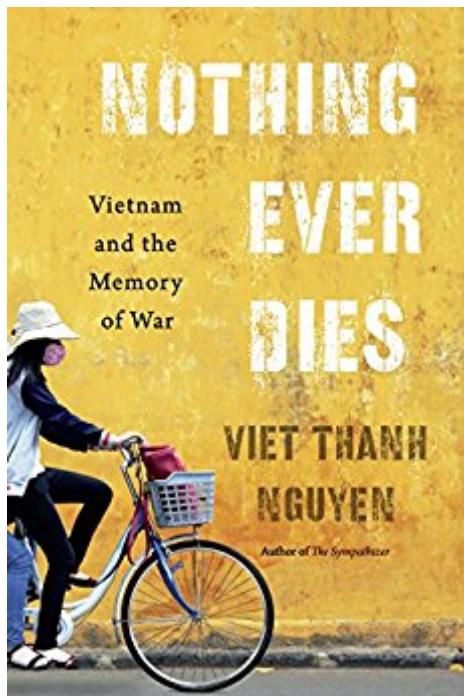


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# Nothing Ever Dies



## **Synopsis**

Nothing Ever Dies, Viet Thanh Nguyen writes. All wars are fought twice, the first time on the battlefield, the second time in memory. From the author of the bestselling novel The Sympathizer comes a searching exploration of a conflict that lives on in the collective memory of both the Americans and the Vietnamese.

## **Book Information**

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## **Customer Reviews**

Nothing Ever Dies, Vietnam and the Memory of War offers many riches. With great erudition and impeccable scholarship, Viet Thanh Nguyen shows us how the traumatic repercussions of war defy simplification, and how facile it is to misremember the dead. Focusing on the American war in Vietnam, and referencing other conflicts (Korea, Cambodia, the Philippines), the author challenges us to extend our understanding and compassion to participants and victims on both sides of the battlefield. By remembering others, we expand and enrich our own stance. Growing up in post-war Europe, I absorbed a good dose of aversion to the Germans and the Russians. Years later, while

Europe was uniting and setting out to reconcile old enemies, I was relieved not to have to blame and point the finger any longer. After moving to Canada, I succumbed to the American version of the war in Vietnam by watching the movies (Apocalypse Now, The Deer Hunter, etc.) and reading the literary war accounts (Tim O'Brien's The Things They Carried, Michael Herr's Dispatches, and others). I admired their artistry but seldom questioned the American one-sidedness. Reading Nothing Ever Dies, meant revisiting the shameful conflict within an expanded Vietnamese-American context to great personal enrichment. Particularly superb are the chapters showing how the "industries of memory" (books, TV, movies) constrain our ethical vision by practicing political partisanship and exclusion. Viet Thanh Nguyen's analytical depth and boundless intellect are here on full display. A biography of 22 pages of "Works Cited" attests to his curiosity and rigour. The book is compelling not least because the author weaves the painful, valiant, and ultimately fortunate trajectory of his family (from a hardscrabble village in northern Vietnam, via refugee camps, to prosperous California) into the broader framework of his inquiry. Nothing Ever Dies challenges us to cultivate a more compassionate sensibility and to recognize that each one of us is capable of being human and also inhuman. An engaging and empowering read.

The book arrived in the mail promptly and in good condition; no complaints there. Reading this book left me discontented and yet I plan to read through it again, more slowly. I am a Vietnam veteran who hopes to apply some meaning and coherence to what I remember. This book, on first read, anyway, did not really help with that, although I do feel rewarded with several meaningful insights, of which perhaps the most significant is that, although The United States' involvement in Indochina amounted to a huge murderous blunder, everything that happened was not just about the Americans. Nothing Ever Dies would be more helpful to someone who has read more than I have, since it is full of references to other books. I intend to read some of them and to reread this book. But I think Viet Thanh Nguyen would have done better direct less energy to quoting other writers and more to expressing his own memories, perceptions, and emotions. It even seems to me that he may have been using his formidable powers of analysis and wide range of literary knowledge to avoid confronting the perceptions and emotions that were the most personal and intense for him. This may be an unfair criticism. I intend to reread the book, it definitely deserves this, to take more time with the books he cites, and then to see what I think.

Wars are fought twice over -- once on the battlefield and once in our memory -- and that is the

subject of Viet Thanh Nguyen's profound and challenging but hugely readable new book. In the end, Nothing Ever Dies is a powerful meditation. It is a book to be read in small sips and not big gulps. It is worthwhile alone for revealing the intellectual roots of Nguyen's The Sympathizer, but even more so for confirming in compelling and passionate terms how we choose to remember and how we choose to forget, most notably that America is indeed fighting a forever War.

Superbly written and argued

Good subject; tough read but worthwhile.

THOUGHTFUL. INCISIVE. A MUST READ ABOUT WAR AND ITS AFTER EFFECTS, INVENTIONS AND DELUSIONS.....Lotte Marcus.

Excellent book.

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