



***Mèo and Bé* by Doan Phuong Nguyen**

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ISBN: 9781643796253 (Hardcover)

*Age Range: 10 & up (Suggested by Publisher)

Grade Range: 6 & up (Recommended by *School Library Journal*)

BOOK SYNOPSIS

Just before the United States enters the Vietnam War, eleven-year-old Bé and her three-footed kitten Mèo must rise above the injustices of war to find the comfort, safety, and love of a found family.

Eleven-year-old Bé hasn't spoken a word since her mother left. She hangs on to the hope that one day they will be reunited, but after two years of waiting, it's becoming more difficult. Her father--who is now frail and helpless after a stroke--can do little to protect her from her stepmother, Big Mother, who treats Bé like an animal and a servant. Thankfully, Bé has a secret friend, her little kitten Mèo, to comfort her in the worst of times. Maybe if she just steers clear of Big Mother and is obedient, everything will be okay.

Unfortunately, Big Mother has other plans. She accuses her of stealing, and Bé is drugged and sold. When she wakes up, she finds herself in a locked underground bunker being held captive with a group of young women. Bé is too young to understand why they're prisoners, but at least she still has Mèo! He was hiding in her shirt when she was taken. As weeks pass, Bé makes a friend her own age, Ngân, even without speaking, and Mèo becomes a solace for the women--being available for cuddles and catching the mice that annoy them.

Suddenly, a violent uprising enables the imprisoned women and girls to escape, only to realize the wider world of war is just as dangerous. Can Bé and Mèo, and their newfound friend, Ngân, find their way to a safe place they can call home--even though the world is literally exploding all around them?

A beautiful literary work, full of kindness and compassion amidst the devastation of war.

REVIEWS AND PRAISE

"Heart-wrenching, hopeful, and heartwarming. Extraordinarily deep and lovely. Please read *Mèo and Bé* and fall in love like I did." —**Jennifer Niven, #1 *New York Times* bestselling author of *All the Bright Places***

"This moving debut novel, based in part on the experiences of members of Nguyen's family, features well-developed characters, vivid depictions of wartime Vietnam, and a sense of everyday life for ordinary Vietnamese people during this period. . . An unsparingly brutal but ultimately uplifting story; readers will cheer as Bé finally finds her voice." —[Booklist](#)

"A harrowing account of one girl's life during the Vietnam War. This raw story of perseverance in the face of horror will challenge readers and their interlocutors." —[Kirkus Reviews](#)

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“This powerfully wrought portrayal of grief and perseverance sensitively depicts an underrepresented perspective of life in Vietnam during the war.” —[Publishers Weekly](#)

“With unflinching honesty, Bé’s story gives readers a rare window into Vietnamese life during the Vietnam War. Devoid of American soldiers and including only passing references to the Viet Cong, readers instead focus on the struggles of the Vietnamese people. Characters are well developed, the historical setting is drawn vividly, and tightly created tension pulls the reader through the story. . . An underrepresented topic on most shelves, this page-turner explores a girl’s search for love and connection while providing a unique and necessary historical perspective.” —[School Library Journal](#)

AWARDS AND ACCOLADES

- Freeman Book Awards Honor (National Consortium for Teaching about Asia)
- Notable Book for a Global Society Book List (International Literacy Association)
- Society of Midland Authors Award Honor

MEDIA AND RESOURCES

- [Teacher’s Guide](#)
- [From the Mixed-Up Files Interview with Doan Phuong Nguyen](#)
- [Cynsations Interview with Doan Phuong Nguyen](#)
- [KSDK St. Louis Interview with Doan Phuong Nguyen](#)

AUTHOR STATEMENT

“Although I was born in the generation after the Vietnam War ended, I’ve always been deeply affected by it. All my relatives (my parents, their siblings, my grandparents, and my great-grandparents) lived through the war, and I grew up hearing their stories of what life was like in wartime. Their stories always made me sad, especially knowing the suffering my people went through during that time, and in the years after the war ended. . . When I was learning about the Vietnam War in my U.S. high school, I had to learn how to separate the American version from the version my father was telling me at home. They are two different perspectives of the war. Through the years, I’ve realized that there are always multiple perspectives or points of view to history, depending on who is telling the story. As you, my readers, learn about the Vietnam War, I hope you are able to see the war from the Vietnamese perspective too, not just the American one.” —**Doan Phuong Nguyen**

*A NOTE ON AGE RANGES

A publisher-suggested age range covers the gamut of readers that publishers envision using the book, whether for independent reading, family sharing, group study, or in other ways. Educators have the best sense of the appropriate age range for the diverse learners they work with and understand these ranges vary depending on a book’s intended use.

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