

BOOKNOTES

TEACHERS GUIDE

classroom connections

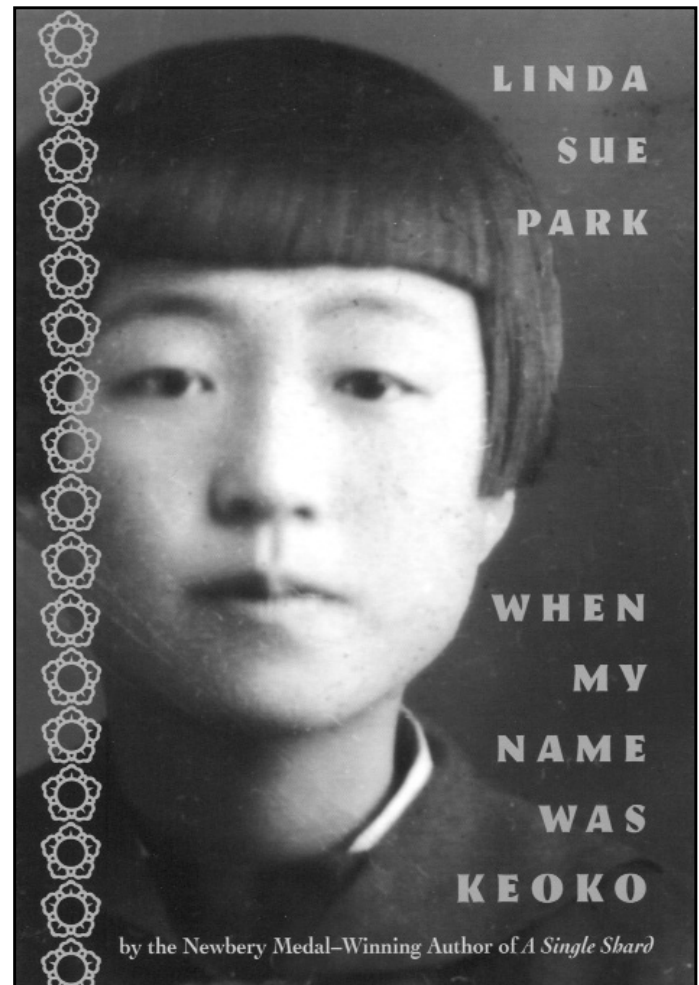
**World War II • Courage
Patriotism • Family
Friendship
Culture and Traditions**

Grades 5 up

about the book

The Kim family's pride in their country and its culture leads them to maintain as much of the Korean ways as possible during the Japanese occupation of Korea. This pride almost costs them their lives.

Sun-hee and her older brother Tae-yul are proud of their Korean heritage. Yet they live their lives under Japanese occupation. All students must read and write in Japanese and no one can fly the Korean flag. Hardest of all is when the Japanese Emperor forces all Koreans to take Japanese names. Sun-hee and Tae-yul become Keoko and Nobuo. Korea is torn apart by their Japanese invaders during World War II. Everyone must help with war preparations, but it doesn't mean they are willing to defend Japan. Tae-yul is about to risk his life to help his family, while Sun-hee stays home guarding life-and-death secrets.



Dell Yearling paperback • 0-440-41944-1

awards & reviews

An ALA Best Book for Young Adults

An ALA Notable Children's Book

★ "[A] powerful and riveting tale."

—Starred, *Kirkus Reviews*

pre-reading activity

Ask students to identify Korea, Manchuria, and Japan on a world map to familiarize themselves with the setting of the story. Lead a class discussion on what it means for a country to be occupied, drawing on other examples from history and current events. Then read students a Korean folktale and explain to them that during Japan's occupation of Korea folktales were one of the forbidden cultural expressions.

thematic connections

QUESTIONS FOR GROUP DISCUSSION

Courage—Courage is the state of mind or spirit that enables one to face danger, fear, or difficulty with confidence and strength. Each member of Sun-hee's family exhibits courage, as do Mrs. Ahn and Tomo. Brainstorm the ways each character exhibits courage and discuss what motivates each to act so courageously when facing the constant fear of death and/or imprisonment. How do you exhibit courage in your life? Would it be considered courageous to stand up against peer pressure? Why or why not?

Patriotism—The children work for the war effort at school, and the Korean citizens contribute many of their possessions to help aid in the war. However, their efforts to help Japan be victorious are superficial because the contributions they make are forced. Their true patriotism is to Korea. Brainstorm the different contributions each member of the Kim family makes to show their loyalty to Korea. What does your family do to exhibit patriotism and loyalty to the United States?

Family—Abuji is the head of the Kim family, and every member of the family obeys him and follows his wishes out of love and respect for his authority. How does Uncle disobey Abuji, but allow him to maintain his position as leader of the family? Tae-yul also acts in ways that are displeasing to his father, but does not outright disrespect him. Discuss the difference between deliberate acts of disobedience and disagreements over a course of action to be taken. Discuss with students how they can respectfully disagree with their parents. Ask them to share a time when they resolved a conflict with their parents by being respectful.

Restoration—Japan's occupation of Korea demoralizes the Korean people. They are not allowed to speak their language or learn their history. Discuss with your students the events that happen in the country and how they are reflected in the Kim family. For example, the country is torn apart by war and the Kim family is torn apart when Uncle leaves, and again when Tae-yul leaves. What are signs of the restoration of the country and the family after the Japanese are forced to flee the country? Have you ever experienced a break in your family or friendships that has been restored?

Friendship—Friendship is important to girls Sun-hee's age, but making friends is difficult, and keeping them proves to be impossible. Discuss how and why Sun-hee's friendships are adversely affected by the war in her country. Neither Sun-hee nor her friends has any control over what is happening around them. Have you ever had a friendship dissolve for reasons out of your control? Ask students to share their experiences with the class.

Culture and Traditions—In the face of losing their culture under Japanese occupation, the Koreans prove to be resilient and commit to preserving their way of life. Why is it so important to them to keep the Korean language, food, names, clothing, and way of life? Why do they go to such lengths, even endangering their lives, to preserve symbols of their heritage?



connecting to the curriculum

Social Studies—Sun-hee and her mother are not meant to listen to “men’s business,” to voice their opinions, or to speak freely when men are present. Their job is to cook, clean, and take care of the men of the family. Ask students to research modern day Korea, and determine if this custom has changed. What jobs, if any, do women hold? Are childcare facilities available to working women in Korea? Have students write an advertisement for a job opportunity, childcare facility, or training class in an area that has job opportunities for women.

History—Tae-yul volunteers to fly for the Japanese Imperial Army. When he is asked to be a Kamikaze pilot he readily agrees so that he can help his family and possibly save his uncle. Ask students to investigate Kamikaze pilots and report to the class the reasons for their missions, the belief system that motivated the pilots to volunteer, and the number of Japanese and Korean pilots who died for their country in this way. Using their research, have students write a series of letters from Tae-yul to his family relating his experiences in the Japanese Imperial Army. Students could start their research at the Kamikaze Pilots Web site. (See the Internet Resources section.)

Science—When the Kims are forced to uproot and burn all of their Rose of Sharon trees, Omoni refuses to destroy them all. She replants the smallest tree in a pot and keeps it in the garden shed covered up with burlap bags and tools. How does the tree stay alive with no sunlight? Experiment by planting flower seeds in a pot; keep them watered, but give them no light. Do they grow? Why or why not?

Art—After investigating Korea, have students make a collage of hand drawn symbols that represent the country. They can begin with trees, flowers, flags, food, language, music, art, and industry. Students can color their drawings and paste them on a poster board to display in the classroom.

Language Arts—When the Emperor orders all Koreans to take Japanese names, the Kim family is angry, but Abuji chooses a family name in Japanese that will honor the family’s history. Then Sun-hee, Tae-yul, their parents, and their uncle all choose new names with new meanings. Ask students to research their own names to determine their meanings. Students can also ask their parents or guardians where their names came from and if they hold any special meaning to their family. Students might find this site helpful:

www.parenthood.com/babynames.html

Uncle is a newspaper publisher for the Korean resistance movement. In small groups, have students produce this resistance newspaper complete with calls to action, news of the war, Japanese atrocities, and stories about individual sacrifices.

vocabulary/ use of language

Many times throughout the novel, announcements and orders given by the Emperor are stated in such a way that the harsh meaning is disguised in positive terms. For example, “By order of the Emperor, all Koreans are to be graciously allowed to take Japanese names.” (p. 5) Discuss connotation and denotation with your students and ask them to find other examples of twisted meanings in the Emperor’s orders.

related titles

by theme

Under the Blood-Red Sun

Graham Salisbury

Culture and Traditions • Courage
Historical Fiction (World War II)
Grades 5 up / 0-440-41139-4
Dell Yearling

Goodbye, Vietnam

Gloria Whelan

Culture and Traditions • Family Life
Historical Fiction (Vietnam War)
Grades 3-7 / 0-679-82376-X
Dell Yearling

Year of Impossible Goodbyes

Sook Nyul Choi

Culture and Traditions • Family
Historical Fiction (1940s North Korea)
Grades 5 up / 0-440-40759-1
Dell Yearling

A Single Shard 🎧

Linda Sue Park

Culture and Traditions • Adopted and Orphaned
Children • Historical Fiction (12th-Century Korea)
Grades 5 up / 0-440-41851-8
Dell Yearling

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Photo Credit: Klaus Pöllmeier

about the author

Raised in Illinois, **Linda Sue Park** is the daughter of Korean immigrants. She has been writing stories and poems all her life and gives a lot of credit to her father for taking her to the library every Saturday. She has published four middle-grade novels—*SeeSaw Girl*; *The Kite Fighters*; *A Single Shard*, a Newbery Medal Winner, an ALA Best Book for Young Adults, and an ALA Notable Children's Book; and *When My Name Was Keoko*, an ALA Best Book for Young Adults and an ALA Notable Children's Book. Ms. Park currently lives in New York with her husband and two children.

internet resources

CNN

edition.cnn.com/2001/WORLD/asiapcf/east/10/15/korea.koizumi/?related

A CNN report on a small monument dedicated to Korean independence freedom fighters tortured to death during the Japanese occupation of Korea.

BBC News

news.bbc.co.uk/2/low/asia-pacific/1132268.stm

The BBC chronicles the events after World War II; the Japanese occupation of Korea ends with Soviet troops occupying the north, and US troops the south.

Kamikaze Pilots

www.info.tampere.fi/a/amuri/tyot/Kamikaze1.htm

This site contains well-documented information about Kamikaze pilots in the Japanese Imperial Army.

Linda Sue Park

www.lindasuepark.com

This is the author's official site.