



TeachersFirst READING TREKS

Inside Out & Back Again

Teacher Guide

Access Reading
Trek Map

Grade Level & Content Areas

Ages: 9–12

Grades: 4–7

Reading Level: 6th grade

Lexile Measure: 800L

Guided Reading Level: U

Developmental Reading

Assessment (DRA): 50

Content Areas: English/language arts, reading, literature, and social studies (including the Vietnam War, immigration, the refugee experience, and cultural identity).

Synopsis of Book

Inside Out & Back Again by Thanhà Lai is a novel in verse that tells the story of Hà, a ten-year-old girl forced to flee her home in Saigon after the Vietnam War. Traveling by boat with her mother and brothers, Hà leaves behind her father, who is missing in action, and everything familiar to her. The family eventually resettles in Alabama, where Hà struggles to learn English, faces bullying, and adapts to a culture very different from her own. Through resilience, humor, and poetry, Hà slowly begins to rebuild her life, finding strength in her family and discovering that while she cannot change her past, she can shape her future.

Standards

Common Core State Standards for K–5

Reading: Literature

- Key Ideas and Details
- Craft and Structure
- Integration of Knowledge and Ideas

Writing

- Text Types and Purposes
- Research to Build and Present Knowledge

Common Core State Standards for 6–12

Reading: Literature

- Key Ideas and Details
- Craft and Structure
- Integration of Knowledge and Ideas

Writing

- Text Types and Purposes
- Research to Build and Present Knowledge

National Curriculum Standards for Social Studies

- Theme 1: CULTURE
- Theme 2: TIME, CONTINUITY, AND CHANGE
- Theme 3: PEOPLE, PLACES, AND ENVIRONMENTS

National Core Arts Standards for Visual Arts

- CREATING
- RESPONDING

National Core Arts Standards for Music

- CREATING
- RESPONDING

Next Generation Science Standards

- Earth and Human Activity
- Engineering Design

Social Justice Standards

- Identity
- Diversity

Using a TeachersFirst® Reading Trek to Explore This Book

TeachersFirst Reading Treks create a virtual field trip of resources about a piece of literature or a text using the My Maps feature of Google Maps. To motivate and enrich student reading, teachers and students can reference this visual collection of web resources and images as they relate to the contents of a book.

TeachersFirst has done the hard work for you! Use the activities in this teacher guide and the accompanying [Reading Trek map](#) as you and your students explore this book. And, if you feel inspired, you (or your students) can create your own Reading Trek about this or another book!

Using This Reading Trek in Class



<https://teachersfirst.org/reading-treks/content/inside-out-back-again>

Below is a list of ideas for how to use this Reading Trek in your educational setting.

Working with the Map:

1. Introduce the book to the whole class by displaying the [Reading Trek map](#) on an interactive whiteboard and highlighting its various layers.
2. Have students create a Storyboard of Hà's Journey using Google Slides ([TeachersFirst review](#)). Make each slide represent a single map location and include images, key quotes from the text, and student-written captions that illustrate how Hà's identity evolves with each move.
3. Invite students to design a family passport for Hà's journey in Adobe Express for Education ([TeachersFirst review](#)). Include pages for location stamps, family reflections, food, language, and emotional growth. Update it as the class tracks each location on the map.
4. Use Padlet ([TeachersFirst review](#)) to record refugee vlogs from Hà's perspective. At each mapped stop (Saigon, the South China Sea, Guam, Florida, and Alabama), have students create short first-person reflections capturing Hà's emotions, struggles, and discoveries.
5. Have students design a postcard home from each map location using Google Drawings ([TeachersFirst review](#)). Ask students to choose a map location and create a postcard with an illustration on the front and a short message from Hà's perspective on the back. The message should capture her emotions, challenges, and hopes at that stage of the journey. Display the postcards around the map in your classroom to create a visual diary of Hà's travels.

Extension Activities:

1. Design a challenge inspired by Hà's migration. Create classroom stations that simulate challenges faced along her journey, such as packing essentials, decoding cultural clues, or solving survival scenarios. Each station can represent a different location, reinforcing Hà's resilience and adaptability.
2. Invite students to create Hà's journal with Book Creator ([TeachersFirst review](#)). Each entry should capture a major event or location and Hà's emotions, struggles, and personal growth. Students can add photos, artwork, or poems to bring Hà's perspective to life.
3. Use Genially ([TeachersFirst review](#)) to design an interactive digital timeline of Hà's journey. Students can include the historical context of the Vietnam War, key events from the novel, and Hà's evolving identity. Link interactive hotspots to images, poems, or student reflections.
4. Have students create a video using Adobe Express Video Maker ([TeachersFirst review](#)) that captures a key moment from Hà's journey—such as leaving Saigon, life on the ship, or adjusting in Alabama—and retells it as a short digital story. Students can combine narration, images, music, and text to capture Hà's emotions while also reflecting on the historical context of that moment.
5. Have students design an interactive timeline of Hà's journey using Timeline JS ([TeachersFirst review](#)). Working in pairs or small groups, students build a multimedia timeline that highlights Hà's experiences across Saigon, the South China Sea, Guam, and Alabama. Each timeline entry can include text from the novel, historical photos, or student-created artwork, helping to blend Hà's personal story with real-world events.

Helpful Resources

From TeachersFirst:

- [TeachersFirst CurriConnects Book List - Maps](#)
- [TeachersFirst Review of Google My Maps](#)
- [OK2Ask: Building Background Knowledge with Reading Treks](#)
- [OK2Ask: No Passport Required: Cross-Curricular Learning Journeys with Google My Maps](#)

Other Resources:

- [LitCharts - Inside Out & Back Again](#)
- [Weebly - Inside Out & Back Again Webquest](#)
- [Inside Out & Back Again Discussion Guide](#)
- [Scribd - Inside Out & Back Again Reading Guide](#)