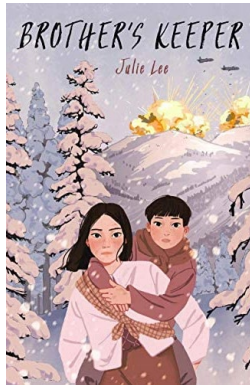


Winner, Middle School Category



Essayist: Nina, age 11, Maret School

Advocating for: *Brother's Keeper* by Julie Lee

In *Brother's Keeper*, Julie Lee takes you into North Korea during the 1950s and shows you the life of fictional character Sora Pak, a girl who has to grow up faster than anyone should have to. She is given the responsibility of taking care of her baby brother, while trying to escape into South Korea during the Korean War. Through snow covered mountains and frozen rivers she tries to escape capture from soldiers as she carries her brother on her back.

This book was inspirational and compelling. The author brought me into a whole new world. I heard the bombs going off around me and the whimpering sobs of her brother. I felt the frigid snow pressing against my feet, and the weight of her brother on my back. As a Korean girl, this novel felt meaningful because it told the history of my ancestors and family members. The stories of those escaping North Korea are not often written and finding this book made me feel like someone had used their words to tell the world these tales. I couldn't take my eyes off the book except to dry my tears. It not only showed me what was going on, but brought me into the world and made me feel like I was right there, feeling the struggle and pain.

Books like these can be overlooked and not read by many people, but this book is one that can connect with a lot of people and show the history of many. It is important for other people to read this book because it tells the history of the Korean War and shows the struggles that these people faced. This book shows how strong girls have to be, and how hard it is to live in a time of war. It told the stories of those who were living in North and South Korea and told their history. This book gives people a glimpse at the lives of other people and how they have had to be strong and go through their struggles. For those who have ancestors or relatives that have experienced the Korean War it is a beautifully written piece to step into the world of this family.



I think that this is a magnificent book. It led me to research my family's history and the history of others. Having books written by someone of a different race, ethnicity, or culture is a meaningful thing to have, and something that can go a long way for people. The struggle shown in this book may speak to other people who have had to leave their homes or find a safer place to live during war, and who have had to be strong and brave for their friends and family. Hopefully this book can be shared with others so that they may hear the stories and words of Sora, the Brother's Keeper.