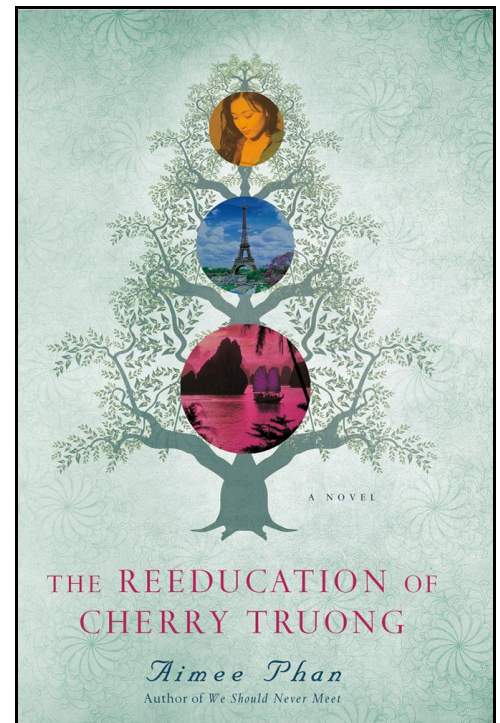




The Reeducation of Cherry Truong

by Aimee Phan

ISBN-13: 978-0-312-32268-7
ISBN-10: 0-312-32268-2



About this Guide

The following author biography and list of questions about *The Reeducation of Cherry Truong* are intended as resources to aid individual readers and book groups who would like to learn more about the author and this book. We hope that this guide will provide you a starting place for discussion, and suggest a variety of perspectives from which you might approach *The Reeducation of Cherry Truong*.

About the Book

A young woman journeys back to Vietnam to uncover family secrets—in this first novel from the author of *We Should Never Meet*

CHERRY TRUONG's parents have exiled her wayward older brother from their Southern California home, sending him to Vietnam to live with distant relatives. Determined to bring him back, twenty-one-year-old Cherry travels to their homeland and finds herself on a journey to uncover her family's decades-old secrets—hidden loves, desperate choices, and lives ripped apart by the march of war and currents of history.

The Reeducation of Cherry Truong tells the story of two fierce and unforgettable families, the Truongs and the Vos: their harrowing escape from Vietnam after the war, the betrayal that divided them, and the stubborn memories that continue to bind them years later, even as they come to terms with their hidden sacrifices and bitter mistakes. Kim-Ly, Cherry's grandmother, once wealthy and powerful in Vietnam, now struggles to survive in Little Saigon, California without English or a driver's license. Cherry's other grandmother Hoa, whose domineering husband has developed dementia, discovers a cache of letters from

a woman she thought had been left behind. As Cherry pieces their stories together, she uncovers the burden of her family's love and the consequences of their choices.

Set in Vietnam, France, and the United States, Aimee Phan's sweeping debut novel reveals a family still yearning for reconciliation, redemption, and a place to call home.

Praise for *The Reeducation of Cherry Truong*

"*The Reeducation of Cherry Truong* explores the intersection of history and human hearts. With tenderness and wisdom, this intricately woven tale presents a world both mysterious and familiar to readers. Aimee Phan is a keen observer and a beautiful writer."

—YIYUN LI, author of *The Vagrants*

"*The Reeducation of Cherry Truong* is a powerful debut novel about reverse migration, the new American immigrant story. Cherry Truong's attempt to reconnect to her mother's family reaches around the world, from America to Vietnam to France, and reinvents what she knows of her family's history and her world. And with this novel, Aimee Phan reinvents what we know of ours at the same time."

—ALEXANDER CHEE, author of *Edinburgh: A Novel*

"A story of loyalties, histories, and identities, *The Reeducation of Cherry Truong* explores multiple generations of the Truong and Vos families. Touching on the events of the Vietnam War, cultural assimilation, reconciliation, forgiveness, and redemption, Phan crafts an epic tale. Through Cherry's eyes, the complex country of Vietnam is lovingly explored in immense, realistic detail. Readers of Maxine Hong Kingston and Gish Jen will enjoy Phan's sensitive, lush prose and recognize similar questions of identity."

—Booklist

About the Author

AIMEE PHAN grew up in Orange County, California, and now teaches in the MFA Writing Program and Writing and Literature Program at California College of the Arts. A 2010 National Endowment of the Arts Creative Writing Fellow, Aimee received her MFA from the Iowa Writer's Workshop, where she won a Maytag Fellowship. Her first book, *We Should Never Meet*, was named a Notable Book by the Kiriyama Prize in fiction and a finalist for the 2005 Asian American Literary Awards. Her writing has appeared in *The New York Times*, *USA Today*, and *The Oregonian* among others.

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Discussion Questions

1. Many Vietnamese families were torn apart after the war, with some remaining in Vietnam, and others departing for different countries around the world. Why do you think Sanh and Tuyet chose to leave the Truong family and go alone to America? Was it ultimately the right choice?
2. While Lum floundered in America, he has become the model success story in Vietnam. Why is it significant that his transformation happens amidst the new, capitalism-embracing, *doi moi* reforms of Ho Chi Minh City?
3. How are Lum and Cherry treated differently by their parents while they are growing up? How do you think this affects the children's relationship with each other and their views of themselves?
4. The novel toggles between the Truong and Vo families in France and America. What do their experiences tell you about the immigration experience and differences between the Vietnamese communities in the two countries?
5. Can you find any similarities between Kim-Ly's attempt to broker a marriage between her daughter and an American officer in Vietnam, and her meddling in her granddaughter Duyen's entry in the Little Miss Little Saigon beauty pageant in America?
6. The Lourdes sanctuary in France provides the backdrop for major revelations in the Truong family. Why do you think this holy tourist attraction is such a significant place for these characters? What does it say about the importance of religion in their lives?
7. Kim-Ly is rather surprised and disappointed by her best friends' gambling obsession during their vacation in Las Vegas. How does the twins' bingo addiction shed light on the larger problem of Asian American gambling? How do these gamblers see gambling as the shortcut to the American dream?
8. The chapters are interspersed with letters from Tuyet to Kim-Ly, and Hung to a mysterious woman named Cuc. These are the only times we hear the perspectives of Tuyet and Hung. Do these letters help you to understand the decisions they make?

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