Refugees from Southeast Asia, 1964–2000

HMong refugees at a HMong New Year Celebration in Laos, ca. 1964
(Southeast Asia Community Resource Center Collection, California State University, Sacramento)

TL TH TEACHING LITERACY THROUGH HISTORY

THE GILDER LEHRMAN INSTITUTE of AMERICAN HISTORY

Refugees from Southeast Asia, 1964–2000

BY JESSICA LANDER

Jessica Lander is a history and civics teacher, having taught immigrant-origin high students in Lowell, Massachusetts, for close to a decade, university students in Cambodia and Thailand, and 6th grade students in Boston. She is the author of Making Americans: Stories of Historic Struggles, New Ideas, and Inspiration in Immigrant Education *and was named the 2023 Massachusetts History Teacher of the Year.*

CONTENTS

GRADE LEVELS: 7–12

RECOMMENDED TIME FOR COMPLETION: Five 45-minute class periods

UNIT OVERVIEW

This unit is one of the Gilder Lehrman Institute's Teaching Literacy through History™ (TLTH) resources, designed to align with the Common Core State Standards. Students will learn and practice skills that will help them analyze, assess, and develop knowledgeable and well-reasoned points of view on visual and textual primary and secondary source materials. These skills will enable students to understand, summarize, and evaluate documents and other resources of historical significance.

Over the course of these five lessons, students will learn about the experiences of Cambodian, Vietnamese, Laotian, and Hmong refugees who were resettled in the US between the 1970s and early 2000s. Students will explore articles, photographs, videos, and oral histories as well as a historical overview essay by a leading scholar. They will synthesize their learning by taking on the perspective of a US school leader and crafting a proposal to support Southeast Asian refugee young people during this time period using evidence from the sources provided. They will demonstrate their understanding through discussion and writing.

Students will be able to

- Summarize the meaning of a primary source
- Analyze different types of primary sources (texts, photos, videos), draw inferences, and explain authors' arguments and perspectives
- Identify key push factors that led to Cambodian, Vietnamese, Laotian, and Hmong people being forced to flee their homes in the 1970s and 1980s
- Synthesize multiple primary sources and then organize and support ideas with text-based evidence

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

- How do people become refugees? In what ways does that impact them, and how do they rebuild their lives?
- How did refugees from Southeast Asia describe their identity?
- What obstacles made life in the US challenging for refugees?
- What opportunities in the US did Southeast Asian refugees create, and who and what supported them?

COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-8.1: Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-8.6: Identify aspects of a text that reveal an author's point of view or purpose (e.g., loaded language, inclusion or avoidance of particular facts).

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.9-10.2: Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary of how key events or ideas develop over the course of the text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.9-10.4: Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including vocabulary describing political, social, or economic aspects of history/social science.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.9-10.1: Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grades 9-10 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

IMPORTANT NOTE ON TEACHING

Your class may have students who are refugees or have families who were refugees. Before beginning this lesson think about strategies you can incorporate to make sure students are supported as they engage in this learning and are also not put on the spot in the class. Remind students that this may be very personal and to be particularly thoughtful and conscious of the language used during discussions. It is important, too, to check in with students throughout.

An additional historical note to consider: In the United States, it is common to refer to the "Vietnam War" as the war fought between North and South Vietnamese in the 1960s and 1970s. This phrasing is US-centric. In Vietnam, the many names for this war include: Second Indochina War, Vietnamese-American War, American War in Vietnam, or the Resistance War against America.

MATERIALS

- Source 1: Warsan Shire, "Home," 2011 (Warsan Shire, "Home," Bless the Daughter Raised By a Voice in Her Head: Poems. Random House, 2022.)
- Source 2: Historical Background: "Southeast Asian Diasporas in the US: History and Experiences of Migration" by Khatharya Um, Associate Professor of Ethnic Studies and Chair of Peace and Conflict Studies, University of California, Berkeley
- Activity Sheet 1: Critical Thinking: Historical Background
- Activity Sheet 2: "Route to a New Life," *Des Moines Register*, October 13, 1988, © The Des Moines Register – USA TODAY NETWORK. Available on Newspapers.com, newspapers.com/image/132016006/.
- Source 3: Excerpts from "Pan Am Stewardesses Recall Last Flight out of Vietnam, 40 Years After Fall of Saigon," April 29, 2015, KPIX 5 / CBS, cbsnews.com/sanfrancisco/news/pan-am-stewardesses-recall-refugee-rescue-

mission-40-years-after-fall-of-saigon/. Used with permission from CBS San Francisco.

- Activity Sheet 3: Story of Escape
- Activity Sheet 4: Gallery Walk
- Gallery Walk Stations

1. Map: "Cambodia During the Vietnam War," "The Rise and Fall of the Khmer Rouge Regime," Asia Pacific Foundation of Canada, asiapacificcurriculum.ca/learning-module/rise-and-fall-khmer-rouge-regime
2. Refugee Camp in Southeast Asia

   Photograph: "White HMong Women and Children Eating at HMong New Year Celebration in Laos," by an unknown photographer, ca. 1964, Southeast Asia Community Resource Center Collection, Courtesy of the Gerth Special Collections and University Archives, California State University, Sacramento, csus.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/seacrcc/id/57
3. Graph: "Vietnamese Refugee Arrivals and Vietnamese Immigrants Granted Lawful Permanent Residence as Refugees and Asylees, 1975–2012," in Hataipreuk Rkasnuam and Jeanne Batalova, "Vietnamese Immigrants in the United States," Migration Information Source, Migration Policy Institute, August 25, 2014, migrationpolicy.org/article/vietnamese-immigrants-united-states-2012
4. Refugee Camps in the United States

   Photographs:

   - "South Vietnamese refugees arriving at a camp at Eglin Air Force Base in Florida" (2 images) by photographer Frank Sikora for the *Birmingham News*, May 1975, Alabama Department of Archives and History,

     digital.archives.alabama.gov/digital/collection/amg/id/100658/rec/1 and

     digital.archives.alabama.gov/digital/collection/amg/id/100684/rec/13. Donated by Alabama Media Group / Photos by Frank Sikora, *Birmingham News*.
   - "Two elderly Vietnamese women wearing head coverings outdoors at the Fort Indiantown Gap refugee camp" by photographer Charles Isaacs, [1975], Library of Congress, loc.gov/pictures/item/2024635317/
   - "Vietnamese refugees at Fort Indiantown Gap, Pennsylvania," by photographer Don Camp for *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, 1975, George D. McDowell Philadelphia Evening Bulletin Photographs, Special Collections Research Center, Temple University Libraries, digital.library.temple.edu/digital/collection/p15037coll3/id/84159/rec/24. Courtesy of the Special Collections Research Center, Temple University Libraries, Philadelphia, Pa.
5. "Children sitting in front of blackboard," unknown photographer, ca. 1970-80, Fort Chaffee (Arkansas) Photographs of Vietnamese and Cambodian Refugees, Southeast Asian Archive, UC Irvine Libraries, https://calisphere.org/item/ark:/13030/hb2p3004r0/

- Source 4: Exploring Identity: "To Make a Return" by Mai Der Vang, *Journal of Southeast Asian American Education & Advancement* 5 (2010)
- Source 5: Arn Chorn-Pond, "Music Saved My Life," TEDxWarwick, University of Warwick, UK, 2015, 15:56, YouTube, youtube.com/watch?v=Cry9Bre_T2g (first 10 minutes)
- Source 6: Oral History of a Laotian American: Excerpts from an interview with Aleena Inthaly by Prinston Pan, November 1, 2020, Irvine, California, Lao Stories: Laotian American Oral History Project, Southeast Asian

Archive, UC Irvine, Libraries, calisphere.org/item/ark:/81235/d8v40kc5f/

- Source 7: Oral History of a Cambodian American: Excerpt from an interview with Ran Kong by Barbara Lau, November 25, 2000. Interview K-0269. Southern Oral History Program Collection (#4007), Southern Historical Collection, Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, docsouth.unc.edu/sohp/K-0269/menu.html
- Source 8: Oral History with a H'mong American: Excerpt from "Interview with Xai Thao" by Main Neng Vang, December 1, 2007, Hmong Oral History Project, 24, DigitalCommons@CSP, Concordia University St. Paul, CC BY-ND 4.0, digitalcommons.csp.edu/hmong-studies_hohp/24/
- Source 9: Oral History with a Vietnamese American: Excerpts from "Oral History of Tuan Anh Le," interviewed by Kathy Le, May 13, 2012, Duarte, California, Viet Stories: Vietnamese American Oral History Project, UC Irvine, Libraries, Southeast Asian Archive, calisphere.org/item/ark:/81235/d8wx8b
- Activity Sheet 5: Evolving Multiple Identities
- Source 10: Excerpts from an interview with Cathy Lam, interviewed by Lotusa Chan, February 19, 2013, Viet Stories: Vietnamese American Oral History Project, University of California, Irvine Libraries/Southeast Asian Archive, calisphere.org/item/ark:/81235/d8gr0v/?order=2
- Source 11: Excerpts from an interview with Dang Nguyen, interviewed by Annie Nguyen, February 10, 2019, Viet Stories: Vietnamese American Oral History project, University of California, Irvine Libraries/Southeast Asian Archive, calisphere.org/item/ark:/81235/d8kv97/?order=1
- Source 12: Opening a Restaurant: Excerpts from Thuy Phan, "Song Long: Three Decades of French/Vietnamese Cuisine," Người Việt Daily News (Westminster, CA). September 14, 2015, nguoi-viet.com/nguoi-viet-english/Song-Long-Three-decades-of-FrenchVietnamese-cuisine-3602/#google_vignette
- Source 13: "Kathy Crockett teaches ESL Class at Lowell High (Massachusetts)," by Michael Pigeon, photographer, February 14, 1988, Lowell Sun Photography Collection, Lowell Historical Society, *Southeast Asian Digital Archive*, umlseada.omeka.net/items/show/2366
- Source 14: "Song Long Restaurant during its grand opening in 1981," April 25, 1981, Courtesy of Song Long Restaurant, published in Taylor Weik, "At Song Long Restaurant, New Vietnamese Americans First Tasted Home," NBC News, April 11, 2016.
- Activity Sheet 6: Obstacles and Opportunities

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

SOUTHEAST ASIAN DIASPORAS IN THE US: HISTORY AND EXPERIENCES OF MIGRATION

by Khatharya Um

Historical context

The Southeast Asian refugee communities that came into being in 1975 and grew in the ensuing decades were the human legacies of what is commonly referred to in the United States as the "Vietnam War," despite the fact that the war was not confined to Vietnam but ravaged Cambodia and Laos as well. The Communist seizure of power in all three countries—Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia—in 1975 brought a final end to the brutalizing war, catalyzing the flight of some 150,000 people from their homeland in this initial refugee exodus. Of this refugee cohort, 128,200 Vietnamese, 5,700 Cambodians, and 11,000 Laotians (the largest single ethnic group being Hmong) were resettled in the US in late 1975–1976.

The genocide in Cambodia in 1975–1979, postwar communist reforms in Vietnam and Laos, and renewed conflict and instability engendered yet another more massive refugee condition in the late 1970s through the mid-1980s. Some 600,000–800,000 Cambodians fled to the Thailand-Cambodia border following the collapse of the Khmer Rouge regime in 1979 to escape starvation, foreign occupation, renewed war, and the potential return of the Khmer Rouge. In Vietnam, ethnic Chinese became the target of state persecution because of their economic dominance, escalated conflict with China, and deep-seated anti-Chinese sentiment. Some 263,000 Sino-Vietnamese crossed overland into China while many more took to the high seas; they constituted the first wave of the "boat people." Later joined by ethnic Vietnamese, more than a million people fled Vietnam between 1977 and the late 1980s. From Laos, approximately 360,000 fled communist rule from 1975 through 1995 in search of freedom, security, and opportunity, including many ethnic minority groups such as the Hmong, Iu-Mien, and Thai Dam who had fought in America's "secret war" in Laos.

Of those who fled their homelands, some 144,702 Cambodians, 205,392 Laotians (the largest single ethnic group being Hmong), and 555,120 Vietnamese were resettled in the United States from 1975 to 1990. Though the populations were dispersed throughout the US, some of the largest communities settled in California, Massachusetts, Minnesota, Wisconsin, Washington, Pennsylvania, Florida, and Texas.

What did these groups have in common?

Though they are often referred to as "Southeast Asian," the term masks the ethnic, religious, linguistic, and cultural diversity that exist among the groups, along with class, religious, gender, and generational differences that are also present within each group. The Laotian community in the US, for instance, is comprised of at least five major ethnic and linguistic groups. Despite the internal diversity, Vietnamese, Cambodians, and Laotians in the US are bound by their shared histories under French colonialism and by their experiences during the wars in Southeast Asia and as refugees from those wars in the US.

What is distinct about the refugee experience?

While migration may involve hardship, discontinuity, and even loss, refugee forced migration is characterized by unanticipated flight from peril, actual or perceived, rather than a movement in search of opportunity. Many Southeast Asians, like many global refugees, had little control over where they eventually ended up. Most languished in protracted uncertainty in temporary asylum, without regularized status, rights, or protection. This context of displacement, marked by forced and abrupt severance from the ancestral homeland, compounds the traumatic

conditions that catalyzed refugee displacement in the first place. Unlike immigrants, many refugees are also unable or unwilling to return to their country because of persisting conflict and fear. Many Southeast Asian refugees continue to face challenges in their place of final resettlement that exacerbate the historical traumas. Despite the challenges, Southeast Asians in the US have made significant contributions to the American economy and society, and in all aspects of American life from the arts, literature, and other forms of cultural productions (including Pulitzer, Guggenheim, and Oscar award–winning works) to gastronomy, research and development, education, science, technology, and medicine.

Khatharya Um is associate professor of ethnic studies and chair of peace and conflict studies at the University of California, Berkeley. She is the co-author of Departures: An Introduction to Critical Refugee Studies *(2022) and author of* From the Land of Shadows: War, Revolution, and the Making of the Cambodian Diaspora *(2015)*.

LESSON 1

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

BY JESSICA LANDER

OVERVIEW

In this lesson the students will investigate how people become refugees and apply this knowledge to the case of Southeast Asian refugees in the 1970s and 1980s. Students will demonstrate their understanding through their written analysis.

ESSENTIAL QUESTION

- How do people become refugees? In what ways does that impact them, and how do they rebuild their lives?

MATERIALS

- Source 1: "Home" (Warsan Shire, "Home," Bless the Daughter Raised By a Voice in Her Head: Poems. Random House, 2022.)
- Source 2: Historical Background: "Southeast Asian Diasporas in the US: History and Experiences of Migration" by Khatharya Um, Associate Professor of Ethnic Studies and Chair of Peace and Conflict Studies, University of California, Berkeley
- Activity Sheet 1: Critical Thinking: Historical Background

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GRADE LEVELS: 7–12

RECOMMENDED TIME FOR COMPLETION: One 45-minute class period

UNIT OVERVIEW: This unit is one of the Gilder Lehrman Institute's Teaching Literacy through History™ (TLTH) resources, designed to align with the Common Core State Standards. Students will learn and practice skills that will help them analyze, assess, and develop knowledgeable and well-reasoned points of view on primary and secondary sources. Over the course of these five lessons, students will learn about the experiences of Cambodian, Vietnamese, Laotian, and Hmong refugees who were resettled in the US between the 1970s and the early 2000s.

MATERIALS

1. **Do Now: Poem and Reflection** (10 minutes)

    a. Warsan Shire's poem is evocative and powerful, but has violent imagery. Please read the poem through before deciding if it is appropriate for your students. If not, move on to the Historical Background essay. Some teachers who choose to assign the poem might decide not to have students read it out loud, thereby providing students with the option of regulating their own exposure.

        i. The poem's seventh stanza includes an obscured racial slur. This obscuring was done for editorial purposes and is not original to the poem. In the context of the poem, the slur illuminates nativism's close connection to racism.

        ii. Re-read the "Important Note on Teaching" on page 3, and consider whether any of these points are important to raise with your class.

    b. Distribute copies of the poem "Home" by Warsan Shire. Ask students to read the poem silently. (Alternatively read the poem to the class or go around the room and have students read lines aloud; the former might be

helpful for multilingual learners and struggling readers.) Ask students to write down:

i. What imagery do you see described in the poem?

ii. What do you think when you hear the lines of this poem?

iii. What does this poem make you wonder?

iv. What is one line in the poem that speaks to you / strikes you? Why?

c. Ask students to share a few of their reflections with either a partner in a "turn-and-talk" or to the whole class.

d. Then, as the teacher, build on what students shared and guide the class into a discussion of what a refugee is and what it might mean to be a refugee.

2. **Historical Background Essay** (20 minutes)

a. Distribute the Historical Background essay "Southeast Asian Diasporas in the US: History and Experiences of Migration" by Khatharya Um, University of California, Berkeley.

b. You may choose to "share read" the essay with the students. This is done by having the students follow along silently while you begin to read aloud, modeling prosody, inflection, and punctuation. Then ask the class to join in with the reading after a few sentences while you continue to read aloud, still serving as the model.

c. Note: As you know your students best, alternatively you can choose to summarize the material from the essay orally for students or in the form of a slide deck, depending on how your students learn best.

d. Show students a map of the region. Point out the countries described in the Historical Background essay.

e. Students should understand that many of the first refugee cohorts were families that had worked with the US government or US companies during the war, and might have been punished by communist governments if they had stayed in place.

f. Hand out the Critical Thinking activity sheet. You can model the first two questions with the class before having the students complete the activity sheet in small groups or individually, depending on the level of support they need.

g. Regroup as a whole class to review answers and reflections.

3. **Wrap Up: Reflection** (5 Minutes)

Have students reflect on what they have learned and discussed today:

a. Why might knowing more about refugees matter to me?

b. Why might knowing more about refugees matter to my family, my friends, my community, and our country?

c. Why might knowing more about refugees matter to the world?

LESSON 2

BECOMING A REFUGEE

BY JESSICA LANDER

OVERVIEW

In this lesson the students will investigate why Southeast Asian refugees moved in the 1970s and 1980s. The students will demonstrate their understanding through writing and in discussions.

ESSENTIAL QUESTION

- How do people become refugees? In what ways does that impact them, and how do they rebuild their lives?

MATERIALS

- Activity Sheet 2: "Route to a New Life," *Des Moines Register*, October 13, 1988, © The Des Moines Register – USA TODAY NETWORK. Available on Newspapers.com, newspapers.com/image/132016006/.
- Source 3: Excerpts from "Pan Am Stewardesses Recall Last Flight out of Vietnam, 40 Years After Fall of Saigon," April 29, 2015, KPIX 5 / CBS, cbsnews.com/sanfrancisco/news/pan-am-stewardesses-recall-refugee-rescue-mission-40-years-after-fall-of-saigon/. Used with permission from CBS San Francisco.
- Activity Sheet 3: Story of Escape
- Activity Sheet 4: Gallery Walk
- Gallery Walk Stations
    1. Map: "Cambodia During the Vietnam War," "The Rise and Fall of the Khmer Rouge Regime," Asia Pacific Foundation of Canada, asiapacificcurriculum.ca/learning-module/rise-and-fall-khmer-rouge-regime
    2. Refugee Camp in Southeast Asia

       Photograph: "White HMong Women and Children Eating at HMong New Year Celebration in Laos," by an unknown photographer, ca. 1964, Southeast Asia Community Resource Center Collection, Courtesy of the Gerth Special Collections and University Archives, California State University, Sacramento, csus.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/seacrcc/id/57
    3. Graph: "Vietnamese Refugee Arrivals and Vietnamese Immigrants Granted Lawful Permanent Residence as Refugees and Asylees, 1975–2012," in Hataipreuk Rkasnuam and Jeanne Batalova, "Vietnamese Immigrants in the United States," Migration Information Source, Migration Policy Institute, August 25, 2014, migrationpolicy.org/article/vietnamese-immigrants-united-states-2012

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4. Refugee Camps in the United States

   Photographs:

   - "South Vietnamese refugees arriving at a camp at Eglin Air Force Base in Florida" (2 images) by photographer Frank Sikora for the *Birmingham News*, May 1975, Alabama Department of Archives and History, digital.archives.alabama.gov/digital/collection/amg/id/100658/rec/1 and digital.archives.alabama.gov/digital/collection/amg/id/100684/rec/13. Donated by Alabama Media Group / Photos by Frank Sikora, *Birmingham News*.
   - "Two elderly Vietnamese women wearing head coverings outdoors at the Fort Indiantown Gap refugee camp" by photographer Charles Isaacs, [1975], Library of Congress, loc.gov/pictures/item/2024635317/
   - "Vietnamese refugees at Fort Indiantown Gap, Pennsylvania," by photographer Don Camp for *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, 1975, George D. McDowell Philadelphia Evening Bulletin Photographs, Special Collections Research Center, Temple University Libraries, digital.library.temple.edu/digital/collection/p15037coll3/id/84159/rec/24. Courtesy of the Special Collections Research Center, Temple University Libraries, Philadelphia, Pa.

5. "Children sitting in front of blackboard," unknown photographer, ca. 1970-80, Fort Chaffee (Arkansas) Photographs of Vietnamese and Cambodian Refugees, Southeast Asian Archive, UC Irvine Libraries, calisphere.org/item/ark:/13030/hb2p3004r0/

PROCEDURE

1. **Do Now: "Route to a New Life" Infographic or "Pan Am Stewardesses…"** (15 minutes)

   a. Depending on what you believe would be better for your class, there are two options for an opening Do Now assignment, both of which help students explore aspects of being forced to flee their home. Option 1 is an infographic and Option 2 is an excerpt from an article. Both can be powerful for students to explore; the second has more text, and if you think that your students would benefit from the more visual activity you might consider Option 1.

   b. Option 1: "Route to a New Life"

      i. Pass out copies of Activity Sheet 2 with the "Route to a New Life" infographic to students.

      ii. Have students examine the infographic either individually or in pairs and answer the associated questions.

      iii. Re-group as a full class and have students share out and review what they reflected on.

      iv. Discuss with your students the impact of these steps for a refugee: How might these steps share their view of the world? How might these steps impact them emotionally? Physically? How might it impact their access to basic human services? How might it impact their ability to access education and to learn? How might it impact them in thinking about dreams for their future? How might it impact them making community and friends?

   c. Option 2: A Story of Escape

      i. Pass out copies of Source 3: "Pan Am Stewardesses Recall Last Flight Out Of Vietnam, 40 Years After Fall Of Saigon" and Activity Sheet 3 to students.

      ii. Have students read the article and answer the questions either individually or in pairs.

iii. Re-group as a full class and have students share out and review their responses.

2. **Gallery Walk** (30 minutes)

   a. Post the map, graph, and photographs at five stations around the room for the Gallery Walk. These images and tables provide snapshots of the refugee experience including refugee camps and first experiences in the United States.

   b. Distribute Activity Sheet 4: Gallery Walk and explain that students will be examining the evidence in the images and data tables to answer the following question:

      - What was it like to become and be a refugee from Southeast Asia?

   c. Ask students to circulate around the room to stop at each station. Assign small groups of students to begin at different stations. Each group will have a set amount of time at each station before rotating to the next station. Students will closely examine the map, graph, and photographs to gather evidence to answer the guiding question.

   d. Reconvene the class, giving the students time to answer the final question. If there is time, have the students or student groups share out and discuss their responses.

LESSON 3

BECOMING A SOUTHEAST ASIAN AMERICAN

BY JESSICA LANDER

OVERVIEW

In this lesson the students will explore how Southeast Asian American refugees developed and navigated multidimensional identities. Students will read, analyze, and synthesize personal narratives using text-analysis and critical thinking strategies. You will assess their understanding through written analysis and oral presentation.

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ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

- How did refugees from Southeast Asia describe their identity?
- What obstacles made life in the US challenging for refugees?
- What opportunities in the US did Southeast Asian refugees create, and who and what supported them?

MATERIALS

- Source 4: Exploring Identity: "To Make a Return" by Mai Der Vang, *Journal of Southeast Asian American Education & Advancement* 5 (2010) Used with the permission of the author.
- Source 5: Arn Chorn-Pond, "Music Saved My Life," TEDxWarwick, University of Warwick, UK, 2015, 15:56, YouTube, youtube.com/watch?v=Crv9Bre_T2g (first 10 minutes)
- Source 6: Oral History of a Laotian American: Excerpt from an interview with Aleena Inthaly by Prinston Pan, November 1, 2020, Irvine, California, Lao Stories: Laotian American Oral History Project, Southeast Asian Archive, UC Irvine, Libraries, calisphere.org/item/ark:/81235/d8v40kc5f/
- Source 7: Oral History of a Cambodian American: Excerpts from an interview with Ran Kong by Barbara Lau, November 25, 2000. Interview K-0269. Southern Oral History Program Collection (#4007), Southern Historical Collection, Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, https://docsouth.unc.edu/sohp/K-0269/menu.html
- Source 8: Oral History of a H'mong American: Excerpt from "Interview with Xai Thao" by Main Neng Vang, December 1, 2007, Hmong Oral History Project, 24, DigitalCommons@CSP, Concordia University St. Paul, CC BY-ND 4.0, digitalcommons.csp.edu/hmong-studies_hohp/24/

- Source 9: Oral History of a Vietnamese American: Excerpts from "Oral History of Tuan Anh Le," interviewed by Kathy Le, May 13, 2012, Duarte, California, Viet Stories: Vietnamese American Oral History Project, UC Irvine, Libraries, Southeast Asian Archive, calisphere.org/item/ark:/81235/d8wx8b
- Activity Sheet 5: Evolving Multiple Identities

PROCEDURE

1. **Perspective of a student** (15 minutes)

    a. Begin with a short free-write: What does it mean **to you** to be American? By starting with students' perspectives, you are helping them consider the connections and differences they see in the primary source narratives they will be exploring today.

    b. Start today's class exploring how Southeast Asian American refugees thought about multiple and sometimes conflicting identities using one of two possible reflections by young Americans:

        i. Source 4: Poem: "To Make a Return" by Mai Der Vang

        ii. Source 5: TED Talk: Music Saved My Life at TEDxWarwick by Cambodian American Arn Chorn-Pond (first 10 minutes)

    Note: The oral history video might be particularly helpful for multilingual learners and struggling readers to engage with the larger ideas of today's lesson and provides a non-text-based primary source, but the poem doesn't require additional technology and an internet connection.

    c. After having students read or watch the source, ask them to reflect on a piece of paper or in a journal.

        i. What do you think this young person was feeling, believing, or experiencing as a new student in the United States? . . . as a refugee? . . . as a Southeast Asian American?

        ii. What would you like to ask this young person to better understand their perspective?

        iii. What surprised or interested you about this poem or video?

2. **Evolving Multiple Identities** (30 minutes)

    a. Divide the class into four groups and explain that each group will read an account by a different Southeast Asian American who arrived in the United States as a refugee. From this reading students should learn how Southeast Asian refugees understood their multiple identities. How did this influence what "home" meant to them?

    b. Distribute the four readings (Sources 6–9) along with Activity Sheet 5 to the groups. Have students do a close reading and then answer the critical thinking questions.

    c. After students have reflected in small groups, encourage them to choose one or two spokespeople from the group to share out their group's reflection either orally or on the board for the entire class.

    d. If time allows, ask students to identify similarities and differences between the four different accounts.

LESSON 4

REFUGEE OBSTACLES AND OPPORTUNITIES

BY JESSICA LANDER

OVERVIEW

In this lesson the students will explore obstacles Southeast Asian American refugees faced and opportunities they seized. They will do so by analyzing and synthesizing oral histories and interviews and applying critical thinking strategies. You will assess their learning through student writing and discussion.

Jessica Lander is a history and civics teacher, having taught immigrant-origin high students in Lowell, Massachusetts, for close to a decade, university students in Cambodia and Thailand, and 6th grade students in Boston. She is the author of Making Americans: Stories of Historic Struggles, New Ideas, and Inspiration in Immigrant Education *and was named the 2023 Massachusetts History Teacher of the Year.*

GRADE LEVELS: 7–12

RECOMMENDED TIME FOR COMPLETION: One 45-minute class period

UNIT OVERVIEW: This unit is one of the Gilder Lehrman Institute's Teaching Literacy through History™ (TLTH) resources, designed to align with the Common Core State Standards. Students will learn and practice skills that will help them analyze, assess, and develop knowledgeable and well-reasoned points of view on primary and secondary sources. Over the course of these five lessons, students will learn about the experiences of Cambodian, Vietnamese, Laotian, and Hmong refugees who were resettled in the US between the 1970s and the early 2000s.

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

- How did refugees from Southeast Asia describe their identity?
- What obstacles made life in the US challenging for refugees?
- What opportunities in the US did Southeast Asian refugees create, and who and what supported them?

MATERIALS

- Source 10: Excerpt from an interview with Cathy Lam, interviewed by Lotusa Chan, February 19, 2013, Viet Stories: Vietnamese American Oral History Project, University of California, Irvine Libraries/Southeast Asian Archive, calisphere.org/item/ark:/81235/d8gr0v/?order=2
- Source 11: Excerpt from an interview with Dang Nguyen, interviewed by Annie Nguyen, February 10, 2019, Viet Stories: Vietnamese American Oral History project, University of California, Irvine Libraries/Southeast Asian Archive, calisphere.org/item/ark:/81235/d8kv97/?order=1
- Source 12: Opening a Restaurant: Excerpts from Thuy Phan, "Song Long: Three Decades of French/Vietnamese Cuisine," Người Việt Daily News (Westminster, CA). September 14, 2015, nguoi-viet.com/nguoi-viet-english/Song-Long-Three-decades-of-FrenchVietnamese-cuisine-3602/#google_vignette
- Source 13: "Kathy Crockett teaches ESL Class at Lowell High (Massachusetts)," by Michael Pigeon, photographer, February 14, 1988, Lowell Sun Photography Collection, Lowell Historical Society, *Southeast Asian Digital Archive*, umlseada.omeka.net/items/show/2366
- Source 14: "Song Long Restaurant during its grand opening in 1981," April 25, 1981, Courtesy of Song Long Restaurant, published in Taylor Weik, "At Song Long Restaurant, New Vietnamese Americans First Tasted Home," NBC News, April 11, 2016.
- Activity Sheet 6: Obstacles and Opportunities

PROCEDURE

1. **Identifying Strengths and Resources** (10 minutes)

    a. Ask students to reflect on the refugee oral accounts and histories they have studied so far in this unit. Either individually or in small groups have students create a list of what strengths and resources refugees have.

    b. Before students begin, model a few possible examples of strengths and resources as a whole class. For example: Speaking multiple languages, having family support, possessing grit and determination, and engaging with community groups.

    c. Reconvene the whole class and have students share their lists of strengths and resources and record them on the board or chart paper, or have the students come up and record the strengths and resources.

    d. Now ask students to consider, from looking at these texts, what challenges and obstacles refugees faced. You might want to model possible challenges by eliciting or providing 1–3 examples. List these together on the board. For example: not knowing English, being unfamiliar with American culture, not having a source of income, poverty.

2. **Obstacles and Opportunities: Primary Source Exploration** (30 minutes)

    a. Having explored resources and challenges, explain to students that they will be reading an oral narrative primary source and doing a close textual analysis to identify opportunities and obstacles faced by the narrator.

    b. Distribute the Obstacles and Opportunities activity sheet and primary sources 10–14. Have students work either in groups of 2–3 or individually to read the primary source narratives and answer the questions. Next, students should analyze the two photographs and answer the photograph analysis questions.

    c. Ask students to share out the obstacles, opportunities, and resources they identified through their analysis. How does this list compare with the list they co-created at the beginning of class?

3. **Refugee Strengths and Resources** (5 minutes)

    As a final reflection, ask students to consider a strength or resource they or a classmate identified. Ask them to consider the following:

    a. Do they think this strength or resource is recognized and valued currently in their community?

    b. How could a community invest in these strengths and resources? What policy or program could help ensure that these strengths and resources are valued and invested in?

LESSON 5

THE ROLE OF SCHOOLS IN NURTURING REFUGEE STUDENTS

BY JESSICA LANDER

OVERVIEW

In this lesson the students will reflect on what they have learned over the past four lessons. They will use their analysis of the primary sources in the unit to understand the refugee experience. You will assess their understanding through their development of an oral presentation.

Jessica Lander is a history and civics teacher, having taught immigrant-origin high students in Lowell, Massachusetts, for close to a decade, university students in Cambodia and Thailand, and 6th grade students in Boston. She is the author of Making Americans: Stories of Historic Struggles, New Ideas, and Inspiration in Immigrant Education *and was named the 2023 Massachusetts History Teacher of the Year.*

GRADE LEVELS: 7–12

RECOMMENDED TIME FOR COMPLETION: One 45-minute class period

UNIT OVERVIEW: This unit is one of the Gilder Lehrman Institute's Teaching Literacy through History™ (TLTH) resources, designed to align with the Common Core State Standards. Students will learn and practice skills that will help them analyze, assess, and develop knowledgeable and well-reasoned points of view on primary and secondary sources. Over the course of these five lessons, students will learn about the experiences of Cambodian, Vietnamese, Laotian, and Hmong refugees who were resettled in the US between the 1970s and the early 2000s.

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

- How do people become refugees? In what ways does that impact them and how do they rebuild their lives?
- How did refugees from Southeast Asia describe their identity?
- What obstacles made life in the US challenging for refugees?
- What opportunities in the US did Southeast Asian refugees create, and who and what supported them?

MATERIALS

- Activity Sheet 7: Presentation to Teachers

MATERIALS

1. **Do Now** (5 minutes)

   Before diving into the final project, have students brainstorm the following: Imagine you are a refugee student, new to life in the United States. What would you want your teachers to know about you? What would you want your peers to know about you? How would you want to be treated?

2. **Welcoming New Students** (40 minutes)

   a. Set the scene for students and explain the summative assignment:

   Students should imagine they are school officials in the 1980s. Their school is welcoming refugee students from Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam. They are in charge of preparing their teachers and staff to best support the new students, ensuring the new students are set up for success in their new school and that the school nurtures a strong sense of belonging in the new students.

b. Divide students into groups of 3–5. Each group will create a "presentation to teachers and staff" before the new students from Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam arrive.

c. Students should be encouraged to draw on the primary sources they have explored and the class discussions from the last four lessons to create their presentation.

d. If time allows have students share their presentations for the whole class.

3. **Final Reflection** (5 minutes)

As a final wrap-up, have students reflect on all they have learned.

- I used to think _____ about refugees, now I think _____.
- I used to think _____ about schools' role in welcoming and supporting refugee students, now I think _____.
- One thing I'm curious to learn more about refugees from Southeast Asia is_____.

Source 1:
"Home" by Warsan Shire (2011)

Warsan Shire is a Somali British writer and poet born in Nairobi.

no one leaves home unless
home is the mouth of a shark

you only run for the border
when you see the whole city running as well
your neighbors running faster than you
breath bloody in their throats
the boy you went to school with
who kissed you dizzy behind the old tin factory
is holding a gun bigger than his body

you only leave home
when home won't let you stay.

no one leaves home unless home chases you
fire under feet
hot blood in your belly
and even then you carried the anthem under
your breath
only tearing up your passport in airport toilets
sobbing as each mouthful of paper
made it clear that you would not be going back.

you have to understand,
that no one would put their children in a boat
unless the sea is safer than the land
no one burns their palms
under trains
beneath carriages
no one spends days and nights in the cold bladder of a truck
feeding on newspaper unless the miles travelled
means something more than journey.

no one crawls under fences
wants to be beaten
wants to be pitied
no one chooses refugee camps
or strip searches where your
body is left aching
or prison,
because prison is safer
than a city of fire
and one prison guard
in the night
is safer than fourteen men
who look like your father
no one could take it
could stomach it
no one skin would be tough enough

the
go home blacks
refugees
dirty immigrants
asylum seekers
sucking our country dry
n_____s with their hands out
they smell strange
savage
messed up their own country and now they want
to mess up ours
how do the words
the dirty looks
roll off your back
maybe because the blow is softer
than a limb torn off
or the words are more tender
than fourteen men between
your legs
or the insults are easier
to swallow
than rubble
than bone
than your child's body
in pieces.

i want to go home,
but home is the mouth of a shark
home is the barrel of the gun
and no one would leave home
unless home chased you to the shore
unless home told you
to quicken your legs
leave your clothes behind
crawl through the desert
wade through the oceans
drown
save
be hungry
beg
forget pride
your survival is more important

no one leaves home unless home is a sweaty voice in your ear
saying-
leave,
run away from me now
i don't know what i've become
but i know that anywhere
is safer than here

Warsan Shire, "Home," Bless the Daughter Raised By a Voice in Her Head: Poems. Random House, 2022.

Source 2: Historical Background
Southeast Asian Diasporas in the US: History and Experiences of Migration

by Khatharya Um

Historical context

The Southeast Asian refugee communities that came into being in 1975 and grew in the ensuing decades were the human legacies of what is commonly referred to in the United States as the "Vietnam War," despite the fact that the war was not confined to Vietnam but ravaged Cambodia and Laos as well. The Communist seizure of power in all three countries—Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia—in 1975 brought a final end to the brutalizing war, catalyzing the flight of some 150,000 people from their homeland in this initial refugee exodus. Of this refugee cohort, 128,200 Vietnamese, 5,700 Cambodians, and 11,000 Laotians (the largest single ethnic group being Hmong) were resettled in the US in late 1975–1976.

The genocide in Cambodia in 1975–1979, postwar communist reforms in Vietnam and Laos, and renewed conflict and instability engendered yet another more massive refugee condition in the late 1970s through the mid-1980s. Some 600,000–800,000 Cambodians fled to the Thailand-Cambodia border following the collapse of the Khmer Rouge regime in 1979 to escape starvation, foreign occupation, renewed war, and the potential return of the Khmer Rouge. In Vietnam, ethnic Chinese became the target of state persecution because of their economic dominance, escalated conflict with China, and deep-seated anti-Chinese sentiment. Some 263,000 Sino-Vietnamese crossed overland into China while many more took to the high seas; they constituted the first wave of the "boat people." Later joined by ethnic Vietnamese, more than a million people fled Vietnam between 1977 and the late 1980s. From Laos, approximately 360,000 fled communist rule from 1975 through 1995 in search of freedom, security, and opportunity, including many ethnic minority groups such as the Hmong, Iu-Mien, and Thai Dam who had fought in America's "secret war" in Laos.

Of those who fled their homelands, some 144,702 Cambodians, 205,392 Laotians (the largest single ethnic group being Hmong), and 555,120 Vietnamese were resettled in the United States from 1975 to 1990. Though the populations were dispersed throughout the US, some of the largest communities settled in California, Massachusetts, Minnesota, Wisconsin, Washington, Pennsylvania, Florida, and Texas.

What did these groups have in common?

Though they are often referred to as "Southeast Asian," the term masks the ethnic, religious, linguistic, and cultural diversity that exist among the groups, along with class, religious, gender, and generational differences that are also present within each group. The Laotian community in the US, for instance, is comprised of at least five major ethnic and linguistic groups. Despite the internal diversity, Vietnamese, Cambodians, and Laotians in the US are bound by their shared histories under French colonialism and by their experiences during the wars in Southeast Asia and as refugees from those wars in the US.

What is distinct about the refugee experience?

While migration may involve hardship, discontinuity, and even loss, refugee forced migration is characterized by unanticipated flight from peril, actual or perceived, rather than a movement in search of opportunity. Many Southeast Asians, like many global refugees, had little control over where they eventually ended up. Most languished in protracted uncertainty in temporary asylum, without regularized status, rights, or protection. This context of displacement, marked by forced and abrupt severance from the ancestral homeland, compounds the traumatic conditions that catalyzed refugee displacement in the first place. Unlike immigrants, many refugees are also unable or unwilling to return to their country because of persisting conflict and fear. Many Southeast Asian refugees

continue to face challenges in their place of final resettlement that exacerbate the historical traumas. Despite the challenges, Southeast Asians in the US have made significant contributions to the American economy and society, and in all aspects of American life from the arts, literature, and other forms of cultural productions (including Pulitzer, Guggenheim, and Oscar Award–winning works) to gastronomy, research and development, education, science, technology, and medicine.

Khatharya Um is associate professor of ethnic studies and chair of peace and conflict studies at the University of California, Berkeley. She is the co-author of Departures: An Introduction to Critical Refugee Studies *(2022) and author of* From the Land of Shadows: War, Revolution, and the Making of the Cambodian Diaspora (2015).

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Activity Sheet 1
Critical Thinking: Historical Background

Read the historical background essay to help answer the questions below.

1. Identify the four groups of refugees Professor Khatharya Um writes about in her essay.

   _____

   Identify where each group comes from on the map below.

ID 97350117 | Map Thailand Cambodia © Peter Hermes Furian | Dreamstime.com

2. Using the information from the Historical Background, estimate the number of refugees who were forced to leave their homes. Provide an estimate for each ethnic or national group.

   a. Number of Southeast Asian refugees: _____

   b. Number of Cambodian refugees: _____

   c. Number of Vietnamese refugees: _____

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d. Number of Laotian refugees, including Hmong refugees: _____

3. *Stretch and connection question:* Sometimes it can be hard to grasp the scale and magnitude of numbers.

   a. How many students attend your school? _____

   b. How many people live in your city/ town/ neighborhood? _____

   c. Compare these numbers to the number of Southeast Asian refugees on the move you identified above.

   _____

4. What are three "push factors" Professor Um identifies that forced Southeast Asians to flee their homes during the 1970s and 1980s?

   _____

5. Where were some Southeast Asian refugees resettled in the United States?

   _____

6. What are two commonalities shared by the four different refugee groups?

   _____

7. In your own words, summarize what Professor Um describes as the key differences between refugees and immigrants.

   _____

   _____

8. After reading this essay, what is one question you have about the Southeast Asian refugee crisis? Where could you find more information?

   _____

   _____

   _____

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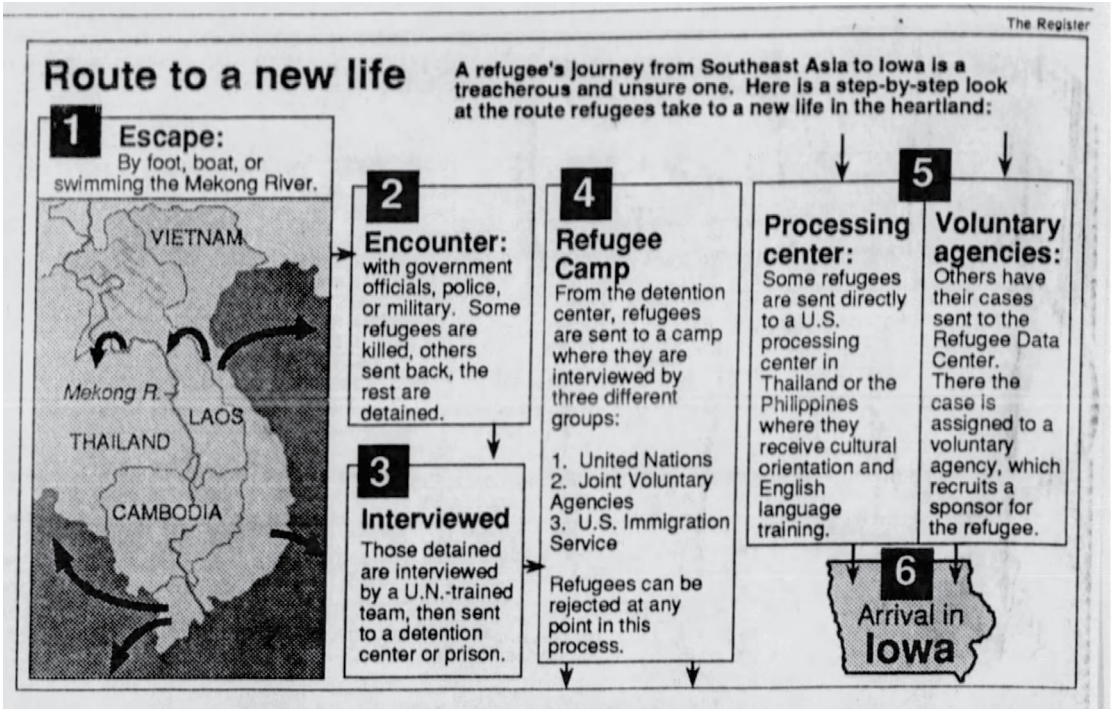
Activity Sheet 2: "Route to a New Life"



Infographic from historical newspaper: "Route to a New Life," Des Moines Register*, October 13, 1988, p. 10*
(© The Des Moines Register – USA TODAY NETWORK; Newspapers.com)

1. What are the six steps that a refugee takes, starting in Southeast Asia and ending up in the United States?

_____

_____

2. As suggested by this infographic, what are two possible dangers refugees fleeing Southeast Asia might face?

_____

_____

3. Why might this infographic have been published in a newspaper in Des Moines, Iowa? Who might the intended audience be?

_____

_____

4. What is one question you have about the information you have learned in this infographic?

_____

_____

Source 3: Excerpts from "Pan Am Stewardesses Recall Last Flight out of Vietnam, 40 Years After Fall of Saigon," KPIX 5 / CBS, 2015

40 years ago, a heroic mission unfolded at Tan Son Nhut Air Base near Saigon, a few days before the North Vietnamese army and the Viet Cong took over South Vietnam on April 30, 1975.

It involved a group of women who volunteered for an extremely dangerous mission that few people know about - the last commercial flight out of South Vietnam.

Four of them recently gathered to remember this bond that they formed decades ago during the Fall of Saigon and the end of the Vietnam War: Susan Matson-Krings, Pamela Borgfeldt Taylor, Laura Lee Gillespie, and Thieu "Tra" Duong Iwafuchi.

"We had a mission to do so we just went in and did what we had to do," explained Gillespie.

In April of 1975, they were all working as stewardesses - "flight attendants" became the preferred term years later - or Pan American Airways. The situation in South Vietnam was unraveling as the Communists massed on the outskirts of Saigon in preparation for final victory.

In late March, World Airways tried to evacuate refugees out of Da Nang, but the rescue plane was mobbed by hundreds of panicked South Vietnamese soldiers, armed with guns and grenades.

Those who could not shove their way onto the World Airways plane, crowded into the luggage compartments, overloading the plane. Those left behind, threw grenades and fired at the plane as it took off, damaging a wing and the landing gear. The situation was chaotic and violent.

"Saigon had not fallen yet, but they were moving. The front was moving south, and it was just going to be a matter of hours," said Taylor.

By the end of April, the Federal Aviation Administration had banned all U.S. commercial flights in and out of South Vietnam. But Pan Am got special permission for one final flight: a mercy mission to Saigon that involved a Boeing 747 jumbo jet.

"It was an eerie feeling to me to know we were going. Flying into a place that people did not want to go into but only to leave and get out of," said Matson-Krings.

The airport was closed, so the 747 went in without tower and without any restrictions. They parked quite a bit away, on the tarmac.

The goal: to evacuate Pan Am's Vietnamese employees and their families, and to cram anyone else they could onboard; that included Duong Iwafuchi's four teenage sisters. Duong Iwafuchi was based in San Francisco.

"I tried to get my family out because I'm Vietnamese," explained the stewardess.

Borgfeldt Taylor had a plan. In the cargo area, with extra uniforms, they disguised Tra's teenage sisters as stewardesses. . . .

One by one, the sisters were driven out to the plane on the tarmac, past soldiers with machine guns. Matson-Krings had them practice their new story lines: that they were not from Saigon, but San Francisco, just in case immigration authorities stopped them.

Once onboard, the teenage sisters were stashed upstairs, in the lounge. It was a safe hiding place.

As for the Vietnamese Pan Am airport employees, they needed documents to leave the country. The American station manager took a cue from Operation Babylift - where thousands of Vietnamese orphans were evacuated to the U.S. - they all had adoption papers.

So station manager Al Topping thought he'd give it a try. He ended up submitting papers to adopt roughly 300 of his airport employees as well as their immediate family members. It worked.

Since the jumbo jet could fit dozens more, the stewardesses passed around pillowcases for donations and bought visas for any other Vietnamese refugee that they could squeeze onboard, including children and babies. The FAA and pilot Bob Berg allowed them to suspend the rules and crowd passengers on the floor, in the bathroom - anywhere they could fit them.

The flight then took off - with almost 500 passengers.

But takeoff was not without serious challenge. First, a fighter jet crashed on the runway, blocking their departure. Once that was cleared, they taxied and took off, but the Communists started firing at their plane.

"You could see there was gunfire, at the end of the runway, they were firing at us." remembered Gillespie.

Duong Iwafuchi remembers working very hard to get everyone settled onboard. She did not have time to think about the danger. "It was such a relief that everyone got on the plane, including my sisters," she said. . . .

From KPIX / CBS staff, "Pan Am Stewardesses Recall Last Flight out of Vietnam, 40 Years After Fall of Saigon," April 29, 2015, KPIX 5/CBS. Used with permission from CBS San Francisco.

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Activity Sheet 3: Story of Escape

Choose one person featured in this story and consider their perspective when answering the questions:

- Stewardess Susan Matson-Krings
- Stewardess Pamela Borgfeldt Taylor
- Stewardess Thieu "Tra" Duong Iwafuchi
- American station manager of Pan Am
- Pilot Bob Berg

1. What do you know about this person from the article?

2. What actions did this person take as described in the article? What reasons might they have had to take these actions based on what you have read in this article? What leads you to think this?

3. How did reading this article extend / stretch your understanding of the refugee experience?

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Activity Sheet 4: Gallery Walk

Gather evidence at each station that will help you answer the following question: What was it like to be a refugee from Southeast Asia?

Station 1:

Title of map:

How might what is shown in the map affect a refugee's life?:

Evidence from the map to support your answer:

Station 2:

Title of photograph:

How might what is shown in the photograph affect a refugee's life?:

Evidence from the photograph to support your answer:

Station 3:

Title of graph:

How might what is shown in the graph affect a refugee's life?:

Evidence from the graph to support your answer:

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Station 4:

Title of photographs:

How might what is shown in the photographs affect a refugee's life?:

Evidence from the photographs to support your answer:

Station 5:

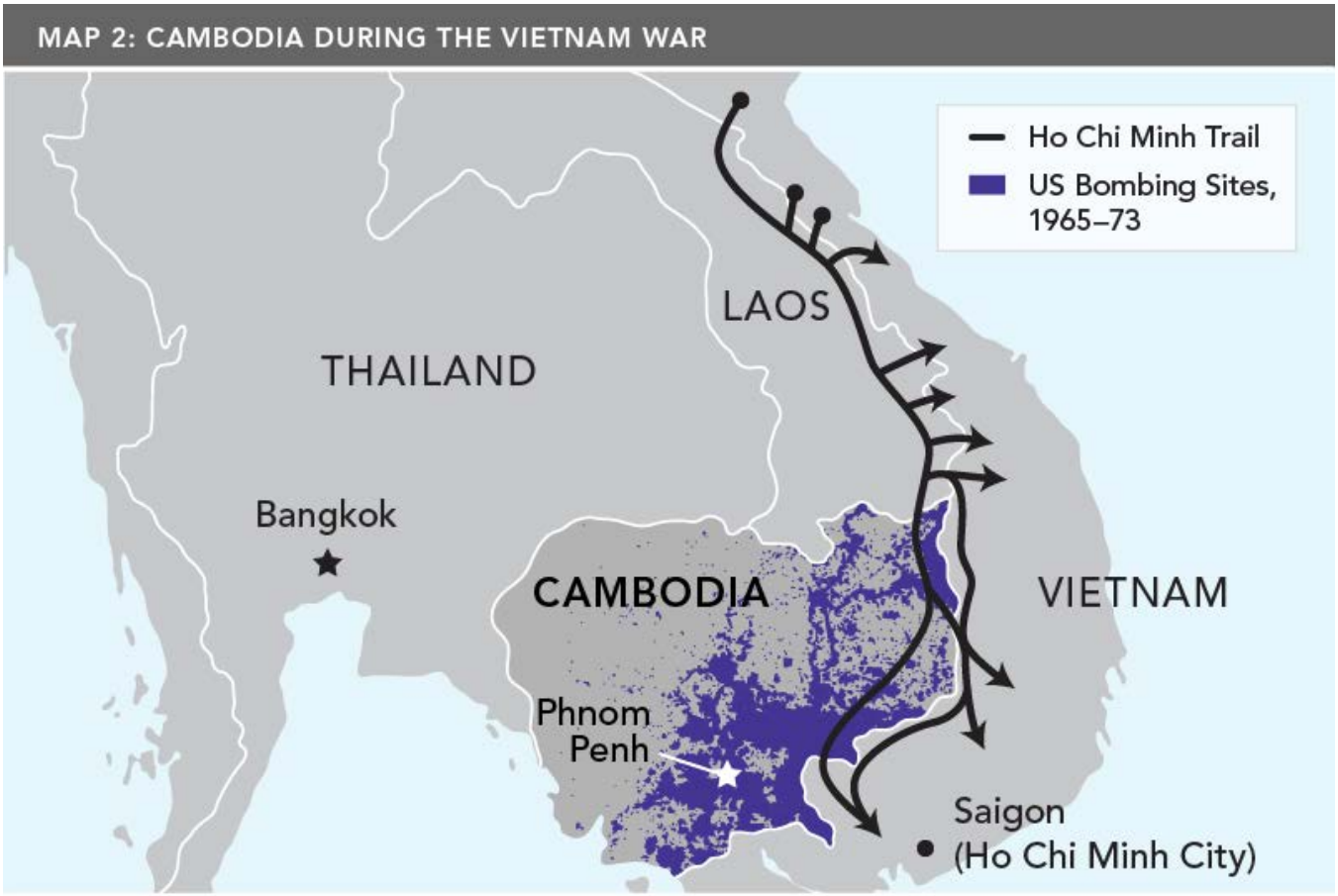
Title of photograph:

How might what is shown in the photographs affect a refugee's life?:

Evidence from the photograph to support your answer:

Synthesizing your evidence from these sources, write a short paragraph. What do these sources tell us about what it was like to become and be a refugee from Southeast Asia?

Station 1: Map



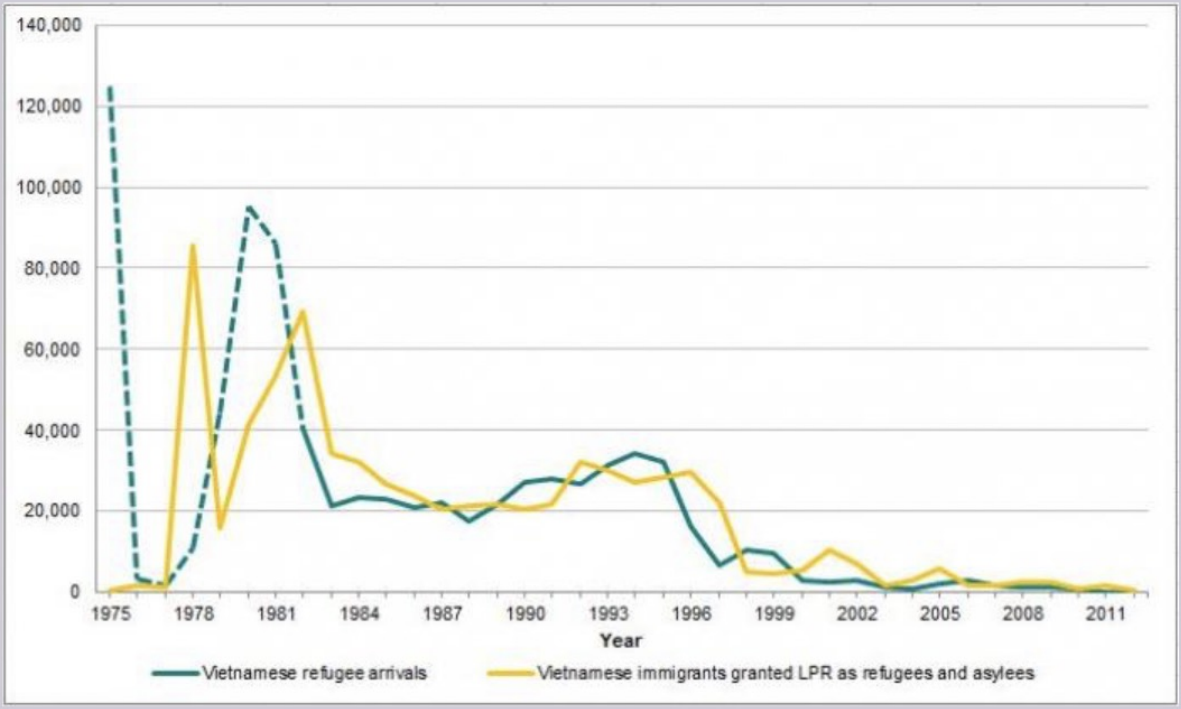
"Cambodia During the Vietnam War," n.d. in "The Rise and Fall of the Khmer Rouge Regime," Asia Pacific Foundation of Canada.

Station 2: Refugee Camp in Southeast Asia

"White HMong Women and Children Eating at HMong New Year Celebration in Laos," by an unknown photographer, ca. 1964, Southeast Asia Community Resource Center Collection (Courtesy of the Gerth Special Collections and University Archives, California State University, Sacramento)

Station 3: Graph

Figure 6. Vietnamese Refugee Arrivals and Vietnamese Immigrants Granted Lawful Permanent Residence as Refugees and Asylees, 1975-2012



Notes: The dotted portion of the line for refugee arrivals from Vietnam prior to 1982 indicates that these numbers are estimates obtained from Table 7.2 in "Southeast Asian Refugee Migration to the United States" by Linda W. Gordon. In 1975, about 125,000 Vietnamese refugees arrived in the United States as the result of a U.S.-sponsored evacuation program following the end of the Vietnam War. From 1976 to 1977, the number of refugee arrivals dropped significantly for the most part because the United States denied admission to Vietnamese individuals except for family reunification. As a result of continuing political and ethnic conflicts within Southeast Asia, the number of refugees from Vietnam and its neighboring countries rose dramatically beginning in 1978. In response to this humanitarian crisis, Western countries, including the United States, began admitting greater numbers of refugees from the region, many of whom were living in refugee camps.

Sources: MPI tabulation of data from DHS, *2012 and 2002 Yearbook of Immigration Statistics* (Washington, DC: DHS Office of Immigration Statistics), www.dhs.gov/yearbook-immigration-statistics; U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS), *Statistical Yearbook of the Immigration and Naturalization Service for 1978-1996* (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office); INS, 1977, 1976, and 1975 Annual Reports (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office); Linda W. Gordon, "Southeast Asian Refugee Migration to the United States," Center for Migration Studies special issues, 5 (3) (1987): 153-73; Rubén G. Rumbaut, "A Legacy of War: Refugees from Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia," in *Origins and Destinies: Immigration, Race, and Ethnicity in America*, eds. Silvia Pedranza and Rubén G. Rumbaut (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 1996); Gail P. Kelly, "Coping with America: Refugees from Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos in the 1970s and 1980s," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 487 (1996): 138-49.

Hataipreuk Rkasnuam and Jeanne Batalova, "Vietnamese Immigrants in the United States," Migration Information Source, Migration Policy Institute, August 25, 2014.

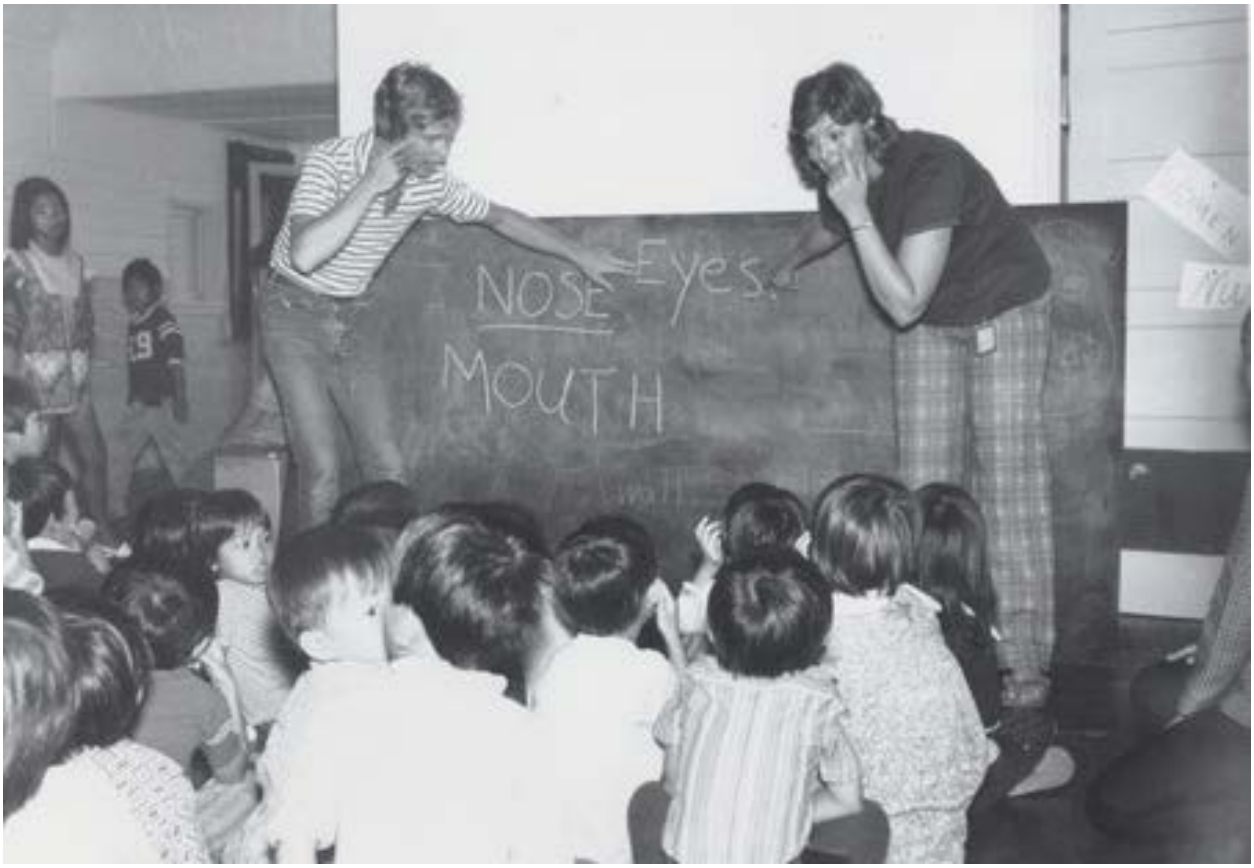
Station 4: Refugee Camps in the United States

"South Vietnamese refugees arriving at a camp at Eglin Air Force Base in Florida" by photographer Frank Sikora for the Birmingham News*, May 1975 (Alabama Media Group Collection, Alabama Department of Archives and History)*

"Two elderly Vietnamese women wearing head coverings outdoors at the Fort Indiantown Gap refugee camp" by photographer Charles Isaacs, [1975] (Library of Congress)

"Vietnamese refugees at Fort Indiantown Gap, Pennsylvania," by photographer Don Camp for The Philadelphia Inquirer*, 1975 (George D. McDowell Philadelphia Evening Bulletin Photographs, Special Collections Research Center, Temple University Libraries)*

Station 5: Refugee Students Learning in the United States



"Children sitting in front of blackboard," unknown photographer, ca. 1970–1980, Fort Chaffee, Arkansas (Photographs of Vietnamese and Cambodian Refugees, Southeast Asian Archive, UC Irvine Libraries)

Source 4: Exploring Identity

"To Make a Return" by Mai Der Vang

"In a way, we are nothing more – or less – than an encoded memory of our heritage."
– Evan Hoffman, "The New Nomads," in Letters of Transit

You are born here,
someplace alien to your ancestral tongue.
Cars replace your two feet
on a spiraling superhighway.
Tract housing becomes a destination
on dizzy roads that look too much alike.
Your father. Your mother.
A young couple far from home
and anything familiar. Stretched
beyond sanity like hitting walls in a maze.

You go to public school,
where you are taught how pilgrims and Indians
ate together, how to pledge allegiance,
and become invisible by turning off your voice
like taking off a jacket.
Never getting the one you want
because of the jobs your parents do not have.
And what you learn on back-to-school night,
when your mother does not know how to
write your name on the chalkboard
of your fourth grade class.

You become jaded by senior year,
swallowed by the language you can
hardly speak, and the assignments that
swarm inside your backpack.
In the midst of eight kids, you feel alone
because they will not let you be.
You wake up at 6 a.m. on a Saturday morning
to move couches before the shaman arrives.
There are chickens fussing in the backyard, and
the neighbors might hear.
The night you come home late,
your father burns his words
into the cracks of the narrow driveway.

You move from home,
chart your course in a crowded landscape,
the cup of freewill flowing to the rim,
like the expensive red wine in your kitchen pantry.
You pour wax from the candles next to the tub
where you soak. No one to bang on the door
while you sink in salts and yesterday's edition of
the New York Times.
On the subway, you watch the highrises shield
your view beyond the city walls.

You wander the streets,
yearning for the recognizable. How you
almost cry at the sight of lemongrass
in a stranger's yard. The old woman
a few doors down whose embroidery
looks like the neon cross-stitched fabric
collecting dust in your mother's closet.
Even the homeless vet who says
he knows of your people
because he fought in 'Nam.

You comb through books magazines, journals
to uncover scabs, peeling from the wounds
left by a war your parents did not explain,
except to say they had to run.
You shrug it off, and now, years after,
you know the reason why your mother feared
fireworks on Fourth of July.
Why she keeps an old piece of clothing
locked in a suitcase, the same one she wore
the night they left Laos.
And your father, a man of tangled emotions
who says he was only showing love
the day he cursed you from the house.
When all along you think the only war
is the one inside you.

You return home.
To loathe something, but to need it.
Like the twisted red string your mother tied
around your left wrist.
Its tainted mildew scent sometimes polluting,
your skin, but never taking over its purpose.
Never forgetting to bring you back.

Mai Der Vang, "To Make a Return," Journal of Southeast Asian American Education & Advancement *5 (2010)*
Used with the permission of the author.

Source 6: Oral History of a Laotian American

Excerpt from an interview with Aleena Inthaly, 2020

Prinston Pan (PP): Are [your parents] somewhat Americanized in different portions of their life?

Aleena Inthaly (AI): This is an interesting question because my parents wanted to preserve Lao culture and traditions as much as possible. What is a great example of that is when my mom and my dad only spoke to me in Lao when I grew up. I'm completely thankful and grateful that they did because now I can speak Lao and I understand Lao. I know that there are a lot of my cousins and there are a lot of my friends who are Laotian and don't speak any Lao and hardly understand Lao. And today in their late twenties are in their adulthood. They're now thinking wow I wish my parents did that.

But I know that my dad grew up in the US. He came here in his late teens. Pretty much grew up here, he went to school here for a little bit and also traveled across the US when he came here. I think he went to Texas first and then he spent time in Virginia Beach and a bunch of different farms in Appalachia. He went all over the country and he also had girlfriends who are not Lao, who were Caucasian who were black. He definitely had more of an Americanized upbringing though when I was growing up, he tried to be as Lao as possible so I thought that was interesting. Knowing that in his early twenties he started partying like an American young person would here today, like my age. But now in his later life when he got married, he kind of went back to Lao tradition.

My mom though, that's all she knew. Since she came from Laos, she completely stayed Laos as much as she could. That's because she was so homesick when she came over from Laos for the first time. So she tried to wear her sin wherever she went and tried to pass that on to me. Even today she has a collection of like 500 different sins. She keeps telling me "whenever I'm gone do not give these to anyone else." She keeps telling me to lose weight so that I can fit into them. The Lao tradition kind of overtook the American side of it.

I always got angry when my parents when they told me "you're too American you know you need to be more Lao." Like when I started going to school, I started learning English and I wanted to get my mom to make me grilled cheese and pack me Lunchables for lunch instead of an omelette and sticky rice. And they were offended and they were like "you're becoming an American." Then I would get offended because I'm Lao and everytime I come home all I do is Lao things. So how can you say that I'm American, and so that's when I had an identity crisis. I think a lot of people might have the same type of experience for a little. Like I'm not American enough, but I'm not Lao enough so I'm sort of in this middle, in between.

But what I find interesting with my family is that when my brother was born, nine years after I was born, his upbringing was completely different from mine because my parents always put on American cartoons for him and they also spoke to him in English when he was growing up. I was like "what are you guys doing?" Then I started talking to my brother in Lao because he's not going to know Lao if you all speak English. By the time my brother was born I think my parents were becoming more Americanized and I didn't even realize this until I saw the differences between my brother and I and the fact that my brother can't speak any Lao. He understands it but he can't speak any Lao. Even though we're only nine years apart it's like a totally different generation. So I think seeing those changes in the way my parents have evolved is kind of interesting because it used to be an insult that I was too American but now I see my mom and she's even more American than I am sometimes.

Keyword: *Sin: A handmade traditional skirt that is often made of silk worn by Laotian and Thai women*

From an interview with Aleena Inthaly by Prinston Pan, November 1, 2020, Irvine, California, Lao Stories: Laotian American Oral History Project, Southeast Asian Archive, UC Irvine, Libraries.

Source 7: Oral History of a Cambodian American

Excerpts from an interview with Ran Kong, 2000

BARBARA LAU: Recently I know you've made a big transition, though. You've decided to become an American citizen. Can you talk a little bit about how you came to that decision and why, and what that process was like?

RAN KONG: I became a Cambodian citizen because—

BARBARA LAU: An American—

RAN KONG: Just kidding. I became an American citizen because it's easier to travel. If you want to go out of the country and come back, it's easier to travel, it's easier to do so. And considering the possibility of study abroad or whatever, I just went ahead and decided that it would be good if I was a citizen. And also I've lived here for so long that I can't imagine ever going back to Cambodia and living there. That may be a possibility, but who knows, in the future. So becoming a Cambodian [sic] citizen was just like this is my official permission to remain here, so like security. . . .

BARBARA LAU: Well, do some people think that if you're a citizen, an American citizen, you're not a Cambodian?

RAN KONG: I don't think so, because as sad as it seems honestly, after becoming naturalized I'm still the same person. I just have this official document that says I have the rights of every American citizen, and I have the protection of an American. So in a way it's kind of we're taking advantage of the system, but it's true. But at the same time I guess especially for my peers, who are my age and who get naturalized, in a way we go through the American educational system. We've lived here so long, we've adopted so many American-isms, like pro-democracy, pro-capitalism, all that—all of those ideals that America—like that you associate with America, you know, or that you associate with the western world. So in a way like it's just an admission to the fact that, hey, I'm a mixed individual. I really am.

From an Oral History interview with Ran Kong by Barbara Lau, November 25, 2000. Interview K-0269. Southern Oral History Program Collection (#4007), Southern Historical Collection, Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

Source 8: Oral History of a H'mong American

Excerpt from an interview with Xai Thao, 2007

MAI NENG VANG: What was the hardest experience for you in America?

XAI THAO: The hardest would have to be that the older generation like us who have no educational background and are not familiar with the language. It is very hard. If we could read and write and know the language then everything would have been better.

MAI NENG VANG: What was the best experience of you in America?

XAI THAO: The best thing was that the Americans were willing to help us in many ways. They allowed us to go back to school and make sure that we did not starve. We were all treated equally.

MAI NENG VANG: Did your sponsor's kindness change the way you view other people who are not Hmong?

XAI THAO: They helped our family and gave us a peace of mind. My children were able to attend school. Back in Laos, this would never have happened. My children went to school at age five and now they are educated. Life will only get better from here on.

MAI NENG VANG: Have you ever considered going back to Laos?

XAI THAO: I only want to go to visit and see the country. I would never want to go and live there anymore. America is a land of freedom and Laos is an oppressive country. I only want to go back to visit family members. Besides, none of the younger generation want to go back.

MAI NENG VANG: Do you have any words to say to the younger Hmong generation that will listen to your word someday?

XAI THAO: First of all, I would like to say that all you who grew up here in America are very lucky. You all were born in a country that is free for you to do everything. You all must listen to us so that your lives will not be tragic like ours. Someday when you are well off, help other people just like the Americans helped us. You all must become model citizens and help others in need. This is all I have to say.

From Main Neng Vang, "Interview with Xai Thao," December 1, 2007, Hmong Oral History Project, 24, DigitalCommons@CSP, Concordia University St. Paul, CC BY-ND 4.0.

Source 9: Oral history of a Vietnamese American

Excerpts from an interview with Tuan Anh Le, 2012

INTERVIEWER: Do you identify yourself as an American, a Vietnamese American, or just Vietnamese when you are in America?

TUAN ANH LE: When I came to America, I believe, I know, because some people told me, like before people usually say "you never become American if you're not white. That's true." *Not true.* It depends on how you take it. I believe that I am Asian American, not Vietnamese anymore, because when the time I left the country. I tried to put everything behind.

And the first paperwork that I got in America, in that paperwork, on that document, they put my state as "stateless." I understand why it said "no country." Because I am people don't belong to Vietnam anymore.

INTERVIEWER: How did that make you feel when you saw the word "stateless"?

TUAN ANH LE: You know, I feel that was true. Because when you left the country, you don't have a country to live. Ok. So you have to go to some other country as a refugee. I know a lot of people go back and say "I'm from Vietnam." Of course you were born there, you can't just leave the memories there. But when you become American you have to protect the country. That's what the country is all about. I believe that there is no place better than America. Of course everywhere they have the problems. It's not that things are perfect. But you have to live with it.

INTERVIEWER: So are you and your wife both citizens?

TUAN ANH LE: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: Do you remember what it was like when you were going through the process of becoming a citizen?

TUAN ANH LE: I think that it was normal, there's nothing odd. Of course when you become a citizen, you have to know some laws about the country . . . America opened its arms, and they take you in with no reason. So I think that when my wife became a US citizen we felt a little bit better than in the old country. Because I believe that other countries don't do that for you like America.

INTERVIEWER: So when you became a citizen, did you feel more American?

TUAN ANH LE: . . . I feel safer . . . When you come back to the United States . . . you feel the difference. You feel you are home. . . . When I go to Vietnam, I don't feel at home.

From "Oral History of Tuan Anh Le," interviewed by Kathy Le, May 13, 2012, Duarte, California, Viet Stories: Vietnamese American Oral History Project, UC Irvine, Libraries, Southeast Asian Archive

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Activity Sheet 5: Evolving Multiple Identities

Name of Interviewee: _____

Consider the ways the interviewee addressed the following:

What did the interviewee list as the specific ways they were American?	What did the interviewee list as the specific ways they were Cambodian / Hmong / Laotian / Vietnamese?
What positive associations did the interviewee have about being American?	What positive associations did the interviewee have about being Cambodian / Hmong / Laotian / Vietnamese?
What negative associations did the interviewee have about being American?	What negative associations did the interviewee have about being Cambodian / Hmong / Laotian / Vietnamese?

Source 10: Excerpt from an interview with Cathy Lam, 2013

I wanted to help my parents, even at twelve years old, you know. We knew that they struggled to make ends meet without real skill and things like that. It's tough to find a job so not only am I going through adolescence, I don't know Vietnamese because I learned French so I felt that part of me was lost somewhere. We had all these adolescence bodily changes. You look weird, you are weird, you are so strange but I wanted, being the oldest in the family, I felt responsible to help my parents so I did odd jobs. I cleaned houses on the weekends, I cleaned bathrooms and we used to, when the strawberry fields is at the end of the season, after the last workers picked up all the strawberries, we would go and pick up whatever they left behind and we would make jam and things like that, make food stretch a little bit longer. I just felt, you know, responsible to help my parents wherever I can and I was ready, I wanted to make sure I would go to college so I tried to study really hard and tried to be the big sister that they want me to be, so set a role model for my brothers and sisters so it's tough. I don't ever want anyone to ever have to have such heavy burden.

From an interview with Cathy Lam, interviewed by Lotusa Chan, February 19, 2013, Viet Stories: Vietnamese American Oral History Project, University of California, Irvine Libraries/Southeast Asian Archive.

Source 11: Excerpt from an interview with Dang Nguyen, 2019

DN: So I was a senior in high school in Vietnam. So at that time, I would be well positioned to go to college right? But because of my English, I did not know much English, so I could not go to college there or I could not go to high school there. So, for some reason they put me in 9th grade, which is three grades lower than my current level, just because of my. Just because I didn't know English.

AN: Was that challenging for you?

DN: Challenging in language only. But not for the subjects in school. Like math, and chemistry, and physics – those are using formulas – and word problems because those are universal, you know education. So those things I did not have any problem at all. Except like English class, you know, oh speech class, you know that kind of thing. But I did not have any problems with any other classes at all.

From an interview with Dang Nguyen, interviewed by Annie Nguyen, February 10, 2019, Viet Stories: Vietnamese American Oral History project, University of California, Irvine Libraries/Southeast Asian Archive.

Source 12: Opening a Restaurant, 2015

Excerpts from Thuy Phan, "Song Long: Three Decades of French/Vietnamese Cuisine," 2015

With its bright yellow awning in a corner building just off of Bolsa Avenue, Song Long Restaurant is one of Little Saigon's longest running restaurants—more than 30 years—and is considered an institution in this tight-knit, ethnic community.

The owner, Khai Lan Vo, also affectionately known as Co Bay, or "Auntie 7," opened up the bakery in 1981 with her younger sister, Co Tam, more than three decades ago, just as Westminster and Garden Grove became the home of the largest Vietnamese American community in the U.S.

"When we first came here as refugees, we never dreamed about opening a restaurant," Vo, 70, said. "But as we started to crave certain dishes that we couldn't find, we thought, let's go ahead and do it ourselves."

They started out with a bakery by the same name, and it was a hit. French-inspired delicacies such as croissants and pate chaud (pastries made with a minced pork filling wrapped with puff pastry) and cafe sua da, or Vietnamese iced coffee, made their bakery a hit with the locals. With Co Tam's credentialed training at Le Cordon Bleu in Paris, they made a name for themselves.

"We found that the bakery was doing really well, and it was time to expand," Vo said. "Back then, we noticed there weren't any restaurants that tailored to French and Vietnamese fusion cuisine so from there, we went from bakery to restaurant in 1985."

In the beginning, they sold items such as eggs, omelets, dim sum and other light fare you might find for breakfast. But they soon realized that their customer base couldn't be sustained solely on French cuisine and the reason, according to Vo, is simple.

"Vietnamese people always miss the rice," Vo said.

That led them to rework their menu and fuse Vietnamese fare with the richer French flavors. With their customers in mind, they dedicated an entire section to Vietnamese rice dishes that satisfied the nostalgia of home. Rice with options of chicken, beef, pork chops, shrimp, stir-fry–you name it, they offered it.

While the bakery eventually closed–they came to face too many competitors and lacked the manpower to handle both—the restaurant continued to steadily grow its customer base, and the patrons were loyal. Most are second- and third-generation customers who have been coming for years. . . .

"I started coming here from when my children were just starting college," [Tuyet] Dao said. "These days I don't cook as much so it's much easier for me to just come here and enjoy a meal. I've been known to come three times in one day! I take my grandkids here now. Three generations."

While familiar Vietnamese dishes such as hu tieu (soup with noodles), bo kho (beef stew) and banh canh (Vietnamese udon noodle soup) were added . . . Song Long continued to serve its most popular French dishes, including Filet Mignon Au Poivre Vert, Filet de Sole au Gratin, Tuna Nicoise Salad and Bouillabaisse. This allowed not only Vietnamese Americans a familiar taste of home, but also offered a European option with Co Tam's French entrees. . . .

And because Song Long has been around for so long, it is also a regular meeting place for well-known Vietnamese novelists, actors and musicians in the community. You might be dining next to a renowned scholar or songwriter and not even know it. . . .

"For the past 30 years, I've come to work and I'm really happy to be here because the customers are very nice," Vo said. . . . Waitress Suong Ngoc Truong, 59, who has been there for 28 years, agrees.

"I've been working here for so long and I love my customers like they are part of my family," Truong said. "I know all three generations, from the grandmothers and grandfathers, to their children and now their grandchildren. It has never crossed my mind to go anywhere else."

From Thuy Phan, "Song Long: Three Decades of French/Vietnamese Cuisine," Người Việt Daily News *(Westminster, CA). September 14, 2015.*

Sources 13 and 14

"Kathy Crockett teaches ESL Class at Lowell High (Massachusetts)," February 14, 1988, by Michael Pigeon, photographer (Lowell Sun Photography Collection, Southeast Asian Digital Archive*)*

"Song Long Restaurant during its grand opening in 1981," courtesy of Song Long Restaurant, published in Taylor Weik, "At Song Long Restaurant, New Vietnamese Americans First Tasted Home," NBC News, April 11, 2016.

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Activity Sheet 6: Obstacles and Opportunities

Choose one of the text-based primary sources narratives (Sources 10, 11, and 12). Consider the following questions:

Title of Primary Source:	
What specific **obstacles** did the interviewee describe facing? Identify what evidence from the text leads you to this interpretation.	What specific **opportunities** did the interviewee describe seizing? Identify what evidence from the text leads you to this interpretation.
Choose one of the **obstacles** from your list above. What **strengths and resources** did the interviewee use to overcome this obstacle?	Choose one of the **opportunities** from your list above. What **strengths and resources** did the interviewee use to take or create this opportunity?

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Choose one of the photographic primary sources (Sources 13 and 14). Consider the following:

Title of Image:	
Describe what you see in the photo. Be as specific as you can.	
What possible **obstacles** are captured in this photograph? What evidence do you have from the photograph to support this?	What possible **opportunities** are captured in this photograph? What evidence do you have from the photograph to support this?

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Activity Sheet 7: Presentation to Teachers

You are a school official in the 1980s. Your school is welcoming refugee students from Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam in the coming weeks. You are in charge of creating a presentation and training program for your teachers and staff to help them learn about their new students and think about how they can create routines, lessons, and a classroom set up that will best support their new students.

Presentation Outline

Draw on and reference **at least 4 primary sources** we have studied. Use these to support the points you make in your presentation.

PRESENTATION TO TEACHERS

Guiding Question	Key points you want to include in your presentation that address this question	Primary Source that supports your answer
Background: What key information about your new students' background should teachers know? Where are your new students coming from? Why are they coming to the US now?		
Education Background: How has students' educational experience possibly been impacted by being refugees? How might this impact how teachers should consider supporting students when they arrive?		

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Resources: What are specific resources that the new students have that schools might not recognize?		
Challenges: What challenges are your students facing as they create a new home in the US? What is life like at school? How can teachers work to address students' challenges?		