



Reading Resources

If you would like to read more on war and memory in Vietnam and Southeast Asia, take a look at these selections identified by students in St. Catherine University's Master in Library Science program. Find further information and recommendations online: libguides.stkate.edu/VietnamWar

Novels

The Sympathizer by Viet Thanh Nguyen (2015)

Follows the story of a communist sympathizer during the war in Vietnam. After Saigon is taken, he stays undercover and travels to the United States to continue to feed information to the North. When the protagonist arrives back in his home country of Vietnam, what will he find? Will things be as he expected?

Monkey Bridge by Lan Cao (1998)

Mai Nguyen is a teenager who is airlifted out of Vietnam with her mother. They settle in Connecticut. Mai is adapting well to life in America but is worried she is losing touch with her Vietnamese heritage. Her mother on the other hand is struggling to adjust and suffers from a stroke after the move.

Short Stories

The Refugees by Viet Thanh Nguyen (2017)

In eight stories set in both Vietnam and California, Nguyen gives voice to the experiences of Vietnamese refugees, exploring themes of home, remembrance, and war's impact. His dedication reads, "For all refugees, everywhere."

We Should Never Meet by Aimee Phan (2005)

These interlinked stories follow the lives of four Vietnamese children who were evacuated in Operation Babylift right before the fall of Saigon. Themes include loss and resilience.

The Things They Carried by Tim O'Brien (1998)

Drawing from the author's experiences in Vietnam, these stories unflinchingly describe the physical and emotional horrors of war. Considered a classic of American literature on the war in Vietnam.

Poetry

Night Sky With Exit Wounds by Ocean Vuong (2016)

A collection of intense poems by the author that feature poverty, depression, queer sexuality, domestic abuse, and violence from the war in Vietnam.



Nonfiction: History

Nothing Ever Dies: Vietnam and the Memory of War by Viet Thanh Nguyen (2016)

Explores what it means to remember a war. Nguyen looks at films, literature, memorials, and other mementos of the war in Vietnam and analyzes what perspectives are present and whose are missing.

The Life We Were Given by Dana Sachs (2010)

Examines the humanitarian effort of Operation Babylift and its unintended consequences. Multiple perspectives are shared, including birth mothers, orphanage workers, adoptive families, and the children themselves.

Vietnam at War by Mark Philip Bradley (2009)

A short history of Vietnam during the war years, focusing on Vietnamese perspectives as well as global context. Bradley examines literature such as a war diary and poetry to tell the story of ordinary people and the impact of war.

The Vietnam War: A Concise International History by Mark Atwood Lawrence (2008)

An accessible and compelling read, this history of the war gives a broad view of the conflicts in Vietnam.

Nonfiction: Memoir

The Latehomecomer: A Hmong Family Memoir by Kao Kalia Yang (2008)

Kao Kalia Yang was born in a refugee camp in Thailand. She tells the story of her family's journey from Laos, to Thailand, then settling in Saint Paul, Minnesota. Throughout their journey they faced many hardships including poverty, disease, hunger, flood, and violence.

Catfish and Mandala: A Two-wheeled Voyage

Through Landscape and Memory of Vietnam by Andrew X. Pham (2000)

Pham embarks on a year-long bicycle journey through Vietnam, exploring his country of birth and his own cultural identity. He recounts his family's escape by boat in 1977 when he was 10 years old, and shares stories of his experiences in modern-day Vietnam.

When Heaven and Earth Changed Places: A Vietnamese Woman's Journey from War to Peace by Le Ly Hayslip and Jay Wurts (1989)

The story of Le Ly Hayslip who grows up in a small village in central Vietnam. She spies for the Vietcong. She suffers many hardships of war including rape, torture, and fear. Eventually she marries a much older U.S. civilian and moves to California, without telling her family. When she visits Vietnam over a decade later, will she be able to reconnect with her family?



Graphic Novel/Memoir

The Best We Could Do: An Illustrated Memoir by Thi Bui (2017)

Bui begins with the birth of her son, then looks back on her family's journey as refugees from Vietnam to the U.S. in 1978, when she was three years old. A beautifully illustrated, moving account of family history and memories, loss and dreams.

Vietnamerica: A Family's Journey by GB Tran (2011)

Tran's parents escaped Vietnam just before the fall of Saigon; he was born one year later in South Carolina. He weaves the threads of his family's stories together, remembering and recovering the past through gorgeously illustrated storytelling.

For Youth: Picture Books

A Different Pond by Bao Phi & Thi Bui (2017)

Grades 2+

A father and son fish together in the early morning -- for food, not for fun. The son catches glimpses of his father: the "different pond" where he fished in Vietnam, his struggles as a new immigrant, and of his love and care for his family. A timely, evocative, and important story.

Dia's Story Cloth by Dia Cha, Chiie Thao Cha & Nhia Thao Cha (1998)

Grades 2-5

A beautiful piece of needlework, a "story cloth," shares Nia's family history and the story of the Hmong people's search for freedom.

The Lotus Seed by Sherry Garland & Tatsuro Kiruchi (1997)

Grades 2-5

When the last emperor of Vietnam loses his throne, Grandmother sneaks into the palace garden and takes a lotus seed. She keeps this with her throughout the war and as she leaves the country for America to remember her country. After telling her grandkids about the importance of the seed, her grandson steals the seed and plants in mud outside their home. Grandmother is so sad she no longer has the seed, will she see a lotus seed or flower again?

Patrol: An American Soldier in Vietnam by Walter Dean Myers & Ann Grifalconi (2002)

Grades 4+

A soldier is scared and tired as he scans the unfamiliar landscape for enemies. He spots a young boy, an enemy. The boy sees him too. What will happen next, who will fire?



For Youth: Fiction

Inside Out & Back Again by Thanhha Lin (2001)

Grades 4-8

The young girl Ha's story is based on the author's experiences, told in free verse. When the communists take over Saigon, along with her mother and three brothers, she takes a Navy ship to Thailand. From there they move to Alabama. They hear that their father was captured by the communists. As they worry about him they try to adjust to their new life in America.

Fallen Angels by Walter Dean Myers (1989)

Grades 7+

17 year old Richie Perry from Harlem, New York, volunteers to serve in the war in Vietnam. He is sent to the front lines fighting the Vietcong. Readers see through his eyes the gruesome realities of war. Perry questions the war and why the black soldiers are given the most dangerous roles in the war.

Death Coming Up the Hill by Chris Crowe (2014)

Grades 9+

This is the story of 17 year old Ash, who is trying understand the war that is happening in Vietnam while dealing with the impact of his parent's struggles with each other. The novel is written in haiku and has 16,592 syllables, one for each American soldier killed during the war in Vietnam and Southeast Asia.

For Youth: Nonfiction

Stormy Seas by Mary Beth Leatherdale & Eleanor Shakespeare (2017)

Grades 4+

This book documents the real-life perilous journeys of five young people, including Phu who, on his own at age 14, flees Vietnam and arrives in the U.S. in 1980. Spanning the years 1936 to 2006, these stories highlight human rights issues that are powerfully relevant today.

Vietnam: A History of War by Russell Freedman (2016)

Grades 6-8

Provides a straightforward history of the war in Vietnam and Southeast Asia, including events that led up to it, protests against the war, and what happened after the war ended.

