



2017

# Inside Out & Back Again

Abigail Packard

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/cbmr>

---

### BYU ScholarsArchive Citation

Packard, Abigail (2017) "Inside Out & Back Again," *Children's Book and Media Review*: Vol. 38 : Iss. 5 , Article 16.  
Available at: <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/cbmr/vol38/iss5/16>

This Book Review is brought to you for free and open access by the All Journals at BYU ScholarsArchive. It has been accepted for inclusion in Children's Book and Media Review by an authorized editor of BYU ScholarsArchive. For more information, please contact [scholarsarchive@byu.edu](mailto:scholarsarchive@byu.edu), [ellen\\_amatangelo@byu.edu](mailto:ellen_amatangelo@byu.edu).

# Book Review

**Title:** Inside Out & Back Again

**Author:** Thanhha Lai

**Reviewer:** Abigail Packard

**Publisher:** HarperCollins

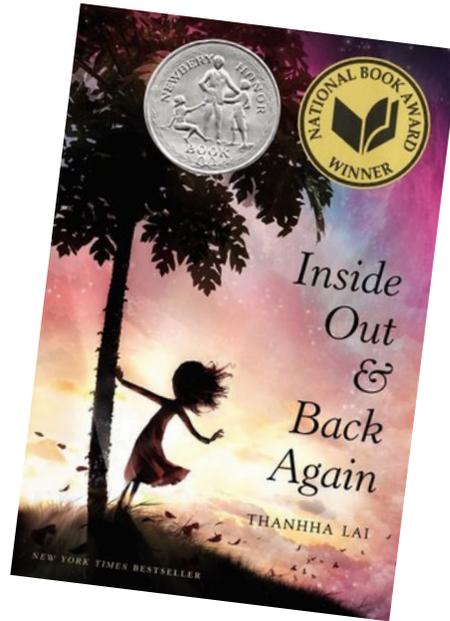
**Publication Year:** 2011

**ISBN:** 9780061962790

**Number of Pages:** 288

**Interest Level:** Intermediate, Young Adult

**Rating:** Excellent



## Review

Hà lives in Saigon during the the 1970s and Southern Vietnam is trying to maintain itself as a democratic state against communist Northern Vietnam. But in 1975 everything changes when Southern Vietnam succumbs to communism. Hà's world is turned inside out; she and her family are forced to flee and find refuge in America. They move to Alabama and everything is different: food, religion, language, and school. It's an emotional rollercoaster for everyone in Hà's family as they try to adapt to this new culture. But Hà is determined to learn English and find a place for herself. She makes new friends like Pam and Steven, but a boy she calls "Pink Boy" and his friends are less than friendly. With the help of her friends, her older brothers, and the friendly Americans she's met, she's able to overcome her fear of the bullies. Hà learns to navigate this new world in Alabama, and as the year comes to a close, she realizes all of the things she has learned and looks forward to her new life.

Lai's writing is clear and beautiful in this fantastic story of upheaval. The free verse format of the story allows Lai to show short moments in brief, powerful images and phrases. The format also allows for interpretation as readers pick apart Lai's words in order to form a more solid narrative within their minds. This technique places a lot of responsibility on the reader's shoulders, and warrants an older audience. Moreover, the minimalism of the structure allows readers glimpses rather than more in depth views of each character. Readers will be able to see and understand Hà on a much deeper level than any of the other characters as they read her words and thoughts. Hà is a very real girl with feelings of alienation and loneliness; feelings that are extremely relatable for any reader. Deep and humorous, Inside Out and Back Again is a wonderful read about the heart-wrenching reality of change and loneliness.