



## Dear Juno

by Soyung Pak, Puffin Books, 2001

Illustrated by Susan Kathleen Hartung

Recommended for ages 4-8 or K-2 grades

**SYNOPSIS:** Little Juno can't read his grandma's letters from Korea to his parents, but he can read the context clues of the pictures in the letters. He writes back by sending her drawings, too. In spite of their great distance across the globe, both grandma and grandson are able to communicate without words.

**SOYUNG PAK:** Soyung's storybook received the Ezra Jack Keats Book Award. Through this story, *Dear Juno*, Soyung Pak highlighted a valued trait among Asians: that of intuiting or sensing what the other is trying to say.

**SUSAN KATHLEEN HARTUNG'S** illustrations capture the nonverbal thoughts of Juno.

**Review:** *"The messages that can be conveyed without words, language differences between generations, and family ties across great distances are gently and affectingly handled in this first picture book."*—Kirkus Reviews

### Cultural Significance:

In many cultures intuitive communication is valued. The intuitive sense is highly developed because one does not want to be teased about being "dense" for not understanding without verbal explanation. Verbal skills, however, are allowed to develop at a natural pace without pressure during one's formative years. Wouldn't it be wonderful for children to have both verbal and intuitive abilities at an early age among cultures around the world?

All the characters in the story behaved as parts of the whole. Juno's character was not demanding even though he is the main character. (He waited until after his parents were done washing the dishes.) Juno's character unfolded gently according to the flow of the story. He asserted only when his parents asked how he knew Grandma had a new cat and the flower was from her garden. (His answers will give smiles to readers.)

To appreciate stories outside one's own cultural milieu, it can help to become aware of the cosmological or anthropological orientation of the characters. If characters embody a cosmological orientation, they see themselves as part of the universe or process, and they will tend to behave passively. Characters who embody anthropological orientation see themselves as the center of the universe or process, and they will tend to be assertive and active.\*

### Faith focus:

At what point in the story did Juno hope that he will see his grandma again? Being separated by great distance from his grandma, Juno was always wondering about his beloved grandma in Seoul where she lived. How about you? Do you struggle with your feeling that you feel fine or you do not, even though someone close to you is far away?

### Bible passage:

*"Pray without ceasing."* 1 Thessalonians 5:17 (NRSV)

Our non-stop prayers for things hoped for, seen or unseen, help us to have faith that it will all work out no matter what happens. Perhaps Juno, on the eve of his grandma's arrival, tossed this way and that way hoping for the best to come.

\**The Trinity in Asian Perspective* by Jung Young Lee, Abingdon Press, 1996

**Family activity:**

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Pretend that you are Juno and the grandmother having a long distance phone conversation. What would you talk about to one another? Click on this website to find instructions to make your own telephone.

[www.ehow.com/how\\_2067160\\_make-tin-can-phone](http://www.ehow.com/how_2067160_make-tin-can-phone).

**PRAYER** *(for children) or one can pray from the heart or just have a silent moment:*

**Dear God, Keep me close to my family whether I live near or far away from them. In Jesus' name, Amen.**