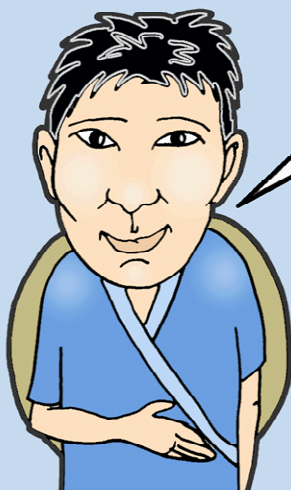


VIETNAM



Hello! My name is Tan Loc and I'm Vietnamese. Some time ago, I visited my country and I learned many interesting things. It's my pleasure to share what I discovered with you. Choose a topic heading and start your exploring Vietnam!



The **Country Fact Sheets** series is presented to you by the Réseau In-Terre-Actif and produced with the support of the government of Canada through the Canadian International Development Agency



Canadian International
Development Agency

Agence canadienne de
développement international



COUNTRY DESCRIPTION

As you can see from the map, my country is part of South-East Asia. Vietnam is located west of the Chinese Sea. China borders Vietnam to the north, and Laos and Cambodia border Vietnam to the west.

My country has a surface area of 329 560 km². I read in a book that Canada has a surface area more than thirty times bigger than Vietnam! Vietnam is one of the most densely populated countries of the world. This means that in comparison to other countries, we have a lot of people living here for the size of our country.

My country's capital is called Hanoi, while the biggest port city is Hồ Chí Minh City. Other important cities include Cần Thơ, Đà Nẵng and Hải Phòng.


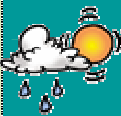



My country produces coffee, manioc, and rice, as well as shoes and clothing. Vietnam is rich in minerals such as tin, zinc, silver, gold, precious stones, and coal. Vietnam's continental shelf is rich in oil and natural gas.

Almost three quarters of Vietnam is made up of mountains or hills. Furthermore, forests cover the majority of the country. Natural spring water is also abundant.

Did you know that ?

Did you know that in Vietnam there's a legend that goes like this: King Lac-Long, a dragon (a fantastical animal from the Southern Seas) married a fairy named Au-Co. One hundred strong and handsome boys were born of this union. Au-Co left for the mountains with fifty sons. The others followed their father to the rivers of the southern seas. It is said that each of these sons became a founder of a kingdom in my country.



	Surface Area 329 560 km ² (Canada : 9 984 670 km ²)
	Climate A tropical monsoon climate, with humidity averaging 84 % throughout the year.
	Temperature From 30 to 40°C during summer, from 15 to 20°C during winter.
	Relief Low, flat delta in south and north; central highlands; hilly, mountainous in far north and northwest.
	Natural Resources Coffee, cashew nuts, potatoes, rice, coconuts, rubber, tin, coal, pork, fish, etc.

COUNTRY DESCRIPTION

Population

More than 84 million people live in my country. More than 7 400 000 Vietnamese live in Hồ Chí Minh City, the most populated city. In comparison, my uncle told me that the province of Quebec has a population of about 7 600 000 people!

Vietnamese is our official language. Accents and vocabulary vary from region to region, but people can still understand one another easily enough. Another 75 languages exist in Vietnam. People living in remote areas of the country speak these languages. These people have resisted the influence of outsiders.

French is spoken as a second language by 100 000 people in my country. These are mostly elderly people who lived through the French colonial period. Today, English is employed as the language of commerce, but remains a secondary language in Vietnam.



Population

Did you know that?

Vietnam is the only country in South-East Asia to use a roman alphabet. Up until the 13th century, the Vietnamese used Chinese characters. This style of writing remains in use today, but only for special occasions or as an art form. However, Latin characters like those that you use were adopted as the foundation for all official writing in my country.

Here are a few Vietnamese words you can learn. This way, you will be able to say hello to people if you ever visit one day.

Hello : *Chào bà*

Good evening : *Xin chào, xin đủ*

What is your name? : *Tên bạn là gì?*

My name is... : *Tên tôi là ...*

Thank you : *Cảm ơn*

Facts at a Glance



Number of Inhabitants

84,2 million (2005)



Density (number of people per Km²)

253 inhabitants /km² (2005)



Life Expectancy

71 years (2005)



Purchasing Power¹

US\$ 2700 (2004)



People Without a job

20 % (2004)



People who can read and write

90 % (2004)



Mortality rate under 5 years of age

23 deaths per 1 000 child (2004)



Human Development Index (HDI)²

108th out of 177 countries (2003)



Ecological Footprint³

0,8 (2001)

History

Let me briefly outline my country's history for you. As you may know, the Chinese ruled my country for a long time. Their rule lasted almost 1000 years. During this time, Chinese culture was firmly implanted in Vietnam.

In the year 939, Ngô-Quyên chased the Chinese from the country after the famous Bach-Dang victory. He founded the first national **dynasty**. Over the next ten centuries, eight dynasties further organized and expanded the kingdom.

Following France's involvement in my country's governance, the Treaties of 1862 and 1874 were signed. Vietnam found itself under French rule along with Cambodia and Laos. The countries made up the "French Indochina". At the end of the Second World War in 1945, my country gained its **independence**. However, the country had to wait until the end of the First Indochinese War in 1954 to legally recover its boundaries.

My people's joy was short-lived because one month later my country was separated in two. In the north a **communist** government ruled. Meanwhile in the south, an authoritarian government ruled in an authoritarian fashion and relied increasingly on support from the United States. The evolution of the government in the south triggered a new conflict: the Vietnam War.



In 1961, guerillas supported by the North Vietnamese government threatened South Vietnam. The United States intervened on South Vietnam's behalf to stop the advance of communist troops from the north. In 1965 the United States bombed North Vietnam to weaken North Vietnamese fuel and ammunition supply lines. A cease-fire was finally signed by North Vietnam and the United States in 1973, almost 10 years after the war started. After the United States pulled out of Vietnam, the communists in the north and the South Vietnamese continued to fight until South Vietnam was defeated in 1975. The country was reunited in 1976.

History



Did you know that?

At dinnertime my father sits at one end of the table. His guests are seated next to him, followed by family members from eldest to youngest. My mother sits at the other end of the table with the women and children.

Dinner begins once everyone is seated and my father begins to serve himself. Pick up your chopsticks! All the food is prepared in bite-sized pieces. You must bring the bowl to your mouth so as not to appear lazy! Be careful! Don't leave a single grain of rice in the bottom of your bowl, never mind letting one fall over the edge!



Culture

Have you ever heard about marionettes on water? This art form is unique to Vietnam. They are marionettes controlled from underwater with poles, or with poles and strings. During a performance of marionettes on water, there is often a reading of poems followed by chanting. Musicians announce the beginning of the show to the villagers. They also read out the legends to the villagers and lead the chanting.

In Vietnam, rice is the main staple of all meals – morning, noon, and night. At home, we don't say that Mom is making dinner, we say that she is *making* rice, *puffing* rice or *cooking* rice! A typical meal consists of fermented **brines**, vegetables, soup, as well as different types of meat (including fish and crustaceans).

In my country, the most practiced religion is *Tam Giáo*, also known as "Triple Religion". It is a mixture of Mahayana **Buddhism**, **Confucianism** and ancestral cults. About 8% of the population is Christian – predominantly Roman Catholic.

Traditional Vietnamese architecture follows precise astrological and geographical guidelines. Cities like Hanoi and Huế, ancient imperial tombs, and temples are examples of this architectural style.

If you want to hear Vietnam's national anthem, click on the following link:

www.david.national-anthems.net/vn.htm

Culture

Challenges



Challenges

People in my country face numerous challenges.

In my country, 200 000 children have been born with disabilities or deformities over the past ten years. The defoliants used by the American during the war cause these problems. These defoliants, better known as *Agent Orange*, are chemical products that were dispersed by the American Army between 1961 and 1971. Thirty years later, almost a million and a half people are contaminated with the chemicals.

Have you ever heard of avian flu? It is a virus that can be transmitted to humans by infected birds through repeated contact. Between 2003 and 2005, Vietnam suffered the most victims to avian flu (42 deaths). Thanks to efforts against this zoonosis (illness transmitted by animals), there were no new cases of infection in the country in 2006.

Occasionally typhoons hit my country. Typhoons are a meteorological phenomenon characterized by strong winds that blow in a circular fashion around the centre, called the "eye". In December 2006, Typhoon Durian hit Vietnam and left at least 50 people dead, 409 injured, and 55 missing. Last October Typhoon Xangsane hit and resulted in 76 dead or missing and 532 injured.

Another serious challenge that persists in my country is the trafficking of women and children. While the exact numbers are not available, the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) estimates that 30 million women and children have been the victims of sexual trafficking in Asia over the last 30 years. Most often, young women from poor families are victims. Some are promised a better life for themselves and their family and are offered jobs or the chance to study in school, while others are kidnapped or sold by their friends or family members. The people who profit from sexual trafficking have no scruples; for them money is worth more than human rights.

Did you know that the percentage of people living in poverty in Vietnam has decreased over the last 15 years? However, despite the progress that has been made, my country remains a poor country. The poorest are principally ethnic minorities and people who live in rural areas.

Despite these difficulties my people are full of spirit, and are warm and welcoming. I hope you will visit us one day!

Solutions



My country benefits from international cooperation projects. Here is one such project that is financed by the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) and that helps Vietnamese people who are of modest means.

The **Canadian Centre of International Studies and Cooperation (CCIC)** has been working with certain local organizations in my country for years and has initiated long lasting projects in the areas of health, education, and agriculture. It's amazing to see what they have achieved together!

A project to improve the means of living in the province of Thanh Hoa is currently underway. This project is aimed at improving access to food, water, education, primary health care, and sanitizing facilities.

My older brother explained to me how the **CCIC** program helps people in that region improve their lives. It's simple! By helping people to develop their skills for the betterment of their community (agriculture, micro-businesses) and for planning, we hope that poverty will decrease. Maybe you know the saying: If you give a man a fish, he eats for a day. Teach him how to fish, and he'll always have food. That's a bit like what **CCIC** is trying to do in that region.

You can learn more about this international development project by visiting the following address:

[www.ceci.ca/ceci/en/where we work/asia/ceci in vietnam.html](http://www.ceci.ca/ceci/en/where_we_work/asia/ceci_in_vietnam.html)

Finally, did you know that you can also act to help make the world a better place? By being a responsible consumer, encouraging the purchase of fair-trade products, and buying local products, you contribute to the health of your community!

Solutions

Glossary

Buddhism:

Religious philosophy founded in India by Buddha.

Communism:

Social, economic, and political system founded on the collective ownership of the means of production, and the elimination of social classes.

Confucianism:

A complex system of moral, social, political, philosophical, and religious founded by the Chinese philosopher Confucius and his disciples.

Dynasty:

Sovereigns (Heads of State) from the same family.

Independence :

A state's condition in which it is not dependent on another state; it is self-determining, autonomous.

Brines

Very salty, flavored water added to food to make preserves.

Purchasing Power¹:

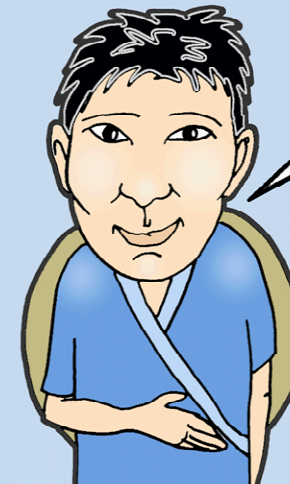
Purchasing power is the capacity to buy goods and services with a given income.

Human Development Index ² :

The Human Development Report issued by the UN, which classifies 177 countries according to life-expectancy, education, literacy, and income.

Ecological Footprint³ :

It measures how much land and water area is necessary to provide one person's sustenance.



Don't forget that you can do something to improve our world. You and your friends in school can get involved. Become aware of the important issues around the world. All together, we can change things for the better!

To learn more about Cameroun, consult the following sources:

- ✓ www.in-terre-actif.com/english
- ✓ www.ethiquette.ca
- ✓ www.equiterre.org/en
- ✓ www.amnesty.org
- ✓ www.acdi-cida.gc.ca

Glossary

LEARNING VIETNAMESE MORALITY THROUGH A PUPPET GAME

Background:

The art of puppetry has a long history in Vietnam. In fact, it dates so far back that it's difficult for experts to determine its precise historical origins. Whatever its beginnings, we know that puppetry was already very much in fashion by the time of the great dynasties of the 11th century A.D. Grand shows were performed in the royal court for the king, in the cities, and in the villages. Today, this art is accessible by everyone and continues to be practiced both by communal groups in the villages, as well as by professional troupes in urban theatres of international renown.

(Source : www.ethnotempos.org)

Directions :

Just like artists of great renown, you must create and present a Vietnamese puppet show based on the Vietnamese legend below. The emphasis comes of the

THE STICKY RICE CAKE

In **Van-Lang** (ancient Vietnam), the first king's son ruled under the name **Hùng-Vuong**.

King Hùng-Vuong married three women, and each one gave birth to a son.

The first wife's son **Long**, married **Kim**, envious and jealous.

The second wife's son **Hô**, married **Ngoc**, who was mean and treated her husband very poorly.

The third wife had passed away, and her son **Van** lived with his maternal grandmother and tended the farm fields. **Il pratiquait la culture sur brûlis?**, cultivated vegetables, and went fishing during his free time.

The grandmother married **Van** to **Xuân**, a wise and hard working young lady from the village. The couple lived a modest, but happy life.

One day, the King ordered the couple to appear before him. The couple **Van-Xuân** had to sell their two bulls to prepare for the voyage to the court.

Once they arrived, **Van** saw that his older brothers and their wives were elegantly dressed and covered in jewelry. **Van** and **Xuân** were confused. Everyone was making fun of them and chastised them for appearing in front of the King in such simple attire. Despite this, the King showed affection to his son **Van** who had lost his mother.

Weakened by old age and his rule of 50 years, the King had decided to give his throne over to one of his three sons according to which one could prepare the tastiest dishes. The two older brothers' wives were confident in their talent and each one believed they would be able to win the throne for their husband. Meanwhile, **Van** and **Xuân** were very worried because they were so poor.

One night, **Van** saw his mother in a vision and she told him that he would win the throne. All he needed to do is make a sticky rice cake in the shape of a square, with fat in the middle to symbolize a heart. The square cake would represent the earth because at that time in Vietnam, it was believed that the earth was square.

Van woke up and recounted his vision to his wife. The couple decided to follow their mother's advice. They made the cake as she advised, and then boiled it in a clay cauldron.

On the arranged day, the King's two daughter's in law **Kim** and **Ngoc** offered the King grand and expensive dishes. However the King was not impressed. When **Van** and **Xuân** presented their cake to the King he was thrilled with its delicate nature and with its significance. (*It would be necessary to govern the country with wisdom*). The King showered **Van** with praise and declared him the successor.

Out of generosity, **Van** declared his brothers Viscounts.

Game

Puppet Making

There are many types of puppets and they are controlled by either suspending them from above, or by holding them from below by means of a small stick, or by inserting one's hand inside the puppet. The type that is held from below is the simplest and easiest type of puppet to make. Use any materials at hand, and all your creativity to make your puppets! Background characters can be added. You can use the pictures of the characters in the legend above, or draw your own characters. An old pair of socks can also do a great job as the foundation for your puppet. Get to work!

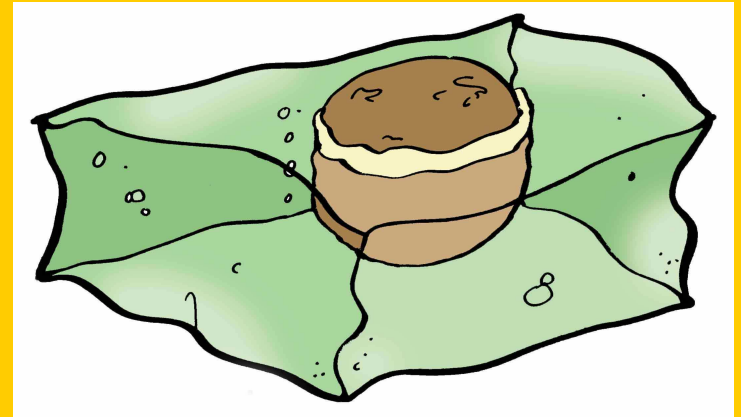
Assigning Tasks

It is possible to involve all the students in the preparations for the play. The number of tasks can vary according to how large and elaborate you decide to make the play. For example, teams of students can be assigned to create and construct the puppets, conceive and create the script, create the props, and carry out the play. This educational exercise is an excellent opportunity to get both extroverted and introverted students involved in theatre and experiencing Vietnamese culture.



DID YOU KNOW THAT?

The Sticky rice cake (or "banh chung" in Vietnam) is one of the traditional Vietnamese dishes enjoyed during the *Tết* festival. It is often served with pork and caramel.



TO LEARN MORE ABOUT THE STICKY RICE CAKE...

To obtain the recipe for the cake visit: www.etab.ac-caen.fr/lyautey-elem/2000_2001/classes/CE2/dossiers_ce2/dossier_Vietnam/Vietnam1/recettes/banh_chung_xang.htm

History source: www.viettourism.com

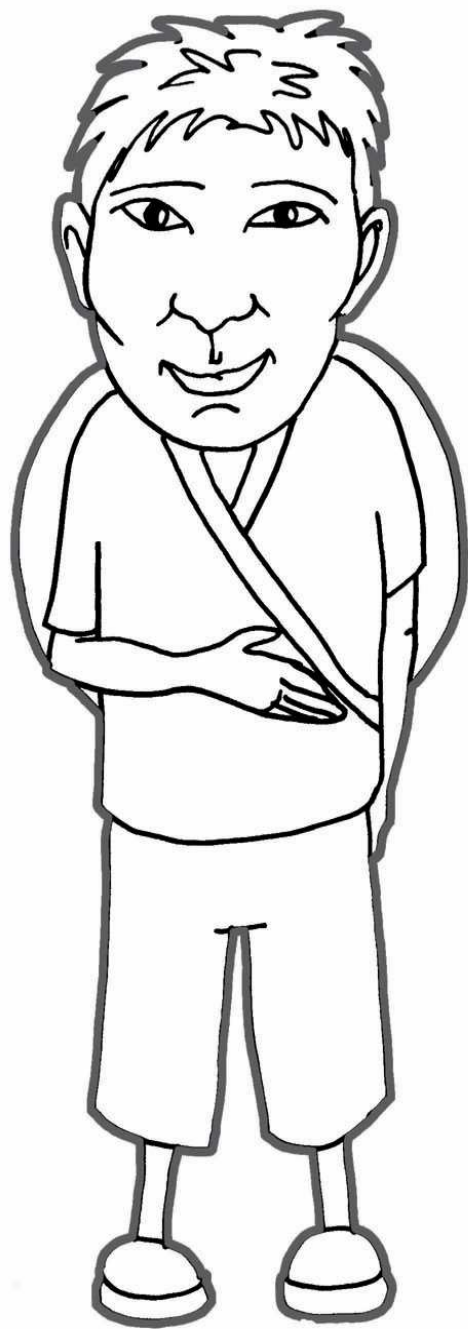


Ngoc



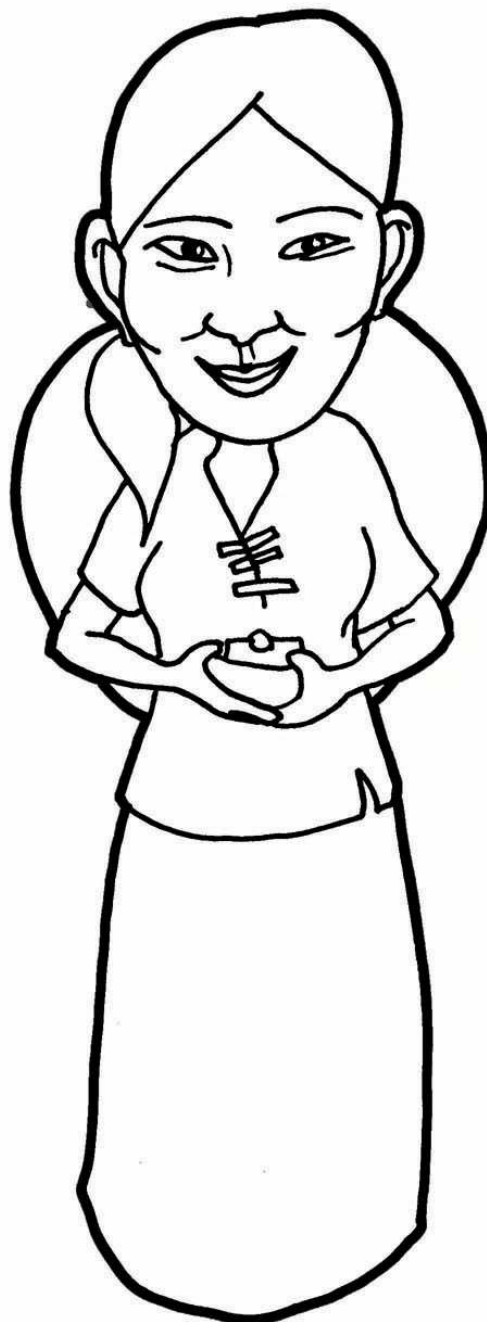
Kim

DO YOU RECOGNIZE SOME
OF THE CHARACTERS
FROM THE STORY?



VAN

12 of 13



Xuân



ROI
Hùng-Vuong

