



EXPEDITIONARY  
LEARNING

# **Grade 8: Module 1: Unit 1: Lesson 13**

## **Comparing Meaning and Tone: The Fall of Saigon in Fiction and Informational Text**



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**Long-Term Targets Addressed (Based on NYSP12 ELA CCLS)**

I can cite text-based evidence that provides the strongest support for my analysis of literary and informational text. (RL.8.1 and RI.8.1)

I can analyze the impact of word choice on meaning and tone. (RL.8.4 and RI.8.4)

I can effectively engage in discussions with diverse partners about eighth-grade topics, texts, and issues. (SL.8.1)

**Supporting Learning Targets**

- I can make inferences to deepen my understanding of *Inside Out & Back Again*.
- I can cite evidence from the poem “Saigon Is Gone” to explain the fall of Saigon and the emotional impact of this news on Ha and the other characters in the novel.
- I can analyze the word choices of two texts about the fall of Saigon and describe how that word choice contributes to the tone and meaning of each text.
- I can participate in discussions about the text with a partner, small group, and whole class.

**Ongoing Assessment**

- QuickWrite 7 (from homework)
- Word Choice, Tone, and Meaning note-catcher

**Agenda**

1. Opening
  - A. Engaging the Reader and Review Learning Targets: “Saigon Is Gone” (8 minutes)
2. Work Time
  - A. Word Choice, Tone, and Meaning: “Saigon Is Gone” (10 minutes)
  - B. Listening to a Read-aloud of the Transcript of “Forgotten Ship” (15 minutes)
  - C. Word Choice, Tone, and Meaning: “Forgotten Ship” (10 minutes)
3. Closing and Assessment
  - A. Debrief (2 minutes)
4. Homework
  - A. Reread and annotate both the poem “Saigon Is Gone” and the transcript from “Forgotten Ship”

**Teaching Notes**

- In this lesson, continue to reinforce the distinction between historical fiction and informational text (see Lesson 6, Opening Part B, plus other teaching notes throughout the unit).
- The opening of this lesson includes reading the last two stanzas of “Saigon Is Gone” aloud, for dramatic effect. Prepare in advance.
- This lesson features a transcript of a radio broadcast titled, “Forgotten Ship: A Daring Rescue as Saigon Fell.” The information is fairly intense and there are multiple speakers. This lesson features the teacher reading aloud the transcript in dramatic fashion. Students are encouraged to follow along in their heads, and they will have the transcript to reread later, as well.
- If students are familiar with a Readers’ Theater, consider assigning parts or have students choose parts to read the transcript aloud either with the whole class or in small groups of six students each.
- Students refer to the transcript during their End of Unit Assessment; be sure students hold on to their texts. Consider allowing English Language Learners to preview the transcript with you before this lesson. This will further support their comprehension when listening to the read-aloud of the transcript during this lesson.
- This lesson is designed as scaffolding toward students’ End of Unit Assessment (in Lesson 13). Therefore, students have some time to work with both texts with support, but are not expected to have “fully analyzed” either text, which they work with further, independently, during the assessment itself.
- Display or distribute the Narrators chart, which lists the narrators of the transcript as a reference for students (see supporting materials).



Lesson Vocabulary	Materials
historical fiction, transcript, critical incident; communists, refugee, humanitarian, elite	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Inside Out &amp; Back Again</i> (book; one per student)</li> <li>• Word Choice, Tone, and Meaning note-catcher (one per student and one to display)</li> <li>• Transcript from “Forgotten Ship: A Daring Rescue as Saigon Fell” (one per student)</li> <li>• Narrators chart (one to display; consider also distributing to students)</li> </ul>

Opening	Meeting Students’ Needs
<p><b>A. Engaging the Reader and Review Learning Targets: “Saigon Is Gone” (8 minutes)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Welcome students and ask them to turn and talk with a partner:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* “What happened to Ha and her family in the reading you did for homework?”</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Give them a minute to talk, then probe,             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* “What specific line in the novel helped you realize that everything had changed?”</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Build up the importance of this pivotal moment in the text. Say, “A pilot lands his helicopter on the ship and shouts...” Then read aloud from page 69:             <p><i>At noon today the Communists crashed their tanks through the gates of the presidential palace and planted on the roof a flag with one huge star.</i></p> <p>Then he adds what no one wants to hear: <i>It’s over; Saigon is gone.</i></p> <p>April 30 Late afternoon”</p></li> <li>• Ask students,             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* “Based on what we read in “The Vietnam Wars” article, why is the news that Saigon is gone something that no one wants to hear?”</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Invite students to turn and talk with a partner. Listen for them to realize that the events described in the poem are told from Ha’s point of view: she lives in South Vietnam. The pilot on the ship was in effect reporting defeat.</li> <li>• Probe,             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* “Was this really new that ‘no one’ wanted to hear?”</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Give students another moment to turn and talk. Cold call a student to share out. Again emphasize the distinction between historical fiction and informational text. Listen for students to connect back to “The Vietnam Wars” article. They now should know that North Vietnamese pro-Communist soldiers marched into Saigon to overtake the South Vietnamese army and unify the two countries.</li> </ul>	



Opening (continued)	Meeting Students' Needs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Challenge them to notice that in the poem “Saigon Is Gone,” the phrase “no one” (as in “no one wants to hear”) refers specifically to Ha, her family, and the other people on the ship: people from South Vietnam who are feeling the conflict. By contrast, the North Vietnamese soldiers WOULD want to hear that “Saigon Is gone”: that was their military objective.</li> <li>• Remind students that this was a real event in history. They read about it in Section 5 of the article “The Vietnam Wars.” Today they will listen to an audio recording of an article describing an event related to the fall of Saigon, and will contrast the fictional and factual accounts of the event.</li> <li>• Have learning targets displayed for students. Read aloud the first learning target:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* “I can cite evidence from the poem ‘Saigon Is Gone’ to explain the fall of Saigon and the emotional impact of this news on Ha and the other characters in the novel.”</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Tell students that they will reread the poem and learn more about this diary entry by listening to a related informational text. Specify that it is an transcript from a radio news piece. They will listen and also follow along with the transcript: a typed-up version of what is being said.</li> </ul> <p>Invite students to turn and talk to a partner about what these learning targets mean for today’s lesson. Ask students to quickly show a thumbs-up if they understand the target, thumbs sideways if they sort of get it, and thumbs down if they are unclear. Answer any clarifying questions.</p>	



Work Time	Meeting Students' Needs
<p><b>A. Word Choice, Tone, and Meaning: “Saigon Is Gone” (10 minutes)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Invite students to gather in the same strategic partnerships as the day before. Ask them to get out their text <b>Inside Out &amp; Back Again</b> and turn to page 67, “Saigon Is Gone.” Distribute the <b>Word Choice, Tone, and Meaning Note-catcher</b>. Students should recognize this from Lesson 12. Tell students that today they will use this note-catcher with both a poem and the transcript.</li> <li>• Ask students to briefly turn and talk with a partner to remind themselves about the purpose of each column of the note-catcher.</li> <li>• Then ask them to follow the same process they did during the previous lesson:</li> <li>• Focus on the “Word Choice/Text Details” column:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* “What are some specific <i>images, words, and phrases</i> the author uses that strike you emotionally and give you a feeling of the events described in the text?”</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Ask students to independently think about this question, reread the poem with the question in mind, and write their response using details from the text.</li> <li>• Then, ask students to share their thinking with their partners and add notes based on what their partner said. Listen for students to notice text such as “whispers among adults,” “escape,” “dropping all the bombs,” “helicopter circling,” “people run and scream,” “do not be frightened,” “helicopter plunged,” “the pilot ... wet and shaking,” “Communists crashed their tanks,” and “It’s over; Saigon is gone.”</li> <li>• Ask one or two partnership groups to share words or phrases they selected, but keep this brief.</li> <li>• Move students on to the center column: “Labeling the Feeling.”</li> <li>• Invite them to, once again, think and write independently, then share with their partners and add to their notes.</li> <li>• Now focus them on the right column: “Tone.” Give students time to think, talk, and write.</li> <li>• Do a quick go round, asking one person from each group to share his/her best word to describe the tone. Listen for descriptors such as “tense,” “upsetting,” “fearful,” “uncertain,” “anxious,” and “worried.”</li> <li>• Tell them that they will return to the “Meaning” column at the end of the lesson.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consider partnering ELL students who speak the same home language when discussion of complex content is required. This can allow students to have more meaningful discussions and clarify points in their native language.</li> <li>• To further support students in identifying the tone, consider providing a word bank of emotion words that could be used to describe literary tone (cynical, hopeful, nostalgic, indignant, frantic, reserved, sarcastic, somber, sentimental, etc.). It could be helpful to organize these words conceptually, to help students understand less familiar academic vocabulary. For example, group words that denote a positive tone or negative tone together. This will also push to expand students’ vocabulary beyond typical words used to describe tone (i.e., happy, sad, mad, excited).</li> </ul>



Work Time	Meeting Students' Needs
<p><b>B. Listening to a Read-aloud of the Transcript of “Forgotten Ship” (15 minutes)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Frame the connection between the poem to the upcoming transcript by asking the following question:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* “What does the fact that Saigon is ‘gone’ mean for the people on board the ship?”</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Probe with the following questions as necessary: “What has happened to Ha’s home?” “Can Ha and her family return to life as usual?”</li> <li>• Cold call upon students to respond. Listen for students to recognize that the people on board the ship are trapped because their enemy, the North Vietnamese Communists, have overtaken their home. Ha and her family cannot return home or live life as usual.</li> <li>• Tell students that the people on board the ship, and many other South Vietnamese people, have now become <i>refugees</i>. A refugee is someone who has been forced to leave his or her country in order to escape war, persecution, or natural disaster. Ha and her family are refugees; this means they no longer have a home. Students will learn much more about refugees’ experiences throughout the module.</li> <li>• Remind the class that this novel is historical fiction: events are described from Ha’s perspective. She tells of how her family in South Vietnam escaped the Communist takeover of Saigon. Other South Vietnamese people took different escape routes. The transcript will provide additional information about other families’ daring story.</li> <li>• Refer students once again to the Word Choice, Tone, and Meaning note-catcher. Direct them to the bottom half. Tell them that now they will listen to a read-aloud of a radio transcript titled “Forgotten Ship: A Daring Rescue as Saigon Fell.” While they are listening, they should follow along on the <b>transcript from “Forgotten Ship: A Daring Rescue as Saigon Fell.”</b> (They will have time to reread and begin to complete their note-catcher later.)</li> <li>• Reveal the <b>Narrators chart</b> and explain to students that there are several narrators who tell the story, and that you have written their names and roles down on the chart to help them keep track. Give students about a minute to read over the names and roles on the Narrators chart.</li> <li>• Tell students that they will listen to a part of the transcript, then you will pause the reading for them to comment, clarify, and for them to take notes about striking descriptions and images. You will then start the reading aloud while students listen to another part and take notes, and so on.</li> <li>• Begin reading aloud: <b>“Forgotten Ship” A Daring Rescue as Saigon Fell.</b> Stop at, “The Kirk’s military mission that day was to shoot down any North Vietnamese jets that might try to stop U.S. Marine helicopters, as they evacuated people from Saigon. The North Vietnamese planes never came. But the Kirk’s mission was about to change, and suddenly.”</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consider allowing ELL students to preview the transcript with you before this lesson. This will further support their comprehension when listening during this lesson</li> <li>• Some students may benefit from using a ruler or piece of paper to underline the lines in the transcript as they listen to the audio clip.</li> </ul>



Work Time	Meeting Students' Needs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Explain to students that this ship had a military mission that changed to a <i>humanitarian</i> mission. Ask students,               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* “What do you think <i>humanitarian</i> means?” (Students should understand that the word means to help other humans, to look out for others’ welfare.)</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Before beginning the next section, tell students that they are going to hear about a helicopter called a <i>Huey</i>, and that these are South Vietnamese helicopters escaping from the North Vietnamese Communists.</li> <li>• Begin reading aloud again and stop at, “The first two helicopters landed safely, but then there was no more room.”</li> <li>• Take a moment to let the events of what the students just listened to sink in. Ask students to turn and talk about the gist of what is happening. Be sure students understand that these helicopter pilots and people on board have taken a huge, desperate risk in order to escape. They literally flew out to sea never to return. They would either be shot down, crash, or be rescued by the U.S. Navy.</li> <li>• Begin final read aloud portion, and stop at, “Then there was the helicopter that was too big to land.”</li> <li>• Give students a moment to think and annotate their transcript.</li> <li>• Cold call a few “numbered heads” to share what this transcript was mostly about.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>C. Word Choice, Tone, and Meaning: “Forgotten Ship” (10 minutes)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ask students to return to their Word Choice, Tone, and Meaning note-catcher: this time for the transcript “Forgotten Ship.”</li> <li>• Give students two minutes to silently reflect and write down striking images that were described in this portion of the transcript, and invite students to share their notes with a partner.</li> <li>• Then focus students on the bottom row of the note-catcher:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* “How does the tone of the poem affect the meaning?”</li> <li>* “How does the tone of the transcript affect the meaning?”</li> <li>* “What does each author want you, the reader and listener, to understand?”</li> </ul> </li> <li>• As time permits, guide students to compare and contrast the tone of the two texts:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* “Do you notice similarities between the tone of the transcript and the tone of the poem, ‘Saigon Is Gone’?”</li> <li>* “How is the tone of the two texts different?”</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Many students will benefit from seeing questions posted on the Smartboard or via a document camera, but reveal questions one at a time to keep students focused on the question at hand.</li> </ul>



Closing and Assessment	Meeting Students' Needs
<p><b>A. Debrief (2 minutes)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Preview the homework with students. Tell them that in the next lesson, they will get a chance to show what they know about how to use text details to determine tone. They will be able to use all of their work from today to support their writing. Tell them to be sure to bring their transcript to class: they will need it for the assessment.</li><li>• Review the learning targets for today. Ask students to talk with a partner:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>* “How was your understanding of what Ha’s family went through enhanced by listening to the transcript?”</li></ul></li><li>• Collect students’ note-catchers, because they will need them for the assessment in Lesson 14.</li></ul>	
Homework	Meeting Students' Needs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Prepare for the assessment: Reread and annotate both the poem “Saigon Is Gone” and the transcript from “Forgotten Ship: A Daring Rescue as Saigon Fell.”</li></ul>	





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## Supporting Materials



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Joseph Shapiro: NPR Reporter

Hugh Doyle: Chief Engineer of the USS Kirk

Paul Jacobs: Captain of the USS Kirk

Kent Chipman: Engine Room Operator

Jim Bondgard: Radar Man

Don Cox: Anti-submarine Equipment Officer



Text: Poem, "Saigon Is Gone"		
<b>Word Choice/Text Details</b> What are some specific <b>images, words, and phrases</b> the author uses that strike you emotionally and give you a feeling of the events described in the text?	<b>Labeling the Feeling</b> For each word or phrase, <b>label the emotion</b> or feeling it conveys.	<b>Tone</b> Based on the images, words, and phrases you have selected, describe the tone of the text with one word.

**Meaning:** How do those specific word choices and tone contribute to the meaning?

Transcript of “Forgotten Ship: A Daring Rescue As Saigon Fell,”  
NPR’s All Things Considered, August 31, 2010

MELISSA BLOCK, host: From NPR News, this is ALL THINGS CONSIDERED. I’m Melissa Block.

ROBERT SIEGEL, host: And I’m Robert Siegel. When the Vietnam War ended and Saigon fell in April 1975, Americans got their enduring impression of the event from television...

But there was another evacuation that didn't get news coverage. U.S. Navy ships saved another 20 to 30,000 Vietnamese refugees.

BLOCK: The full scope of this humanitarian rescue has been largely untold, lost in time and in bitterness over the Vietnam War. But correspondent Joseph Shapiro and producer Sandra Bartlett, from NPR's investigative unit, interviewed more than 20 American and Vietnamese eyewitnesses. And they studied hundreds of documents, photographs and other records, including many never made public before. Here's Joseph Shapiro with part one of our report and the story of one small U.S. Navy ship.

JOSEPH SHAPIRO: On the morning of April 29, 1975, the USS Kirk and its crew stood off the coast of South Vietnam in the South China Sea.

*(Soundbite of a 1975 tape)*

*Mr. HUGH DOYLE (Then-Chief Engineer, USS Kirk): I'm sure as you know by this time, Vietnam has surrendered and the mass panic - almost panic-stricken retreat has already taken place.*

SHAPIRO: Sitting on his bunk, the ship's chief engineer, Hugh Doyle, records a cassette tape to send home to his wife, Judy.

*(Soundbite of a 1975 tape)*

*Mr. DOYLE: I really don't know where to start. It's been such an unusual couple of days. Where we fit in was really interesting. You're probably not going to believe half the things I tell you. But believe me, they are all true.*

SHAPIRO: Doyle's cassette tapes, which until now have never been heard publicly, provide one of the best accounts of one of the most extraordinary humanitarian missions in the history of the U.S. Navy.



The Kirk's military mission that day was to shoot down any North Vietnamese jets that might try to stop U.S. Marine helicopters, as they evacuated people from Saigon. The North Vietnamese planes never came. But the Kirk's mission was about to change, and suddenly. Doyle told Judy what he and his crewmates saw when they looked toward South Vietnam, some 12 miles away.

*(Soundbite of a 1975 tape)*

*Mr. DOYLE: We looked up at the horizon, though, and pretty soon all you could see were helicopters. And they came and just was incredible. I don't think I'll ever see anything like it again.*

Mr. PAUL JACOBS (Then-Captain, USS Kirk): It looked like bees flying all over the place. Yeah, trying to find some place to land.

SHAPIRO: Paul Jacobs was captain of the Kirk.

Mr. JACOBS: Every one of those Hueys probably had 15 or 20 on board. But they're all headed east, you know, trying to escape.

SHAPIRO: Kent Chipman, a 21-year-old Texan, worked in the engine room.

Mr. KENT CHIPMAN (Then-Crewman, USS Kirk): What was freaky and it's still - it gives me goose bumps till today, it'd be real quiet and calm and not a sound, and then all of a sudden you could hear the helicopters coming. They just - you can hear the big choop-choop-choo-choop, you know, the Hueys.

SHAPIRO: These were South Vietnamese Huey helicopters. Military pilots had crammed their aircraft with family and friends and flown out to the South China Sea. They were pretty sure that the U.S. Navy 7th Fleet was in that ocean somewhere. Now they were desperately looking for some place to land.

Here's Hugh Doyle speaking today.

Mr. DOYLE: Well, they were flying out to sea. Some of them were very low on fuel and some of them were crashing alongside the larger ships. They would crash in the water, and I don't know how many Vietnamese refugees were lost in all that.

SHAPIRO: But the helicopters flew past the Kirk. They were looking for a larger carrier deck to land. Jim Bondgard(ph), a radar man, was watching all the traffic dotting the radarscope when Captain Jacobs issued orders.



Mr. JIM BONDGARD (Crewman, USS Kirk): The skipper got real excited. He called down to us and said, you need to try to advertise and see if you can get these guys on the radio. Just announcing where our haul number and we have an open flight deck; if you want to come land on us, we can take you aboard, and that kind of thing. You know, just trying to encourage them to come in.

SHAPIRO: There was one problem: It wasn't clear that the pilots could land on a moving ship.

Don Cox was an anti-submarine equipment officer.

Mr. DON COX (Crewman, USS Kirk): Most of the Vietnam pilots had never landed on board a ship before. Almost to a man they were army pilots and they typically landed either at fire zones, they had little clearings in the brush, or at an airport. And the ship looks very, very small and the deck was very crowded.

SHAPIRO: Cox was one of the sailors who, not sure if those pilots would land or crash, stood on the flight deck to direct the helicopters in. The first two helicopters landed safely, but then there was no more room. The Kirk was a destroyer escort. It was built to hunt submarines, not land helicopters. It had a landing deck about the size of a tennis court.

Mr. COX: I believe it was the third aircraft landed and chopped the tail off the second aircraft that had landed. There were still helicopters circling wanting to land. There was no room on our deck, so we just started pushing helicopters overboard. We figured humans were much more important than the hardware.

*(Soundbite of a 1975 tape)*

*Mr. DOYLE: So we couldn't think of what else to do. And these other planes were looking for a place to land. And, you know, we would have lost people in the plane so we threw the airplane over the side. Yeah, really.*

SHAPIRO: As one helicopter landed and the people scrambling off, dozens of sailors ran over to push the aircraft over the side and into the ocean.

But Kent Chipman says it wasn't easy. Vietnamese helicopters were heavy. And because they were designed to land in fields, they had skids instead of wheels.

Mr. CHIPMAN: The flight deck has non-skid on it. I mean, it's like real rough sandpaper. And the Hueys didn't have tires on. They had like skids.



And we had to just work it this way and work it that way, till we got it over to the edge. And then everybody there'd be like 30 people just fighting their way to get over there and try to help, you know.

SHAPIRO: With one final shove, the helicopter would totter over the edge of the ship, with its tail high in the air and then crash to the water below.

*(Soundbite of a 1975 tape)*

*Mr. DOYLE: There were stories, horrible stories that I've heard from these refugees.*

SHAPIRO: One Vietnamese pilot landed with bullet holes in his aircraft. Hugh Doyle saw he was in shock.

*(Soundbite of a 1975 tape)*

*Mr. DOYLE: As he was loading his helicopter, had his family killed. They're standing waiting to get on the helicopter, his family was machine-gunned. He was just sitting in the helicopter. He was the pilot. He stood there and looked at them. They were all laying dead.*

SHAPIRO: The crew of the Kirk fed the refugees and spread out tarps to protect them from the blazing sun.

Mr. DOYLE: We took the people up on to the 02-Level, it be just behind our stack, and we laid mats and all kinds of blankets and stuff out on the deck for their babies. And there were all kinds of - there were infants and children and women, and the women were crying. And, oh, it was a scene I'll never forget.

SHAPIRO: Kent Chipman.

Mr. CHIPMAN: These people were coming out of there with nothing - whatever they had in their pockets or hands. Some of them had suitcases. Some of them had a bag. You know, and you could tell they'd been in a war. They were still wounded. There were people young, old, army guys with the bandages on their head, arms - you could tell they'd been in a fight.

Some of the pilots and their families came from Vietnam's elite, and some of them carried what was left of their wealth in wafers of gold, sometimes sewn into their clothes. The captain locked the gold in his safe.

Then there was the helicopter that was too big to land.

Mr. CHIPMAN: This is when the big Chinook came out. And you could tell the sound of it was different; more robust, deep.

*(Soundbite of a 1975 tape)*

*Mr. DOYLE: This huge helicopter called a Chinook. It's a Boeing. You know, remember them from my mother's house on Berthold Place? So you know those huge helicopters they made down there - those great big ones?*

SHAPIRO: Doyle had grown up in Pennsylvania, near the factory that made those helicopters.

*(Soundbite of a 1975 tape)*

*Mr. DOYLE: They came out and tried to land on the ship. Oh, we almost - the thing almost crashed on board our ship. So we finally got them to realize to wave them off, it was too big. You know, he just could not have landed. Well, he flew around us a couple of times and he was running low on fuel. Picture this: we're steaming along at about five knots and this huge airplane comes in and hovers over the fantail, opened up its rear door and started dropping people out of it. And this is about 15 feet off the fantail.*

There's American sailors back on the fantail catching babies like basketballs.

Mr. CHIPMAN: The helicopter, it wasn't stationary. It'd come in and hover and, you know, trying to get close as they could. And I remember, at least twice, that he went back up - not real high, you know, 60 feet or so - and he'd slowly come back down.

The helicopter was probably eight to 10 foot in the air as - off the deck, as we were catching the people jumping out. Then we kind of scooch out to the door and just kind of drop down, you know, as easily as they could. This - I mean, juts the noise is tremendous. It's the biggest Chinook they make with the four sets wheels. The wind off this thing, it's like being in a hurricane.

SHAPIRO: One mother dropped her baby and her two young children toward the outstretched arms of the sailors below.

Mr. CHIPMAN: I remember the baby coming out. You know, there was no way we were going to let them hit the deck or drop them. We caught them. I was pretty small myself back then - weighed 130 pounds. Even as small as I am, you know, they come flying out and we caught them.

SHAPIRO: These were the Vietnamese army pilots' children. He'd saved the lives of his passengers, but now he was out of fuel and surrounded by



flat, blue ocean. Hugh Doyle saw him fly the huge helicopter about 60 yards from the Kirk. Doyle uses slang and calls it an airplane.

Mr. DOYLE: He took the airplane, hovered it very close to the water, took all his clothes off with the exception of his skivvies, all by himself, no co-pilot, took all his clothes off, threw it out the window. And then he got up on the edge of the window, still holding onto the two sticks that a helicopter has to fly with. He tilted it over on its side, still flying in the air, and dove into the water. The airplane just fell into the water. It hit the water on its right-hand side. The rotors just exploded.

Mr. CHIPMAN: There were small pieces, but there were also pieces, probably 10, 15 foot long, big pieces go flying out - it sounded like a giant train wreck, you know, in slow motion, and it's loud, it's, you know, wind blowing everywhere.

The Chinook ended upside down. He dove out the side of it, the thing flipped upside down, and then it was calm and quiet again like you turned off a light switch.

I'm thinking, man, this guy just died. I said this is crazy. And his little head popped out of the water. I said, he's alive. It was pretty cool.

SHAPIRO: The pilot's name was Ba Nguyen. He and his family were among some 200 refugees rescued from 16 helicopters. On the second day those refugees, more than half were women, children and babies, would be moved to a larger transport ship.

But the heroics of the Kirk would continue. Shortly before midnight, at the end of the second day, the Kirk's captain, Paul Jacobs, got a call.

Mr. PAUL JACOBS: And that's when I got a (knocking sound) on the shoulder from the XO. He says, hey, Seventh Fleet wants to speak to you now. It's urgent.

SHAPIRO: It was the admiral in charge of the entire rescue.

Mr. JACOBS: He says we're going to have to send you back to rescue the Vietnamese navy. We forgot them, and if we don't get them or any part of them, they're all probably going to be killed.

SHAPIRO: The Kirk was being sent back to Vietnam. The South Vietnamese government had fallen; the Communists were in control now. The Kirk would be headed into hostile territory by itself.



Mr. JACOBS: So I said: Am I going to get any support? No. Am I going to get any air cover? No. You're on your own. I said: What's the rules of engagement? He said, there are none.

SHAPIRO: The Kirk set out to save the South Vietnamese Navy, and it ended up rescuing tens of thousands of desperate Vietnamese refugees. We'll tell you that story tomorrow on ALL THINGS CONSIDERED.  
Joseph Shapiro, NPR News.

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