

CTYOnline Young Readers' Series for Grades 4 & 5



On Our Own **Sample Assignment**

In this theme, young, orphaned protagonists search both for their identities and their places in the world. In *A Single Shard* by Linda Sue Park, a 12th Century Korean boy learns about perseverance, creativity, and courage when he becomes apprenticed to a master potter. In *Crispin: The Cross of Lead* by Avi, a boy leaves behind the bleak life of a medieval serf in his search for freedom. In *The Thief Lord* by Cornelia Funke, a band of children make their home in the magical underworld of Venice, Italy, led by the clever and charming Thief Lord.

Designed for 4th and 5th grade children reading at a middle-school level or above, students in this critical reading series:

- read three thematically connected, age-appropriate books of increasing difficulty
- participate in online discussions with gifted classmates from Boston to Beijing
- post book-related writing assignments such as alternate story endings and talk shows with characters as guests
- analyze the authors' writing styles and use of literary devices
- learn sophisticated vocabulary words and literary devices with the help of online games and puzzles

Instructors encourage students to read carefully and cite the text to support their points. Students become conscious of the importance of interpreting an author's inferences in understanding plot and character. Students typically read and share written responses every other day (fall, spring, and early summer sessions) or daily (midsummer intensive session). Work is posted in the virtual classrooms at the student's convenience as long as deadlines are met. Parents should review the books in each theme before choosing in order to find the most interesting and appropriate theme for their child.

To give you an idea of the type of assignments involved, the following is the first of ten lessons:

Instructions for Lesson One

All work is due by the following Sunday at midnight. (That's the end of Sunday, not the beginning!) This means that your assigned reading should be started early and completed by Thursday night--at the latest--to allow you enough time to finish all the assignments (reading, poll, blog, discussion forum, and optional games, crossword puzzles, and wikis) by Sunday night.

1. Begin guided reading of *A Single Shard* by Linda Sue Park, preferably reading in the following reading chunks:

Pages 3-24 (Chapters 1-2)

Pages 25-48 (Chapters 3-4)

Pages 49-72 (Chapters 5-6)

2. Vote your opinion on the [Poll](#).

3. Post ONE of the following Blog assignments to the Blog forum:

- a. Using the explanations of 1st Person [Point of View](#) found in the terms [Narrator](#) and [Point of View](#) in the Glossary, pretend you are a character in *Shard* and write a 100-300 word diary account from “your” 1st person [point of view](#) describing some event that occurs in the book.
- b. Pretend you are Tree-ear and write a 100-300 word letter of gratitude to another character in the story expressing Tree-ear’s appreciation.

4. Contribute two (or more) thoughtful posts to the Discussion Board in response to any of the following questions (Remember! At least one of your two thoughtful posts should be in reply to a discussion post made by another student.) :

a. **Setting.** The unnumbered page before page 3 lets us know that the [Setting](#) (see Glossary) of the book is a small village on the west coast of Korea, mid- to late 12th century. Does this [setting](#) make you more or less interested in the book you are about to read? Are you concerned whether you will be able to relate to people from that long ago and perhaps that far away?

b. **A Kind of Stealing.** In the first chapter, why did Tree-ear wait until the man reached the bend in the road before telling him that he was losing rice from his container? Do you think that he should have told the man earlier? Why? Was Tree-ear’s waiting until the bend to tell the man a kind of stealing? Explain why or why not.

c. **Luck and Learning.** Many people think that some one who is particularly good at something is just "lucky" or "born that way." In contrast, Tree-ear's experience with learning how to cut and carry wood and clay is an excellent example of the "learning curve" that takes place when people learn new skills. According to this theory, as people perform a task more often, they become better at it: They become more physically fit and mentally confident, make fewer mistakes, create shortcuts, and figure out improvements. Have you ever experienced the "learning curve" effect in your own life or observed it in others? Explain.

d. **Two and Four Legs.** What does Crane-man mean on page 36 when he comments "when I leave this world, I will have two good legs and no need [for a crutch]? What does Tree-ear mean when he adds "Some of us will have four good legs?"

e. **Winter.** What do you think of Crane-man and Tree-ear's practice of moving from the bridge to sleeping in a pit every winter (pg. 55)? Why do you think that they did not go to the monks and beg for a warm place to stay during the winter?

f. **Orphans.** Why do you think orphans are considered bad luck in many societies? Do you think that they are considered bad luck in your culture?

g. **Kang's Idea.** Do you agree that if Tree-ear would tell Min about what he had seen in Kang's workshop, that he would be stealing Kang's idea? Crane-man responded on page 64 that "once a man has revealed his idea to others, it is no longer his alone. It belongs to the world." Do you agree? Do you think it should be a matter of common decency or law enforcement that should stop Tree-ear from spreading the news of Kang's new idea?

Note: You are provided with a list of “50 Mind-Expanding Vocabulary Words from *A Single Shard*” that you can use to help better understand *Shard* and increase your knowledge of vocabulary words in general.

OPTIONAL-Not Required- fun activities are also provided:

- Share your favorite stories and authors with other students in the [Recommended Reading Wiki](#).

- Print out and work on the crossword puzzles that have been provided to help reinforce your knowledge of the "mind-expanding" vocabulary words.
- Participate in the [Students' Adventure On Their Own Wiki](#), a group writing activity.
- Play the literary terms review games.