

Process Paper

How did I choose my topic?

After having great difficulty choosing a topic, I began to research the Vietnam War and America's involvement in the conflict. I discovered that during the Vietnam War, American troops sprayed millions of gallons of herbicides (with the most widely used named Agent Orange) over Vietnam in order to defoliate the forests and expose the enemy. As a direct result of exposure to Agent Orange, U.S. veterans, Vietnamese citizens, and their offspring, suffered from multiple health complications. Shocked by the terrible impact of Agent Orange, I was determined to represent this topic in my project. Learning that a U.S. conflict sparked over the use of Agent Orange, I concluded that this topic displayed this year's theme perfectly.

How did I conduct my research?

Having had an interest in the impact of chemical warfare on veterans of war and society, I began to research the use of this tactic in multiple wars. As my research expanded, I learned that in order to uncover convert enemy hiding areas, American military forces used chemical pesticides to kill Vietnam's thick mangrove forests. Fascinated by the negative impacts of Agent Orange, I then found that the U.S. Department of Defense and Department of State disagreed on the use of Agent Orange in Vietnam. I conducted interviews with author Fred A. Wilcox, Professor Carolyn Eisenberg, and David Dean, Chief Trial Counsel of the Agent Orange Product Liability Litigation. I visited the New York Historical Society's Vietnam War exhibit and included photographs from this museum throughout the entirety of my website.

How did I select my presentation category and create my project?

Having previous experience with Weebly, I knew that a website would be organized, clean, and easily accessible. I also knew that photographs and videos of Agent Orange would be necessary to show the deadly consequences of this conflict. Therefore, I concluded that a website would be a perfect presentation category to fit my topic.

How does my topic relate to the theme?

During the Vietnam War, the main mission of the US was to contain the spread of communism in Asia. Fighting the communist Viet-Cong's guerrilla warfare tactic, the U.S. struggled to combat this strategy as the enemy took sanctuary among the trees. A proposal to use chemical defoliants to kill Vietnam's forests resulted in a conflict as the U.S. Department of Defense and the State Department disputed the ethics of the use of Agent Orange. Fearing negative repercussions, the State Department opposed crop destruction by use of Agent Orange. However, the Department of Defense advocated crop destruction, citing the prior use of food denial by use of herbicidal warfare in the Malayan Emergency. Due to the U.S.' refusal to compromise their mission, President John F. Kennedy ordered for Agent Orange, destroying Vietnam forests and food supplies. By displaying the tragic consequences of chemical warfare, new international legislation was passed to prevent the further use of chemical, biological, and herbicidal warfare.

