

## WHAT'S YOUR STORY, LINDA SUE PARK?



Until I was about eight years old, my family was the only Korean family in our whole town. There were no other Koreans living nearby. My parents decided to speak English at home, so for me and my brother and sister, English was our first language. Things were different back then—people weren't aware of the importance of bilingualism or multiculturalism. My parents thought they were making the right decision. Today I regret that I don't speak Korean, but I'm also glad that English is my first language.

Being the only Korean in school meant that I always felt different from my classmates. Most of the time the other kids were nice to me, but sometimes the mean kids would tease me and make me cry.

What helped me get through those times was this: I loved to read, and I worked hard at my writing.

Find something you're interested in. It can be anything: art, music, collecting things, a subject you can learn a lot about. Birdwatching. World War II. Anything you're interested in! Work at it really hard, and get good at it. Become an expert.



When you feel good about yourself, it doesn't matter as much what other people think.

Those kids who were mean to me? Not one of them has ever written a book, and I've written LOTS of them. Take that, bullies!

- **What were your favorite things to do when you were young?**



*READ! I owned very few books, but my father took me to the public library regularly, and I also checked books out of the school library. I read everything I could get my hands on, and I re-read my favorites all the time.*

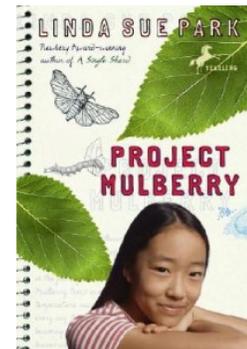
- **What were you afraid of?**

*Worms. Caterpillars. Soft, squirmy things like that. I'm still afraid of them. And I gave that phobia to a character in one of my books! Patrick, in [PROJECT MULBERRY](#), is afraid of worms.*

- **Did you ever get into trouble at home or school?**

*When I was about eight years old, I trimmed my little sister's eyelashes. I'd heard it would make them grow back thicker and longer, but I didn't want to try it on myself, so I used her for a guinea pig. My mom got really mad at me...especially when my sister followed my example and later gave herself a really terrible haircut!*

- **What books were favorites as a child?**



[THE SATURDAYS](#), by Elizabeth Enright

ROOSEVELT GRADY, by Louisa Shotwell

[I, JUAN DE PAREJA](#), by Elizabeth Borton de Trevino

WHAT THEN, RAMAN? by Shirley Arora

THE MAN WITH THE PURPLE EYES, by Charlotte Zolotow

- **What did you want to be when you grew up?**



*A major-league baseball player. I wanted to play either shortstop or center field for the Chicago Cubs. I was probably about nine or ten years old when someone pointed out to me that there were no female ballplayers in the majors. I couldn't believe it—I was crushed. But it wasn't as great a blow as it could have been, because I had **NEGATIVE** talent for playing baseball.*

- **If you weren't a writer, what would you like to be?**

*A composer of music, or a visual artist. Because if you write music or paint or draw, your work doesn't need translation to reach people all over the world.*

*I'd also like to be an astronaut.*



- **What advice do you have for aspiring young readers and writers?**

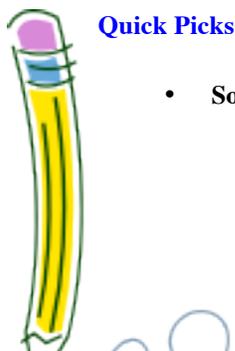
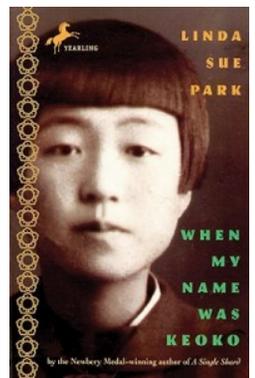
*Read a lot. Write a lot. And one more tip you might not have heard before: Get yourself attached to a losing sports team. A **LOSING** team, not a winning one. If you follow a losing team, you experience a constant cycle of hope and disappointment – hope and heartbreak. This will be your life as a writer, so you can start practicing right now! I am convinced that my years as a Chicago Cubs fan helped prepare me for the career I have today.*

- **How many times do you have to revise? Do you love revision or hate it?**

*Most of the time, I love revision. I love the challenge of choosing exactly the right words for the story. My personal record: I revised one of my novels, [WHEN MY NAME WAS KEOKO](#), 37 times before I was satisfied with it!*

- **Have you ever thrown a manuscript away?**

*Lots of them! A story might seem like a good idea at first, but then when I start working on it, I figure out that it's actually a really **BAD** idea. I have thrown away many more stories than I've published.*



### Quick Picks

- **Soup or salad?**

*BOTH. But if I had to pick one, it would probably be salad. No, wait, soup. Okay, can I say salad in summer and soup in winter?*

- **P & J or Mac and Cheese?**

*Mac and cheese.*

- **Dog, Cat, Bird, or Fish?**

*Dog! I love dogs. I like cats too, but unfortunately I'm allergic to them. And I also like birdwatching.*

- **Favorite or least favorite vegetable?**

*Favorite vegetable: artichokes.*

*Least favorite: none. I never met a vegetable I didn't like, as long as it's prepared nicely.*

- **Longhand or computer?**

*Computer for novels. Longhand for picture books and poetry.*

- **Early Bird Writer or Night Owl?**

*Night Owl. But not for writing. I write during the day. I read at night...sometimes until very late. When I was a kid, my parents used to yell at me to turn off the light and go to sleep. Now it's my husband who does the yelling!*

Read "Your Friend, Linda Sue Park (A Letter to Readers)" [HERE](#).

For more about Linda Sue, visit her website [HERE](#).