

BookTalk



Title: *A Single Shard*

Author: Linda Sue Park

Publisher: Clarion Books; New York

Genre: Historical fiction

Grade Level: 5 – 9

Booktalker: Vicki Holliday

Did you write stories when you were 4 years old? The author of the book I want to discuss with you did! The very first dollar she made is still sitting in a frame on her father's desk.

Linda Sue Park lives in New York with her husband, their two children, a dog, a hamster, and eight tadpoles (do you still think they are tadpoles?). Besides reading and writing, Linda Sue Park likes to cook, travel, work crossword puzzles, and watch movies. Do you have any of the same pets Linda Sue Park has? Do you enjoy any of the activities she likes to do? I bet you like to watch movies too!

I selected this book to talk with you for one reason, and one reason only: one of my favorite 7th grade students told me, “You just have to read this book, Ms. Holliday. I know you will love it!”

Have you ever heard of a peeping Tom? Well, in a way, that is what you could call Tree-ear, the orphaned main character of the book *A Single Shard*. By the way, how do you like the name Tree-ear; there's a good reason why this is his name! Tree-ear is fascinated by the creations the village's famous potter, Min, makes. So, Tree-ear secretly watches Min.

Eventually, Tree-ear begins to work for Min, however he gets NO money for working for him. He doesn't just mow the lawn or take out the garbage; he does work like: Chopping wood for hours without a single bite to eat had been hard enough.

But the worst of the day was the long trip back down the mountainside with the cart full of wood. The path was rutted and bumpy. The homemade cart was poorly balanced, awkward with its heavy load . . . Tree-ear lifted his head for a moment, in eager anticipation of the end of his journey. Just then the right-hand wheel caught a stone. The cart handles were wrenched from his hands, and the cart tipped onto its side . . . For a moment he didn't know whether to curse or cry . . . As he heaved a large, rough, log, an arrow of pain shot through his right hand.

This is just an example of the frustrations, pain, and disappointments that Tree-ear must endure, just because he wants to know how to be a potter! Have you ever wanted something so badly that you would do just about anything to reach your goal?

Working hard is not all that Tree-ear must go through. He is verbally abused, betrayed and robbed. He is given a sign by a fox, gets seasick, and is sent on a long and treacherous journey. Will Tree-ear be able to survive with the small little piece of a clay pot in his hand?

I plan on reading this book to my 7th grade reading students while, in social studies, we learn about the struggles along the Silk Route and how important the journeys made along the Silk Route were. Tree-ear is a teenager who must overcome many obstacles as he travels, by foot, on his route to the king's palace in order to show his master potter's work. We will make comparisons of Tree-Ear's journey to those who journeyed along the Silk Route, while we learn about the customs, geography, and history of parts of China and Korea.

During this social studies and reading unit, our students will also be creating their own pots in their art classes. They will learn about the celadon pottery from the Koryo Dynasty, including the method of inlay called saggam. They will choose between flowers, cranes, clouds, or willow branches to further learn about the type of art from the time period of this story.

Resources

Author, Linda Sue Park. Bio (nd). Retrieved June 24, 2006, from <http://www.kidsreads.com/authors/au-park-linda-sue.asp>