

linda sue park a single shard

linda sue park a single shard is a celebrated children's novel that has captivated readers with its rich storytelling and vivid portrayal of 12th-century Korea. Written by Linda Sue Park, this historical fiction explores themes of perseverance, artistry, and cultural heritage through the journey of a young orphan named Tree-ear. The novel has received critical acclaim, including the prestigious Newbery Medal, making it a significant work in children's literature. This article delves into the background of the author, a detailed synopsis of the book, its key themes, characters, and the cultural context that enriches the narrative. Additionally, it highlights the literary significance and educational value of the novel for readers of all ages. The following sections provide a comprehensive overview of **linda sue park a single shard** and why it remains a beloved classic in contemporary literature.

- Author Background and Inspiration
- Plot Summary and Setting
- Main Characters
- Themes and Symbolism
- Cultural and Historical Context
- Literary Significance and Reception
- Educational Applications

Author Background and Inspiration

Linda Sue Park's Biography

Linda Sue Park is a Korean American author known for her contributions to children's and young adult literature. Born in Urbana, Illinois, she has a strong academic background in English literature and creative writing. Park's cultural heritage and passion for history often inspire her works, which frequently explore Korean culture and historical settings. Her dedication to storytelling and cultural representation has earned her numerous accolades and a devoted readership.

Inspiration Behind *A Single Shard*

The inspiration for *A Single Shard* stems from Linda Sue Park's interest in

Korean ceramics and the Joseon Dynasty period. The story is set in 12th-century Korea, focusing on the art of pottery-making, which is a significant cultural tradition. Park's meticulous research and vivid imagination bring this historical era to life, allowing readers to connect with the past through the eyes of a young protagonist. The novel reflects Park's commitment to authenticity and educational storytelling.

Plot Summary and Setting

Overview of the Story

Linda sue park a single shard narrates the journey of Tree-ear, an orphan boy living under a bridge in a small Korean village named Ch'ulp'o. Tree-ear dreams of becoming a potter and learns the craft by observing and assisting a master potter named Min. The plot follows Tree-ear's determination to deliver a valuable pottery piece to the royal court, overcoming numerous hardships along the way. His resilience and dedication highlight the novel's core message about pursuing one's dreams.

Historical and Geographical Setting

The novel is set during the Goryeo Dynasty in 12th-century Korea, a time when celadon pottery was highly prized. The village of Ch'ulp'o is depicted with rich detail, showcasing traditional Korean life, social structures, and the importance of artisanal crafts. The setting not only grounds the story in historical reality but also educates readers about Korean culture and history in an engaging manner.

Main Characters

Tree-ear

Tree-ear is the protagonist, an orphan boy with a strong spirit and an unwavering desire to learn the art of pottery. His character embodies themes of perseverance, humility, and hope. Despite his lack of formal education and resources, Tree-ear's curiosity and kindness drive his growth throughout the novel.

Min, the Potter

Min is a master potter who initially dismisses Tree-ear but eventually becomes a mentor figure. His dedication to his craft and high standards illustrate the discipline and passion required to create beautiful pottery. Min's relationship with Tree-ear evolves from skepticism to mutual respect.

Crane-man

Crane-man is Tree-ear's uncle and guardian, a wise and gentle figure who supports Tree-ear's aspirations. Although physically challenged, Crane-man's guidance and encouragement are pivotal in Tree-ear's journey, reflecting themes of family and support.

Themes and Symbolism

Perseverance and Hard Work

The novel emphasizes the importance of perseverance through Tree-ear's relentless efforts to learn pottery and complete his mission. His journey symbolizes the value of hard work and dedication in achieving one's goals, a universal theme that resonates with readers.

Artistry and Craftsmanship

Pottery in *A Single Shard* serves as a symbol of beauty, tradition, and personal expression. The detailed descriptions of the pottery-making process highlight the artistic skill and patience involved, underscoring the respect for craftsmanship.

Hope and Dreams

Tree-ear's story is ultimately one of hope. Despite his humble background and numerous obstacles, his dreams propel him forward. The novel encourages readers to believe in their potential and the possibility of a better future.

Cultural and Historical Context

Korean Celadon Pottery

Celadon pottery, famous for its jade-green glaze, is central to the novel's setting and plot. During the Goryeo Dynasty, celadon was highly prized and represented the pinnacle of ceramic art. The novel provides insight into the techniques and cultural significance of this art form, enhancing readers' understanding of Korean heritage.

Social Structure and Daily Life in 12th-Century Korea

The story portrays the hierarchical social system of the time, where artisans like Min held particular roles, and orphans like Tree-ear faced social challenges. Daily life, customs, and community interactions are vividly

illustrated, offering a window into historical Korean society.

Literary Significance and Reception

Award Recognition

Linda sue park a single shard received the Newbery Medal in 2002, one of the most prestigious awards in children's literature. This recognition underscores the novel's literary merit, historical accuracy, and emotional depth. Critics and educators alike praise the book for its compelling narrative and educational value.

Critical Acclaim

The novel has been lauded for its rich characterization, evocative setting, and seamless integration of history and fiction. Reviewers highlight Linda Sue Park's skillful storytelling and ability to engage young readers with complex themes and cultural content.

Educational Applications

Use in Classrooms

A Single Shard is widely used in educational settings to teach history, culture, and literary analysis. Its accessible language and meaningful themes make it suitable for middle-grade readers. Teachers often incorporate the novel into curricula to enhance students' understanding of Korean history and art.

Discussion Topics and Activities

Educators utilize the novel to prompt discussions on themes such as perseverance, cultural identity, and the importance of art. Activities may include:

- Research projects on Korean ceramics and history
- Creative writing assignments inspired by Tree-ear's journey
- Art projects replicating celadon pottery styles
- Group discussions about character development and moral lessons

Frequently Asked Questions

Who is the author of 'A Single Shard' and what is the book about?

The author of 'A Single Shard' is Linda Sue Park. The book is a historical fiction novel set in 12th-century Korea, telling the story of a young orphan named Tree-ear who dreams of becoming a potter and the challenges he faces in pursuing his passion.

What are the main themes explored in Linda Sue Park's 'A Single Shard'?

'A Single Shard' explores themes such as perseverance, mentorship, artistry, and the importance of dedication and hard work in achieving one's dreams.

Why is 'A Single Shard' significant in children's literature?

'A Single Shard' is significant because it provides a rich cultural insight into Korean history and pottery, and it won the Newbery Medal in 2002, recognizing its excellence in American children's literature.

How does Linda Sue Park develop the character of Tree-ear in 'A Single Shard'?

Linda Sue Park develops Tree-ear as a determined and humble protagonist who grows from a curious orphan into a skilled apprentice, showing growth through his persistent efforts and moral integrity.

What role does pottery play in the story 'A Single Shard'?

Pottery is central to the story as it symbolizes artistry, tradition, and Tree-ear's aspirations. The craft of making a single exquisite shard of pottery represents the dedication and precision required in both art and life.

How accurate is the historical setting in 'A Single Shard' by Linda Sue Park?

The historical setting in 'A Single Shard' is well-researched and accurately reflects 12th-century Korea, particularly the culture of the potters in the town of Ch'ulp'o, providing readers with an authentic backdrop for the story.

Additional Resources

1. *Where the Mountain Meets the Moon* by Grace Lin

This beautifully illustrated novel blends Chinese folklore with a heartwarming story about a young girl named Minli. Determined to improve her family's fortune, she embarks on a journey to find the Old Man of the Moon to ask him for a wish. Along the way, Minli learns about bravery, friendship, and the power of storytelling, much like the themes of perseverance found in Linda Sue Park's works.

2. *Shadow of the Dragon* by Sherry Garland

Set in 16th century Korea, this historical novel follows a young boy named Jang as he navigates political intrigue and personal challenges during a time of war. The book offers rich cultural details and a strong, character-driven plot that fans of Linda Sue Park's **A Single Shard** will appreciate. It highlights themes of honor, loyalty, and courage.

3. *Dragon Pearl* by Yoon Ha Lee

A blend of Korean mythology and science fiction, this fast-paced novel features a young fox spirit named Min who goes on a quest to find her missing brother. With elements of adventure and coming-of-age, this story shares the cultural richness and youthful determination found in **A Single Shard**. It's perfect for readers interested in Korean culture and fantasy.

4. *Peacebound Trains* by Holly Keller

This historical fiction picture book tells the story of a young Korean boy who dreams of peace during the Korean War. Through simple yet powerful storytelling, it explores themes of hope and resilience, similar to the emotional depth found in Linda Sue Park's works. The book provides a gentle introduction to Korean history for younger readers.

5. *The Kite Fighters* by Linda Sue Park

Also written by Linda Sue Park, this novel is set in 15th century Korea and follows two brothers who dream of becoming kite fighters. The story beautifully portrays family bonds, tradition, and determination. Readers who enjoyed **A Single Shard** will find a similar blend of cultural insight and heartfelt storytelling.

6. *Cranes* by Ruth Sawyer

This classic tale centers on two Korean children from opposing sides of the Korean War who find common ground and friendship. It's a poignant story about understanding and compassion, echoing the themes of kindness and perseverance seen in **A Single Shard**. The narrative is simple yet deeply moving.

7. *Call It Courage* by Armstrong Sperry

This adventure story follows a young Polynesian boy named Mafatu who conquers his fear of the sea through courage and determination. Like **A Single Shard**, it's a coming-of-age tale that explores themes of bravery, self-discovery, and resilience. The book is celebrated for its vivid descriptions and inspiring message.

8. *The Tale of Despereaux* by Kate DiCamillo

This enchanting story about a brave little mouse who loves music and storytelling shares themes of courage and hope with **A Single Shard**. Through its whimsical narrative and memorable characters, it encourages readers to believe in themselves despite challenges. It's a wonderful read for fans of heartfelt, character-driven stories.

9. *Inside Out and Back Again* by Thanhha Lai

Told in free verse, this novel chronicles the journey of a young Vietnamese girl and her family as they flee their homeland and start anew in America. Themes of identity, adaptation, and resilience run throughout the story, paralleling the emotional growth and cultural exploration found in **A Single Shard**. It offers a powerful perspective on displacement and hope.

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