

FINDING JUNIE KIM

BY ELLEN OH

This month's book is *Finding Junie Kim* by Ellen Oh, who is the co-founder of [We Need Diverse Books](#), the movement and organization that has inspired nearly every aspect of our book club.

Finding Junie Kim is the story of 12-year-old Junie, who just wants to fit in. Junie is dealing with daily racist and bullying behavior from some tormentors who are recently emboldened by their "MAGA hats and fake news claims." When racist graffiti appears in her school, Junie must decide whether to stay silent or speak out.

This tender story is woven between Junie's current dilemma and the past. She learns about her grandparents' extraordinary strength and what they experienced during the Korean War in the 1950s.

Author Ellen Oh says, "*Finding Junie Kim* has been the hardest of my books to write, the most deeply personal. In many ways, I feel very exposed by what I share in this book. But I also am proud of this story. It is both truth and fiction, historical and contemporary. It is both about my mother's experience being a lost child during the Korean War, and it is also the story of my children's experiences with racism and cultural identity in the US. There were many moments where I hesitated about how much to share, but in the end, I had to be true to the story."

TOPICS TO BE AWARE OF

Bullying, racist acts, depression, war, and a brief mention of suicidal ideation, which is sensitively handled.

DEEPEN YOUR READING

- Watch [this Read Across America video review](#) with teen author & activist Marley Dias.
- Read [the Kirkus Review](#).
- Read the [New York Times Book Review](#).

AWARDS

- Asian/Pacific American Award for Literature Honor Book
- A Bank Street Best Children's Book of the Year
- Included in NPR's 2021 Books We Love List
- 2021 Nerdy Award Winner

WHERE TO FIND IT

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QUESTIONS TO REFLECT ON ...

- 1 Hello everyone, and welcome to May book discussion, *Finding Junie Kim*, by Ellen Oh. This book resonated so much for me with Junie's feelings as she navigated friendship issues, even without the overt racism at school. Was there anything that resonated with you? What felt real for you?
- 2 Mental health—how do we recognize the struggles that the people in our lives are having? It's difficult when they hide their feelings and tell you everything is okay. What types of check-ins can you do?
- 3 Whether you are younger or older, connecting with different generations can help you to not only understand others, but also see the connections between past events and current events. Have you had a chance to connect with older generations about their experiences growing up? How does that help your understanding of the challenges they faced?
- 4 Junie internalizes the lessons that she learns from her grandfather's stories, and has to apply them to her own encounters with racism. How has learning about racism and diversity helped you to apply your knowledge to other situations?
- 5 Are you a "Take Immediate Action" type of person —like Patrice—or are you a reluctant respondent (realist? pessimist?) like Junie? Somewhere in-between?

—Kathy
May 2022

The gorgeous yarn, above, was available to book club members at the yarn tier. It was dyed by Leanna of [Waifu Yarn](#) especially for our club.

LITTLE SKEIN BOOK CLUB | POWERED BY KATHY & ANNE

a book club for yarn-loving adults to read diverse kids' books

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