

Dear rising seventh graders,

This summer you will read *Inside Out and Back Again* by Thanhà Lai. **So that it is fresh in your mind, you should read this book close to the end of the summer.** This book was inspired by the author's childhood experience of fleeing Vietnam at the very end of the Vietnam War in 1975 and immigrating to Alabama. See the third page for some background information on the Vietnam War (adapted from <https://www.lcps.org/>). This novel is written in verse (poetry form).

In addition to *Inside Out*, you are required to read **two books** from the reading lists “Recommended Books for Grade 7” or “Recommended Books for Grade 8,” both of which can be found at: <http://library.danahall.org/readinglists/summer-reading>.

As you read *Inside Out*, have a pen or pencil in hand and take notes to keep track of the novel’s themes and the characters’ development. Underline words or phrases that stand out to you. In particular, **prepare bullet points on each of these four questions** (adapted from Harper Collins reading guide) so that you are prepared to engage in discussions and write a graded essay when you return to school. You **do not have to turn in** these notes and they **will not be graded**.

1. Hà’s story is told in a series of poems. What do you think about that? Find examples of different types of poems: For instance, find one that tells a story and another that paints a picture. Some of the poems have a specific date at the end, but others say “every day.” Why do you think that is?
2. What did you know about Vietnamese culture before reading the story? What are some of the things you learned as you read?
3. Sometimes Hà is angry about being a girl. Why does she make sure to tap her big toe on the floor before her brothers wake up on the morning of the new year? When she thinks about that moment a year later, what does she say?
4. Why does Hà love papaya so much? What might the fruit represent for her? How is that the same as or different from what the chick means for Brother Khôi?
5. Hà describes her American town as “clean, quiet loneliness” (p. 122). How is life in Alabama different from Saigon? Describe each setting and the differences between the two. Are there any similarities?

I look forward to working with you next year!

Sincerely,
Mrs. Robbins

ANTICIPATION GUIDE

Quick background information:

The Vietnam War

- Vietnam is a small country in Southeast Asia. It is a bit larger than New Mexico.
- On September 2, 1945, Vietnam gained independence from France.
- An international conference in Geneva on November 1, 1955 split Vietnam into a communist North and a noncommunist South.
- The start of United States involvement in the Vietnam War is not definitive. During the late 1950s and early 1960s, United States support of South Vietnam increased.
- During the Vietnam War, the United States supported noncommunist South Vietnam against communist North Vietnam and their allies in the South, the Viet Cong.
- The United States withdrew combat forces from Vietnam in 1973.
- On April 30, 1975, North Vietnam gained control of Saigon, the capital of South Vietnam, ending the war and reunifying Vietnam under communist rule.
- Saigon is now called Ho Chi Minh City, and it is the most populous city in Vietnam.
- Over 3 million people, including 58,000 Americans, were killed in the Vietnam War.



"Battlefield: Vietnam." *PBS*. PBS. Web. 8 Mar. 2015. <<http://www.pbs.org/battlefieldvietnam/timeline/>>.

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"Vietnam." *Central Intelligence Agency*. Central Intelligence Agency, 3 Apr. 2013. Web. 5 Mar. 2015. <<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/cia-maps-publications/Vietnam.html>>.

"Vietnam War." *History.com*. A&E Television Networks, 1 Jan. 2015. Web. 8 Mar. 2015. <<http://www.history.com/topics/vietnam-war>>.

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