

# Countries Around the World™

## Vietnam

### Program Summary

Meet Thanh. He and his family live in Ho Chi Minh City, a city located in the southeast region of Vietnam. Join Thanh as he heads over to the Binh Tây market to buy shrimp for his mother. Along the way, he walks through the Botanical Gardens and stops to watch an aquatic puppet show, an art form invented ages ago by people living in the Red River Delta. Discover the importance of family in Vietnam when Thanh returns home and witnesses his father performing a ritual of ancestor worship before Thanh's extended family sits down for a large dinner. Next, Thanh goes out for a night on the town with his sister and her boyfriend, and they decide to partake in one of Vietnam's most popular pastimes — karaoke! Students will learn about Vietnamese customs when Thanh releases caged birds and burns incense for good luck before looking for traditional, herbal medicines in the Cholon, Ho Chi Minh City's Chinese quarter. Finally, Thanh travels by barge to the Mekong Delta. The journey there will reveal how vital the lush delta is to Vietnamese agriculture when Thanh observes all the crops being grown there and even enjoys the sweet drink of a freshly-picked coconut.

### Country Information

- **location:** Southeast Asia, bordering the Gulf of Thailand, Gulf of Tonkin and South China Sea; bordered by Cambodia, Laos and China
- **capital:** Hanoi
- **official language:** Vietnamese
- **type of government:** communist state
- **total area:** approximately 329,560 sq km
- **climate:** tropical in the South; monsoonal in the North with a hot, rainy season (May to September) and a warm, dry season (October to March)
- **terrain:** low, flat delta in the South and North; central highlands; hilly and mountainous in the far North and Northwest
- **natural resources:** includes phosphates, coal, manganese, bauxite, chromate, offshore oil and gas deposits, forests and hydropower
- **industries:** includes food processing, garments, shoes, machine-building, mining, coal, steel, cement, chemical fertilizer, glass, tires, oil and paper
- **agricultural products:** includes rice, coffee, rubber, cotton, tea, pepper, soybeans, cashews, sugar cane, peanuts, bananas, poultry, fish and seafood

### Vocabulary

**Saigon** — The former name of Ho Chi Minh City.

**delta** — A large area of fertile land at a river mouth where deposits of eroded materials build up.

**trishaw** — A small, light, three-wheeled vehicle that is used for carrying people or goods, and is pedaled by an operator.

**rickshaw** — A small, two-wheeled, single-passenger cart that is pulled by one person.

**moped** — A lightweight, motorized bicycle that can be pedaled as well as driven by a low-powered gasoline engine. (Continued)

**incense** — An aromatic substance that produces a pleasant odor when burned. It is used in certain religious ceremonies in Vietnam.

**ao dai** — The traditional dress of Vietnamese women, which consists of a long tunic that is slit on the sides and worn over loose trousers.

**karaoke** — A music entertainment system providing prerecorded accompaniment to popular songs that a performer sings live, usually by following the lyrics on a video screen.

**pagoda** — A Buddhist place of worship.

**Mahayana Buddhism** — A religion based on the life and teachings of Siddhartha Gautama, the Buddha. Mahayana Buddhism differs from other forms of Buddhism by placing importance on becoming a bodhisattva, a person who has attained enlightenment and works toward the salvation of others.

**acupuncture** — A procedure used in or adapted from Chinese medical practice in which specific body areas are pierced with fine needles for therapeutic purposes.

**Cholon** — The name for the Chinese quarter of Ho Chi Minh City.

**tributary** — A smaller river or stream that flows into a larger body of water.

**barge** — A large, flat-bottomed boat.

### Pre-viewing Discussion

- Distribute maps of Southeast Asia to the students. Have them find and label Vietnam, its capital and the major bodies of water. In addition, students can label neighboring countries and their capitals. Questions to ask include: How would you describe the shape of Vietnam? How many countries border Vietnam? Which one shares the longest border? Which one shares the shortest? Do you think the Vietnamese people share anything in common with the people of the countries that border Vietnam? If so, what?
- As a class, brainstorm a list of questions about Vietnam. Prompt students by asking them to share what they already know about Vietnam and what they would like to find out about the country. Students can make predictions about what they think they will see in the program. As they watch, have students keep track of how many of their questions were answered and if their preconceptions about Vietnam were correct or not.
- Engage students in a discussion about the modes of transportation that they use. How do you normally get to where you're going? What do you think is the main form of transportation in the United States? In other countries? How do different forms of transportation fit people's travel needs? How are modes of transportation related to the geographic layout of a region? Can you think of a place where the vehicles you use for transport wouldn't be very effective because of the geography? Inform students to watch for the types of transportation used in the program, and after viewing, have students compare the modes of transportation used by the host with the ones they use.

### Follow-up Activities

- Read selections from Sherry Garland's *Children of the Dragon: Selected Tales from Vietnam* (Harcourt Children's Books, 2001) to the class. Then, have students recreate one of the stories in the classroom by acting it out in a traditional, Vietnamese way — with puppets! Divide the class into small groups and task each group with designing sets and puppets that focus on the aspects of the folktale's characters, plot and setting. After each performance, conduct a question and answer session in which students explain why they retold the folktale the way they did.

(Continued)

- Southeast Asia is a unique region of the world that consists of island nations as well as countries on the Asian continent. While these countries may be similar to each other in some ways, they are very different in others. Geography, belief systems and language, for example, might have familiar elements among the Southeast Asian countries, but also have significant, regional differences. Engage students in a comparative study of Vietnam with other nations of this region. Determine a few areas of focus (e.g., geography, religion, agriculture, etc.) and organize findings with various graphic organizers, like Venn diagrams and bar graphs. Consider watching the programs on *Indonesia*, *Cambodia* and *Myanmar (Burma)* of this series.
- Ho Chi Minh is a major figure in Vietnam, and whether it's a statue, the currency or even a whole city named after him, Ho Chi Minh is everywhere! But how do other countries honor their national figures, and what do they mean to the people living in those countries? From George Washington in the United States to Genghis Khan in Mongolia, students will enjoy finding out how different countries pay homage to national figures. Students can use the information they find to create fact posters that feature brief bios and time lines of the national figures, in addition to pictures or illustrations that show the different depictions of that person in a given culture. Encourage students to share their posters and display them in the classroom.
- Vietnam is filled with historic buildings and temples, and some of Vietnam's most beautiful structures can be found in the feudal capital city of Huế. Students can learn the history behind some of these ancient structures and even take a virtual tour of them by visiting [whc.unesco.org/en/list/678](http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/678). Students can pick their favorite structures, and using various materials, build models of them for display in the classroom. Instruct students to create time lines for the buildings they choose. As an extension, have students use their knowledge of scale to arrange their models in the classroom for a 3-D, miniaturized version of the building layout at Huế.
- In this program, Thanh releases birds and burns incense for good luck. Have students discuss other traditions that they or people they know practice for good luck. Students can also discuss acts and symbols that are linked with bad luck. Challenge students by encouraging them to discuss the concept of luck. What is it? Do they believe in it? Can one actually do things that influence good or bad luck? Then, have students explore another Southeast Asian practice designed to bring good luck — what the Vietnamese call *phong thủy*, but is more commonly known as *feng shui*. What is *feng shui*? How did it get started? How does it work? Students can even design an experiment in which they arrange the furnishings in a section of the classroom to test the precepts of *feng shui*.
- Students will have fun creating their own “Traveling down the Mekong Delta” board games. Divide students into small groups and, using pieces of cardboard and various craft materials, have students design and fashion their game boards to resemble the Mekong Delta while inventing the rules for their games. The games can include facts about the Mekong Delta, like the food grown there or the different rivers that feed into it, and may even include playing pieces that resemble the types of watercraft used on the delta! Once they have finished making their boards, students can take turns playing each others' games.
- The teachings of Siddhartha Gautama became the basis for one of the world's most prominent religions, Buddhism. Invite students to learn more about this venerable belief system by sharing some Buddhist parables. Read selections from *I Was Once a Monkey: Stories Buddha Told* (Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1999) to the class. Discuss the stories by asking questions, such as: What do you think the lesson of that story is? Are the values that this story teaches applicable to your life? Have you ever experienced something similar? How would you have dealt with the situations encountered in the stories? Then, have students write and illustrate their own parables, modeled after the ones in the text. Collect the students' stories and compile them in a class book.
- Students will have fun learning all about Vietnam by creating their own question and answer books. Begin by dividing the class into small groups and assigning each group a topic to cover, such as climate, history, food or wildlife. Once they have finished creating their books, students can use the material from their question and answer books in a classroom trivia game about Vietnam. An interactive tool for making a question and answer book can be found at [www.readwritethink.org/materials/flipbook/](http://www.readwritethink.org/materials/flipbook/).

## Suggested Internet Resources

- [www.vietnamembassy-usa.org/](http://www.vietnamembassy-usa.org/)  
This site, assembled by the Embassy of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, details Vietnamese history, culture, geography and politics.
- [www.katw.org/pages/sitepage.cfm?id=65&pname=Home&purl=index.cfm](http://www.katw.org/pages/sitepage.cfm?id=65&pname=Home&purl=index.cfm)  
This site introduces students to the lives, customs, and cultures of children in Vietnam. Includes lesson plans and links to other sites about Vietnam.
- [www.timeforkids.com/TFK/specials/goplaces/0,12405,187312,00.html](http://www.timeforkids.com/TFK/specials/goplaces/0,12405,187312,00.html)  
Discover Vietnam and what it is like to live there! This web site by Time Inc. presents information about Vietnam's famous sites, history and language. Also includes a quiz.
- [www.cia.gov](http://www.cia.gov)  
The CIA World Factbook web site presents detailed and up-to-date information on Vietnam and many other countries. Topics include geography, people, government, economy, transportation and communication. On the main page of the CIA site, click on the “World Factbook” link.

## Suggested Print Resources

- Englar, Mary. *Vietnam: A Question and Answer Book*. Capstone Press, Mankato, MN; 2006.
- Lee, Jeanne M. *Toad Is the Uncle of Heaven*. Henry Holt and Co., New York, NY; 1989. A retelling of a traditional, Vietnamese folktale.
- Nair, Charissa Marie and Audrey Seah. *Vietnam*. Marshall Cavendish, Tarrytown, NY; 2005.
- Willis, Terri. *Vietnam*. Children's Press, Danbury, CT; 2002.

Teacher's Guide written by Brian Wales, Curriculum Specialist, Schlessinger Media

(Continued)

Teacher's Guides for titles in this series are available at [www.LibraryVideo.com](http://www.LibraryVideo.com)

- Algeria
- Argentina
- Australia
- Austria
- Belgium
- Bolivia
- Brazil
- Cambodia
- Canada
- Chile
- China
- Czech Republic
- Denmark
- Estonia
- Finland
- France
- Germany
- Greece
- Guatemala
- Iceland
- India
- Indonesia
- Ireland
- Israel
- Italy
- Japan
- Jordan
- Kenya
- Lebanon
- Madagascar
- Mali
- Malta
- Mexico
- Mongolia
- Morocco
- Myanmar (Burma)
- Netherlands
- Norway
- Peru
- Portugal
- Romania
- Russia
- Rwanda
- South Africa
- Spain
- Sweden
- Switzerland
- Turkey
- United Kingdom
- United States
- Venezuela
- Vietnam



Teacher's Guide Copyright 2007 by Schlessinger Media, a division of Library Video Company  
PO. Box 580, Wynnewood, PA 19096 • 800-843-3620

Program © Marathon, Pixcom Productions and Storm- MMV All Rights Reserved