

Inside Out & Back Again

Everyday, millions of refugees are forced to flee their homes due to the invasions and wars occurring in their hometown. Refugees don't only lose their home, but also lose their families, jobs, and prized possessions. In the novel *Inside Out & Back Again* by Thanhha Lai, a family is forced to leave their home and possessions behind because of the constant invasions occurring in their area. Ha's mother, a single mother of four kids, makes a decision to flee to America, which comes with many obstacles to overcome, including becoming refugees and making their way to a new home. Ha's family feels as if their life is being turned inside out. The novel illustrates the challenges and hardships of being a refugee by describing how it's hard finding a new place to call home.

Ha and her family leave Vietnam due to the war occurring in Saigon. Even though Mother's children do not want to leave Saigon, the communists have made it clear that they are taking over once and for all. In *Sssshhhhhh*, Brother Khoi writes "No matter what Mother decides, we are not to leave. I must protect my chick and you your papayas." This shows how none of Ha and her siblings aren't ready to leave Saigon yet, considering the fact that this is their childhood home, and will be forced to leave their prized possessions behind. In *Saigon is Gone*, the author writes "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 clearly represents how the Communists plant their country's flag on the roof, which means that they're taking over. This must be tremendously hard for the people of Saigon, and I can't imagine what they're going through.

On the journey to Alabama, Ha and her family face numerous hardships. This includes

not having enough food to fill them up, not being able to sleep comfortably, not being able to bathe for weeks, being crowded on a small boat, and unsanitary conditions. In the poem *One Mat Each*, the author writes “bodies cram every centimeter below deck, then every centimeter on deck.” This clearly shows one of the many issues Ha’s family had to face, which was being crammed, on a boat, for weeks. In *Floating*, Ha explains “Our ship creeps along the river route without lights without cooking without bathrooms.” Both of these details show what Ha and her family had to go through, in order to survive.

After being on a boat for countless weeks, Ha’s family finally arrived in Alabama, however it’s not the type of experience they thought it would be. Ha’s family face an abundance of challenges, such as being heckled at, getting bullied, but most importantly, racism. In *Pancake Face* the author writes “By the end of school he yells an answer: She should be a pancake. She has a pancake face.” This indicates that Ha is made fun of when she attends school, because of her appearance. In *Boo-Da, Boo-Da*, Ha explains “Someone pulls my hair, forcing me to turn and see a black hole in a pink face: Boo-Da, Boo-Da Girl.” Ha’s classmates dislike Ha because of her language barrier, and because she’s the ‘odd one out.’ Ha feels embarrassed and shameful because she wants to fit in with the other kids, and she wishes that they would stop making fun of her.

From beginning to end, Ha’s family overcomes innumerable obstacles, which leads Ha’s character to grow tremendously. In the beginning of the story, Ha just wanted her father in her life, and continuously wished for him to appear there and then. While Ha’s family is on their journey to Alabama, Ha starts to realize that she isn’t going to move on in life if she doesn’t throw away the past. Ha chooses to move on, and wishes the best for her mother and siblings, and forgets about father. Ha’s journey throughout life teaches us to be more appreciative of the

refugees in need, who are forced to leave their hometown, jobs, family, etc.

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	4	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	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:		18	97

Student Reflection	Teacher Comments
I am most proud of...	Glow: Your essay analyzes the novel and cites multiple pieces of evidence to support your claims.

I struggled with...

Grow: You could explain more and make more connections to the universal refugee experience.

Inside Out and Back Again

Inside Out and Back Again follows a young girl and her family through the chaos of the Vietnam War. It is a story about a well-off family suddenly becoming refugees, about lives being turned inside out, homes being lost, and having to grow up without warning, but in the end love will always keep you together. This novel illustrates the challenges and hardships of being a refugee by allowing you to understand the fear that must drive you to leave your home. It portrays the love that you must feel for your family that would cause you to risk your life for them. And it shows you what millions of people are forced to go through everyday just to live a normal life.

Ha and her family leave Vietnam due to the war that is brewing. They hear bombs and sirens go off in the night, prices are being raised significantly, and there are more and more people dying everyday. Eventually, Mother decides that their home is no longer safe and that they must leave; so that is what they do. In the poem "Quiet Decision" the last stanza states, "You deserve to grow up where you don't have to worry about saving half a bite of sweet potato." The poem "Choice" is focused on Ha packing up to leave Saigon, and in this poem it demonstrates how very little they were able to pack with them. As stated in the text, "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."

Ha and her family struggle with a plethora of hardships on their journey to Alabama. They face having to be on the same ship for weeks on end, they barely have any food or water, they have no choice but to cram together and sleep on two straw mats below deck, they were forced to go days without being able to bathe, and they could only bring the bare minimum with

them. In the poem “One Mat Each” it describes the horrible, cramped, limited amount of space that they lived in for two weeks. The text allows you to imagine their condition by saying, “We climb on and claim a space of two straw mats under the deck, enough for all five of us to lie side by side” as well as, “bodies cram every centimeter below deck, then every centimeter on deck.”

When Ha and her family first move to Alabama, they all struggle with things, however Ha’s struggles impact her the most. She deals with getting made fun of by her classmates because of her appearance and her race and she struggles with the language barrier and feeling dumb because of it. Eventually, Ha adapts to her new environment by dedicating a large portion of her time to learning English so that she can communicate with her peers and the people she now lives around. Ha makes two new friends, Pem and Steven, that accept her for who she is, and are kind to her. The poem “Feel Dumb” describes how Ha feels when she begins school in Alabama and how it has an affect on her. “I count up to twenty. The class claps on it’s own. I’m furious, unable to explain I already learned fractions and how to purify river water. So this is what dumb feels like, I hate, hate, hate it.”

Throughout this book Ha and her family go through an unimaginable journey; and through that journey Ha grows and matures mentally and physically. She goes from wishing for her father to show up at her school in front of all her classmates, to wishing for her brothers and her mother, as well as herself to have a good future and accomplish all that they want. Through this expedition, Ha proves that what doesn’t kill you only makes you stronger, and I think that we can all learn a lesson from her story as well as be sympathetic and understanding towards all the refugees in need of finding their home, and not just a place to live.

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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		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		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		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		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		7
Total:			94

Student Reflection	Teacher Comments
I am most proud of...	Glow: Your analysis is well organized and supported with evidence.
I struggled with...	Grow: Organizing your evidence in your body paragraphs.

In the book “Inside Out & Back Again” by Thanhha Lai, Ha, a ten-year-old girl, and her family have to choose to either stay in Saigon or to flee to America. This decision was difficult to make, but they ended up choosing to abandon their home and leave everything they loved behind. She misses out on most of her childhood and matures very quickly. During Ha’s journey as a refugee, she experiences hunger, maturity, thirst, etc. This trip changed their lives for better or for worse, but they had to give it their all or nothing, even if things start up bad.

Ha, and her family leave Vietnam because of the war against the Communists and Vietnam, if they stay it would be very dangerous. “Uncle Son returns and tells us to be ready to leave any day.”(85) Mother decided that the decision to leave would be best for the family. According to the poem “Quiet Decision”, “I am proud of my ability to save until I see tears in Mother’s deep eyes. *You deserve to grow up where you don’t worry about saving half a bite of sweet potato.*”(79) This states that Mother quietly decided that they would move to America, she couldn’t bear to see her children worry about saving food, but if they left they would have to start from the very beginning. They would have to leave their old lives back at home., a home that would be destroyed. The decision was tough to make, they would have to sacrifice everything to flee, there was also the fear of getting caught by Communists. According to the poem “Should We?” it states, “Mother twists her brows. *I’ve lived in the North. At first not much will happen, then suddenly Quang will be asked to leave college. Ha will come home chanting the slogans of Ho Chi Minh, and Khoi will; be rewarded for reporting to his teacher everything we say in this house.*” This proves that Mother thought that the decision should not be taken lightly, it was a

life-changing decision.

The journey to America was harsh, families huddled together in tight corners of the ship. Ha was starving and thirsty, she started to dream of all the snacks back home. Weeks passed and still, no one came to rescue them. According to the poem “One Engine,” it states that they were floating on one engine, which made everyone panic because with only one engine the boat is slower than if driven with two engines, meaning they could be caught. Hope was slowly fizzling out of everyone, people were scared. They were running out of food and water, “The commander now decides that the ration is now half a clump of rice only at morning and night, and one cup of water all day.”(136) The rations were often split which was hard on the passengers aboard the ship. The hunger was too much and so was the thirst.

When Ha’s family finally gets to Alabama, they struggle to adapt. Everything in Alabama is different, the food, the people, etc. The poem, “American Chicken states,” “Brother Quang forces a swallow before explaining we are used to fresh-killed chicken that roamed the yard.” This part of the story tells me that they aren’t used to and don’t really like the food in America. The next line of that poem states that Ha had to force “yum-yum” sounds, which means that they do not want to seem ungrateful either. During Ha’s time at school, she sees that no one looks like her, people bullied her, made fun of her, she felt alone. The poem “More Is Not Better” states, “when they ask if I eat dog meat, barking and chewing and falling down laughing.” Her bullies didn’t really help Ha with the idea of making Alabama her home.

At the beginning of this story, Ha was childish and stubborn, she was also very competitive. Her journey as a refugee escaping Saigon led to her maturing, she started to look back on her past actions and felt ashamed of the way she used to act. Ha confessing to Mother about all the bad things she had done in Saigon was one of the moments where you can really tell

that she had matured. Another moment of Ha becoming more mature was when she gave up her doll to allow Brother Khoi's chick to rest in peace. The moments of Ha becoming a refugee may have been one of the most dangerous, but also life learning experiences.

Compare and Contrast 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	30	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	29	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	20	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	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	9
Total:		99	99

Student Reflection	Teacher Comments
I am most proud of...	Glow: Excellent job analyzing the novel and citing evidence to support your claims.
I struggled with...	Grow: Take it a step further by comparing Ha's journey to the universal refugee experience.

Name: Helin Demir
Class: 804

P.S. 299K
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A Literary Analysis of Inside Out & Back Again

Inside Out and Back Again is a novel by Thanhha Lai that depicts the life of a refugee. In the story, the protagonist Ha has to flee her wartorn home in Saigon, plagued with unrest and poverty, on a rickety, unsanitary boat, and is sent to Alabama where she struggles to get used to her new home. In a way, you could say that her life turned inside out. This depicts the challenges and hardships of being a refugee through the fact that many refugees also have to deal with death, poverty, and abandoning their loved ones in the attempt to have a better, safer life. In this essay we will analyze how Ha and her family's lives turned 'inside out and back again' when fleeing to another country.

Firstly, Ha and her family decide to leave Vietnam due to the poverty, the food shortages, and most importantly the general instability of life in Vietnam. The first piece of text evidence demonstrating this is, "I am proud of my ability to save until I see tears in Mother's deep eyes. 'You deserve to grow up where you don't have to worry about saving half a bite of sweet potato.'" Clearly, Ha and her family are struggling in Vietnam. They cannot afford much food and need to be smart about saving it. However, Ha's mother is getting tired of this. There is also more proof that shows Ha's mother having financial problems due to the state of Saigon. "A few years ago she made enough money to consider buying a car. On weekends she takes me to market stalls, dropping off the clothes and trying to collect on last week's goods." She used to make a great deal of money, but is now just trying to survive and is working as hard as she can. Furthermore, later in the story, there is more evidence that points towards the current political climate of Vietnam being the main cause of this. To further illustrate, "Mother says if the price of eggs were not the price of rice, and the price of rice were not the price of gasoline, and the price of gasoline were not the price of gold, then of course Brother Khoi should keep hatching eggs." If eggs are the price of gold, that would point to an unstable economy and an unstable environment to live in.

Secondly, on Ha's way to Alabama, she has to deal with poor boat conditions while escaping from Vietnam, low food rations, and the fear of being caught and sent home to Saigon. Proving this is a quote from part II of the poems. "Writing becomes boring, so I draw over my words. Pouches of pan-fried shredded coconut. Tamarind paste on banana leaf. Steamed corn on the cob. Rounds of fried dough. Wedges of pineapple on a stick. And of course cubes of papaya tender and shiny. Mother smooths back my hair, knowing the pain of a girl who loves snacks but is stranded on a ship." Ha is stuck on the ship with her family. She is bored and she is hungry. This must be incredibly difficult for her and her family. Moreover, the conditions on the rescue ship they were all on was also repulsive. As stated in part II of *Inside Out and Back Again*, "A flattened chick lies crooked, neck dangling off his palm. The chick had not a chance after we shoved for hours to board. Brother Khôi screams, kicks everything off our mats. Brother Quang carries him above deck." There was a dead chicken in Brother Khoi's pocket. It just stayed there. What if it had spread illness to others on the boat? This shows the terrible conditions on the rescue ship. However, everyone on the boat still had to deal with this due to the fact that it was so crowded and people had to focus on more important issues. For instance, also in Part II, the ship captain says to all the passengers, "Sip, he says, and don't waste strength moving around because it's impossible to predict how much longer we will be floating." This shows the biggest problem facing the people on the ship. The fact that they are stranded and floating. Just floating, trying to reach shore. However, Ha and her family soon do reach shore and arrive in Alabama where more issues arrive.

When Ha's family finally gets to Alabama, they struggle with speaking English and Ha ends up being bullied at school. However, they soon adapt quickly to their new home. Firstly, starting off by quoting part of the text from when Ha just came to Alabama, "To make it worse, the cowboy explains horses here go neigh, neigh, neigh, not hee, hee, hee. No, they don't. Where am I?" Here, Ha expresses confusion over the differences between animals in Saigon and in Alabama. She feels homesick. She expected the horses to be the way they were back home. Moreover, this is not the worst that it gets. Later in the story, when Ha was at school, "Tears gush because I can't make myself explain a pancake is very

very flat." Ha is trying to explain the fact that she is being bullied to her mom. However, she is struggling due to her mom not understanding English. This could lead to Ha being even more isolated. However, it does in fact get better for Ha. Around the end of the story, Ha learns to stand up for herself. As stated in the text, "The red-velvet girl points to the middle of my chest. 'See this flower? They only put that on nightgowns.' I look down at the tiny blue flower barely stitched on. I rip it off. 'Nightgown no more.'"

Here, Ha acts confident. She is used to living in Alabama now. She understands that this is where she lives. And she feels like it is her home.

In conclusion, from beginning to the end of *'Inside Out and Back Again'* by Thanhha Lai, one major change I see in Ha is that she is no longer angry. She has grown wiser and calmer thanks to her new life experience. She has a new home and new friends, along with a new view on the world. One thing displaying this is the fact that Ha wants to learn to fly-kick, not to kick but to mainly fly, displaying her emotional development and growth. Moreover, she has grown wiser and more mature through all that she experienced when coming to Alabama and all she had to experience while getting used to her new school. Thanks to her pain and the hardships she went through as a refugee, she grew and developed into a better and stronger 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		29
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		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		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		8
Total:			97

Student Reflection	Teacher Comments
I am most proud of...	Glow: Your essay analyzes important aspects of the text and is well organized to show your thinking.
I struggled with...	Grow: Include more of a variety of sentence structure when citing evidence.

Inside Out & Back Again Essay

A refugee is someone who is forced out of their country because they're country may be in danger. When they leave their own country, they would need to find a new country to find a new home because of the fact that they might possibly never return to their original country. They would lose valuables such as special memories, possessions, and their home. By leaving their old home and finding a new home, it would make a refugee feel like their life is being turned inside out. According to a novel, "Inside Out and Back Again," a young girl named Ha is living in a dangerous time period where war is coming closer which makes life too dangerous for them to live. With the upcoming war bringing more fear to the family, it was time for the family to flee from danger. As a refugee, they flee their old place and find a new home. Their family's lives are being turned inside out in the same way other refugees would.

The war coming closer to Saigon may be so destructive that Ha's family had to make a difficult decision whether they should or shouldn't stay in their hometown. This was a very hard decision to make because life as war was coming closer, life in Saigon might get harder as well. According to "Current News," it 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, Miss Xinh finally says no more." This shows how the incoming war has affected Ha's hometown. With prices increasing, the family may not be able to afford to live in their houses if they stay. With bombs exploding, the family is at huge risk because at any given moment, they can be easily killed. However, if they choose to leave Saigon, this was also a very hard decision to make because memories may be lost forever

considering that the family may not be able to return back to Saigon. According to “Wet and Crying,” it states, “Brother Vu chops; the head falls; a silver blade slices. Black seeds spill like clusters of eyes, wet and crying.” The phrase, “Black seeds spill like clusters of eyes, wet and crying,” helps emphasize how Ha would feel seeing her papaya tree being cut.

After Ha’s family had decided to move out of home, they needed to go by boat to reach a new home. This was a very scary experience because they were on a small boat and if they were to be caught by Communists, they would be in huge trouble. According to “Saigon is Gone,” it states, “We hear a helicopter circling circling near our ship. People run and scream, Communists!” According to “One Engine,” it states, “If the Communists catch us fleeing, it’s a million times worse than staying at home.” This shows how risky and scary going by boat fleeing to a new home was for Ha’s family. After a rough experience on sea, they arrived at a tent city where they go to find a volunteer to help sponsor them to a new home. These sponsors preferred Christians, and unfortunately Ha’s family were Buddhists. According to “Another Tent City,” it states, “Then by chance Mother learns sponsors prefer those whose applications say “Christians.” Just like that Mother amends our faith, saying all beliefs are pretty much the same.” This shows that Mother had to lie in order to be accepted into the public and to enter the country.

Ha’s family have just found a home in America, but they have to restart life because people living here are speaking different languages and the fact that they’re also poor. According to “Life in Waiting,” it states, “A routine starts as soon as we settle into our tent Camp workers teach us English mornings and afternoons.” This shows that in a new world they would have to learn English so they can communicate with other people living there. According to “Amethyst

Ring,” it states, “Mother wants to sell the amethyst ring Father brought back from America, where he trained in the navy before I was born. She wants to buy needles and thread, fabric and sandals from the camp’s black market.” “Brother Quang says, NO! What’s the point of new shirts and sandals if you lose the last tangible remnant of love?” This shows that the family is so poor that Mother has to sell something very expensive in order to save the family. Ha then goes to a new school, but struggles because there is a classmate who likes to pick on Ha because of her appearance and nationality. According to Boo - Da, Boo - Da,” it states, “I hear laughter and a murmur building: Boo-Da, Boo-Da.” It also states in “Pancake Face,” “Pink Boy keeps asking, What are you? By the end of school he yells an answer: She should be a pancake. She has a pancake face.” This shows how she is being picked on at her new school.

According to the article, “Refugees: Who, Where, and Why,” a person may be forced out of their homelands because of persecution or devastation. However, fleeing an old home and finding a new home may bring some additional challenges which makes a refugee feel his or her life being turned inside out. According to “Inside Out and Back Again,” the main challenges Ha’s family faced during the trip to a new home were making a difficult decision on what to bring, possibilities that they may be captured by Communists while on the boat, and adapting to a new home. Adaptation was the hardest challenge for them because they needed to learn the language that is being spoken in the new land and find ways to make money to help support the family. However, when they are finally able to fully adapt, their life, once flipped inside out is flipped again into a normal life.

Essay Rubric

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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	29	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	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	18	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	97

Student Reflection	Teacher Comments
I am most proud of... How much evidence is used in this essay to help strengthen what each individual paragraph is trying to convey.	Glow: Your essay addresses all parts of the task and includes relevant evidence to support.
I struggled with... Keeping the essay organized and neat	Grow: Being more organized and concise.

Inside Out and Back Again Reading Analysis

In the book, “Inside Out and Back Again” (written by Thanhha Lai), Ha and her family face the difficulties and complications of being refugees. From the fear of getting caught fleeing, to worrying over family, to the prejudices of being different, Inside out and back again is the whole refugee experience. Throughout the story, Ha and her family are changing and adapting to their lives that are turning inside out and looping back again. From moving their lives across the world and having to start from scratch, to learning about the death of their father. In the novel, Thanhha Lai doesn’t gloss over any of the refugee experience. She explains how difficult it was to move your entire life without looking back because there wasn’t anything to look back on. She demonstrated everything that she had to go through in a strong precision. Lai used sensory details and demonstrated how difficult it was to cope with living in a whole country as well as living in a place where you’re so different from everyone else. Three major parts of the story consist of the decision to move out of Vietnam, the journey to their new home, and being forced to adapt to their new home. These parts are the components that make up the refugee experience that is journeyed through by Ha and her family.

Ha’s mother ultimately decides to move to Vietnam when she learns that America would no longer fight to defend Vietnam. This was a very difficult decision to make, if they were to stay they would have to continue to endure the bombings and the dangers of living during a time of war, not only would they have to endure the bombings, they would also have to submit to communism and be forced to tell what happens at home, they wouldn’t even be able to have an ounce of privacy. However, if they left, they would have to start from square one, they would have to leave everything behind that was of value to them. Not only that, no one knew what

would be in store for Ha and her family once they docked. "Should We" demonstrates how difficult of a decision this was for Ha's family. Most of Ha's brothers didn't want to leave because they would have to abandon Saigon, their home. However, Ha's mother wasn't so sure, she grew up in the North and knew how suffocating forced submission into communism was. In "Crisscrossed Packs" it states that Mother has started to make packs for their journey out of Vietnam. This meant that she chose to leave for the safety of their family. According to "The Vietnam Wars" it states, "One Vietnamese pilot landed with bullet holes in his aircraft. Hugh Doyle saw he was in shock. As he was loading his helicopter, his family was killed. They're standing waiting to get on the helicopter, his family was machine-gunned. He was just sitting in the helicopter. He was the pilot. He stood there and looked at them. They were all lying dead." This demonstrates how Mother was correct about the Communists, anyone who kills their family in front of them can't have moral intentions. Mother's choice may have been difficult to make however it was the right choice.

Ha and her family faced a lot of difficult challenges throughout their journey to Alabama. Brother Khoi was devastated with the loss of his chick, Ha's mother was lost and didn't know what was going to happen. The weight of their choices was more important than they have ever been. In addition, the fact that Ha and her family were most likely upset because of the fall of Saigon. They wouldn't have a home to go back to even if they wanted to and everything that they ever knew was gone and there was no going back. According to "Life in Waiting" it states, "I go sit with Brother Khôi, who rarely speaks anymore but I'm happy to be near him." Brother Khoi was devastated by the loss of the only thing that was from Vietnam. He was upset with the fact that he would have to say goodbye to the life that he had always known. Ha knows how everyone has changed however, is still happy with the small sense of familiarity. According to

“Choose” it states “Choose America, more opportunities there, especially for a family with boys ready to work.” Mother whispers back, ‘My sons must first go to college. If they’re smart America will give them scholarships. Mother chooses.’ Ha’s mother is struggling to find the most beneficial place to relocate despite the fact that their opportunities have lessened drastically. She is torn because this is a very important decision and she wants what’s best for her family. There was also a chance that they wouldn’t get picked by a sponsor which only added to their distress. According to “Another Tent City” it states that Ha’s family was too big to supply for by American standards. In addition, most sponsors liked people who were Christians. This meant that the chances of Ha’s family getting picked were very slim. This exemplifies the challenges that Ha and her family faced during their journey to their new home.

Ha’s life in Alabama is a drastic change in comparison to her life in Vietnam. She has to adapt. She struggles with English and making friends. In addition, she gets bullied for being different. She dislikes her life immensely during this time, she doesn’t want to live in America despite it being peaceful unlike the raging battlefields in Vietnam. According to “War and Peace” it states “No one would believe me but at times I would choose wartime in Saigon over peacetime in Alabama.” This shows that she disliked her new life in Alabama that she would rather live on an active battlefield with constant fear and bombings instead of living peacefully in Alabama. Ha is close-minded about Alabama, she didn’t have any friends and her classmates would bully her for being different. This may have been a trying time for Ha however it was necessary, she finally understood what it felt like to be a victim. And she finally understood how she acted as a kid, disrespectful and rude. According to “Confessions”, it states that she was disobedient and rude. She understands how her behavior was when she lived in Vietnam. Had did not behave well in some situations and she has now learned from her past mistakes and she

confesses to her mother who is there to console her, this is a big sign of maturity. She learned that she couldn't bully people and she couldn't use her mother's money to buy sweets. She learns to regret the thing that she did, this is another big sign of maturity. This indicates that when Ha adapts to her life in Vietnam she learns a lot and matures because of it.

Throughout the book, you can see how Ha changes. She used to be close-minded and blinded by her very strong beliefs and temper. She learns that the way she acted was wrong and disrespectful. She learns to settle for things that aren't as they seem. She understands that even though things aren't as they seem they aren't as bad either. Ha understands that even though she is upset about the way that things turn out she knows that she has to adapt and learn to live with it no matter how big or small the matter is. In addition, she saw the flaws in the way she acted like a kid, now that she was the victim of the bullying. For example in "But Not Bad" she starts to throw a tantrum because the dried papaya is not satisfactory in comparison to the fresh papaya that she had in Vietnam. She learns that even though the papaya isn't like what she is used to, the papaya is not bad. Ha learns to compensate for the things that she finds unsatisfactory. This demonstrates how Ha has changed throughout the book "Inside Out and Back Again"

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		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		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		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		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		8
Total:			98

Student Reflection	Teacher Comments
I am most proud of...	Glow: Your analysis is supported by evidence and organized to address the essay task.
I struggled with...	Grow: Taking it a step further, putting Ha's experience in the larger context of the universal refugee experience by referencing the nonfiction articles we read.

Inside Out & Back Again, The Experience of a Refugee

Inside Out & Back Again is a novel written by Thanhha Lai that follows a girl named Ha and her family throughout life. We follow Ha and her family as they are forced to leave home due to war, and take refuge in America. *Inside Out & Back Again* shows the hardships and challenges of being a refugee by bringing us, the readers, through all the difficulties Ha and her family faced throughout their journey.

Ha and her family decide to leave Vietnam because there is a war that is coming closer to where they live. In the poem "Inside Out" Ha says that "The war is coming closer to home," after stating rumors and the procedures Ha and her family have to go through to get to safety. This shows that life where they are currently living is rough. Along with that, in the poem "Current News" Ha states "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, Miss Xinh finally says no more." This is demonstrating the fact that in Ha's class everyone is aware that everything is becoming increasingly worse and the war is getting closer and more dangerous.

Ha and her family face many hardships on their journey to Alabama, including being given very small rations of food and water and having to constantly move from shelter to shelter. We see this in the poem "One Engine" Ha tells us that "The commander decides the ration is now half a clump of rice only at morning and night, and one cup of water all day." Along with that, in the poem "Tent City" Ha informs us that they "eat inside a huge tent where Brother Vu becomes head chef, heating up cans of beef and potatoes tasting like salty vomit." This shows

that the journey is difficult because they are given food that tastes like “salty vomit” and they have to live inside tents instead of houses.

Ha and her family face lots of challenges when they move to Alabama. This includes the fact that they are being treated poorly due to the fact that they are refugees, and the language barrier that prevents Ha and her family from easily communicating and understanding others. We see Ha and her family being treated poorly in the poem “Neighbors” in which Ha tells us that “A brick shatters the front window, landing on our dinner table along with a note.” To add on, in the same poem we are told that the Neighbors slam the door on Ha’s family as they try to greet them. This exhibits how badly Ha and her family are treated due to the fact they are from a different place. Furthermore, in the poem “Wishes” Ha says “I wish ... that I could be invisible until I can talk back.” This portrays how the language barrier prevents her from responding to the people bullying her. However, she adapts to this by just running away from the people bullying her in school as we see in the poem “Boo-Da, Boo-Da” where she says “I have no choice but to run.” She does say that she wishes she didn’t have to run, but this is her solution for the time being.

Throughout the story *Inside Out & Back Again* Ha experiences major changes, and she grows throughout her journey. She changes once she realizes how difficult the world is, and stops being selfish like she was in the beginning of the story. Many other refugee’s have to go through the same difficult journey that is much more difficult than their normal life.

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	4	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	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:		100	100

Student Reflection	Teacher Comments
I am most proud of my first paragraph, as I think I used very good pieces of evidence.	Glow: Your essay addresses all parts of the task and is supported by well-chosen evidence.
I struggled with my conclusion.	Grow: You could take it a step further by comparing Ha's experience to the universal refugee experience.

Inside Out And Back Again

Inside Out and Back Again is a book written by Thanhha Lai about her experience during the Vietnam war and after the war. The book fictionalizes Ha leaving her home because of the Vietnam war and living somewhere new in Alabama, where she and her family has to start from the bottom and work their way back to the top (learning English and making money). As soon as the family reaches Alabama, Ha needs to learn a new language and learn to adapt to the new environment, a new place they now call home. Refugees (like Ha and her family) in *Inside Out and Back Again* lives turn out a mess when they move into another country. They are disrespected, made fun of and getting hurt for just trying to live a normal life. And there were many challenges they faced during their time in Vietnam to moving to America and their time in America. This novel tells us what they need to go through like their experience during a war happening in their home country, having to find a sponsor, how to basically start from the bottom and start back up.

Ha's family and her (like other refugees) left Vietnam because of a war. Telling how dangerous the Vietnam war and the risk if they stayed in Vietnam. As it states in *Watch over us* (85) "If war should separate them they know to find each other through Father's ancestral home in the north" Which tells us that families are getting separated because of this war that is happening in Vietnam, the reason why these Refugees need to flee. To flee Vietnam people had to buy plane tickets to take them to a different country but that was for rich people in Vietnam, what about the poor people. Later some People found out that some Navy ships are leaving the

war anymore, fleeing basically, so people start to get on these ships to flee Vietnam. As it states in One Mat Each (101) “We climb on and claim a space of two straw mats under the deck, enough for us five to lie side by side. By sunset our space is one straw mat, enough for us five to huddle together.” Once Ha and her family got on the ship ready to flee Vietnam more and more people got on the ship and the ship got more cramped. As more people got on ship this tells us how dangerous (and how much people wanted to leave Vietnam) Vietnam war during the war. And the place where He lived in Vietnam, Saigon, the Communists took over the place later on.

Ha and the refugees arrived at Guam, (where the navy ships brought them to safety away from the war) where they basically live their everyday life but in tents for a short period of time. They got to watch movies and even learn more English. This place probably looked and sounded like a palace they would stay in until they could go back to Vietnam. It was only temporarily they still had to choose a new place to go to (New York, Canada, etc.) and find a sponsor. A sponsor is someone that basically sponsors your family (if you're a refugee in the story) to a place you guys want to go. For example, if you are a refugee and you have family in New York you would try to find a sponsor to sponsor your trip to New York. Ha's family had a big problem (challenge) because they have a “big” family by American standards. As it states in Another Tent City (164) “We wait and wait, but mother says a possible widow, three boys, and a pouty girl make too huge of a family by American standards.” It was hard for them to find a sponsor, Ha's mom even tried to act like a Christian to get sponsored, but at the end of the day Americans thought they were a little too big. This was an emotional changing problem and not a fun experience because back in Guam they were having fun, watching movies, basically thinking everything is gonna be ok, but now they have to find a sponsor, and who knows what will

happen to them if they cant. In Alabama (167) it states “he keeps holding up one finger before picking Brother Quang whose studies in engineering impress him.” And because a sponsor liked Brother Quang’s interest in engineering, he sponsored their trip to Alabama.

Ha’s family moved into Alabama with their sponsor. Moving into a new place and calling that home while losing their original home is already tough and hard for Ha and her family. Although Ha survived the challenges while moving into Alabama, going to school has its own challenges for Ha. Moving into a new school and learning a new language is already a hard challenge (and the fact that the school speaks the language that she is just learning). In Inside Out and Back again it states in Pancake Face (289) “By the end of school he yells and answers She should be a pancake. She has a pancake face.” Ha was getting bullied in school by Pink boy calling her a pancake face and other things. This makes Ha feel worse about herself and since she already been through a lot with leaving her home and war. This changes Ha from bullying a little girl to people bullying her. Ha later on tells what happened and how she was bullied by Pink boy to her teacher Miss Washington. This was a smart thing to do because she helped Ha report it to the principal. As it states in Cowboy’s response (299) “In the principal’s office sit Pink boy and his mother. It’s very hot in here. Lots of strained voices holding in anger. Finally all eyes are on Pink Boy, who wrestles out, Sorry.” Ha kind of helped herself by the way she reacted to this, by telling Miss Washington, she helped Ha get through this, if it wasn’t for her Pink Boy may just keep calling her and she not being able to defend herself may just keep hiding the pain.

There are many changes in Ha in this story, but the major change that I see in Ha is that she can preserve and be brave to go up against these challenges. She learns that even though the

world may seem impossible to live in or basically extremely bad you can still achieve happiness by preserving. There were many challenges He faced like, living in Vietnam where war was happening, 3 weeks in a ship fleeing from communist, and getting bullied and made fun of at a school where you can't stand up for yourself, were all 3 challenges she preserved through. Ha does not just inspire people to push against the odds/challenges but to other refugees out there that are suffering because of a war. She motivates us to keep pushing in the toughest times.

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	3.5	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	9
Total:		19.5	98

Student Reflection	Teacher Comments
I am most proud of... how i explained the main topic and basically challenges Ha faced	Glow: Your analysis is supported by text evidence and well organized for the reader.
I struggled with... How to explain my evidence the start and write Ha's experience	Grow: You could proofread for clarity and concision.

