

***Life in Korea During World War II:  
When My Name Was Keoko***  
**Grade 12**

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**Purpose:**

Students will read and discuss Linda Sue Park's novel of Korea in World War II, When My Name Was Keoko, to analyze the experiences of Koreans living under Japanese imperial rule.

**Ohio Academic Content Standards:**  
**Social Studies**

**People in Societies**

- Grade 11-12, Benchmark C: Explain the role of diverse cultural institutions in shaping American society.
- Grade 12, Grade-Level Indicator 5: Evaluate the role of institutions in guiding, transmitting, preserving and changing culture.

**Citizenship Rights and Responsibilities**

- Grade 11-12, Benchmark A: Evaluate various means for citizens to take action on a particular issue.
- Grade 12, Grade-Level Indicator 8: Analyze how democracy, the free flow of information, global economic interdependence, or human rights movements can cause change within a country.

**English Language Arts**

**Reading Applications: Literary Text**

- Grade 11-12, Benchmark A: Analyze and evaluate the five elements (e.g., plot, character, setting, point of view and theme) in literary text.
- Grade 12, Grade-Level Indicator 2: Analyze the historical, social and cultural context of setting.
- Grade 12, Grade-Level Indicator 4: Evaluate an author's use of point of view in a literary text.

**Essential Questions:**

- How does an imperial power change and control the culture of an occupied territory?
- How can an oppressed group work towards change and independence?
- How does the historical setting of a story shape the experiences of the characters?
- How does the author's choice of narrator(s) affect a story?

**Rationale:**

Historical fiction allows a reader to experience historic events from the point of view of those involved. When My Name Was Keoko provides students with a first person account of daily life and historic events during World War II in Korea. This novel also offers students the chance to analyze an author's choice of setting and point of view.

**Post-Assessment:**

There are many post-assessment options when reading historical fiction. This assignment challenges students to think about historical events from a participant's point of view, as well as changing the point of view from the author's original work.

Have students write an article for the resistance newspaper as if they were Uncle. Challenge students to think about Uncle's point of view, his purpose and his audience. Students may be encouraged to write an article about events from any point in the novel. What might Uncle have written about? What message would he have wanted to send to his readers? How would he have seen things differently than Sun-hee or Tae-yul?

Requirements for length and format can vary.

**Scoring Guidelines:**

Outstanding, 4 points:

Completed article shows all of the following:

- Ability to use point of view for literary effect;
- Understanding of historical setting and events;
- Empathy for characters involved;
- Understanding of the causes and consequences of oppression.

Very Good, 3 points:

Completed article shows at least two of the following:

- Ability to use point of view for literary effect;
- Understanding of historical setting and events;
- Empathy for characters involved;
- Understanding of the causes and consequences of oppression.

Fair, 2 points:

Completed article shows at least two of the following:

- Some ability to use point of view for literary effect;
- Some understanding of historical setting and events;
- Some empathy for characters involved;
- Some understanding of the causes and consequences of oppression.

Needs Improvement, 1 point:

Completed article shows little of the following:

- Ability to use point of view for literary effect;
- Understanding of historical setting and events;
- Empathy for characters involved;
- Understanding of the causes and consequences of oppression.

### **Lesson Preparation:**

- Divide chapters by the number of days planned for this lesson. This plan is written for 10 days, but can be adjusted based on student needs and available time.
- Assign each student a chapter to prepare for class discussion. Prepare a schedule for students showing required reading and assigned chapters.
- Provide students with background reading from their history text or other appropriate source. Students may be familiar with World War II, but not with Japan's control of Korea prior to and during World War II.

### **Activities:**

#### **Day One:**

1. Ask students to recall what they already know about World War II. Focus their brainstorming on events in Asia and Japan's role. Discuss Japan's invasion and control of Korea and, if necessary, provide students with background reading.
2. Introduce Linda Sue Park's When My Name Was Keoko. Assign each student a chapter to prepare for class discussion. Distribute the "Discussion Starters" suggestions to help students prepare.
3. Distribute a schedule of assigned reading and assigned chapters for class discussion.

#### **Day Two through Eight:**

4. At the beginning of each session allow time for students to ask clarification questions. You may need to re-visit historic events such as Pearl Harbor and Hiroshima.
5. For each chapter read, have the assigned student share their "Discussion Starter" and lead the group in a 5-10 minute discussion (discussion time can be adjusted as necessary).
6. After each student-led discussion, focus student exploration on one of the following themes/topics. Questions can be used for class discussion or journal writing.

#### **Point of View**

Encourage students to think about the author's choice to use two points of view to tell the story.

- How does Sun-hee see things differently than Tae-yul?
- How do roles for boys and girls differ in this time and place?
- Why do you think the author chose to use young adults to narrate instead of adults?
- Why did the author choose to use two narrators? What effect does this have?

#### **Culture**

Throughout the novel we learn of examples of the Japanese imperial government working to change and control Korean culture. Encourage students to think about how and why they did this and how Koreans reacted.

- How do Sun-hee and her family secretly preserve their culture? Why is this so important to them?
- Why does the imperial government try to extinguish Korean culture? Why do they see it as dangerous?
- How do people transmit culture from generation to generation? What role do institutions and government play in transmitting culture?

### **Courage and Responsibility**

Two of the recurring themes in this novel are courage and responsibility. Encourage students to think about how each character exhibits both traits in different ways.

- How does Abuji balance his responsibility to his family and his heritage?
- Who do you think is the most courageous character? Why?
- Does Tae-yul live up to his responsibilities as a son and a brother?
- How does Omoni show courage?

### **Rebellion and Resistance**

Encourage students to think about how difficult it was for Koreans to resist the demands of the Japanese imperial government.

- Is Uncle's resistance work worth the risk? Why?
- How do the different characters silently resist Japanese control?
- Should Abuji have done more to rebel against the Japanese?

### **Days Nine and Ten:**

7. Conclude discussion of the novel with a return to discussion of historic events. Review the conclusion of World War II and the division of Korea along the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel.
8. Assign the post-assessment. If possible, provide a forum for students to share their work.

### **Grade Adaptation:**

- This novel is easily accessible by both middle and high school students. The historic setting may be less familiar to middle school students who have not yet studied the events of World War II and would require more instruction/exploration of the time period.
- Leading a class discussion may be more difficult for younger students; adjust this aspect of the plan as necessary. Engaging the class in creation of discussion guidelines can clarify expectations for younger students.

### **Extensions:**

- Have students research and report on historic events referenced in the novel.
- Have students analyze and discuss related primary source documents. Many museums and government agencies have made primary source materials easily accessible via the Internet.
- Have students create an artistic representation of their reading experience. Students may write a poem, create an illustration or art project, or prepare a performance.



***When My Name Was Keoko***  
**Discussion Starters**

**Directions:** For your assigned chapter, it is your responsibility to lead a 5-10 minute class discussion. Think about the important events and themes in your chapter and plan a “discussion starter” to help the class focus their discussion.

Some suggestions for starting discussion:

- Select a pivotal quote from the chapter for the class to discuss.
- Prepare a debate question for discussion. For example, was a character acting ethically when they made a certain choice or participated in an event?
- Create and share an illustration that depicts an important event from the chapter.
- Find and share a primary source document that relates to historic events in the chapter.
- Discuss an important decision one of the characters has to make. What do you think he/she should have done? What might you have done?
- Relate events from the story to modern events. How can we learn from the past to make better choices today?