

## English Grade 7

Summer Assignment 2025

Mrs. Okoniewski

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*For your summer reading assignment, you will read a book that tells the story of Hà, a ten-year-old girl who must flee Saigon with her family during the Vietnam War and seek refuge in the United States. For all 10 years of her life, Ha has only known Saigon: the thrills of its markets, the joy of its traditions, the warmth of her friends close by, and the beauty of her very own papaya tree. But now the Vietnam War has reached her home. Hà and her family are forced to flee as Saigon falls, and they board a ship headed toward hope. Author Thanhha Lai bases Hà's story on her own childhood experiences and wrote this book as a series of first-person verse poems, each 1–3 pages in length, that span the course of a single year. The book is:*



★★★★★ 6,991

[Inside Out and Back Again](#) by Thanhha Lai

ISBN 978-0061962790

You will need a **small marble composition book** (college-ruled) to complete this assignment, and you will use this same notebook for journaling in class for the remainder of the school year.

**This summer work will be collected on the first day back to school in September.**

### **Task #1: Reading of the poem “Maps” & Journal**

Read the poem, “Maps,” by Yesenia Montilla (see attached).

In your composition journal **label, number**, and in your own handwriting, dedicate two pages to the poem by responding to as many of the questions below as you can. Remember to use complete sentences.

1. Write down any interesting words or phrases
2. What do you notice about how the poem is structured?
3. List any questions you have after reading the poem. What do you wonder?
4. How do you think the poet/speaker feels about maps?
5. How do you think maps contribute to the way we understand the world?
6. How do you think maps are used to convey certain ideas about different places in the world?
7. The speaker of the poem outlines the disadvantages of maps. Do you think that maps and borders have any positive traits, or do you agree with the speaker? If you believe that maps have positive traits, what are they?
8. In the poem, the speaker is separated from someone they care about and this is made more painful because they are separated by lines on the map. Why is it painful to be separated from someone you care about? In your opinion, do the lines on maps physically and emotionally divide us from others?

## **Task #2: Inside Out and Back Again      Reading**

Students should read Lai's novel over the summer and try to take notes **in the book** as they read. If you don't wish to write in your book, you can use sticky notes. *Inside Out & Back Again* will be our focus for the first month of school, so don't worry about right or wrong interpretations- we will have many discussions to flesh out Hà's story.

Annotations (or notes in the margins) will be a focus of the class during the school year, so each student should practice them over the summer. Here are some tips on what writing in your book might look like...

**Annotations** can take many forms but are mostly used to make observations about plot, characters, and major themes (*Identity, Coming-of-Age, Language/Communication, or being an Outsider*). Your book should look 'worked in'. This summer, I want you to focus the notes you take on the protagonist and narrator, *Hà*.

*What do we know about her character?*

*What pages and scenes feature important moments?*

*How does she change over the course of the novel?*

*In what ways is she an outsider?*

*What details inform readers about her identity? (In other words, what makes Hà, Hà?)*

*How is she different from those around her?*

Also, highlight, underline, and/or mark any passages that you find particularly important or significant. Then, write in the margins (marginalia), jot some notes about why you marked that passage.

*Think: Why is this scene or passage in the book so important?*

Pay specific attention to scenes in which *Hà* feels or is treated like an outsider or telling you about her identity and family life. Be aware of the notes you are taking. By no means should the entire book be highlighted and/or underlined. You should be able to search your notes quickly during class discussions.

## **Task 3: Inside Out and Back Again      Journaling**

In addition to reading and taking notes, you will complete one journal entry for each of the sections listed below (Parts I, II, III and IV). It is highly suggested that you do not wait until after you have read the entire novel to complete your journal entries! You can break down the assignment into smaller chunks by reading one section and completing the assigned journal entry for that section.

**Use the same marbled composition notebook as the poem above and label all responses accordingly.**

### **Part I (pp 1-69) Summary/Reflection:**

1. Write what theme stands out the most to you in this section.  
(*Identity, Coming-of-Age, Language/Communication, or being an Outsider*)
2. Write a quote that stands out to you from this section and a note as to why you are choosing this quote. Does it make you wonder anything? Is it foreshadowing something to come? Does it represent characterization?
3. Write a 1-paragraph **SUMMARY** (5-6 sentences) summarizing and highlighting the action that occurred in pp 1-69 in your own words.  
Think: If you had to tell a friend what happened without leaving out any important details.
4. Write a 1-paragraph **REFLECTION** (5-6 sentences) reflecting on any connections you can make with Hà, her emotions, how she's changed, and/or another text you have read or even connect Hà and your own world (What if this was your life?).

**\*\*\*Repeat and do the same as above for Part II (pp73-111), Part III (pp 115-234) and Part IV (237-260).**

You should treat this reading journal as a personal object, a place to be and act and write as yourself. If you like to draw, draw. If you like to ask questions, ask questions. If you want to write about other characters or do research about the historical background of the book and write about that, go ahead. As long as you fulfill the general requirements of the assignment (i.e. summarize the action of each chapter and provide a personal reaction/analysis of the reading), you may do what else with it what you will.

**Class Supply List-** Please have the following on the first day back in September:

- 3-ring binder (1 ½ inch) & lined paper
- 5 Dividers (Label and place in binder: Literature, Writing, Grammar, Tests/Quizzes, and Poetry)
- 1 marble composition book that is college-ruled for journaling (use the same as your summer work)
- pens/pencils/highlighters
- Post it notes for note-taking
- 2 boxes of tissues for classroom use (Please give to ‘English’ teacher on our first day of class in September)
- 2 dry erase markers for classroom use- any color (Please give to ‘English’ teacher on our first day of class)

**Required Texts -** Please obtain the specific editions below **BEFORE** we return to school in September. It is imperative that you purchase the following editions; this will make finding passages in class that much easier.

[\*Inside Out and Back Again\*](#) by Thanhha Lai ISBN: 978-0061962790 (summer assignment)

[\*Haroun and the Sea of Stories\*](#) by Salman Rushdie ISBN: 978-0140157376

*The Merchant of Venice* by William Shakespeare  
[\(Cambridge School of Shakespeare edition\)](#) ISBN 978-1107615397

4th book TBD

# Maps

<https://poets.org/poem/maps>

Yesenia Montilla

*for Marcelo*

Some maps have blue borders  
like the blue of your name  
or the tributary lacing of  
veins running through your  
father's hands. & how the last  
time I saw you, you held  
me for so long I saw whole  
lifetimes flooding by me  
small tentacles reaching  
for both our faces. I wish  
maps would be without  
borders & that we belonged  
to no one & to everyone  
at once, what a world that  
would be. Or not a world  
maybe we would call it  
something more intrinsic  
like forgiving or something  
simplistic like river or dirt.  
& if I were to see you  
tomorrow & everyone you  
came from had disappeared  
I would weep with you & drown  
out any black lines that this  
earth allowed us to give it—  
because what is a map but  
a useless prison? We are all  
so lost & no naming of blank  
spaces can save us. & what  
is a map but the delusion of  
safety? The line drawn is always  
in the sand & folds on itself  
before we're done making it.  
& that line, there, south of  
el rio, how it dares to cover  
up the bodies, as though we  
would forget who died there  
& for what? As if we could  
forget that if you spin a globe  
& stop it with your finger  
you'll land it on top of someone  
living, someone who was not  
expecting to be crushed by thirst—