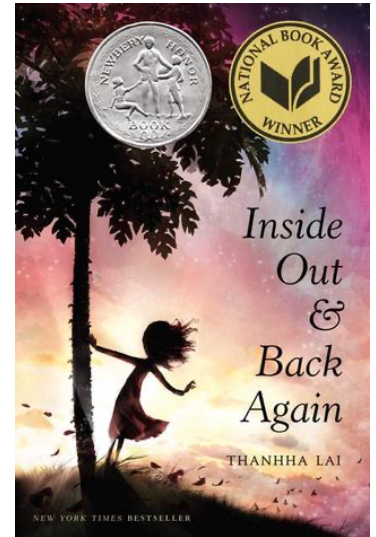


# ***Inside Out & Back Again***

Written by Thanhha Lai

This is an autobiographical story of 10-year-old Hà, who lives in Saigon for her entire life until one day when her family is forced to flee Vietnam. Hà, her mother, and her three brothers board a ship in an effort to escape the Vietnam War. Ultimately, they end up in Alabama, in the United States. There, she discovers a new world that is not always friendly toward her family. Through her experiences learning English, being bullied at school, and trying to find out what happened to her father, Hà discovers her own inner strength and the strength of



## **Possible Strategies for Instruction**

### ***Comprehension***

- **Use prior knowledge to predict and connect with text.**
  - This story takes place before and during the Vietnam War. Before reading, students should have researched and read about the Vietnam War and what happened to many refugees during that time. Making connections to their understanding of the history of the Vietnam War can help students understand what is happening in the text, as many events are implied but not directly stated. Furthermore, making connections to modern-day conflicts and refugees will make their understanding of the experiences Hà and her family go through in the text more meaningful.
    - “How does your knowledge of the Vietnam War match what happens in the text?”
    - “Are the events in the text similar to any real-world events you have heard or read about?”
- **Use text features to learn important information.**
  - The text is written as a series of free-verse poems across many short chapters. Each chapter is half a page to three pages long and has a title that suggests a theme of the significance of the event described in that section. The titles are important, because they often add to the reader’s understanding of Hà’s experiences or her feelings about her experiences. Students can use the chapter titles to predict what will happen before reading. Students can also use them to reflect on the significance of each event to Hà, and on what they know about Hà as a result of the chapter.
    - “Based on the title, what do you predict this chapter will be about? Why do you think so?”
    - “Now that you have read the chapter, why do you think the author chose to give it that title?”
    - “What new information do you know about Hà as a result of the title of this chapter?”

### ***Accuracy***

- **Skip the word, then come back.**
  - The text includes occasional words in Vietnamese, which most students will not understand. For example, in chapter 1 (“1975: Year of the Cat”), the first line refers to Tết, followed by a description of how Hà and her family celebrate it. Students may not know what Tết is, but if they read on and come back to the word at the end of the page or chapter, they can use context clues to infer that it is a New Year holiday celebrated in Vietnam.

## **Fluency**

- **Use punctuation to enhance phrasing and prosody.**
  - The text is written in the form of free-verse poetry. Most lines are quite short, and there are intentional line breaks. Some lines include punctuation, but others do not. Poetry is written with the sound of lines in mind, and students would benefit from focusing on how the author intended each line to sound by keeping in mind the grouping of words and where the reader should pause (e.g., how many words are in one line and where line breaks occur). Students would also benefit from paying attention to end punctuation and using their intonation to match what is written (e.g., rising or falling intonation at the end of lines). These will help students better understand the effect the author wanted to create when reading aloud, and it may also help students reflect on how poetry and prose differ when read aloud.
- **Adjust and apply different reading rates to match text.**
  - Because the text is a series of free-verse poems, the length of lines is an important indicator of how quickly or slowly the author wants the reader to read, and where pauses should occur. Furthermore, the spacing between stanzas is sometimes quite long (e.g., there are multiple blank lines before a stanza), which suggests that there should be a longer pause. Students should pay attention to the length of lines and the spacing between stanzas and adjust their reading rate accordingly, with the intent of reading the text as the author intended for it to be read.

## **Expand Vocabulary**

- **Apply understanding of figurative language.**
  - There is a great deal of figurative language used in the text. For example, in the chapter titled “Papaya Tree,” Hà describes the origin of her prized possession, a papaya tree, saying, “It grew from a seed I flicked into the back garden. A seed like a fish eye, slippery shiny black.” This is a simile, which the author uses to create a vivid image in the reader’s mind of what the papaya seed looked like. By focusing on figurative language in the text, students will be able to understand the structure and function of poetic devices such as alliteration, similes, metaphors, and personification. They will be able to recognize and comprehend figurative language that they encounter, helping them read beyond the literal meaning in texts, and ultimately those devices can be added to their vocabularies and used in their own writing.

***This text can be used with nearly any strategy on the CAFE Menu. The above strategies are a highlighted collection to use as a springboard for further instruction.***