

# The Symbol of My Responsibilities

LESSON TIME:   
One Class Session

**Suggested Application: Social Studies, Language Arts, Leadership, Vietnam War**

## OBJECTIVES

### Students will:

- explain what the flag means to them
- understand the responsibilities associated with American citizenship

### Medal of Honor Focus: Tommy Norris, U.S. Navy, Vietnam War

#### Introductory Activity:

Put students into groups of three to four. Have each group discuss and then write down the differences between a right and a responsibility. Create two columns on the board, "Rights" and "Responsibilities", and then ask students to come up and write in the columns what their rights and responsibilities are as a citizen of this country. Lead a discussion to clarify and help determine the differences between the two categories.

#### Whole Group Activity:

Show Tommy Norris's Living History for the class. Invite them to think about different actions in the story that relate to the six character values and how they tie into rights and responsibilities as they view the video. At the conclusion of the video, have students read Tommy Norris's Portrait of Valor.

#### Small Group/Individual Activity:

After they have watched the video and read the Portrait of Valor, the students should form back into their groups and discuss what they learned about Tommy Norris.

Allow some time for discussion; then hand out the flag worksheet. Have students work together to identify examples of each core value in Tommy Norris's story and finish the statement WE THE PEOPLE in the union part of the flag. Have them write individually two to three sentences about their responsibilities as a citizen.

#### Concluding Activity:

Have students answer the thought question at the bottom of the sheet. If time permits, lead a short class discussion with students sharing responses. Have students color the flags accordingly and post them around the classroom.

#### Assessment:

Worksheet

#### Resources:

Tommy Norris Portrait of Valor and Living History video, worksheet

#### Extended Activity:

Direct students to explore on the Internet different poems about the flag. Have students write their own short acrostic poem or free verse poem about the flag.



# CONGRESSIONAL MEDAL OF HONOR FOUNDATION



Thomas Norris graduated from the University of Maryland in 1967. He had studied criminology with the hope of joining the FBI, but knowing that he had to satisfy his military obligation, he enlisted in the Navy, eventually joining the SEALs.

On April 2, 1972, a U.S. electronic surveillance aircraft was downed by an enemy surface-to-air missile. Lieutenant Colonel Iceal Hambleton was the sole crew member to eject safely—but he parachuted into the middle of some thirty thousand North Vietnamese troops. Over the next several days, during an extensive rescue effort, four aircraft were downed, ten Americans were killed, two were captured, and another two were trapped behind enemy lines.

Lieutenant Norris volunteered to go after the survivors. On April 10, his five-man team was inserted into a forward operating base (FOB). That evening, Norris led his team through enemy positions to a predetermined interception point deep in enemy territory. One of the downed airmen, Lieutenant Mark Clark, had been informed over his survival radio to work his way to the river and to float downstream. Hiding on a riverbank, Norris heard Clark approaching, but he had to let the American pilot float by because of a nearby North Vietnamese patrol. Once the enemy had passed, Norris slipped into the river and swam after Clark, locating him and returning him to the FOB.

Then the FOB came under heavy attack, resulting in the loss of half of the personnel there. During this attack, Norris saved numerous South Vietnamese soldiers, directed counter-fire, and treated the wounded at the base.

On April 13, a forward air controller pinpointed Lieutenant Colonel Hambleton's whereabouts, and Norris and one of his South Vietnamese commandos made a third attempt to rescue him. At nightfall, the two men, dressed like the enemy, got into a sampan and began paddling upriver through enemy positions. They managed to locate Hambleton, but fearing that he was too badly injured to wait for the cover of darkness to bring him out, they put the airman in the bottom of the sampan, covered him with vegetation, and started back downriver. Nearing the FOB, the boat came under heavy machine-gun fire. Norris called in an air strike and, as American planes dropped bombs and smoke, they brought Hambleton to safety.

## TOMMY NORRIS

*Lieutenant, U.S. Navy SEALs Advisor,  
Strategic Technical Directorate  
Assistance Team, Headquarters, U.S.  
Military Assistance Command*

### **BORN:**

January 14, 1944  
Jacksonville, Florida

### **ENTERED SERVICE:**

Silver Spring, Maryland

### **BRANCH:**

U.S. Navy

### **DUTY:**

Vietnam War



Several months later, Norris was leading a SEAL patrol on a reconnaissance mission when his team was ambushed by a large enemy unit. At the end of a long firefight, Norris ordered his men to head for the water and the boat waiting to pick them up, while he provided cover. When he was shot in the head, another SEAL, Michael Thornton, charged back to save him, killing two North Vietnamese about to dispatch Norris. For his action, Thornton would be awarded the Medal of Honor in October 1973. Norris, who was hospitalized for three years, defied doctors' orders and attended the White House ceremony.

Norris heard that he too might be recommended for the medal, but he didn't feel worthy of it. However, in 1975, when the rescue of Clark and Hambleton was finally declassified, Navy investigators talked with those involved and submitted the action for review. On March 6, 1976, with Michael Thornton in the audience, Thomas Norris was awarded the Medal of Honor by President Gerald Ford. In 1979, after leaving the military, Norris picked up his dream of joining the FBI. He retired in 1999.

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Period \_\_\_\_\_

## The Symbol of my Responsibilities

Directions: After viewing the video of Tommy Norris and reading his Portrait of Valor, fill out the American flag below. For each character trait write at least one example Tommy Norris or any member of his unit showed during their action. Once you have the stripes of the flag complete, fill out the "Union" portion of the flag. The sentence begins with "We the People." Finish the sentence by writing 2-3 sentences about your responsibilities as a citizen of this country. Use at least two of the character traits in your response.

<h3>We The People...</h3>	CITIZENSHIP:
	COMMITMENT:
	PATRIOTISM:
	INTEGRITY:
COURAGE:	
SACRIFICE:	

Thought Question: What does the symbol of the flag mean to you?