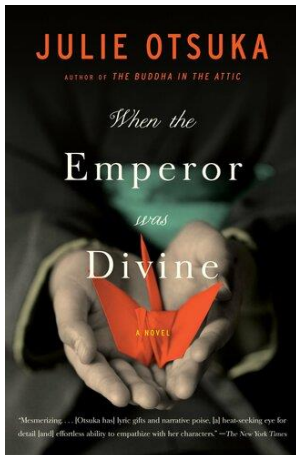


The 2022 Phoenix Award Winner

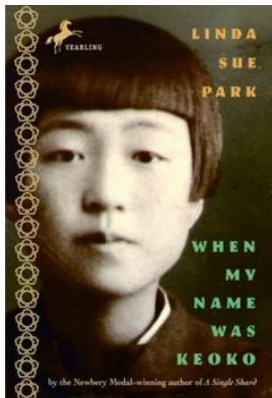


***When the Emperor Was Divine* by Julie Otsuka, Knopf, 2002**

Julie Otsuka's spare, stunning novel *When the Emperor Was Divine* begins with a series of goodbyes: to a family home, to a neighborhood, to a beloved pet, to security and freedom. In the aftermath of Executive Order 9066, Otsuka's story follows a family whose members are intentionally left nameless as they are uprooted and traumatized by the WWII incarceration of Japanese Americans. Through each character's perspective, Otsuka underscores the physical and psychological damage not only of their time in the camp but also pre- and post-incarceration. Equally important, she illuminates the strength, resolve, and tenacity of survivors. When the woman says of a lost earring, "Or maybe, it's just gone. Sometimes things disappear and there's no getting them back. That's just how it is," she is preparing her children for larger losses to come even as she teaches them how to mourn them. As relevant

now as when it was first published, *When the Emperor Was Divine* asks readers to bear witness to the devastating effects of racism and xenophobia.

The 2022 Phoenix Honor Book:



***When My Name Was Keoko* by Linda Sue Park, Clarion Books, 2002**

In *When My Name Was Keoko*, Linda Sue Park weaves together the stories of siblings Sun-hee and Tae-yul Kim as they navigate the dangers of Japanese-occupied Korea during World War II. Over and over again, they are required to give up the things that make them Korean—their language, their culture, and even their names. Sun-hee's chapters provide an inside perspective on the Kim family and on the people in their neighborhood and school, while Tae-yul narrates the growing conflict of the war and the danger it presents to his family and country. The recurring themes of resilience and courage are underscored by the ongoing resistance of both adult and child characters: Mr. Kim chooses a new Japanese surname that ties them back to their Korean identity, Uncle publishes an underground newspaper, and Mrs. Kim hides a

rose of Sharon tree that is outlawed under occupation. As Sun-hee practices subterfuge through her writing, Tae-yul enlists in the Japanese army as a kamikaze pilot to protect his family. Ultimately Sun-hee realizes her Korean identity, that her thoughts are Korean regardless of what language she's forced to speak. As Sun-hee's elderly neighbor declares, "They cannot have my thoughts. I will not allow it." *When My Name Was Keoko* brings to life a crucial and underrepresented historical event that illuminates both the realities of living under occupation and the possibilities of resistance.