



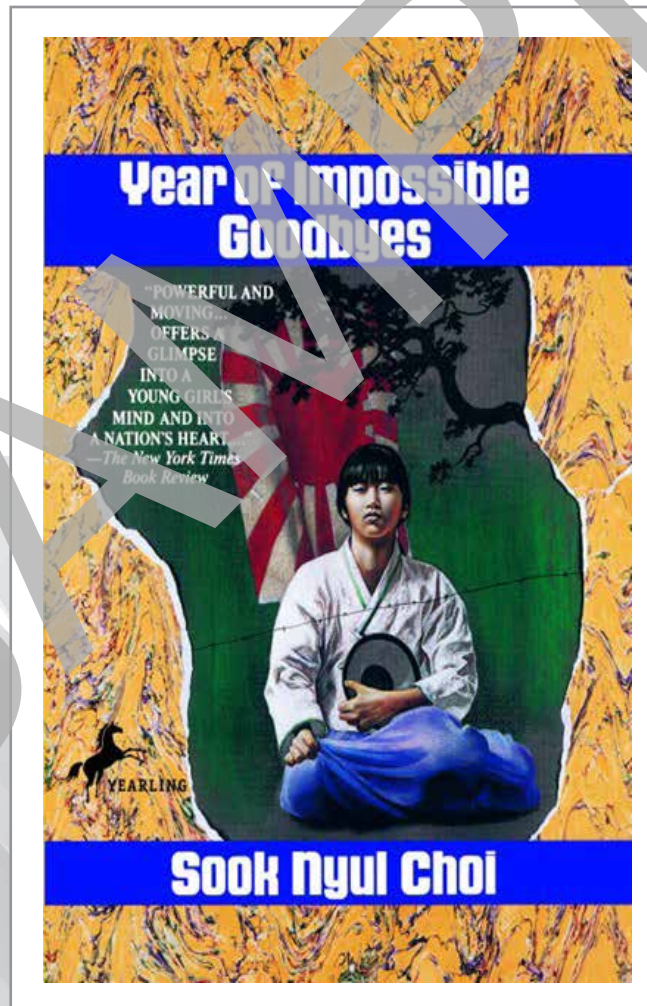
TEACHER GUIDE

GRADES 6-8

COMPREHENSIVE CURRICULUM BASED LESSON PLANS

Year of Impossible Goodbyes

Sook Nyul Choi



READ, WRITE, THINK, DISCUSS AND CONNECT

Year of Impossible Goodbyes

Sook Nyul Choi

TEACHER GUIDE

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

Thinking

Research, compare/contrast, pros/cons, brainstorming, problem solving, creative thinking, critical thinking

Listening/Speaking

Dramatizing, interviewing, story telling, discussion, oral reports

Comprehension

Predicting, sequencing, foreshadowing, cause and effect, inference, anticipating

Vocabulary

Synonyms, antonyms, parts of speech, word predictions, etymology

Literary Elements

Literary analysis, story mapping, plot development, setting, characterization

Writing

Character journal, memories, personal writing, creative writing, haiku

Across the Curriculum:

Social Studies/Geography—maps, research; Math—estimation; Art—design and color, advertisements, illustrations; Health—food preparation; History—research; Religion—research; Technology—Internet research, PowerPoint™ presentation, Web page design

Summary

Year of Impossible Goodbyes tells the story of a Korean family that withstands the oppression of the Japanese invaders. Sookan, the daughter, must help her mother and Aunt Tiger with the sock factory. As the story unfolds, Grandfather dies and the cruel Captain Narita drags the sock girls off to the Japanese front lines. After many hardships, Sookan's cousin brings news that the Japanese have been defeated, but the family's joy is short lived. The Russian soldiers take control of North Korea. Again Sookan and her family suffer under a ruthless regime, and Mother decides that her family must escape to the South. Kisa arranges for a guide to take Mother, Sookan, and Inchun across the Thirty-eighth Parallel to freedom. Sookan, Inchun, and Mother use determination and courage to flee to liberation in South Korea.

About the Author

Sook Nyul Chol wrote *Year of Impossible Goodbyes* to share her experiences, rich culture, and the tragic history of Korea. Her love for America and Korea inspired her to write about her first-hand knowledge of this time period and to aid in a greater understanding of her culture. Sook Nyul Chol taught in New York City for about 20 years. She now lives in Cambridge, Massachusetts.

Initiating Activities

1. **Book Predictions and Perspectives:** Have students look at the book cover and title and answer the following questions. What are "impossible goodbyes"? What emotions come to mind? What do you think is the theme of the book? What will be the setting for this story? Based on their answers, students predict what the book will be about.
2. **Geography:** Have the students study the map at the beginning of the book and answer the following questions: What countries border Korea? How does the size of Korea compare to the size of the neighboring countries? On what continent is Korea located? Divide the students into groups of four or five and have each group recreate the map on a piece of poster board. Make sure they label the map as it is shown in the book, and include the smaller map that shows where Korea is located in relation to the surrounding countries. Display the maps in the classroom. Students should refer to the maps as they read the book.
3. **Social Studies:** Over a period of one week, have students look in daily newspapers or on the Internet to find information on South and North Korea. They should locate the cities mentioned on the map created in activity 2. List the current events mentioned in the news on a poster board or bulletin board. You may want to divide the class into groups for this project. Display the information in the classroom.
4. **Character Journal:** List the main characters from *Year of Impossible Goodbyes* and have students choose one. As they read the book, students should write regular journal entries from that character's point of view. Journal entries should reflect the events of the story. At various points in their reading, have students share their journals with classmates.

Character Attribute Web

Directions: Choose a character from *Year of Impossible Goodbyes* and place his/her name in the center circle. Then fill in the surrounding circles with information about the character you chose.

A central circle is connected to five surrounding circles. The surrounding circles are labeled: 'His/her thoughts', 'His/her statements', 'His/her behavior', 'Other's statements about him/her', and 'Other's statements toward him/her'. Each surrounding circle contains four horizontal lines for writing. A large 'SAMPLE' watermark is overlaid on the diagram.

His/her thoughts

His/her statements

His/her behavior

Other's statements about him/her

Other's statements toward him/her

Chapter Seven, pp. 103–115

Vocabulary

meandered (103)	capitalistic (104)	tungsten (104)	incredulously (104)
brainwashed (106)	boisterous (107)	proletariat (108)	Marxism (108)
incessantly (110)	fervently (110)	philosophy (110)	monotonous (110)
traitors (111)	candor (112)	plotting (114)	vigorously (114)
wary (114)	converted (114)	profusely (115)	

Discussion Questions

1. Why do you think Sookan is fascinated by the Russian soldiers? *(Answers will vary.)*
2. Why does Mrs. Kim support the Russians over the Japanese and the Americans? *(She says the Russians treat all people as equals. The Americans do not help the Koreans because the Japanese took the country's wealth. She believes the Russians will help Korea begin again.)*
3. Why doesn't Mother allow Sookan to follow the jeep into the town square? *(Answers will vary.)*
4. Why doesn't Sookan's family go to South Korea where the Americans are located? *(The Russians are shooting anyone who crosses the Thirty-eighth Parallel. Mother wants to wait until the men and the nuns can go, too.)*
5. Why does Mother attend the town meeting? *(Answers will vary.)*
6. Why do the Russians show the Koreans a film about the abundance of Russia? *(Answers will vary, but the film is obviously part of their propaganda.)*
7. What is life like for Sookan and the others after the town meeting? *(Answers will vary, but should include information about the work all the people must do.)*
8. What do you think happened to the little boy at the Little Proletariat School who talked about his family and then was never seen again? *(Answers will vary.)*
9. Why is Mother worried about her children going to the Little Proletariat School? *(She knows that the Russians are clever enough to trick them into revealing information that could hurt her family.)*
10. Who are the "Pinks"? Why might they be in danger? *(The Pinks are those Koreans who do not fully accept the Russian ideas. The Russians might kill the Pinks if they suspect that they are not loyal.)*
11. Why does Mrs. Kim come by to check on Sookan's family and offer them more food? *(Answers will vary, but Mother knows that Mrs. Kim might suspect that they are planning to leave.)*
12. Why do you think Mrs. Kim is so dedicated to the Russians? *(Answers will vary.)*

Supplementary Activities

1. Character Analysis: Have the students update their character attribute webs and story maps.
2. Geography: Update the map the class created as a prereading activity. Have students place a star on the Thirty-eighth Parallel and draw a line from Pyongyang to the Thirty-eighth Parallel. Next, they should estimate the number of miles Sookan's family will have to travel to the Thirty-eighth Parallel.
3. Research: Sookan and her family were forced to work under both the Japanese and Russian occupation. Have the students research U.S. labor laws. What is the youngest age a person can legally work? How many hours per day is a fourteen-year-old allowed to work? Does this change once a person turns sixteen? What is the minimum hourly wage? Are there any laws about break or lunch times during the day? As a class, discuss how a worker's life in America is different from Sookan's life as a worker under the Russian occupation.
4. Pros/Cons: Have the class list the pros and cons of living under Russian occupation as opposed to Japanese occupation. Discuss as a class.

Chapter Eight, pp. 116–138

Vocabulary

arouse (117)	hoist (117)	propaganda (119)	potential (119)
anticipation (119)	attuned (121)	semidarkness (121)	bitter (123)
spiteful (123)	disperse (124)	interrogate (126)	unconditionally (128)
wares (128)	scrutinizing (129)	khaki (129)	handicrafts (130)
paddies (132)	crescent (135)	reeling (137)	

Discussion Questions

1. What news does Kisa bring to Sookan and her family? (*He has seen Sookan's father and knows that her brothers are now fine.*)
2. Why does Kisa tell Mother to "praise Communism" while she waits to escape? (*Answers will vary, but praising Communism would be one way to avoid suspicion.*)
3. Why does Aunt Tiger become so involved with the Communist activities? (*She is worried that the family's escape plan will not work and they may have to stay. She also wants to avoid suspicion that they are not loyal Communists.*)
4. Why does Sookan say that "each day seemed longer than the one before" when the family waits to escape? (*Answers will vary.*)
5. Why does the family's escape plan change? (*Sookan's father knows that security is tight, and he cannot come for them. He sends gold and jewels so they can hire a professional guide to help them escape.*)