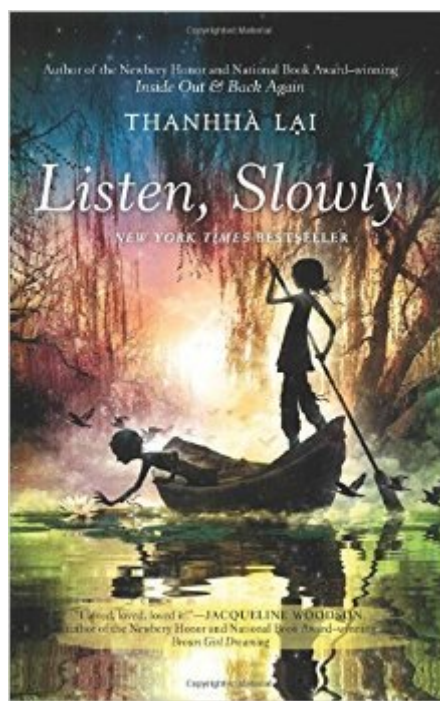


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# Listen, Slowly



## 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: 4.5 out of 5 stars [See all reviews](#) (86 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #36,350 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #32 in [Books > Children's Books >](#)

[Geography & Cultures > Explore the World > Asia](#) #109 in [Books > Children's Books > Growing](#)

[Up & Facts of Life > Fiction](#) #126 in [Books > Children's Books > Growing Up & Facts of Life >](#)

[Family Life > Multigenerational](#)

Age Range: 8 - 12 years

Grade Level: 3 - 7

## Customer Reviews

This is a fun, interesting book of a California girl (whose parents were born in Vietnam, but now both

have successful careers in the US) who's required to visit Vietnam with her aging grandmother to investigate what may have happened to her grandfather who was lost in the war. Although that line draws the plot along, it's really a book about a girl going somewhere new, making friends and having adventures, rather than a story about adults or grandparents. It's fun, interesting, and easy to relate to--it accurately reflects the way most of us who were born in the U.S. would likely feel upon traveling to a new country for an extended period of time--awkward and annoyed at first, then slowly beginning to appreciate the various angles of living somewhere new. But this happens in a way that's fun and interesting rather than dry and lecture-y (with the protagonist herself rolling her eyes or saying "whatever" precisely at the moment that we ourselves would likely feel that way when an authority figure offers too much instruction). As I reader, I really enjoyed the story--fun, touching, exciting, adventurous. As someone who was born in the US and lived overseas as a child, it has a very realistic feel to it. As someone who enjoys traveling a lot (spending 7+ days in each location rather than taking a whirlwind approach to my travels), it made me feel like I was actually there, and excited to perhaps visit sometime (even despite the drawbacks she mentions). As a parent, I like that it's a great way to introduce my kids to a new culture in a way that will make them interested rather than bored.

"Listen, Slowly" is a novel of quiet, powerful and emotional personal growth. Thanhha Lai has written a book that highlights the culture and customs of Vietnam as seen through the eyes of Mai, a young first-generation Californian. Mai is a twelve-year old California girl. Her father, now a doctor, was evacuated as a child from Saigon two days before its fall; her mother, who is an attorney, was a boat-person. Neither will talk to Mai about their memories of Vietnam "...random roots are encouraged but specific roots are off-limits ..." Mai's grandmother Ba lives with the family. Her one desire is to return to Vietnam to discover the fate of her husband, captured during the Vietnam War. While her physician father performs medical procedures in rural Vietnam, a reluctant, disgruntled Mai must assume the responsibility, as Ba waits to meet the man who guarded Mai's grandfather, of being her grandmother's companion. As the days pass, Mai begins to understand and to appreciate the people and the culture of her ancestral homeland. Characters throughout "Listen, Slowly" are very appealing. Mai is a typical preteen, complete with her eye-rolling and exasperated view of parents. "...I guess parents embarrass their children everywhere in the world ..." Even her view of Vietnam and the Vietnamese people is colored by her pre-teen attitudes. "So many good habits in one population are really annoying ..." "Listen, Slowly" is filled with gentle humor and deep familial love. Thanhha Lai realistically captures the nuances of culture and language, the characters'

personalities and emotional reactions, and the innate strength of individuals who have one, overwhelming goal to achieve.

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