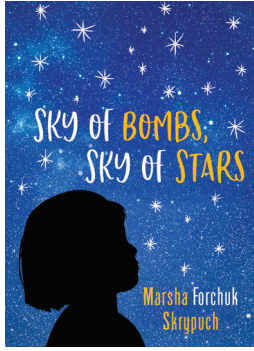


# Sky of Bombs, Sky of Stars

Omnibus edition of *Last Airlift: A Vietnamese Orphan's Rescue from War & One Step at a Time: A Vietnamese Child Finds Her Way*

## READING GUIDE



### STORY SUMMARY

Tuyet remembers little about life before the Saigon orphanage, before polio left her limping and in constant pain, before the war made it too dangerous to stand under the bomb-filled Vietnam sky. Unable to play with the other children and knowing that at eight she is too old to be adopted, she helps care for the babies in the orphanage. So when frantic aid-workers load a van full of babies and take Tuyet as well, she thinks that's why she is there: as a carer. She can't guess that, with the capital about to fall to the North Vietnamese, she is being evacuated on the last airplane full of at-risk children bound for new adoptive homes in the west.

Before she knows what is happening, Tuyet is whisked into life with the Morris family: Mom, Dad, their biological daughter Beth, and their adopted children Lara and Aaron. It takes some time to really understand that she isn't there to help care for baby Aaron: she is there to be their daughter. She learns that the bright sparks in the sky are stars, not bombs, that flames on a birthday cake are nothing to fear, and that her only jobs are to play and to be loved. But a bigger test stands before Tuyet: corrective surgery for her twisted ankle, and a gruelling physiotherapy regimen. Unable to speak English yet and terrified that the procedure will fail, Tuyet must draw on every ounce of courage and focus on her dream of running and kicking a ball in a pair of matching shoes.

**MARSHA FORCHUK SKRYPUCH** is a multi-award-winning author of historical fiction and non-fiction for children and young adults. *Dance of the Banished* was a USSBY Outstanding International Book, a White Ravens Selection, and the winner of the Geoffrey Bilson Award for Historical Fiction for Young People. *Last Airlift: A Vietnamese Orphan's Rescue from War* won the Red Cedar Information Book Award and its sequel, *One Step at a Time: A Vietnamese Child Finds Her Way* won the OLA Silver Birch Non-Fiction Award. Both were Bank Street Best Books. Her other acclaimed titles include *Stolen Child*, *Making Bombs for Hitler*, and *Underground Soldier*. In 2008, in recognition of her outstanding achievement in the development of the culture of Ukraine, Marsha was awarded the Order of Princess Olha. She lives in Brantford, Ontario.

Juvenile Nonfiction Ages 8–12 | ISBN: 978-1-77278-094-9 | Pages: 224

**KEYWORDS:** Narrative nonfiction, Biography, Immigration, Adoption, Polio, Vietnam, Vietnam War, 1970s, Hospitalization, Overcoming obstacles, Children with different abilities, Family, Acceptance, Self-esteem

### BISAC CODES

JNF007000 JUVENILE NONFICTION / Biography & Autobiography / General  
JNF019010 JUVENILE NONFICTION / Family / Adoption  
JNF053180 JUVENILE NONFICTION / Disabilities & Special Needs  
JNF069000 JUVENILE NONFICTION / Diversity & Multicultural  
JNF024020 JUVENILE NONFICTION / Health & Daily Living / Diseases, Illnesses & Injuries  
JNF025030 JUVENILE NONFICTION / History / Asia  
JNF025130 JUVENILE NONFICTION / History / Military & Wars

### READING LEVEL

Lexile Measure: 750L | Fountas & Pinnell: X

## Last Airlift: A Vietnamese Orphan's Rescue from War

### STORY SUMMARY

Author Marsha Forchuk Skrypuch tells the story of a Vietnamese orphan, Tuyet, who was airlifted from Saigon, Vietnam in 1975 and subsequently adopted in Toronto, Canada. Tuyet's story is enhanced with photographs of Tuyet, her family, and relevant documents.

### PRE-READING LESSONS

#### 1. Finding Vietnam and Canada:

**Materials:** World map or globe

**Directions:** Identify a place near you where Vietnamese refugees settled in the 1970s and 80s. Mark it on a world map. Help students locate Vietnam. Point out that Vietnam is in Southeast Asia and borders the countries China, Laos, and Cambodia, as well as the Gulfs of Thailand and Tonkin, and the South China Sea. Ask students to estimate the distance between Vietnam and the nearby location you identified. Ask students to identify the different means of travel one might take to make that journey.

#### 2. Brief History of the Vietnam War:

**Materials:** Map of Vietnam

**Directions:** Show students the map of Vietnam. Explain that after World War II Vietnam was temporarily partitioned, or separated into two parts: a northern zone and a southern zone. The two sides began a war that lasted close to twenty years. During the war it is estimated that over three million people were killed, including over one million Vietnamese people, 58,000 soldiers from the United States, and an unknown number of people in Cambodia and Laos. The war ended in 1975 when the northern army captured the capital of Southern Vietnam, then called Saigon. *Last*

*Airlift* begins its story in 1975, when the northern armies were approaching Saigon (now called Ho Chi Minh City.)

#### 3. The Orphan Airlift:

**Directions:** Tell students that in April of 1975 the situation in South Vietnam was deteriorating. As the northern armies were moving to the south, food and medicine were scarce and people were leaving the country. United States President Gerald Ford ordered the beginning of a mass evacuation of some of the 70,000 Vietnamese orphans. During the month of April, approximately 3,300 Vietnamese orphans were flown to the United States, Europe, Australia, and, as in the case of *Last Airlift*, Canada. In the United States this evacuation was called Operation Babylift.

**Extension for students in grades 6 and above:** Have students learn more about the orphan airlifts by using Internet resources or the resources listed at the end of this book. Students may research other child evacuation events such as Operation Peter Pan (1960–1962, Cuba to the United States), or Haitian Orphan Airlift (2010, Haiti to the United States). Discuss the pros and cons of these events.



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### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. p. 13 – What was a day like for Tuyet? *Note: Tuyet uses the pronunciation “Too-YET.” This is the pronunciation that her family uses in Canada and how she refers to herself. In Vietnam, her name might have been pronounced similar to “Twet.”*
2. p. 14 – Why might it be Tuyet’s duty to help with the younger children and babies? Did you, or do you, have similar responsibilities at age 8?
3. p. 14 – Why weren’t the children allowed to go outside? What do you think could have happened to Tuyet before she arrived at the orphanage?
4. p. 16 – Tuyet shares that she has polio. What do you know about polio? *Explain that polio is a contagious, viral disease and in some instances can lead to partial or full paralysis. Historically it’s been a devastating disease but due to the polio vaccine it has largely been eradicated in Europe, North and South America, much of Asia, and Australia. Tuyet explains that her left ankle was so weak she had to walk on her heel and that in order to move forward she had to push on her left knee with her left hand. Consider inviting students to respectfully try to walk around as Tuyet described. Have students share what is especially challenging about moving in that way. What sorts of activities might be harder to do with that type of physical challenge?*
5. p. 18 – Why was an orange so important that it stands out as a special memory for Tuyet?
6. p. 18 – Who might the two visitors have been? Why might they have stopped coming?
7. p. 21 – The man called Tuyet, “Son Thi Anh Tuyet.” *Explain that in Vietnamese, names are arranged as family name then given name. So “Tuyet,” which is her given or proper name, comes at the end of her full name. Arranging names this way is referred to as “Eastern order” and is common in many countries in eastern Asia, parts of Africa, and Hungary. In areas influenced by European naming traditions, such as North and South America, names are arranged in “Western order,” with the given name first, followed by the family name.*
8. p. 29 – What do you know about Hercules? Do you think that was a fitting name for the plane? Why or why not?
9. p. 37 – A woman on the plane gave Tuyet a cloth doll. What did it mean to her to have that doll? What does “breathed in its fresh newness” mean?
10. p. 40 – What was Tuyet safe from at the end of chapter three? Could there have been dangers that the woman knew about that were unknown to Tuyet at that time?
11. p. 44 – Why did Linh advise Tuyet to say “No” when people said things to her in English? Do you think this was reasonable advice? Why or why not?
12. p. 48–50 – Describe what different sensory experiences Tuyet had when she stepped off the plane in Toronto. What did she see, hear, smell, feel, and taste? *Have students step outside the classroom to see what they immediately see, feel, taste, smell, and hear. Compare and contrast their experiences to Tuyet’s.*
13. p. 55 – When Tuyet sees her photograph she says, “Did she really wear her sadness on her face for all to see?” What does she mean by that question? Have you ever seen a photograph of yourself and been surprised by how you looked? If so, what was that like?
14. p. 65 – How do you think Linh felt about going with her new family? Do you think she wanted to stay in Surrey Place with Tuyet? Why did Tuyet push Linh away?
15. p. 68 – Why did Tuyet assume the family wanted her to be their helper? Tuyet had experienced the loss of her birth family, her home and friends at the orphanage, and Linh. How do you think those experiences might affect her ability to trust and bond with a new family?
16. p. 73 – Why didn’t the idea of a dad seem very real to Tuyet? How might growing up in a country besieged by war influence a child’s concept of dads? Why would she have not ever seen a dad (or realized she’d seen one) before?
17. p. 84 – What do you think of Tuyet’s first dinner at home? Why did she drop the corn and chicken into her sock?

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18. p. 93 – Why did Tuyet sleep on the rug? What makes changing sleeping habits difficult? Do you remember changing your sleeping arrangements, such as from a toddler bed to a larger bed, or changing your sleep environment? If so, what was that like?
19. p. 99 – Why did Tuyet burp after eating the sweet cereal? Was she being impolite? Why or why not?
20. p. 112 – At the end of the story Tuyet's bedding is moved into the girls' room. Why is this significant for Tuyet? Why do you think the author might have chosen to end the story with the image of Tuyet slipping out of bed to look at the stars?



### TUYET'S JOURNEY (GEOGRAPHY, MAP SCALE)

**Materials:** One copy of a world map per student, rulers, pencils, crayons or colored pencils, means to display a projection of the map (optional)

**Preparations:** Prepare copies of the map. Use the free map "World 2" at <http://www.yourchildlearns.com/megamaps/print-world-maps.html> or a map that is similar.

#### Directions:

1. Distribute maps and rulers to students. Help them label the continents and major oceans on their maps.
2. Have students find and label your city on the map. Identify and label a second city that is approximately one cm away from your city on the map.
3. Use [Mapquest.com](http://Mapquest.com) or another tool to identify the true distance between your city and the second city on your map. Use this information to create the scale for the map. Have students draw a map scale key on their map, i.e., 1 cm = x km.
4. Identify and label Saigon, which was renamed Ho Chi Minh City right after the northern armies claimed Saigon in 1975. Remind students that this was where Tuyet lived before the airlift.
5. Reread the first sentence of the second paragraph on page 36 of *Last Airlift*: "There were more flights between Hong Kong and Toronto, but they all blended into one long dream." Identify and label Hong Kong, Vancouver, and Toronto on the map.
6. Using the map scale, have students identify the approximate distances from:
  - a. Saigon to Hong Kong
  - b. Hong Kong to Vancouver (via the Pacific Ocean)
  - c. Vancouver to Toronto
7. Add the distances from each leg of the journey to find the estimated distance that Tuyet traveled from Saigon to Toronto.
8. Discuss where else the flight might have stopped after Hong Kong.
9. Make three columns on the board. Label the columns "Tuyet," "Babies," and "Staff and Crew." Discuss the varying emotions and feelings that each person or group might have experienced during this journey. List your answers in the appropriate columns.
10. Compare and contrast the experiences of the different people on the plane.

**Extension:** Have students use information from the activity to create a newspaper article about Tuyet's journey. Include facts about the travels and use information from steps 9 and 10 to create quotes from the passengers and crew on the plane.

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### FROM VIETNAM TO CANADA (WEATHER, CLOTHING, FOOD):

**Materials:** A weather website such as [weather.com](http://weather.com), chart paper; markers; access to Internet or library for research; writing paper

**Preparations:** Make a grid on chart paper that has three rows and six columns. Label the first row with the name of your city, the second row “Toronto,” and the third row “Ho Chi Minh City.” Label the first column with the current date.

#### Directions:

1. Read the paragraph on page 47 that begins with, “The first thing Tuyet noticed when she approached the open door was cold air blowing on her face.”
2. Say, “Tuyet says, ‘It was always hot and humid in Saigon.’” If students are unfamiliar with humidity explain that it’s like the air in the bathroom when you turn on a hot shower.
3. Use a weather website to find the current temperature in your city, in Toronto, and in Ho Chi Minh City. Write the temperatures on the grid. *Continue checking the weather once a week for the next five weeks or longer to see how the temperatures change.*
4. Discuss how the temperature and climate of an area affects what people wear in that area. Ask, “What sorts of clothing do you wear where it is warm? Hot? Cold?” Ask, “What new items of clothing might Tuyet have learned about when she moved to Canada?”
5. Divide students into six groups. Assign each group a topic to research: climate in Ho Chi Minh City, climate in Toronto, food in Ho Chi Minh city, food in Toronto, clothing in Ho Chi Minh City, clothing in Toronto.
6. Give each group a piece of chart paper and markers. Have them research their topic and create a poster that uses words and illustrations to give information about their topic.
7. Have students present their posters to the class. Display the posters around the room.

**Closure:** Compare and contrast the climate, food, and clothing from Toronto and Ho Chi Minh City. Ask what it would be like to move from one city to the other if you didn’t have any information beforehand. Have students pick one of the cities and imagine that they have just moved there. Give students writing paper and have them write a letter to a friend as if they have just moved to this city. Encourage them to use sensory details and to include information about what would be the same as in their old home and what would be different.

### PRIMARY AND SECONDARY SOURCES (SOCIAL STUDIES):

#### Directions:

1. Review the documents and photographs on pages 12, 32, 38, 54, and 66.
2. Tell students that these are primary sources from Tuyet’s story. Remind them that “primary” means “first” in this context. Explain that primary sources are documents or objects that were created during the time of the event being studied or written about.
3. Ask students, “Would *Last Airlift* be considered a primary source?” Explain that things such as articles, movies, or books that tell or examine a story after the event are considered secondary sources.
4. Discuss how to identify whether something is a primary source or a secondary source. Ask students to identify which of the following in each pairing is a primary source and which is a secondary source (the primary source is in **bold**).
  - **a pilot’s diary**—a book about a pilot
  - a book about soldiers in Vietnam—**a collection of letters from soldiers in Vietnam**
  - **an eyewitness account of the evacuation of Saigon**—a newspaper article about the evacuation of Saigon
  - **a photograph of Operation Babylift**—an illustration made from a photograph of Operation Babylift
  - **an interview with Tuyet**—an interview with someone who read *Last Airlift*

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## READING GUIDE

5. Ask, "Why does it matter whether the source is primary or secondary?" Discuss that primary source materials tend to be accurate and can include emotion and details from events. Secondary materials might include more objectivity and additional historical information about the event.
6. Discuss how Marsha Skrypuch uses primary sources. For example, in *Last Airlift*, interviews with Tuyet gave the author interesting and intimate details about her experience traveling, while primary source documents gave facts such as dates, names, and places. The author then added this additional historical information (which Tuyet might not have known about at the time the events occurred) to Tuyet's story to create a secondary source that gives the reader a full picture of what took place.

### TELLING YOUR STORY (BIOGRAPHICAL NARRATIVE WRITING):

**Materials:** Pencils, index cards (approximately 4 per student, depending on the number of questions generated in step 6), blank paper, writing paper

**Preparations:** Decide whether students will interview someone at home or someone in the class for this activity. Students might also interview "Big Buddies" from other classrooms for this activity. *This activity can easily be adapted to personal narrative writing if appropriate; simply skip the interview section and allow students time to brainstorm their own experiences.*

#### Directions:

##### Define Biographical Narrative:

1. Read the first three paragraphs of chapter one. Ask, "What voice does the author use to tell the story? Is it fiction or non-fiction?" *third-person narrative, non-fiction*
2. Discuss what evidence they can find from the opening chapter and cover/back cover to support their answers.
3. Tell students that *Last Airlift* is written as a non-fiction biographical narrative. Explain that there are three main types of narrative writing. Fictional narratives are made-up stories such as *Charlotte's Web* or books in the Harry Potter series. Personal narratives are auto-

biographies that focus on major events in the author's own life, such as *Thank you, Mr. Falker* by Patricia Polacco, or *Boy and Going Solo* by Roald Dahl. Biographical narratives like *Last Airlift* are written using the facts from an event in someone's life.

4. Tell students that the author of *Last Airlift*, Marsha Skrypuch, used interviews and documents to learn the facts about Tuyet's story, which she then wrote as a third-person biographical narrative. Tell students they are going to write a biographical narrative essay about an event in someone else's life.
5. Assign each student a partner or subject for the interview. Tell students they will be asking their interviewee to describe an event they have experienced. Direct students to ask for positive events that are safe for the interviewees to share, such as "Tell me about a time when you did something really fun," or "Tell me about a family celebration such as a birthday party or holiday."
6. Brainstorm a list of questions that students will ask their interviewees:
  - Tell me about ....
  - How old were you when it happened? Where did it take place?
  - How did the event start?
  - What are some of the things you liked best about the event?
  - How did you feel during the event?
  - What did you say during the event?
  - When and how did it end?
7. Have students write questions on index cards. Use one side of a card for each question.



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### The Interview and Writing Process:

1. Have students interview their subjects. Encourage them to write as much information on each index card as possible.
2. Give students a blank page. Tell them they are going to create a story web to organize their information.
3. Have them write the topic of their event in the center of the page. Say, "This will be the basis of your topic sentence," and ask them to put a circle around the topic.
4. Ask students to extend a short line from the circle toward the left side of the page. Have them write a word or a few words about the beginning of the event and circle it. Direct them to do the same under the topic sentence for the middle of the event, and to the right side of the topic for the ending of the event.
5. Have students add details to each of their circles. For example, details for the topic sentence might include a description of the subject, their age, and the place where the event took place. Details for the beginning, middle, and end would include facts about the event, sensory details, emotions or feelings, etc.
6. Pass out writing paper and have students use their story web to write their rough drafts. Students in grade three might write a paragraph while students in grades four and above should be challenged to write a full essay that includes an introductory paragraph, three paragraphs about the event, and a concluding paragraph.

### Revision and Final Drafts

1. Have students edit their stories for clarity and correct spelling and mechanics.
2. If possible, allow students to read their drafts to their interviewee to ask for more details (if needed) and to make sure their story is accurate.
3. Give students time to revise their essays or paragraphs and then write their final drafts.

### THE JOY OF PLAY (HEALTH, CREATIVITY):

**Materials:** Assortment of recycled objects such as paper tubes, empty cartons and pint baskets; construction paper; chenille stems (pipe cleaners); glue; scissors

#### Directions:

1. Ask, "What were some of the activities Tuyet learned to do with her new family?" Discuss teeth brushing, baths, eating new foods, and playing.
2. Ask, "Why didn't Tuyet have experience playing outside?"
3. Ask, "Is play important?" Talk about the different types of playing that children do. Have students share their favorite playtime activities now and things they did when they were younger.
4. Ask, "Do we learn from playing?" Brainstorm things that children can learn through playing and list them on the board. The list may include problem solving, coordination, taking turns, planning activities, creativity, language, and physical skills (fine motor and gross motor).
5. If students are allotted recess time at school, ask, "What value do you think recess adds to your school day? When recess is canceled because of weather or other reasons, how do you feel and why do you feel that way?"
6. Discuss what children don't get to learn when they don't have the opportunity for play.
7. Tell students that children all over the world make toys from everyday objects in their home and environment. Discuss how children might play with cardboard boxes, wrapping paper tubes, string, rocks, etc.
8. Tell students they are going to use everyday objects to invent a toy they might give to Tuyet.
9. Put materials on a table and allow each student to take a few items. Give them time to create a toy with the materials.
10. While students are working, ask questions about their toy such as "How would she play with it?" and "Is this something she might play with alone or with someone else?"

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**Closure:** When students are finished working, have them present their toy to the class or to their groups. Ask them to explain how it works, why they made it, and why they would give it to Tuyet.

### STAR LIGHT, STAR BRIGHT (ART):

**Materials:** Tagboard or cardstock, aluminum foil, scissors, pencils, one pushpin per student

**Preparations:** Cut the tagboard into squares of approximately 12x12cm (5x5") and cut foil into squares of 24x24cm (10x10")

#### Directions:

1. Read page 112 of *Last Airlift*. Discuss the importance of stars in this story. Ask, "What do you think stars meant to Tuyet?" Note that they were not something she could enjoy in Vietnam because it wasn't safe to go outside, and that they were one of the first things she saw when she arrived in Toronto.
2. Give students a tag board square each. Have them draw a five-point star that fills the square. Tell students to cut the out star.
3. Pass out the foil squares. Have students carefully place the tagboard star in the middle of the foil. Help students cut the foil between each point of the star. Have students fold the foil over each point until the star is covered with foil.
4. Ask students to think of a word that Tuyet might have thought of when she looked at the stars. Words might include peace, family, safety, shelter, hope, play, mom, dad, sisters, brother, etc. Have students lightly print their word on the front of the star.
5. Give each student a pushpin. Have them prick holes along the lines of the letters to form the word.
6. Display the stars on a bulletin board or hang them throughout the room. Stars could also be displayed to form "Tuyet" or another word from the story.





## One Step at a Time: A Vietnamese Child Finds Her Way

### STORY SUMMARY

Vietnamese-born Tuyet has escaped her war-torn homeland and found a loving family in Canada, but she still has battles of her own to fight. Tuyet dreams of running and playing with her adoptive siblings, but her leg has been weakened by polio. Can she face her fear of hospitals and the traumatic memories they awaken if it means walking in matching shoes at last?

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. How do you tell the difference between a book that is fiction and one that is nonfiction?
2. Nonfiction books that tell a story are called “narrative nonfiction.” Why is this a good name?
3. What clues can you look for to tell whether a book is a made-up story or a work of narrative nonfiction?
4. p. 119–120 – What do you think Tuyet is remembering as she lies awake the night before her operation?
5. p. 120 – The book says, “Tuyet thought she had buried those memories for good.” What does that mean? Why do you think the memories would come back now?
6. p. 126 – Why are the red shoes Mom bought Tuyet so special?
7. p. 131 – Why is Tuyet afraid when Mrs. Nguyen comes to the house?
8. p. 133–134 – How does Tuyet feel about her upcoming operation?
9. p. 137 – What makes Tuyet feel calmer when she is frightened of the hospital?
10. p. 139–143 – Have you ever been scared because you didn’t understand what was going on around you? How did you learn what was really happening? Once you knew the truth, how did you feel?
11. p. 142 – Tuyet thinks, “Didn’t everyone feel constant pain? It was just a part of living after all.” Did this surprise you? Is there anything that seems normal to you that might be different for other people?
12. p. 145–155 – Have you ever tried to talk with someone who spoke a different language than you? Was it difficult? Funny? Frustrating? How did you manage to communicate?
13. p. 161 – Tuyet shares her balloons with Beth, Lara, and Aaron and thinks, “It was exciting to have something to give her brother and sisters.” Why would this be exciting for Tuyet?
14. p. 162 – Why does Tuyet insist on climbing the stairs on her own, even though it is hard? Have you ever felt the same way about a difficult but important task?
15. p. 166 – “Now that she had a family, she didn’t have to worry about being in the exact same room with them all of the time.” Why might Tuyet have worried about being in the same room as her family all the time before? Why might she feel differently now?
16. p. 171–172 – How does Lara help Tuyet remember that she belongs in the Morris family even though she looks different than her parents and the people she sees on TV?
17. p. 180 – Why is Tuyet alarmed when she sees her birthday cake?
18. p. 180–183 – Tuyet’s birthday introduces her to several “strange Canadian customs,” including “burning cakes” and “ripping up little boxes.” What other holiday celebrations would be strange to Tuyet? How might she describe them?
19. p. 199–208 – How does Tuyet feel about the brown shoes when she first sees them? How does she feel about them later?

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20. p. 211 – “Not all hurts show on the outside,” says Mrs. Nguyen. What does she mean?
21. p. 228 – In the Author’s Note, Marsha Forchuk Skrypuch explains that hospitals were different in the 1970s and “if Tuyet were a child now, the experience would not have been so terrifying.” In what ways do you think *One Step at a Time* would be different if she were a child today?
2. Using a whiteboard or blackboard, work with the class to develop a list of the features of fiction. Do the same for nonfiction informational texts. Discuss how biography is a form of nonfiction that uses many of the same features as fiction. Develop a list of the features of biography.
3. Distribute copies of the handout “Features of Biography.” Have students use the lists you created to fill in the sections of the diagram.

### I RECOMMEND... (PERSUASIVE WRITING, READING COMPREHENSION, INTERTEXTUALITY):

**Materials:** Reading journals or lined paper, pencils

#### **Directions:**

Have students write a persuasive letter to a friend recommending that they read (or, if they prefer, do not read) *One Step at a Time*. The letter should address the following points:

- a. What is the story about? **Note:** Older students can provide a sentence describing the main idea of the book and also list several of the main events.
- b. Why do you/do you not recommend reading *One Step at a Time*?
- c. What is one historical event or subject discussed in *One Step at a Time* that you think your friend would find interesting? Suggest some other resources (informational texts, historical fiction, videos, etc.) where he or she could learn more about it.

### WHAT IS BIOGRAPHY? (FEATURES OF TEXT, CLASSIFICATION):

**Materials:** Whiteboard or blackboard, “Features of Biography” handout, pencils

**Preparations:** Prepare photocopies of the “Features of Biography” handout found at the end of this guide.

#### **Directions:**

1. Explain to the class that *One Step at a Time* is a biography about the life of a real person, Tuyet Morris.

**Bonus:** Ask students to identify the features of biography exemplified by *One Step at a Time*. For example, it has a setting like a work of fiction, but it also has factual information like an informational text.

### RESEARCHING A BIOGRAPHY (SOCIAL STUDIES):

#### **Directions:**

1. Choose an event that happened earlier this year and ask for two volunteers who were present.
2. Have one volunteer leave the room while you interview the other closely about the event, asking for detailed information about what they saw and heard, including specific conversations. Keep notes about what the student remembers.
3. Ask the second volunteer to return to the classroom and interview her in the same way, asking the same questions about small details and dialogue.
4. When both interviews are complete, discuss with the class:
  - a. Did both of our volunteers give exactly the same answers? Why not?
  - b. When Marsha Forchuk Skrypuch began interviewing Tuyet, Tuyet did not remember very much about her childhood. How do you think the author learned the details her subject could not remember?

# Sky of Bombs, Sky of Stars

Omnibus edition of *Last Airlift: A Vietnamese Orphan's Rescue from War & One Step at a Time: A Vietnamese Child Finds Her Way*

## READING GUIDE

### POINT OF VIEW (WRITING):

**Materials:** Paper, pencils

**Directions:**

1. Introduce students to the idea of first-person and third-person narration. Ask them to identify the narrative voice of *One Step at a Time*.
2. Ask students to speculate why third-person narration is used for biography. How would the book be different if the story were told using first-person narration? What if it were told from more than one point of view?
3. Tell students that Marsha Forchuk Skrypuch interviewed many people, including Tuyet's mother, sisters, and doctors, to learn all the details she used to write *One Step at a Time*. Those interviews are not published, but by looking at the text we can imagine what the other members of Tuyet's family were thinking and feeling. Ask students to choose a scene in *One Step at a Time* and re-tell it from another character's perspective.

### SIMILES (FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE):

**Materials:** Whiteboard or chalkboard, "What is a Simile?" handout, pencils

**Preparations:** Make photocopies of the "What is a Simile?" handout found at the end of this guide.

**Directions:**

1. Tell the class, Tuyet feels strong emotions about the possibility of having her ankle straightened. Instead of writing, "Tuyet felt like Mrs. Nguyen understood her dream" or "She was excited and nervous," Marsha Forchuk Skrypuch uses similes to express the feelings:  
"It was as if Mrs. Nguyen had reached inside Tuyet's heart." (p. 133)  
"This plan to have her ankle straightened felt like reaching for the stars." (p. 134)
2. Explain that a simile is a figure of speech that describes one thing by comparing it to something else using the word "like" or "as." Ask students to speculate why similes would be useful for describing emotions.

3. Working as a class, come up with a list of emotions. Ask a student to share an experience that made him or her feel one of those emotions.
4. Ask the class to come up with a comparison for that feeling. Write it on the board in the format of the following example:

**Experience:** Finding a lost toy

**Feeling:** Very happy

**Comparison:** A dog digging up a bone

**Simile:** When I found my toy I was as happy as a dog digging up a bone.

5. Distribute the handout "What is a Simile?" and have students complete the exercise themselves.

### LEARNING NEW WORDS (VOCABULARY, INFERENCE):

**Materials:** Crossword handout, pencils

**Preparations:** Prepare photocopies of the crossword handout included at the end of this guide.

**Directions:**

1. Throughout *One Step at a Time*, Tuyet learns new words in English. Students reading this book may also learn many new words. Challenge each student to share one new word he or she encountered and use context to infer the word's meaning.
2. Distribute copies of the crossword handout. Page references are provided for each word to help students decode the clues.  
**Bonus:** Have students use the Index to find further instances of many of these words.



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### LOST IN TRANSLATION (DRAMA):

Tuyet and her family face the challenge of communicating without speaking the same language. The following drama game is a lighthearted play on communicating without words. It can be thought of as an action-based version of Broken Telephone.

1. This game is most effective in groups of eight or so, especially if the players do not have long attention spans.
2. The players line up one behind the other, all facing in the same direction.
3. The player at the back of the line (Player 1) taps the next player (Player 2) on the shoulder. Player 2 turns around to face her. Player 1 thinks of an activity and acts it out.
4. When Player 1 has finished, Player 2 taps Player 3 on the shoulder. Player 3 turns around and watches while Player 2 mimics the actions he has just seen Player 1 perform.
5. Player 3 then performs them for Player 4, and so on. When the final participant has watched the actions, she must guess what activity Player 1 was thinking of. Since the actions are likely to morph with each performance, the results are likely to be entertaining.

### POLIO (HEALTH, SOCIAL STUDIES, ART):

**Materials:** Internet access, large screen for sharing Internet resources with class, paper, pencils, colored pencils or markers

**Preparations:** Load the Internet resources described below.

**Directions:**

1. Read the Historical Note beginning on page 1.
2. Read the article “No More Cases of Polio in India” on the website Teaching Kids News:  
<https://teachingkidsnews.com/2012/01/23/no-more-cases-of-polio-in-india/>
3. Discuss:
  - a. How did knowing Tuyet’s story help you understand the article?
  - b. Look at the children in the second photograph, captioned “Child carrying Polio immunization sign at Lucknow rally, November 7, 2009.” Why was it

important for children to be a part of the rally?

3. Share the following public-domain Alaska Division of Public Health “Wellbee” poster promoting polio booster shots:  
<https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/9/92/BoosterWellbee7221.jpg>
4. Tell students that Wellbee was a character used on many posters telling people about the polio vaccine. Ask them to speculate why these posters were effective in helping to eradicate polio in North America.
5. Remind students that there are still places in the world where polio is a problem. An up-to-date list of affected countries can be found at [www.polioeradication.org](http://www.polioeradication.org). Using facts they have learned about polio, have students create a poster encouraging immunization in those countries.  
**Bonus:** Older students can research and write a report about polio and the fight for its eradication using the resources listed in the book (p. 223–224).

### HISTORICAL PHOTOGRAPHS (ELEMENTS OF NONFICTION):

**Materials:** Internet access, large screen for sharing photographs with class

**Preparations:** Load the Internet resources described below.

**Directions:**

1. Explain that not all of the photographs in *One Step at a Time* show exactly what the text describes. On page 198 we see “An updated version of the leather and metal brace that Tuyet wore.” Page 200 shows “A pair of orthopedic shoes similar to Tuyet’s.” Page 139 has a photograph of a “McMaster University Medical Centre operating room, circa 1975.”
2. Discuss:
  - a. Why might the publisher have included these pictures even though they don’t show Tuyet’s actual brace, shoe, and operating room?
  - b. Did the pictures give you any information that the text did not?
  - c. How did the pictures help you understand the text?

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## READING GUIDE

3. Share the following public-domain images with the class:

A physiotherapist helping two young children with polio perform rail exercises:

[http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/f/f3/Polio\\_physical\\_therapy.jpg](http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/f/f3/Polio_physical_therapy.jpg)

An ancient Egyptian stele showing a priest with a withered leg, thought to be a polio survivor:

[http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/5/5c/Polio\\_Egyptian\\_Stele.jpg](http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/5/5c/Polio_Egyptian_Stele.jpg)

United States President Franklin D. Roosevelt, a polio survivor, in his wheelchair:

[http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/b/be/Roosevelt\\_in\\_a\\_wheelchair.jpg](http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/b/be/Roosevelt_in_a_wheelchair.jpg)

Discuss:

- What can these photos help us understand about *One Step at a Time*? What can they help us understand about polio?
- Thinking about these photos, can you imagine what it would have been like to live before the polio vaccine was created? How would life be different? How would life be the same?
- Can you think of any other images that would have helped your experience of reading this book?

**Bonus:** Older students can research more public domain photos relating to polio and other subjects discussed in *One Step at a Time* by searching the Wikimedia Commons at: <http://commons.wikimedia.org>

### TELLING STORIES (INTERTEXTUALITY):

**Materials:** Internet access, large screen for sharing Internet resources with class

**Preparations:** Load the video found at the following link: <http://youtu.be/rmmfM5CH8K4>

**Directions:**

- Read pages 140 and 141 from “Tuyet willed herself not to think of that other time in the hospital” to “A time that she needed to forget.”

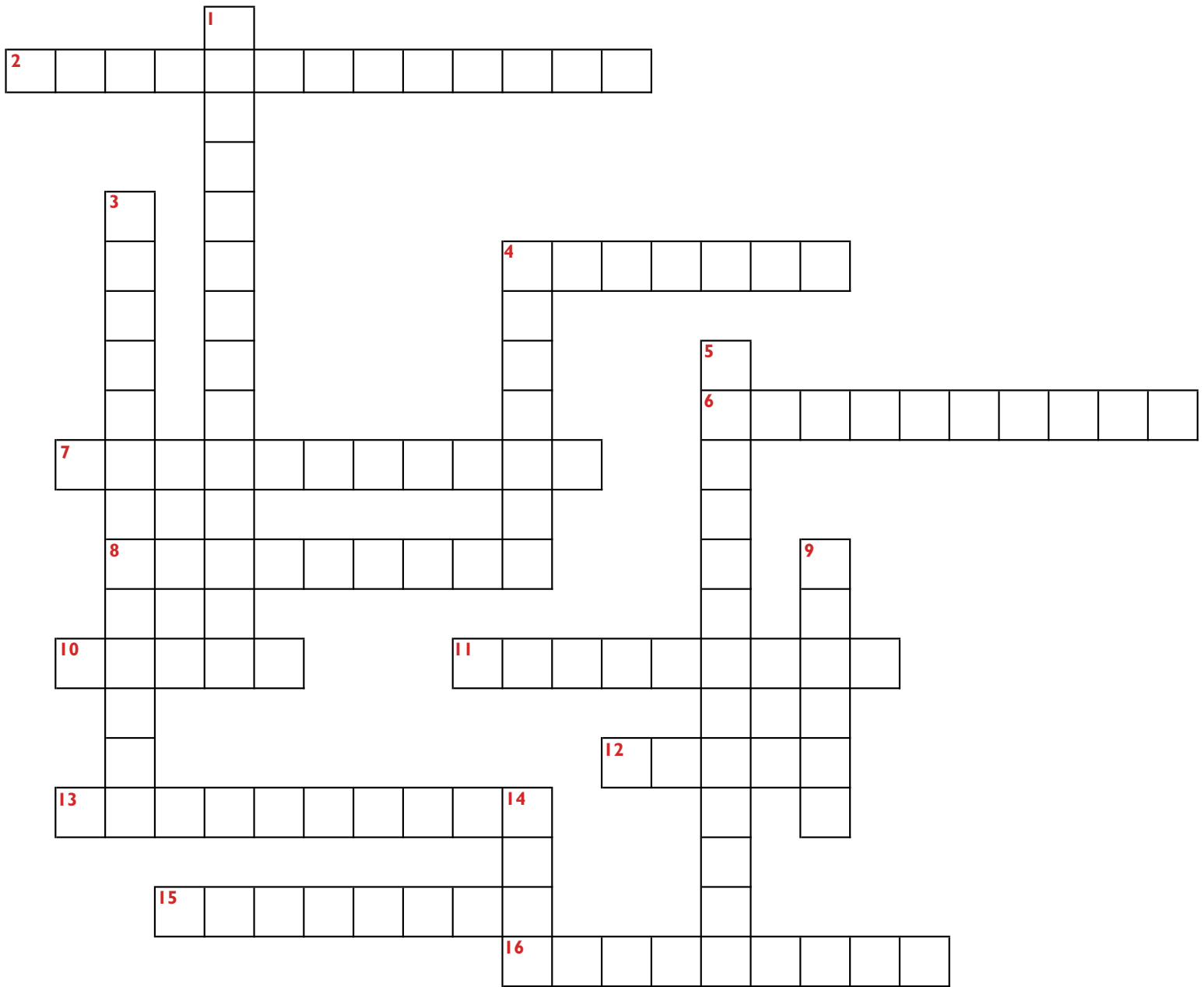
- Discuss:
  - Why did Tuyet not want to remember the other time she had been in a hospital?
  - What does this passage tell us about Tuyet’s early childhood?
  - Why do you think Tuyet went to an orphanage after the hospital instead of home?
  - If the woman who visited Tuyet was her mother, why do you think she stopped coming?
- Watch the video “Global Citizen Festival: Archie Panjabi, Ramesh Ferris, Aseefa Bhutto Zardari & John Hewko on polio” from 00:00 to 03:51. Explain that the organizers of this presentation were celebrating the end of polio in India, and encouraging others to keep working to eradicate it from the last few countries where it survives. Vietnam (Tuyet’s birthplace) and North America are both polio free.
- Discuss:
  - What are the similarities between Ramesh’s story and Tuyet’s? What are the differences?
  - One Step at a Time* and Ramesh’s story can both be considered secondary sources. Why? What features do they share? What features are different?

**Note:** You may need to explain that as a recording of the 2012 Global Citizen Festival in New York City, this video is a primary source, but as a hindsight account of Ramesh’s childhood, it is a secondary source.

Having listened to Ramesh, do you have any new ideas about why Tuyet’s mother might have left her at the orphanage?

Why did Ramesh tell the audience about his childhood? How are stories helpful in persuading people to take action?





## ACROSS

2. A television show about a large family with three boys and three girls (47)
4. The country in which Tuyet was born (2)
6. Made to hold the joints in the correct position (78)
7. A rag doll first popular in the late 1960s (1)
8. A title used in Vietnam to show respect (33)
10. A set of metal rods and leather straps that support a weak body part (77)
11. Loss of movement in a body part (Historical Note I)
12. A disease that can permanently damage the muscles in a child's arm or leg (64)
13. A kind of needle that injects medicine under the skin (31)
15. Supports that help an injured person to walk (36)
16. Explain the meaning of words in another language (13)

## DOWN

1. A medical clinic that helps patients with broken bones (64)
3. Exercises that help patients strengthen parts of their bodies that are weak or damaged (73)
4. A medicine given to healthy people to make them immune to a disease (Historical Note II)
5. The long name for Polio (Historical Note I)
9. The city where Tuyet lived before coming to Canada (2)
14. A hard casing that keeps a limb straight so that bones can heal (33)



# What is a Simile?

A simile describes one thing by comparing it with

something else using " \_\_\_\_\_ " OR

" \_\_\_\_\_ "

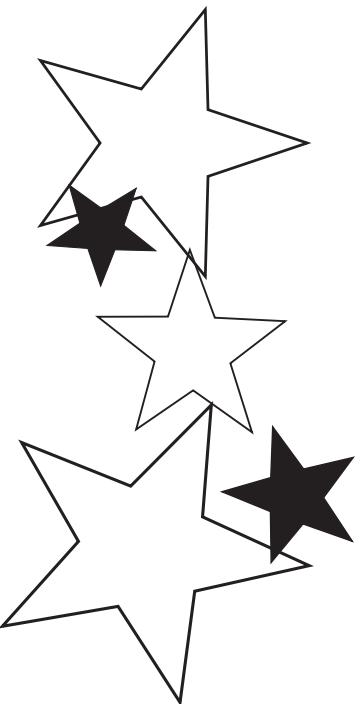
**EXAMPLE FROM ONE STEP AT A TIME**

**Experience:** Tuget thinking about the surgery to straighten her ankle

**Feeling:** nervous and excited

**Comparison:** reaching for the stars

**Simile:** This plan to have her ankle straightened felt like reaching for the stars.



## YOUR TURN:

Experience: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Feeling: \_\_\_\_\_

Comparison: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Simile: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_



# FEATURES OF BIOGRAPHY

