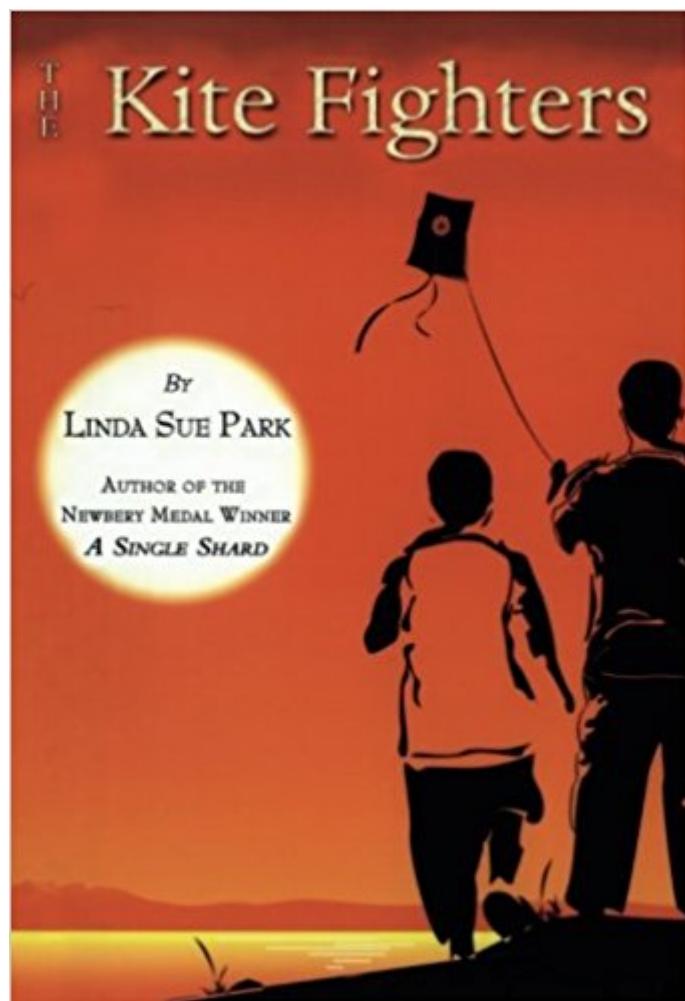


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# The Kite Fighters



## **Synopsis**

In a riveting narrative set in fifteenth-century Korea, two brothers discover a shared passion for kites. Kee-sup can craft a kite unequaled in strength and beauty, but his younger brother, Young-sup, can fly a kite as if he controlled the wind itself. Their combined skills attract the notice of Korea's young king, who chooses Young-sup to fly the royal kite in the New Year kite-flying competition--an honor that is also an awesome responsibility. Although tradition decrees, and the boys' father insists, that the older brother represent the family, both brothers know that this time the family's honor is best left in Young-sup's hands. This touching and suspenseful story, filled with the authentic detail and flavor of traditional Korean kite fighting, brings a remarkable setting vividly to life. AUTHOR'S NOTE.

## **Book Information**

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Age Range: 7 - 10 years

Grade Level: 2 - 5

## **Customer Reviews**

Tradition and family loyalty come into question in this book by the recently named Newbery Medalist, set in Seoul, Korea, in 1473. Two brothers anticipate the annual New Year's Kite competition, wondering how to balance convention and love for one's talent. Ages 9-12. Copyright 2002 Cahners Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Grade 4-7-When Young-sup holds a kite in his hand, he knows exactly how to make it fly. His older brother, Kee-sup, struggles to launch his kite, but he knows exactly how to construct one that is beautiful in form and perfectly balanced. One day, the young king of Korea suddenly arrives with all of his attendants on the hillside where the brothers are playing with their matching tiger kites. He requests their help in learning to fly one, and then asks Kee-sup to make a kite for him. The boy is deeply honored and works diligently on it, a dragon flecked with real gold paint. Meanwhile, Young-sup is determined to win the kite-fighting competition at the New Year's festival. He practices on the hillside where the king frequently joins him, and their growing friendship leads to an interesting collaboration and a thorny challenge to tradition in Korea in 1473. The final contest, in which Young-sup flies for the king, is riveting. Though the story is set in medieval times, the brothers have many of the same issues facing siblings today. They play and argue, they compete for their father's attention, and eventually develop a greater understanding of one another. The author has drawn her characters with a sure touch, creating two very different boys struggling to figure out who they are. With ease and grace, Park brings these long-ago children to life. Barbara Scotto, Michael Driscoll School, Brookline, MA Copyright 2000 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Linda Sue Park fills an important niche in children's literature, providing insight into and surfacing important issues about Korean history and culture in such a way that children can easily relate to. While Seesaw Girl was about the role of women and a Single Shard was about the importance of families and class, Kite Fighters is about the power dynamics within the traditional Korean family. Kee-sup and Young-sup are the sons of a bureaucrat in medieval Korea. Because Kee-sup is the oldest son, he is expected to study hard and take the civil service examination required for important bureaucratic positions. Young-sup is the second son. He is neither expected nor encouraged to sit for the examination. While Kee-sup is methodical and artistic, Young-sup is daring, instinctive and enjoys a challenge. Because of their personalities, Kee-sup is able to make it through his studies, but Young-sup is the one with the true passion for learning. Kee-sup's passion is in building things, and thus while he has little skill flying a kite, he can make one perfectly. Young-sup lacks the attention to detail required to build a great kite, but he knows automatically how to fly one. Although the brothers' relationship is fraught with some tension, they are able to work together to construct and fly their kite so well that they draw the attention of the boy-king of Korea. Although supposedly all-powerful, the boys immediately recognize both the loneliness and burdens the king feels. They are then honored and touched when the king asks them to fly a kite for him during the annual kite

festival, which he cannot participate in. The description of the festival is rich in detail, but not tiresome, and while the reader can guess the outcome, the author successfully and even somewhat suspensefully draws it out. Although Young-sup is the primary voice of the story, the author shows that both brothers should have our sympathy. While tradition requires Young-sup to work that much harder for any recognition from his father, it demands that Kee-sup take a path which he agrees to but is not entirely cut out for. While Young-sup resents his brother's privileges and Kee-sup envies his brother's freedom, it is obvious that the two depend on each other for their happiness. Park also drops a few references to the examination system which dominated Korean society for hundreds of years and is in large part responsible for the importance of education in modern Korea. While selections for civil service jobs are supposed to be made on the basis of merit- or the results of the exam- it is known even to these young boys that who you know can still be very important in securing a good job. One must wonder how that cynical knowledge mingled with the strict lessons in Confucian values about honor for children in this culture. I have used this book many times when teaching Korean history to preteens to illustrate Korean history. I recommend that anyone who wants to approach this period with children nine and up explore this and Park's other books.

What a great book. My children (ages 10,12,13) and I read it together and thoroughly enjoyed it. I wasn't sure I would like it, but it was so beautifully written. LOVED it.

I bought this book because I volunteered to coach a team of 4th graders in Battle of the Books. I wanted to read the books the students were reading so I could help them prepare for the Battle. I thought that reading books written for children would be tedious, but I was pleasantly surprised at how enjoyable *The Kite Fighters* was. The story is compelling and there are some good life lessons illustrated in the plot. And, I learned a lot about the sport of kite flying. I never even realized there was so much involved in the constructing of kites and that kite flying can be very competitive. A good book to read and share with the young readers in your life.

In *See-Saw Girl*, Linda Sue Park described the expectations and limitations for a girl growing up in ancient Korean traditional society, and in *The Kite Fighters* she does the same for two brothers. Both boys have differing interests and skills, but the expectations put on them by their family and society don't match them very well. Played out in the arena of "professional" kite flying, brave decisions and honorable understandings develop in a dramatic ending. A fast, relatively easy read for upper elementary students.

Thanks

I just finished reading this book aloud to my children, ages 9 (girl) and 7 (boy). They both loved it, as did I. Linda Sue Park has an interesting writing style. She is not overly descriptive - in fact, her descriptions are deceptively simple yet still manage to evoke a vivid scene in your mind. It was very refreshing, as I dislike books that drag out pretentious descriptions over several pages. The story was engaging and my kids clamored for me to read more, wanting to know what happened next. It provides an interesting slice of Korean history and customs without being overwhelming. I'm off now to shop for other books by this author.

This was a good story about sibling rivalry that is solved through the depiction of a traditional pastime that still practiced today. It is also a great description of kite making, kite flying and kite fighting.

Well written story with great character portrayal. The main message of the book is achieving positive results through persistence, woven into an original context.

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