

The One Thing You'd Save

BY LINDA SUE PARK ILLUSTRATED BY ROBERT SAE-HENG



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“Imagine that your home is on fire. You’re allowed to save one thing. Your family and pets are safe, so don’t worry about them. Your Most Important Thing. Any size. A grand piano? Fine.”

About the Book

When a teacher asks her class what one thing they would save in an emergency, some students know the answer right away. Others come to their decisions more slowly. And some change their minds when they hear their classmates’ responses. A lively dialog ignites as the students discover unexpected facets of one another—and themselves. With her ear for authentic dialog and knowledge of tweens’ priorities and emotions, Newbery Medalist Linda Sue Park brings the varied voices of an inclusive classroom to life through carefully honed, engaging, and instantly accessible verse.

About the Author

Linda Sue Park is the author of the Newbery Medal-winning *A Single Shard*, the bestseller *A Long Walk to Water*, and the highly praised novel *Prairie Lotus*. She has also written several acclaimed picture books and serves on the advisory board of We Need Diverse Books. She lives in western New York with her family.

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About the Illustrator

Robert Sae-Heng is an illustrator and teacher who lives in London. www.robertsaeheng.com, Twitter and Instagram: @robertsaeheng

Discussion Questions

1. As you read the poems, do you get an image in your head of the student who is speaking (or thinking)? What do you think they look like? Consider why their words create that image in your mind. Then try envisioning someone else, someone different, who might say those same words.
2. In writing, a dialogue tag is the phrase used to identify the person speaking: “I’m over here,” Chris said. The words *Chris said* form the dialogue tag. In these poems, there are no dialogue tags, which means that the reader has to figure out who is speaking. For some readers,

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- this might be confusing. For others, it can be an interesting challenge. Still others might appreciate the space it leaves to imagine the speakers. Try assigning dialogue tags to some or all of the poems. Find clues to who might be the speakers by tracking the names mentioned in the poems.
3. Mrs. Chang, the teacher in *The One Thing You'd Save* gives her students the previously mentioned homework. Most of the class is excited about the assignment. Can you think of a homework assignment you have enjoyed more than others? What was it? What made it so enjoyable?
 4. In the book, which character's response can you most relate to, or which character would you most want to be friends with based on their response? Why?
 5. Things or stuff become the focus of this book. In **this video**, Linda Sue Park mentions that to develop her characters, she sometimes imagines walking into their bedrooms to get a better sense of who they are and what things they might have. Try out her writing exercise: choose a character from the book. Imagine walking into their bedroom without them there. What things do you think you would see in their room?
 6. For the poems in this book, Linda Sue Park uses a Korean form of poetry called sijo (pronounced SHEE-zho). Sijo is a syllabic form with three lines and a set number of syllables per line. Linda Sue Park has used the form in an untraditional way. A classic sijo has three lines of thirteen to seventeen syllables. Sometimes the lines are divided into six shorter ones. Which poems were your favorites? Take a stab at writing your own sijo.
 7. The book becomes a lively discussion between the characters. Some speculate about what their friends might take. What one thing do you think your friends or family members might choose? Take a guess and then see if their answer matches your guess.
 8. Artist Robert Sae-Heng's illustrations accompany the text of this book. What do you think of the drawings throughout the book? What do you think they bring to the story?
 9. Think about your own life and possessions; what one thing would you choose to save? Why? Write a poem or draw a picture of the one thing you'd save.