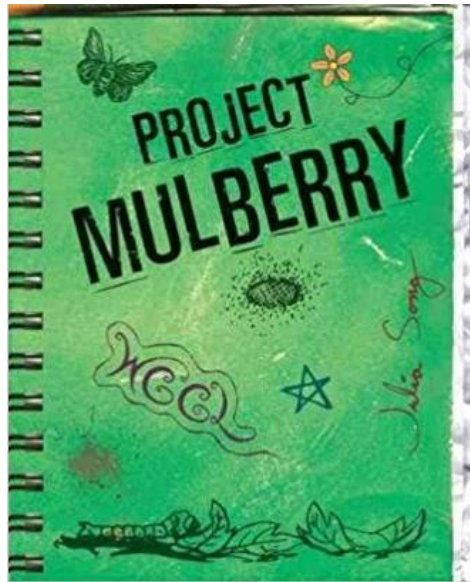


Paula Matney

Summer 2017



Project Mulberry
By Linda Sue Park

Introduction

Linda Sue Park is the author of multiple books that emphasize Korean culture. Her books are written for kids of several age groups including *Bee-Bim Bop!* (pre-grade 2), *When My Name Was Keoko* and *A Long Walk to Water* (grades 5-7). Linda Sue Park has received awards including the Newberry Medal for the book *A Single Shard*. The book *Project Mulberry* is for grade levels 5-7 and is published by HMH Books.

About the Book

Two kids, Julia and Patrick, join the Wiggle (**W**ork-**G**row-**G**ive-**L**ive) Club and work together on a project for the state fair. They want to participate in the animal husbandry category but have a hard time deciding what animal to raise. Julia's mother suggests they raise silkworms but Julia doesn't like that idea because it is an Asian tradition and she wants to do something more

American. However, her friend Patrick likes the idea so Julia goes along with it. In order to raise the silkworms, they need to procure fresh Mulberry leaves for food and also provide a safe container for shelter. Through the local grapevine they find Mr. Dixon, who volunteers his mulberry tree. Julia's mother isn't altogether comfortable with Mr. Dixon because he is black. During process of raising the silkworms, both kids discover things about each other they were previously unaware of and struggle with having to kill the silkworms in order to use the silk. The story weaves together aspects of different cultures and ethnicities, and conservation, biology and ethics of animal husbandry. The author also has periodic conversations with the main protagonist character, Julia, which gives insight into the interworkings of an author's thought process when writing.

Discussion Guide

1. What cultures traditionally raise silkworms? How is each stage of the silkworm life cycle described and are they described true-to-life?
2. What is a Wiggle project? What is a comparable group to the Wiggle Club where you live?
3. What type of farming did the characters learn about on their Wiggle Club field trip? How did the characters incorporate that type of farming into their project?
4. What is the purpose of the author having ongoing conversations with the main character? Did this add to the story? How does this give insight into how a story is written?
5. How did the characters experience racism? Give some examples. Was this a negative experience or was it a learning experience and how?

6. What kind of phobia does Patrick admit to having? How does he attempt to get over this phobia? How does this correspond to Julia's enthusiasm to do the project?
7. What is Julia planning to do with the silk thread produced by the silkworms? How does this go along with the original Wiggle project?
8. How is the concept of entomology and an entomologist incorporated into the story? Do you think this story would encourage kids to become more or less interested in insects?
9. How did the kids overcome the dilemma of killing the silkworms so they could use the silk? What were the ethical struggles? Do you think the kids became emotionally attached to the silkworms?
10. What is the meaning of the word "Gak!"?