

## *The Refugees* by Viet Thanh Nguyen

Here are some of the questions we will discuss at our in-person meeting on April 27.

- Nguyen dedicates this book, "For all refugees, everywhere." What are the ways in which people can be refugees?
- List some of repeated ghost/haunting imagery. Which characters are ghosts (literal or figurative)?

### "Black-Eyed Women"

- What is the significance of this title? Who are the "black-eyed women"?
- When the narrator wishes she died instead of her brother, he replies, "You died, too. You just don't know it." What does he mean?

### "The Other Man"

- When Liem talks about not telling his parents he loved them, Marcus tells him, "that's all in the past...The best way you can help them now is by helping yourself." Liem thinks this is a very American attitude. Do you agree?
- Compare and contrast Liem and Marcus. What does "The Other Man" mean?
- At the end of the story, Liem stands at the window and wonders if the world is watching him. What does this signify?

### "The War Years"

- What is the significance of the title?
- The first sentence mentions that Mrs. Hoa "broke into our lives." Why "broke into"? What does this suggest?
- What does the narrator's mother give him at the end of the story? What does this represent?

### "The Transplant"

- Discuss all the "transplants" in this story.

### "I'd Love You to Want Me"

- Why is the main character known only as "Mrs. Kahn"?
- What do Mrs. Kahn's memories about her escape reveal about her?
- How is Mrs. Kahn a refugee?

"The Americans"

- Is Carver a refugee? In what way?
- Why is Carver so angry? What is he losing? What does he realize at the end? Does it alleviate his anger?

"Someone Else Besides You"

- What does the title refer to?

"Fatherland"

- Why does Viven misrepresent herself? How is this the same or different from Mrs. Kahn from "I'd Love You to Want Me" or Marcus from "The Other Man"?
- What is the author attempting by including a story of a man who leaves America and returns to build a new life in Vietnam?
- What is the purpose of Phuong's father naming his Vietnamese children after his American children? What does it mean to be a replacement Vietnamese child?