

Process Paper

My Lai: The Massacre That Changed the
Course of the Vietnam War

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Individual Website

Student Composed Words: 1199

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Multimedia Length: 1 minute 35 seconds

The My Lai Massacre was one of the most influential events that happened during the Vietnam War. The newspaper articles accompanied by graphic photographs and veteran testimonies brought light to the atrocities happening in Vietnam carried out by the American army. This intensified the ongoing anti-war movement. The way this massacre was revealed to Americans was a pivotal turning point in increasing anti-war sentiment in the U.S.

My journey of learning about the My Lai Massacre arose from my interest in Asian American history. I learnt about the My Lai Massacre while reading Howard Zinn's *A Young People's History of the United States*. In the chapter about the Vietnam War, Zinn included a page about the brutal massacre. I was intrigued. This being my first time participating in National History Day, I was excited to delve deeper into the heartbreaking and hidden details of the Vietnam War.

I first began researching using my school's Encyclopedia Britannica platform. It had a short article about the Vietnam War and a list of important events. However, it did not mention the massacre. I started from the list of sources that the author used and branched out. A paper, "Atrocity, Authenticity and American Exceptionalism: (Ir)rationalizing the Massacre at My Lai," and a book, *The My Lai Massacre in American History and Memory*, written by historian Kendrick Oliver provided me with newspapers and information. I also found a website that laid out the impacts the My Lai Massacre caused. This is how I learned about the trial of Calley and how Ronald Ridenhour revealed the gruesome details about the massacre to the public. Then, I tracked down the photographs. Some were available through the Library of Congress and Getty Images, but others required further investigation. Since most of the images taken during the massacre were by Ronald Haeberle, I used his name as a keyword to find several photographs.

Before I began to construct my website, I sketched out a rough picture of what I wanted the site to look like. Using the short History Day paper that I wrote for my Language Arts class, I laid out all the sections. I just needed to find the right photos to go with my website. I then started my two month-long journey of finding my way around the website builder. Due to the word limit, I learned how to combine photos and short descriptions to tell an effective story of this massacre.

The My Lai Massacre showed the strength and importance of journalism stopping a war. The news of the massacre escalated the anti-war protests contributing significantly to the U.S.'s withdrawal from the Vietnam War. It turned the tide of the most extensive and economically wasteful war the U.S. had ever been involved in.