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English Comp. I
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Summary of “Letter to My
Mother”
Letters and Interviews

In an emotional letter, Tran Thi Nga writes to her mother, whom she misses very much, in Vietnam. From her letter, we find out that her mother refused to come to America, sacrificing herself for the sake of her family.

At the moment when she writes the letter, Nga has been in the United States for more than three years. She left Vietnam to escape an unfortunate situation—which was not very clearly explained in the letter. From the letter, we also find out that Nga is unsure if her mother will receive the letter, or the presents she and her family sent to her mother. She is also worried about her mother’s health and the conditions in which she’s living in Vietnam. In the letter, we sense the love and respect that Nga has for her mother, and we are touched.

In the new country, America, Nga and her family feel fortunate to have a nice home—even if by western standards it is only a very small house. They also have a small garden, and Nga spends long hours working in it—maybe because it reminds her of her home in Vietnam.

Nga’s son speaks English very well; but she wants him to speak Vietnamese too, so he will not forget his language of origin. Therefore, at home, they speak Vietnamese. They also

keep their traditions and religion from Vietnam and even have an altar for their Father, Buddha.

Nga misses her mother very much. She and her family don't know for sure when they will return to Vietnam. However, they look forward to the day when they will be able to visit their homeland. Although, materially, they are doing very well in America, spiritually, they feel deprived; therefore, they miss Vietnam and their family even more.

Her letter ends with a metaphorical meaning: "We want to swim in our own pond. Clear or stinky, still it is ours." They remain faithful to their origin, because it is a big part of what and who they are today. By denying that part of their lives, they would deny themselves their heritage.

Works Cited

Nga, Tran Thi. "Letter to My Mother." *Connections: A Multicultural Reader for Writers*. Editor Judith A. Stanford. California: Mayfield, 1997. 121-122.