



## Reading Group Guide:

### INSIDE OUT AND BACK AGAIN

by Thanhha Lai

Reading Levels: GRL: W LEX: 800L DRA: 60

#### PRE-READING ACTIVITY

**Activate Prior Knowledge** Have students respond to the following prompts: What do you know about the Vietnam War? What questions do you have? Record students' responses in the first two columns of a K-W-L (Know, Want to Know, Learned) chart. Then, show students a slideshow of photographs from the era and provide background information about the war. (If students are mature enough to view them, consider showing them some of the images described in the poem "War and Peace" in *Inside Out and Back Again*.) Return to the chart after the discussion to complete the third column. (SL.4.1c, SL.5.1c, SL.6.1c)

#### QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION OR WRITTEN RESPONSE

- Compare and contrast Hà's home in Vietnam with her new environment in America. Use a Venn diagram to organize your ideas. Then, write a summary of your analysis, including specific details from the text in your answer. (RL.5.3, RL.6.2)
- Describe Brother Quang. What do his words and actions show about him? How does he feel about his family's decision to leave Vietnam? Support your answer with accurate quotations from the text. (RL.4.3)
- Explain what happens in the poem "Most Relieved Day." What can the reader infer about Steven and Pam? How does this poem mark a turning point in the book? (RL.4.1, RL.5.1, RL.6.1)
- List the many challenges Hà and her family face in Alabama. How do they respond to these challenges? What messages does the book convey about the refugee experience? (RL.5.2, RL.6.3)
- Explain how Hà adapts to her surroundings over the course of the book. At what point do things begin to get better for her? Describe the specific episodes that lead to positive changes in her life. (RL.6.3)

#### OTHER ACTIVITIES TO TRY

**Explore Structural Elements of Poetry** Ask students to examine the structure of *Inside Out and Back Again* (Is the book a novel, a collection of poetry, or both? How can you tell? What helps you recognize a poem?) Teach or review the terms *stanza* and *line*, pointing out these structural elements in the poem "Wishes." Then, have students write poems about their own dreams and desires modeled after "Wishes." Students can structure their poems in four stanzas, the first three beginning with the line "I wish." (RL.4.5)

**Write Profiles** In her Author’s Note, Tahnha Lai says she hopes the book inspires readers to “sit close to someone you love and implore that person to tell and tell and tell their story.” Ask each student to have a conversation with a relative using the questions below as a guide. Then, ask students to write about their conversations in narrative form, incorporating dialogue and descriptive details whenever possible. (W.4.3, W.5.3, W.6.3)

- How were things different when you were a child? Be as specific as possible.
- What were the biggest challenges your family faced when you were growing up?
- What did you fear most when you were a kid?
- What did you look forward to most when you were a kid?

**Teach Similes** Review the term simile and have students analyze the quotations from the book below. What does each simile describe? What feelings and ideas do the similes convey? To extend the activity, have students write similes about images and sensations in their own lives. (RL.5.4, RL.6.4)

- “the piles of bodies / that keep crawling on / like raging ants / from a disrupted nest.”
- “the morning air glides cool / like a constant washcloth / against my face.”
- “Eggs explode / like smears of snot / on our front door.”
- “Bathroom paper hangs / like ghosts / from our willow.”

**BUILD VOCABULARY**

**Preview Challenging Words** Have students work individually or in groups to determine the meanings of new words and identify synonyms. (RL.4.4, L.4.4, RL.5.4, L.5.4, RL.6.4, L.6.4)

gaunt	conviction	monsoon	tangible	diacritical
tolerable	persuade	disrupted	remnant	illogical
justify	migration	obvious	giddy	solitude
flaunts	chiding	idle	contorted	superstitious

**SITES TO VISIT**

**Find a Unit Plan** on using poetry to explore change and belonging at <http://tinyurl.com/69ptflm>

**Write Poetry** with a “Writing With Writers” interactive at <http://tinyurl.com/4ymcx>

**Explore the Immigrant Experience** with an interactive activity at <http://tinyurl.com/b2jnj>

**NOTE:** Questions are keyed to the Common Core Standards [www.corestandards.org](http://www.corestandards.org)

- RL: Reading Standards for Literature
- SL: Speaking and Listening Standards
- L: Language Standards
- W: Writing Standards