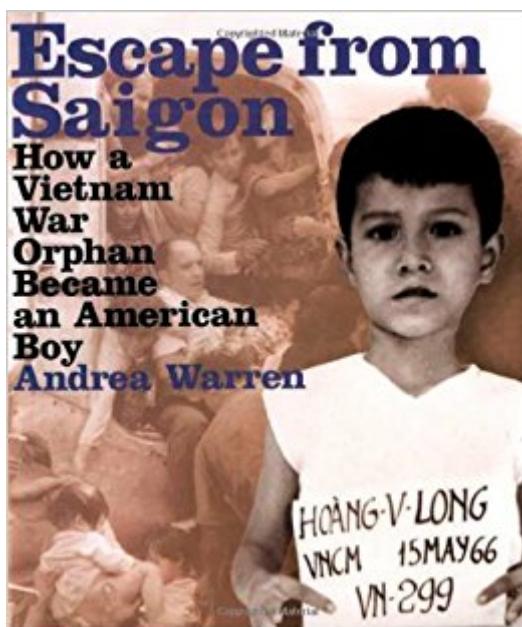


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# Escape From Saigon: How A Vietnam War Orphan Became An American Boy (Booklist Editor's Choice. Books For Youth (Awards))



## **Synopsis**

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

## **Book Information**

Lexile Measure: 930L (What's this?)

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Age Range: 10 - 15 years

Grade Level: 5 and up

## **Customer Reviews**

Grade 5-9âœ Warren relates the story of the 1975 Operation Babylift as seen through the eyes of Long, an eight-year-old Amerasian boy who was part of the airlift. The author uses narrative and reconstructions of conversations from interviews with those involved to trace Long's life,

beginning with his indistinct memories of his American father and his more vivid recollections of his Vietnamese mother's suicide and his grandmother's struggle to protect and support him during wartime. She describes his stay at the Saigon orphanage operated by Holt International Children's Services, which housed, schooled, and arranged for his adoption by an American family. Long recalls the fear and excitement during the fall of Saigon, his journey out of Vietnam, his sorrow at the separation from his grandmother, and his emotional transition to his new identity as Matt Steiner. The book concludes with a moving account of Matt's 1995 return to Vietnam, where he finally understood the magnitude of the sacrifice his grandmother made for his safety and future. Photos of Long in both Vietnam and America illustrate the text. Although Warren mentions the cruelties of the communist Vietnamese government and America's abandonment of its South Vietnamese allies, this is a personal story, one that is so well written that it will be sure to hold readers' attention. An outstanding choice. —Mary Mueller, Rolla Junior High School, MO

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*\*Starred Review\* Gr. 5-12.* At the end of the Vietnam War, eight-year-old Amerasian orphan named Long fled his country and found a loving home with his adoptive family in Ohio. With a new name, Matt Steiner, he grew up to be high-school valedictorian and athletic star, and now he is a doctor with his own happy family. But this stirring photo-essay is more than a rags-to-riches story. Always true to the child's viewpoint, Warren's clear narrative, with many documentary photos, begins as the boy struggles to survive in Vietnam, then describes the anguish of his abandonment by a loving grandmother no longer able to care for him; the kindness of rescuers at the orphanage, who arranged his adoption; and his terrifying evacuation on a plane under fire. The child-at-war story and the facts about the Operation Babylift rescue are tense and exciting. Just as gripping is the boy's personal conflict: his struggle to become American; his attempt to deny his sadness at what he left behind; and, finally, his pride in his roots ("I will never forget that my American heart is half Vietnamese"). Framing the biography is fascinating information, including Warren's account of the evacuation of her own adopted baby daughter on Operation Babylift; discussion about international adoption and Amerasian children; and a lengthy annotated list of sources. Hazel Rochman

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This is the true story of a young Amerasian boy finds a new family in the United States. Being the son of a Vietnamese woman and an American man puts Long in a difficult position. Because of the war, many do not see Americans with an unbiased eye. When Long loses his mother and his

grandmother can no longer support him, he goes to live in an orphanage run by a nonprofit organization from the United States. As the Communists get ever closer it, Holt International (the group running the orphanage) decides they must get the children out without delay (most of the children have been placed for adoption). The book follows the remarkable operation known as Babylift which helped get over two thousand children out of Saigon before the Communists arrived. The rest of the story follows Long's (Matt) experiences in adjusting to a new family and a new life. This book beautifully complements Inside Out & Back Again, giving the reader a glimpse of the Vietnam War from the perspective of a child. It also reveals that some good things were done by Americans as well as all the bad things we always hear about happening during that war. The writing is clear and crisp and perfect for reading out-loud. This book gives the reader, especially a child reader, a chance to see some of the things that children experience around the world, and hopefully better appreciate the good things about living in the United States.

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

At first I thought the content would be too difficult for 2nd grade reader. It turned out my daughter loved it and started to care about orphans and the cause.

Very touching story based on true facts. I was able to visualize the pain and suffering experienced by orphans as they grappled with war, death and loss of identity.

I think this was a very good book even if I had to read it for history. It's hard to believe one boy could create such an impact on the Vietnam war.

I'm a Vietnamese raised in the early 90s and I can assure you that whatever it is; this book got it! It depicts the very sad and true situation in my country back in the 60s-70s. Every word in this book seems to remind me of my childhood as well. I have no more words to say about this book. It's just simply a wonderful piece. A story you shall never forget.

It was good and it was interesting. It was cool to learn about and I enjoyed reading it. However, I thought that it needed a little bit more details about the people still remaining in Saigon.

Excellent !

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