

## WELCOME TO THE 11<sup>TH</sup> YEAR OF READING ACROSS RHODE ISLAND!

*Reading Across Rhode Island*, the statewide community read, kicks off its 11th year with the 2013 title, *The Beauty of Humanity Movement* by Camilla Gibb. *Reading Across Rhode Island* is a project of the Rhode Island Center for the Book, made possible through a vibrant collaboration of librarians, teachers, book group leaders and readers from across the State.

The 2013 program runs from January to May with readers in Rhode Island classrooms, libraries, and bookstores joining discussions and participating in events such as lectures, art exhibits, poetry readings and dramatic interpretations focused on this year's selection.

Robin Kall, host of the popular radio show *Reading With Robin* on WHJJ 920 AM and Chanravy Proeung, Executive Director of prYSM (Providence Youth Student Movement) serve as the program's Honorary Chairs.

This booklet presents resources the *Reading Across Rhode Island* committee has gathered to enrich and expand this reading.

[www.ribook.org](http://www.ribook.org)

## THANK YOU!

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Rhode Island Center for the Book is a statewide organization devoted to promoting personal and community enrichment by celebrating the art and heritage of reading, writing, making, and sharing books. Founded in 2003, Center for the Book is an affiliate of the Center for the Book in the Library of Congress in Washington, D.C.

## Rhode Island Center for the Book



At Rhode Island Council for the Humanities

[www.ribook.org](http://www.ribook.org)

## CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Join a discussion group at your community public library, school or bookshop!

Kick-Off Event

January 26, 2-4pm

Newman Congregational Church

Rumford, RI

Professor Theodore Gatchel

“Language, Culture and History: Understanding Mr. Hung’s Vietnam”

March 18, 7pm

Providence Public Library

Providence, RI

Ken MacLean, Ph.D. Assistant Professor of International Development and Social Change: “Vietnamese Resistance Movements in the 1950’s and Current Day Vietnam.”

April 8, 7pm

Weaver Library

East Providence, RI

Martha Collins will discuss Vietnamese literature and read some of her translations of Vietnamese poems. She will offer brief comments on the literary history of Vietnam, but her main focus will be on contemporary poetry, and the challenges and rewards of translation. Collins has individually published six volumes of poetry, for which she has won numerous awards, and two volumes of co-translated Vietnamese poetry; a third volume of her co-translations will be published this year. Formerly Pauline Delaney Professor of Creative Writing at Oberlin College, she is now an editor for FIELD magazine and the Oberlin College Press, and lives in Cambridge, Massachusetts. Her website is <http://www.marthacollinspoet.com>

May 3, 10am

Statewide student videoconference with Camilla Gibb

May 4, 9am

11<sup>th</sup> Annual May Breakfast with Camilla Gibb

Rhodes on the Pawtuxet, Cranston, RI

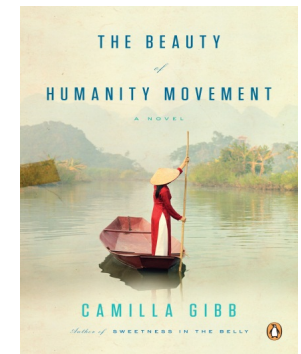
Tickets available after February 25<sup>th</sup>

## ABOUT THE BOOK

By Maxine Williams, Reading Across RI Committee Member

*The Beauty of Humanity Movement* gives a glimpse of the history and culture of the Vietnamese people by telling the story of several individuals. We meet Tu, a young man working as a tour guide in Hanoi in present-day Vietnam; Maggie, who was born in Vietnam but came to the U.S. as a young child with her mother and has returned to her native country to uncover the fate of her father, an artist and political dissident; and Hung, a highly skilled culinary expert who produces tasty fare for his many customers in times of great scarcity as well as increasing comfort.

The book moves skillfully between the 1950s, when the Communist regime was becoming increasingly more oppressive and Hung provided space in his building for political liberals, to the turbulent 1970s Vietnam War era, to the current day, when food is more plentiful but questions of how to preserve Vietnamese culture and art remain complicated with people struggling to make peace with their past.



The children, men and women of different ages are believably drawn and appealing. Issues of loyalty to family and tradition emerge along with a message of hopefulness that understanding and forgiveness can arise even in the face of great difficulty.

The book also helps the reader look at some historical events from the Vietnamese perspective. For example, what we refer to as the Vietnam war is conversely called the American war.

In reviewing *The Beauty of Humanity Movement*, another member of the RARI committee wrote, “This is a novel filled with longing: Hung’s longing for the woman who lives in the shack almost adjoining his own, the longing of Maggie for information about her father...the longing of Hung’s soup fans who look forward to inhaling the aroma of his broth every morning and warming their bellies.” I agree with this person completely, and believe that this longing is one of the most moving aspects of the book.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR



**Camilla Gibb** is the author of four novels: *Mouthing the Words*, *The Petty Details of So-and-So's Life*, *Sweetness in the Belly* and *The Beauty of Humanity Movement*.

She was the winner of the Trillium Book Award in 2006, a Scotiabank Giller Prize short list nominee in 2005, winner of the City of Toronto Book Award in 2000 and the

recipient of the CBC Canadian Literary Award for short fiction in 2001. Her books have been published in 18 countries and translated into 14 languages and she was named by the jury of the prestigious Orange Prize as one of 21 writers to watch in the new century.

Camilla was born in London, England, and grew up in Toronto. She has a B.A. in anthropology and Middle Eastern studies from the University of Toronto, completed her Ph.D. in social anthropology at Oxford University in 1997, and spent two years at the University of Toronto as a post-doctoral research fellow before becoming a full-time writer.

Camilla has been writer-in-residence at the University of Toronto and the University of Alberta. She is currently an adjunct faculty member of the graduate creative writing programs at the University of Guelph-Humber and the University of Toronto, and is the Barker Fairley Distinguished Visitor at the University of Toronto this fall. She is at work on a memoir and a new novel.

## SUGGESTIONS FOR STUDENTS

(continued)

### TOPICS FOR FURTHER STUDY OR RESEARCH

1. Vietnam has long been the object of colonization and intrusion by China, Japan, France and Russia from 221 B.C. to the present. What influences did each of these nations have upon the Viet people and how do we see evidence of their respective efforts even today? Include such examples as language, arts, cuisine religion, etc.
2. Identify the following:
  - a) The 17<sup>th</sup> Parallel
  - b) Ho Chi Minh
  - c) Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City
  - d) The Tet Festival
3. A map of Vietnam and its proximity to other countries help to shed light on invaders' interest in the country. What might some of them be?
4. The poet Phan Khoi appears as a minor character in the book. Is his role in the novel similar to his in the movement? Be sure to include a biographical sketch of the man to give some insight into his actual persona.
5. Write a commentary about what can be learned about Vietnam by viewing the films *Three Seasons* or *The Quiet American*. You may also listen to the CD's of Gabriel Yared's soundtrack of *The Lover* and/or *Blue Zone*. Pham Duo Thanh is an earlier musician with CD's *Fishing* and *The Moving Cloud*, which show an older Vietnam.

We encourage teachers to read *The Beauty of Humanity Movement* before assigning it for their students to determine the appropriateness of the content for their specific students. There are lists of similarly themed books for children and youth in our Resource Guide, which may be substituted if *The Beauty of Humanity Movement* is not appropriate for the classroom level.

## SUGGESTIONS FOR STUDENTS

*Developed by Muriel Sweeney  
Retired Teacher, Veterans Memorial High School*

### WRITING AND/OR DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What do you consider the main plot of the book? What then is the sub-plot?
2. How does the Vietnamese family differ from the American family? Cite examples from the book and your study of the culture.
3. The arts, particularly music and painting, play a major role in the novel. How is this depicted through both Phuong and Dao?
4. What was the relationship between Dao and Hu'ng before Dao was taken away?
5. Do a character analysis of Hu'ng using specific examples from the text to illustrate your points.
6. What are the mainstays of Vietnamese cuisine? How are the influences of Indian, French and Japanese cooking apparent in the country's foodstuffs?
7. What is pho? What are its varieties?
8. What are the cultural interests of the Vietnamese? What is the chief religion?
9. What languages are spoken in the country today?
10. What is the country's political status at present?

## BOOKS ON RELATED THEMES FOR ADULTS

*Compiled by Amy Greer, Reading Across RI Committee Member*

### NONFICTION

*The History of Vietnam* by Justin J. Corfield  
*Tours of Vietnam: War, Travel Guides, and Memory* by Scott Laderman  
*Embers of War: The Fall of an Empire and the Making of America's Vietnam* by Fredrik Logevall  
*Vietnam: An Illustrated History* by L. Shelton Woods  
*Perfect Spy: The Incredible Double Life of Pham Xuan An, Time Magazine Reporter and Vietnamese Communist Agent* by Larry Berman  
*Black Virgin Mountain: A Return to Vietnam* by Larry Heinemann  
*Vietnam, Now: A Reporter Returns* by David Lamb  
*Argument Without End: In Search of Answers to the Vietnam Tragedy* by Robert S. McNamara  
*Strange Ground: Americans in Vietnam, 1945-1975, an Oral History* by Harry Maurer  
*River of Time* by Jon Swain  
*A Piece of My Heart: The Stories of 26 American Women Who Served in Vietnam* by Keith Walker

### FICTION

*The Time In Between: A Novel* by David Bergen  
*Up Country* by Nelson DeMille  
*A Dangerous Friend* by Ward S. Just  
*The Things They Carried* by Tim O'Brien  
*Don't Mean Nothing: Short Stories of Vietnam* by Susan O'Neill  
*Girl by the Road at Night: A novel of Vietnam* by David Rabe  
*The Lotus Eaters* by Tatjana Soli  
*What We All Long For* by Dionne Brand  
*Monkey Bridge* by Lan Cao  
*Quiet as They Come* by Angie Chau  
*Fake House: Stories and Love Like Hate: A Novel* by Linh Dinh  
*Night, Again: Contemporary Fiction From Vietnam* edited by Linh Dinh  
*Daughters of the River Huong: Stories of a Vietnamese Royal Concubine and Her Descendants* by Nicole Nguÿen Duong

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

(continued)

### POETRY

*An Anthology of Vietnamese Poems: From the eleventh through the twentieth centuries*

*Spring Essence: The Poetry of Hồ Xuân Hương*

*Song of the Cicadas* by Mộng-Lan

*A Thousand Years of Vietnamese Poetry* by Nguoc Bích Nguyễn

*Poems From Captured Documents* selected and translated from the Vietnamese by Thanh T. Nguyen & Bruce Weigl

### FOOD

*Vietnamese Cooking* by Ghillie Basan

*Wild, Wild East: Recipes & stories from Vietnam* by Bobby Chinn

*Communion: A culinary journey through Vietnam* by Kim Fay

*Koto: A culinary journey through Vietnam* by Tracey Lister

### MEMOIRS & BIOGRAPHIES

*In the Jaws of History* by Diem Bui

*The Sacred Willow: Four generations in the life of a Vietnamese family* by Duong Van Mai Elliott

*Where the Ashes Are: The odyssey of a Vietnamese family* by Qui Thuc Nguyễn

*The Eaves of Heaven: A life in three wars* by Andrew X. Pham

*Last Airlift: A Vietnamese orphan's rescue from war* by Marsha Forchuk Skrypuch

*The Lost Years: My 1,632 days in Vietnamese reeducation camps* by Tri Vu Tran

*Ao Dai: My war, my country, my Vietnam* by Phuong Xuan

### FILMS

*Buffalo Boy*, 2004

*Daughter from Danang*, 2003

*Foreign Letters*, 2012

*Journey from the Fall*, 2006

*Owl and the Sparrow*, 2005

*Exploring Vietnam: From Hanoi to Saigon*, 2002

*21<sup>st</sup> Century Awakening*, 2011

*The Quiet American*, 2001

## BOOKS ON RELATED THEMES

### FOR YOUNG ADULTS

Compiled by Elizabeth Brown, author; Dr. Joan Glazer, Professor Emeritus, RI College; and Cheryl Space, OLIS

### FICTION

*All the Broken Pieces: A novel in verse* by Ann E. Burg

*Song of the Buffalo Boy* by Sherry Garland

*Shadow of the Dragon* by Sherry Garland

*Cracker: The best dog in Vietnam* by Cynthia Kadohata

*A Million Shades of Gray* by Cynthia Kadohata

*Inside Out & Back Again* by Thanhha Lai

*Zazoo* by Richard Mosher

*Sing for Your Father, Su Phan* by Stella Pevsner & Fay Tang

*Goodbye, Vietnam* by Gloria Whelan

### NONFICTION

*Vietnamese Americans* by Susan Auerbach

*Vietnam: Land of many dragons* by Hal Buell

*American Women of the Vietnam War* by Amanda Ferguson

*Vietnam & Countries of the Mekong* by Larry Henderson

*The Land I Lost: The adventures of a boy in Vietnam* by Quang Nhuong Huynh

*Vietnamerica: A family's journey* (graphic novel) by GB Tran

*Escape from Saigon: How a Vietnam War orphan became an American boy* by Andrea Warren

*Three Faces of Vietnam* by Richard L. Wormser

### BIOGRAPHY

*Ho Chi Minh: legend of Hanoi* by Jules Archer

**Nominate the Next  
Reading Across Rhode Island Book!**

Deadline: May 15, 2013

The general criteria for book selection includes:

- A good story with a universal theme
- Appealing to a wide range of readers, from age 14 and up
- Accessible in language and content
- Available in different formats (i.e., paperback, audio, Braille)
- Written by an author who is available to visit and speak with Rhode Islanders about the book
- Over time, the titles selected should reflect diversity in content, culture and genre

**Title & Author:**

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Or email your book nomination to [kate@ribook.org](mailto:kate@ribook.org).

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Center for the Book



At Rhode Island Council for the Humanities



**The Beauty of  
Humanity Movement  
By Camilla Gibb**

***2013  
Resource Guide***



*www.ribook.org*