



## Goodbye, Vietnam

By Gloria Whelan

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### Goodbye, Vietnam By Gloria Whelan

"When Mai's family discovers that Vietnam government soldiers will soon apprehend her father and grandmother, the family slips away in the night. They trudge through the swamps of the Mekong Delta toward the sea. The gut-wrenching trip to Hong Kong is just another step toward a new life, which the family eventually finds. Whelan's characters are distinctive, and her story is riveting, haunting, and memorable, reflecting the human virtues of determination, hope, love, and courage in the face of the most devastating of circumstances and injustices."--*Booklist*.

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## **Editorial Review**

From Publishers Weekly

Whelan's ( *Bringing the Farmhouse Home* ; Hannah ) latest novel examines the monumental struggle and privation that a group of people must endure to escape political and economic oppression in contemporary Vietnam. Thirteen-year-old Mai is frightened and distraught to learn that her parents have planned to leave their home and secure passage to Hong Kong. But with hopes of freedom and prosperity to spur them on, Mai and her relatives cram themselves onto a barely seaworthy boat captained by a crusty, greedy man. The voyage is difficult at best: food and water are scarce; illness, lice, rats and blazing sun plague the debilitated passengers. When they finally reach Hong Kong, the challenges of a police inspection and a camp filled with thousands of other refugees await them. Although it chronicles many brutal realities, Whelan's story maintains an air of cool composure. Mai is the perfect narrator through whom to introduce a large cast of unusual, sympathetic characters; her emotional control and keen observations prove to be a source of calm in the storm that swirls around her. Readers will be introduced to elements of a new culture and made painfully aware of social conditions in other parts of the world. Ages 8-12.

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From School Library Journal

Grade 4-8-- Since the grandmother faces arrest in present-day Vietnam for following the old religion and practicing healing, the Vinh family decides to flee their small rice-growing village in the Mekong Delta and escape by sea to Hong Kong. With his skills as a mechanic, the father has secured their passage on a small boat. In a first-person narrative, 13-year-old Mai relates their odyssey. Before boarding the boat, the Vinhs become acquainted with a female doctor and her daughter from Ho Chi Minh City (formerly Saigon).

Whelan uses this relationship to set off Vietnamese rural life against the urban, the old traditions against the new. Perhaps because of this emphasis on imparting information, the plot is not as significant as it could be, and many of the characters are stock figures. Nonetheless, the book describes well the hardships many of America's newest refugees have endured and is one of the few accounts available on Vietnam's boat people.

--Diane S. Marton, Arlington County Library, VA

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From the Inside Flap

"When Mai's family discovers that Vietnam government soldiers will soon apprehend her father and grandmother, the family slips away in the night. They trudge through the swamps of the Mekong Delta toward the sea. The gut-wrenching trip to Hong Kong is just another step toward a new life, which the family eventually finds. Whelan's characters are distinctive, and her story is riveting, haunting, and memorable, reflecting the human virtues of determination, hope, love, and courage in the face of the most devastating of circumstances and injustices."--"Booklist.

## **Users Review**

**From reader reviews:**

**Amber Orlowski:**

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**John Bullard:**

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**Thelma Martin:**

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**Karen Baskin:**

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