

**A TEACHER'S  
RESOURCE BOOK FOR  
*MAY 4TH VOICES:*  
*KENT STATE, 1970***

*Teaching History and Social Justice in the Classroom*

*Edited by John L. Morris, Ph.D.  
with contributions by educators from  
around the United States*

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## SCENE TWO: SOMETHING DRASTIC

Thursday and Friday

*David Massucci, Teacher of English, Theodore Roosevelt High School, Kent, Ohio*

### SYNOPSIS

As the early May temperatures rise, so does the tension across the United States. An escalation of the war by President Nixon intensifies opposition to it. Students and citizens in Kent are challenged by changes that they cannot yet define. For students, the draft continues to loom as an unwelcome possibility. For residents, the university setting becomes an obstacle to their daily tasks. In Kent, lives and conflicts begin to intersect as fire and vandalism occur downtown and a group of students harasses two elderly residents.

### CONTEXT AND CONNECTIONS

*Bombing of Cambodia* began in late April as the United States bombed targets in Cambodia, a country in southeastern Asia and a border nation of Vietnam. Described as an “incursion” by President Nixon, the bombing campaign sought to destroy or capture North Vietnamese weapons and equipment. Although it was successful in accomplishing some of those goals, the bombing of Cambodia also fed the Anti-War movement in the United States and was the catalyst for many demonstrations and protests.

*1-A Classification* meant that a man was qualified to serve in combat if drafted. Men who were between 18 and 26, and therefore of draft age, were classified according to their respective abilities to serve. The classification system also enabled men to seek postponement, deferment, or exemption from military service. For example, a college student could be granted a 1-S deferment for study. A 4-F classification meant that a man was physically unfit for service.

*Woodstock* took place over three days (August 15–18, 1969) on a farm in upstate New York. Woodstock was a music festival that became a legendary social and cultural phenomenon. Popular performers such as Janis Joplin, The Grateful Dead, and Jimi Hendrix attracted

nearly 500,000 attendees, many of whom were united in their dismissal of authority and materialism and, by extension, the Vietnam War. Long hair, experimentation with drugs, and “free love” were hallmarks of the 1960s and Woodstock. These qualities symbolized a generational shift in priorities that was motivated in no small part by a desire for peace.

*ROTC* (Reserve Officer Training Corps) is a college program offered at many U.S. campuses. Students who enroll in ROTC programs receive training and tuition assistance while they are in college. In exchange, ROTC students commit to a period of military service upon completion of their studies. Campus ROTC buildings house these programs and serve as a contact and headquarters for ROTC students.

### INITIAL UNDERSTANDING

1. Where is Cambodia?
2. What is an RA counselor?
3. What is “cannon fodder”?

### INTERPRETATION

1. Male Student 1 has a “strange, cold feeling” as he walks past the ROTC building. What does this foreshadow? How is his feeling ironic?
2. Why would anti-war students view the ROTC building and/or ROTC students with suspicion or negativity?
3. Why is it significant that the couple in the car being rocked is an elderly couple?

### REFLECTION

1. How might having a 1-A classification influence students and their behavior?
2. How did gender influence the thought processes of students?

## EXTENDED RESPONSE WRITING PROMPTS

1. Would the Anti-War movement have been different if Woodstock had not happened? Explain.
2. For this assignment, create a conversation between the elderly couple in the car. The conversation should begin moments before their car is surrounded and conclude as they pull into their driveway, assuming they are on their way home.

## SCENE SPECIFIC CROSS-CURRICULAR PROJECT CONNECTIONS

*Historical Connection*—Research the rationale behind President Nixon’s decision to invade Cambodia during the Vietnam War. Discuss the pros and cons of this controversial action.

*Musical Connection*—investigate the musical groups that performed at Woodstock. Choose one group that performed a protest song during the concert, analyze the lyrics of the song, and connect those lyrics to the time period and/or events of this scene.

*Journalism Connection*—Rewrite the events described in this scene as objectively as possible. Utilizing a journalistic approach, avoid any bias either for or against those involved.



A “strange, cold feeling” grips students as they pass the ROTC building. Photo by Mathias Peralta. Courtesy KSU Wick Poetry Center.

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