

Discussion Questions for *A Single Shard* by Linda Sue Park

1. At the beginning of the book, Tree-ear sees a farmer with a bag of leaking rice. What does his decision during that incident tell you about his character?
2. What word do you think best describes the relationship between Crane-man and Tree-ear? What does each character give the other?
3. Based on what you know of their situation, do you think Tree-ear and Crane-man are outsiders in Ch'ulp'o by choice or by necessity? Why?
4. How do you think these two characters maintain such a positive outlook despite the many challenges they face in life? Why do they cling to their sense of honor even though they have so little?
5. What observations can you make about the homes, clothing, food, religion, traditions, and customs of 12th century Korea? How do these cultural elements influence the way Tree-ear lives, thinks, and interacts with others on a daily basis?
6. Crane-man says that seeing the fox actually changed his life, causing him to stay under the bridge instead of going on to the temple. "Between the fox and you," Crane-man tells Tree-ear, "I was destined never to become a monk!" What does Crane-man mean by "destined?" Is destiny mostly a matter of luck or does it come from qualities in the characters themselves?
7. Do you think the potter Min is an admirable person? Why or why not? Why does he change in his attitude toward Tree-ear?
8. How do Min and Ajima treat Tree-ear differently? Why do each of these characters behave the way they do with Tree-ear?
9. Where does Tree-ear get the courage for his dangerous mission? Is he already brave before the trip or does his courage grow as he goes along?

10. In some ways life in Tree-ear's world is very different from ours in the here and how. What are some of these differences? What are some similarities? Can you imagine Tree-ear or Crane-man or the potter Min living in your neighborhood as modern Americans? What would they be like? What about Kang the potter who invents a new way of decorating pottery?

11. Why do you think the author gives so much detail about the process they use to make their pottery?

Sources:

- J. Wright www.conversationpieceslearning.org/a-single-shard.html
- Duke University Program in Education
www.blogs.tip.duke.edu/teachersworkshop/book-club-a-single-shard/
- Multnomah County Library www.multcolib.org/single-shard