GEOGRAPHY OF VIETNAM

Reading Culture Presentation
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Image: Ha Long Bay, Vietnam
Image Source: Bryant Evans
True or False? Vietnam is part of an area that historically was referred to as “Indochina”.

Answer: True. Indochina is a term that was used to describe mainland SE Asia historically, dating to 1804. Vietnam sits along the eastern edge of this peninsular region.
Where is Vietnam?

- Located in Southeast Asia
- Borders China, Laos, and Cambodia; also bounded by South China Sea (aka East Sea), Gulf of Tonkin, and Gulf of Thailand

- The country possesses an elongated shape and has also been likened to being shaped like the letter “S”
Vietnam’s Size and Population

- Vietnam has an area of 127,881 square miles
- Slightly larger than the U.S. state of New Mexico.
- Vietnam is the 67th largest country in the world in area
- Population (2017): 96.1 million; 15th most populous country in the world
- Close to 40% of Vietnam’s pop. is 24 years old or younger
Roughly ¾ of Vietnam is characterized by high relief.
Possesses over 1,400 miles of coastline.
Low, flat deltas are found in the north and south, highlands in central region; mountainous northwest.
The highest point is Fan Si Pan = 10,312 feet.
The lowest point is along the East Sea = sea level.
• **True/False:** Vietnam is home to the world’s largest cave.

• **Answer:** True

• The Son Doong Cave stretches more than 3 miles in length and reaches heights of up to 650 ft.


Map Source: chopsticksny.com
Vietnam houses the final stretch of the Mekong River and much of its delta in southern Vietnam.

Mekong means “Mother of Water”; also referred to as Cuu Long, which means “9 mouths”.

The Red River passes through northern Vietnam; intensely developed and densely populated.

These two rivers have been described as Vietnam’s two “rice bowls”.

The Perfume River in Hue  
Source: Bryant Evans
Trivia: Cultural

- **True or False?:** Roughly half of Vietnam’s population possesses one of two different surnames.
- **Answer:** True
- Around half of Vietnam’s population has either a last name of Nguyen (39%) or Tran (11%).

Source: atlasobscura.com
As far back as 3000 BC – area that is now Vietnam settled by Viets from central China
111 BC – 939 AD: Vietnam occupied by China
1802 – N, Central, and S Vietnam united by Prince Nguyen Anh
1884 – French colonization
1940 – Japanese occupation
1946-1954: First Indochina War
1954: Geneva Accords; N/S Vietnam
1954-1975: Second Indochina War
1975: Reunified Vietnam (Communist)
1995: Full diplomatic relations restored with U.S.
2007: Became member of WTO

Historical Maps of Vietnam
http://www.zum.de/whkmla/histatlas/seasia/havietnam.html
• **True or False?** The Second Indochina War (1955-1975) was also known as the “Vietnam War” within the U.S. and Vietnam.

• **Answer: False**

While known as the “Vietnam War” in the U.S. (who was engaged in direct combat in Vietnam from 1965-73), in Vietnam this particular chapter of the war is commonly known as the “American War”.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yKhhbmk-akk
Cultural: Impacts of Second Indochina War (1954-75)

- Estimated 3.1 million Vietnamese deaths (2 million civilians; 1.1 million military)
- Over 58,000 American deaths (1.6 million Americans served in combat in Vietnam)
- Vast environmental and health damages due to extensive dropping of Agent Orange and other herbicides
- Economic costs (U.S. spent an est. $168 billion on war efforts)
- Immense psychological costs of the war
- An est. 1.5 million Vietnamese attempted to leave Vietnam in aftermath of war, and an est. 823,000 refugees were accepted to the U.S.
- Officially a Communist state
- 58 provinces and 5 municipalities
- Current constitution was adopted in 1992
- Tran Dai Quang has served as Vietnam’s President since 2016
Ethnicity: 85.7% Viet, but very diverse society with 54 gov’t recognized ethnic groups

Official language: Vietnamese

Religion: Officially atheist state, but it is believed only 30% of pop. doesn’t adhere to a religion

Median Age: 30.5 years old

Life Expectancy at Birth: 73.7 years of age
Vietnam had a rigid, centrally planned, largely agrarian economy after uniting under Communism.

Since mid 1980s, economic strategy has involved blending Communism with market economics.

Direct foreign investment has helped drive economic growth in recent years.

Labor force: 40% ag.; 34% services; 26% industry.
Triva: Cultural

• True or False?: Vietnam is one of the world’s top producers of rice, coffee, and cashew nuts.

• Answer: True

• Vietnam ranks second in the world in each of these products, and is #1 in the world in the production of pepper.

Images from Vietnam

Source of Photos: Bryant Evans
Cảm ơn for your attention!

Questions?