

# ***ONE THOUSAND CHESTNUT TREES AND MYUNG-JA'S MEMORY BOOK***

**GRADE LEVEL:** Ten through eleven

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**SUBJECT:** AHLISA II (American History and Literature with an Independent Study in the Arts)

**TIME REQUIRED:** Two to three class periods to present all elements of the project  
Two to three weeks for students to complete the project independently

## **OBJECTIVES:**

As a result of this project, students will:

1. Be able to do extensive research on the political and cultural climate of Korea during 1944-1951(History).
2. Know how to express factual information in a journalistic news story format (History and English).
3. Be able to research information and then subsequently express their own opinion and viewpoints in editorial style articles (History and English).
4. Successfully capture the voice and life experience of a distinct character in two fictional pieces of writing (English).
5. Be capable of expressing, in a visually artistic manner, descriptions of people and places in a novel (Art).

## **Applicable NCSS Standards:**

1. Culture
  - A. Analyze and explain the ways groups, societies and cultures address human needs and concerns.
  - B. Construct reasoned judgments about specific cultural responses to persistent human issues.
2. Time, Continuity and Change
  - A. Investigate, interpret and analyze multiple historical and contemporary viewpoints within and across cultures related to important events, recurring dilemmas and persistent issues, while employing empathy, skepticism and critical judgment.
3. Individual Development and Identity
  - A. Describe the ways family, religion, gender, ethnicity, nationality, socioeconomic status and other group and cultural influences contribute to the development of a sense of self.

## **MATERIALS REQUIRED:**

- Copies of Mira Stout's *One Thousand Chestnut Trees*
- Research materials
- Art supplies
- A book that will hold all elements of the project (students are encouraged to *create* their own authentic-looking books)

## **RATIONALE:**

Since our course covers the time period of the Korean War, Stout's *One Thousand Chestnut Trees* is a wonderful piece of autobiographical fiction for the AHLISA students to read. Once students are done reading and discussing the novel, "Myung-ja's Memory Book" will serve as the culminating project. While the letters, entries and depictions will come from Myung-ja's voice and vision, the news articles (meant to reflect those that she would have clipped from a Korean newspaper) will be presented in an editorial voice.

## PROCEDURE:

1. Students will read and discuss at length Mira Stout's *One Thousand Chestnut Trees*.
2. As a culminating exercise, students will be assigned to create "Myung-ja's Memory Book" (perhaps the one thing, along with her violin, that she carries with her as she and her family are continually being moved).
3. Students will need include the following elements in their projects:
  - A. A book that can hold the entire project
  - B. A cover that represents the individual student's take on Myung-ja's life
  - C. A motivational excerpt from the novel for each of the following elements:
    1. History (both required)
      - a. News article  
Sample motivational excerpt:  
"As the Americans disembarked from their ship and the Korean delegation moved to greet General Hodge, the Japanese police opened fire and killed five of the Koreans instantly, wounding nine others. Among the slain were Labor Union leader Kwon Pyong-gun and peacekeeping activist Yi Sok-ku" (p. 154).
      - b. News editorial  
Sample motivational excerpt:  
"The announcement stated that Korea had been divided into two halves to facilitate the withdrawal of the Japanese. Northern provinces had been placed under the jurisdiction of Russia (whose Soviet army of occupation was already crossing the Yalu River) and the southern region under the protection of the United States. The 38<sup>th</sup> Parallel had been chosen by Colonel Dean Rusk so that Seoul would fall under the control of the Americans, who would soon be arriving to accept the surrendering Japanese troops" (p. 151).
    2. English (choose two)
      - a. Letter (to or from Myung-ja)  
Sample motivational excerpt:  
"Although I knew he was hanging around with a raffish crowd, I was still shocked and hurt to find this evidence of a secret, rather seedy adult life, away from us. When I saw Jin-ho again after following him, I was uncomfortably suspicious of everything he did and said. Although he behaved no different at home, he now felt like a stranger to me, a double agent" (p. 133).
      - b. School diary entry  
Sample motivational excerpt:  
"Although a good student, I was lazy. I suffered particular ennui in Japanese composition class. The plain and po-faced Miss Takagawa, with her thin face, steel-rimmed spectacles, and bowl-shaped haircut, made us keep a daily diary in Japanese. To amuse myself, fill up space, and tease Miss Takagawa, I included quotes from my favorite books—ponderous phrases from Balzac, Gide and Tolstoy, which I grafted onto my juvenile observations about friends and family" (p. 127).
      - c. The personal journal entry Myung-ja writes after Anna returns from her trip to Korea (should include dialogue)  
Sample motivational excerpt:  
"Perhaps my only purpose had been to gather together the small, scattered fragments of my mother's blasted history, to witness them, broken as they were, without attempting to make them whole again. That would have been far beyond my powers" (p. 346).
3. Art (choose two)
  - a. Character portrait  
Sample motivational excerpt:

“Meanwhile our household had acquired a bizarre new addition in the form of Jin-ho’s bodyguard, called Peking, who slept in Jin-ho’s dressing room, and accompanied him to and from university every day—to ensure his protection from various enemies he had accumulated with his shady exploits as much as to enforce his attendance at university. Peking had a shaved head, strange, penciled-in eyebrows, and a very thick neck. I found him frightening, but realized belatedly that this was the point of Peking, and decided that he did his job quite well” (p. 177).

b. Personal sketch of a significant moment

Sample motivational excerpt:

“I did not look back at the house as I shut the big iron gates behind me and my family for the last time. We walked fast toward the center of Seoul, the low-flying aircraft overhead making us all nervous. Apart from a small pouch of jewels and a paper bag stuffed with cabbage (to hide my violin) we left everything behind, and walked the streets disguised as poor country peasants; without luggage. Father had a half-grown beard as well as his new bumpkin haircut, Mother wore an old-fashioned white cotton *han-bok*, and my sister and I sported pigtails, too-small pinafores, and scuffed lace-up school shoes. We looked quite convincing” (p. 193).

c. Depiction of a location

Sample motivational excerpt:

“As we neared Seoul, the sight before us was breathtaking—epic and tragic. The city was in flames. Snowy, shark-toothed mountains ringed the burning buildings. Those buildings still standing were dark, without electricity; streets were corridors of live flame, casting a blood orange glow against the black silhouette of wing-tipped rooftops. I could make out Bridge Street, the Town Hall, the Choson Hotel, and Capitol Building in the fire; I prayed that the damage would be confined to the modern quarter of the city, and would not reach my family. At Capitol Corner I saw the pathetic white banner stretched between lampposts: WELCOME UN TROOPS WITH BOUNDLESS GRATITUDE!” (p. 227-228).

## EVALUATION:

Each subject area teacher will create an area-specific assessment that incorporates evaluations from teachers, students and peers.