



PODCAST DISCUSSION GUIDE



MISSION

Vietnamese Boat People is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization dedicated to the preservation and continuation of the narratives within the Vietnamese diaspora community. Our primary objective is to empower the community to share their stories in their own authentic voices. Through these narratives, we aim to illuminate the rich tapestry of histories and lived experiences, fostering education and meaningful connections.



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THE PODCAST

We take pride in being a podcast entirely dedicated to the narratives of the Vietnamese diaspora. Our distinctive approach involves presenting these stories in a first-person format, often featuring multi-generational voices. We delve into a wide range of topics, including family dynamics, cultural assimilation, matters of race, trauma, identity, faith, and beyond. Through our podcast, we weave together conversations that bridge the past to the present, sparking crucial dialogues and offering representation to our vibrant and diverse communities.

ABOUT THE DISCUSSION GUIDE

The Vietnamese Boat People Podcast discussion guide offers a unique resource to delve into the rich narratives of the Vietnamese diaspora. Tailored to specific podcast episodes, the guide provides discussion questions and reflection prompts that connect personal and historical experiences to universal themes of resilience, identity, and community.

Drawing on the public narrative framework—Story of Self, Story of Us, and Story of Now—the guide encourages students to explore individual stories, recognize shared struggles, and reflect on their relevance to present-day issues. By integrating historical insights, personal reflection, and community connections, it serves as a powerful tool for fostering empathy, critical thinking, and social awareness in diverse educational settings. Whether examining refugee journeys or addressing broader social justice themes, this guide equips educators with structured yet flexible materials to create engaging and impactful learning experiences.

ADDITIONAL NOTES

The Vietnamese Boat People Podcast shares deeply personal stories that illuminate themes of resilience, migration, and identity, offering a compelling way to engage students with history and lived experiences. This discussion guide is designed to help facilitate thoughtful classroom discussions, developing empathy and critical thinking skills while connecting past events to contemporary challenges.

The guide is most appropriate for middle school, grades 9–12 or older but can be adapted for other learning levels. Each episode-specific section includes targeted questions and prompts to spark reflection and dialogue, allowing flexibility to meet the needs of different age groups.

FEATURED EPISODES



Episode #4 Riches to Rags

Steve, born in 1961 in Vietnam, was 14 when the South fell. Once from a wealthy family, he quickly became responsible for supporting his younger siblings after their life changed overnight.



Episode #14 The World Looked Away

Tom, born in 1971, was separated from his parents during the Vietnam War. Reunited in America, he later helped document his family's survival story in the book *The World Looked Away*.



Episode #16 The Ground Kisser

Thanh, the oldest of six, was eight during the Fall of Saigon. Amidst war and conflict, her family made one of their toughest decisions; they arranged her escape from Vietnam without them.

PODCAST EPISODES ARE AVAILABLE ON ALL MAJOR PLATFORMS:

- VIETNAMESEBOATPEOPLE.ORG
- SPOTIFY
- APPLE PODCASTS
- PODBEAN
- PANDORA
- AUDIBLE
- AMAZON MUSIC AND MORE



EPISODE #4 RICHES TO RAGS

ABOUT THE EPISODE

Steve, born in 1961 in Vietnam, was 14 years old when South Vietnam lost the war to North Vietnam. The eldest son of a socialite family, Steve's childhood was filled with everything he desired. All of that disappeared overnight. A wealthy boy who had lived a life of indulgence and ease suddenly found himself forced to provide for his family as the oldest child of seven.

EPISODE QUESTIONS

1. What tactics did the new government take to change the ideologies of kids like Steve after the war had ended?
2. Describe the sensory experience (touch, sight, taste, smell, and emotional feel) of Steve's escape.
3. Steve and his father were told that they had to sink their ship in order to be saved by the Coast Guard as part of a strategy during "boat push back." Why was Steve's family turned away?

STORY OF SELF (PERSONAL REFLECTION)

- Steve and his family endured a challenging journey, marked by significant life changes and loss, as described in the podcast episode. Can you imagine how you might react in this situation? What would you do?

STORY OF US (COMMUNITY CONNECTION)

- Steve's family relied heavily on community support during their journey. How did their interactions with others, including local communities and strangers, influence their resilience and ability to navigate difficult circumstances? How can understanding these community dynamics strengthen our empathy and willingness to support others facing adversity?

STORY OF NOW (CURRENT CHALLENGES)

- In what ways can Steve's story of survival and resilience be applied to current global issues or local community challenges? How has it informed your perception of refugees and immigrant groups today, particularly those facing displacement or socioeconomic hardship?



EPISODE #14 THE WORLD LOOKED AWAY

ABOUT THE EPISODE

Tom was born in 1971 in Saigon as Hung Quoc Pham. At the end of the Vietnam War, his father Quoc Pham, a former South Vietnam Naval officer, was sent away for many years to re-education camp. Tom was sent to live with his grandparents at age four until one day, a father he barely knew appeared again. And the two of them would escape Vietnam in 1980 when Tom was eight years old. Tom shares what it was like growing up in America, separated from the rest of his family and the emotional distance they felt when they were finally reunited in America. In 2014, Tom played an instrumental role in helping to get his parents' story of survival documented in the book *The World Looked Away*.

EPISODE QUESTIONS

1. Why do you think Tom's father was put in the re-education camp during that time?
2. When Tom first arrived in America, what were his experiences like in school?
3. How does Tom describe his relationship with his father and mother? How does it change after working on the book together?

STORY OF SELF (PERSONAL REFLECTION)

- How did Tom Pham's early experiences of separation and hardship shape his resilience and character? Put yourself in Tom's shoes as a young child in a new country. What range of emotions do you think you would experience?

STORY OF US (COMMUNITY CONNECTION)

- Tom's story highlights how his community and school advocated for him. Think about the community in which you currently live in. How do you think they would react if they heard Tom's story?

STORY OF NOW (CURRENT CHALLENGES)

- Tom's efforts to reunite his family and share their story demonstrate the power of advocacy and storytelling. Give an example of when you witnessed advocacy for positive change in your community or school? What steps were taken?



EPISODE #16 THE GROUND KISSER

ABOUT THE EPISODE

Thanh is the oldest of six children and was eight years old at the Fall of Saigon. She was living in Tân Châu, six miles from the Cambodian border, and she vividly remembers the violence from the continued warfare between Vietnam and Cambodia following the civil war in the country. Thanh's parents had to make a tough decision to stay together and face whatever came in the new Communist regime or risk separating the family. In 1979, Thanh's parents found an opportunity for Thanh to leave Vietnam, but they did not know that their 12-year-old-daughter would embark on a journey fighting for her life.

EPISODE QUESTIONS

1. What is generation 1.5 in this context?
2. How does Thanh describe her position as the oldest of her siblings?
3. Why did Thanh's family have to escape Vietnam? Why couldn't they just leave?

STORY OF SELF (PERSONAL REFLECTION)

- Thanh Duong Boyer describes a stark transition from a life of privilege in Vietnam to the hardships of refugee camps. How did her early experiences of leadership and responsibility within her family shape her resilience during these challenging times? How might her ability to adapt and lead her siblings reflect broader themes of personal agency and determination in adversity?

STORY OF US (COMMUNITY CONNECTION)

- Thanh's story highlights the importance of community support when she and her sister were rescued and sponsored by a family in Alabama. Can you write about a time when your community (school, neighborhood, town) came together to support someone or a group in need?

STORY OF NOW (CURRENT CHALLENGES)

- Thanh Duong Boyer's journey reflects not only personal resilience but also the broader issues of displacement and the refugee experience. In what ways might understanding her narrative encourage individuals and communities to advocate for refugee rights and support systems in their own contexts?

RESOURCES

Ganz, Marshall. "Public Narrative, Collective Action, and Power." *Accountability through Public Opinion: From Inertia to Public Action*, edited by Sina Odugbemi and Taeku Lee, The World Bank, 2011, pp.273-289.

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