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Inside Out & Back Again

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Book Review

Title: Inside Out & Back Again

Author: Thanhha Lai

Reviewer: Sydnee Burr

Publisher: HarperCollins

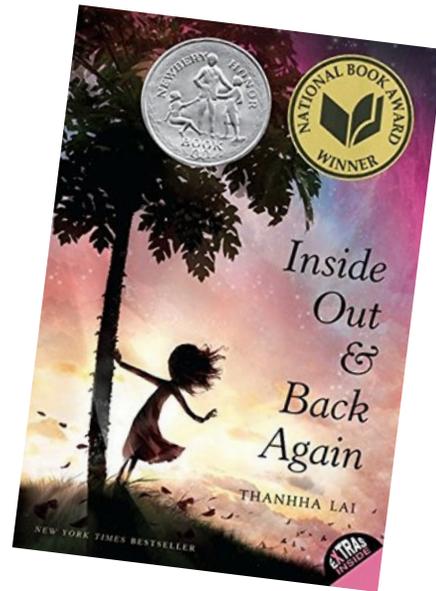
Publication Year: 2011

ISBN: 9780061962783

Number of Pages: 262

Interest Level: Intermediate, Young Adult

Rating: Outstanding



Review

Ha and her family narrowly escape the rise of communism in Vietnam and dangerously travel to America to start fresh, safe lives in Alabama. Growing up in a small hut with her mother and brothers, Ha misses her father who went missing in combat. She nurtures a precious papaya tree, and holds what is left of her family close. With the promise of a bright future, they bravely board a ship headed for America. There are pieces of their new life in Alabama that are better. Adequate clothes, enough food, daily schooling, and stable jobs to support themselves are new realities Ha's family did not experience in Vietnam. However, there are also new painful pieces that make Ha wish for her war-torn childhood home. Written in verse, Lai offers a raw view of immigration and family through a child's eye that is sure to leave the reader reeling for more.

Living in a country and attending classes where immigration, multiculturalism, and language barriers are an everyday reality for the majority of America's citizens and presents between difficulties in communication and empathy. Unfortunately, it is common for prejudices among those of vastly different cultural experiences to be exploited and adopted. However, this misunderstanding and stereotyping does not have to be the case. Thanhha Lai helps readers to understand the perspective and emotions of a young, scared, and shy immigrant who just wants to fit in and discover what normal means. Through the experiences of Ha and her family, teachers will be able to help their foreign students with more sympathy while fellow students will develop empathy for their classmates that do things a little differently. Inside Out and Back Again is an outstanding diverse read relevant to the social issue we face in our modern day.