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)


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 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
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
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
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
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.