

Inquiry Lesson Plan
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What was the cause of the Kent State Shooting?

Abstract

The Vietnam Era is arguably one of the most controversial periods of American history. The country was divided and political unrest was rampant across the country. Students had taken on the role of activist, and nowhere was that more apparent than college campuses. This political unrest came to a head on May 4, 1970 in Kent, Ohio. On this day a shooting at Kent State University took 4 lives and injured nine others. Not only did this event lead to a student strike that closed hundreds of high schools and universities but it further divided public opinion and highlighted the severe strain that the Vietnam War was taking on all Americans. Today, more than 40 years later there is still conflict over what happened. The question that so many are still trying to answer is: What was the cause of the Kent State shooting? The following inquiry lesson is designed to engage students in higher order thinking, deep knowledge, and substantive conversation with their peers. Inquiry based instruction is important in the classroom because it helps keep lessons authentic, and provides students more freedom and creativity in developing content knowledge while reinforcing basic and advanced skills.

Ideal Audience

This inquiry lesson is intended for 11th or 12th grade students in an American Civics or Recent American History course. The lesson requires that students have some background knowledge on the Vietnam War and the social unrest at home. It also relies on students' ability to think critically and develop hypotheses based on evidence presented. To use this lesson for underclassmen the data facts could probably remain the same, but not as many data sets should be presented. In addition, the instructor would need to introduce even more background information regarding the Vietnam War to the students prior to beginning the lesson. I also believe if some of the data sets were altered and the discussions guided in a slightly different direction this would be an ideal inquiry lesson for a sociology class to use as they explore how people act differently in groups, as opposed to independently.

Accommodations

Students that have special needs may be given accommodations or modifications during this lesson. Accommodations and modifications will be made on an individual basis. Students that are ELL may need to have interpreters for some of the sources. In addition, some students that are exceptional learners may need to have the overviews read out loud to them instead of reading them silently to themselves. Groups will be determined in advanced by the instructor so that students who may need additional support have classmates that are available to assist them in each group. The assessment portion of the lesson may also need to be adjusted for some students. Examples would be lowering the amount of sources needed and/or adjusting length of the essay.

Rationale

This lesson will give students an insight into the political unrest that enveloped the nation during the Vietnam War. The purpose of this lesson is to get students thinking about social involvement. It should also get students questioning the line that separates when the government is protecting us from when the government is impeding on our rights as American citizens. During this lesson students will analyze and evaluate primary and secondary sources, while questioning the behavior of those involved. Students should be engaged in the process of creating hypotheses and defending their tentative conclusions with evidence. Students will also learn to discuss their

disagreements civilly, which will help students to have educated and civil conversations about controversial issues outside of the classroom.

Objectives

During this lesson:

- Students will analyze the thought processes of the students, guardsmen, and government concerning the Kent State shooting
- Students will use maps as well as primary and secondary sources to evaluate relevance, bias, and conclusions for an event
- Students will identify possible reasons for the Kent State shooting
- Students will evaluate the tension that draped the country during Vietnam War
- Students will use evidence to create and then defend or disagree with multiple hypotheses during an individual lesson
- Students will actively participate in a respectful conversation by raising their hands and contributing several times throughout several class periods
- Students will question the idea of protests as well as appropriate responses to protests
- Students will draw a final conclusion using data from multiple sources on who they feel is most responsible for a national tragedy in a well-researched essay that is at least 3 (double spaced) pages long

WMAS Addressed in Lesson

- B.12.1 Explain different points of view on the same historical event, using data gathered from various sources, such as letters, journals, diaries, newspapers, government documents, and speeches
 - Students will address this standard by evaluating and explaining data sets that all pertain to the same event, but the sources themselves are different. For example, the students will look at a newspaper article, two interviews, and a map
- B.12.2 Analyze primary and secondary sources related to a historical question to evaluate their relevance, make comparisons, integrate new information with prior knowledge, and come to a reasoned conclusion
 - This standard will be addressed as students evaluate the data sets and determine which evidence they choose to use as they develop their conclusion on what caused the Kent State shooting
- B.12.4 Assess the validity of different interpretations of significant historical events
 - Students will address this standard as they analyze, evaluate, and draw conclusions from a variety of different interpretations of the Kent State shooting
- F.12.1 Conduct research and inquiry on self-selected or assigned topics, issues, or problems and use an appropriate form to communicate their findings.
 - This standard is addressed in the lesson as the students perform an inquiry on an assigned topic where their findings are communicated in a well-researched essay
- A.12.3 Read and discuss literary and nonliterary texts in order to understand human experience.
 - To address this standard, students will read and evaluate a variety of texts to better understand the experiences of the guardsmen and protestors who were present at the Kent State shooting
- C.12.10 Identify ways people may participate effectively in community affairs and the political process

- Students will address this standard as they identify the different ways that the protestors participated in the events leading up to and including the Kent State shooting and the effect that it had on the political process
- C.12.14 Explain and analyze how different political and social movements have sought to mobilize public opinion and obtain governmental support in order to achieve their goals.
 - In addressing this standard students will explain and analyze how the protests of the Vietnam era sought to change political opinion or current political policies.

Time

This lesson plan should take five 50-minute class periods. This extended amount of time will allow for students to have plenty of opportunity to listen to, watch, and read the data sets. It was also allow plenty of time for small group and whole class discussions and debate concerning possible hypotheses.

Material

- Lesson Plan
- Handouts of the Inquiry Hypothesis Sheet for all students
- Copies of the Data Sets
- Handout for Students: Overview – Controversy over Kent State
- Handout for Students: Overview, cont. – Neil Young’s “Ohio”
- Whiteboard and dry erase markers
- Computer capable of audio and video projection
- Video Projector
- Screen (or Smart Board)
- Overhead Projector (or Smart Board)
- Internet Sites:
 - Neil Young’s “Ohio” - <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YnOoNM0U6oc>
 - Kent State Website - http://www.library.kent.edu/drc/oral_histories/browse_subjects.php
 - Kent State Documentary - <http://www.youtube.com/watch?NR=1&v=5H8izrhFNy8&feature=endscreen>

The Hook

There are three pieces to The Hook. The first, a documentary created by an 11th grade history class is available on YouTube and will be viewed by the students. This will give students a background of the events that occurred that day. It should also help to garner interest and allow students to generate some general hypotheses for what happened. The movie should air from the beginning to about 6 minutes 20 seconds. The website for this YouTube video is: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?NR=1&v=5H8izrhFNy8&feature=endscreen>. The second part of The Hook is an overview of the controversy surrounding the shooting. This is a handout that will be given to the students that they will read silently. Finally, the third piece of The Hook is Neil Young’s “Ohio”. The link to the “Ohio” video is: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YnOoNM0U6oc>. There is also a handout with the lyrics for the video that will be distributed to the students before playing the song. The last two pieces of The Hook should really get the students thinking about the different viewpoints and the years of controversy and strong feelings that have surrounded this issue.

Inquiry Lesson Procedure

Day 1

Introducing the Lesson Plan: Write the causal question on the board before students come in for class: What was the cause of the Kent State Shooting? Make sure this is written somewhere that it can remain on the board for the entire week long lesson. Introduce the students to what an inquiry is. Remind students that they are not questioning who shot the students, but what led to the students being shot; it is possible that these are two totally different answers. Let students know that although there is no *right* answer, some answers are definitely better than others, specifically those supported by evidence. Students also need to be aware that it is likely not everyone in class will agree, but they need to have civil discourse on the topic. Lastly, make sure that students are informed that their participation is vital to the success of the inquiry and that their participation in the lesson is part of their assessment and grade.

The Hook: Have students watch the documentary on YouTube:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?NR=1&v=5H8izrhFNy8&feature=endscreen>. Only air the video until 6 minutes 20 seconds (the students start getting more opinion based at that point). Remind the students that this movie was created by high school students after a history lesson on the Kent State shooting. There are chances for historical inaccuracies, but overall the material and narration is accurate.

After viewing the movie distribute the overview handout: Overview – Controversy over Kent State. Have students read the overview silently. Once all students have finished reading the overview, distribute the handout: Overview Cont. – Neil Young’s “Ohio”. After students have the handout play the Neil Young video: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YnOoNM0U6oc>. While switching between the different media ask students to think about how they feel about the shootings. Could they imagine something like this happening at their school or at their local university? Does their initial reaction lead them to believe the government or the students went too far?

Elicit Hypotheses: After watching and reading the three parts of the Hook distribute to students their Inquiry Hypothesis Sheet. Have students write down several different hypotheses that may answer the causal question: What was the cause of the Kent State Shooting? Tell the students to give thoughtful answers. They can feel free to put down the first thing that pops into their head, but make sure that they go beyond that. Each student should have at least 3 different hypotheses.

After all students have their hypotheses divide the class into groups of 4 or 5. (*Groups should be decided by the instructor in advanced. The instructor should make sure that each group has a strong leader to support any students who may have difficulty with the lesson.*) Direct the students to discuss their individual hypotheses in the group. Students should write down all of their group member’s hypotheses on their individual Inquiry Hypothesis Sheet. They do not need to repeat any hypotheses, they only need to make sure their lists contain all of the different *hypotheses* their group members came up with. After the groups have discussed their individual hypotheses and listed them, direct students to create 2 or 3 out of the box hypotheses as a group. These will also be written on each student’s Inquiry Hypothesis Sheet. These out of the box ideas will help facilitate later discussion.

After the group discussion, go around the classroom and ask each group to share their hypotheses, including their out of the box ideas. Make sure that each student in the group gives at least one hypothesis each. It is not necessary for students to share any hypotheses that have already been given by other groups. Have one student write all of the class’s hypotheses on the Smart Board or overhead projector – just make sure that all students can see them and that you will be able to pull them up again for class the rest of the week. Students should also write any of the class’s hypotheses that they don’t already have, on their individual Inquiry Hypothesis Sheet.

Possible Hypotheses:

- The school for not doing more to protect the students
- The protestors who were on campus that day
- The protestors who had been on campus for weeks destroying property and burning down the ROTC building
- The Ohio National Guard Soldiers involved in the shooting
- Richard Nixon and the government for not doing more to ease tensions across the country and bring our soldiers home
- The sniper who fired on the gunman

Days 2-5

Gathering Data and Revising Hypotheses: On the second day of class have students immediately sit with their groups and distribute the first data set. Choose one student to read the first data set out loud to the class. Once the data set has been read have students discuss in their groups how the evidence in the first data set possibly undermines or supports any of their current hypotheses. Are there any new hypotheses that the students can think of to add to their lists after reading this data set? After the small group discussion the groups will discuss their opinions with the class as a whole. Make sure the students/groups use the evidence presented so far to defend their arguments on whether the hypotheses have been supported or undermined. Any hypotheses that have been undermined should receive a negative sign on the class's hypotheses sheet as well as each student's individual sheet. Hypotheses that are supported with the evidence will be given plus signs on the class and individual sheets. Any new hypotheses should also be recorded in both locations. Distribute the next data set and repeat this process for data sets 2-8 over the rest of the week. Do not do data set 9 yet, it will be distributed to students at the end of the last day. Have a different student read each data set to give more students an opportunity to participate. If time is an issue data sets may be combined into groups of two *after* the first 4 data sets.

Notes on each data set for guiding discussions and hypothesis building:

The instructor is responsible for facilitating the discussion, not leading it. Some data sets have certain questions that are italicized below. It is hoped that the students will be asking these questions on their own. If this is not happening and the instructor needs to bring up the questions they should do this as if they were an active participant in the inquiry, not as an instructor quizzing their students.

Data Set 1: Provides an argument for the guardsmen fearing for their lives and only shooting in self-defense. *Does the court case influence their opinions?*

Data Set 2: Discusses President Nixon's response to the shooting as well as some background on the causes of the protests. *Although Nixon wasn't even on campus that day, do his policies bare any responsibility for the event?*

Data Set 3: New York Times article from the day after the shooting. The article brings up the possibility of a sniper firing on the guardsmen first. It also discusses some violence that the protestors perpetrated against the guardsmen and police.

Data Set 4: Is a continuation of the exact same New York Times article from data set 3. This portion of the article seems to give a more sympathetic view of the protestors. *Is it odd that the same author seems to have contradicting viewpoints?*

Data Set 5: This is a map of the campus that shows where victims were found, where the guards travelled, and locations of bullet holes. The map seems to show that the victims are sprawled across campus. Students should interpret the map in their groups and then discuss whether it shows any undermining or supporting evidence for their hypotheses.

Data Set 6: This is a taped recording and it should be set to start at 5 minutes 35 seconds. The taped interview is of an anonymous protestor who was a student at Kent State and there the day of the

shooting. The protestor discusses violence that had been perpetrated against the protestors even before the shootings. He also gives a background of the protests that had been taking place for several days on campus. *Does the class think the National Guard went too far? Would the protestors or Guardsmen behave this way if they were alone or were they influenced by the crowd? Can we trust this source?*

Data Set 7: This is a taped recording. Students can listen to the entire recording of this interview. This interview is from a Kent State Physical Education professor who was on campus that day. The professor discusses the unrest that had been taking place at Kent State for over two years. Her interview tends to focus more on the student protestors. *Did the protestors cross a line as far as free speech, right to assemble, etc.? Was this the best way to influence the policies the protestors disagreed with or could they have found a better way that wouldn't have resulted in violence and death? In that way are the protestor's responsible?*

Data Set 8: This report is more of an overview, but it may help undermine or support any hypotheses that the city or government should have done more to protect the students. *Do the protestors think the National Guard should have been called in? If so, should they have been called in earlier?*

Data Set 9: This data set is distributed separately at the end of the lesson. It addresses some of the most recent developments that have come to light regarding the shooting.

Each day: After the first day of the inquiry lesson have Neil Young's "Ohio" playing in the background as students walk into class. This should get students back in the mindset of the inquiry and will hopefully help students feel a connection to the event as the song can be very moving. After the first day of class students should sit with their group members as soon as class starts. Prior to class each day, make sure all videos and recordings are set and ready to go so that you can seamlessly transition from data set to data set. Also, after the first day, the class's list of hypotheses will need to be displayed so students can keep track of the undermining and supporting evidence as a class, as well as on their individual hypothesis sheet. During discussions make sure that students continue to use evidence from all of the data sets, and that they remain aware of the sources they are using, i.e. bias, primary vs. secondary. Allow students to lead the discussion, and encourage the discussion if students start relating the material to their personal lives. However, if students start to get off track too much, remind them about the causal question and that the goal is to answer the question: What was the cause of the Kent State Shooting? Leaving this question on the board all week will help to keep students on track. Lastly, it is very important to make sure that all students are involved in the discussion each day. This can be done by calling on all students and making sure that group members take turns in their responses to the whole class.

Conclusion: After all the data sets have been exhausted and discussion is complete ask students to decide which hypothesis they think answers the question *best*. Ask the students if they have any new hypotheses they would like to add. Students will then write one to two paragraphs quickly outlining their argument for what caused the Kent State Shooting. Students should make sure they are using evidence from a collection of sources, not just the one that supports their opinion. This will be followed by a debriefing where the instructor ask students what did they learn, did they enjoy the activity, what would they do differently, what would they still like to learn, etc. The final step, right before the end of class on the last day is to distribute data set 9 and have a student volunteer read it. This last data set will give students one final interpretation to think about. It discusses one of the most recent developments in the controversy and although it still does not definitively answer the causal question it should get students thinking and get them talking about this issue outside of the classroom.

Assessment

An informal assessment will be based on students' participation throughout the Inquiry Lesson. Students will need to have participated fully in the small group and whole-class discussions and have provided supported

responses to receive full credit. As a formal assessment, students will write a 3 page paper where they address the issue of who or what they believe caused the Kent State Shooting. Students will be given more time to research the event to support their conclusions before completing their paper.

Essay Question:

What caused the Kent State shooting? Why do you believe this caused the Kent State shooting as opposed to other factors? What evidence do you have to support your conclusion? Make sure that you use a variety of primary and secondary sources, beyond those presented as data sets for your answers.

Rubric

| Kent State Essay | Not Satisfactory | Satisfactory | Good | Excellent |
|-------------------------|--|---|---|--|
| Resources | Less than 2 sources cited. | 2 – 4 sources cited, but sources may lack diversity or reliability. | 4 + sources that are diverse – primary and secondary, but may lack reliability. (Or the exact opposite: may be reliable, but not diverse) | 4 + sources that are diverse – primary and secondary, and are also reliable. |
| Thesis | Limited argument. No clear direction of thesis. | Student’s thesis is clear, but lacks sufficient evidence to back it up. | Student’s thesis is clear and evidence is present. | Student uses the evidence to develop a clear thesis statement. |
| Mechanics | Errors are present throughout the paper and hinder the meaning of the paper. | Errors are present, but do not hinder the paper. | Few errors are present. | Very few errors are present. |
| Effort | Paper shows little to no effort | Student attempted to answer the question. | Student answered the question. | Student has gone above and beyond the expectations of the assignment. |

Reflection

The National Council of Social Studies has agreed upon six standards that evaluate the quality of teaching in the subject of Social Studies. These are known as the PASS Standards, which stands for Powerful and Authentic Social Studies. The following is an assessment on how this inquiry lesson would likely be evaluated if it was implemented in the classroom based on the PASS Standards

PASS Standard #1: Higher Order Thinking

Score: 5

Higher order thinking takes place when students manipulate information and ideas by synthesizing, generalizing, explaining, hypothesizing or arriving at conclusions that produce new meaning and understanding. This could also be a description of the objectives of an inquiry lesson as students are expected to actively participate in these same activities. This inquiry lesson requires all students to use these skills throughout the

entire lesson as they develop hypotheses on the cause of the Kent State shooting, defend their opinions, and evaluate sources to reach a conclusion.

PASS Standard #2: Deep Knowledge

Score: 5

During this lesson students will go into great detail about the events on May 4, 1970. Following this lesson, students should be able to express a very systematic understanding of the events that day. Students will also show their ability to construct explanations and draw conclusions on the events from that day. During the lesson all students will sustain a focus on the causal question. Students will also arrive at a reasoned and supported conclusion of what happened and the cause. Following this lesson, students should have a very complete understanding of the events that took place in Kent, Ohio on May 4, 1970.

PASS Standard #3: Substantive Conversation

Score: 5

Substantive conversation is when students are able to share their higher order thinking in a discourse that has at least three consecutive interchanges. This inquiry lesson is designed to have students leading their own discussion where they share well thought out, evidence based ideas and conclusions. The teacher is only there to act as a facilitator for the conversation, which means students will be primarily responsible for all interchanges during the discussion. The nature of the inquiry is for there to be conflict surrounding the discussion which will create more discussion and more interchanges. Since all students will be required to give their hypotheses and discuss their group's opinions, everyone in the class should be fully participating each day.

PASS Standard #4: Connections Beyond the Classroom

Score: 3

This lesson is an inquiry on a topic that is over 40 years old. Students may not immediately feel connected to the discussion. There is also no opportunity directly presented to the students for them to become actively involved outside of the classroom on this topic. However, some students may become more interested in the prospect of protesting themselves as they analyze the protests of others. They also may feel more connected to the protestors personally, as they are also students and similar in age.

PASS Standard #5: Ethical Valuing

Score: 5

This lesson gives students the opportunity to debate the ethical decisions made by protestors, government officials and National Guardsmen. Students should be actively participating by evaluating decisions made and attempting to understand or rationalize the actions of all the participants. As part of their discussion students will look at many different positions and support or challenge the role of those involved. Students should also be considering core democratic values like the right to free speech and the right to assemble and protest. Throughout the lesson all students will be required to participate in a discussion where they support hypotheses and challenge the hypotheses of others, many times based on moral or ethical reasoning. Students will also be taking a clear stance on the cause of the shooting using supported evidence.

PASS Standard #6: Integration

Score: 3

This lesson integrates history, political science, social sciences, and some aspects of music and literacy. History is the main discipline addressed as the event inquired upon took place in the past. Students will also be "thinking like a historian" by evaluating, analyzing, and synthesizing to create and defend their hypotheses. The discipline of political science is also addressed as students will evaluate the some of the politics that led to the shootings. In addition, students will evaluate the rights Americans have, and evaluate if the protestors and/or the guardsmen breeched those rights. Another social studies discipline addressed is the social sciences, specifically sociology. Students will address through their discussions whether the protestors and guardsmen acted differently as groups than they would have as individuals. Beyond the subject of social studies, the lesson integrates the subject of music as well. During the lesson students will address the use of music as a way of expression and protest. Through the continual use of Neil Young's "Ohio" students will be evaluating the role and impact of music on society. The connection to literacy is a little less direct, but students will read and

discuss literary and nonliterary texts in order to understand a human experience. Through this process of integration students will have a better understanding of or civic efficacy.

Personal Reflection

Researching and designing this inquiry lesson plan was a very informational assignment. It helped to build my overall lesson planning skills as well as give me an opportunity to create a weeklong lesson plan, which is something I had never done before. I also liked that it allowed me to put into words the way I envision discussions going in my classroom. I had often wondered what it meant to facilitate discussion as opposed to lead it. In this lesson plan the discussion prompts for the instructor indicate how I envision myself facilitating discussion in my everyday classroom. I feel that overall my lesson plan is pretty successful, as it should hopefully get the students engaged in the inquiry, the discussion, and even their assignments. I also believe when this lesson plan is implemented in the classroom it will provide another unique learning experience for me as a teacher. I think this assignment will be a great indicator of how well I am instructing my students on how to “think like a historian”. I also think that it will help me to assess how I well I, as a teacher, am doing at facilitating as opposed to leading discussions.

If I were to improve this lesson I think I would seriously consider trying to find a protestor or National Guardsmen who was present at the shooting to speak to the class over social media or Skype. If I were to do this, I think I would use it as the final data set on the last day of class as a way to get students talking about the inquiry outside of class. Also, if I could find someone cooperative enough I would add an additional portion to the assessment where students would write to the person we interviewed with questions that they would like to have answered.

Overview – Controversy over Kent State

On May 4, 1970 members of the Ohio National Guard fired into a crowd of Kent State University demonstrators, killing four and wounding nine Kent State students. The impact of the shootings was dramatic. The event triggered a nationwide student strike that forced hundreds of colleges and universities to close. H. R. Haldeman, a top aide to President Richard Nixon, suggests the shootings had a direct impact on national politics. In The Ends of Power, Haldeman (1978) states that the shootings at Kent State began the slide into Watergate, eventually destroying the Nixon administration. Beyond the direct effects of the May 4th, the shootings have certainly come to symbolize the deep political and social divisions that so sharply divided the country during the Vietnam War era.

In the nearly three decades since May 4, 1970, a voluminous literature has developed analyzing the events of May 4th and their aftermath. Some books were published quickly, providing a fresh but frequently superficial or inaccurate analysis of the shootings (e.g., Eszterhas and Roberts, 1970; Warren, 1970; Casale and Paskoff, 1971; Michener, 1971; Stone, 1971; Taylor et al., 1971; and Tompkins and Anderson, 1971). Numerous additional books have been published in subsequent years (e.g., Davies, 1973; Hare, 1973; Hensley and Lewis, 1978; Kelner and Munves, 1980; Hensley, 1981; Payne, 1981; Bills, 1988; and Gordon, 1997). These books have the advantage of a broader historical perspective than the earlier books, but no single book can be considered the definitive account of the events and aftermath of May 4, 1970 at Kent State University.⁽¹⁾

Despite the substantial literature which exists on the Kent State shootings, misinformation and misunderstanding continue to surround the events of May 4. For example, a prominent college-level United States history book by Mary Beth Norton et al. (1994), which is also used in high school advanced placement courses,⁽²⁾ contains a picture of the shootings of May 4 accompanied by the following summary of events: "In May 1970, at Kent State University in Ohio, National Guardsmen confronted student antiwar protestors with a tear gas barrage. Soon afterward, with no provocation, soldiers opened fire into a group of fleeing students. Four young people were killed, shot in the back, including two women who had been walking to class." (Norton et al., 1994, p. 732) Unfortunately, this short description contains four factual errors: (1) some degree of provocation did exist; (2) the students were not fleeing when the Guard initially opened fire; (3) only one of the four students who died, William Schroeder, was shot in the back; and (4) one female student, Sandy Schreuer, had been walking to class, but the other female, Allison Krause, had been part of the demonstration.

Lewis, Jerry, and Thomas Hensley. "The May 4 Shootings at Kent State University: The Search for Historical Accuracy." Welcome to Kent State University Departmental Site.
<http://dept.kent.edu/sociology/lewis/LEWIHEN.htm> (accessed October 23, 2012).

Overview, cont. – Neil Young’s “Ohio”

Neil Young’s “Ohio” - YouTube Video

Tin soldiers and Nixon's coming We're finally on our own
This summer I hear the drumming Four dead in Ohio
Gotta get down to it Soldiers are gunning us down
Should have been done long ago
What if you knew her And found her dead on the ground
How can you run when you know?
Gotta get down to it Soldiers are gunning us down
Should have been done long ago
What if you knew her And found her dead on the ground
How can you run when you know?
Tin soldiers and Nixon's coming
We're finally on our own
This summer I hear the drumming Four dead in Ohio

Four dead in Ohio
Four dead in Ohio
Four dead in Ohio

"Crosby, Stills, Nash & Young - "Ohio" (1970) Kent State University - YouTube." YouTube.
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YnOoNM0U6oc> (accessed October 25, 2012).

Data Set 1:

Why Did the Guardsmen Fire?

The most important question associated with the events of May 4 is why did members of the Guard fire into a crowd of unarmed students? Two quite different answers have been advanced to this question: (1) the Guardsmen fired in self-defense, and the shootings were therefore justified and (2) the Guardsmen were not in immediate danger, and therefore the shootings were unjustified.

The answer offered by the Guardsmen is that they fired because they were in fear of their lives. Guardsmen testified before numerous investigating commissions as well as in federal court that they felt the demonstrators were advancing on them in such a way as to pose a serious and immediate threat to the safety of the Guardsmen, and they therefore had to fire in self-defense. Some authors (e.g., Michener, 1971 and Grant and Hill, 1974) agree with this assessment. Much more importantly, federal criminal and civil trials have accepted the position of the Guardsmen. In a 1974 federal criminal trial, District Judge Frank Battisti dismissed the case against eight Guardsmen indicted by a federal grand jury, ruling at mid-trial that the government's case against the Guardsmen was so weak that the defense did not have to present its case. In the much longer and more complex federal civil trial of 1975, a jury voted 9-3 that none of the Guardsmen were legally responsible for the shootings. This decision was appealed, however, and the Sixth Circuit Court of Appeals ruled that a new trial had to be held because of the improper handling of a threat to a jury member.

The legal aftermath of the May 4 shootings ended in January of 1979 with an out-of-court settlement involving a statement signed by 28 defendants as well as a monetary settlement, and the Guardsmen and their supporters view this as a final vindication of their position. The financial settlement provided \$675,000 to the wounded students and the parents of the students who had been killed. This money was paid by the State of Ohio rather than by any Guardsmen, and the amount equaled what the State estimated it would cost to go to trial again. Perhaps most importantly, the statement signed by members of the Ohio National Guard was viewed by them to be a declaration of regret, not an apology or an admission of wrongdoing:

Lewis, Jerry , and Thomas Hensley. "The May 4 Shootings at Kent State University: The Search for Historical Accuracy." Welcome to Kent State University Departmental Site.
<http://dept.kent.edu/sociology/lewis/LEWIHEN.htm> (accessed October 23, 2012).

Data Set 2:

Nixon on the War and Protestors:

The U.S.'s role in Vietnam seemed to be a more difficult problem ([Timeline of the Vietnam War](#)). When Nixon took office in January 1969, the lives of 540,000 young Americans who had been sent to Indochina under the policies of the Kennedy and Johnson administrations were now in his hands. The President began withdrawing U.S. troops while still bolstering South Vietnam's capacity to defend itself -- Nixon soon found out, however, that it was not possible to play both sides of the fence. Nixon's bombing of Hanoi in 1969 angered many Americans who felt that the president was not ending the long conflict as he had promised. President Nixon approved the bombing of Cambodia even against the objections of many of his White House advisors while continually promising an "honorable end to the war." The invasion of Cambodia resulted in the largest anti-war protests the U.S. had ever seen, and three members of Kissinger's staff also resigned in president. Nixon would refer to college student protestors as "bums," and he argued that the "silent majority" of America would want him to take an aggressive stand in Vietnam. Unfortunately, the protests reached a fevered pitch, and by May 1970 several students were killed at Kent State University and at Jackson State University. One angry father, whose daughter had been killed, would respond, "my child was not a bum." Nixon would argue that, like the protestors, he wanted to stop the war, end the draft, and stop the killing, but he believed that "his decisions would serve that purpose." Over the next three days, protestors flooded Washington, D.C., and after a tense press conference, President Nixon went to the Lincoln Memorial at dawn where a group of protestors had gathered. A young student told Nixon that he didn't understand that protestors were willing to die to stop the war, and Nixon responded that he hoped to create a world where people would not have to die for what they believed in.

Hay, Jeff. Richard M. Nixon: Presidents and their Decisions Series. California: Greenhaven Press, Inc., 2001.

Data Set 3:

May 5th, 1970 – New York Times Article

Kent, Ohio, May 4 -- Four students at Kent State University, two of them women, were shot to death this afternoon by a volley of National Guard gunfire. At least 8 other students were wounded.

The burst of gunfire came about 20 minutes after the guardsmen broke up a noon rally on the Commons, a grassy campus gathering spot, by lobbing tear gas at a crowd of about 1,000 young people.

In Washington, President Nixon deplored the deaths of the four students in the following statement:

"This should remind us all once again that when dissent turns to violence it invites tragedy. It is my hope that this tragic and unfortunate incident will strengthen the determination of all the nation's campuses, administrators, faculty and students alike to stand firmly for the right which exists in this country of peaceful dissent and just as strong against the resort to violence as a means of such expression."

In Columbus, Sylvester Del Corso, Adjutant General of the Ohio National Guard, said in a statement that the guardsmen had been forced to shoot after a sniper opened fire against the troops from a nearby rooftop and the crowd began to move to encircle the guardsmen.

Frederick P. Wenger, the Assistant Adjutant General, said the troops had opened fire after they were shot at by a sniper. "They were understanding orders to take cover and return any fire," he said. This reporter, who was with the group of students, did not see any indication of sniper fire, nor was the sound of any gunfire audible before the Guard volley. Students, conceding that rocks had been thrown, heatedly denied that there was any sniper.

Gov. James A. Rhodes called on J. Edgar Hoover, director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, to aid in looking into the campus violence. A Justice Department spokesman said no decision had been made to investigate. At 2:10 this afternoon, after the shootings, the university president, Robert I. White, ordered the university closed for an indefinite time, and officials were making plans to evacuate the dormitories and bus out-of-state students to nearby cities.

Students here, angered by the expansion of the war into Cambodia, have held demonstrations for the last three nights. On Saturday night, the Army Reserve Officers Training Corps building was burned to the ground and the Guard was called in and martial law was declared.

Today's rally, called after a night in which the police and guardsmen drove students into their dormitories and made 69 arrests, began as students rang the iron Victory bell on the commons, normally used to herald football victories.

A National Guard jeep drove onto the Commons and an officer ordered the crowd to disperse. Then several canisters of tear gas were fired, and the students straggled up a hill that borders the area and retreated into buildings.

A platoon of guardsmen, armed- as they have been since they arrived here with loaded M-1 rifles and gas equipment - moved across the green and over the crest of the hill, chasing the main body of protesters.

The youths split into two groups, one heading farther downhill toward a dormitory complex, the other eddying around a parking lot and girls' dormitory just below Taylor Hall, the architecture building.

The guardsmen moved into a grassy area just below the parking lot and fired several canisters of tear gas from their short, stubby launchers.

Three or four youths ran to the smoking canisters and hurled them back. Most fell far short, but one landed near the troops and a cheer went up from the crowd, which was chanting "Pigs off campus" and cursing the war.

A few youths in the front of the crowd ran into the parking lot and hurled stones or small chunks of pavement in the direction of the guardsmen. Then the troops began moving back up the hill in the direction of the college.

Kifner, John . "4 Kent State Students Killed by Troops." *New York Times (New York City)*, May 5, 1970.

Data Set 4:

New York Times Article Cont.

The students in the parking lot area, numbering about 500, began to move toward the rear of the troops, cheering. Again, a few in front picked up stones from the edge of the parking lot and threw them at the guardsmen. Another group of several hundred students had gathered around the sides of Taylor Hall watching.

As the guardsmen, moving up the hill in single file, reached the crest, they suddenly turned, forming a skirmish line and opening fire.

The crackle of the rifle volley cut the suddenly still air. It appeared to go on, as a solid volley, for perhaps a full minute or a little longer.

Some of the students dived to the ground, crawling on the grass in terror. Others stood shocked or half crouched, apparently believing the troops were firing into the air. Some of the rifle barrels were pointed upward.

Near the top of the hill at the corner of Taylor Hall, a student crumpled over, spun sideways and fell to the ground, shot in the head.

When the firing stopped, a slim girl, wearing a cowboy shirt and faded jeans, was lying face down on the road at the edge of the parking lot, blood pouring out onto the macadam, about 10 feet from this reporter.

The youth stood stunned, many of them clustered in small groups staring at the bodies. A young man cradled one of the bleeding forms in his arms. Several girls began to cry. But many of the students who rushed from the scene seemed almost too shocked to react. Several gathered around an abstract steel sculpture in front of the building and looked at the .30-caliber bullet hole drilled through one of the plates.

The hospital said that six young people were being treated for gunshot wounds, some in the intensive care unit. Three of the students who were killed were dead on arrival at the hospital.

One guardsman was treated and released at the hospital and another was admitted with heat prostration.

In early afternoon, students attempted to gather at various areas of the Commons but were ordered away by guardsmen and the Ohio Highway Patrol, which moved in as reinforcements.

There were no further clashes, as faculty members, graduate assistants and student leaders urged the crowd to go back to dormitories.

But a bizarre atmosphere hung over the campus as a Guard helicopter hovered overhead, grim-faced officers maneuvered their men to safeguard the normally pastoral campus and students, dazed, fearful and angry, struggled to comprehend what had happened and to find something to do about it.

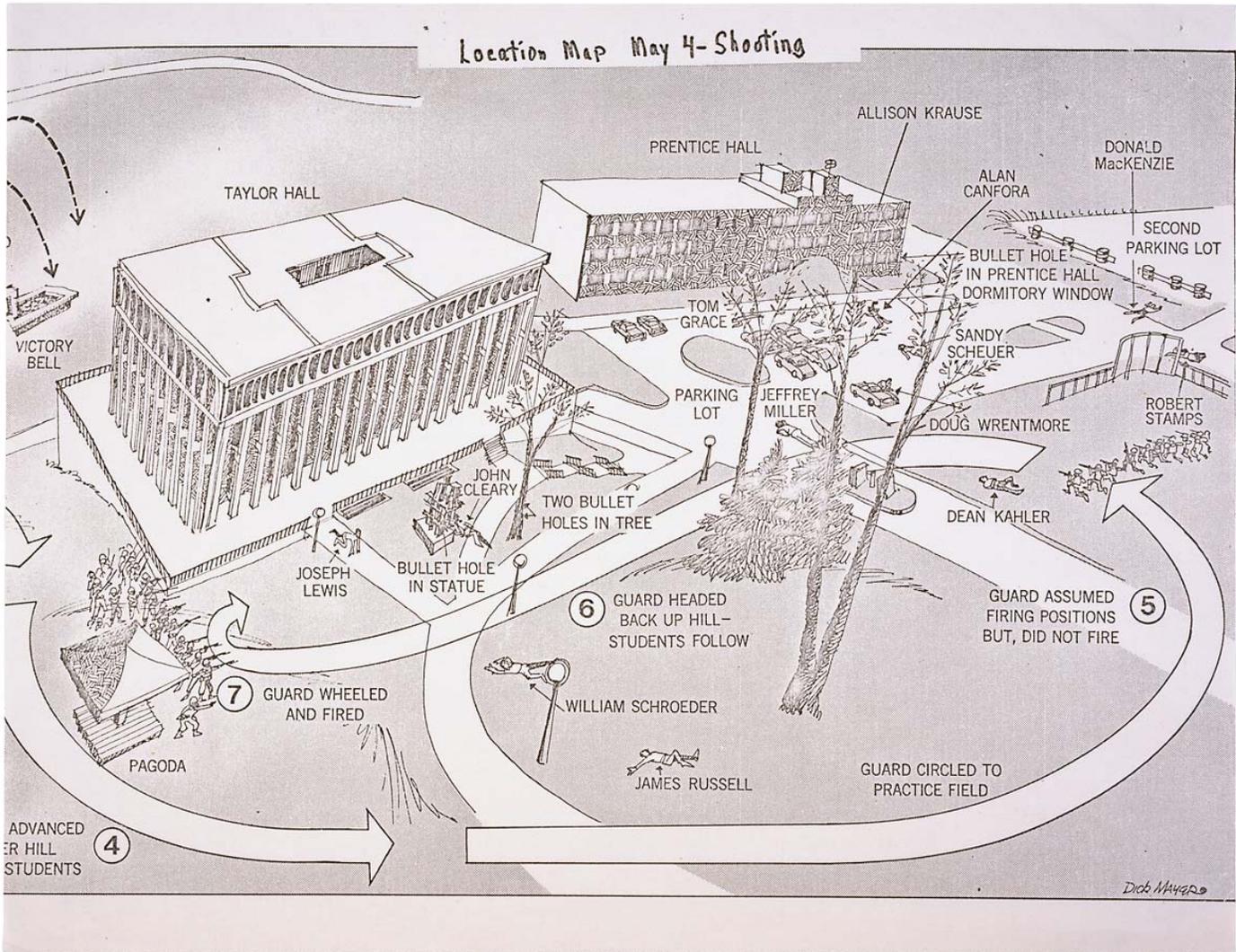
Students carrying suitcases and duffel bags began leaving the campus this afternoon. Early tonight the entire campus was sealed off and a court injunction was issued ordering all students to leave.

A 5 P.M. curfew was declared in Kent, and road blocks were set up around the town to prevent anyone from entering. A state of emergency was also declared in the nearby towns of Stow and Ravenna.

Kifner, John . "4 Kent State Students Killed by Troops." *New York Times (New York City)*, May 5, 1970.

Data Set 5:

Campus Map with Details on May 4th Shooting



"File:Map of Shootings at Kent State University in 1970." Wikimedia Commons.
commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Map_of_Shootings_at_Kent_State_University_in_1970.jpg (accessed October 23, 2012).

Data Set 6:

Anonymous Protestor

http://www.library.kent.edu/drc/oral_histories/item_detail.php?search=browse_subjects&itemId=1587

This anonymous oral history is given by a man who was an undergraduate student at Kent State University in 1970. He relates his memories of the events surrounding the May 4, 1970, shootings on campus. He begins by discussing the events of Friday May, 1, and mentions the protest that took place in the Commons at noon and the unrest in downtown Kent later that night. He describes the burning of the ROTC Military Science Building on campus on May 2 and also discusses the burning of an archery shed nearby. He describes the National Guard presence on campus, the use of tear gas, and a student protest that he participated in on Sunday, May 3, in which the National Guardsmen used bayonets. He relates his eyewitness account of the shootings and then concludes by describing the scene in the Commons after the shootings had occurred and leaving campus during the evacuation

Anonymous. Interview by Sandra Haleman. Tape recording. Kent State Alumni Center, May 3, 2003.

Data Set 7:

Kent State Physical Education Teacher

http://www.library.kent.edu/drc/oral_histories/item_detail.php?search=browse_subjects&itemId=1646

A physical education instructor at Kent State University in 1970, Winona Vannoy relates her memories of the days surrounding the shootings on campus. She discusses the unrest in town and on campus in the days preceding the shootings. She mentions a friend, a Kent State University police officer, who suffered a broken leg at the scene of the ROTC Military Science Building fire on May 2 and that physical education equipment, stored near the ROTC building, was also destroyed in that fire. She discusses her classes on Monday, May 4, and how, when she arrived to teach her class in Wills Gymnasium, she had difficulty finding a place to park because of the National Guard tanks. She then learned that there was a bomb threat in nearby Merrill Hall but that her building had not been evacuated yet. She discusses leaving campus before the shootings occurred and hearing the news on her car radio and that her husband picked up their children at the University School on campus and encountered roadblocks on the way home. She describes a display of weapons that had been confiscated from students' rooms after the campus had been closed that was set up for the public to view in Wills Gymnasium. She also discusses meetings she and the other faculty in her department had after the shootings and how the students completed their classes by mail.

Vannoy, Winona. Interview by Tina Boeder. Tape recording. Kent State, May 30, 1990.

Data Set 8:

Why was the Ohio National Guard Called to Kent State?

The decision to bring the Ohio National Guard onto the Kent State University campus was directly related to decisions regarding American involvement in the Vietnam War. Richard Nixon was elected president of the United States in 1968 based in part on his promise to bring an end to the war in Vietnam. During the first year of Nixon's presidency, America's involvement in the war appeared to be winding down. In late April of 1970, however, the United States invaded Cambodia and widened the Vietnam War. This decision was announced on national television and radio on April 30, 1970 by President Nixon, who stated that the invasion of Cambodia was designed to attack the headquarters of the Viet Cong, which had been using Cambodian territory as a sanctuary.

Protests occurred the next day, Friday, May 1, across United States college campuses where anti-war sentiment ran high. At Kent State University, an anti-war rally was held at noon on the Commons, a large, grassy area in the middle of campus which had traditionally been the site for various types of rallies and demonstrations. Fiery speeches against the war and the Nixon administration were given, a copy of the Constitution was buried to symbolize the murder of the Constitution because Congress had never declared war, and another rally was called for noon on Monday, May 4.

Friday evening in downtown Kent began peacefully with the usual socializing in the bars, but events quickly escalated into a violent confrontation between protestors and local police. The exact causes of the disturbance are still the subject of debate, but bonfires were built in the streets of downtown Kent, cars were stopped, police cars were hit with bottles, and some store windows were broken. The entire Kent police force was called to duty as well as officers from the county and surrounding communities. Kent Mayor Leroy Satrom declared a state of emergency, called Governor James Rhodes' office to seek assistance, and ordered all of the bars closed. The decision to close the bars early increased the size of the angry crowd. Police eventually succeeded in using tear gas to disperse the crowd from downtown, forcing them to move several blocks back to the campus.

The next day, Saturday, May 2, Mayor Satrom met with other city officials and a representative of the Ohio National Guard who had been dispatched to Kent. Mayor Satrom then made the decision to ask Governor Rhodes to send the Ohio National Guard to Kent. The mayor feared further disturbances in Kent based upon the events of the previous evening, but more disturbing to the mayor were threats that had been made to downtown businesses and city officials as well as rumors that radical revolutionaries were in Kent to destroy the city and the university. Satrom was fearful that local forces would be inadequate to meet the potential disturbances, and thus about 5 p.m. he called the Governor's office to make an official request for assistance from the Ohio National Guard.

Lewis, Jerry , and Thomas Hensley. "The May 4 Shootings at Kent State University: The Search for Historical Accuracy." Welcome to Kent State University Departmental Site. <http://dept.kent.edu/sociology/lewis/LEWIHEN.htm> (accessed October 23, 2012).

Final Data Set 9:

New Evidence?

Just last week, we marked the 40th anniversary of the shootings at Kent State University that resulted in the death of four students. Now, [there's new evidence that sheds light on the events of that day](#):

The Ohio National Guardsmen who fired on students and antiwar protesters at Kent State University on May 4, 1970 were given an order to prepare to shoot, according to a new analysis of a 40-year-old audio tape of the event.

“Guard!” says a male voice on the recording, which two forensic audio experts enhanced and evaluated at the request of The Plain Dealer. Several seconds pass. Then, “All right, prepare to fire!”

“Get down!” someone shouts urgently, presumably in the crowd. Finally, “Guard! . . .” followed two seconds later by a long, booming volley of gunshots. The entire spoken sequence lasts 17 seconds.

The previously undetected command could begin to explain the central mystery of the Kent State tragedy – why 28 Guardsmen pivoted in unison atop Blanket Hill, raised their rifles and pistols and fired 67 times, killing four students and wounding nine others in an act that galvanized sentiment against the Vietnam War.

The order indicates that the gunshots were not spontaneous, or in response to sniper fire, as some have suggested over the years.

“I think this is a major development,” said Alan Canfora, one of the wounded, who located a copy of the tape in a library archive in 2007 and has urged that it be professionally reviewed. “There’s been a grave injustice for 40 years because we lacked sufficient evidence to prove what we’ve known all along – that the Ohio National Guard was commanded to kill at Kent State on May 4, 1970.”

“How do you spell bombshell?” said Barry Levine, whose girlfriend Allison Krause was mortally wounded as he tried to pull her behind cover. “That is obviously very significant. The photographic evidence and eyewitness accounts of what took place seemed to suggest everything happened in those last seconds in a coordinated way. This would be the icing on the cake, so to speak.”

This would certainly seem to change the narrative of the Kent State shootings. Instead of being a spontaneous response by troops who were, admittedly, not much older than the students involved, it turns into something far more deliberate, and for which the commanders of the troops bear a great deal of the responsibility for giving an order to fire on an American college campus. Instead of merely being a tragedy and a mistake, it looks like to me like an outrage and about as close to being an act of cold-blooded murder as you can get.

Mataconis, Doug. "Historical Bombshell: Kent State Guards Were Given Order To Shoot."

Below The Beltway. belowthebeltway.com/2/ (accessed October 23, 2012).

What was the cause of the Kent State Shooting?

Name: _____

| Hypotheses | Supporting Evidence/ Undermining Evidence |
|------------|--|
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