

Phùng Nguyễn Quang & Huỳnh Kim Liên

My First Day



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RANDOM HOUSE
CHILDREN'S BOOKS



MAKE ME
A WORLD



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Phùng Nguyễn Quang & Huỳnh Kim Liên

My First Day



About the Book

A visually stunning story of resilience and determination by an award-winning author-illustrator team.

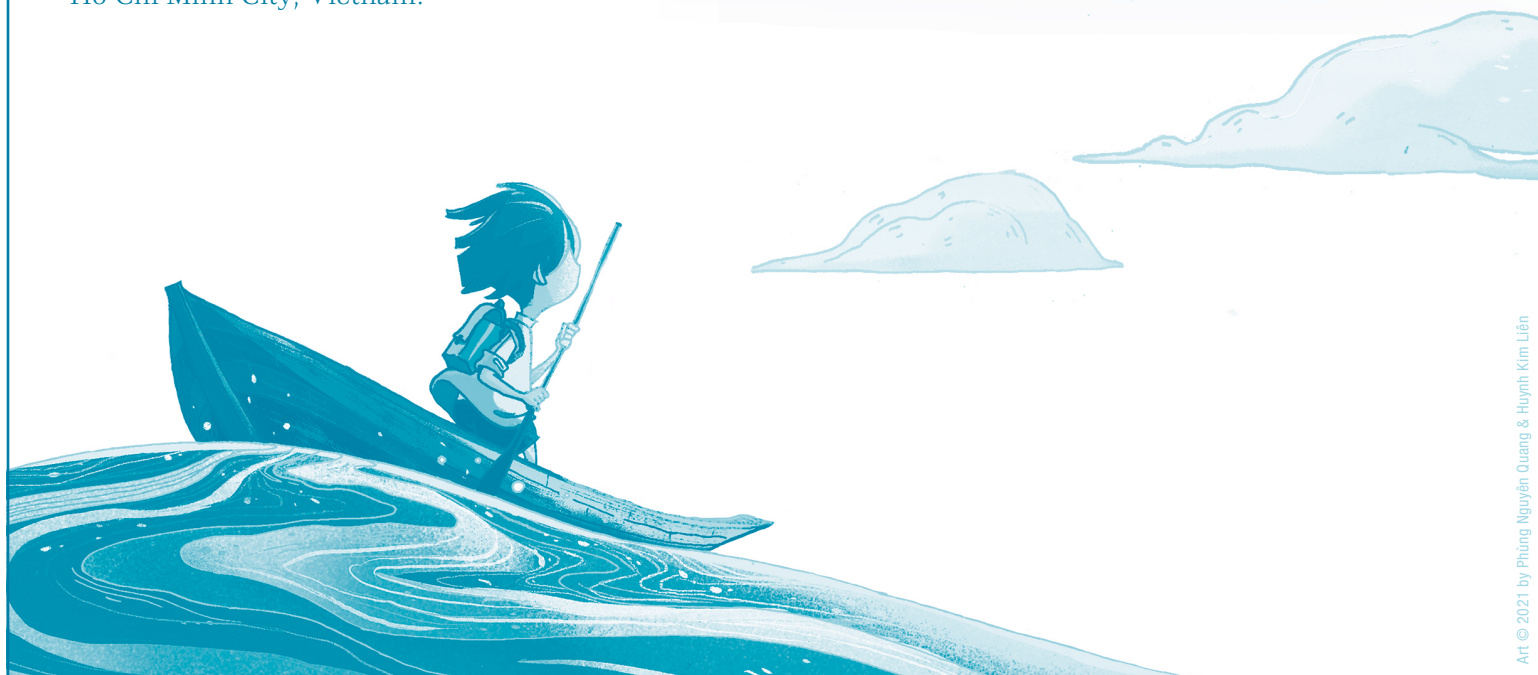
This is no ordinary first journey. The rainy season has come to the Mekong Delta, and An, a young Vietnamese boy, sets out alone in a wooden boat wearing a little backpack and armed only with a single oar. On the way, he is confronted by giant crested waves, heavy rainfall, and an eerie forest, where fear takes hold of him. Although daunted by the dark unknown, An realizes that he is not alone and continues to paddle. He knows it will all be worth it when he reaches his destination—one familiar to children all around the world.

About the Authors

Phùng Nguyễn Quang and Huỳnh Kim Liên are award-winning book creators who live and work together in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam.



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Projects for before, during, and after reading *My First Day*

Activate Imaginations

The purpose of this exercise is to offer a full-body experience, allowing students to pay attention to their breath and what they feel and as they immerse themselves experientially into *My First Day*.

Clear your classroom to create an open space where students can move safely. Students should move around the classroom with the following prompts and variations.

Remote-learning option: Invite students to clear an area around their workspace. If students are in a tight space, they can be creative with how they move around the room. Students also have the option to close their eyes, turn off the video on their screens, and visualize the prompts as the teacher reads them. Any students with mobility issues should do as much as they can or simply close their eyes.

Teachers should pace their reading of the prompts below, pausing for a few seconds to allow students to experience each. Move around the room; get a feel for the space.

- What's the temperature like? Are you comfortable?
- Where are the open spaces? Tight spaces?
- Where is there light? Where is it dark?

Now imagine stepping into the shallows of a river.

- What's the temperature of the water?
- What kind of shoes are you wearing?
- Do you see mud? Plants? Fish?

Imagine you can breathe underwater. Explore the river as you move around the room. Be sure to smile or say "hello" to your fellow underwater explorers/classmates.

- Now that you are fully immersed, think about the water around you. Is it cold, warm, or just right?

You're being pulled from the water onto a boat. Stretch as you feel your body being lifted aboard!

- Pay attention to your breathing. How does it feel?
- How do the water and air feel against your skin?

You're on the boat now. Glide across the room as a nice strong breeze pushes you across the river.

The wind just picked up and a big wave is propelling the boat toward the sky! Keep moving across the room as you hold on to the boat to stay afloat.

- How does the air feel?
- Is the water splashing around you? What does the water feel like?

Drift across the room as you imagine the wave pushing you to shore.

- What do you see as you move across the water?

Now that you're at the shore, shake off the excess water. Take a deep breath. You've arrived at school. Pay attention to how you feel.

Discussion Questions

In the classroom, invite students to stand in a circle to share their reflections.

In an online classroom setting, ask students to share their responses either in live discussion or in the chat box. Teachers can also choose to share these questions in an online document for students to reference and place students into smaller breakout groups for discussion.

- Describe in one word or phrase how you feel after this exercise. Share emotions, sensations, thoughts, etc.
- What was it like imagining you were in the water? On a boat? Gliding on a wave?
- How did you feel when you arrived on shore?
- What did you notice about your relationship to the space and the people around you?
- How do you think this activity relates to *My First Day*?

Water as Life

The word for *water* in Vietnamese is *nước*, which also means *country*, *nation*, or *homeland*. For the narrator, water is a pathway to school and new adventures and a place to face fears. Water carries symbolic and material importance.

- The human body is composed of mostly water.
 - The brain is about 80–85 percent water.
 - The heart is 75–80 percent water.
 - The lungs are 75–80 percent water.
 - The muscles are 70–75 percent water.
- The earth's surface is 71 percent underwater.

Before you read *My First Day*, share these statistics and ask students how they interact with water in their daily lives. What significance does water have to them? What are some ways people might take for

granted their access to water? To clean water? Offer examples of unclean tap water in Flint, Michigan; the Water Protectors movement at Standing Rock; or floating schools in the Mekong Delta to show how important clean, free-flowing water is to communities around the globe.

- Flint Children Demand Clean Water, Share Effects of Water Crisis Through Protest
youtube.com/watch?v=R65CK6CsA8E
- Young Water Protectors: A Story About Standing Rock
youtube.com/watch?v=WA0sR6RA4zQ
- Floating Schools—Education Along the Mekong Delta
youtube.com/watch?v=GgbSuwQEFcI

As you read *My First Day*, ask students to pay attention to how the water is characterized in the book. What do they notice about its colors? About how the water is drawn? What appears in the water? What is the narrator's relationship to the water?

After reading *My First Day*, ask students how the narrator's story about traversing the water on the first day of school makes them think about the journey. Is the water an important part of the story?

Learning About Ecosystems

Create a large map of the river using butcher paper. Ask students to draw plants, animals, and other objects that might live in the river on separate pieces of paper and add them to the larger butcher paper. Discuss how the different living and non-living elements interact with each other. Add and subtract elements, and discuss how their absence or presence impacts the larger ecosystem. Talk about how every element has a role to play. What ecosystems are the students' part of (home, school, local community, etc.)? What roles do they play in their ecosystems? How do they help keep their environments balanced? What responsibility do they have to their ecosystems?



Feelings and Memories of the First Day of School

The purpose of this exercise is to open up space for students to reflect on their first day of school and to learn about emotions. To cultivate emotional awareness, students are asked to learn and articulate a range of emotions as they pay attention to their different emotional states. In *My First Day*, the narrator expresses a range of emotions, including fear, excitement, wonder, hope, and many more. This activity emphasizes the importance of understanding emotions.

Option 1

Materials: index cards or sticky notes and a writing utensil

Review a feelings chart to help students learn new words to articulate their emotions. Students will be given three to five index cards or sticky notes each. On each card, students should describe how they felt on their first day of school or a memory they have of that day. Remind students that we can have multiple feelings at the same time, which is why they have several cards or notes to write on. Have students read their feelings or memories one at a time. Encourage those who remember having the same memory or feeling to raise their hands, even if they didn't write it down. Facilitate a discussion on each common feeling or memory. Discuss how different people can react the same way to a new situation. We can understand each other's feelings because we often share them. If someone had a feeling no one else remembers, talk about that, too. Each of us react in our own way sometimes, and that is okay.

For online classes, students can write how they feel on index cards, sticky notes, or pieces of paper, and hold them up to the screen one by one. Teachers can take a screenshot of students sharing their words on the screen. Students can share the word they wrote

and call on another classmate until everyone in the class has shared. If the video option is not available for students, students can share their words in the chat box.

After everyone has shared, ask students if any particular feeling or memory stood out to them and why.

Additional prompt: Students can choose one word or memory to write a poem about, reflecting on an emotion or experience from their first day of school. Share poems with the class.

Option 2

Ask students to close their eyes and take three deep breaths. Tell them to pay attention to their breathing and the sensations that arise in their bodies. Ask:

- Are you antsy or are you still? Maybe somewhere in between?
- Imagine your first day of school.
- What did you feel when you woke up?
- What did you wear? How did you get to school? Who was with you? What did you see on your journey to school?
- Most important, how did you feel along the way? Did your emotions change as you got closer to school?
- What advice would you give someone for their first day of school about how they can navigate their emotions?

Ask students to take another deep breath and slowly open their eyes. Ask the questions above again, this time inviting students to answer. Discuss feelings people had in common, as well as any feelings that were specific to one student. Talk about how many emotions are universal.



Climate Change Poster Making



“Climate change is the defining issue of our time and we are at a defining moment. From shifting weather patterns that threaten food production to rising sea levels that increase the risk of catastrophic flooding, the impacts of climate change are global in scope and unprecedented in scale. Without drastic action today, adapting to these impacts in the future will be more difficult and costly.” —United Nations (un.org/en/sections/issues-depth/climate-change)

The purpose of this poster-making exercise for older readers is to encourage personal and collective responsibility in taking care of our planet and taking action against the negative effects of climate change. The Mekong Delta is home to one of the most biodiverse ecosystems in the world. Due to global climate change, which is exacerbated by burning fossil fuels, deforestation, and overindustrialized farming,

the Mekong Delta is facing rising sea levels. This is leading to land erosion, damaged crops, and the displacement of residents (projections show millions will be displaced by the end of the century). Climate change affects the most vulnerable populations around the world, especially those who live in resource-scarce and impoverished areas. How can you take action to raise awareness about climate change? What local or global initiatives can you take part in? What are the specific ways you can get involved (call a senator, write a letter to your congressperson, sign a petition, mobilize a movement, etc.)?

For this exercise, students research key facts about climate change, local and global initiatives, and ways to take action. Students will create a poster using information, images, and quotes they have collected.

Choose a community or location impacted by climate change.

Key facts about how climate change impacts this community or location:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Initiatives and campaigns that addresses climate change and how to get involved:

INITIATIVE/CAMPAIGN/ORGANIZATION	HOW TO GET INVOLVED



Climate Change Poster Making

continued

Research images! Search for relevant images, symbols, and photographs for your poster.

How will you set up your poster so that it effectively delivers the information you have found?

What colors will you use?

What images from your search best convey the urgency of the issue?

Come up with a short, punchy slogan that encompasses your message.

Who is your main audience? Why?

Where do you see these posters? How do you want people to engage with the posters?

Create your poster! Draw, create a collage, or digitally design your poster.

Take action! How will you share this poster to help raise awareness about issues of climate change and how people can get involved?

Who is your main audience? Why?

Where do you see these posters? How do you want people to engage with the posters?

Poster Examples:

- *Celebrate People's History: The Poster Book of Resistance and Revolution* edited by Josh MacPhee
- For the People's Artist Collective (forthepeoplecollective.org/graphics.html)
- JustSeeds (justseeds.org/graphics/)
- Mobile Street Art Cart (werdmvmntstudios.com/pdfs.html)



Create a design for your advice below.
Use crayons/markers/color pencils.