

## An Unforgettable Girl

<p>The main character in Maijue Xiong's autobiographical short story, "An Unforgettable Journey," is Maijue, herself.</p> <p>The story begins around 1975 in Maijue's village in Laos.</p> <p>Because Maijue's father had helped the Americans and the CIA during the Vietnam War, after the Communist forces win, Maijue's family must flee for their lives. During the story, Maijue describes the difficult, three year journey she is forced to take with her family and the hardships and tragedy they had to endure in order find a better life in the United States.</p> <p>In the beginning of the story, Maijue is a timid and scared little girl, but by the end of the story, she has learned to adjust to a new life in America, and has become a confident and determined young woman.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Draw an arrow to the following story elements:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• author</li><li>• genre</li><li>• title</li><li>• character's name</li><li>• story setting</li></ul></li><li>2. Draw a box around the story conflict.</li><li>3. Put a squiggly line under the story summary.</li><li>4. Underline the thesis statement.</li><li>5. According to the thesis statement, what is Maijue like at the beginning of the story?</li><li>6. What does she learn during the course of the story?</li><li>7. What is she like at the end?</li></ol>
<p>When the story starts, Maijue is a young girl who is often insecure and frightened. In fact, when she left home, Maijue was only three years old; consequently, her memories of the journey are a bit hazy. She talks about walking over the rugged mountains, always fearful of being found by the Communists and seeing children drugged with opium to keep them quiet. In addition, she recalls a time when she was too scared to cross over a trail of ants and had to have her father carry her. One time, Maijue recalls, as they were traveling by boat over a swiftly moving river, she screamed out in terror, "We're going to fall out!" (273). Fortunately, she didn't, and Maijue and her family were able to find shelter in Thailand in a bus station that had been turned into a refugee camp. It's not hard to understand why a little girl like Maijue would be fearful and anxious after being forced from her home and made to endure such a difficult passage.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>8. Underline the topic sentence for this paragraph.</li><li>9. What is this paragraph trying to show about the character?</li><li>10. What are two examples of Maijue being "insecure and frightened" in this paragraph?<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>a.</li><li>b.</li></ol></li></ol>

<p>One significant event for Maijue was when her family was staying at a bus station that had been converted to a large refugee center in Bangkok. Maijue described the place as being “depressing and nerve-racking” (274), and there was very little food. Maijue recalls how a small child came to her family and begged for something to eat. The girl said that both her parents were dead and that she was all alone. Although at first Maijue’s father gave the girl a piece of bread, when she came around a second time, he had to refuse. This incident made Maijue very sad, and it obviously was a memory that stayed with her long after it occurred. Maijue probably worried that she could end up like that little girl as well. Over time, she came to realize how lucky she was to have two parents to look after and care for her. Maijue’s gratitude is expressed later in the story when she says about her parents, “I know in my heart that they care about me and want me to be successful so that I can help them when they can no longer help themselves” (275).</p>	<p>11. Underline the topic sentence.</p> <p>12. What is the purpose of this paragraph?</p> <p>13. What are the numbers 274 and 275 referring to?</p> <p>14. Draw a box around the part of the paragraph where it explains the effect the incident with the orphan girl has on Maijue.</p> <p>15. What does Maijue learn, realize, or understand from this experience?</p>
<p>When Maijue ends her story, we learn that she has changed from a small frightened girl to a young woman who has become educated and confident. After her family finally arrives in the United States, she must make many changes and get used to an entirely new way of life. She struggles with school and things we take for granted such as seeing a blond-haired person for the first time and learning how to hold a crayon. In addition, she has to do all her school work without any help from her parents. However, Maijue’s strength and determination to pursue an education help her to adapt and find success in her new country. In fact, she becomes the first person in her family to go to college. Through her story, the author helps us see that even though we may lose family members and face extremely harsh conditions in our lives, we have the ability to rise above those hardships and make our lives better if we work hard and persevere.</p>	<p>16. Draw a squiggly line underneath the summary statement.</p> <p>17. What is Maijue like at the end of the story?</p> <p>18. Draw a box around the discussion of the theme of the story.</p> <p>19. According to the essay, what is the story’s theme?</p>