



**Tap Dancing on the Roof**

Written by Linda Sue Park  
Illustrated by Istvan Banyai  
Clarion Books, 2007, 48pp.  
ISBN: 978-0618234837.

Have you heard of sijo? Do you know haiku but not sijo? Then, *Tap Dancing on the Roof* is for you. If you are looking for an enjoyable poetry book for children or craving a different type of poetry, then, *Tap Dancing on the Roof* is for you. Linda Sue Park's collection of sijo is like a magician's magic box as she transforms a simple activity like folding

laundry into a fun game. With titles like breakfast, pockets, and tennis, readers may have certain simplistic expectations, but Linda Sue Park's sijo will surprise them with well-crafted lines and creative ideas. The humor and wit invite readers to the world of sijo and leaves a remarkable impression of this poetic form. Readers will learn that anything around them can be written in sijo and take a look at things with a different level of appreciation. In this book, ordinary topics and children's lives are described with humor and wit either in three-line sijo or six-line sijo. Istvan Banyai's illustrations also add a delightful mood to the book. The author's note explains the historical background of sijo and suggests additional readings along with writing tips for this poetry.

Linda Sue Park, author of the 2002 Newbery medal winner, *A Single Shard*, introduces Korean culture, history, and traditions through her books. She has impressed readers with her thorough research on Korean culture and authentic descriptions of Korean history and traditions, and she does it again in this book. Once children read these sijo, they will feel that it is easy to create even though it may be an unfamiliar form of poetry. They may even want to twist their daily lives into extraordinary ones through writing their own sijo. As a first sijo book for children, *Tap Dancing on the Roof* is a strong introduction, making sijo accessible to children. It also paves a way for other future poets of this form. Additional information about Linda Sue Park can be found on her website (<https://wowlit.org/on-line-publications/review/reviewvolumevii2/9/www.lindasuepark.com>).

If readers are not familiar with sijo, it can be taught in comparison with haiku. Both sijo and haiku originate from East Asia. Sijo is a traditional Korean poetry format whereas haiku is a traditional Japanese poetry format. The history of sijo can go back to the sixth century, but it is assumed that the format of sijo appeared first in Goryeo dynasty (918-1392) and ended in Joseon Dynasty (1392-1897) in Korea. Like haiku, sijo is short and has limited number of syllables in each line. Sijo in English has three lines or six shorter lines. Each line contains fourteen to sixteen syllables. The last line of sijo usually has the unexpected or funny ending that makes readers surprised or laugh. In addition, the last line of sijo reveals the theme of a poem as well. Traditional sijo did not have a title, but modern sijo has a title like western poetry. Sijo in *Tap Dancing on the Roof* creates fun and lighter feelings, but sijo can deliver serious messages too.

This book is the only sijo book for children published in the United States so far. However, with its similarities to haiku, other collections of haiku can be read with *Tap Dancing on the Roof*. The following three poetry books for children describe the four seasons in haiku: *Guyku, A Year of Haiku for Boys* written by Bob Raczka (2010) and illustrated by Peter H. Reynolds, *Hi, Koo!: A Year of Seasons* written and illustrated by Jon J. Muth (2014), and *The Year Comes Round: Haiku Through the Seasons* written by Sid Farrar and illustrated by Ilse Plume (2012).

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