

Read the article and answer the questions on the back of the page in the spaces provided.

As the Vietnam War escalated in the mid-1960's, antiwar feelings grew among many Americans. Religious leaders, civil rights activists, teachers, journalists and college students protested the war for a number of reasons. Some believed the US had no business involving itself in the affairs of other nations, while others believed the methods of warfare were inhumane.

College students were often a large group of protestors. Many were opposed to the mandatory draft, which required young men to serve in the military. In demonstrations around the country, young men burned their draft cards. By 1967, it was clear that the Vietnam War had divided Americans into two groups: war hawks, who were for the war and doves who were antiwar.

A famous protest occurred at Kent State University in Ohio on **May 4, 1970**. It began with a peaceful demonstration about a speech recently given by President Nixon. In a televised address, President Nixon announced that he was escalating the war by committing US troops from Vietnam into specified areas of nearby Cambodia. The reaction of some Kent State students and faculty was immediate.

Students congregated at the KSU commons as a result of an unidentified person ringing Kent State's bell. The students were told to evacuate the premises, but nobody seemed to follow the demands. The mayor of Ohio, Leroy Satrom, called for the Ohio National Guard. An army jeep was driven in front of the assembled students and they were told to disperse immediately.

Students responded with jeers and chants such as, "Pigs off campus!" When the students refused to disperse, the guardsmen were ordered to disperse them. Then, the tragic shooting began by an unknown Ohio National Guardsman firing his gun. Nobody knows how though. This same exact question still lies today. Some theories still remain. Many think the Kent State shooting and the Boston Massacre are similar events in history because they both have no answer as to how they started.

The Ohio National Guardsmen were equipped with tear gas, grenade launchers to help fire the tear gas, and fire arms. They were also provided with bayonets. The students knew they would need to defend themselves, so they retaliated. As they were retreating up Blanket Hill they lobbed tear gas canisters back at the guardsmen along with rocks and other sharp objects. They also charged with torches. Between 61 and 67 shots were fired in 13 seconds without order or warning. By the time it ended, four students lay dead along with nine others injured.

Of the 13 shots that connected, 7 were in the sides or the backs of students, showing they were not advancing toward the Ohio National Guardsmen, they were fleeing.

As the news rapidly spread through the nation through reports, television, paper, books, songs, and magazines, anger was directed toward the Ohio National Guard. Not just students were enraged, but also teachers and other faculty members of schools with all levels of education. Four days after the massacre, Mayor John Lindsay of New York, lowered the flag at City Hall to half-mast in honor of the deceased students. More than 450 colleges throughout the country contributed to



student or faculty protest strikes. Riots swept over campuses and at the end of May, the National Guard had been called 24 times at 21 campuses in 16 states.

The tragic shooting at Kent State left thousands of people in shock. This quote "One, two, three, four, we don't want to go to war!" shouted by the student protestors shows they gathered for a peaceful demonstration and were not expecting or wanting violence. They only wanted to express their opinions on the expansion of the Vietnam War.

1. What are some **groups** who protested against the Vietnam War and why?
2. Why were many college students opposed to the war?
3. What is a **dove**?
4. What is a **hawk**?
5. What inspired the protest at Kent State?
6. Give a brief *summary* of what happened at Kent State.
7. If *you* were a student at Kent State, would you have participated in the protest? Why or why not?
8. Who do you feel is to blame for the shootings?
9. Do you think this incident affected President Nixon's decision to expand the war? Explain.

