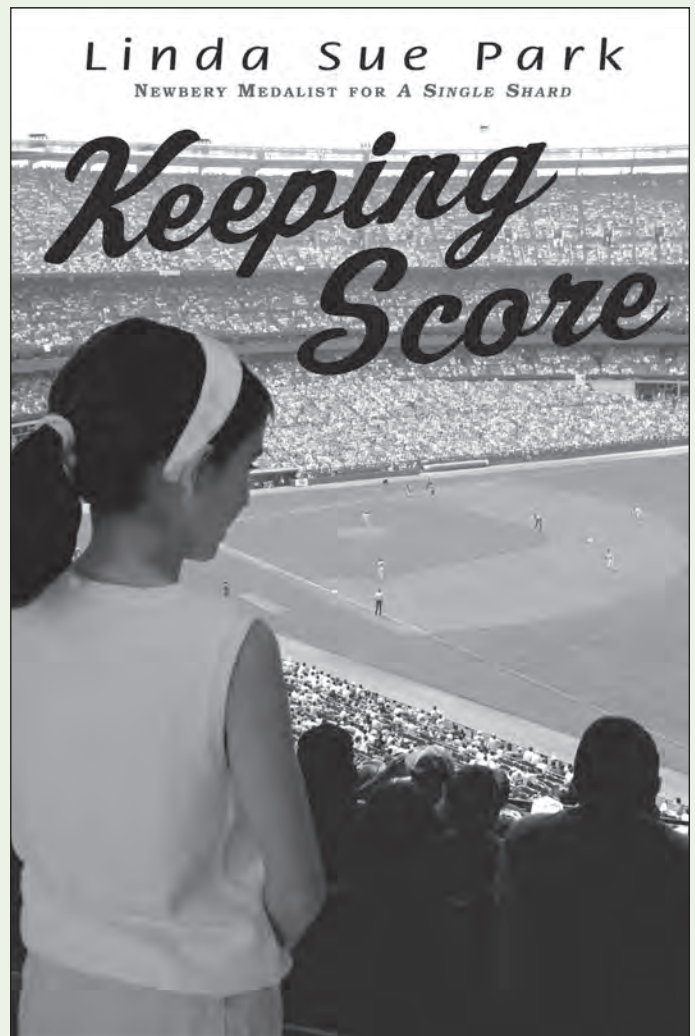


A Guide for Book Group Discussion & Classroom Use

About the Book

Most people call her Maggie. Her brother, Joey-Mick, calls her Mags, Mom calls her Margaret Olivia Fortini (when she's angry). Dad always calls her Maggie-o—after Joe DiMaggio, his favorite baseball player. Maggie and Joey-Mick aren't Yankee fans like Dad: their team is the Brooklyn Dodgers. Although Maggie doesn't play baseball herself, she knows the game. She can recite the players' stats and understand complicated plays; she cheers when the Dodgers win—and suffers when they lose. But even with Maggie's support and prayers, the Dodgers fail to win the World Series, season after season. Adding to her disappointment, the letters she sends to her friend and baseball mentor, Jim—serving in the army in Korea—aren't answered.

No matter what she does, Maggie can't seem to break Jim's long silence. Or help the Dodgers. Will anything she tries ever make a difference?



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Author Interview

1. How did you become such a rabid baseball fan?
2. What do baseball and writing have in common?
3. What inspired Maggie's story?

Discussion Guide

1. Explain the names and nicknames in Maggie's family. Are there any nicknames in your family? If you could be named after anyone, who would it be?
2. Who is Jim? What does he teach Maggie that becomes a part of her life as a baseball fan? Would you be interested in learning how to keep score? How is it like a secret code?
3. "There was something else about keeping score—something Maggie loved most of all. . . . It was as if cheering for them, supporting them, listening to the games, talking about them, somehow helped them play better." (p. 33) What rituals does Maggie think will make a difference in baseball and in life? Do you think most fans feel this same sense of purpose and connection to their teams?
4. Despite their love of the game, Mr. Fortini won't let his kids go to Ebbets Field. Why not? How do parents develop their restrictions for their children?
5. Whom does Maggie choose as her favorite player? Why does this upset Joey-Mick so much? What does she like so much about this player? Who is your favorite player? Why?
6. Maggie struggles with the notion of prayer throughout the novel. She wonders about whether you should pray for certain things (like baseball games) or not and whether it makes a difference. What does she decide? Do you think prayers "are like collecting shells—maybe you had to say a whole lot of them before they added up to something." (p. 83) Is one prayer as important as many or not? Why? Is it okay to pray for things you want or only for other people?
7. What realization does Maggie arrive at about her mom? Do you think there are things about your own parents that you never noticed before?

Pre-reading

Are you a fan of any sports team? What does it mean to be a fan? Do you stick with your team year after year, even if they always disappoint you? Do fans make a difference? How?

8. Despite Maggie's steadfast devotion and several near misses, the Dodgers never win the World Series. Is any kind of loss equally bad, or is a loss harder to bear when you get so close? Would a shutout be easier to swallow than so many near misses? Support your opinion!
9. Who is Jay-Hey? How does Maggie have a connection to him? What types of things does she send him? What happens to him? How does this make Maggie feel? Have you ever had a pen pal?
10. Maggie tries understanding the conflict in Korea by reading both current and past newspapers, but she doesn't have much luck. How does her mom explain it to her in a way she comes to understand? Why does Maggie create so many maps? What else does she learn about the Korean conflict?
11. What happened to Jim in Korea? Why does Maggie's dad keep the truth from her for so long? How does Maggie try to make Jim feel better? What sacrifices does she make for this effort? What else does she try on Jim's behalf?
12. Describe Maggie and Treecie's friendship. One of the things they love to discuss is their future careers. What plans does Treecie have? What options were available to most girls during the 1950s? What careers do you think about for your own future?
13. In the end, Maggie decides, "Maybe praying was another way to practice hope." (p. 186) What other ways to people 'practice hope'? What do you hope for?

Projects

READING

“Instead of spooling randomly for articles about the war, Maggie was now looking for something specific. It made the search go much more quickly.” (p. 95)

Maggie learned that having a purpose while you’re reading makes it much easier to stay focused and to comprehend what you’re reading. Now you try it in one of the following ways:

Read chapters 1 and 2 and find at least ten facts about Maggie. Or read the lead article in your local newspaper and answer the five journalistic questions: Who, What, When, Where and Why.

LANGUAGE ARTS

Maggie gets hooked on the local paper when she realizes there is a sports section and articles about her favorite team. Explore your own local paper and clip out at least three things you find interesting and discuss in a short journal response why you picked them.

The letters and packages Maggie sent to Jim and Jay were important to them but also to Maggie. Find a pen pal or write to someone who is serving our country in the military, Red Cross, or Peace Corps. Discuss what you learn in a brief journal about writing letters.

HISTORY

The novel takes place in 1951-1954. Create a timeline that includes the ten years before the novel opens to ten years after it closes. Include not just important political and social dates but interesting facts from popular culture as well.

MATH

Baseball is a game dominated by math, with both individual and team averages. How does your favorite game use mathematics? Create at least five word problems using the sport and team of your choice. Trade with a friend.

About the author

Linda Sue Park is the author of the Newbery medal winner *A Single Shard*. Her Clarion titles include five other novels, two picture books, and a book of poetry. Ms. Park grew up in the Chicago area and was an ardent baseball fan as a child. She says of *Keeping Score*, “For the scenes depicting Maggie’s disappointment at the Dodgers’ many near-misses, I was able—alas!—to draw on many memories from my years as a Cubs’ fan.” She is now a fan of the New York Mets, continuing the cycle of disappointment and hope. She lives with her family in Rochester, New York. Her website is www.lindasuepark.com



photo © Anna Dobbin

To order *Keeping Score* by Linda Sue Park, call toll-free (800) 225-3362 or fax (800) 674-7568

This guide was created by Tracie Vaughn Zimmer, a reading specialist and children’s book author. Visit her website, www.TracieVaughnZimmer.com, to find hundreds of guides to children’s books.

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