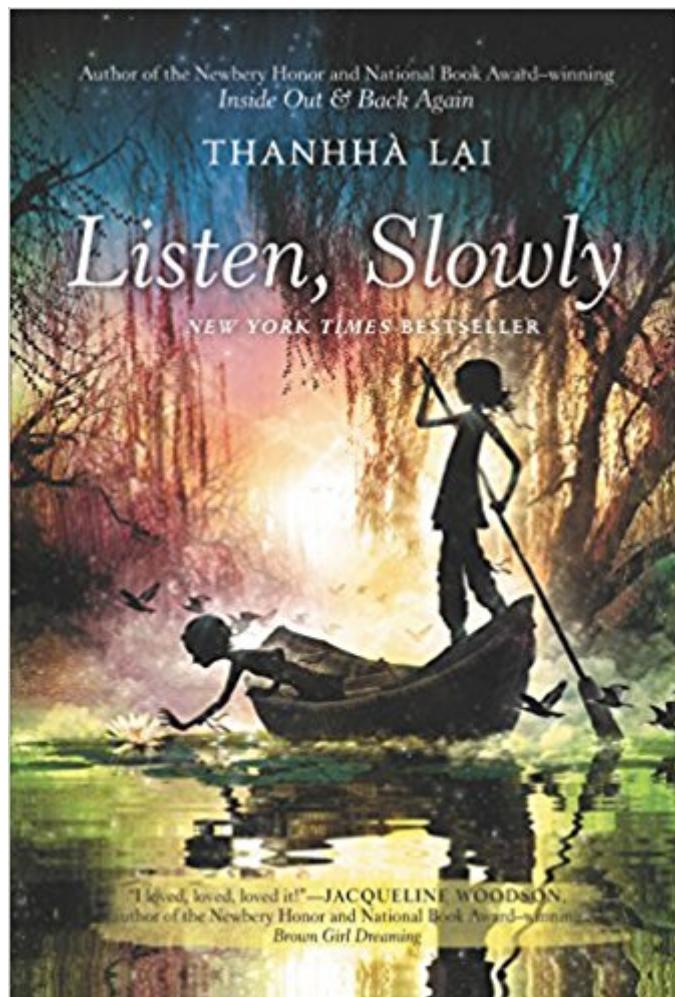


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# Listen, Slowly



## Synopsis

Listen, Slowly is a New York Times Book Review Notable Book and a Publishers Weekly Best Book of the Year! This remarkable and bestselling novel from Thanhha Lai, author of the National Book Award–winning and Newbery Honor Book Inside Out & Back Again, follows a young girl as she learns the true meaning of family. A California girl born and raised, Mai can't wait to spend her vacation at the beach. Instead, she has to travel to Vietnam with her grandmother, who is going back to find out what really happened to her husband during the Vietnam War. Mai's parents think this trip will be a great opportunity for their out-of-touch daughter to learn more about her culture. But to Mai, those are their roots, not her own. Vietnam is hot, smelly, and the last place she wants to be. Besides barely speaking the language, she doesn't know the geography, the local customs, or even her distant relatives. To survive her trip, Mai must find a balance between her two completely different worlds. Perfect for fans of Rita Williams-Garcia and Linda Sue Park, Listen, Slowly is an irresistibly charming and emotionally poignant tale about a girl who discovers that home and culture, family and friends, can all mean different things. This paperback edition includes a special letter from the author and a Vietnamese glossary and pronunciation guide.

## Book Information

Paperback: 288 pages

Publisher: HarperCollins; Reprint edition (May 17, 2016)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0062229192

ISBN-13: 978-0062229199

Product Dimensions: 5.1 x 0.6 x 7.6 inches

Shipping Weight: 7.2 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.4 out of 5 stars 85 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #20,842 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #16 in Books > Children's Books > Geography & Cultures > Explore the World > Asia #48 in Books > Children's Books > Growing Up & Facts of Life > Fiction #55 in Books > Children's Books > Growing Up & Facts of Life > Family Life > Multigenerational

Age Range: 8 - 12 years

Grade Level: 3 - 7

## Customer Reviews

Gr 5-8 •The summer before she turns 13, Mai is planning to spend her time going

to the beach and finally talking to her secret crush. She's less than thrilled when her parents make her escort her grandmother to Vietnam instead. New information may have surfaced about her long lost grandfather, who disappeared over 40 years ago in "THE WAR." Mai doesn't know the culture or speak the language, and everything she knows about Vietnam is from a PBS documentary on the Fall of Saigon. While her parents are excited for her to learn more about her roots, the teen doesn't even know the details of her own parents' escape because "random roots are encouraged, but specific roots are off-limits." Stuck in a village with limited internet access, a sulky Mai slowly makes friends due to lack of better things to do and bonds with her grandmother, with whom she was very close as a small child. Mai's character growth is slow and believable, coming in small increments and occasionally backsliding. The sights, smells, and tastes of Vietnam's cities and villages come alive on the page, without overwhelming a story filled with a summers-worth of touching and hilarious moments, grand adventure, and lazy afternoons. With a contemporary time setting, this compelling novel shows the lingering effects of war through generations and how the secrets our parents keep can shape us. •Jennifer Rothschild, Arlington County Public Libraries, VA --This text refers to the Library Binding edition.

"This book is at once funny, thoughtful, and stunningly engaging. I loved, loved, loved it! Can't wait for my own daughter •and every reader who is lucky enough to get their hands on it to step inside Mai's two, very different, worlds. (Jacqueline Woodson, author of the National Book Award-winning *Brown Girl Dreaming*) "Lai does a superb job of creating a memorable setting and populating it with fully developed, complex characters. Gracefully written, *Listen, Slowly* is a sometimes humorous, always thought-provoking coming-of-age story. (Booklist (starred review)) "The sights, smells, and tastes of Vietnam's cities and villages come alive on the page, without overwhelming a story filled with a summers-worth of touching and hilarious moments, grand adventure, and lazy afternoons. (School Library Journal (starred review)) "As she did in her National Book Award-winning *Inside Out & Back Again*, Lai offers a memorable heroine and cultural journey •ones that are clever near-opposites of those in that book. (Publishers Weekly (starred review)) "Lai inserts Ba's lyrical voice selectively into Mai's story. These heart-stopping passages further shift Mai's position from outsider to insider, to, finally, truly bicultural, just as Listen, Slowly invites readers to see Vietnam from the inside out •and back again. (New York Times Book Review) "This is a love story on many levels, between granddaughter and grandmother,

grandmother and grandfather, and for the homeland one carries within. Details Lai plants early on add up to a powerful finish. A beautiful counterpart to Thanhha Lai's Inside Out and Back Again. (Shelf Awareness (starred review)) "Newbery Honor author Lai delivers a funny, realistic tale of family and friendship and culture clashes. A touching tale of preteen angst and translation troubles." (Kirkus Reviews) "This valentine of a novel may jumpstart questions in young readers about the people and places of their families' past." (Washington Post) "Lai convincingly shows Mai's slow transformation from spoiled child to someone who can look beyond herself with compassion. Her strong-willed personality makes her an entertaining narrator; readers will happily travel anywhere with Mai." (The Horn Book) "Through prose so evocative we can feel the heat caressing Mai's skin as she lands, Lai transports the reader from suburban California to modern-day Vietnam." (Los Angeles Times) The village experience and Mai and her grandmother's travels in the city offer Lai a way to introduce readers to various aspects of Vietnamese culture with both wry wit and genuine enthusiasm. (Bulletin of the Center for Children's Books) "Thanhha Lai is so amazing." (Bustle.com) "Holy cats, I LOVE this book! I loved Mai so much she's one of the best characters I've read in a while. Sarcastic, smart, and so, so funny. And she brings a wonderful sense of levity to a beautiful, sad story." (BookRiot.com) Praise for INSIDE OUT AND BACK AGAIN: "An enlightening, poignant and unexpectedly funny novel in verse. In her not-to-be-missed debut, Lai evokes a distinct time and place and presents a complex, realistic heroine." (Kirkus Reviews (starred review)) "Based in Lai's personal experience, this first novel captures a child's refugee's struggle with rare honesty. Written in accessible, short free verse poems, Haf's immediate narrative describes her mistakes both humorous and heartbreaking; and readers will be moved by Haf's sorrow as they recognize the anguish of being the outcast." (Booklist (starred review)) "The taut portrayal of Haf's emotional life is especially poignant as she cycles from feeling smart in Vietnam to struggling in the States, and finally regains academic and social confidence. An incisive portrait of human resilience." (Publishers Weekly (starred review)) "Haf's voice is full of humor and hope." (School Library Journal (starred review)) "Open this book, read it slowly to savor the delicious language. This is a book that asks the reader to be careful, to pay attention, to sigh at the end." (Kathi Appelt, bestselling author of Newbery Honor Book *The Underneath*) "American and Vietnamese characters alike leap to life through the voice and eyes of a ten-year-old

girlâ€”a protagonist so strong, loving, and vivid I longed to hand her a wedge of freshly cut papaya. (Mitali Perkins, author of *Bamboo People*)â€”“Laiâ€”â€œs spare language captures the sensory disorientation of changing cultures as well as a refugeeâ€”â€œs complex emotions and kaleidoscopic loyalties. (The Horn Book)â€”“In this free-verse narrative, Lai is sparing in her details, painting big pictures with few words and evoking abundant visuals. (Bulletin of the Center for Childrenâ€”â€œs Books)

My daughter very much enjoyed reading this book with me. It is told from the point of view of the granddaughter and daughter of war refugees from Vietnam. The protagonist starts out with a negative attitude toward her trip back to the old country but she learns a great deal, both from her young relatives and new friends living there and from the elders who lived through the trauma of the war.

Beautiful book about girl coming in terms with her heritage. It teaches good values and respect to one's culture. It shines a light on values and priorities, as well as on what good friendships are like. I bought this book for my niece, but promptly got another copy for my son who read it in one sitting. It allowed us to have great conversation about his heritage, languages, relationships with his friends, relationships with his family, and it also inspired us to get further educated on Vietnam -- the history, political situation, and the country today. We also ended up getting another book from Thanhha Lai.

Love a book where the teen character experiences growth in maturity. As with C. Kadohata books, the young woman is able to love and respect her grandmother and rise above being embarrassed by cultural differences that may affect how her friends see her. I think the descriptions in Viet Nam are so well written that I feel I could smell the markets and the stagnant ponds! Very interesting characters throughout and loved the friendship between Mei and Ut. This would be a great book for teachers to read aloud--grades 6 and up. Perfect for a multicultural read, also.

Love this story...at times, heart wringing, once Mia/Mai matures and begins to look beyond herself. Other times, quite hilarious...especially Chap.23 ...anyone who has tried to learn Vietnamese would appreciate. I had 1st read *Inside Out and Back Again* - The poetry format was surprisingly fitting and very touching. So well crafted. Motivated me to read *Listen, Slowly*. I will watch for works from Thanhha Lai.

I personally really enjoyed this book. In my opinion, it is a perfect account of what many second-generation kids feel about going to their parent's home country. The main character, Mai/Mia, is a Vietnamese girl raised in Laguna, who has striven for a long time to become American and let go of her heritage. But she is pulled into a summer trip to Vietnam by her grandmother, and as time passes, learns to accept who she is, and to love Vietnam. The book is funny and sad simultaneously, and I would recommend it to all middle schoolers and older kids too.

I enjoyed 80% of the book. I learned so much about Vietnamese culture. I loved most of the characters except the main character. It was hard for me to relate to her two dimensional Valley Girl persona. I understood why the author characterized her that way but it was just hard for me to connect to her. I would still recommend this book to middle grade kids because there is a lot to gain from reading about a culture you never, ever see in books. Thank you for that experience.

Absolutely beautifully written book. I loved the back story about grandma. I hope one day the author will expand on that story. The teenage side of the story was so relatable and I felt as if she was telling my own story. Loved this book and recommend for all age readers.

good book

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