

# **To interact with a war veteran and to discuss the realities, consequences, and personal responses to war.**

## OVERVIEW

### LEADER PREPARATION

\* Send out a postcard invitation one week before the discussion. (Here's an example: "WE WANT YOU!" to join us at 6:30 this Wednesday night. (Person's rank) John (or Jane) Doe, a veteran of the Vietnam, Panama, Granada, and Persian Gulf wars will discuss U.S. involvement in war, and will allow YOU the opportunity to ask any questions. (Remember, the only wrong question is one that you do not ask.) See ya Wednesday Night! P.S. Come hungry—we'll serve ice cream sundaes from 6:15-6:30...)

\* Coordinate volunteers to organize the ice cream social. You will need tables, paper goods, assorted ice cream and toppings, soft drinks, and an ice cooler.

\* Prepare slips of paper and pencils to pass out to students (they will have the opportunity to write questions for Col. Doe answer).

\* Contact John or Jane Doe several days before, and tell him (or her) about your group. This will prepare the speaker for any potential questions, issues, or reactions.

\* Prepare items for the meeting's break—serve U.S. military rations. Contact the closest U.S. military institution one week before, and ask them to donate rations for this project. Two or three volunteers can supervise the break.

\* Prepare several slips of paper, each listing a different branch of the armed services (i.e., Army, Navy, Marines, Officer's Corps, Reserve Unit, Air Force, etc.). Prepare one for every student, and prepare an equal number for each armed service branch. These will be used to divide the group into small groups.

\* Prepare blank sheets of paper for students to respond to the session.

### GROUP BUILDING

\* Begin with the ice cream social.

\* Sing two songs. The first can be anything fun. For the second song, sing the "Battle Hymn of the Republic". After singing the first stanza of the traditional hymn, stop and inform the students that the song was actually written during a war, and challenge them to feel the author's experience and emotion during this time.

\* While closing down the social, hand out slips of paper for students to prepare anonymous questions for the guest speaker. Collect the papers when the students have completed their questions.

### GROUP PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION

Five techniques are used in this presentation to stimulate thinking: post card invitation, hymn, opportunity to secretly ask questions (on paper), guest speaker, and rations.

Pass out slips of paper (each listing a different armed service branch) as students enter the room after the ice cream social. Have them break into small groups, finding others in their same branch. Have them discuss the topic for the evening, including these questions:

\* What are the ethical and moral responsibilities for the innocent victims of war, for you personally and for the U.S.?

\* At what point (if ever) is it okay to use the nuclear bomb?

\* What are political and economic reasons that the U.S. should be involved in a war?

\* How do you feel about the prospect of going to war?

\* End small group discussion and return to hear the guest speaker. The speaker will have the opportunity to answer the questions that students wrote earlier.

#### WRAP-UP

Allow a final question and answer time with Col. Doe, allowing him three to four minutes at the end to pull the discussion together.

#### EVALUATION AND FOLLOW-UP

Pass out to the students blank pieces of paper. Ask them to write out how they feel about war. They may sign their sheet or turn it in anonymously. Collect and read their responses to determine if a follow-up session is needed.

#### IMPLICATIONS

1. Students will leave this session better informed about war—who it involves and personal and national repercussions.
2. The session may encourage kids to talk about this volatile issue with their friends and family.
3. Although the discussion may frighten some, the students will better understand how they feel about war.

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