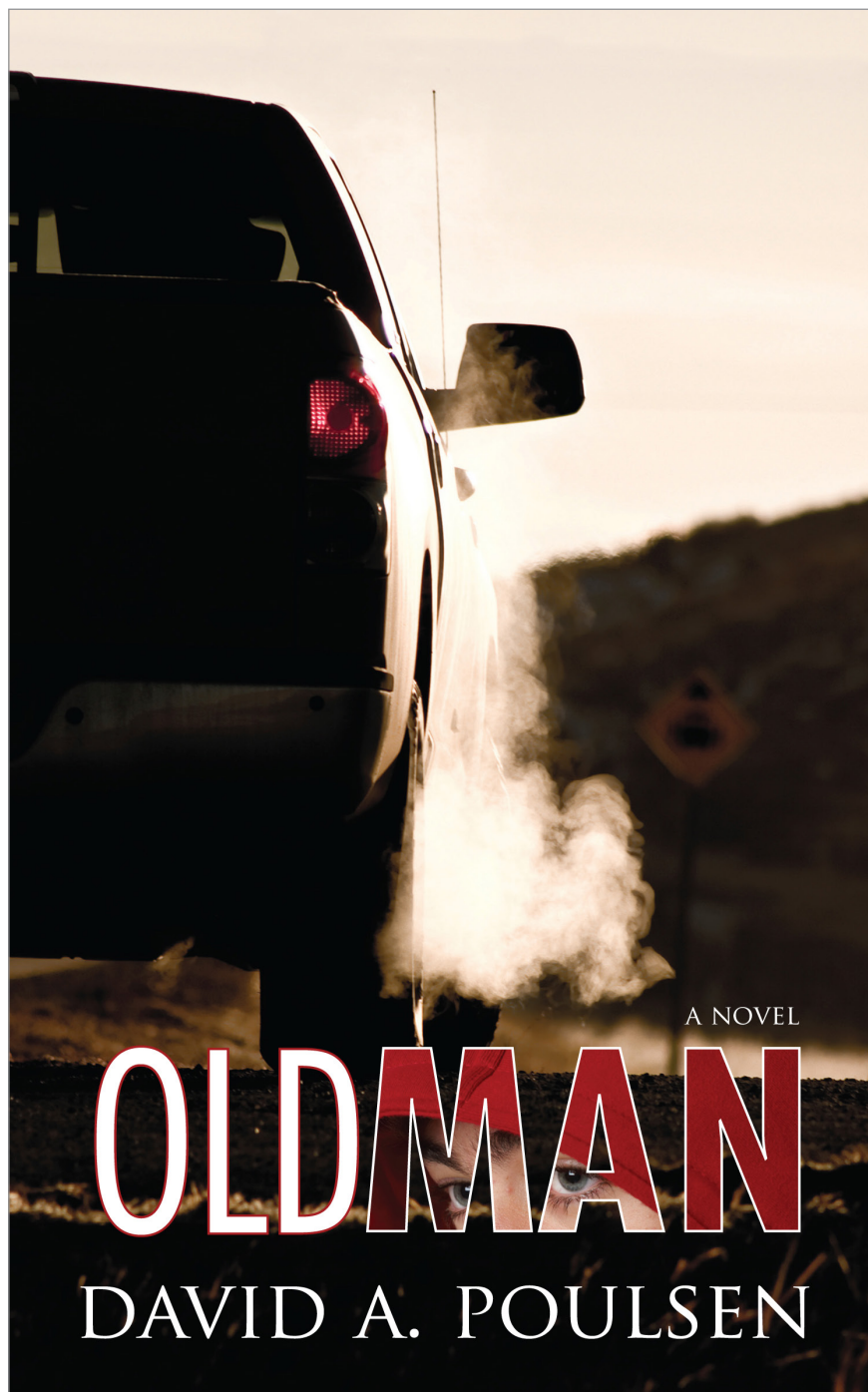


# TEACHER'S GUIDE

Grade 9 or 10 English



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# INTRODUCTION

Nate Huffman's summer self-improvement plans are unexpectedly shelved when his estranged father resurfaces with a ridiculous offer; Nate should go on a road trip with his *Old Man*. Worse yet, his mother agrees. Nate finds himself in a pickup with a man he can't stand, heading on a multinational whirlwind tour of his father's past.

The *Old Man* really wants Nate to understand him. Larry Huffman has chosen to make this happen by taking his son into his own history, which has the Vietnam War as its centrepiece.

As the two struggle their way through the jungle of the A Shau Valley, the *Old Man* relives the horror of the battle that changed him forever, and Nate undergoes changes of his own. They both experience something that goes far beyond what either of them expected.

But why now, after eleven years of absence, has Larry Huffman chosen to reconnect with his embittered son?

## A Note to Teachers

*Old Man* and the activities in this package are suited to students at the grade 9 and 10 level.

Because *Old Man* is predominantly set in modern day Vietnam, and concerns some of the history of the Vietnam War, *Old Man* includes content relevant to curriculum requirements for grade nine academic geography and grade nine applied geography. *Old Man* could easily be made the focus of a novel study by teachers of these courses. Selected readings from *Old Man* could be used to illustrate topics of interest in these courses. For this reason, some of the pre-reading and post-reading activities have been written with a focus on topics like mapping or tourism.

Teachers of Grade 9 and 10 English classes who want to use *Old Man*, are invited to have their students complete some of these activities, as comparison of the societies in which *Old Man* is set are relevant to the themes *Old Man* explores.

## About the Author

David A. Poulsen has been a television broadcaster, teacher, football coach, stage and film actor and rodeo clown. He is the author of more than 20 books. He has received the Sakura Medal in Japan, for his young adult novel, *Numbers*. In Alberta, his novel *The Prisoners and the Paintings* was the Golden Eagle Children's Choice Book Award Winner. Mr. Poulsen spends 80 to a 100 days each year as a visiting author in schools across Canada. He lives with his wife in Claresholm, Alberta, where he raises running quarter horses.

# CURRICULUM EXPECTATIONS

English, Grade 9 and 10	Geography, Grade 9, Academic
<p><b>Oral Communication</b></p> <p>1.2 Uses Active Listening Strategies 2.2 Interpersonal Speaking Strategies 2.3 Clarity and Coherence</p>	<p><b>Global Connections</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>analyse connections between Canada and other countries;</li> </ul>
<p><b>Reading</b></p> <p>1.1 Variety of Texts 1.2 Using reading comprehension strategies 1.3 Demonstrating understanding of content 1.4 Making inferences 1.5 Extending understanding of texts 1.6 Analysing texts 1.7 Evaluating texts 1.8 Critical literacy 3.3 Developing vocabulary</p>	<p><b>Understanding and Managing Change</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>explain how global economic and environmental factors affect individual choices.</li> <li>recognize the similarities among cultures and the need to respect cultural differences;</li> </ul>
<p><b>Writing</b></p> <p>1.3 Research 1.4 Organizing Ideas 2.1 Form 2.3 Diction 2.4 Sentence Craft and Fluency 2.6 Revision</p>	<p><b>Geography, Grade 9, Applied</b></p> <p><b>Global Connections</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>identify the economic, cultural, and environmental connections between Canada and other countries;</li> <li>report on how Canada influences and is influenced by its economic, cultural, and environmental connections with other countries;</li> </ul>
<p><b>Media Studies</b></p> <p>1.3 Evaluating Texts 1.5 Critical Literacy</p>	

# CONTEXT

## The Vietnam War

The Vietnam War was a proxy war fought in Vietnam as part of the larger Cold War situation. American involvement began initially as a support of France, with American military advisors arriving in (then) French Indochina in the 1950's. By 1960, The U.S. And its allies had a considerable troop presence in Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia as "advisors." U.S. combat troops were officially deployed in 1965, with the greatest commitment of troops peaking in 1968. The goal of U.S. involvement was to contain communism. While Canada remained neutral in this conflict, many Canadians like Larry Huffman did enlist in the U.S. military in order to take part.

After the Tet Offensive of 1968 U.S. troops were gradually pulled out, and by 1973 the U.S. had pulled out entirely. Despite the Paris Peace Accords, signed by all parties in January 1973, fighting continued. The capture of Saigon City in 1975 marked the end of the Vietnam war, when North and South Vietnam were reunited into the Socialist Republic of Vietnam.

The Vietnam War was deeply divisive in the US and Canada. Some people thought it was the only way to stop the spread of communism. Others feared it would only spark additional bloodshed and conflict.

All through this period high profile protests against the war occurred in the United States, especially following the My Lai Massacre of 1968. The protests only stopped when the U.S. withdrew in 1973.

## The Viet Cong

The Viet Cong, or National Liberation Front (NLF), was a political organization and army of South Vietnamese communists. The Viet Cong organization included both guerrilla units and regular army units. The Viet Cong are today remembered most for launching the Tet offensive in 1968. They are also remembered for ferocious guerrilla tactics, including campaigns of assassination, booby traps and mass bombings

The Viet Cong worked closely with North Vietnam against the United States and South Vietnam during the Vietnam War. While the Viet Cong presented themselves as a home grown South Vietnamese organization during the war years, (and denied direct sponsorship by North Vietnam,) a considerable core of the Viet Cong consisted of Vietnamese trained in and initially supplied from Hanoi, and their earliest campaigns followed the Ho Chi Minh trail south from North Vietnam.

The Viet Cong was dissolved in 1976, following the successful unification of Vietnam under communist rule. Today, official Vietnamese histories of the war list the Viet Cong as a part of the People's Army.

## **The Cu Chi Tunnels**

The Cu Chi Tunnels, the complex visited by Nate, are a vast underground system of tunnels located in the Cu Chi District of Ho Chi Minh City. They are part of a much larger network of tunnels spread through much of Vietnam. These tunnel networks were used by the Viet Cong as bases of operation, hiding spots for ambushes, communication routes, supply caches and hospitals living quarters. Viet Cong forces operating from tunnel complexes prolonged the war, increased American casualties and contributed to the ultimate communist military success. In particular, the tunnels in and around Cu Chi were a source of constant aggravement for the US Military. The Cu Chi tunnels served as the base of operations for the Tet offensive of Saigon in 1968.

Today the Cu Chi Tunnels are preserved by the Vietnam government. Parts have been converted into a war memorial park, with widened tunnels and lighting, and are a popular tourist destination.

## **The A Shau Valley, and the Battle of A Shau**

The A Shau Valley, a 25 kilometre long valley southwest of Hue, was strategically important, as it was next to the Ho Chi Minh Trail, the major infiltration route south for the North Vietnamese Army. On March 9th, 1966, the A Shau Special Forces camp, manned by United States and South Vietnam troops was attacked by the North Vietnamese. The defending forces held back the invaders, for more than a day, but were hampered by resupply issues, and the air support available was of limited use given the poor weather conditions. By 5:00 p.m. the next day the defenders had managed to evacuate, having held off the North Vietnamese and inflicted staggering casualties. Nonetheless, it was a crashing victory for the communist forces, who promptly fortified A Shau themselves. Two years later, The A Shau Valley provided the communists with a secure base during the Tet offensive for coordinating strikes against South Vietnamese cities.

Mr. Poulsen doesn't give us an exact date for the battle Larry Huffman participates in at Hill 453. In the period leading up to the Battle of A Shau American military forces in the area skirmished with Viet Cong and North Vietnamese units regularly. Hill 453 as described might be meant to represent one of these incidents. Or, Mr. Poulsen may have modeled Hill 453 on "Hamburger Hill," officially "Hill 937," a battle fought as part of a later campaign by American and South Vietnam forces to neutralize North Vietnamese control of the area. Hill 937, or Dong Ap Bia, is a large, independent mountain edging the A Shau Valley. American and South Vietnamese forces assaulted the position from May 10th to 20th, sustaining heavy losses, but ultimately seizing the hill. After the seizure, the hill was quickly abandoned. The major distinction between Hamburger Hill and the fictional battle of Hill 453 is timing. Hill 453 was supposed to have occurred just prior to the Tet offensive in 1968. Hamburger Hill was fought in 1969.

## **The Tet Offensive**

In early 1968 the North and South Vietnamese negotiated a two day cease-fire for the period of the Tet Festivities, (the Vietnamese Lunar New Year.) Early in the morning of January 30th, 1968, the Viet Cong broke the agreement and attacked more than a 100 urban targets in two waves. The first waves, restricted to I and II Corps Tactical Zones caused little alarm initially, and amounted to little more than a distraction. The main Viet Cong operation began the next day, involved more than 80

000 troops, and targeted more than a 100 towns and cities across South Vietnam.

Although the attacks succeeded in taking U.S. and South Vietnamese forces by surprise, most, with some exceptions, were quickly contained with high communist casualties. The Battle of Hue, and the concordant Massacre at Hue lasted for the next month. Fighting at the U.S. Khe Sanh base lasted until the end of March.

In Saigon, 35 Viet Cong battalions targeted a variety of strategic locations, including The U.S. Embassy, the National Radio Station, the independence Palace, and various military headquarters. Small squads of Viet Cong also worked through the city, targeting the homes of officers and enlisted men, and police stations. Fighting in Saigon continued until March 7th. Larry Huffman's confused, man-on-the-ground report in *Old Man* is consistent with what it was like in Saigon at the time.

There were several important results of the Tet offensive. The Viet Cong put so much of their fighting capacity into the Tet offensive, and lost so much of it, that they were unable to take much effective action during the remaining years of the war. Thereafter, the North Vietnamese took the lead. Although the Tet offensive was a defeat for the communists it had a profound effect on U.S. morale, both in Vietnam and domestically. This was by far the largest communist offensive to this point, sharply contradicting U.S. assumptions that the communist forces were unable to coordinate attacks on this scale. Domestic opposition to U.S. involvement in the war increased.

## **My Lai**

In 1968, Charlie Company of the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, 20th Infantry regiment, 11th Brigade, massacred somewhere between 347 and 504 unarmed civilians at My Lai, and My Khe, in the village of Son My. Most of the victims were women, children and the elderly. To cover up the massacre the three US servicemen who tried to stop the massacre were denounced as traitors. The cover up attempt failed, and later the three men received recognition for their valorous actions. Twenty-six US soldiers were charged with criminal offenses for the massacre, only one second lieutenant was actually convicted. He served a three and a half year sentence under house arrest. When the incident became public knowledge it provoked global outrage, and US domestic opposition to the war skyrocketed.

## **Modern Vietnam**

After the Vietnam War North and South Vietnam were consolidated under communist leadership. The process of nationalizing farms and industries led to economic collapse, massive inflation, and triggered waves of emigration during the 1970's and 1980's. Since the mid 80's reform-minded leadership in Vietnam has transitioned the country from a planned economy model towards a free market. Today Vietnam is a "socialist-oriented market economy." While Vietnam still contends with some social issues, including rising gender inequality, it is currently one of the world's fastest growing economies. Vietnam is a member of multiple international organizations with Canada and the US, including the United Nations. It is a major agricultural exporter and a growing industrial nation.

Vietnam has become a major tourist destination, with about 3.7 million international tourists in 2009.



## Ho Chi Minh City (Saigon)

Ho Chi Minh City is the former capital of South Vietnam and the largest city in modern day Vietnam. It was renamed Ho Chi Minh City on July 2nd, 1976, when the municipality of Saigon was merged with the surrounding Gia Dinh Province. The name Saigon is still used to refer to the urban districts of Ho Chi Minh City, and is used informally through Vietnam as a synonym for Ho Chi Minh City.

Ho Chi Minh City is the economic centre of Vietnam. It has 8.3 % of the population, and accounts for 20.2 % of the GDP and 28 % of Vietnam's industrial output. It is situated on the Saigon River, 60 kilometres from the South China Sea. 40 % percent of Vietnam's imports and exports flow through Ho Chi Minh City. 9 million people currently live in Ho Chi Minh City and current plans project it to reach a population of 20 million by 2020.

## Vietnam Veterans

A Vietnam veteran, (as opposed to a Vietnam era veteran,) is a person who served in the armed forces *in country* during the Vietnam War. Because of the social divisiveness of the Vietnam War for the U.S., there was less public and institutional support for Vietnam veterans than for veterans of other conflicts. The benefits they received were considerably less than those given to WWII veterans, for instance.

Vietnam veterans frequently appear in fiction or films where a major theme is the difficulties of soldiers readjusting from combat to civilian life. (Some examples are Sylvester Stallone as John Rambo in *First Blood*, or the Marvel Comics character Frank Castle, the protagonist of *The Punisher* comic series.) Common stereotypes associated with Vietnam veterans include psychological trauma, difficulty readjusting to society and consequently embittered behaviour, drug addiction and homelessness. To a certain degree, these stereotypes were founded on genuine readjustment problems the returning vets experienced after the war. Much later, the problems being experienced by returning veterans would lead to the formal identification of "Post Traumatic Stress Disorder."

By 1979 the first vet centers were established to help veterans. Initially controversial, vet centers were ultimately spread nation wide and began servicing other populations including surviving veterans of WWII, the Korea War, and later conflicts. These centers helped to develop many of the debriefing techniques used nows with traumatized populations impacted by violent crime, abuse, or manmade and natural disasters.

And in stark contrast to the stereotype, many Vietnam veterans went on to successful, well adjusted post-war lives.

## Anxiety and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder

Anxiety is a psychological state characterized by worry or dread, sometimes triggered without an identifiable stimulus. Anxiety is a normal reaction to stressors. Like fear, it can help individuals deal with or survive demanding situations by prompting individuals to focus on those situations. But, anxiety can easily become excessive. A person suffering from excessive anxiety is classified as having an anxiety disorder. Anxiety disorders affects twelve percent of all Canadians.

Physical effects of anxiety can include heart palpitations, muscle weakness, tension, fatigue, nausea, headaches and stomach aches, sweating and pallor. Emotional effects include jumpiness, irritability, restlessness, nightmares, apprehension and dread. Anxiety sufferers may experience obsessive thoughts patterns or develop phobias. Although panic attacks are not experienced by every person who has anxiety, they are a common symptom. Panic attacks usually come without warning and, although the fear is generally irrational, the subjective perception of danger is very real.

Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) is a severe anxiety disorder that can develop after exposure to any event that results in psychological trauma. PTSD is less frequent and more enduring than some other forms of anxiety. It is characterized by persistent, aversive anxiety-related experiences, behaviors, and physiological responses that develop after exposure to a psychologically traumatic event, (sometimes months after.) It can be caused by experiencing or witnessing a childhood trauma, experiencing or witnessing an assault as an adult, or working in certain fields, including emergency response or the armed forces. The diagnosis of PTSD in U.S. military veterans has been a subject of some controversy.

In *Old Man* Nate Huffman's initial headaches, fear of dogs, and panic symptoms when threatened by the dog on Hill 453 are consistent with an anxiety disorder of some kind. Given the two separate traumatic events he experienced as a child, anxiety on his part is understandable. Larry Huffman may possibly be displaying some of the symptoms of PTSD, in particular the possible flashback he seems to experience in the Saigon vegetable market, the flashback he experiences on Hill 453, and the irritability and tension he has difficulty in overcoming when approaching Ba Li.

# THEMES

## Forgiveness

The predominant theme in *Old Man* is “Forgiveness.” Forgiveness can be defined as the renunciation of resentment or anger over a perceived offense. From one point of view, forgiveness purely concerning the person doing the forgiving; a transformation in their own thinking towards another person. This idea of forgiveness is best exemplified in the last pages of *Old Man*, when Nate brings himself to call the *Old Man* “Dad”. This can make no difference to Larry Huffman, but does allow Nate to reposition his own feelings towards his father.

In practice, the act of forgiveness is highly nuanced and conditional. Forgiveness can depend on whether restitution or an apology has been requested or offered, whether forgiveness has been requested or offered, the personalities of the transgressor and transgressee, the quality of the relationship that they share, and the nature of the offense. It can be argued that all these factors contribute to a continuum of offense, ranging from the easily forgiven to the unforgiveable.

In *Old Man*, forgiveness is initially sought by Larry Huffman from Nate, for abandoning Nate and his mother and for being absent from his life. Larry also is looking for forgiveness from Ba Li, for the wartime incident in which he shot her brother. Finally, he may be looking to forgive a number of minor personal resentments he has harboured since the war such as exclusion from the Rex Hotel and Dalat. Some of these goals are achieved, some are not. Nate initially resists the notion of forgiving his father, or even attempting to have a relationship with his father. Nate forgives Larry only after a relationship based on shared experience has developed and Nate has become personally invested in understanding Larry. Ba Li does not forgive Larry, possibly because he presents his request for forgiveness badly. Or, because Ba Li’s character, understandably, still resents Larry.

Nate also has to look for forgiveness and to forgive. He has to forgive the Australian Jen when she breaks up with him, and has to be forgiven by her when he initially responds poorly to the break up. He has to, symbolically, forgive the dog that attacked him as a child, and at least begins to do so when he pets An Lien’s dog at the English Language School.

Finally, a variety of characters exemplify forgiveness and the lack of forgiveness in more minor ways. Nate’s mother has a distant but mature relationship with her ex husband. She is able to send Nate to spend time with him without a qualm. Jen’s father is able to put aside the affront Nate’s father has given him when his daughter becomes involved with Nate. The dog owner on Hill 453 has never forgiven the loss of his two brothers, and continues to take out his anger on visitors to the hill 40 years later. Mr. Vinh, in contrast, lived through the same era and may even have been a combatant. Nonetheless, he has no discernable emotional burden from the experience, instead he is able to make a living as a tour guide for returning veterans. If he had something to forgive, he has forgiven it.

## Risk

A second theme in *Old Man* is the idea of “Risk.” Risk is the potential for an activity to lead to an undesirable outcome. Most actions have some degree of risk, and risk assessment is complicated. Individuals evaluate risk based on highly personal criteria, and it is entirely possible to overestimate or underestimate a risk as a result. Larry Huffman’s shooting Ba Li’s brother could be considered the result of an overidentification of the risk presented at the time. Larry’s presence in the Vietnam War could be considered an underidentification of the risks involved. In retrospect American involvement in the Vietnam War at all can be considered the result of an undercalculation of risk.

One of the most fascinating components to risk assessment is that people are highly likely to misidentify risk when they are personally invested in a particular outcome. Nate is highly invested in dating the Canadian Jen at the beginning of *Old Man*. He has not asked her out precisely because he is emotionally invested. So, he is not willing to risk rejection. In contrast, his emotional investment in the Australian Jen is low, and he is able to confidently begin a relationship with her.

Larry Huffman is highly invested in Nate, and for that reason won’t risk attempting a relationship with Nate until his cancer causes the risk of not making the attempt to outweigh the risk of making it. Similarly, Vietnam as a location clearly remained important to Larry Huffman after the war, but he didn’t choose to do anything about it until his cancer diagnoses forced him to.

## Division versus Connection

Another recurring theme explored in various ways in *Old Man* is the tension between the impulse to erect barriers between one’s self and others on the one hand, and the impulse to make connections with others on the other.

Nate refers to his father as *Old Man* precisely because he wants to deny a relationship with Larry Huffman. Doing so enables him to maintain his anger and represent himself, in his own mind, as different from Larry. Nate puts considerable effort, during the initial road trip, into maintaining this division by acting as obnoxiously as he can. By the end of *Old Man*, Nate has built enough of a relationship with his father to be interested in understanding him. By the end of the book, although he has lost his father to cancer, the connection he has established with Larry Huffman has enriched his life in a number of ways.

Nate’s experiences in Vietnam follow a similar trajectory, through initial culture shock and into acclimatization. Initially, he can only relate to Saigon as disorientating. His first expectations are confounded, and his first experience of Vietnamese food is unpleasant. By the time he has returned to Canada, he has become interested in Vietnam enough to consider returning to teach English. Visiting a foreign country has been an enriching experience for him.

Finally, the use of Vietnam as a setting, and focus on the Vietnam war, touch on this theme. During the Vietnam War people’s identities were heavily polarized. North and South Vietnamese, Viet Cong and U.S. Soldiers, patriots and protestors. In the considerably more advantaged and prosperous Vietnam in which *Old Man* is set, many of these distinctions have completely disappeared. While, for some characters the memory of the war, and the old antipathies associated with it still matter, it is hard to see how maintaining them provides any benefit.

# PRE-READING ACTIVITIES

## Response Journal

Before beginning *Old Man*, ask students to create a response journal to keep notes in while they read the novel . These journals can serve several purposes;

- A place to store notes and create rough copies for specific written assignments during the period that students read *Old Man*.
- A place to record chapter summaries as students read *Old Man*.
- A private place students can record their own thoughts and feelings about elements in the novel.

## Cover Deconstruction

Ask students to analyze elements of the cover and to make predictions about the book based on the elements they can see or read.

Elements to prompt students attention to include:

1. The title. (Why *Old Man*? Why not *The Old Man*? What do students call their own parents? What might that particular title indicate about the father-son relationship in the book?)
2. The book jacket synopsis
3. The picture of the truck. (Why are we seeing the truck from behind? What might the steam or smoke indicate?)
4. The title format (Why are we seeing the boy inside the word “man?” Why only in man and not also in old?)
5. The sentence, “a trip with his estranged father changes Nate forever?” (What might that mean?)

Have students make and record predictions for how Nate is going to change.

Have students share and justify their predictions in class discussion.

## Mapping the Book

This activity is intended to promote interest in the book prior to reading it, and to provide a geographical context for locations identified in the book.

1. Provide students with copies of an outline map for Vietnam, an outline map of the Pacific Rim, and a list of the following locations. Calgary, Alberta. Minneapolis, Minnesota. Los Angeles California. Tokyo, Japan. Saigon, Vietnam.
2. Have students use atlases, or an online tool like Google Maps, to locate each of the locations on their list.
3. Have students add each location to the Pacific Rim Map.
4. Have students go through the book and add to the list of place names, using the book's chapter headings. Saigon should appear three times.
5. Have students use atlases or an online tool like Google Maps to locate each of the locations they have added
6. Have students add each location to the Vietnam Outline Map

The following website is a good source for a freely available outline map of Vietnam:

<http://www.mapsopensource.com/vietnam/vietnam-outline-map>

The following website is a good source for a freely available outline map of the Pacific Rim and the United States:

[http://er.jsc.nasa.gov/seh/Mission\\_Geography/Map\\_Index.pdf](http://er.jsc.nasa.gov/seh/Mission_Geography/Map_Index.pdf)

## Poster Deconstruction

Display several pro-war and several anti-war posters from the Vietnam War. Have students work in small groups to evaluate how effectively information, ideas, issues, and opinions are communicated in each poster.

Discuss with students what they think it would have been like to live in an era when both sets of ideas were prevalent in the public discourse.

## Location Study

This activity is intended to promote interest in the book prior to reading it, and to provide a cultural and historical context for locations and references identified in the book.

1. Divide students into groups of three. Have each student choose one location from the following list: Dalat, Saigon, the A Shau Valley.

2. Ask each student to research and prepare five copies of a one-page report on their chosen location. One copy for themselves, one for display, one for the teacher and one for each other member of their group.
3. Suggested subtopics should include:
  - The Vietnam War
  - Culture
  - Economy
  - Tourism
4. Suggested research strategies could include:
  - Use of encyclopedias, on and offline
  - Use of Wikipedia's subwiki for tourists, WikitravelUse of Tour Company websites
  - Using information for the larger regional level
5. When students have completed their report, provide class time to have individuals in each group present their reports to their fellow group members.
6. Create a class display of reports for each separate location.

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Class: \_\_\_\_\_

## Location Study

To prepare for your reading of *Old Man*, you are challenged to learn about one of the places in which it is set.

You and your two partners will each research and prepare a one-page report about one location from the following list:

- Dalat
- Saigon
- the A Shau Valley.

Suggested subtopics could include:

- The Vietnam War
- Culture
- Economy
- Tourism

Suggested research strategies could include:

- Use an encyclopedia or an online encyclopedia
- Use Wikipedia's subwiki for tourists, Wikitravel
- Use Tour Company websites
- Use information for the larger regional level (A Shau is part of the Thua Thien-Hue Province, Dalat is the capital of Lam Dong province, and Saigon is the urban area of the municipality of Ho Chi Minh City)

Please remember to include a bibliography of all your sources.

Your report will be assessed for:

- Understanding of your chosen topics
- Evidence of thorough research
- Clarity of writing in your final product

Your report is due in class on \_\_\_\_\_

On that day, please bring 5 copies of the report to class. You will be asked to keep 1 copy, give 1 copy to your teacher to grade and 1 copy to display, and to share 1 copy with each of your partners.



# CHAPTER SUMMARIES

## Last Month of School, 1-5 (Pages 1-20)

Nate Huffman, the narrator and protagonist of *Old Man*, is a 16 year old teenager living in Alberta. Nate is looking forward to the summer vacation now that his grade 10 school year is over. He has big self-improvement plans for the summer, including asking out Jen Wartz. Unfortunately for his plans, his father, the titular "*Old Man*," arranges with Nate's mother for Nate to go on a trip with him. Nate has had little contact with his father since his father left his mother for a dental hygienist when Nate was five. He feels angry and resentful towards his father, and does not feel inclined to go. Nate's mother refuses to tell him anything about the reasons for the trip, or very much about his father, insisting this information should come from Nate's father. She does, however, insist that Nate should go.

Nate explains some specific things he feels important about himself. First, when he was a small boy, he was attacked by a dog. This traumatized him and he has had a fear of dogs since. Second, Nate gets headaches, which a doctor has diagnosed as being caused by stress and tension. Third, Nate's mother wanted to become a nurse but had never been able to afford the training to become one.

## Summer Part One, 1- 5 (Pages 27-44)

Nate's father, the *Old Man*, arrives to collect Nate in a pickup. He visits with Nate's mother. Then Nate and the *Old Man* leave. Initially, the *Old Man* does not tell Nate much about his intended destination. Nate finds the drive boring, and attempts to provoke a negative reaction through some bratty behaviour, with little success. Nate and his father establish some rules for conduct. Later, the *Old Man* reveals that they are driving into the United States, to the Minneapolis Airport, and that they will be traveling to Saigon.

At the US border, a crossing guard named Granfield is suspicious of Nate's presence with his father, and tries to establish if Nate is being kidnapped. Nate is tempted to take advantage of Granfield's suspicions, but realizes that, although he resents being forced to take the trip, that his father has attempted to conduct the trip responsibly. Nate refers Granfield to Nate's mother, which resolves the issue. The drive to Minneapolis continues.

## Summer Part One, 7-9 (Pages 44-64)

The *Old Man* shares a memory with Nate, about Nate's mother. Nate tries to understand his doing so. Nate remembers his first babysitting job when he was eleven, and an incident in which he and his five year old charge had witnessed a small girl being run over in a street. Nate grills his father about the *Old Man* having left his mother for another woman. The *Old Man* and Nate take Malaria pills.

Subsequently, the *Old Man* drives to a friend place, where the truck will remain. The friend is Tal Ledbetter, a one-armed, heavily bearded, older man. Nate is surprised to find out that Tal knows of Nate. Tal's place is also a surprise for Nate, it has two cows in small paddock, and a "moat," a

hole filled with brackish water near the cows. Artworks on the walls in Tal's garage attract Nate's attention, although he doesn't completely understand them. Finally, a taxi takes Nate and his *Old Man* to the Minneapolis airport.

The trip to Saigon from Minneapolis takes three flights. Nate and the *Old Man* pass through Los Angeles Airport, and Tokyo. They just make the connecting flight in Los Angeles. In Tokyo have time to visit the Tokyo tower before boarding the last plane to Saigon.

## Saigon, 1-3 (Pages 65-90)

Saigon, now Ho Chi Minh City, confounds Nate's expectations by being very busy and quite modern. Nate and the *Old Man* take a taxi through the city, stopping briefly at an outdoor market that seems to hold some particular significance to the *Old Man*, he does not explain what. They leave the taxi some distance from the Rex Hotel, where they will stay, and have dinner in an open-air noodle shop. This is an experience Nate, suffering from jet lag, finds trying. After, they walk to the hotel.

The next day, the *Old Man* answers some questions. Nate discovers that the *Old Man* was a Vietnam War veteran. The Rex Hotel was an important location for Americans in that war, although as an enlisted man the *Old Man* hadn't spent much time there. Nate and the *Old Man* visit a number of tourist locations, the city zoo, the Palace of Reunification, the War Remnants museum – where Nate notes the focus on American Atrocities during the Vietnam War - and Dam Sen Park - where Nate and the *Old Man* get to ride elephants.

Next, Nate and *Old Man* visit a museum site built in and around a Viet Cong tunnel complex, the Cu-Chi tunnels. On the bus, an Australian man accompanied by his wife and teenage daughter, identifies the *Old Man* as a veteran and attempts to secure an interview with the *Old Man*, who is abrupt and rude. At the site, Nate finds some of the exhibits displaying Viet Cong ambushes and traps as horrible as some of the earlier exhibits. The *Old Man* sends Nate into the tunnels with a tour group, but remains above. Nate wanders away from the group and spends time with the Australian girl, Jen. Jen gives Nate her email address before her father pulls her away.

## Saigon, 4-7 (Pages 91-111)

The next day Mr. Vinh, (a guide hired by the *Old Man*,) arrives to take Nate and the *Old Man* on the next stage of the trip. Before leaving, Nate emails Jen. He also reads about the most infamous American incident of the Vietnam era, "My Lai." Mr. Vinh, Nate and the *Old Man* travel by Land Rover. They arrive at a jungle encampment where an older woman, presumed to be Mrs. Vinh, is cooking. The group eats a meal of noodles cooked by Mrs. Vinh. After the meal, Mr. Vinh leads Nate and the *Old Man* into the jungle.

Nate finds the walk through the jungle difficult, At one point they are forced to wade across a wetland and Nate falls in. They stop for the night in a clearing that had once been a helicopter landing zone. Without any other options, Nate is forced to change his sodden clothes in the open. Mr. Vinh finds Nate's discomfort hilarious, and the *Old Man* and Nate laugh together. The group eats a meal. Nate is told that they are headed for the A Shau Valley, another significant site for the war, before the group goes to sleep.

## The A Shau Valley (Pages 112-140)

The next day the group walks further, into the A Shau Valley, aiming at “Hill 453.” Nate is warned to walk only where Mr. Vinh walks, in order to minimize the risk of setting off “unexploded ordinance.” The group sneaks across a rice paddy, and is temporarily delayed while an old lady yells at Mr. Vinh for the trespass.

At hill 453, Nate and the *Old Man* climb up while Mr. Vinh waits for them below. The *Old Man* locates the spot he has been aiming at, which proves to be a battle site in which he and his platoon had been ambushed by North Vietnamese troops. The *Old Man* clearly still finds this memory deeply traumatic. He describes for Nate his experiences on the hill in detail. The *Old Man* then leaves an exhausted Nate while he climbs higher up.

While he waits for his father, Nate is surprised by an old Vietnamese man, with an aggressive and threatening dog. The man yells abuse at Nate, and threatens him. Nate is paralyzed by the dog. His father arrives and threatens the dog owner, who laughs and insults the *Old Man*. Nate throws up. The dog owner and his pet leave. Nate and the *Old Man* discuss fear, bravery and survival.

Nate and the *Old Man* rejoin Mr. Vinh and are lead out of the jungle. On the way out the *Old Man* discovers that Mr. Vinh had previously know about the dog owner, and that the dog owner had a history of hassling vets in that area. This causes Mr. Vinh and the *Old Man* to have a loud argument.

## Saigon the Second Time (Pages 141-165)

Nate and his father return to Saigon, drop Mr. Vinh off at his home, borrow the Land Rover, and return to the Rex Hotel. The *Old Man* goes out. Nate checks his email, and discovers a reply from the Australian Jen. Nate calls, pretends to her father that he is a pizza delivery man, and arranges to meet her. Nate and Jen meet and then run into the *Old Man*. Jen and Nate go out to eat. They discuss their impressions of Vietnam, including motorbikes and Jen’s plans to return later to teach English. They watch a movie and finish the evening at her hotel for a make out session, which ends when her parents return from their own evening out.

The next day Nate and the *Old Man* go swimming. Jen and her family depart for Hanoi, to further her father’s research. Nate buys a gift for his mother, and phones home.

## Dalat (Pages 166-179)

Nate and the *Old Man* travel to Dalat, which had been a rest and recuperation centre for the officer classes on both sides during the Vietnam War. Nate and the *Old Man* check into a hotel called “the Crazy House”. After checking in, the *Old Man* rents horses and he and Nate go trail riding. Nate takes some pictures of a local waterfall.

The *Old Man* and Nate talk. They discuss the dog on Hill 453, the Vietnam War, the *Old Man’s* work, (he is partner in his brother’s exotic flower import business,) and the *Old Man’s* horse and cattle ranch. The *Old Man* wants to leave the ranch to Nate. Nate is uncomfortable with this idea, and suggests that it would be a topic better discussed after he has finished college. The *Old Man* explains that that isn’t really an option, as the *Old Man* has pancreatic cancer, and less than six

months to live. After talking about the cancer, and the implications of this revelation, Nate and the *Old Man* return to the hotel. Later, at a restaurant, the *Old Man* explains that after the trip ends he will live with Tal for his last few months.

The next day Nate and the *Old Man* return to Saigon.

## **Saigon the Last Time (Pages 180-210)**

In Saigon, Nate gets a text from the Australian Jen. He researches pancreatic cancer. He visits an English language school where he enjoys the experience of teaching An Tien, a small girl, some new English words, and brings himself to pet her dog.

That night Nate accompanies the *Old Man* to the vegetable market the *Old Man* had stopped near on the first night. Here they meet Madame Nguyen Thi Soon, an interpreter. Mrs. Soon introduces the *Old Man* and Nate to “Ba” Li, an older woman who the *Old Man* wants to talk to. During the invasion of Saigon he shot her twelve year old brother. Now the *Old Man* is hoping that Ba Li can confirm that her brother had been Viet Cong, and wants to make some sort of restitution. The meeting goes poorly, Ba Li spits on the *Old Man*, and shouts at him. Both she and Mrs. Soon walk away.

The next day Nate meets up with Jen again. She informs him she has patched things up with her longtime boyfriend, Roger, and so wants to break up with Nate. Nate takes the news badly at first. The two share a meal, and part ways.

Nate returns to the Rex and is treated to a steak by the *Old Man*. Nate and the *Old Man* discuss the Vietnam War. The next day they fly home.

## **September (Pages 211-214)**

On returning home, Nate resumes his summer plans, achieving most of them, but failing to date the Canadian Jen, as she also has a boyfriend. He finds himself no longer troubled by headaches.

The *Old Man* and Nate stay in touch by phone. Nate receives the deed to the *Old Man*'s cattle ranch by mail, minus some acreage sold to fund nursing classes for Nate's mother, and University for Nate. Nate begins occasionally visiting a local Vietnamese restaurant for noodles.

## **November 27 (Pages 215-217)**

Nate receives a letter from Tal, informing him that the *Old Man* has died, and sending him the *Old Man*'s ashes. Nate rents a horse, and sets out into the local countryside. He spreads the ash-es on a hillside above his town, and says goodbye.

# CHAPTER RESPONSE ACTIVITIES

## Last Month of School (Pages 1-26)

### Chapter Summary

Record a 1 to 2 paragraph summary of the significant events and information from this section of the book.

### Vocabulary Chart

Use Vocabulary Chart 1 to investigate specific vocabulary words.

### Comprehension

1. How does the *Old Man* disrupt Nate Huffman's summer plans?
2. What are the reasons that Nate identifies his father as an "*Old Man*"? How does Nate feel about the *Old Man*?
3. Why does Nate fear dogs?

### Making Inferences

1. What could be the possible reasons for Nate's headaches?
2. Why do you think Nate's mother backs up the *Old Man* about the summer trip?
3. Why do you think Nate's mother does not tell him anything about the trip, or very much about the *Old Man*?

### Critical Literacy

1. Why do you think the author begins the book with a blunt statement about his father running off with a dental hygienist? Was this a good beginning?

## Summer Part One, 1- 5 (Pages 27-44)

### Chapter Summary

Record a 1 to 2 paragraph summary of the significant events and information from this section of the book.

### Comprehension

1. Nate is initially surprised that his *Old Man* is not “a bald, slobby-looking guy.” Why might that be?
2. What problem occurs at the US-Canada Border? How does Nate solve it?
3. Find at least three examples of Nate behaving obnoxiously.

### Making Inferences

1. Why do you think Nate is behaving obnoxiously?
2. In this section the only information Nate is given about the trip is that they will be flying from Minneapolis, and going to Saigon. Why do you think the *Old Man* does not give Nate more information about the trip?
3. What do you think the purpose of the trip might be?
4. If he hasn't seen Nate in eleven years, why might the *Old Man* be taking Nate on a trip now?

## Summer Part One, 7-9 (Pages 44-64)

### Chapter Summary

Record a 1 to 2 paragraph summary of the significant events and information from this section of the book.

### Comprehension

1. What did Nate witness when he was eleven? How might this have affected him?
2. What are the pills for?
3. What do you know about the *Old Man's* friend, Tal Ledbetter?

### Making Inferences

1. Why do you think that the *Old Man* tells Nate about the notes Nate's mother used to leave, on pages 44 and 45?
2. Why might the paintings of Tal's all feature a blank space?

## Extending Understanding

1. On Page 55 Tal says, “I can’t believe you’re going back.” The *Old Man* replies, “a lot of guys are. They have tours.” What are they talking about? What reasons can you think of for people to go on a tour of this kind?

## Critical Literacy

1. Why do you think the author has included the scene with Tal Ledbetter?
2. Why do you think the author has included the scene with Tal’s brackish pond?

## Saigon, 1-3 (Pages 65-90)

### Chapter Summary

Record a 1 to 2 paragraph summary of the significant events and information from this section of the book.

### Vocabulary Chart

Use Vocabulary Chart 2 to investigate specific vocabulary words.

### Comprehension

1. How does Saigon differ from Nate’s expectations of it?
2. Why has the *Old Man* chosen the Rex Hotel to stay at?
3. What are the Cu Chi tunnels?

### Making Inferences

1. Why do you believe the displays noticed by Nate at the Palace of Reunification and the War Remnants Museum focus on destructive actions by Americans?
2. Why do you think that the *Old Man* is rude to the Australian man?
3. What do you think the *Old Man* wanted Nate to learn from the tour or the tunnels?

### Making Connections

Write a 1-2 paragraph description of a time when you have been disorientated in new surroundings, like Nate in Saigon. Be detailed.

### Critical Literacy

1. Why do you think the author has included the scene, on pages 68 and 69, where the *Old Man* stops the taxi and stares at a building?

## Saigon, 4-7 (Pages 91-111)

### Chapter Summary

Record a 1 to 2 paragraph summary of the significant events and information from this section of the book.

### Vocabulary Chart

Use Vocabulary Chart 3 to investigate specific vocabulary words.

### Comprehension

1. How does Nate characterize Mr. Vinh? Why might he characterize Mr. Vinh in this way?
2. Why do Nate and the *Old Man* laugh together?
3. Why are Nate and the *Old Man* traveling into the jungle?

### Making Inferences

1. How has Nate's relationship with the *Old Man* changed since first meeting him?

### Critical Literacy

1. Why do you think the author has included references to the complicated and messy history of the Vietnam War (Like the Viet Cong pit traps or the description of My Lai) in *Old Man*?

## The A Shau Valley (Pages 112-140)

### Chapter Summary

Record a 1 to 2 paragraph summary of the significant events and information from this section of the book.

### Comprehension

1. What is in the briefcase?
2. Why do Nate and the *Old Man* need to walk only where Mr. Vinh does?
3. Summarize the *Old Man's* experience on hill 453.
4. Summarize Nate's experience on hill 453.

### Making Inferences

1. On page 129 the *Old Man* says, "This is the most important thing that ever happened to me." Why do you think that he believes this?
2. How does Nate feel about his experience on hill 453? Do you think he is right to feel this way? Why or why not?



## Extending Understanding

3. If you had been a young adult during the era of the Vietnam War, do you think you might have enlisted, as the *Old Man* did? Why or why not?
4. Do you think that understanding what the *Old Man's* wartime experience was like will make it easier for Nate to forgive him? Why or why not?

## Saigon the Second Time (Pages 141-165)

### Chapter Summary

Record a 1 to 2 paragraph summary of the significant events and information from this section of the book.

### Vocabulary Chart

Use Vocabulary Chart 4 to investigate specific vocabulary words.

### Comprehension

1. Describe Mr. Vinh's home.
2. How is traffic different in Saigon than it would be in a North American city?
3. Where do Jen and Nate go to eat, and why is it famous?

### Making Inferences

1. Why do you think Nate is reluctant to share his experience in the A Shau Valley with Jen?
2. How is this similar to the *Old Man's* reluctance to share?
3. On page 146 Nate asks, "How is it a guy who couldn't buy a date in Canada can get hooked up a few thousand miles from home with a totally hot chick who is also a few thousand miles from home?" What is your best, serious answer to Nate's question?

### Critical Literacy

1. What do you think the author would like us to realize about taking risks, by posing this question?

## Dalat (Pages 166-179)

### Chapter Summary

Record a 1 to 2 paragraph summary of the significant events and information from this section of the book.

### Comprehension

1. What is The Crazy House, and why is it called The Crazy House?
2. Why is the *Old Man* visiting Dalat?
3. What was the Tet offensive?
4. Why does the *Old Man* want to give Nate his ranch now, rather than waiting until after Nate finishes university?

### Making Inferences

1. On page 176, the *Old Man* apologizes for running out on Nate, as a child. Why do you think he does not apologize sooner?

### Extending Understanding

1. In your opinion, should Nate forgive the *Old Man*? Why or why not?

### Critical Literacy

1. What do you think the author intends us to understand from Nate's talicised thoughts on page 178? *Watch me do this. Dying is something you do.*

## Saigon the Last Time (Pages 180-210)

### Chapter Summary

Record a 1 to 2 paragraph summary of the significant events and information from this section of the book.

### Comprehension

1. What does Nate do with his free time in Saigon?
2. Who is Ba Li and why does the *Old Man* visit her?
3. What happens on Jen and Nate's second date? Why?

### Making Inferences

1. Why do you think Nate pets the dog Tu?
2. Why do you think the *Old Man* seems angry when he is talking to Ba Li?

### Extending Understanding

1. Are the *Old Man's* actions unforgiveable? Why or why not?
2. Do you think the *Old Man* did the right thing, in approaching Ba Li?

## September (Pages 211-214)

### November 27 (Pages 215-217)

#### Chapter Summary

Record a 1 to 2 paragraph summary of the significant events and information from this section of the book.

#### Making Inferences

1. Why do you think Nate gets a job at a florist?
2. Why do you think Nate is now able to achieve most of his five point plan?
3. Why does Nate now occasionally go for a bowl of noodles?
4. Why do you think Nate no longer gets headaches?

#### Evaluating Texts

1. What do you think were the most important themes in *Old Man*? Justify your answer.
2. Does the author write a convincing character arc for Nate bonding with the *Old Man*? Why or why not? Justify your answer.

#### Extending Understanding

1. Does your new knowledge of Aunt Phyllis's reasons for lying change how you view her character? How?
2. List as many examples as you can of cinematic illusions being employed on the film set in chapters 17 and 18.

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Class: \_\_\_\_\_

## Vocabulary Page 1

For each word in the table below state what you think it might mean based on context. Check and record the dictionary definition. Was your guess close to the actual meaning of the word?

<b>Vocabulary Word</b>	<b>Page</b>	<b>I Think It Means</b>	<b>Dictionary definition</b>	<b>Was I Close? Y/N</b>
<b>estranged</b>	<b>Cover</b>			
<b>centrepiece</b>	<b>Cover</b>			
<b>concoction</b>	<b>15</b>			
<b>opportunity</b>	<b>35</b>			
<b>squealing</b>	<b>47</b>			
<b>slough</b>	<b>56</b>			
<b>brackish</b>	<b>56</b>			
<b>indication</b>	<b>59</b>			

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Class: \_\_\_\_\_

## Vocabulary Page 2

For each word in the table below state what you think it might mean based on context. Check and record the dictionary definition. Was your guess close to the actual meaning of the word?

<b>Vocabulary Word</b>	<b>Page</b>	<b>I Think It Means</b>	<b>Dictionary definition</b>	<b>Was I Close? Y/N</b>
<b>guarantee</b>	<b>69</b>			
<b>intense</b>	<b>72</b>			
<b>reunification</b>	<b>79</b>			
<b>atrocious</b>	<b>79</b>			
<b>scooting</b>	<b>88</b>			
<b>oh six hundred hours</b>	<b>90</b>			
<b>machete</b>	<b>91</b>			

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Class: \_\_\_\_\_

### Vocabulary Page 3

For each word in the table below state what you think it might mean based on context. Check and record the dictionary definition. Was your guess close to the actual meaning of the word?

Vocabulary Word	Page	I Think It Means	Dictionary definition	Was I Close? Y/N
remnants	93			
machete	102			
sloshed	106			
ordnance	117			
platoon	125			
communism	130			
summit	130			

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Class: \_\_\_\_\_

### Vocabulary Page 4

For each word in the table below state what you think it might mean based on context. Check and record the dictionary definition. Was your guess close to the actual meaning of the word?

Vocabulary Word	Page	I Think It Means	Dictionary definition	Was I Close? Y/N
kamikaze	142			
sappy	164			
offensive	168			
spied	173			
tentative	186			
enlisted	209			
affirmative	210			

# POST-READING ACTIVITIES

## Narrative: Culture Clash

Ask students to create a 1-2 page story about an incident of culture clash. Invite student to draw from their own experiences as an immigrant or a traveler, or to use their own background knowledge of Canadian and other cultures. The story should demonstrate the use of descriptive detail, and explore the character's thoughts and feelings about the experience.

## Narrative: Caught in a Bind

Ask students to create a 1-2 page story from the point of view of another character from *Old Man*. The story should focus on how economic, cultural or social pressure compels the character to make a particular choice. (Examples could be, Nate's mother giving up on her nursing dream, Tal Ledbetter being drafted, Mr. Vinh using ex-military experience to establish a post war career as a guide, Ms. Soon becoming an English-Vietnamese translator despite feelings of resentment towards the US, etc.) The story should explain the context of from that character's point of view, and explore the character's thoughts and feelings about the experience.

## Movie Screening

Hold an in-class screening of a movie set in the Vietnam War. While most of the best films on the topic depict violence and extreme language, it could be worthwhile to secure permission for a showing anyway. Some of the best choices include:

- Good Morning Vietnam (R)
- The Deer Hunter (R)
- Path to War
- We Were Soldiers (R)

Following the movie:

1. Hold a class discussion about the movie. Ask student to analyse the movie for:
  - Pro-war or anti-war bias
  - Pro or anti-American bias
  - Pro or anti-Vietnamese bias
2. Ask students to create a movie review, giving the movie a rating out of ten, and evaluating the movie based on the quality of its portrayal of the war.
3. Have write a story board or synopsis for a Vietnam War movie from the point of view of a Viet Cong, soldier, or a Vietnamese civilian.



## PTSD Report

Ask students to write 1 page report on the topic of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. The report should explain the causes, common symptoms and treatments for PTSD. The report should use examples from *Old Man* to illustrate what PTSD can look like.

## Vietnam War Report

Ask students to write a 1-2 page report on the Vietnam war. Ask students to include information on;

- the causes of the war,
- the reasons why the United States became involved in the war,
- the reasons that the United States pulled out of the war,
- at least one major battle
- the outcome of the war

Alternatively, ask students to research and present their information as a short film documentary or presentation

## Country Comparison

Ask students to create a t-chart, or a short report, to compare and contrast modern day Vietnam to modern day Canada. Subtopics could include;

- Governmental organization
- Geography, climate and resources
- Agriculture and industry
- Immigration and emigration patterns
- International Relations
- Culture
- Tourism
- Ecological footprint
- Cross-cultural influence between Canada and Vietnam

## Class Discussion: Forgiveness

1. Have students work in small groups to list all the occasions that people in the novel *Old Man* get or want forgiveness.
2. As a class, discuss student's answers and make a master list
3. Hold a class discussion on what "forgiveness" is

4. As part of the discussion, consider posing the following questions
  - Can forgiveness be earned?
  - Is forgiveness always owed?

## **Class Discussion: Risk**

Define the concept of “risk” for the class

1. Have students work in small groups to list factors that make people more or less likely to take physical, social or emotional risks.
2. As a class, discuss student’s answers.
3. As a class, discuss how Nate’s behaviour or the *Old Man’s* behaviour exemplify this theme.

## **Debate: Division Versus Connection**

Ask students to debate whether it is better to keep your distance from others or better to make connections when possible? Student’s should prove their points by referring to evidence from *Old Man*.

Depending on your time limits and needs, you might organize formal debating teams, or choose an informal style, (like a “musical chair” debate,) in which students get repeated opportunities to pair off.

## **Culminating Task: Essay Assignment**

Have students write a 2-3 page essay on one of the following topics:

- Discuss the motivations and achievements of the character Larry Huffman in *Old Man*.
- How does the character Nate Huffman grow and change in the novel *Old Man*?
- Analyze the use of setting in *Old Man*. How does the use of location and references to the Vietnam War inform Nate Huffman’s character arc?
- What are the most important themes in *Old Man*?
- Evaluate the author’s success at depicting an estranged son and father reconnecting. Does the author portray this realistically? Justify your answer.

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Class: \_\_\_\_\_

## Essay Assignment

Write an essay on one of the following topics.

- Discuss the motivations and achievements of the character Larry Huffman in *Old Man*.
- How does the character Nate Huffman grow and change in the novel *Old Man*?
- Analyze the use of setting in *Old Man*. How does the use of location and references to the Vietnam War inform Nate Huffman's character arc?
- What are the most important themes in *Old Man*?
- Evaluate the author's success at depicting an estranged son and father reconnecting. Does the author portray this realistically? Justify your answer.

Please remember to include a bibliography of all your sources.

Your essay will be assessed for:

- Knowledge and understanding of the text
- Analysis of the text
- Critical thinking
- Clarity of organization in your final product
- Sentence fluency
- Revision

**Your essay is due in class on** \_\_\_\_\_

# ASSESSMENT TOOLS

## Contextual Understanding in Written Work

Category	Level 1 (D)	Level 2 (C)	Level 3 (B)	Level 4 (A)
<b>English, Reading</b>				
<b>1.3: Knowledge and Understanding</b>	-demonstrates limited knowledge of events in <i>Old Man</i> , or topics and events referred to in <i>Old Man</i>	-demonstrates some knowledge of events in <i>Old Man</i> , or topics and events referred to in <i>Old Man</i>	-demonstrates considerable knowledge of events or topics and events referred to in <i>Old Man</i>	-demonstrates a high degree of knowledge of events or topics and events referred to in <i>Old Man</i>
<b>English, Writing</b>				
<b>1.3: Research</b>	-locates and selects minimal or inaccurate information to support ideas for writing, using limited strategies and resources,	-locates and selects some information to support ideas for writing, using a couple of strategies and resources,	-locates and selects information to support ideas for writing, using several different strategies and print, electronic, and other resources, as appropriate	-with precision, locates and selects information to support ideas for writing, shows expertise using different strategies and print, electronic, and other resources
<b>1.4: Organizing Ideas</b>	-with considerable errors, identifies, sorts, and orders main ideas and supporting details using an organizational pattern suited to the content and purpose for writing	-with some errors, identifies, sorts, and orders main ideas and supporting details using an organizational pattern suited to the content and purpose for writing	-identifies, sorts, and orders main ideas and supporting details using an organizational pattern suited to the content and purpose for writing	-identifies, sorts, and orders main ideas and supporting details with clarity, using an exemplary organizational pattern suited to the content and purpose for writing
<b>Geography: Academic</b>				
<b>analyse connections between Canada and other countries</b>	-with considerable errors and omissions, analyses the connections between Canada and Vietnam	-with some errors and omissions, analyses the connections between Canada and Vietnam	-analyses the connections between Canada and Vietnam	-with significant insight, analyses the connections between Canada and Vietnam
<b>explain how global economic and environmental factors affect individual choices</b>	-with difficulty, -explains how global economic and environmental factors affect individual choices, using examples from the text	-with some limited insight, explains how global economic and environmental factors affect individual choices, using examples from the text	-explains how global economic and environmental factors affect individual choices, using examples from the text	-with significant insight, explains how global economic and environmental factors affect individual choices, using examples from the text
<b>Geography: Applied</b>				
<b>identify the economic, cultural, and environmental connections between Canada and other countries</b>	-with considerable errors and omissions, identifies the economic, cultural, and environmental connections between Canada and Vietnam	- with some errors and omissions, insight, identifies the economic, cultural, and environmental connections between Canada and Vietnam	- identifies the economic, cultural, and environmental connections between Canada and Vietnam	- with significant insight, identifies the economic, cultural, and environmental connections between Canada and Vietnam
<b>report on how Canada influences and is influenced by its economic, cultural, and environmental connections with other countries</b>	-with difficulty, reports on how Canada influences and is influenced by its economic, cultural, and environmental connections with Vietnam	-with some limited insight, reports on how Canada influences and is influenced by its economic, cultural, and environmental connections with Vietnam	-accurately reports on how Canada influences and is influenced by its economic, cultural, and environmental connections with Vietnam	-with significant insight, reports on how Canada influences and is influenced by its economic, cultural, and environmental connections with Vietnam

## Demonstration of Reading Strategies and Comprehension of the Text

Category	Level 1 (D)	Level 2 (C)	Level 3 (B)	Level 4 (A)
<b>English, Reading</b>				
<b>1.2: Use of Reading Strategies</b>	-demonstrates limited use of comprehension strategies before, during, or after reading to understand the text	-demonstrates satisfactory use of comprehension strategies before, during, or after reading to understand the text	-demonstrates consistent use of comprehension strategies before, during, or after reading to understand the text	-demonstrates in an exemplary manner the use of comprehension strategies before, during, or after reading to understand the text
<b>1.3: Knowledge and Understanding</b>	-demonstrates limited knowledge and understanding of the text	-demonstrates some knowledge and understanding of the text	-demonstrates considerable knowledge and understanding of the text	-demonstrates a high degree of knowledge and understanding of the text
<b>1.4: Making Inferences</b>	-makes and explains a few simple inferences about the text -provides little or no support of their explanations from stated and implied ideas in the text	-makes and explains some inferences about the text -provides some support of their explanations from stated and implied ideas in the text	-makes and explains inferences about the text -provides support for their explanations from stated and implied ideas in the text	-makes and explains insightful inferences about the text -provides exact supports for their explanations from stated and implied ideas in the text
<b>1.5: Extending Understanding</b>	-makes a few, tenuous connections between the ideas in the text and personal knowledge, experience, and insights; other texts; or the world around them, providing limited understanding of the text	-makes some connections between the ideas in the text and personal knowledge, experience, and insights; other texts; or the world around them, providing some additional understanding of the text	-makes connections between the ideas in the text and personal knowledge, experience, and insights; other texts; or the world around them, and extending their understanding of the text	-makes astute connections between the ideas in the text and personal knowledge, experience, and insights; other texts; or the world around them, considerably extending their understanding of the text
<b>1.6: Analyzing Texts</b>	-with considerable difficulty, analyses the text in terms of information, ideas, issues, or themes, identifying a few aspects of the text contributing to the presentation or development of these elements	-with some error, analyses the text in terms of information, ideas, issues, or themes, identifying various aspects of the text that contribute to the presentation or development of these elements	-analyses the text in terms of information, ideas, issues, or themes, examining how various aspects of the text contributes to the presentation or development of these elements	-expertly analyses the text in terms of information, ideas, issues, or themes, examining how various aspects of the text contributes to the presentation or development of these elements
<b>1.7: Evaluating Texts</b>	-attempts, with difficulty, to evaluate the effectiveness of the text, using little or inaccurate evidence from the text to support their opinions	-attempts to evaluate the effectiveness of the text, making use of some, vague evidence from the text to support their opinions	-evaluates the effectiveness of the text, using specific evidence from the text to support their opinions	-convincingly evaluates the effectiveness of the text, using specific and relevant evidence from the text to support their opinions
<b>1.8: Critical Literacy</b>	-identifies a few obvious perspectives and/or biases evident in the text, often without comment	-identifies and comments on some of the perspectives and/or biases evident in the text	-identifies and comments on the perspectives and/or biases evident in the text	-with a high degree of insight, identifies and comments on the perspectives and/or biases evident in the text

## Vocabulary Development

Category	Level 1 (D)	Level 2 (C)	Level 3 (B)	Level 4 (A)
<b>English, Reading</b>				
<b>3.2: Developing Vocabulary</b>	-makes limited use of strategies to expand vocabulary	-makes some use of strategies to expand vocabulary	-makes successful or consistent use of strategies to expand vocabulary	-makes exemplary use of strategies to expand vocabulary

## Evaluation of Oral and Media Literacy in Class Discussions or Debates

Category	Level 1 (D)	Level 2 (C)	Level 3 (B)	Level 4 (A)
<b>English, Oral Communication</b>				
<b>1.2: Uses Active Listening Strategies</b>	-inconsistently attempts the use of active listening strategies when participating in classroom interactions	-makes inconsistent use of active listening strategies when participating in classroom interactions	-makes consistent use of active listening strategies when participating in a variety of classroom interactions	-always makes successful, consistent use of active listening strategies when participating in a variety of classroom interactions
<b>2.2: Interpersonal Speaking Strategies</b>	-demonstrates limited understanding of interpersonal speaking strategies, sometimes adapting them to suit the situation	-demonstrates some understanding of interpersonal speaking strategies, usually adapting them to suit the situation	-demonstrates understanding of interpersonal speaking strategies, adapting them to suit the situation	-demonstrates expert understanding of interpersonal speaking strategies, adapting them to suit the situation
<b>2.3: Clarity and Coherence</b>	-with considerable difficulty, communicates in a clear, coherent manner appropriate to the purpose	-with some difficulty, communicates in a clear, coherent manner appropriate to the purpose	-communicates in a clear, coherent manner appropriate to the purpose	-consistently communicates in a clear, coherent manner appropriate to the purpose
<b>English, Media Literacy</b>				
<b>1.3: Evaluating Texts</b>	-attempts, with difficulty, to evaluate how effectively information, ideas, issues, and opinions are communicated in media texts, and decide whether the texts achieve their intended purpose	-attempts to evaluate how effectively information, ideas, issues, and opinions are communicated in media texts, and decide whether the texts achieve their intended purpose	-evaluates how effectively information, ideas, issues, and opinions are communicated in media texts, and decide whether the texts achieve their intended purpose	-convincingly evaluates how effectively information, ideas, issues, and opinions are communicated in media texts, and decides whether the texts achieve their intended purpose
<b>1.5: Critical Literacy</b>	-identifies a few obvious perspectives or biases evident in media texts, often without comment	-identifies and comments on some of the perspectives and/or biases evident in media texts	-identifies and comments on the perspectives and/or biases evident in media texts	-with a high degree of insight, identifies and comments on the perspectives and/or biases evident in media texts

## Evaluation of Literary Essay Work

Category	Level 1 (D)	Level 2 (C)	Level 3 (B)	Level 4 (A)
<b>English, Reading</b>				
<b>1.3: Knowledge and Understanding</b>	-demonstrates limited knowledge and understanding of the text	-demonstrates some knowledge and understanding of the text	-demonstrates considerable knowledge and understanding of the text	-demonstrates a high degree of knowledge and understanding of the text
<b>1.4 Making Inferences</b>	-makes and explains a few simple inferences about the text -provides little or no support of their explanations from stated and implied ideas in the text	-makes and explains some inferences about the text -provides some support of their explanations from stated and implied ideas in the text	-makes and explains inferences about the text -provides support for their explanations from stated and implied ideas in the text	-makes and explains insightful inferences about the text -provides exact supports for their explanations from stated and implied ideas in the text
<b>1.6 Analyzing Text</b>	-with considerable difficulty, analyses the text in terms of information, ideas, issues, or themes, identifying a few aspects of the text contributing to the presentation or development of these elements	-with some error, analyses the text in terms of information, ideas, issues, or themes, identifying various aspects of the text that contribute to the presentation or development of these elements	-analyses the text in terms of information, ideas, issues, or themes, examining how various aspects of the text contributes to the presentation or development of these elements	-expertly analyses the text in terms of information, ideas, issues, or themes, examining how various aspects of the text contributes to the presentation or development of these elements
<b>1.7: Evaluating Texts</b>	-attempts, with difficulty, to evaluate the effectiveness of the text, using little or inaccurate evidence from the text to support their opinions	-attempts to evaluate the effectiveness of the text, making use of some, vague evidence from the text to support their opinions	-evaluates the effectiveness of the text, using specific evidence from the text to support their opinions	-convincingly evaluates the effectiveness of the text, using specific and relevant evidence from the text to support their opinions
<b>1.8 Critical Literacy</b>	-identifies a few obvious perspectives or biases evident in the text, often without comment	-identifies and comments on some of the perspectives and/or biases evident in the text	-identifies and comments on the perspectives and/or biases evident in the text	-with a high degree of insight, identifies and comments on the perspectives and/or biases evident in the text
<b>English, Writing</b>				
<b>1.3: Research</b>	-locates and selects minimal or inaccurate information to support ideas for writing, using limited strategies and resources	-locates and selects some information to support ideas for writing, using a couple of strategies and resources	-locates and selects information to support ideas for writing, using several different strategies and print, electronic, and other resources, as appropriate	-with precision, locates and selects information to support ideas for writing, showing expertise while using different strategies and print, electronic, and other resources
<b>1.4 Organizing Ideas</b>	-with considerable errors, identifies, sorts, and orders main ideas and supporting details using an organizational pattern suited to the content and purpose for writing	-with some errors, identifies, sorts, and orders main ideas and supporting details using an organizational pattern suited to the content and purpose for writing	-identifies, sorts, and orders main ideas and supporting details using an organizational pattern suited to the content and purpose for writing	-identifies, sorts, and orders main ideas and supporting details with clarity, using an exemplary organizational pattern suited to the content and purpose for writing

<b>2.4 Sentence Craft and Fluency</b>	-sometimes writes complete sentences that communicate their meaning clearly and accurately, -provides little variance of sentence type, structure, and length or logical transitions between ideas	-usually writes complete sentences that communicate their meaning clearly and accurately, -usually varies sentence type, structure, and length and makes logical transitions between ideas	-writes complete sentences that communicate their meaning clearly and accurately, -varies sentence type, structure, and length and makes logical transitions between ideas	-expertly writes complete sentences that communicate their meaning clearly and accurately, -provides a high degree of variety of sentence types, structures, and lengths and makes logical transitions between ideas
<b>2.6 Revision</b>	-with considerable errors and gaps, revises drafts to improve the content, organization, clarity, and style of their written work	-with some errors or gaps, revises drafts to improve the content, organization, clarity, and style of their written work	-revises drafts to improve the content, organization, clarity, and style of their written work	-thoroughly revises drafts to improve the content, organization, clarity, and style of their written work