

**Edith Swank  
West Holmes Middle School  
Millersburg, Ohio  
Spring 2007**

## **A Study of Korea with the novel *A Single Shard* by Linda Sue Park**

### **Purpose**

Students become better readers by reading from a variety of materials. *A Single Shard* permits students to gain an understanding of the Korean culture in the 12<sup>th</sup> century. This is a distinct change from the American/European history and culture to which students are most commonly exposed with literature in the sixth grade.

### **Grade Level**

Sixth grade language Arts

### **Materials**

Multiple copies of *A Single Shard* by Linda Sue Park  
Study Guide for vocabulary and comprehension  
Website: <http://www.lindasuepark.com/>

This is the official site for author Linda Sue Park. Students should have some understanding of the author's background to see why she is qualified to write a story set in Korea in the middle ages. This site also included information about the pieces of ceramics mentioned in the book.

- Map of Korea
- Container for the 'artifacts' collected by students
- Post-it notes

### **Length of Lesson**

1 class session of 40 minutes for 3-4 weeks

### **Vocabulary**

These words have been chosen from the first third of the book. Once students have become involved with the story I do not slow the flow of the action with additional vocabulary words. I have selected words dealing with the making of pottery and also

words that relate to other books I will have my students read throughout the year. Students find it interesting to have vocabulary word repeated, especially when the word is used in another way.

|                             |                    |                |                  |
|-----------------------------|--------------------|----------------|------------------|
| protruded (3)               | perusal (4)        | glean (4)      | ruefully (5)     |
| crane (7)                   | monk (8)           | gourd (9)      | droning (10)     |
| potter (10)                 | oafish (11)        | celadon (12)   | kilns (12)       |
| Buddhist(12)                | inscribed (13)     | emerged (14)   | emboldened (14)  |
| Glazed (14)                 | consistency (15)   | impudence (15) | symmetrical (15) |
| melon (Korean variety) (15) |                    | derision (18)  | communal (19)    |
| ministrations (26)          | diligent (27)      | spoor (27)     | rifle (28)       |
| insolence (30)              | kimchee (27)       | mire (39)      | tedious (41)     |
| viscous (42)                | pummeling (42)     | slip (50)      | fuse (52)        |
| awl (59)                    | chrysanthemum (59) |                |                  |

( ) are page numbers.

## Discussion

The characters in this novel are particularly interesting. In the book we will read before this one, *Hatchet* by Gary Paulsen, the action is what pulls the story along. Crane-man and Tree-ear have personalities that are more developed, perhaps because they are able to ‘playoff’ each. The reader is able to gain a better understanding of them. The emphasis on honesty, dignity, honor, and respect is such a wonderful fit with how we want our students to act. Park has been able to create truly good characters without them becoming stilted. In describing the main characters, Crane-man and Tree-ear plus the potter Min and his wife, students can readily share not only the physical characteristics of each but also the more important value of the inner self.

With the daily reading that would include both reading together as a group and silent reading, we will discuss the text. As students read independently they record points of interest or events that are confusing to them, using post-it notes. These comments might include vocabulary (I am still amazed with the words students do not know.) or questions concerning why something happens that does not fit into their understanding of how life is. Students at first are reticent to admit there are parts they do not understand. Once a few of the better readers begin asking questions all students feel comfortable with sharing their own questions. The discussions generated by students’ questions have been interesting and helpful, resulting in a deeper understanding of the text.

Artifact Box – Once the story is underway, we have an artifact box for students to contribute items relating to the story. These are items they have found from home. Students must explain how the artifact is connected to the story. Examples would be clay, bowl, gourd, weeds for weaving, mushrooms.

Predictions can currently be done with this book as there is not a movie of it yet.

What will happen when Tree-ear goes on his journey?

Will the vases be accepted?

What will happen to Tree-ear's dream of becoming a potter like the great Min?

What happens to Tree-ear's friendship with Crane-man who has raised him despite his own poverty?

### **Assessments**

Questions are similar to those on the 6<sup>th</sup> grade OAT test.

- Crane-man has helped Tree-ear with his injured hand. Share what he has done to make it heal faster. (p.23)
- Explain the steps in preparing the clay for the potter's wheel (p.42)
- What do the other village potters think of the speed with which Min works? Give 2 examples of how they describe his rate of work. (p.45-46)
- Describe the 'best tasting' meal Crane-man and Tree-ear share. What is one of the best tasting meals you have ever had?