

**ESCAPE FROM SAIGON:  
HOW A VIETNAM WAR ORPHAN BECAME AN AMERICAN BOY**

**Louisiana Young Readers' Choice Award Nominee 2007 Grades 6-8**

Submitted by Elizabeth Hunt, Graduate Student, School of Library and Information Science, LSU (Professor: Dr. Margie Thomas); and Chelsea Davis and Nerissa LeJeune, Students, University of Louisiana at Lafayette (Instructor: Dorothy Grimsley)

**Escape from Saigon: How a Vietnam War Orphan Became an American Boy** by Andrea Warren. Farrar, Straus & Giroux (Melanie Kroupa Books), 2004. 128 p.

**Summary**

This is the story of an Amerasian boy named Long, who lived in Vietnam with his mother and grandmother. His father was a white American soldier who abandoned Long's mother. After Long's mother died, his grandmother took care of him, but poverty and the hardship of war forced her to send Long to the Holt International Orphanage. Long felt abandoned and rejected. Because Long was half-American, he had what the Communists called "blood of the enemy." It was very risky for him to remain in Vietnam. Just before the city of Saigon was invaded by the Communists, Operation Babylift flew Long to Chicago where he met his adoptive family and assumed his American name of Matthew Ray Steiner. Operation Babylift evacuated 2,242 orphans from Vietnam. The book includes touching photographs of Long and other Vietnamese children. It also includes author-recommended resources about Amerasian adoption and Vietnam.

**Awards**

Orbis Pictus Award for Outstanding Nonfiction for Children (recommended 2005)  
Society of Midland Authors Book Award (Winner 2004-2005 Children's Non-Fiction)  
IRA Notable Books for a Global Society  
NCSS-CBC Notable Trade Book in the Field of Social Studies

**Author's Biography**

Born in Norfolk, Nebraska in October 1946, Andrea Warren worked as a teacher and magazine editor before becoming a freelance writer. She graduated from the University of Nebraska with a Master's degree in British Literature. Andrea Warren wrote her first stories for publication while teaching English and history at a high school in Hastings, Nebraska. She later moved to Kansas to attend the University of Kansas to complete a master's degree in magazine journalism. Ms. Warren writes for young adult readers because she remembers voraciously at that age. Warren's books focus on significant historic events as experienced by young adults living during that time. Warren now lives in Kansas City, Kansas and is the mother of four children. Her daughter, Alison, was a Vietnamese orphan evacuated by Operation Babylift.

<http://www.andreawarren.com/>

<http://www.eduplace.com/kids/hmr/mtai/warren.html>

**Other Titles by Andrea Warren**

*Orphan Train Rider: One Boy's True Story*

*Pioneer Girl: Growing Up on the Prairie*

*Surviving Hitler: A Boy in the Nazi Death Camps*

*We Rode the Orphan Trains*

## Related Titles

*Rain Forest Girl: More Than an Adoption Story* by Chalise Miner.

*Goodbye Vietnam* by Gloria Whelan.

*The Land I Lost: Adventures of a Boy in Vietnam* by Huynh Quang.

See also [www.adoptvietnam.org/books/books-adoptvietnam.htm](http://www.adoptvietnam.org/books/books-adoptvietnam.htm) for an extensive list of books about Vietnam adoptions.

## Classroom Connections

See the web site: **PBS: Daughter of Danang**

<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/daughter/tguide/index.html>

The teacher's guide for Daughter of Danang can be readily adapted for *Escape from Saigon*. Excellent, thought-provoking activities.

See the web site: **The New York Times Learning Network: Teacher Connections**

<http://www.nytimes.com/learning/teachers/index.html>

This site has some lesson plans related to Asia, Vietnam, etc.

## Connections by Elizabeth Duman, Good Hope Middle School, West Monroe Grade 6

ELA Unit 3: Historical Fiction – This title can be utilized in the following activity by student historical research groups interested in the Vietnam Era.

Activity 3: Resources for Exploration: Fiction and Nonfiction Bibliographies.

This book may serve as a springboard to classroom units about:

- **Adoption**
- **Orphans**
- **War**
- **Vietnam**
- **Immigration**
- **Adjusting to new culture**

## Web Links

### Author and Book

#### **Andrea Warren**

<http://www.andreawarren.com/>

Andrea Warren's official website includes her biography, information about each of her books (summary, awards, and reviews), contact information, and an interview.

#### **Houghton Mifflin**

<http://www.eduplace.com/kids/hmr/mtai/warren.html>

This includes a biography of Warren.

#### **Nancy Keane's Booktalks**

[http://www.nancykeane.com/booktalks/warren\\_escape.htm](http://www.nancykeane.com/booktalks/warren_escape.htm)

This site includes a booktalk for *Escape From Saigon*.

## **Vietnam Adoption**

### **Adopt Vietnam: The Legacy of Operation Babylift**

<http://www.adoptvietnam.org/adoption/babylift.htm>

This site gives an in depth study of "Operation Babylift." It provides information about the lift off, the reasons for the baby lift, the tragedy of the first baby lift plane crashing, moving on after the tragedy, arrival in America and the controversy that followed with adoption. It also includes a list of children's books about Vietnam adoption.

### **Daughter From Danang**

<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/daughter/>

Go behind the scenes of a PBS movie about a young Vietnamese-American woman who was adopted by an American woman after the Vietnam War as part of Operation Babylift.

### **Vietnam Babylift**

<http://www.vietnambabylift.org/>

This site contains personal stories of people involved in the "Operation Babylift." The site also provides a history, a timeline of the events that occurred during the baby lift and other resources, including films and images.

## **Vietnam**

### **Ask Asia**

<http://www.askasia.org>

This site, dedicated to Asian themed curriculum, includes maps, images, and lesson plans for teachers. Site also has a link for kids' games.

### **New York Times Learning Network: Fall of Saigon**

<http://www.nytimes.com/learning/general/specials/saigon/>

A collection of essays, articles, maps and photos about this historic event during the Vietnam War.

### **Kid's Eyes on Asia: Vietnam**

<http://stmnftsc.melb.catholic.edu.au/kidseyes/vietnam/>

See Vietnam through the eyes of students from Victoria, Australia.

### **Vietnam Facts**

<http://www.odci.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/vm.html>

CIA World Factbook.

### **Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund: Teach Vietnam**

<http://www.vvmf.org/index.cfm?SectionID=6>

Includes a free curriculum kit with information about the history of Vietnam. The site includes lesson plans about the war.