

Ha: The Journey of a Vietnamese Refugee

In the novel *Inside Out & Back Again* by Thanhha Lai, a young girl named Ha is forced to flee her home in South Vietnam to Alabama as it is taken over by communists in war. Ha's life in Alabama is filled with hardships and the struggle of fitting into American culture. The novel illustrates the challenges and hardships of being a refugee by showing the difficulty of having to leave a native home, the journey of travelling to a new country, and adapting to a new lifestyle.

Afraid of their future if they stay in Vietnam, Ha's family makes the decision to leave. Ha and her family leave Vietnam because the situation in Saigon is becoming extremely violent, and they can hear the bombings getting closer. In "Should We," Ha's mother talks about how the communists will eventually control their entire family, such as forcing Brother Quang to leave college, brainwashing Ha into believing communist propaganda, and sacrificing their household privacy. "Early Monsoon" depicts the upcoming violence by describing, "In the distance bombs explode like thunder, slashes lighten the sky, gunfire falls like rain...not that far away after all." Violence is coming closer and Ha's family won't be able to avoid it. The decision to leave is difficult as it is for many refugees, but in the end, it is for the sake of Ha's family's safety and future.

During Ha and her family's journey to Alabama they face fear of being caught by the communists, starvation, and homesickness. In the passage, "One Engine," Ha claims "If the Communists catch us fleeing, it's a million times worse than staying at home." Ha's family and the others on the ship travel in fear of being caught by the communists, because if caught, they will be considered traitors to the country, which has consequences worse than Ha can imagine.

The refugees on the ship each get we each get “one clump of rice, small, medium, large, according to our height” (Rations). Resources on the ship are becoming scarce, making the journey even more difficult. In the midst of starvation, Ha begins to miss “Pouches of pan-fried shredded coconut Tamarind paste on banana leaf Steamed corn on the cob” (Routine). The foods that she misses symbolize her longing for the safe home she once knew. Despite the challenges the refugees face on the long, never ending journey, they persevere through and finally arrive in Alabama, greeted by crates of food.

Ha and her family settle in Alabama, where Ha faces alienation by her neighbors, bullying from her classmates, and difficulty adjusting to American culture. In the poem, “Neighbors,” Ha’s neighbors do horrid things to Ha and her family, watching as “Eggs explode like smears of snot on our front door.” Ha’s neighbors continuously disrespect and treat Ha’s family differently, making Ha’s family feel as if they don’t belong. Ha’s school is filled with bullies that say hurtful and racist things to Ha that she doesn’t understand. However, once Ha begins to understand English, she regrets being able to hear them ask “if I eat dog meat, barking and chewing and falling down laughing” or “if I lived in the jungle with tigers” (More is Not Better). Even after Ha learns English, she is still not able to fit in with others at her school. In “New Word a Day,” Ha says “A, an, and the do not exist in Vietnamese and we understand each other just fine.” Differences between Vietnamese and English make it harder for Ha to fit in because she can’t communicate as easily. While in Alabama, Ha faces many challenges and hardships that her and her family have to endure and eventually overcome.

By the end of the novel, Ha has grown as a person by learning not only the English language, but also how to stick up for herself. She finally retaliates against the bully that made her adjustment so difficult. Ha matures from a child in Vietnam who longs for her father to

return, to an individual who is able to accept the possibility that he may be gone. Through her strength as a refugee, Ha is able to start over and find a new home in Alabama.

Essay Rubric

Category Description and Goals	Possible Points	Student Assessment	Actual Points Earned
Content and Analysis – The essay conveys ideas and information clearly and accurately in order to support an insightful analysis of the text, addressing all parts of the task.	4 – 30 3 – 27 2 – 24 1 – 21	3	30
Command of Evidence – The essay is developed with relevant, well-chosen evidence and examples from the text. The evidence is varied and clearly supports your claims. Evidence is provided with context and explained thoroughly.	4 – 30 3 – 27 2 – 24 1 – 21	4	30
Style and Organization – There are topic sentences. The essay logically organizes ideas and uses appropriate transitions. The essay uses a formal language with sophisticated language and an engaging style of writing.	4 – 20 3 – 18 2 – 16 1 – 14	4	20
Control of Conventions – There are no spelling or capitalization errors. Punctuation is used correctly. Paragraphs are indented.	4 – 10 3 – 9 2 – 8 1 – 7	4	9
Publishing – The final piece is in size-12, Times New Roman font, has a cover, title, and is double-spaced. The student assessment and reflections are complete.	4 – 10 3 – 9 2 – 8 1 – 7	4	10
Total:			99

Student Reflection	Teacher Comments
I am most proud of...finishing my essay with all supporting elements.	Glow: Your essay analyzes important themes and poems from the novel. Your writing is clear, strong, and sophisticated.
I struggled with...finding the motivation to finish the essay and finding the best supporting evidence.	Grow: Typos, proofreading for clarity, but well done!

Inside Out & Back Again Literary Analysis

The refugee experience is universal. Citizens that are compelled to leave their country because of persecution, war, natural disasters, or any form of danger become refugees. The novel *Inside Out and Back Again* by Thanhha Lai reveals the story of a Vietnamese family during the Vietnam War. The story, narrated by Ha, illustrates the challenges her family faces when they become refugees and journey to their new life in America. Ha and her family's experience of fleeing Vietnam depicts the circumstances in which international refugees face.

The "war is coming closer" to Ha's home. As each day goes by, staying in Vietnam is becoming more and more dangerous. Ha and her family fear for their safety as chaos breaks their once lively neighborhood. The poem "Current News" states, "But when we keep talking about how close the Communists have gotten to Saigon, how much prices have gone up since American soldiers left, how many distant bombs were heard the previous night..."(39). This excerpt represents the threat of the war to the safety of Ha and her family. The communist troops are approaching Saigon, and an increasing number of soldiers are patrolling Ha's neighborhood. The price of food increased drastically, and now Ha even needs to save half a bite of sweet potato. Mother is heartbroken that her child needs to face the hardships of poverty at such a young age. However, making the decision to escape South Vietnam is complicated. Ha and her family acknowledge that they would make sacrifices to pursue this journey. The poem "Should We" states, "Brother Khôi says, What if Father comes home and finds his family gone?" (75). This quote shows that the family is contemplating whether or not to leave because they might never see Father again if he returns home. Their hope of having a complete and happy family would be impossible to recognize if they leave South Vietnam. Likewise, many refugees decide

to flee their home country because of wars and natural disasters, which place them in danger. And when they do flee, they leave behind what is precious to them, such as fond memories or careers.

Ha's family face many hardships throughout their journey to the U.S. The living conditions of the abandoned navy ship were unbearable and unhygienic. The ship lacked basic necessities of life, such as water and food. To illustrate, in the poem "S-L-O-W-L-Y," Ha resorts to snacking on moldy rice that she brought from home because she was malnourished. Furthermore, Ha's family and many refugees are crammed on the ship, leaving less than one foot in proximity between each person. Like many refugees, Ha's family is willing to suffer through any circumstance in order to get to safety. Ha and Brother Khôi are also struggling to leave the past behind. The poem "Last Respects" states, "Brother Khôi nods and I smile, but I regret not having my doll as soon as the white bundle sinks into the sea" (133). The white bundle, which was thrown into the sea, contained Ha's doll and Brother Khôi's dead chick. In the novel, the doll symbolizes Ha's scars from her childhood. Therefore, when Ha threw the doll overboard, it depicts her will to move on with life and abandon the past. However, the phrase "but I regret not having my doll as soon as the white bundle sinks into the sea" illustrates that it is difficult for Ha to accept the fact that she needs to move on to an alienated world.

Ha and her family are struggling to enter the American society. When Ha settled in Alabama, her family faced prejudice because of their unique background. For instance, in the poem "Neighbors," nearby-residents vandalized Ha's home by egging her house, toilet papering the trees, and shattering the window with a brick, attached with a spiteful note. These neighbors are showing prejudice because of Ha and her family's presence. In addition to what Ha experiences at home, she is extensively bullied at school. The poem "Pancake Face" states, "By

the end of school he yells an answer: She should be a pancake. She has a pancake face...Tears gush because I can't make myself explain a pancake is very very flat" (290). In this excerpt, the children tease Ha because she is Asian and has a different appearance. Mother and her children adapt to this culture in the hopes of being more accepted by the community. The poem "HA LE LU DA" describes Ha's experience of being baptized Christian. The poem "HA LE LU DA" states, "We must get dressed and line up onstage next to the plump man, our cowboy, and his smiling wife. Her lips curl up even more as people line up to kiss our cheeks" (257). After their conversion to Christianity, the neighbors became more welcoming and friendly. Although they seem to be Christian, they revert to their true religion once they return home. Similarly, many refugees cannot be "outsiders" they need to fit and indulge themselves into the new society by covering their "blemishes."

Refugees suffer through many obstacles and challenges when trying to flee their country. However, through every challenging experience, a lesson is learned. The same applies for Ha; Ha has matured into a more wise and self-aware person. In particular, Ha confessed to her mother, "I used to like making the girl who shared my desk cry." After the harassment that He received at school, she began to realize her wrong-doings against her classmate because now Ha empathizes with the feeling of being weak. Ha learns how to struggle through hardships and the importance of family. Ultimately, the challenges that Ha and her family face transformed them into a better version of themselves.

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Command of Evidence – The essay is developed with relevant, well-chosen evidence and examples from the text. The evidence is varied and clearly supports your claims. Evidence is provided with context and explained thoroughly.	4 – 30 3 – 27 2 – 24 1 – 21	30	30
Style and Organization – There are topic sentences. The essay logically organizes ideas and uses appropriate transitions. The essay uses a formal language with sophisticated language and an engaging style of writing.	4 – 20 3 – 18 2 – 16 1 – 14	29	18
Control of Conventions – There are no spelling or capitalization errors. Punctuation is used correctly. Paragraphs are indented.	4 – 10 3 – 9 2 – 8 1 – 7	9	10
Publishing – The final piece is in size-12, Times New Roman font, has a cover, title, and is double-spaced. The student assessment and reflections are complete.	4 – 10 3 – 9 2 – 8 1 – 7	10	10
Total:		96	98

Student Reflection	Teacher Comments
I am most proud of... my introduction because I feel like it properly introduces the rest of the essay.	Glow: Excellent analysis, supported by evidence, and written in an engaging style.
I struggled with... writing the conclusion because I could not choose which specific change in Ha I should display. I also struggled with finding the correct vocabulary to use when writing.	Grow: Proofreading for concision, being more clear and varying sentence structure.

Inside Out & Back Again The Obstacles Ha faced

The novel *Inside Out and Back Again* by Thanhha Lai features the struggles Ha and her family had to go through. It shows their journey of escaping war while being in constant fear. Moving from Saigon to Alabama where Ha knows no one and constantly gets bullied and harassed, she struggles with adapting to life in Alabama. Ha's father is also missing in action. The novel illustrates the challenges and hardships of being a refugee by showing how people struggled to adapt and survive war.

Ha and her family left Vietnam because of war and terror, they also left in hopes of finding a father. Like other refugees, Ha's family knows the risk of leaving Vietnam, and the chances of father returning home. According to the passage "Saigon is Gone" it states "I listen to the swish, swish of Mother's handheld fan, the whispers among adults, the bombs in the ever greater distance." (107). They leave because it is simply too dangerous to stay. Additionally, they are weighing the odds of father coming home, in the poem *Should We Brother Khoi* states "What if Father comes home and finds his family gone?" (75). They leave in hopes of seeing Father along their journey, but the risk is if Father does come back home, they won't be there.

As Ha's family migrated to the United States, there were many barriers in their way. They face hunger, bad sanitation, crowded ships, and deciding what to bring and leave behind. They had to go through many tent cities and constant fear of bombs or communists finding out that

they had escaped. It states in the poem “Early Monsoon,” “In the distance bombs explode like thunder, slashes lighten the sky, gunfire falls like rain, distant yet within ears, within eyes, not that far away after all.” (81). The phrases “thunder and slashes lighten the sky” show how loud and close they were to the bombs. The poem “In the Dark” it states “It has been said the ship next door has a better engine, more water, endless fuel, countless salty eggs.” (104). This shows the limited and rationed supply of items.

Ha faces many challenges while attempting to adapt to life in Alabama. Some of the challenges Ha face include bullying, language barriers, discrimination and injustice. In the passage “Third Rule” it states “Why no s for two deer, but an s for two monkeys? Brother Quang says no one knows. So much for rules! Whoever invented English should be bitten by a snake.” (195). Ha complains at the fact that there are so many rules in English. Another detail to show how Ha reacted to bullying is “My heart is lifting, I run and shout, Bully! Coward! Pink Snot Face!” She defended herself at times, but sometimes all she could do was simply run away.

From beginning to end, a major change I see in Ha is her maturity. At the beginning, she was clueless to what was happening around her, but as the story went on she began to realize reality and what was happening. She learned how to let go, especially of father.

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Command of Evidence – The essay is developed with relevant, well-chosen evidence and examples from the text. The evidence is varied and clearly supports your claims. Evidence is provided with context and explained thoroughly.	4 – 30 3 – 27 2 – 24 1 – 21	3	30
Style and Organization – There are topic sentences. The essay logically organizes ideas and uses appropriate transitions. The essay uses a formal language with sophisticated language and an engaging style of writing.	4 – 20 3 – 18 2 – 16 1 – 14	3	20
Control of Conventions – There are no spelling or capitalization errors. Punctuation is used correctly. Paragraphs are indented.	4 – 10 3 – 9 2 – 8 1 – 7	4	10
Publishing – The final piece is in size-12, Times New Roman font, has a cover, title, and is double-spaced. The student assessment and reflections are complete.	4 – 10 3 – 9 2 – 8 1 – 7	4	10
Total:		96	97

Student Reflection	Teacher Comments
I am most proud of... the details I used	Glow: You cite and analyze specific poems.
I struggled with... Explaining the details.	Grow: Don't be afraid to explain more and dig deeper to analyze what you cite.

Inside Out and Back Again and The Hardships of Refugees

In a single term, the experiences of refugees around the world can be summarized as challenging. Refugees are people who have left their home country to avoid difficulties such as conflict, persecution, or natural disasters. They leave behind their loved ones, prized possessions, and their home as they embark on this dangerous journey, which has the effect of turning one's life inside out. *Inside Out and Back Again* is a novel based on true events and is written by Thanhha Lai. The story follows Ha, a 10-year-old girl from South Vietnam, and her family as they escape to the United States because they are trapped in the middle of a violent conflict, and Mother is trying to provide for her four children as prices rise. The novel depicts the difficulties and hardships of becoming a refugee by depicting Ha and her family's experiences with bigotry, discrimination, and prejudice. However, it is not just Ha and her family that are affected, but all refugees who arrive in a foreign world.

Refugees must make the tough decision to surrender their belongings in order to move to a safer place. The situation in Vietnam deteriorated with time; the South (Anti-Communism) and North (Communism) of Vietnam, as well as some other nations, were at war over the “topic” of Communism and freedom. In Saigon where Ha lives, she can simply hear bombs exploding in the distance, and her school is even closed. Eventually, in “Should We,” Mother calls for a meeting and “asks...Should we leave our home?” Then Mother’s “brows twist so much we hush,” (75) which indicates that this decision was extremely difficult to make but soon, they decide that they should leave for the better. When Ha has to choose a few belongings to bring with her, she decides to bring a few pairs of clothes, some hygienic items, and her doll that she’s

always loved because it reminded her of her own life. In “Wet and Crying,” Ha’s papaya tree had to be cut down because it would be better than sharing it with the Communists, and she describes it as “Black seeds spill like clusters of eyes, wet and crying.” (96). Evidently, Ha is devastated that her beloved papaya tree is cut down, and the tree was always a sign of hope for her. Ha having to leave behind her precious papaya tree is like any other refugee having to leave behind something they love.

On the journey to flee the country, Ha encounters hardships on the way to Alabama. Ha and her family prepares to flee, and once they’re are at sea, there was no looking back. The ship is loaded with passengers, which means that there is barely any room, so Ha is cramped. As mentioned in “One Mat Each,” “Bodies cram every centimeter below deck, then every centimeter on deck.” (101). Since there are so many passengers, there must be little food. In fact, “The commander decides the ration is now half a clump of rice only at morning and night, and one cup of water all day,” as stated in “One Engine.” (135). In addition, in the poem “S-l-o-w-l-y,” Ha nibbles on the “Hard and moldy, yet chewy and sweet” rice, and she chews “each grain s-l-o-w-l-y.”(117). This piece of evidence shows that there is so little food that Ha is eating hard and moldy grains of rice, but she eats it slowly; moreover, the way “slowly” is written in a way that demonstrates Ha really ate it “s-l-o-w-l-y” because she was even eating the little things she had no matter its condition. Furthermore, Ha's favorite doll, which she had taken with her, had to be left behind. Ha, and other refugees also end up losing their most important belongings on the journey, and sometimes it’s gone forever. Thus, on the journey to Alabama, Ha encountered obstacles like not having enough food, unsanitary conditions, and more.

Ha, and her family soon arrive in Alabama, where she faces many problems to which she learns to adapt. She was certainly discriminated against as a refugee in a foreign country because

of her origins. "A brick shatters the front window, landing on our dinner table along with a note," Ha says in "Neighbors," (245) when Ha and her family had just moved in. Her neighbors are racist, as shown by the fact that they also hurled eggs at the front door and toilet papered the trees. Ha is discriminated against not only in her own neighborhood but also at school. "A pink boy with blonde hair on his back, white eyes, and white eyelashes pulls my arm hair," it says in "Loud Outside." (220). Clearly, students at her school bully her on her appearance and background. Not only that, but they call her names like "pancake face," and asks if she eats dog meat; Ha runs away as soon as kids at her school bully her and during lunch, and she goes to the bathroom to eat so she wouldn't have to face her classmates. In fact, Ha purposefully made her deskmate cry in Vietnam, and the fact that it's the other way around in Alabama exemplifies how her life is turned "inside out." Discrimination based on Ha's ethnicity is undeniably one of the most challenging obstacles that most refugees also meet while living in a new world.

As stated in the article, "Refugees: Who, Where, and Why," " In today's world, we have the knowledge and tools to seek solutions to some of these issues." When Ha was bullied at school, she immediately ran away, but she quickly learned to stand up for herself with Brother Vu's help. When her classmates mocked her, Ha soon had the courage to shout names at them. Like many refugees, their life tends to change when they move to a completely new environment. However, "change" might be just an understatement. Perhaps, the phrase that "one's life may twist inside out" could possibly illustrate a refugee's life.

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Command of Evidence – The essay is developed with relevant, well-chosen evidence and examples from the text. The evidence is varied and clearly supports your claims. Evidence is provided with context and explained thoroughly.	4 – 30 3 – 27 2 – 24 1 – 21	3	30
Style and Organization – There are topic sentences. The essay logically organizes ideas and uses appropriate transitions. The essay uses a formal language with sophisticated language and an engaging style of writing.	4 – 20 3 – 18 2 – 16 1 – 14	4	20
Control of Conventions – There are no spelling or capitalization errors. Punctuation is used correctly. Paragraphs are indented.	4 – 10 3 – 9 2 – 8 1 – 7	4	10
Publishing – The final piece is in size-12, Times New Roman font, has a cover, title, and is double-spaced. The student assessment and reflections are complete.	4 – 10 3 – 9 2 – 8 1 – 7	4	10
Total:		95	100

Student Reflection	Teacher Comments
I am most proud of... How my conclusion is. I like that I was able to connect the article very well to Ha's experience.	Glow: Excellent job! Your essay cites and explains important poems from the book to address the essay task and analyze the novel.
I struggled with... My body paragraphs. I feel like maybe I could've connected more to the universal experience of refugees and made sure of Ha's difficulties.	Grow: You could, as you say, write more about the universal refugee experience, maybe citing a text we read, but this is not a demerit, just a suggestion.

Ha's Journey

The novel named *Inside Out & Back Again* by Thanhha Lai is a collection of poems that convey Ha, a vietnamese girl's journey through the Vietnamese war and the aftermath. It seems like a normal girl's life, going to school, etc however, her life turns Inside Out and her and her family are faced with some of the hardest challenges/decisions to overcome. The novel illustrates the challenges and hardships of being a refugee by following Ha through her journey from being fine in Vietnam to being a refugee in America. As a refugee, Ha's challenges that need to be overcome are shown by the author.

Ha and her family leave Vietnam because they have no other choice since if they stay, they are going to get captured by the communists. This was a very hard decision because they were still hoping their father would come back and if he did, they wouldn't be there. There were also many other reasons behind each side like for example, her brother Quang says that if they flee, they are disrespecting Vietnam's honor and being cowards. The poem "Wet and Crying" states, "Brother V wants to cut it down, saying it's better than letting the Communists have it." This evidence conveys that the communists were about to take over and the papaya tree Ha owned was something they had to sacrifice so they wouldn't be helping communists. The poem "Saigon is Gone" states, "At noon today the Communists crashed their tanks through the gates of the presidential palace and planted on the roof a flag with one huge star." This evidence also supports the fact that the communists were attacking quickly.

Hardships Ha and her family face as they're going to Alabama include many things like fear, hunger, and worry. These emotions were caused when He had to go through almost not

being able to make it on the American rescue ships, running out of resources for food and almost not being able to be rescued to safety. The poem "One Engine" states, "The commander says, Thailand is much farther on one engine. It was risky to take the river route. We escaped bombs but missed the rescue ships." This evidence conveys the fear and worry that Ha and her family endure as they receive news they may not make it and may not be rescued. The poem "One Engine" states, "The commander decides the ration is not half a clump of rice only at morning and night, and one cup of water all day." This evidence conveys the feeling of hunger Ha and everybody felt as their rations were getting shortened as time went on and hope was being lost.

Some challenges Ha faces in Alabama include things like being bullied, not being used to Alabama, having a hard time learning English, etc. In "Fourth Rule" it stated, "Would be simpler if English And life were logical." This conveyed one of Ha's challenges which was learning English and she reacted by getting mad at the fact that English is so hard to learn. The poem "Fly Kick" states, "Someone called me Ching Chong. Is that good? Didn't sound good. Then he tripped me, so I flew up and almost scissor-kicked him in the face." This evidence conveyed when she first started getting bullied in which she reacted by being confused and mad at the same time because she was wondering if Ching Chong was good or bad. When she realized why her classmate said what he said, she reached a point where she wanted to learn to fly-kick to get revenge but her brother Vu tells her that he will teach her self-defense, not for revenge.

A major change I saw in Ha was how much more mature, aware, and understanding she became. At the beginning, she was very ignorant which is shown when she disobeys her mom's rules and steps on the stone tile first before her brother however, now she endures which is shown when she is very patient about her father being able to be found or not. She also becomes

more mature as time went and this can be conveyed when she endures throwing her doll and her brother's chick away rather than being selfish and keeping it meanwhile her brother is sad from the loss of his chick. Another example of her being a lot more mature and aware is when she says in the poem "What If", "I can't think of anything but can't let my brothers best me, so I blurt out, What if Father is really gone?" This evidence conveys the maturity, awareness, and understanding of Ha as she understands that it is sad but her dad will probably not come back so she becomes the bigger person and tells her older brothers what if their dad never comes back. Therefore, Ha grew and changed a ton as a person in a good way through her awareness, maturity, and understanding as a person.

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Command of Evidence – The essay is developed with relevant, well-chosen evidence and examples from the text. The evidence is varied and clearly supports your claims. Evidence is provided with context and explained thoroughly.	4 – 30 3 – 27 2 – 24 1 – 21	28	27
Style and Organization – There are topic sentences. The essay logically organizes ideas and uses appropriate transitions. The essay uses a formal language with sophisticated language and an engaging style of writing.	4 – 20 3 – 18 2 – 16 1 – 14	19	18

Control of Conventions – There are no spelling or capitalization errors. Punctuation is used correctly. Paragraphs are indented.	4 – 10 3 – 9 2 – 8 1 – 7	10	10
Publishing – The final piece is in size-12, Times New Roman font, has a cover, title, and is double-spaced. The student assessment and reflections are complete.	4 – 10 3 – 9 2 – 8 1 – 7	10	10
Total:		97	95

Student Reflection	Teacher Comments
I am most proud of... How I explained everything and supported my ideas.	Glow: Your essay is well supported by evidence and addresses all parts of the task.
I struggled with... Finding the most top notch evidence. I felt like I could've found better evidence overall.	Grow: Varying your explanations "This conveys that..." and using more sophisticated sentence structure.

Inside Out and Back Again Literary Analysis

In the book *Inside Out and Back Again* Ha is a girl who lives with a family of brothers, a mother, and a missing father, and Ha is excited for the new year. However, Ha encounters a surprise as a fortune-teller says the family's life will turn "inside out." That same year Ha's family leaves Vietnam due to the threat of war. Ha's family had to leave Vietnam where they went to Alabama in the United States. There Ha faces numerous challenges such as racism, cultural barriers, and Ha having to learn a new language. However, eventually Ha and Ha's family overcome these challenges and adapt to their new life. The novel illustrates these challenges through concise poems highlighting the positive and negative experiences she had, for example, cultural barriers, learning a new language, racism, and making friends.

Ha and her family left Vietnam due to the threat of war, Ha's family received this information through rumors and sudden local unrest. The first quote that supports the family's decision to leave Vietnam is that the poem "Inside Out" (19) states, "I heard on the playground this year's bánh Chung, eaten only during Tet, will be smeared in blood." This shows that there are threats of war because the word smeared in blood implies there will be violence causing that food eaten during Tet to be covered in blood. Additionally, the poem "Current News" (39) states, "how many distant bombs were heard the previous night." This shows the concern over a catastrophic event such as a bombing occurring sometime in the foreseeable future that being a violent war possibly involving bombs. All these details eventually lead up to them boarding a

ship for a last-minute evacuation of Vietnam which affects them emotionally by leaving behind many of the things they loved about Vietnam behind such as Tet celebrations.

The hardships Ha and her family face on their journey to Alabama are lack of water, lack of food, and boredom. The first quote to support the challenges Ha faces is the poem “Floating” (114) which states, “I don’t blame her, having a daughter who’s either dying of thirst or demanding release.” This detail shows that Ha’s thirst is extreme to the point of possibly wanting to die. Additionally, the poem “S-l-o-w-l-y” (117) states, “I nibble on the last clump of cooked rice from my sack.” This detail implies that food on the ship was so limited that Ha had to nibble food to preserve the food supply. Lastly, the poem “Routine” (123) states, “Mother cannot allow idle children, hers or anyone else’s.” This detail implies that there were few activities to do on the ship therefore, Ha’s mother had to create activities for her children to do. Many of these challenges faced on the family's journey are the challenges that many refugees face all over the world when migrating to new countries on their journeys they face numerous challenges including but are not limited to food and/or water shortages, learning a new language, and disease. In *Inside Out and Back Again*, Ha faces food and/or water shortages on the ship and has trouble learning English once she arrives in Alabama.

Some of the challenges Ha faces in Alabama are racism, cultural barriers, and not having friends. Ha adapts to these challenges by not caring what other people think of her. The poem “War and Peace” (286) shows Ms. Scott showed the class the current chaotic state of Vietnam instead of things that represent Vietnamese culture for example Tet. This piece of evidence shows that Ha faces racism as the lack of showing culture and showing only the negative parts of

Vietnam implies that Ms. Scott thinks of Ha as a lesser compared to her peers. Additionally, the poem "Boo-Da, Boo-Da" (302) states "I hear laughter and a murmur building: Boo-Da, Boo-Da." This quote shows Ha's classmates don't understand her culture and are therefore making fun of Ha's religion. Lastly, in the poem "The Outside" (207) Ha wonders what friends she will eat lunch with when her mother is discussing school with Ha. This implies that since Ha is in a new country she does not have any friends to interact or talk with.

A drastic change I saw in Ha from the beginning to the end of the book was that she is far more adaptable than she was at the beginning of the book. A major lesson that Ha learns by the end of the book is that life can be very inconsistent. Henceforth Ha grows by adapting to the large inconsistencies, and life changes more easily at the end of the book than at the beginning.

Essay Rubric

Category Description and Goals	Possible Points	Student Assessment	Actual Points Earned
Content and Analysis – The essay conveys ideas and information clearly and accurately in order to support an insightful analysis of the text, addressing all parts of the task.	4 – 30 3 – 27 2 – 24 1 – 21	3	27
Command of Evidence – The essay is developed with relevant, well-chosen evidence and examples from the text. The evidence is varied and clearly supports your claims. Evidence is provided with context and explained thoroughly.	4 – 30 3 – 27 2 – 24 1 – 21	3	30
Style and Organization – There are topic sentences. The essay logically organizes ideas and uses appropriate transitions. The essay uses a formal language with sophisticated language and an engaging style of writing.	4 – 20 3 – 18 2 – 16 1 – 14	3	20
Control of Conventions – There are no spelling or capitalization errors. Punctuation is used correctly. Paragraphs are indented.	4 – 10 3 – 9 2 – 8 1 – 7	3	10
Publishing – The final piece is in size-12, Times New Roman font, has a cover, title, and is double-spaced. The student assessment and reflections are complete.	4 – 10 3 – 9 2 – 8 1 – 7	3	10
Total:		15	97

Student Reflection	Teacher Comments
<p>I am most proud of...</p> <p>I am most proud of the essay being concise.</p>	<p>Glow: Your essay is well organized and full of details and citations to support your analysis.</p>
<p>I struggled with...</p> <p>I struggled with picking the most relevant evidence.</p>	<p>Grow: You could try using more sophisticated vocabulary and sentence structure.</p>

Inside Out & Back Again

Inside and out again by Thanhha Lai is a novel about a ten year old girl (Ha) and her family and the struggles they faced fleeing Vietnam. After they get to America The book goes into detail about what Ha and her family had to go through after leaving South Vietnam and the discrimination they had to face. This book is based on the author, Thanhha Lai and what she had to endure while fleeing Vietnam. This novel illustrates the challenges and hardships of being a refugee by analyzing the struggles they had to go through just getting somewhere safe and itemizes what the refugees faced, (discrimination, bullying, racism, etc.).

Ha and her family lived in southern Vietnam (Saigon) in 1975 during the Vietnam war. When it became clear that it was becoming dangerous to stay in Saigon, they decided to leave Vietnam because the war was getting closer. A poem based on April 14, 1975 tells the readers that Ha doesn't even have school anymore, "School's now closed; everyone must go home a month too soon." Additionally, bombs that explode in the sky are getting vinical, which the poem, "Early Monsoon" demonstrates, "In the distance, bombs explode like thunder, slashes lighten the sky, gunfire falls like rain. Distant, yet within ears, within eyes." After their president resigns, it becomes cognet that Ha and her family should flee Vietnam before it's too late.

Ha and her family face many hardships fleeing Vietnam, on the ship there isn't much room, food, or privacy. It was challenging even before leaving Saigon, after deciding to leave Vietnam, Ha and her family have to pack for their voyage, "Into each pack: one pair of pants, one pair of shorts, three pairs of underwear, two shirts, sandals, toothbrush and paste, soap, ten palms of rice grains, three clumps of cooked rice, one choice." Not long after they leave Saigon with two mats for their family, the refugees come to find out that the communists have taken

over Saigon, there is no going back. There aren't many resources on the ship and its very unsanitary, which makes the long journey more difficult, the poems "Floating" and "S-l-o-w-l-y" exemplifies some of the obstacles the refugees faced, "We are told to sip water only when we must so our bodies can stop needing." and "I nibble on the last clump of cooked rice from my sack. Hard and moldy, yet chewy and sweet inside. I chew each grain s-l-o-w-l-y." Both substantially exhibit some issues and difficulties they encountered. When they reach Guam, Mother has to choose where to go and puts America, which leads to them going to Florida. In Florida, they wait and eventually get a sponsor that takes them to their new home, Alabama.

In Alabama, Ha and her family face many challenges. Ha gets bullied in school and Mother works till her fingers bleed. Ha gets bullied at school because she is from Vietnam, she doesn't know English, and because of her religion. Ha doesn't have many friends and even admits that sometimes she prefers a wartorn Saigon over peace in Alabama. "No one would believe me but at times I would choose wartime in Saigon over peacetime in Alabama" The people in their neighborhood don't really welcome Ha's family. Their house gets egged and a brick is thrown through their window, with a vile note. The neighbors 'accept' them when Ha and her family change their religion. Another hardship other than the language barrier was that kids at school were bullying Ha and calling her 'pancake face', "They chase me. They yell "Boo-da, Boo-da" at me. They pull my arm hair. They call me Pancake Face. They clap at me in class." When Ha tells Miss Washington and Mother, they tell the school which makes Pink boy (her bully) get in trouble. Throughout all of that going on, while working Mother loses her amethyst ring, a sign that Father is really gone. To conclude, Ha's family faced a handful of hardships while being in Alabama.

In conclusion, Ha's family faced many challenges being refugees and fleeing Vietnam. In the end, Ha became more mature and her family as a whole came out stronger. The experience changed Ha's family and was very difficult.

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Total:		92	97

Student Reflection	Teacher Comments
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<p>I am most proud of... The vocabulary I used and my claims.</p>	<p>Glow: Your language and style is very engaging to read. Your essay addresses the task and provides evidence to support your claims.</p>
<p>I struggled with... Explaining my claims the way I would've liked.</p>	<p>Grow: Your essay might benefit from more analysis of the poems you cite. Also, you might try connecting Ha's experience to other refugees.</p>