

### Procedures

**NOTE:** It is assumed that students have viewed *American Valor*/and or have background knowledge about the Medal of Honor and know the stories of recipients of the award.

- 1) Ask students why people serve in the military. They may note reasons that include patriotism, career opportunity, and conscription or selective service, “the draft”. Encourage them to share stories of people with whom they are familiar, who have been or are in the armed services. Ask students to identify some of the reasons those interviewed for *American Valor* joined the armed forces.
- 2) Discuss with the class what status serving in the armed forces holds in the nation’s constitutional democracy. Is it a right or a civic responsibility? Is it a mandated activity for all citizens? When is one required to serve in the military? How does one negotiate being required to serve if he or she has anti-war sentiments? Are certain people exempt from serving? Why do people volunteer to join the military? Provide students background on selective service and those who choose not to serve (conscientious objectors) when required to do so.
- 3) Ask students to discuss their feelings about war. Do they feel it is necessary? How might they respond to being drafted into the military? How might they respond if they had to participate in combat? How might they feel if they came face to face with the enemy? Encourage students to share stories of people with whom they are familiar, who participated in combat.
- 4) Ask students to recollect the feelings *American Valor* interviewees had regarding their participation in the armed forces and combat. How do most of them balance their military responsibilities and individual feelings about war and combat? For some interviewed, such as [Jon Cavaiani](#), there is a turning point during their term when they have different feelings about the war in which they are fighting. Who else in the film has similar experiences? Describe them. Might all of those interviewed have enlisted if selective service had not existed during their lifetimes?
- 4) Have students review the film segments in which Medal of Honor winner [John Baca](#) shares his experience of encountering an enemy soldier and the work he undertook in Vietnam after the war. What do his actions suggest about his involvement in the Vietnam War? How did he negotiate his feelings when encountering an enemy soldier? Why does he return to Vietnam to assist the North

Vietnamese? Would students have acted similarly had they been in Baca's shoes?

John Baca:

*I walked the point I think Christmas, Christmas morning, I saw this North Vietnamese soldier sitting on a, a trail on a bunker. And I just kinda caught him off guard and surprised him. And I was away from my, I was like, it was just him and I, and his rifle was beside him, and I just knew like, you know, God, I don't want to shoot this guy, and he doesn't want to die, you know, I'm afraid, there's nobody here, what do I do? and I knew what to say to him, surrender, you know, choo hoi, and that was the words he wanted, and I motioned for him to move to another area, say like, covering, so I could run down there and pick him up, and I did. And I had pictures of my mom and my sisters, and I shared them with him, and he had pictures of his family. And I knew, what are we doing, you know? You know, he just, he's happy he didn't, he didn't die. He was 16 years old, fighting for his country. You know, and I think taking that guy and realizing and you know, what, it kind of changed the morale, kind of mellowed people out. It was a, it was a beautiful time, it was like a beautiful Christmas gift.*

*In 1990 I went back to Vietnam with my friend Art. And there was eight of us that went back, and we stayed for two months. For six weeks we worked, we worked alongside the North Vietnamese out, 12 kilometers outside Hanoi building an American/Vietnamese Friendship Clinic. And somehow you know that, that kid I took alive, you know, 20 years earlier, my Christmas gift, and somehow his, he was there in that crowd working with us. You know, those Vietnamese just befriended us, loved us.*

5) Have students select a major war or a battle (starting with the Civil War) in which the US was involved (It might be helpful to offer students a list of such battles. It is recommended that each student have a different battle to research.). Instruct students assume the role of an unknown soldier. In their monologues, they should provide accurate historical information on the selected battle and imagine the soldier's emotional state during combat, particularly the negotiation of feelings and civic duty.

**Assessment:**

Create a rubric that evaluates student involvement in class discussion and group participation. Students can maintain portfolios that chart the progress of their monologues.

**Extended Activities:**

- Interview local veterans about their combat experiences
- Interview enlisted service people yet to fight in war about their feelings and civic duty as military personnel

