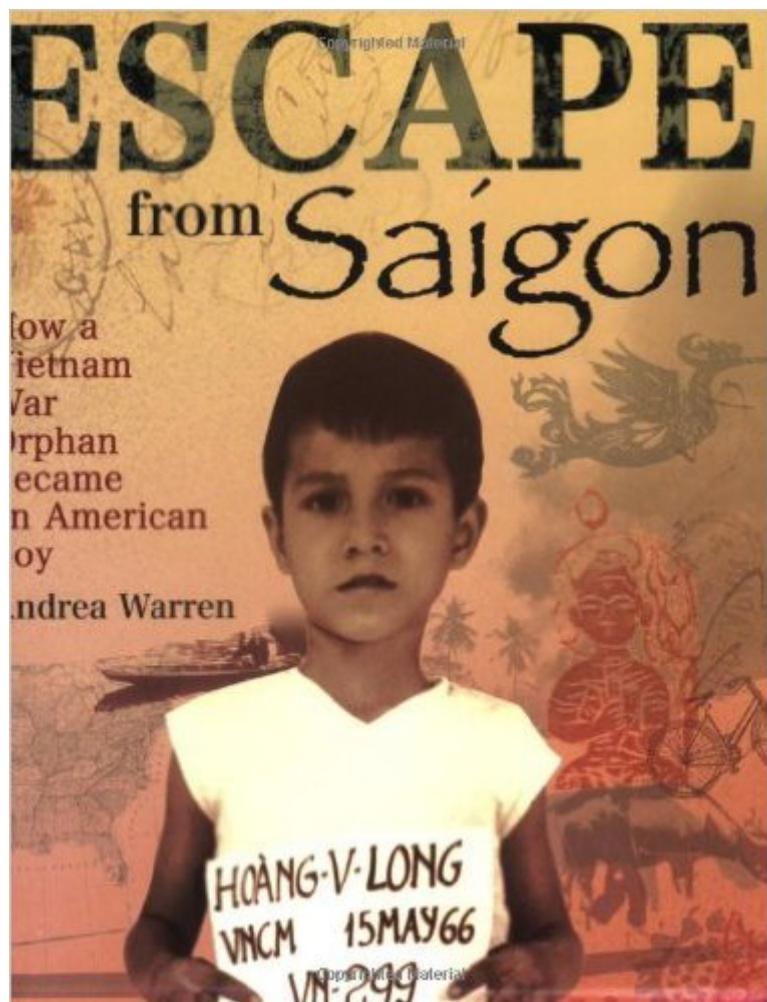


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# Escape From Saigon: How A Vietnam War Orphan Became An American Boy



## **Synopsis**

An unforgettable true story of an orphan caught in the midst of warOver a million South Vietnamese children were orphaned by the Vietnam War. This affecting true account tells the story of Long, who, like more than 40,000 other orphans, is Amerasian -- a mixed-race child -- with little future in Vietnam. Escape from Saigon allows readers to experience Long's struggle to survive in war-torn Vietnam, his dramatic escape to America as part of "Operation Babylift" during the last chaotic days before the fall of Saigon, and his life in the United States as "Matt," part of a loving Ohio family. Finally, as a young doctor, he journeys back to Vietnam, ready to reconcile his Vietnamese past with his American present. As the thirtieth anniversary of the end of the Vietnam War approaches, this compelling account provides a fascinating introduction to the war and the plight of children caught in the middle of it.

## **Book Information**

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Average Customer Review: 4.5 out of 5 starsÂ  See all reviewsÂ  (21 customer reviews)

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Age Range: 10 - 14 years

Grade Level: 5 - 9

## **Customer Reviews**

I read this straight through on an airplane and had to turn away from my seatmates so they wouldn't see me cry. As usual, Warren has written a compelling, evocative story about one child's experience, and in it has distilled an era and a place. The main character, Long, suffers through poverty and loss, then winds up in an orphanage where he vacillates between grief over the loss of

his own family and hope for a new mother. I got tears in my eyes as he said good-bye to his grandmother, who was his last surviving family member, and then again when he learned he had a new home in America. As a reader I felt his excitement and anxiety as the day approached when he would see his new family, and then his fear as the war moved from the countryside to the streets of his city. The drive to the bombed airport and the flight on the transport plane were terrifying, followed immediately by the joy as Long ran into the arms of his new mother. This story will stick with readers, both adults and children, leaving a personalized image of an otherwise hard-to-comprehend world event.

This is the true story of a young Ameriasian boy finds a new family in the United States. Being the son of a Vietnamese woman and an American man puts Long in a difficult position. Because of the war, many do not see Americans with an unbiased eye. When Long loses his mother and his grandmother can no longer support him, he goes to live in an orphanage run by a nonprofit organization from the United States. As the Communists get ever closer it, Holt International (the group running the orphanage) decides they must get the children out without delay (most of the children have been placed for adoption). The book follows the remarkable operation known as Babylift which helped get over two thousand children out of Saigon before the Communists arrived. The rest of the story follows Long's (Matt) experiences in adjusting to a new family and a new life. This book beautifully compliments Inside Out & Back Again, giving the reader a glimpse of the Vietnam War from the perspective of a child. It also reveals that some good things were done by Americans as well as all the bad things we always here about happening during that war. The writing is clear and crisp and perfect for reading out-loud. This book gives the reader, especially a child reader, a chance to see some of the things that children experience around the world, and hopefully better appreciate the good things about living in the United States.

If you've loved Warren's earlier books about children surviving in difficult new circumstances (the two Orphan trains books, Surviving Hitler, and the one about the girl growing up on the prairie) you'll love this one, too. In this one, Long, the young hero, is half Vietnamese, half American. His survival depends on a pivotal airlift of Vietnamese orphans "tainted by the blood of the enemy" as the North Vietnamese are about to take over Saigon. But even before that the reader is caught up in the story of Long's mother and grandmother struggling to survive in a wartorn country. The story works on one level for children and on another for adults -conveying how America's withdrawal from Vietnam affects the family of a boy whose young life is shaped by war. It has all the virtues of nonfiction

wrapped up in a charming, moving, and compelling story. Adults and children may want to read this one together. It's a tribute to parenting, in whatever form it comes, and to the resilience of children.

Once you start reading, you probably won't be able to put it down. This is an amazing story, with wonderful photographs. I cried twice and made my husband read it. He loved it too! Teachers will find this useful in the classroom, for teaching about the war in Vietnam, and Long/Matt is a role model we'd be delighted to see any kid follow.

I bought this book not knowing it was for young readers, so that's my fault. Of course, it wasn't very obvious, looking at the description. Regardless, I bought it, received it, and started reading it, and could tell right away it was for young readers, ie dumbed-down. Short sentences one after another like "Matt was hungry, he hadn't eaten today. He wondered where his mother was. He saw a water buffalo crossing the road." Anyway, I guess it's alright for young adults. I've been to Vietnam, and every spoiled American brat kid should go there and see how the majority of the earth's kids live. I would recommend the author Google "Matt Steiner, MD" and see what he's up to these days. Oh, I just did that, and see he was arrested for selling drugs and giving alcohol to minors. Seems like a Matt, having been lucky to escape from Vietnam and end up with a good American family, and then going to medical school and becoming a doctor, marry a lady and have kids, ie "The American Dream" would know better than to throw it all away like that; selling prescription drugs out of a seedy hotel room. However, it might make for a new edition of the book. ....)

This book gives enough detail that it can stand alone without any prior knowledge of the situation in Vietnam at the time of the fall of Saigon. It gives a very understandable history to explain it. The story is very compelling and the author has a connection to Operation Babylift. I found it very difficult to find stories about Operation Babylift. I could find information but not many stories. This story is well written and it can be applicable to anyone from middle school on. I have had high school students that read it and thought it was very good.

I assigned this book for my middle school 6th and 7th graders. They have really enjoyed it. It is interesting, tells a good story and gives students an introduction to the Vietnam War. The book was inexpensive and readily available. It has been wonderful and ALL my students have raved about it. If you want to introduce your students to non-fiction, this book is wonderful!

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