

## EDUCATORS RECOMMEND *THE MOUNTAINS SING*

A Winner of the 2020 Lannan Literary Awards Fellowship for Fiction

“Nguyễn Phan Quế Mai’s monumental historical novel, *The Mountains Sing*, should be required reading in schools and colleges everywhere. It is a lyrical celebration of Vietnam, a land of beauty whose poetry is embodied in its people. It is a book for teachers who want to provoke their students to think deeply about American exceptionalism, social justice, the cost of colonialism and empires, the rights of Indigenous peoples, the perils of factionalism within a nation, the resilient strength of the poor, the courage of women, and the sacred character of the land of one’s ancestors.”

—PENN SZITTYA, Professor Emeritus, Georgetown University; Board of Directors, Lannan Foundation

“A master class in decolonial historical fiction . . . There is no attempt to anglicize or water down her culture for a Western audience—which is exactly how it should be. Generations of Vietnamese people speak through her visceral writing and provide, arguably for the first time in recent years, a sensitive yet deeply educational and profound telling of not only the Vietnam War but also the Vietnamese history and culture, centering those whose voices have been omitted, especially by the Western narrative.” —SOFIA AKEL, Race Equity Lead, Centre for Equity & Inclusion, London Metropolitan University

“For the first time, we are seeing the war from the Vietnamese themselves in their own country. This book is a first step in completing the narrative of a war that devastated too many lives, and gives us a glimpse into the ancient culture, language, and traditions that shape modern Vietnam in this engaging and heartfelt tale.”

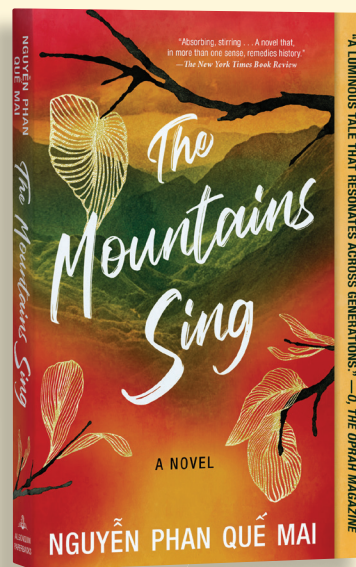
—XU XI, Faculty Co-Director, International MFA in Creative Writing & Literary Translation, Vermont College of Fine Arts

“It’s become oft-remarked that most American literature about the Việt Nam War leaves out the Vietnamese; in that light, I found teaching *The Mountains Sing* as comparative literature, paired, for example, with O’Brien’s *The Things They Carried*, or with Marlantes’ *Matterhorn*, immerses students into a complex history and a complex humanity in a way that remains both personal and transformative.”

—PROFESSOR WAYNE KARLIN, College of Southern Maryland

“A triumph, a novelistic rendition of one of the most difficult times in Vietnamese history, an epic account of Việt Nam’s painful twentieth century history, both vast in scope and intimate in its telling. Through the travails of one family, Nguyễn Phan Quế Mai brings us close to the horrors of famine, war, and class struggle. But in this moving and riveting novel, she also shows us a postwar Việt Nam, a country of hope and renewal, home to a people who have never given up.”

—PROFESSOR VIET THANH NGUYEN, Aerol Arnold Chair of English, University of Southern California



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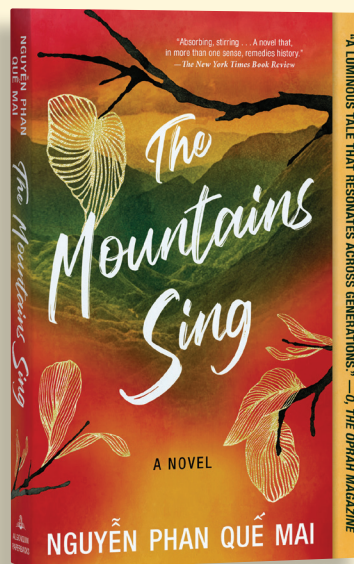
“As an IB Language and Literature teacher, I have taught Tim O’Brien’s magnificent *The Things They Carried* for a number of years. However, I always longed to be able to provide students with accompanying texts from the Vietnamese perspective, to balance out the white, Western homogeneity of the texts on offer in their curriculum. Nguyễn Phan Quế Mai’s exquisite *The Mountains Sing* would be the perfect novel to add. It offers a female perspective on Vietnam’s history, and on war in general and, as such, would again challenge the dominant narratives that students may be used to. It is a text that raises challenging questions about family and duty, and many other themes, and the language is vibrant with local idioms, which could help bridge the study of language and literature in compelling ways.” —DANNY NASON, Senior Head of Nansen House, Island School, Hong Kong

“This absorbing novel is a great resource for students who are interested in learning about modern Vietnamese history, culture, and domestic tensions caused by war and political oppression.” —PROFESSOR QUAN MANH HA, University of Montana

“One of the greatest abuses of history is the willful silencing of the voices and experiences of the weak and marginalized. Any curriculum seeking to decolonize the literary canon would be incomplete without Quế Mai’s *The Mountains Sing* . . . Students and educators alike will relish in the language and lyricism of Quế Mai’s poetic writing and her artful structuring of the story, as well as in the historical lessons . . . that are truly universal in nature, reminding us all of our collective and interconnected humanity.” —DR. SOFIA REHMAN, independent scholar

“*The Mountains Sing* was the highlight of my creative writing class. Students appreciated the prose style and texture, characters, and sense of place very much and looked at them anew through the novel. It is rare to have a Vietnamese novel in English that focuses on Vietnam and Vietnamese history. The language is sumptuous, steeped in Vietnamese culture and proverbs; the story is rich, the characters authentic. We read a devastating history in language as beautiful as a bird’s song.” —DR. TAHIA ABDEL NASSER, Associate Professor and Chair, English and Comparative Literature, the American University in Cairo

“We are shown a people and culture that until recently has been written off as unworthy of study. Reading *The Mountains Sing*, we can find all that is missing from dry history texts: It is only through good fiction that readers are allowed to explore the very fiber of human experience in the midst of chaos, joy, despair, and hope.” —CHRISTOPHER T. BAKER, M.Ed, MLIS, Adult Services Librarian, New Bern-Craven County (NC) Public Library



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