



2003

When My Name Was Keoko: A Novel of Korea in World War II

Peggy Robertson

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/cbmr>

BYU ScholarsArchive Citation

Robertson, Peggy (2003) "When My Name Was Keoko: A Novel of Korea in World War II," *Children's Book and Media Review*: Vol. 24 : Iss. 3 , Article 27.

Available at: <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/cbmr/vol24/iss3/27>

This Book Review is brought to you for free and open access by the Journals at BYU ScholarsArchive. It has been accepted for inclusion in Children's Book and Media Review by an authorized editor of BYU ScholarsArchive. For more information, please contact scholarsarchive@byu.edu, ellen_amatangelo@byu.edu.

Park, Linda Sue. *When My Name Was Keoko: a novel of Korea in World War II*. Clarion Books, 2002. ISBN 0618133356. \$16.00. 199 pp.

Reviewer: Peggy Robertson

Reading Level: Intermediate

Rating: Outstanding

Genre: Historical fiction;

Subject: Patriotism—Juvenile fiction; Family life—Korea—Juvenile fiction; Military occupation—Juvenile fiction; Korea—History—1910-1945—Juvenile fiction; Books—Reviews;

Between 1935 and 1945 the Japanese occupied Korea. Besides being forced to study Japanese history and language and bow to the Japanese emperor, Koreans were forced to take a Japanese name. *When my name was Keoko* is a fictionalized account of one family's resistance against Japanese control. The story is told by the two children in the family Sun-hee (Keoko) and her brother Tae-yul (Nobuo). In alternating chapters the children describe the every day events of living under the control of the Japanese. They describe their school life, the family's printing business, the raids by Japanese soldiers to commandeer supplies for the war effort, and most importantly the underground resistance movement by their uncle and neighbors to make sure that Korean culture, language, and identity were never completely snuffed out by the Japanese.

Although this book is a work of fiction, Park takes pieces of the story from events in her own parents' lives. As the daughter of Korean immigrants, she displays a superb knowledge of Korea's involvement in World War II. Her research is thorough, and yet the book is quite readable without sounding preachy or vindictive. Her portrayals of anger by the Koreans against the Japanese are believable and well written.

Above all, she writes about the will to succeed and the desire to maintain a cultural heritage. Her characters, each in their own way, discover what it means to be Korean and how to take the best in themselves and use it for the good of the country.