

Book Discussion

Stealing Buddha's Dinner by Bich Minh Nguyen

1. Share the excerpt that you brought to class: a passage that you found interesting and explain what it means to you?
2. Bich describes the influence of popular culture on her sisters and her. How did food, advertising, television and music influence their assimilation and the formation of their cultural identity? How do children navigate the challenges of living in two (or in Bich's life, three) different cultures?
3. In what ways did the Vietnamese people in Grand Rapids create a viable and vibrant community? How did Bich remain connected to her Vietnamese identity? How did she separate herself from the community?
4. Bich was an avid reader, saying, "I read to be alone. I read so as not to be alone." But she also writes that she "didn't have any non-white literature." How did Bich's reading influence her identity? Why is it important for children to read books that portray characters that look like them?
5. Bich describes the school celebration of the Vietnamese holiday of Tet. Why was she uncomfortable with the celebration? How might a school better honor the cultural heritage of its students?
6. How did the Bich's family change from the time that she arrived in Grand Rapids to the end of her memoir? How is this similar to the changes that took place in your own family throughout your childhood and adolescence?