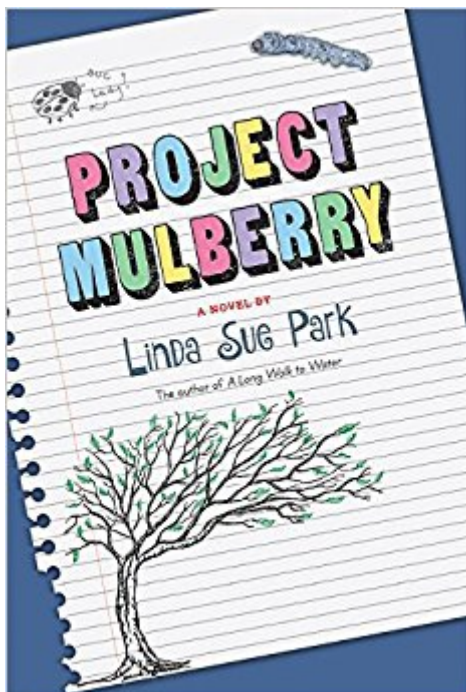


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# Project Mulberry



## Synopsis

Julia Song and her friend Patrick would love to win a blue ribbon, maybe even two, at the state fair. They've always done projects together, and they work well as a team. This time, though, they're having trouble coming up with just the right project. Then Julia's mother offers a suggestion: They can raise silkworms, as she did when she was a girl in Korea. Patrick thinks it's a great idea. Of course there are obstacles—for example, where will they get mulberry leaves, the only thing silkworms eat?—but nothing they can't handle. Julia isn't so sure. The club where kids do their projects is all about traditional American stuff, and raising silkworms just doesn't fit in. Moreover, the author, Ms. Park, seems determined to make Julia's life as complicated as possible, no matter how hard Julia tries to talk her out of it. In this contemporary novel, Linda Sue Park delivers a funny, lively story that illuminates both the process of writing a novel and the meaning of growing up American.

## Book Information

Paperback: 272 pages

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Age Range: 10 - 12 years

Grade Level: 5 - 7

## Customer Reviews

Starred Review. Grade 4-7 When Julia Song moves with her family to Plainfield, IL, where they are the only Korean family in town, she becomes good friends with her neighbor Patrick. They have joined the Wiggle (Work-Grow-Give-Live) Club, and they need a project for the state fair. Animal husbandry is their category of choice, but what can they raise in their suburban

neighborhood? When Julia's mother suggests silkworms, Patrick is enthusiastic, but Julia is not. Raising silkworms is so Korean, and she wants a real American project. Still, she agrees to the idea. When she realizes that to get the silk, the worms must die, her anguish clearly indicates how much her attitude has changed. At the end of almost every chapter, Park and her young protagonist discuss the story inside the story: where the author's ideas came from, how the characters take on a life of their own, how questions raised in the book continue to percolate inside some readers' minds when it is finished. This lively interaction provides an interesting parallel to the silkworm project as it moves from idea to reality. Julia, a feisty seventh grader, concludes that it is important to know what you don't know, an insight that she has as she grapples with her mother's attitude toward blacks. Park appropriately leaves Julia wondering what's behind her mother's prejudices in certain situations. As the novel progresses, Patrick and Julia negotiate the ups and downs of their friendship, and Julia begins to show a gradual change in attitude toward her younger brother. This skillfully written tale will have wide appeal. --Barbara Scotto, Michael Driscoll School, Brookline, MA Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. --This text refers to the Hardcover edition.

**\*Starred Review\*** Gr. 5-8. There are big issues in Park's latest novel--conservation, prejudice, patriotism, biology, and more. But the Newbery-winning writer never allows them to swamp the story; in fact, it's the compelling characters and their passionate differences and commitments that drive the plot. Julia Song doesn't want to do a silkworm project for the state fair. It's too Korean; she wants something American. But she becomes interested in caring for the eggs, the caterpillars, and the moths and then in sewing the silk thread. Kind, elderly Mr. Dixon donates the mulberry leaves the silkworms eat, but why is Mom against Julia spending time with him? Is it because he is black? The first-person narrative alternates with lively interchanges between Julia ("Me") and the author ("Ms. Park") about writing the story. The author's intrusion may distract some readers, but most children will be hooked by the funny, insightful conversations. There's no easy resolution, but the unforgettable family and friendship story, the quiet, almost unspoken racism, and the excitement of the science make this a great cross-curriculum title. Hazel Rochman Copyright © American Library Association. All rights reserved --This text refers to the Hardcover edition.

I chose this rating because it was a really great book I enjoy and recommend this book to others to read it had different themes in the book like racism, husbandry, and a little peer pressure and it's very descriptive and my favorite part is when Julia (main character) and Mrs. Parks (author) would

have conversations with each other about the book and with what's going on in that chapter sometimes Julia would debate with Mrs. Parks but that was her personality which made her a great character and Mr. Dixon was such a friendly character and I do think that Julia's mother was stereotyping Mr. Dixon because of her having a bad experience with other African-American's so she would discriminate however Mr. Dixon did stereotype Julia's family also so they were both wrong on both parts but to find this paragraph up if you get the book you will not

I needed it for school

This was a required reading for my son. He enjoyed the book. And so did I.

As described

This book was assigned by my child's 5th grade teacher as a class reading assignment and it caused a lot of problems. I have a child adopted from China who attends a mostly white school. There are topics about racism in this book that are quite extreme and racial slurs are used. one happened to be an Asian slur that had been used against my child the year before at school. hearing it read out loud in class and discussed in the manner in which it was created a very upsetting situation for my child. the few other Asian children and families were all asked how they felt and they also were upset. I absolutely don't think it's appropriate for school unless there is a balanced racial make up of the class. It made the Asian kids feel very isolated and afraid. Also one of the characters is racist against African Americans and the African American families in the class also had problems with the book. I think that maybe it would be an OK read for 12+ year olds and outside of school where parents can discuss the subject matter with their children.

My 10yr. old loves the book. It was on her summer reading list, but even if not I would definitely still buy it for her.

Bought this for my son as it was required reading for his Battle of the Books competition. He enjoyed it but I don't think he loved it.

I purchased this book due to the fact that I would be attending a conference at which Ms. Park is speaking (I like to get an idea of the presentors background). I knew that Ms. Park is talented, but

never did I expect to enjoy it so very very much. As an author I found the entries between the chapters to be fascinating. What a great idea. And the story itself was amazing as well. I can not say enough about the whole package other than READ IT! Can't wait to meet you Ms. Park! Julia (not Julia Song, but still Julia)

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