

# Curriculum Guide for *In A Village by the Sea* by Muon Van; Illustrated by April Chu

## **In a Village by the Sea**

By Muon Van

Illustrated by April Chu

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Ages 4-10

Written in a spare, lyrical style using fresh, evocative imagery, *Village by the Sea* tells the story of longing for the comforts of home. A perfect book for teaching about diverse cultures and lifestyles through rich pictures and words, moving from the wide world to the snugness of home and back out again. Authored by a woman who left Viet Nam as part of the influx of “boat people”, this book pays homage to a disappearing culture.

### **About the Author and Illustrator:**

*Muon Van* was born on the run in the southern port city of Rạch Giá, Vietnam. When she was nine months old, she left Vietnam as part of the “boat people” mass exodus. Her family fled on her maternal grandfather’s fishing boat, which her father captained all the way to Hong Kong. From there, she immigrated to the United States and lived in Galveston, Texas and Honolulu, Hawaii, both cities by the sea. She now lives in Northern California with her family, where she gets a glimpse of the sea every morning and every evening.

*April Chu* began her career as an architect with a degree from the University of California, Berkeley, but decided to return to her true passion of illustrating and storytelling. She recalls spending most of her childhood drawing whimsical characters in her notebook after school every day, and she hasn’t stopped drawing ever since. April currently lives and works in Oakland, California. This is the second picture book she has illustrated. For more information, visit [www.aprilchu.com](http://www.aprilchu.com).

### **Standards:**

#### **Kindergarten:**

- 2.1 Comprehension and Analysis of Grade-Level-Appropriate Text
- 2.2 Use pictures and context to make predictions about story content.
- 2.3 Connect to life experiences the information and events in texts.
- 2.4 Retell familiar stories. 2.5 Ask and answer questions about essential elements of a text.
- 3.0 Literary Response and Analysis Students listen and respond to stories based on well-known characters, themes, plots, and settings.

#### **First Grade:**

- 1.1 Ask and answer questions about key details in a text.

1.2 Retell stories, including key details, and demonstrate understanding of their central message or lesson.

1.3 Describe characters, settings, and major events in a story, using key details.

***Craft and Structure:***

1.4 Identify words and phrases in stories or poems that suggest feelings or appeal to the senses.

1.5 Explain major differences between books that tell stories and books that give information, drawing on a wide reading of a range of text types.

1.6 Identify who is telling the story at various points in a text.

***Integration of Knowledge and Ideas:***

1.7 Use illustrations and details in a story to describe its characters, setting, or events.

1.9 Compare and contrast the adventures and experiences of characters in stories.

***Range of Reading and Level of Text Complexity:***

1.10 With prompting and support, read prose and poetry of appropriate complexity for first grade.

**Discussion and Writing Prompts:**

For young children use these prompts to lead a discussion about the book. For older students have them write and draw their responses. While you are reading the book have the children notice whose perspective each page is illustrating.

- This story is shown through the eyes of the various inhabitants. Talk or write about what the fishermen were seeing. (*The fishermen saw the village by the sea. They felt the storm coming.*)
- Talk or write about what the dog saw. (*The dog saw the kitchen. He was curious and wanted to see what the woman was cooking.*)
- Talk or write about what the woman saw. (*The woman saw her baby sitting by her side. The woman is waiting for her husband to come home.*)
- Talk or write about what the baby saw. (*The baby saw the hole where the cricket was hiding.*)
- Talk or write about what the cricket was doing. (*The cricket is humming and painting a picture of the fisherman in the storm.*)
- Talk or write about the fisherman saw while he was in the storm. (*He saw a village and in that village was his house and in that house his family is waiting for him to come home.*)

- Talk or write about how things can look differently depending on who is looking at them. For instance, to the fisherman, his house looked far away.
- Talk or write about a time when you were waiting for someone. How did it feel to wait?

***Extension Activities:***

- Make a Story Map. [Printable version](#) of a story map for In a Village by the Sea.
- Have the students fill in a [Journal Page](#).
- Have the students do the In My World activity. [Printable version](#) is available here.
- Do an art project based on the book. Instructions for a [Fishing Scene art project](#).
- Make a Vietnamese inspired dish like [Banh Mi](#) from Sodium Girl.
- Research Viet Nam with the students:

<http://kids.nationalgeographic.com/explore/countries/vietnam/>

<http://www.sciencekids.co.nz/sciencefacts/countries/vietnam.html>

<http://www.atozkidsstuff.com/vietnam.html>

**Author's Note:**

In a Village by the Sea was inspired by my father and An Bằn, my ancestral village in Central Vietnam. For as long as anyone can remember, ancestors on both sides have lived and worked as fisher folk in this small village near Huế. Typically, the men went to sea in small boats and caught fish and other edible sea creatures. When they returned to land, their wives and daughters carried the fish to the market and sold it, bargaining hard and fast. It was a village proverb that a rich man owed his success to his wife, and that a talented fisherman would stay poor as long as his wife was bad at business. The Vietnamese-American war interrupted my father's life as a fisherman but after he moved to the United States, he worked as a fisherman and shrimper again, first off the Gulf Coast of Texas, and later in the vast Pacific waters of the Hawaiian Islands. With my father at sea most of the time, my mother bore the brunt of managing the household and rearing their nine children. Just like the family in Village by the Sea, we would often wonder where my father was, if he found the catch he was looking for, and when he would return home again, safe and sound.