

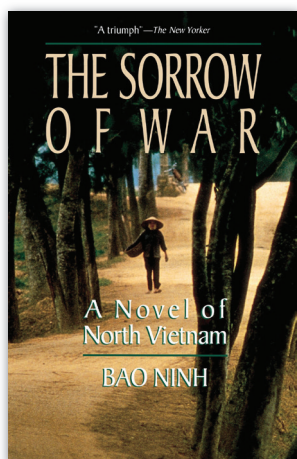
RECOMMENDED NEXT READS

The Vietnam War may have ended in 1975, but its effects have reached across generations, as *The Mountains Sing* makes clear. For our Recommended Next Reads, we've selected titles that dive into Vietnamese culture and history, as well as the war, offering readers a chance to explore from a variety of perspectives.

View the full collection here: <https://www.hoopladigital.com/collection/8557>

CONFLICT IN FICTION

Spotlight author Nguyễn Phan Quế Mai believes that "...a historical novel can offer almost the same level of insight and understanding compared to a nonfiction account...fiction can help us get at a deeper, experiential and personalized truth about historical events and their aftermath." Here are additional book recommendations lauded for their honest portrayal of difficult events and tenuous times, illustrated ever so eloquently through the medium of fiction.



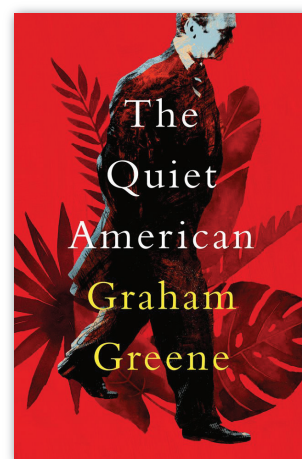
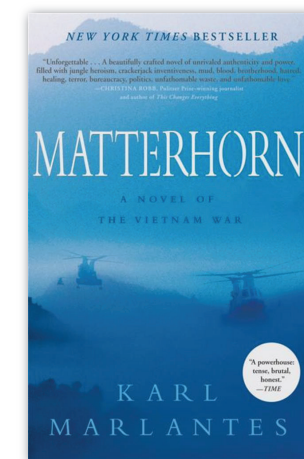
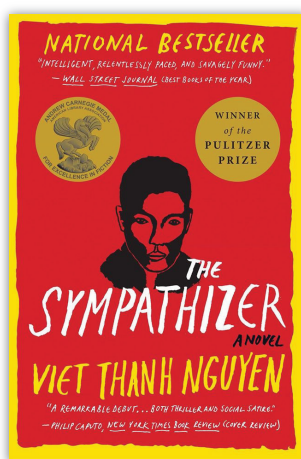
THE SORROW OF WAR BY BAO NINH

"Will force American readers to acknowledge how little they still understand of the long war that left such a legacy of grief and guilt in their own country." —*The Washington Post*

This historical fiction novel by former North Vietnamese soldier Bao Ninh provides a strikingly honest look at how the Vietnam War forever changed his life, his country, and the people who live there. Born in Hanoi in 1952, Bao Ninh served with the Glorious 27th Youth Brigade during the Vietnam War. Of the five hundred who went to war with the brigade in 1969, he is one of the ten who survived. Originally published against government wishes in Vietnam because of its non-heroic, non-ideological tone, *The Sorrow of War* has won worldwide acclaim and become an international bestseller.

MATTERHORN BY KARL MARLANTES

"It's impossible, of course, for anyone who wasn't there to fully gauge the horror and violence that American and Vietnamese soldiers encountered every minute of every day. In his debut novel, *Matterhorn*, Vietnam combat veteran Karl Marlantes attempts to transport his readers to 1969, in a jungle near Laos, just south of the Vietnamese Demilitarized Zone where a company of young U.S. Marines are fighting for their lives in a war none of them really understands...Marlantes comes closer than any American writer ever has to capturing the unrelenting terror and enormity of one of the saddest chapters in recent world history." —*NPR*



THE SYMPATHIZER BY VIET THANH NGUYEN

The winner of the 2016 Pulitzer Prize for Fiction, *The Sympathizer* is an absolute breakthrough novel. With the pace and suspense of a thriller and prose that has been compared to Graham Greene and Saul Bellow, this is a sweeping epic of love and betrayal. The narrator, a double agent, is a "man of two minds," a half-French, half-Vietnamese army captain who arranges to come to Los Angeles after the Fall of Saigon, and while building a new life with other Vietnamese refugees is secretly reporting to his communist superiors in Vietnam. *The Sympathizer* is a blistering exploration of identity and America, a gripping espionage novel, and a powerful story of love and friendship.

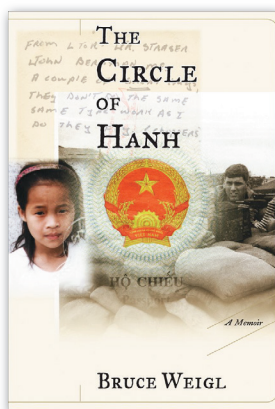
THE QUIET AMERICAN BY GRAHAM GREENE

"*The Quiet American*, by Graham Greene, was written in 1955 and set in Vietnam, then the site of a rising local insurgency against French colonial rule. In its brilliant braiding together of a political and a romantic tangle, its characters serve as emblems of the American, European and Asian way, and yet ache and tremble as ordinary human beings do. It also is a typically Greenian prophecy of what would happen 10 years later when U.S. troops would arrive, determined to teach a rich and complex place the latest theories of Harvard Square. Lyrical, enchanted descriptions of rice paddies, languorous opium dens and even slightly sinister Buddhist political groups are a lantered backdrop to a tale of irony and betrayal." —*NPR*

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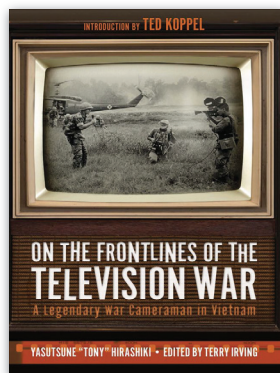
TRUE STORY: NONFICTION ACCOUNTS OF THE VIETNAM WAR

In this selection of nonfiction accounts of the Vietnam War, you'll find stories shared from very different—but ultimately intersecting—angles. If read in totality, you'll glean a comprehensive view of the war from perspectives across time, space, and careers. For an even deeper look, please read on to our Gaining Perspective theme, in which we compare the stories of a Vietnamese citizen and an American researcher along the same timeline, during the Battle of Hue in 1968 and its immediate aftermath.



THE CIRCLE OF HANH BY BRUCE WEIGL

In this piercingly honest memoir, Bruce Weigl, who has established himself as one of our finest American poets, explores the central experience of his life as a writer and a man: the Vietnam War, which tore his life apart and in return gave him his poetic voice. Weigl knew nothing about Vietnam before enlisting in 1967, but he saw a free ride out of a difficult childhood among volatile people. The war completely changed his life; there was a before and then one irrevocable after. Moving from childhood to the war to a final act of compassion and hope, *The Circle of Hanh* is a powerful recreation of a deeply haunted life and, ultimately, a stunning work of redemption.



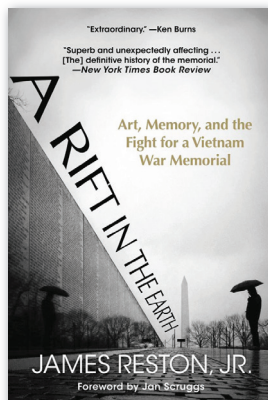
ON THE FRONTLINES OF THE TELEVISION WAR BY YASUTSUNE HIRASHIKI

A LEGENDARY WAR CAMERAMAN IN VIETNAM

"On The Frontlines of the Television War" is the story of Yasutsune "Tony" Hirashiki's ten years in Vietnam, beginning when he arrived in 1966 as a young freelancer with a 16mm camera but without a job or the slightest grasp of English and ending in the hectic fall of Saigon in 1975 when he was literally thrown on one of the last flights out.

His memoir has tales of peril, hardship, and close calls, but it is primarily a story of very real and yet remarkable people: the soldiers who fought, bled, and died, and the reporters and photographers who went right to the frontlines to record their stories and memorialize their sacrifice.

"Tony Hirashiki is an essential piece of the foundation on which ABC was built. From the day he approached the Bureau Chief in Saigon with a note pinned to his shirt saying he could shoot pictures to the anxious afternoon of 9/11 when we lost him in the collapse of the Twin Towers (and he emerged covered in dust clutching his precious beta tapes), Tony reported the news with his camera and in doing so, he brought the truth about the important events of our day to millions of Americans." —David Westin, Former President of ABC News



A RIFT IN THE EARTH BY JAMES RESTON

A Rift in the Earth tells the remarkable story of the ferocious "art war" that raged between 1979 and 1984 over what kind of memorial should be built to honor the men and women who died in the Vietnam War. At its center are two enduring figures: Maya Lin, a young Asian-American architecture student at Yale whose abstract design won the international competition but triggered a fierce backlash among powerful figures, and Frederick Hart, an innovative sculptor of humble origins on the cusp of stardom.

James Reston, Jr., a veteran and bestselling historian, explores how the debate reignited passions around Vietnam long after the war's end and raised questions about how best to honor those who fought and sacrificed in an ill-advised war. Richly illustrated with photographs from the era and design entries from the memorial competition, the story intertwines art, politics, historical memory, patriotism, racism, and a fascinating set of characters, from those who fought in the conflict and those who resisted it to politicians at the highest level.

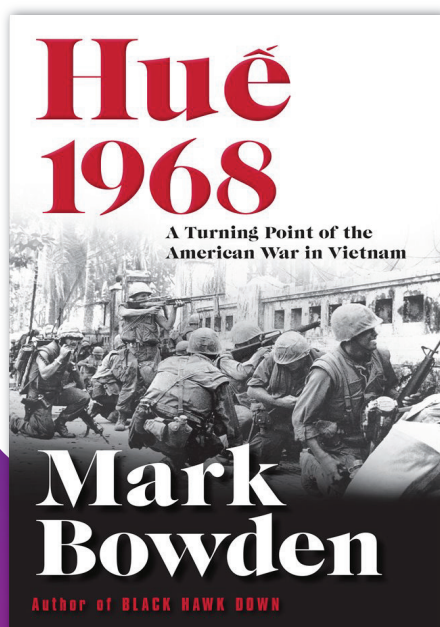
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GAINING PERSPECTIVE

The Battle of Hue made its painful mark on history as one of the longest and bloodiest battles of the war—no minor marker as so many of the conflicts of the Vietnam War were nearly as devastating.

Bestselling author Mark Bowden's account is written from a broad perspective, using sources from U.S. and Vietnam military archives, as well as interviews with participants on both sides. In the pages of *Hue 1968*, Bowden narrates each stage of this crucial battle through multiple viewpoints.

Author Nha Ca presents events from a more intimate angle. In January of 1968, she arrives in the city to attend her father's funeral. Without warning, war erupts all around them, drastically changing their lives. After a month, their beautiful city lies in ruins and thousands of people are dead. You will find in *Mourning Headband for Hue* an unvarnished, riveting account of war as experienced by everyday people caught in the violence.



HUE 1968 BY MARK BOWDEN

Longlisted for the 2017 Andrew Carnegie Medal for Excellence in Nonfiction
An ALA Notable Book of the Year
A Kirkus Reviews & Chicago Public Library Best Book of the Year

"A gripping, and timely, history...powerful...[*Hue 1968*] is likely to claim a place on the shelf of essential books about the Vietnam War. Based on hundreds of interviews, news accounts, histories and military archives, the book combines intensive research with Bowden's propulsive narrative style and insightful analysis...What sets Bowden's account of the battle apart is his skill at moving from the macro—the history of the war, the politics surrounding it, the tactics of the battle—to the micro: the individuals, American and Vietnamese, who fought it and tried to survive it."

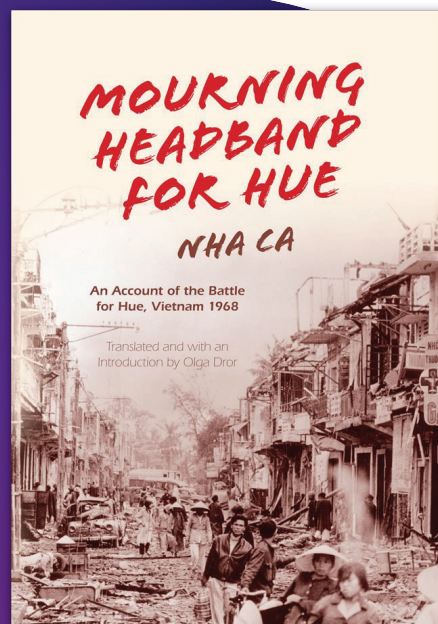
—Colette Bancroft, *Tampa Bay Times*

MOURNING HEADBAND FOR HUE BY NHA CA

"...too little has been written on the civilian experience of conflict, a conflict that profoundly shaped the lives of millions of Vietnamese. It is important that we read about this violence, and through first-hand accounts: the further we move away from the Vietnam War, and the more we clinically dissect the war in terms of high politics and military strategy, the less we seem to remember that the war, on the ground, could be vicious, brutal, and devastating."

—Shawn F. McHale, George Washington University, author of *Print and Power: Confucianism, Communism, and Buddhism in the Making of Modern Vietnam*

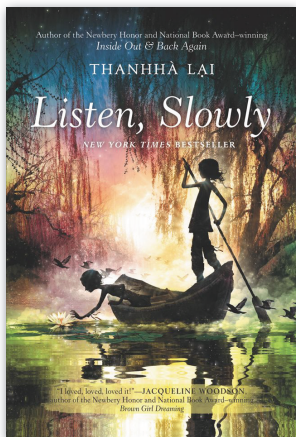
"...a great piece of modernist war writing and it deserves to be read alongside *All Quiet on the Western Front*, *Homage to Catalonia*, *Johnny Got His Gun*, *The Naked and the Dead*, *The Things They Carried*, and *Black Hawk Down*." —Peter Zinoman, University of California Berkeley, author of *Vietnamese Colonial Republican: The Political Vision of Vu Trong Phung*



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WORKS BY VIETNAMESE AUTHORS: LITERATURE

After being so moved by Nguyễn Phan Quế Mai's depiction of her culture in *The Mountains Sing*, we knew we wanted literature by Vietnamese authors to be a focus of our Recommended Next Reads. We were delighted to later find some of these titles also recommended by Quế Mai in her Author Q&A (available for download at theclub.hoopladigital.com). Here we present more selections from Vietnamese writers that have received enthusiastic reviews.



LISTEN, SLOWLY BY THANHHA LAI

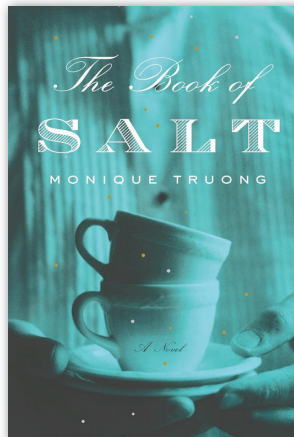
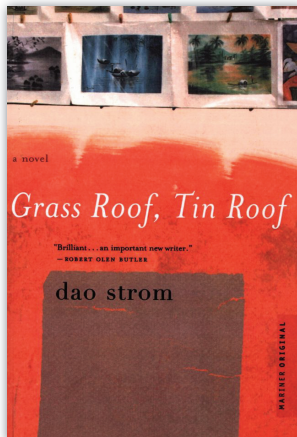
This remarkable and bestselling novel from Thanhha Lai, author of the National Book Award-winning and Newbery Honor Book *Inside Out & Back Again*, follows a young girl as she learns the true meaning of family.

A California girl born and raised, Mai can't wait to spend her vacation at the beach. Instead, she has to travel to Vietnam with her grandmother, who is going back to find out what really happened to her husband during the Vietnam War. Though it is a book meant for middle grades, adults will perhaps come to understand the perspective of American-born Vietnamese children with a narrator quite similar to Guava's age at the start of *The Mountains Sing*.

"This book is at once funny, thoughtful, and stunningly engaging. I loved, loved, loved it! Can't wait for my own daughter—and every reader who is lucky enough to get their hands on it—to step inside Mai's two, very different, worlds." —Jacqueline Woodson, author of the National Book Award-winning *Brown Girl Dreaming*

GRASS ROOF, TIN ROOF BY DAO STROM

Told from multiple perspectives and spanning several decades, *Grass Roof, Tin Roof* begins with the story of Tran, a Vietnamese writer facing government persecution, who flees her homeland during the exodus of 1975 and brings her two children to the West. Here, she marries a Danish-American man who has survived a different war. He promises understanding and guidance—but the psychic consequences of his past soon hinder his relationships with the family, as the children, for whom the war is now a distant shadow, struggle to understand the world around them on their own terms. In delicate, innovative prose, Strom's characters experience the collision of cultures and the spiritual aftermath of war on the most visceral level.



THE BOOK OF SALT BY MONIQUE TRUONG

"[He] came to us through an advertisement that I had in desperation put in the newspaper." It began captivantly for those days: "Two American ladies wish..." It was these lines in *The Alice B. Toklas Cook Book* that inspired *The Book of Salt*. In Paris, 1934, Binh has accompanied his employers, Gertrude Stein and Alice B. Toklas, to the train station for their departure to America. His own destination is unclear: will he go with "the Steins," stay in France, or return to his native Vietnam? Binh has fled his homeland in disgrace, leaving behind his malevolent charlatan of a father and his self-sacrificing mother. For five years, he has been the live-in cook at the famous apartment at 27 rue de Fleurus. Before Binh's decision is revealed, his mesmerizing narrative catapults us back to his youth in French-colonized Vietnam, his years as a galley hand at sea, and his days turning out fragrant repasts for the doyennes of the Lost Generation.

DRAGONFISH BY VU TRAN

Robert, an Oakland cop, still can't let go of Suzy, the enigmatic Vietnamese wife who left him two years ago. Now she's disappeared from her new husband, Sonny, a violent Vietnamese smuggler and gambler who's blackmailing Robert into finding her for him. As he pursues her through the sleek and seamy gambling dens of Las Vegas, shadowed by Sonny's sadistic son "Junior," and assisted by unexpected and reluctant allies, Robert learns more about his ex-wife than he ever did during their marriage. He finds himself chasing the ghosts of her past, one that reaches back to a refugee camp in Malaysia after the fall of Saigon, as his investigation soon uncovers an elusive packet of her secret letters to someone she left behind long ago. This remarkable debut novel is a noir page-turner resonant with the lasting reverberations of lives lost and lives remade a generation ago.

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WORKS BY VIETNAMESE AUTHORS: POETRY

The Mountains Sing author Nguyễn Phan Quế Mai has expressed the written word in many forms—as a translator, essayist, journalist, and poet. It is the last of these forms—poetry—that we found to inform the writing of the novel so beautifully; poets seem to take language onto another level altogether, cementing ideas and scenes in our hearts in a more emotionally resonant way. Below you will find a collection of poetry by our Spotlight author alongside three anthologies by Vietnamese poets. Rather than describing the collected books here, we've offered up poetry excerpts from a selected poem in each that we found to encapsulate an idea or feeling we'd read echoed in *The Mountains Sing*.



THOUSAND STAR HOTEL BY BAO PHI

An excerpt from '*Ego-Tripping as Self-Defense Mechanism for Refugee Kids Who Got Their Names Clowned On*'

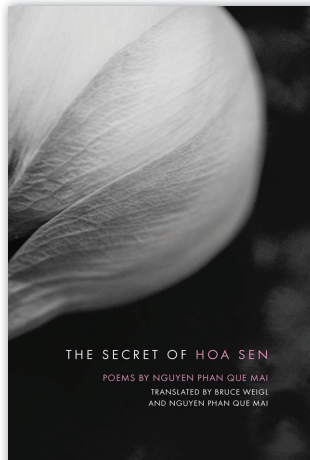
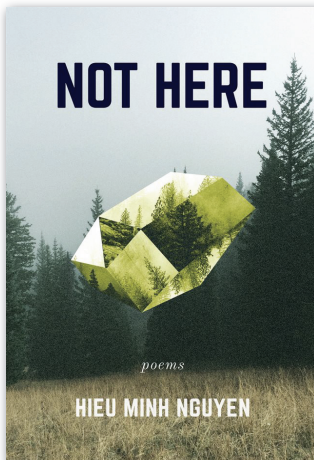
"My given name, Thiên-bảo,
translates to
treasure from heaven...
...I would finally like to thank my parents...

"...because everyone who has ever addressed me
from bullies to crushes to haters
has had no choice
but to call me
valuable."

NOT HERE BY HIEU MINH NGUYEN

An excerpt from '*Reunion*'

"...In death we belong to everyone
who can pass our names through their warm mouths
who can smell the rotten air without flinching
who can tilt their noses up into the sky & think family."



THE SECRET OF HOA SEN BY NGUYỄN PHAN QUẾ MAI

An excerpt from '*The Poem I Can't Yet Name*'

"...Lifting the bowl of rice in my hands, I count every seed,
each one glistening with the sweat of my ancestors,
their backs bent in the rice fields,
the fragrance of my grandmother's lullaby alive on each one."



NIGHT SKY WITH EXIT WOUNDS BY OCEAN VUONG

An excerpt from '*Headfirst*'

"...When they ask you
where you're from,
tell them your name
was fleshed from the toothless mouth
of a war-woman.
That you were not born
but crawled, headfirst—
into the hunger of dogs. My son, tell them
the body is a blade that sharpens by cutting."