

Lesson Plan on Korea
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Purpose:

Students will learn about traditional Asian pottery-making and get a sense of the culture and traditions in 12th century Korea through a story that will make them empathize with the main character.

Essential Questions:

1. What can *The Single Shard* by Linda Sue Park teach us about life, society, history and culture in 12th century Korea?
2. What can we learn from the ethical dilemmas that the protagonist faces?

Rationale:

Our 7th grade teachers recently chose this book as a common read for all of our students beginning next year. Students will read this as part of a unit about the broader East Asian world during this time. Students will learn about Korea during the Koryo period in preparation to read this Newbery award-winning novel. My hope is that reading this book will make students care about and empathize with a character living in a completely different time, place and culture.

Materials:

- copy of *The Single Shard* for each student to be read in class and as homework
- small clay pots – use building funds and/or ask each student to contribute about \$3 (obviously this depends on the socio-economics of your district), or ask students to bring in any size pot that they would like on their own
- potting soil and seeds of some kind
- paint in a wide variety of colors, brushes and Sharpie pens

Activities:

1. Read *The Single Shard* over a period of about 3 weeks. While reading in class and through homework assignments, students will answer questions to prepare themselves for daily discussions in class about the development of the novel. Themes emphasized:
 - art and pottery
 - societal class and the “downtrodden,” specifically homeless and disabled citizens
 - traditional roles of women
 - government at the time – the emperor
 - cultural values of the time
 - ethical dilemmas and decisions
2. As a culminating activity, students will create their own pottery as a tribute to the protagonist, Tree-ear, and what they have learned from him. Using a “rough draft” drawing of a pot, students should plan to use at least:
 - two quotations from the book
 - 3 visuals
 - 3 words that all signify what they believe were the most important things that they learned from the novel.

Students should complete the rough draft and get it checked off with the teacher before moving on.

3. Using their rough draft pot, students should neatly and carefully create a pot that represents the novel using the quotes, visuals and words. *Note: the rough draft and pot-painting should take about 2 class periods.
4. When all students have completed their pots they should prepare to present their quotes, visuals and words to the class. Students should be prepared to explain why they chose the quotes, visuals and words that they did – you may want to require students to write this down on an index card to prepare. Teacher should comment on similarities between pots and ideas during the presentations.
5. Student should fill their pots with potting soil and plant some seeds. Teacher should send students home with their pots with the reminder to never forget the lessons of Tree-ear.

Assessment

In addition to assessing student's discussion questions throughout the reading of the novel, teacher should assess rough drafts and final pots on the following:

- Importance and significance of quotes, words and visuals to the novel
- Explanation of their choice of quotes, words and visuals to the class

Grade Adaptation:

The target grade of this lesson is the 7th grade.

Scaling Up: Although I wouldn't necessarily recommend this book for high school students, they can be expected to read the book on their own outside of class and have only discussions in class. Questions should be more analytical and look for understanding of the ethical lessons in the novel. Also, many high schools have their own pottery wheels that a social studies teacher might arrange to take advantage of with the art teacher. I would suggest doing pots in small groups if making their own.

Scaling Down: Read the book only in class, with a combination of silent, teacher-led and whole class reading. Questions can be more general and geared toward basic comprehension.

Source Used

Park, Linda Sue. *The Single Shard*. New York: Random House Children Books, 2003.

ABOUT THE BOOK

The Barnes & Noble Review

Linda Sue Park's novels are distinctive for their focus on various aspects of Korean history. *A Single Shard*, the winner of the 2002 Newbery Medal, is a tenderly rendered tale about a 12th-century Korean boy named Tree-ear, who must overcome a host of obstacles in order to attain his life's dream.

Orphaned as a toddler, Tree-ear (named after a type of mushroom that grows out of a tree without the benefit of parent seeds) has been raised by a kindly, crippled weaver named Crane-man (so named because he has only one good leg). Over the years, they have eked out a meager but relatively happy existence living under a bridge and scavenging for food, though never stealing or begging. The town they live in, Ch'ulp'o, is renowned for the many artisans who craft the area's unique clay into beautiful celadon pottery. Tree-ear has dreams of one day creating his own pottery, and for this reason, he starts spying on one of the most gifted craftsmen in town, a cranky old codger named Min. When Tree-ear accidentally breaks some of Min's work, he offers to pay for the damage by working off the debt, hoping Min will eventually offer him an apprenticeship.

Things don't go as planned, however. The curmudgeonly Min isn't an easy man to work with, and Tree-ear's dream of creating his own pottery seems more unattainable with each passing day. Things come to a head when Min is offered a shot at a royal commission and Tree-ear offers to carry samples of the artisan's work to the royal court -- a hike of many days across some of Korea's most unforgiving country. The journey is fraught with setbacks that test Tree-ear's courage and integrity, but in the end, he comes to know a triumph of heart, mind, and spirit that will leave him, and Korean history, forever changed.

This delightfully endearing tale is not only entertaining; it's inspirational and educational. Tree-ear's decisions and actions in the face of several ethical dilemmas exemplify honor, honesty, and integrity at their best, setting a fine example for young readers to follow. And Park's vivid portrayal of this era in Korean history offers a colorful introduction to a culture and an art form that might otherwise go unknown. (Beth Amos)

From The Critics

Publisher's Weekly

In a starred review of this Newbery Medal winner, PW wrote, "The author molds a moving tribute to perseverance and creativity in this finely etched novel set in mid- to late-12th-century Korea. Readers will not soon forget these characters or their sacrifices." Ages 10-up. (Feb.) Copyright 2003 Reed Business Information.

Publisher's Weekly

Park (*Seesaw Girl*) molds a moving tribute to perseverance and creativity in this finely etched novel set in mid- to late 12th-century Korea. In Ch'ul'po, a potter's village, Crane-man (so called because of one shriveled leg) raises 10-year-old orphan Tree Ear (named for a mushroom that grows "without benefit of "parent-seed"). Though the pair reside under a bridge, surviving on cast-off rubbish and fallen grains of rice, they believe "stealing and begging... made a man no better than a dog." From afar, Tree Ear admires the work of the potters until he accidentally destroys a piece by Min, the most talented of the town's craftsmen, and pays his debt in servitude for nine days. Park convincingly conveys how a community of artists works (chopping wood for a communal kiln, cutting clay to be thrown, etc.) and effectively builds the relationships between characters through their actions (e.g., Tree Ear hides half his lunch each day for Crane-man, and Min's soft-hearted wife surreptitiously fills the bowl). She charts Tree Ear's transformation from apprentice to artist and portrays his selflessness during a pilgrimage to Songdo to show Min's work to the royal court he faithfully continues even after robbers shatter the work and he has only a single shard to show. Readers will not soon forget these characters or their sacrifices. Ages 10-14. (Mar.) Copyright 2001 Cahners Business Information.

A broken piece of pottery sets events in motion as an orphan struggles to pay off his debt to a master potter. This finely crafted novel brings 12th-century Korea and these indelible characters to life.

The Single Shard Pot: Rough Draft

Prepare to create your pot by using this rough draft. You want to include 2 quotes from the book, 3 visuals and 3 words that summarize the significance of the novel.

