



TEACHER GUIDE

GRADES 6-8

COMPREHENSIVE CURRICULUM BASED LESSON PLANS

When My Name Was Keoko

Linda Sue Park

READ, WRITE, THINK, DISCUSS AND CONNECT

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NOTE:

The trade book edition of the novel used to prepare this guide is found in the Novel Units catalog and on the Novel Units website. Using other editions may have varied page references.

Please note: We have assigned Interest Levels based on our knowledge of the themes and ideas of the books included in the Novel Units sets, however, please assess the appropriateness of this novel or trade book for the age level and maturity of your students prior to reading with them. You know your students best!

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Skills and Strategies

Critical Thinking

Interpreting evidence, compare/contrast, forming opinions, identifying stereotypes, paradox, pros/cons, research

Comprehension

Cause/effect, classifying, details, generalizing, inferencing, main idea, predicting, summarizing

Listening/Speaking

Discussion, oral report, role-playing

Vocabulary

Compound words, context clues, synonyms, antonyms, using a dictionary

Writing

Article, description, list, narrative, letter, report, interview

Literary Elements

Analogy, characterization, description, foreshadowing, plot development, setting, point of view, simile, theme

Across the Curriculum

Art—drawing; Science—pine trees, cherry trees, rice, gliders; Social Studies—maps, culture, history, politics, laws; Math—statistics, percentages; Technology—Internet research

Genre: historical fiction

Setting: a town in southern Korea, 1940–1945

Point of View: first person, from two characters' points of view

Themes: national pride, family, cultural diversity, political disobedience, hardships of war, loss of freedom

Conflict: person vs. self, person vs. person, person vs. society

Style: narrative

Date of First Publication: 2002

Summary

The year is 1940. Ten-year-old Sun-hee and her 13-year-old brother, Tae-yul, live with their parents in Japanese-controlled Korea. The Japanese prohibit the expression of Korean culture, going so far as to require Koreans to adopt Japanese names. Sun-hee becomes Keoko, and Tae-yul becomes Nobuo. Their father, a vice-principal at a school, is secretly a writer for the Korean revolutionary movement, and their uncle, a printer, prints an underground Korean resistance paper. Sun-hee misunderstands a friend's warning and believes Uncle is in danger of being arrested by the Japanese. Uncle goes into hiding. As World War II heats up, Tae-yul drops out of school to work on a Japanese airstrip. The Japanese police question him about Uncle and want him to arrange a meeting, but Tae-yul dodges the task by saying he is reporting for duty as a soldier in the Japanese army. He eventually becomes a kamikaze pilot. His family believes he is dead after they receive a letter he wrote before his mission. Unbeknownst to the family, clouds obscure Tae-yul's target, and his flying group returns to base and is thrown in jail. At the end of the war, he is released, Americans occupy the southern part of Korea, and Uncle is trapped in the northern part of the country.

About the Author

Linda Sue Park was born and raised in Illinois. Her parents are Korean immigrants, and her stories come from her interest in her heritage. She earned degrees from Stanford University, Trinity College Dublin, and the University of London. Park worked as a copywriter and journalist before trying her hand at young adult novels. Park believes writers should first be voracious readers, which will make writing techniques an intrinsic part of the writing process.

Park's first novel, *Seesaw Girl*, was published in 1999 and earned excellent reviews. Her second book, *The Kite Fighters*, was also well received. *A Single Shard*, her third book, won the 2002 Newbery Medal. *When My Name was Keoko* also received many awards: ALA Notable Books for Children, ALA Best Books for Young Adults, Jane Addams Children's Book Honor Award, *Publishers Weekly* Best Books of the Year, *School Library Journal* Best Books of the Year, and IRA Notable Books for a Global Society.

Park and her husband live in Rochester, New York, with their two children and a dog. Her official Web site is www.lspark.com (active at the printing of this guide).

Major Characters

Sun-hee: ten-year-old Korean girl whose Japanese name is Keoko

Tae-yul: 13-year-old Korean boy whose Japanese name is Nobuo

Abuji: father of Sun-hee and Tae-yul; a school vice-principal

Omoni: mother of Sun-hee and Tae-yul

Uncle: Abuji's brother; a printer

Tomo: Sun-hee's Japanese schoolmate

Jung-shin: Sun-hee's Korean friend whose father is helping the Japanese

Mrs. Ahn: neighbor of Sun-hee's family

Initiating Activities

Choose one or more of the following activities to introduce the novel.

1. **Multimedia:** Show videotapes, pictures, and photographs of Korea and its people. Check out several books about Korea to use as resources throughout the study of the novel. Allow each student to look at a resource material for three minutes before passing it on to the next person. Continue passing resources around until students have seen most of the resources. Seeing pictures of Koreans and their country will give students background knowledge for the novel.
2. **Maps:** Show Korea on a world map and point out its proximity to Japan.
3. **Science:** Show a picture of rice fields in Korea and explain the unique way rice grows. Explain that rice is a staple in the Korean diet.
4. **Culture:** Show pictures of traditional Korean dress, homes, and planned gardens in the 1940s.
5. **Math:** Give statistics about population density and major cities in both North and South Korea.
6. **History:** Discuss the Korean Conflict, how Korea is now divided, and the role the United Nations plays in keeping the peace.
7. **Social Studies:** Discuss the family arrangement and the importance of honor and respect in Korean society. Contrast it with family arrangements in the United States.
8. **Predicting:** Give students the following clues and have them write a paragraph predicting what they think will happen in the story: World War II, Japanese occupation of Korea, kamikaze, traitor, underground resistance newspaper, Korean alphabet, Japanese names, and traditions.

Chapters 28–29, pp. 149–170

It is only later that Tae-yul realizes he's volunteered to be a kamikaze. His excitement at learning to fly overshadows his fear of death. He doesn't want to help the Japanese by flying into an American ship, but he has a plan. He is thrilled about learning to fly and feels incredible freedom. He writes a final letter home before he is sent on his suicide mission. Sun-hee arrives home to hear her mother screaming. The family has received the box with Tae-yul's final letter. The family is in mourning. At a neighborhood accounting about two months later, the leader announces that Japan has surrendered. The war is over.

Vocabulary

casualties (154)
bombardment (154)
maneuvers (156)
evasive (156)
complicated (160)
spectacular (167)
grudgingly (168)

Discussion Questions

1. Why does Tae-yul believe he must fulfill his promise to be a kamikaze? Why do you think losing face is so important to him? (*He would lose face or honor completely if he backed down. Answers will vary. p. 150*)
2. Why does Tae-yul tell himself to expect that real flying will not be as good as he has imagined? Is this a good way to prepare yourself for unknown adventures? (*He doesn't want to be disappointed. Answers will vary. p. 155*)
3. How do the Kim family members react to receiving Tae-yul's box? Are these the reactions you would expect from these characters? (*Omoni screams and turns ashen; Abuji tries to speak and can't; Sun-hee's heart seems to stop beating, and her hands shake. Their grief is "too deep for tears." Answers will vary. pp. 164–166, 168*)
4. Explain Sun-hee's reaction to the news of the war's end. (*She is horrified that Tae-yul's death was less than two months earlier. She wants to howl at the futility of it. p. 170*)

Supplementary Activities

1. Metaphors and Similes: Add to your list of metaphors and similes. Example: "her body still as a stone" (p. 166).
2. History: Read about the surrender of the Japanese on the U.S.S. *Missouri*. Show pictures of the surrender with the Japanese in their dress attire.
3. Predictions: Complete the Prediction Chart on page 12 of this guide.
4. Science: Discover how a glider works and why it is effective in teaching flying lessons.