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Overview

Accidental Refugee, the Muoi Quan Story is a true story of a young girl in Vietnam who found herself in extraordinary situations. When she was nine, Muoi's city of Saigon collapsed along with the rest of her country to the Communists. At ten, the ruling regime destroyed her family's livelihood. She and her Cousin Tran attempted an escape to China when Muoi was eleven. When they passed through Hanoi, the authorities captured them and presented them with a very real threat of death by firing squad. Unknow to her, her older brother has a chance to escape Vietnam in a dangerous sea crossing. Almost as an afterthought, her parents invite her on a journey to say goodbye. Once at the boat site, a twist of fate has her pushed onto the boat herself – in the place of a stranger who had not shown up. After an arduous journey in the South China Sea, she eventually came to the United States as a refugee at the ripe old age of twelve.

Muoi's story is one of determination, courage, and self-reliance. She was, and is, a living example of the triumph of the human spirit. She and I both hope that you and your class enjoy her journey and that it inspires them to realize that the only limiting factor in their lives is themselves.

Accidental Refugee – The Muoi Quan Story

Chapter Summary

Chapter 1 – Winter-Spring 1975

Muoi is an eight-year-old girl living in Cho Lon, the Chinatown of Saigon, Vietnam. Muoi takes us through a typical Monday in her life with a large family sharing a small home. She shows us the type of life she enjoys and gives us a hint of her adventurous spirit. We see how her life is markedly different from the American experience.

Chapter 2 – Tran

Muoi adores her mother, but a close second is her Cousin Tran. Tran is a young woman with crutches, a result of polio. Tran is an unbending spirit. She, like Muoi, does not like it when others tell her she cannot do something. Muoi's parents assign her to Tran as her companion, and she loves the pairing. Together they go on many adventures in Saigon including an almost disastrous trip to the beach where Tran nearly drowns.

Chapter 3 - Chinese? In Vietnam?

This chapter explains how the Chinese came to Vietnam over 200 years earlier, and why her grandparents left China after Mao took power. Cho Lon means "Big Market" and Muoi explains how that is so. She also explains how her mother and father met and how her mother is her idea of what a complete woman should be. Muoi gives a hint of her family's status as upper-middle-class. Father has property and gold which he uses to build a new house in Cho Lon - one they never move into.

Chapter 4 – Reunification

Muoi is nine when Saigon falls to the Communist North Vietnamese Army in April 1975. There was no law in Saigon since the police and military abandoned their posts in fear of retribution. As traumatic as the experience was for the city, Muoi could see little difference in her life. She and her best friends go on an adventure where she sneaks out of the house to go swimming. Her reaction to the guards on the streets and to other signs of occupation indicate a total disregard for the new regime as only a nine-year-old can show. In the end, she acknowledges that change is on the horizon for even her and her family.

Chapter 5 – Raids

Muoi's mindset changes with the reinstatement of raids for new army draftees. She describes how the army raids in the evening to stage a house to house search for men age 18 or older. The hamlets are structured, the people nearest to the main roads feel the assault first. They raise an alarm via their windows to other neighbors who pass the message on to the next. Muoi's father quickly moves to a hidden place between the walls to hide from them. Muoi's older brother, Hung, is too young for the draft.

On a trip to the market, Muoi and her sister San are witnesses to a thief stealing bread. They watch in horror as the police take the man to a major intersection, handcuff him to a pole, and execute him. They leave his body in plain view as a deterrent to other thieves. This shakes Muoi, and she secretly wishes to leave, as many of her friends' families have done.

Chapter 6 - A Vacation in Da Nang

The twelve-year-old Muoi is thrilled when Tran asks her to accompany Tran and her brother to Da Nang to visit friends. Muoi's mother acts strange when she asks Muoi if she would still want to go if it meant "never seeing the family again." The train trip to Da Nang is thirteen-hours long and for Muoi it is tortuous. There is nothing to do but watch people and stare out the window. Over the course of the 500-mile journey, Muoi notices changes to the rivers, streams, and communities that she passes.

In Da Nang, Tran tells her that the real reason for the trip is to escape from the country. Along with Tran's brother and some other friends, they have hired a guide to get them to the Chinese border. The escape is fraught with trials until, while in Hanoi, the army arrests them along with many others. Muoi is afraid that the military will execute them and is surprised when instead they put the escapees on a train home. They soon discover that officers are arresting people as they leave the train in their home communities. They decide that Tran's brother will jump off the train as it approaches Ho Chi Minh City while Tran and Muoi take their chances at the station. They are lucky, and the police do not detain them.

Chapter 7 – The Chance

Unknown to Muoi, her father has planned an escape for Hung. About a year earlier, he paid a boat owner eight ounces of gold for a place on the ship. Now the time has come for Hung to go and he leaves in the early morning for Long Xuyên on the Me Kong River.

Three weeks later, Muoi's parents decide to see Hung off. They and Muoi's sister, My, are on their way to the bus when they pass Muoi playing marbles in the alley outside the home. Father decides to take Muoi along also and forces her to leave her game. She is distraught and still has no idea what is going on.

Once at Long Xuyên, she sees Hung and the family explains what is happening. She is jealous that Hung is living her dream. There are two boats, one large and one small, together they hold 250 passengers. The owners delay the departure so that they can sell additional seats to pay government bribes. 512 people are now to be on board.

In an elaborate attempt to get Hung's money before he leaves the country, Muoi sneaks away from her parents and into the compound where Hung and the other travelers are waiting to leave. Once she gets the few pennies in his possession, she stays there to observe the boarding. During the process, the owner calls a girl's name three times. Muoi's uncle who is also leaving, pushes her forward and tells her to "stop being a silly girl" and get on the boat. She gets on the large boat.

Chapter 8 – In the Belly of the Beast

The security person leads Muoi into the forward hold on the vessel. She knows that the ship is carrying twice as many people as it should but is unprepared for what that means for her. Each person has about one square foot of space. She does not know if her brother is on this boat or the other one. The boat clears the mouth of the delta and enters the choppiest South China Sea, the passengers' nausea turns into mass vomiting. Muoi realizes she needs to quickly get to the open air.

Once topside, she sees that there is nothing outside the ship's edge but water. People on the deck have the same conditions as those below. She scans the crowd looking for her brother but does not find him. As she looks back at the sea, she realizes the truth of her mother's words. She may never see her family again.

Muoi discovers her brother, cousins, and uncle when Hung calls to her. As the day progresses, the boat approaches a Dutch freighter in hopes that they will take them to safe harbor. The freighter ignores them throwing the refugees into a emotional hole.

Chapter 9 – The Anger of Gods

The next day is quiet and still. They see other refugee boats on the horizon but not their sister ship lost the day before. As the heat of the day draws near, a large storm looms on the horizon. The people form a human net as they lock arms and legs. The captain forces the ship into the storm to keep her from capsizing. When it passes, the refugees realize that they have power in each other. Their spirits rise until the captain tells them he no longer knows where they are. Instruments are useless. He decides that dead reckoning will get them somewhere. Muoi is concerned that they might run out of fuel before getting anywhere.

Chapter 10 – The Deceptions of Men

People see lights off the bow as evening approaches. The captain goes toward them in search of aid and finds Thai fishermen on the ship. They agree to help in return for money and fuel. The refugees gladly pay all that they have and give them all their extra fuel as well. Men from the refugee boat go to the Thai vessel as security against abandonment. The fishermen tie a rope to the bow of the refugee ship and begin towing them behind them.

In the night, the Thai show their true colors by attacking the men on their boat with machetes. The refugee men throw themselves off the stern of the fishing boat to get away. The refugee boat pulls all the men aboard, cuts the line to the Thai vessel, and steers away from the previous path. The refugees put their women and small children in the hold. The men prepare for battle if the Thai return.

Chapter 11 – Miracles Do Happen

The events of the second day have demoralized the refugees as they drift along on the next day. They are low on fuel. A smudge on the horizon turns into another freighter that is coming their way. When the refugees hail the ship, the *Kua Kuum* responds with an offer of aid.

The boat is a Thai vessel in route to Bangkok. The crew puts women and children aboard the freighter which includes Muoi and her younger cousin Hung. Her brother, cousin and uncle stay on the refugee boat. The crew gives everyone on both boats, food and water and access to emergency medical care. During the night, the Thai captain joins the refugee men and tells them that he is not going to be able to take them to Bangkok as it is against Thai law for commercial vessels to aid refugees.

The men decide to sink their boat forcing the captain's hand. He takes everyone on board and takes his chances with the authorities. In port, the police arrest him. The authorities force the refugees to stay on board for two weeks while they figure out what to do with them. During that time, the local media turns them into a human-interest story that spreads around the world. Aid comes in from everywhere for food and supplies. The refugees use their new notoriety to get the captain out of prison and reinstated on his ship. Representatives of the UN refugee organization come on board to photograph everyone and fill out the necessary paperwork. Hung gives the representatives the address of a relative in the United States.

After two weeks, officials move the refugees to a barge in the harbor so that the freighter can sail again. The government will not allow them on land until all processing is complete. Muoi loves the freedom of the barge and how she can swim anytime she wants. Representatives of the US government come on board and tell Hung that he and Muoi's uncle agreed to sponsor them. The US government puts them on the fast track and within a few days they find themselves on a military plane headed to San Francisco via Guam and then on to Oklahoma City.

In San Francisco, Muoi gets a hint of the culture shock she will experience in America when she and Hung go shopping for gum and cigarettes at an airport kiosk with the hundred dollar bill her mother had placed in Hung's belt.

Chapter 12 – Oklahoma City, July 5, 1979

At their destination, Hung and Muoi sit waiting for their uncle to get them. They do not know that due to a series of miscommunications that their uncle doesn't know they are coming. A Laotian man who cleans the airport after hours sees Muoi and Hung still sitting at the departure gate and realizes there is a problem. Through sign language he gets them to accompany him to his apartment. There he finds a Vietnamese lady who knows their uncle. After some time he is contacted. He comes and retrieves Muoi and Hung to take them to his house.

The rest of the chapter deals with the adjustments Muoi and Hung make to acclimate themselves. One major adjustment is to the temperate climate of Oklahoma. They have no experience with cold weather let alone snow and ice. Next, they must adjust to living apart. Hung is going to rent the duplex with a friend while Muoi must live with her aunt and uncle.

This chapter ends telling us about Muoi's family in Cho Lon and how life is going for them there.

Chapter 14 – The Ultimate Challenge

In this chapter, Muoi must face her greatest challenge, junior high school. Her first day starts with her aunt abandoning her in the office of Brink Junior High. Muoi has no English language skills and know no one there. As she wanders around from class to class, she remarks that there is no one here that “looks like me”. An English language teacher named Mrs. Blevens saves her and begins basic training in English. She continues her learning using *Sesame Street* and *Electric Company* as her guides. Eventually, she discovers a Vietnamese student, Tram. Tram translated for Muoi when her new English skills failed her. She becomes Muoi’s first friend in America. Her example shows Muoi how she can also succeed here.

Two years later, Muoi goes to West Mid-High much more confident in her abilities. Here she receives her English name of Lisa from a coach who cannot pronounce her Chinese name. He asks her if he can call her Lisa, and she agrees. It sticks. Lisa goes on to graduate in the top ten percent of her class, goes to Oklahoma University and gets a degree in mathematics there. Hung also takes on an English name, Billy.

Chapter 15 – New Beginnings

When Lisa is fourteen, she and Billy get word that the rest of their family escaped on a boat and are now in a refugee camp in Malaysia. Lisa goes to work at a restaurant to help raise the money needed to bring them to Oklahoma. It takes almost two years before they have the paperwork completed and the funds raised. It is a happy gathering at the airport this time as they welcome their family to their new home.

All ten family members live in Billy’s duplex. It is crowded but they are happy being together. Mother and the older sisters get jobs at restaurants nearby while Lisa and her younger siblings continue at school. One of the restaurant owners offers the family an opportunity to own their own restaurant if they will do all the renovation themselves. They agree and the Miriwa restaurant is born and prospers.

Chapter 16 – Full Circle

With the restaurant doing well, Lisa and her older sister San decide to break in their US Passports with a trip to Hong Kong in 1989. While going down the promenade there, they see a travel agency advertising a tour to Ho Chi Minh City. It is the first sanctioned trip there since reunification fourteen years earlier. The two women are excited at the thought of going home and immediately investigate the risks of doing so. Informed they take the tour and return to Cho Lon. They are concerned about how family and friends will receive them, but their reception is warm and friendly. They decide to throw a party on their last night in town which is a rousing success. On the last day, Lisa goes back to her roof concerned with how things have changed in ten years. As she muses about, this she hears children playing in the street below. She comes to the decision that she has changed more than this city. This place belongs to Muoi and she is Lisa.

Afterward

This is a wrap-up of events in the Quan family since 1989.

Chapter 1 Vocabulary - Student List

- 1 necessary pot _____
- 2 alley _____
- 3 ancestor's altar _____
- 4 Buddhist shrine _____
- 5 calligraphy _____
- 6 Chinese Checkers _____
- 7 Chinese New Year _____
- 8 cleft lip _____
- 9 coconut water _____
- 10 condensed milk _____
- 11 discipline wand _____
- 12 electric hot plate _____
- 13 hamlet _____
- 14 headmaster _____
- 15 herbal _____
- 16 lunar cycle _____
- 17 mercurochrome _____
- 18 monsoon _____
- 19 Moon Festival _____
- 20 moped _____
- 21 mung beans _____
- 22 polio _____
- 23 pressure cooker _____
- 24 pus _____
- 25 red pockets _____
- 26 retaining walls _____
- 27 sticky rice _____
- 28 tomboy _____
- 29 tropics _____
- 30 washtub and wringer _____

Chapter 1 Vocabulary - Teacher List with Definitions

necessary pot	A large pot used as a toilet during the night. Muoi's entire family used one.
alley	A narrow road about the width of one car
Ancestors' altar	A place in the home where one's ancestors can be venerated and shown respect.
Buddhist shrine	A place where veneration is directed to the Buddha. These can be small home shrines or large public ones.
calligraphy	Intricate writing style the is more art than traditional script. In Asian cultures, calligraphy is done with brushes.
Chinese Checkers	A game played on a hexagon shaped board using dice and marbles
Chinese New Year	A seven-day celebration commencing on the first day of the new moon at the end of January. Also called TET in Vietnam.
cleft lip	An opening in the upper lip that can extend to the nose
coconut water	A clear liquid that comes from the center of green coconuts. Not to be confused with coconut milk which come from the meat of the coconut.
condensed milk	Cows' milk from which much of the water has been removed. Stored in cans.
discipline wand	A thin stick or piece of cane used to inflict pain on a student for disciplinary action.
electric hot plate	A single sometimes double electric burner that sits on a table or counter and plugs into the wall for its power
hamlet	A small village or neighborhood. Muoi's hamlet is a neighborhood within Cho Lon
headmaster	The principal of the school
herbal	Refers to a medicine that is all natural extracted from various herbs
lunar cycle	The length of time between new moons. A lunar month.
mercurochrome	A topical antiseptic. No longer used in the United States because of its mercury content.
monsoon	A seasonal reversing wind accompanied by excessive rainfall
Moon Festival	Occurs on the 15th day of the 8th lunar month often in late September on the western calendar
moped	A small motorcycle that may have pedals like a bicycle used to start it.
mung beans	Ingredient in savory and sweet foods and drinks
polio	An infectious disease that affects the nervous system. Can lead to paralysis particularly in the legs.
pressure cooker	A pot with a sealed lid that allows pressure to build up. In slang, this refers to situations where emotions are high needing a way to release or else explode.
pus	A thick yellowish fluid produced by infected tissue or trauma.
red pockets	A container for a monetary gift given at holidays, weddings, etc.
retaining walls	Low barriers used to keep water from flowing into homes
sticky rice	A rice grown in Southeast Asia that is very sticky when cooked.
tomboy	A girl who prefers to play like a boy
tropics	An area spanning the equator 23 degrees both north and south
washtub and wringer	An early washing machine where washing was done by hand

Name _____

Date _____

Chapter 1 Matching

Directions: Match the word to the BEST definition. Put the letter of the definition in the blank provided.

- | | |
|-----------------------------|--|
| 1. _____mung beans | a. the time between two new moons |
| 2. _____pressure cooker | b. a food that adheres together |
| 3. _____necessary pot | c. fruit of the cow where water has been removed |
| 4. _____washtub and wringer | d. happens in 8 th lunar month |
| 5. _____Buddhist shrine | e. barrier to keep water out |
| 6. _____sticky rice | f. a place to remember dead forefathers |
| 7. _____Moon Festival | g. a nighttime toilet |
| 8. _____condensed milk | h. an opening in the upper lip |
| 9. _____lunar cycle | i. game played on hexagon shaped board |
| 10. _____coconut water | j. something to put money in as a gift |
| 11. _____retaining walls | k. something to wash clothing |
| 12. _____electric hot plate | l. ingredient for savory or sweet drinks |
| 13. _____ancestors' altar | m. a thin stick or piece of cane |
| 14. _____discipline wand | n. a place to revere Buddha |
| 15. _____red pockets | o. a seven-day celebration |
| 16. _____cleft lip | p. a table-top stove |
| 17. _____Chinese New Year | q. a clear liquid from a seed |
| 18. _____Chinese Checkers | r. a pot with a sealed lid |

Chapter 1 Matching – Key

Name _____

Date _____

Directions: Match the word to the BEST definition. Put the letter of the definition in the blank provided.

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|---|
| 1. <u> l </u> mung beans | a. the time between two new moons |
| 2. <u> r </u> pressure cooker | b. a food that adheres together |
| 3. <u> g </u> necessary pot | c. fruit of the cow where water has
been removed |
| 4. <u> k </u> washtub and wringer | d. happens in 8 th lunar month |
| 5. <u> n </u> Buddhist shrine | e. barrier to keep water out |
| 6. <u> b </u> sticky rice | f. a place to remember dead forefathers |
| 7. <u> d </u> Moon Festival | g. a nighttime toilet |
| 8. <u> c </u> condensed milk | h. an opening in the upper lip |
| 9. <u> a </u> lunar cycle | i. game played on hexagon shaped
board |
| 10. <u> q </u> coconut water | j. something to put money in as a gift |
| 11. <u> e </u> retaining walls | k. something to wash clothing |
| 12. <u> p </u> electric hot plate | l. ingredient for savory or sweet drinks |
| 13. <u> f </u> ancestor's altar | m. a thin stick or piece of cane |
| 14. <u> m </u> discipline wand | n. a place to revere Buddha |
| 15. <u> j </u> red pockets | o. a seven-day celebration |
| 16. <u> h </u> cleft lip | p. a table-top stove |
| 17. <u> o </u> Chinese New Year | q. a clear liquid from a seed |
| 18. <u> i </u> Chinese Checkers | r. a pot with a sealed lid |

Name _____

Date _____

Chapter 1 – Supplemental Assignment 1 - Inference

Directions: Inference is the ability to get the definition of a word from the context in which we use it. In the following questions, CIRCLE the letter of the answer that you feel is the BEST definition of the underlined word.

1. The honeycomb maze of streets and alleys, with homes sometimes touching and at most a foot or two apart, made it all but impossible for us to see the actual sun rise.
 - a. gardens
 - b. narrow streets
 - c. ledges
 - d. balconies

2. I loved to write. My mother instructed me in Chinese calligraphy and my cousin Tran inspired me to perfect it.
 - e. driving
 - f. reading
 - g. doll making
 - h. writing

3. We were the tallest house in our hamlet and from its vantage point I could see the whole of my world.
 - a. neighborhood
 - b. city
 - c. street
 - d. block

4. I once came to school with shoes that were “almost black”, and the headmaster sent me home immediately...
 - e. principal
 - f. slave trader
 - g. teacher
 - h. class parent

5. I could hear my father and mother on the floor above beginning their day manufacturing Chinese herbal medicines for the doctors and apothecaries in Cho Lon.
 - a. plant based
 - b. secret
 - c. illegal
 - d. artificial

6. Later, Mom painted my wound with mercurochrome which I swear hurt worse than the damaged skin did!
- e. paint
f. tar
- g. medicine
h. chrome
7. Not even the monsoons whose water fell straight down and filled our makeshift alley swimming pool in minutes could compare with this.
- a. gentle rain
b. thunderstorm
- c. heavy rain
d. tornado
8. Other times, he gave me rides on his moped. I would sit in front of him with my mouth open, humming along with the engine noise.
- e. motorcycle
f. car
- g. bicycle
h. bicycle with a motor
9. She had contracted polio when she was four and it had left her severely disabled.
- a. a disease
b. an accident
- c. a cold
d. a fall
10. As it turned out, blood and pus were flowing down my back, and that was what freaked her out.
- e. a yellow bodily fluid
f. a type of medicine
- g. a home remedy for sunburn
h. a syrup from cold drinks
11. My sister, San, claimed I was a tomboy, and I guess that was true to a degree. I loved adventure...
- a. a boy with a typically girl's behavior
b. a girl with a typically boy's behavior
- c. a girl who is physically active
d. a girl who bullies others
12. Living in the tropics, any relief from the omnipresent heat was welcome.
- e. a place without air conditioning
f. a house with no windows
g. another name for Muoi's neighborhood
h. a place on Earth where it is always hot and humid

Chapter 1 – Supplemental Assignment 1 - Inference

Answers for Inference Review

1. b

2. h

3. a

4. e

5. a

6. g

7. c

8. h

9. a

10. e

11. b

12. h

Chapter 1 – Supplemental Assignment 2

Parts of an Essay

While you read the following expository essay (an essay that informs) on Vietnam, identify the following by highlighting or underlining it in the essay. After identifying it, label it for identification later.

- 1. “grabber” sentence**
- 2. Thesis sentence for the essay from the opening paragraph**
- 3. Topic sentence for each of the body paragraphs**
- 4. Restatement of the thesis in closing paragraph**

Vietnam

Vietnam may appear to be an alien world, especially to those in the West. It is just so different from anyplace else. Enticing to the adventurous, yet difficult to comprehend, this country which is slightly smaller than California contains impenetrable mountains in the northwest as well as enormous coastal plains in the southeast with every possible combination in-between. Culturally, the northern part of the country excels. The history and architecture found in its temples and palaces are magnificent. Its people, although they appear the same, have distinct ways, almost a different language. Although all of these make Vietnam a unique experience, it is its political past that most influences Muoi and her family.

Vietnam is not a particularly large country especially when compared to the United States or China. This is misleading. A trip from the northernmost part of Vietnam to the most southern would be the equivalent of travelling from Seattle, Washington to San Diego, California, a trip of nearly 750 miles. Similarly, depending on the time of year, someone travelling the length of Vietnam could see snow on the mountains west of Hanoi and, on the very same day enjoy a hot,

sunny beach outside of Ho Chi Minh City with thousands of people taking the opportunity to cool off from the omnipresent heat. As in the United States, the northern part of Vietnam houses most of its industrial capabilities, while the south is its agricultural powerhouse.

The north is also the source of most of Vietnam's cultural wealth. Legend states that the earliest Vietnamese dynasty, the Hung, started here around 3000 BCE and endured for almost three thousand years. Even though there is no real documentation for much of this history, suffice it to say that civilization has existed here for a long time. We do know that around 100 CE the Chinese conquered this area and integrated it into China as part of the Han Empire. Control of the country and its people see-sawed back and forth between Vietnam and China until 1887 CE when France successfully annexed Vietnam as a French colony. They divided the country and developed it as two separate entities – industry and manufacturing in the north, and agricultural development in the south. Because it was the seat of the earliest Vietnamese civilization, the north also contains the wealth of Vietnamese antiquities and culture. Here one can literally see cultures collide as Vietnamese, Chinese, and French architecture compete on every street corner.

The people of Vietnam are as different as their landscape. The people of the north, influenced by the harsher weather are more aloof, more reserved than their cousins to the south whereas the South Vietnamese are more easy going. This is not that different than people in the United States. People from the deep South often consider their northern counterparts “stuffy”, while at the same time, people from New England have a difficult time understanding the more relaxed attitudes in the South.

There is a big difference when it comes to language. Where the dialectical differences between northern and southern Americans can drive people crazy, we can generally understand

that “Youse” and “Y’all” mean the same thing. In Vietnam, that is not the case. There, common words to both locales can mean totally different things. This is the reason Tran asks Muoi not to speak on the trip to Hanoi.

People much smarter than I have argued the political differences between North and South Vietnam for decades. Shortly after the Second World War and encouraged by what he was seeing in China, Ho Chi Minh and a group of followers started a revolution to drive the French out of Vietnam – an endeavor in which they were only partially successful. When the Vietnamese Army finally defeated the French in battle, the UN established a treaty formally creating two Vietnams – North and South. The South embraced democracy as demonstrated by the French and Americans while the North embraced Communism.

In the embattled years to follow, many southerners sympathized with their brothers in the North. Among other things, this led to the defeat of the South Vietnamese forces in 1975 when the Communists united the entire country under Communist rule. This is what led to so many wanting to escape their homeland for strange shores. Muoi’s family was among them. They had prospered under the divided rule. The geographic, historic, and linguistic differences had not affected them at all. It was the political change that forced their hand.

Chapter 1 – Supplemental Assignment 2 Answers

Vietnam

“grabber” sentence

Vietnam may appear to be an alien world, especially to those in the West. It is just so different from anyplace else. Enticing to the adventurous, yet difficult to comprehend, this country which is slightly smaller than California contains impenetrable mountains in the northwest as well as enormous coastal plains in the southeast with every possible combination in-between. Culturally, the northern part of the country excels. The history and architecture found in its temples and palaces are magnificent. Its people, although they appear the same, have distinct ways, almost a different language. Although all of these make Vietnam a unique experience, it is its political past that most influences Muoi and her family.

Thesis statement

Vietnam is not a particularly large country especially when compared to the United States or China. This is misleading. A trip from the northernmost part of Vietnam to the most southern would be the equivalent of travelling from Seattle, Washington to San Diego, California, a trip of nearly 750 miles. Similarly, depending on the time of year, someone travelling the length of Vietnam could see snow on the mountains west of Hanoi and, on the very same day enjoy a hot, sunny beach outside of Ho Chi Minh City with thousands of people taking the opportunity to cool off from the omnipresent heat. As in the United States, the northern part of Vietnam houses most of its industrial capabilities, while the south is its agricultural powerhouse.

Topic sentence
(geography)

The north is also the source of most of Vietnam’s cultural wealth.

Topic sentence
(culture)

Legend states that the earliest Vietnamese dynasty, the Hung, started here around 3000 BCE and endured for almost three thousand years. Even though there is no real

documentation for much of this history, suffice it to say that civilization has existed here for a long time. We do know that around 100 CE the Chinese conquered this area and integrated it into China as part of the Han Empire. Control of the country and its people see-sawed back and forth between Vietnam and China until 1887 CE when France successfully annexed Vietnam as a French colony. They divided the country and developed it as two separate entities – industry and manufacturing in the north, and agricultural development in the south. Because it was the seat of the earliest Vietnamese civilization, the north also contains the wealth of Vietnamese antiquities and culture. Here one can literally see cultures collide as Vietnamese, Chinese, and French architecture compete on every street corner.

The people of Vietnam are as different as their landscape.

Topic sentence
(people)

The

people of the north, influenced by the harsher weather are more aloof, more reserved than their cousins to the south whereas the South Vietnamese are more easy going. This is not that different than people in the United States. People from the deep South often consider their northern counterparts “stuffy”, while at the same time, people from New England have a difficult time understanding the more relaxed attitudes in the South.

There is a big difference when it comes to language.

Topic sentence (language)

Where the dialectical differences between northern and southern Americans can drive people crazy, we can generally understand that “Youse” and “Y’all” mean the same thing. In Vietnam, that is not the case. There, common words to both locales can mean totally different things. This is the reason Tran asks Muoi not to speak on the trip to Hanoi.

People much smarter than I have argued the political differences between North and South Vietnam for decades.

Topic sentence (politics)

Shortly after the Second World

War and encouraged by what he was seeing in China, Ho Chi Minh and a group of followers

started a revolution to drive the French out of Vietnam – an endeavor in which they were only partially successful. When the Vietnamese Army finally defeated the French in battle, the UN established a treaty formally creating two Vietnams – North and South. The South embraced democracy as demonstrated by the French and Americans while the North embraced Communism.

*In the embattled years to follow, many southerners sympathized with their brothers in the North. Among other things, this led to the defeat of the South Vietnamese forces in 1975 when the Communists united the entire country under Communist rule. This is what led to so many wanting to escape their homeland for strange shores. Muoi’s family was among them. They had prospered under the divided rule. **The geographic, historic, human, and linguistic differences had not affected them at all. It was the political change that forced their hand.***

Thesis restatement

Chapter 1 Supplemental Assignment 2 – Follow-up Questions

As a follow up to this assignment, I suggest the following questions for discussion.

1. The author’s “grabber” sentence is a little bland. Can you think of a better one?
Example: One could travel the world over and not experience anything quite like Vietnam?
2. What do you notice about the order of topics in the essay?
Answer: The author presents the detail paragraphs in the same order they are mentioned in the first paragraph.
3. What do you notice about the sentence lengths in this essay?
Answer: Lengths vary from long to short.
4. Why do you think the author does this?
Answer: Varied lengths build interest. It keeps the essay moving.