

Summer Reading 2024:
***The Sympathizer* by Viet Thanh Ngyuen**

Welcome to A.P. Language & Comp. 11. Before you begin reading *The Sympathizer*, please take some time to familiarize yourself with the information below, which will give you the context you need to fully appreciate the world of the novel.

The Sympathizer begins with the evacuation of South Vietnamese allies of the United States military from Saigon in 1975, two years after the end of America's involvement in the Vietnam War. The narrator of the story, known only as "The Captain," is the *aide-de-camp* to a South Vietnamese General, for whom he has arranged passage on a plane to take them to the United States before the North Vietnamese army's invasion of the south begins. What no one knows except for us and the Captain is that, all along, he has secretly been a North Vietnamese spy.

From there, the book travels back and forth in time, from the 'present' (the U.S. post-1975), to the narrator's childhood and time as a student in Paris, and to the war itself. Below you will find explanations of some of the terminology used in the book:

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South Vietnam, also known as the **Republic of Vietnam (RVN)**, existed from 1945-1975. From the 1950s to 1973, they were the allies of the United States, fighting together to preserve democratic rule in the country. By the time the U.S. withdrew from Vietnam in 1973, more than 58,000 American lives and an estimated one million Vietnamese lives were lost.

The South Vietnamese and American militaries fought **North Vietnam**, also known as the **Democratic Republic of Vietnam**, a communist government run by **Ho Chi Minh**. With behind-the-scenes backing from the Soviet Union and communist China, the North Vietnamese government was attempting to unite the entire country, North and South, under communist rule. They achieved this in 1975 with the fall of Saigon, two years after American military withdrawal.

For the duration of the American war in Vietnam, North Vietnam was assisted covertly by the **Viet Cong (V.C.)**, whose official name was the **National Liberation Front**. The Viet Cong was a guerilla force made up of citizens from South and North Vietnam. Men and women of all ages dressed in civilian clothing and hiding in plain sight, the Viet Cong were responsible for countless ambushes of American and South Vietnamese forces. Their knowledge of the country's jungles, secret supply routes, and underground tunnel networks made them impossible to eliminate.