Abby Jackson

Dr. Crovitz

ENGL 7711

7 February 2013

Inside Out and Back Again – Questions

1. How does the structure Lai uses impact the story? Does this complicate the reading of the story she writes?
2. Hà struggles in being immersed into American culture. What cultural aspects of her life seem to disappear as she continues to live in Alabama? Which American cultural aspects influence her? Which of her own aspects of her own culture remain prominent in her life?
3. How is the environment in America different from the environment in Vietnam? How are they similar?
4. How do the titles of her daily poems connect to the words in the poetry? Especially in “Most Relieved Day”?
5. Why do you think Lai chose to use specific dates on some poems while others say “Everyday?” What would be the purpose of this?
6. What character flaw influences Hà’s decisions on whether or not she will listen to the cultural practices her mother imposes upon her? How does this impact her at the end of the book?
7. Explain Mother’s character and how hers and Hà’s relationship changes throughout the book.
8. What does mother’s ring symbolically represent? Why do you think Lai chose Amethyst?
9. Why does Hà love papaya? What does the use of papaya and/or fruit represent? Does it have any cultural significance?
10. What stereotypes are portrayed about ethnicities and religion in this novel?
11. Mother teaches Hà not only cultural practices but also life lessons, such as compromising and being gentle or calm. How does Mother portray these lessons? Did she compromise? Is she calm in nature? How?
12. Why is it important for the children to learn English in America? Why does Mother continue to enforce this?
13. How did living in America provide the family with more opportunities? What other cultures have received refuge in America with hopes and dreams of more opportunities?
14. What is the significance of the use of fruit, animals, and flowers? Does it have a cultural significance? If so, explain.
15. How do we, as teachers and/or peers, help students in Hà’s situation? She is not “dumb;” she just has a language barrier.
16. Hà’s English teacher tries to help Ha by showing images of her home land, but she only highlights the negative of Hà’s background. How important is it to ensure that students are not misunderstood when they come from other countries and cultures?