

**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*

A COPUBLICATION OF THE KENT HISTORICAL SOCIETY AND
THE KENT STATE UNIVERSITY PRESS
KENT, OHIO

SCENE NINE: VIGIL

Legacy of Trauma

Margana Fahey, Teacher of English, Theodore Roosevelt High School, Kent, Ohio

SYNOPSIS

This scene provides the perspective of looking back—reflecting—on the events surrounding May 4th, 1970. Students and alumni reveal the emotional and psychological impact of being involved in or related to the events of that day. They discuss the tension felt in the days and weeks afterward and the anger that continued to mount as few to none talked openly about the causes and outcomes of the day’s events. Alumni share how vivid the events of 1970 seem to them when they return to campus years later for commemoration ceremonies. They ponder how aware people are now of what happened at Kent State in the spring of 1970 and what their role may be in promoting healing. Maj Ragain concludes the piece by exploring May 4th’s meaning today.

CONTEXT AND CONNECTIONS

Post-Traumatic Stress (PTSD) is defined as “a mental health condition that’s triggered by a terrifying event. Symptoms may include flashbacks, nightmares and severe anxiety, as well as uncontrollable thoughts about the event.”

“*Kent 25*” is the name given to the 25 Kent State University students and faculty indicted by a grand jury for their involvement in events of May 4th, 1970.

Jackson State is the site of the deaths of two young men, resulting from shots fired by police amid campus unrest, on May 14th, 1970.

INITIAL UNDERSTANDING

1. What does *viscera* mean?

INTERPRETATION

1. What does Female Student 1 mean when she says, “This was not Pearl Harbor” (39)?

2. Why would a student say, “[Kent State] was like the ideal place for the government to make an example of the student protest and anti-war movement?”
3. What “sixties’ values” (40) appear in this scene or throughout the play?

REFLECTION

1. How would Post-Traumatic Stress affect an individual? How might it affect a community?
2. Forty years later, are you satisfied that “the truth has been told” (41)?
3. How is May 4th, 1970, at Kent State a symbol “for everything . . . of everything at that time” (40)?

EXTENDED RESPONSE WRITING PROMPTS

1. How were the events at Kent State “different than Jackson State” (39) in the spring of 1970? How were they similar?
2. What memorials to the events of May 4th, 1970 exist at Kent State University (or elsewhere) today? Where are they and why?
3. What events in your community’s history deserve to be commemorated?
4. How could you encourage future generations to know the past?
5. What can everyone, regardless of where or when they live, learn from what happened at Kent State on May 4, 1970?

SCENE SPECIFIC CROSS-CURRICULAR PROJECT CONNECTION

Historical Connection—Research the events that occurred at Jackson State and compare and contrast them to events that occurred at Kent State.

Medicine/Psychology Connection—Research Post Traumatic Stress Disorder and how this diagnosis was identified and treated after the Vietnam War and today.

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ISBN 978-1-60635-166-6

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The poem "May 4, 1970/A Memory" by Maj Ragain was first published in 2005 by Pavement Saw Press, Columbus, Ohio, in *Hungry Ghost Surrenders His Tacklebox* by Maj Ragain and is reprinted with permission.

Cataloging information for this title is available at the Library of Congress.

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