

## BOOK STATS

Grade Level Equivalent: 7–10

Ages: 13–15

Lexile Measure®: 860L

Pages: 183

Guided Reading Level: Z

Genre: Historical Fiction

Subject/Theme: Vietnam War, Friendship

Common Core State Standards	Reading	Writing	Listening & Speaking	Language
Grade 7	RL.7.1, RL.7.2, RL.7.3, RL.7.4, RL.7.7	W.7.1, W.7.7	SL.7.1, SL.7.4	L.7.4, L.7.5
Grade 8	RL.8.1, RL.8.2, RL.8.4, RL.8.7	W.8.1, W.8.7	SL.8.1, SL.8.2, SL.8.4	L.8.4, L.8.6
Grade 9–10	RL.9–10.1, RL.9–10.2, RL.9–10.3, RL.9–10.4	W.9–10.1, W.9–10.7	SL.9–10.1, SL.9–10.4	L.9–10.4, L.9–10.6

## OVERVIEW

### Book Summary

Four best friends. Four ways to serve their country.

Morris, Rudi, Ivan, and Beck are best friends for life. So when one of the teens is drafted into the Vietnam War, the others sign up, too. Although they each serve in a different branch, they are fighting the war together—and they pledge to do all they can to come home together.

Haunted by dreams of violence and death, Morris makes it his personal mission to watch over his friends—and the best place to do that is in the US Navy. Stationed off the coast of Vietnam on the *USS Boston*, Morris and his fellow sailors provide crucial support to the troops on the ground.

But the *Boston* itself isn't safe from attack. Morris finds his courage and resolve tested like never before, especially when he is assigned to a river monitor boat in the Mekong Delta. He learns that if friendship has an opposite, it has to be war.

This book contains mature content about the Vietnam War. You may want to preview before reading aloud.

## Teaching the Book

He made a pledge. He must not let his friends die. Morris finds that his ideas about war are challenged in Vietnam, but one thing never changes—his dedication to his friends. This first book in the *Vietnam* series provides the opportunity for students to identify story elements and analyze the theme of friendship and war. Activities engage students in researching the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, studying editorial cartoons, and writing their own pledges.

**Theme Focus:** Fantasy

**Comprehension Focus:** Analyze Setting

**Language Focus:** Words With Dark Connotations

### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Chris Lynch is the author of numerous acclaimed books for middle-grade and teen readers, including the *Cyberia* series and the National Book Award finalist *Inexcusable*. He holds an MA from the writing program at Emerson College. He teaches in the Lesley University creative writing MFA program, and divides his time between Massachusetts and Scotland.

# Get Ready to Read

## Pre-Reading Activities

**Vietnam War** Ask students what they know about the Vietnam War. Help them build a knowledge network about the war including when it was fought, why it was fought, how long it lasted, how many American troops were involved, and how many troops lost their lives. Visit the Fact Monster website for this basic information about the war at <http://bit.ly/VHbYfo>.

To build background knowledge and to help students visualize the war as they read, show them combat photographs. There is an excellent, thoughtful, and touching slideshow which can be projected by visiting <http://mil-com.me/WJcBXU>. After viewing, ask students which photos had the greatest affect on them and what they learned about the war that they did not know before.

**Preview and Predict** Discuss with students the title and cover of the book. Prompt them with these questions: How does the cover art portray the war? What does “I Pledge Allegiance” mean? Why do you think this is called “Book One?”



## BIG QUESTION

**Critical Thinking** Ask students to think about this question as they read and be ready to answer it when they have finished the book. Write the question on chart paper or have students write it in their reading journals.

**What does Morris mean by “if friendship has an opposite, it’s war?”**

## Vocabulary

**Domain-Specific Vocabulary** Explain to students that the text includes many words that are specific to the fighting of a war. Ask students to look for clues in the text to figure out the words’ meanings or to check dictionary definitions.

Print **Resource #1: Vocabulary Cards** on page 7 and distribute copies to students. Ask them to write down the definitions of the words as they read them in the book.

draft (p. 29)	deferral (p. 29)
recruit (p. 34)	death-and-dismemberment (p. 99)
turret (p. 135)	mortar (p. 142)
camaraderie (p. 150)	napalm (p. 152)

## As You Read

### Reading the Book

**Modeled Reading** Read aloud Chapter One, asking students to follow along. Then ask them these questions: What do you know about the narrator so far? What year is it? What is his attitude toward war? What is his attitude toward his friends? What do you think the pledge may be?

**Independent Reading** Assign students to read *Vietnam Book One: I Pledge Allegiance* independently. Remind them to keep the big question in mind as they read.

### Comprehension Focus

**Analyze Story Elements** Encourage students to identify key story elements in each part of the book and help them understand how the setting drives the story’s plot, character development, and theme. Briefly review the four basic story elements: setting is the time and place of a story; characters are the people who play an important role in the story; plot is the key events of the story; theme is the message the author wants to convey to the reader.

Use **Resource #2: Analyze Story Events** to model for students how to identify the key elements in each part of the book and put the information on the graphic organizer. Project the page on a whiteboard and pass out copies to students.

**Model:** Part One of the book begins on page 3 and continues to page 42. First, I'll determine the setting. I know the time is the 1960s because Morris says on page 8 that coverage of the war is always on the news. On page 25, I find out that the friends live in Boston. So the setting is Boston in the 1960s. The main characters are the four friends—Morris, Beck, Rudi, and Ivan. The most important plot event is that Rudi is drafted and the other three friends join up to go to Vietnam. How is the theme developed in Part One? Morris is afraid of the war, he has nightmares about it, but his friendship overcomes his fear.

Ask students to fill in the rest of the organizer as they read, integrating the different story elements to understand how the theme of the book is being developed.

## After You Read

### Questions to Discuss

Lead students in a discussion of these focus story elements.

**1. Friendship and War** Do you think the four friends all made a good decision to serve in the armed forces in Vietnam? (*Sample answers: I think it was right for Ivan and maybe Rudi, but I think Morris should have stayed at home and Beck should have gone to college.*)

**2. Analyze Story Elements** How does the setting change when Morris is reassigned to a river monitor boat? How does Morris's situation change? What is the plot action in this part of the story like? How does Morris's ideas about himself and the war change? (*Sample answers: The setting is "brown water" in the Mekong Delta; Morris is in charge of communications and a machine gun; the action is heavy fighting and killing; Morris becomes good at shooting and killing and becomes braver but also becomes harder.*)

**3. Domain-Specific Vocabulary** The United States currently has a volunteer army, instead of a draft. Do you think this is a fair way to have people serve in the military? (*Answers will vary, but should be supported by text or personal evidence.*)

### Questions to Share

Encourage students to share their responses with a partner or small group.

**1. Text-to-Self** How would you feel about serving in the military during a war? Do you think you would do well in combat conditions?

**2. Text-to-World** How does the Vietnam War compare to the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan of recent years? How do they contrast?

**3. Text-to-Text** Compare what you read in the book with the photographs of the Vietnam War that you saw before reading. Do the photos and the book give you the same feeling about the war? How do they affect you differently?

## WORDS TO KNOW

### Domain-Specific Vocabulary

Ask students to answer each question with a complete sentence using a vocabulary word.

1. Why was Rudi the first of the friends to be drafted? (*Rudi was a year older and eligible for the draft first.*)
2. How could Beck have gotten a deferral from going to war? (*Beck could have gone to college, which would have gotten him a deferral.*)
3. What kinds of weapons were in the turrets of the river monitor that Morris was assigned to? (*There were cannons, machine guns, and flamethrowers in the turrets.*)
4. What is an example of camaraderie in the story? (*The four friends had camaraderie with each other; so did the men on the river monitor.*)
5. Why was napalm such a deadly weapon? (*Napalm is a thick gel that shoots straight and sticks to its victims and then burns.*)

Ask students to think about and answer more questions using the vocabulary words, applying them to the novel or to their own lives.

## Extension Activities

### Reading/Writing Connection

**Argument Essay** Ask students to write an argument essay about a current military issue such as: Should women soldiers fight in combat? Should every young person have to serve in the military? Encourage students to research the issue they choose, take a stand, and find evidence to support their stand. Remind students that an argument essay states a claim, supports it with evidence, and restates the claim in the conclusion. Have students present their essays to the group to critique and compare.

Don't forget the



### BIG QUESTION

**Critical Thinking** Give each student an opportunity to answer the big question. Encourage students to support their answers with details and evidence from the text. Tell the students there is more than one right answer.

**What does Morris mean by "if friendship has an opposite, it's war?"**

## Content Area Connections

**History Timeline** Challenge students to create a timeline of the most important milestones of the Vietnam War. A chronological list of important events in the war is available at the about.com website by visiting <http://bit.ly/Y2M442>. Suggest to students that they choose ten to twelve milestones to put on the timeline with dates and brief synopses of the event and its importance.

**Social Studies Editorial Cartoons** The controversies surrounding the Vietnam War resulted in many editorial cartoons. Use this opportunity to acquaint students with editorial cartoons based on issues covered in the book. Guide students to visit the University of Texas website for a set of cartoons accompanied by questions by visiting <http://bit.ly/X6chA0>. Ask partners to study one of the cartoons, answer the questions, and discuss their responses.

**Science Toxic Killers** Ask students interested in science to research napalm and Agent Orange, two of the most deadly and toxic chemicals used during the Vietnam War. They can find descriptions of the chemicals at The Vietnam War site by visiting <http://bit.ly/11wWTcc>. Ask them to write a brief report on their findings.

**Arts Vietnam Memorial** Ask students to research some aspect of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington D.C. They might want to learn about the young architect, Maya Lin, or look at captioned photographs showing visitors at the wall. For photos and information about Lin and the controversy that surrounded her design, visit About.com at <http://bit.ly/Xm33zv>. For photos of the memorial, visit the US News and World Report website at <http://bit.ly/12k10UJ>.

### BIG ACTIVITY

**I Pledge Allegiance** The young characters in the book take a pledge to do all they can to come home together from the war. Ask students to think about the people or ideas they would take a pledge of allegiance or loyalty oath to.

Make copies of the printable **Big Activity: I Pledge Allegiance** and distribute to students. Challenge them to write their own personal pledges of allegiance to people or things that are important to them.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## **BIG ACTIVITY:** I Pledge Allegiance

Think of people or ideas that you would pledge your allegiance to and then explain your pledge in the space provided.

*I Pledge Allegiance . . .*

to \_\_\_\_\_

because \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

to \_\_\_\_\_

because \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

to \_\_\_\_\_

because \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

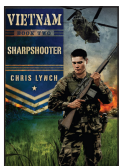
*Signed:* \_\_\_\_\_



# READ MORE AND LEARN MORE

Use these books and other resources to expand your students' study of the book or theme.

## Series/Author Connections



### Vietnam: #2: Sharpshooter

*Chris Lynch*

**Ages:** 13–15

**Grades:** 7–10

**Lexile Measure:** 850L

**Pages:** 192

**Guided Reading Level:** Z

Ivan is eager to enlist in the army, expecting to serve with honor as his father did and to be a hero. But when he accompanies an elite team into the jungles of Vietnam, Ivan feels like a stupid kid, and he finds that his feelings are as complicated as identifying the enemy. Can he be a good soldier in a war where nothing is as clear or as glorious as the tales his father told? **Available as a Storia eBook**



### Vietnam #3: Free Fire Zone

*Chris Lynch*

**Ages:** 13–15

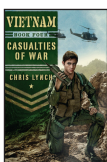
**Grades:** 7–1

**Lexile Measure:** 860L

**Pages:** 192

Morris, Rudi, Ivan, and Beck promise to do all they can to come home together. Rudi is perhaps the most concerned about whether or not he'll be able to keep that promise. After all—he's not smart like Beck, or brave like Ivan. He lacks the strength of Morris's moral convictions. But once Rudi is in the Marines, he finds something he's good at: following orders. Will that be enough to keep him alive?

**Available as a Storia eBook**



### Vietnam #4: Casualties of War

*Chris Lynch*

**Ages:** 13–15

**Grades:** 7–10

**Lexile Measure:** 890L

**Pages:** 192

Of the four friends in Vietnam, it's Beck that has the most to lose. He's the smart one of the bunch, and he could be—SHOULD be—going to college. But he has a pact to honor, and so Beck enlists in the US Air Force. As their tours of duty near completion and the war itself spirals further out of control, the four best friends are at last on a collision course. Will they all survive long enough to be reunited? **Available as a Storia eBook**

## Theme Connections



### All the Broken Pieces

*Ann E. Burg*

**Ages:** 13–16

**Grades:** 7–10

**Lexile Measure:** 680L

**Pages:** 224

**Guided Reading Level:** Y

Twelve-year-old Matt Pin is lucky. He was rescued from Vietnam when his mother handed him off to US soldiers. Now he lives a world away, adopted by a loving American family. Matt can't forget his former life: the father who abandoned him or the mother who surrendered him. But the war is behind him. Can he forgive himself for leaving one life and leading a better one? **Available as a Storia eBook**



### An Innocent Soldier

*Josef Holub*

**Ages:** 13–15

**Grades:** 7–9

**Lexile Measure:** 640L

**Pages:** 256

**Guided Reading Level:** U

Adam is a 16-year-old orphan and servant whose master has forced him to sign up for Napoleon's Grande Armée. Adam is deeply traumatized by life on the battlefield. When a wealthy lieutenant named Konrad Klara offers him a job, he transforms into the courageous soldier he once could only dream of becoming. **Available as a Storia eBook**



### Phantoms in the Snow

*Kathleen Benner Duble*

**Ages:** 13–16

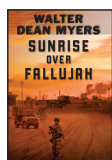
**Grades:** 7–10

**Lexile Measure:** 710L

**Pages:** 240

It is 1944, and 15-year-old Noah Garrett's parents have died. He's sent to Camp Hale, to live with his uncle. There's just one problem: Noah has been raised a pacifist, and Camp Hale is a US military base for a little-known division of soldiers called Phantoms. But how can a boy who doesn't believe in war survive among these soldiers?

**Available as a Storia eBook**



### Sunrise Over Fallujah

*Walter Dean Myers*

**Ages:** 14+

**Grades:** 8–12

**Lexile Measure:** 1050L

**Pages:** 320

**Guided Reading Level:** Z

Operation Iraqi Freedom, that's the code name. But the young men and women in the military's Civil Affairs Battalion have a simpler name for it: WAR. The young civil affairs soldiers soon find their definition of "winning" ever more elusive and their good intentions being replaced by terms like "survival" and "despair." Myers's richly rendered characters are just beginning to understand the meaning of war in this powerful, realistic novel of our times. **Available as a Storia eBook**

To find PDF versions of the Storia teacher guides and links to purchase the related books, visit <http://teacher.scholastic.com/ereading-resources/>.

**draft (p. 29)**

**deferral (p. 29)**

**recruit (p. 34)**

**death-and-dismemberment (p. 99)**

**turret (p. 135)**

**mortar (p. 142)**

**camaraderie (p. 150)**

**napalm (p. 152)**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## RESOURCE #2: Analyze Story Elements

Fill in the setting, main characters, important events, and theme development for each part of *Vietnam Book One: I Pledge Allegiance*.

	Part One (pp. 3–42)	Part Two (pp. 45–132)	Part Three (pp. 133–183)
Setting			
Main Characters			
Important Plot Events			
Theme Development			