

## Passage to Freedom: The Sugihara Story

written by Ken Mochizuki  
illustrated by Dom Lee  
afterword by Hiroki Sugihara

### About the Book

**Genre:** Nonfiction

**Format:** 32 pages, 10" x 8"

**ISBN:** 9781584301578

**Reading Level:** Grade 5

**Interest Level:** Grades 1–6

**Guided Reading Level:** U

**Accelerated Reader® Level/Points:**  
4.1/0.5

**Lexile™ Measure:** AD610L

\*Reading level based on the ATOS Readability Formula

**Themes:** Nonfiction, War, Responsibility, Overcoming Obstacles, Multiethnic interest, Jewish Interest, Immigration, History, Heroism, Fathers, Families, Discrimination, Asian/Asian American Interest, Empathy and Compassion, Integrity and Honesty, Leadership, Persistence and Grit, Respect and Citizenship, World War II, Pride, Collaboration, Courage, Gratitude, Protest, Tolerance and Acceptance

**Resources on the web:**

[leeandlow.com/books/passage-to-freedom](http://leeandlow.com/books/passage-to-freedom)

All guided reading level placements may vary and are subject to revision. Teachers may adjust the assigned levels in accordance with their own evaluations.

### SYNOPSIS

As a Japanese diplomat in Lithuania in the 1940s, Chiune Sugihara had a chance to help thousands of Jewish people escape the Holocaust through Japan, but it was against his government's orders. When his five-year-old son Hiroki asked, "If we don't help them, won't they die?" Sugihara decided to assist the refugees.

Based on Hiroki Sugihara's own words, *Passage to Freedom* is the first fully illustrated children's book to tell Sugihara's heroic story, highlighting his courageous humanity, and the importance of a child's opinion in his father's decision.

### Awards

- Winner, Parents' Choice Award
- American Library Association Notable Book
- Winner, Parenting Reading Magic Award, Parenting Magazine
- Winner, Teachers' Choices Award, and Notable Book for a Global Society - International Literacy Association
- Winner, Bulletin Blue Ribbon Award
- Winner, Society of School Librarians International Best Books, K-6 Social Studies
- Texas Bluebonnet Award Master List
- National Council of Teachers of English Notable in Language Arts
- "Pick of the Lists" - American Bookseller
- "Editors' Choice" - San Francisco Chronicle
- "Choices," Cooperative Children's Book Center

- Notable Books for Children - Smithsonian
- Notable Children's Trade Book in the Field of Social Studies, NCSS/CBC
- Finalist, National Jewish Book Award
- Finalist, Utah Children's Book Award
- Finalist, Arizona Young Readers' Award
- ABA Children's Bookseller's Choice, American Book Association
- Children's Peace Book Awards, California Peace Education Fund
- Jane Addams Picture Book Honoree
- "Starred Review," Publishers Weekly

### Additional Resources

Check out the research-based read aloud and paired text lessons for *Passage to Freedom* (<https://www.readworks.org/lessons/grade3/passage-freedom-sugihara-story>) created by the staff at the award-winning, non-profit [ReadWorks.org](https://www.readworks.org/).

Check out the classroom-tested, teacher-created lesson plan ([https://www.leeandlow.com/uploads/loaded\\_document/16/Passage\\_to\\_Freedom\\_lesson\\_plan\\_by\\_Achieve\\_the\\_Core.pdf](https://www.leeandlow.com/uploads/loaded_document/16/Passage_to_Freedom_lesson_plan_by_Achieve_the_Core.pdf)), provided by Achieve the Core (<https://achievethecore.org/>), a Student Achievement Partners website designed to help educators understand and implement the Common Core State Standards.

Use *Passage to Freedom* with the field-tested lesson plan, Walk a Quote: A Lesson Based on the Sugihara Story (<http://mandelproject.us/Person.htm>), by Valerie Person, provided by the Museum Teachers Fellows (<http://mandelproject.us/>) of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (<https://www.ushmm.org/>).

For classroom resources, check out the article "What is Good Citizenship? The Story of Chiune Sugihara" (<https://www.socialstudies.org/social-studies-and-young-learner/19/2/what-good-citizenship-story-chiune-sugihara>) by Dr. J. Allen Bryant of Appalachian State University in Social Studies and the Young Learner, a journal from the National Council for the Social Studies (<https://www.socialstudies.org/>).

NOTE: The story is also available in Spanish: *Pasaje a la libertad: La historia de Chiune Sugihara* (<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/pasaje-a-la-libertad>).

## BACKGROUND

### Story Behind the Story

"Toward the end of 1994, Yukiko Sugihara and her son Hiroki began telling their story via a photo exhibit titled "Visas for Life" - of their husband/father who, as a Japanese diplomat stationed in Lithuania in 1940, is credited with saving over 10,000 Polish Jews from the Holocaust. Liz Szabla, then editor at Lee & Low Books, suggested I do this story as a picture book. What? Nazis, genocide, the Holocaust in a children's picture book? How? When we began to hear the story from Hiroki Sugihara's point of view as a young boy during that time, we knew we had the workable vehicle for a picture book. There was hardly any information available on this man, family and story - as opposed to now - and I thought I would have to spend endless hours in libraries and archives. Then, in November 1995, Hiroki came to Seattle to speak at a synagogue and he placed most of my research in my hands: his self-published book of his mother's memoirs, also called *Visas for Life*. That, and additional phone interviews with Hiroki, who lived in San Francisco during that time, led to this book." - Ken Mochizuki, author of *The Passage to Freedom* from <http://kenmochizuki.com/book.htm>.

### Who Was Chiune Sugihara? Adapted from PBS' "Sugihara"

Chiune Sugihara was born on January 1, 1900 in rural Japan. Sugihara's childhood was marked by Japan asserting itself as a global power. He was exposed to many cultural influences during his childhood: his mother came from a long line of samurai, and his family stressed loyalty to family and country. Sugihara studied English literature at Waseda University in Tokyo, instead of following his father's dream that he become a doctor. During his time at Waseda University, Sugihara won a scholarship from the Japanese foreign service to study Russian in Harbin, China.

One of Sugihara's first assignments was in Manchuria after he finished his diplomatic training. He negotiated with the Soviet Union to win control of the Manchurian Railroad at a favorable price for Japan. Sugihara was unhappy with Japan's cruel treatment of Chinese people in its quest for dominance, and he resigned from his post in 1934 and returned to Tokyo in hopes of getting assigned in Europe. He met and married Yukiko Kikuchi after his return.

In the fall of 1939, Sugihara was appointed consul general to Lithuania and he, Yukiko, and his young children moved to Lithuania. He was tasked with setting up a small consulate in the capital city of Kaunas, but his primary responsibility was to monitor the Soviet and German armies near the border of Russia.

The Sugiharas became friendly with many of the local residents and Jewish families during Chiune's time in Lithuania. They shared their fears about the Nazis, and they inspired Sugihara to start issuing visas after his own government would not officially accept large numbers of refugees in August of 1940. He saved thousands of refugees' lives and allowed them to escape.

Lithuania was annexed to the Soviet Union later that fall, and Sugihara was forced to close the consulate under pressure from the Soviet regime. Sugihara was reassigned to several Japanese consulates throughout Nazi-occupied Europe until the end of the war. Sugihara served in Bucharest

during Germany's surrender in 1945, and when the Soviet Union took control of Romania, Sugihara and his family were detained in a concentration camp. They were released in 1946 but continued to be detained for months in Vladivostok on their journey back to Japan.

Upon his arrival back to Tokyo in 1947, Sugihara was pressured to resign from the foreign ministry. He believed it was due to issuing the unauthorized visas in 1940, though the official reason was downsizing of the diplomatic corps.

Afterwards, Sugihara worked as a translator and interpreter, finding odd jobs. Sugihara never openly spoke about his actions in Lithuania. His deed went almost unacknowledged until the late 1960s, when he was located by a man he helped to save.

In 1985, Israel recognized Sugihara for his actions at the Holocaust Memorial in Jerusalem and was declared "Righteous Among Nations." Sugihara died in 1986." ([pbs.org/wgbh/sugihara/readings/sugihara.html](https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/sugihara/readings/sugihara.html))

### About Chiune Sugihara, adapted from "Chiune Sugihara" from the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum

Chiune Sugihara was the first Japanese diplomat posted in Lithuania. Following the German invasion of Poland on September 1, 1939, hundreds of thousands of Jewish people and other Polish citizens fled to escape the incoming German army. Many refugees found temporary safety in Lithuania. Options for escape were limited and required visas to cross borders. One route was through Asia using a combination of permits issued by foreign envoys in response to the crisis: a falsified visa for entrance to the Dutch Caribbean island of Curaçao and a visa for to travel through Japan.

Sugihara lacked clear instructions from his government in Tokyo about how to proceed with the refugees. Sugihara granted approximately 1800 10-day visas to Japan to hundreds of refugees who held Curaçao destination visas. The Foreign Ministry reported that individuals with visas headed for the United States and Canada had arrived in Japan without money or final destination visas. Sugihara admitted to issuing visas to people who had not completed all arrangements for destination visas. He explained that Japan was the only transit country available for going in the direction of the United States, and his visas were needed to leave the Soviet Union. Sugihara had saved thousands of Jewish people over the course of just a few weeks. Because of his efforts, Yad Vashem awarded him the title of "Righteous Among the Nations" in 1984. (<https://www.ushmm.org/collections/bibliography/chiune-sugihara>)

## BEFORE READING

### Prereading Focus Questions

(Reading Standards, Craft & Structure, Strand 5 and Integration of Knowledge & Ideas, Strand 7)

(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1 and 2)

Before introducing this book to students, you may wish to develop background knowledge and promote anticipation by posing questions such as the following:

- What do you know about World War II? What were some of the most important events in World War II? What was happening in Germany and Europe? What are some of the legacies of the war? What was happening in Japan and Asia?
- What do you know about the Holocaust? Who was targeted in the Holocaust? Who led the persecution and murder of the Jewish people and other groups? What are some of the legacies of the Holocaust?
- What is courage? What does courage look like? Have you ever been courageous? What did you do?
- What does compassion mean to you? What does it mean to be compassionate? How do you show and demonstrate compassion to others?
- What does it mean to stand up for what's right? What are some instances in history where people have had to stand for what they believe in even though they encountered adversity and opposition?
- What does it mean to take a risk? Can you give an example of when you or someone you know took a risk for something you believed was right?

### Exploring the Book

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas & Details, Strand 1; Craft & Structure, Strand 5; and Integration of Knowledge & Ideas, Strand 7)

(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1 and 2)

- **Book Title Exploration:** Talk about the title of the book, *Passage to Freedom: The Sugihara Story*. Then ask students what they think this book will most likely be about and whom the book might be about. What do they think might happen? What information do they think they might learn? What makes them think that?
- **Read Author Ken Mochizuki's Biography:** Read about Ken Mochizuki in the back of the book or online at <http://kenmochizuki.com/>. How do you think Ken Mochizuki gets inspired for his books?
- **Read Illustrator Dom Lee's Biography:** Read about Dom Lee in the back of the book. How do you think Dom Lee creates his illustrations? What kinds of materials do you think he uses?
- Encourage students to stop and jot in their reading notebooks during the read-aloud when they: learn new information, see a powerful image, have an emotional reaction or an idea, have a question, or hear new words.
- Have students quickly write a feeling in their notebooks during reading. After reading, ask

students why they wrote down that feeling and have them write a journal entry about it.

### Setting a Purpose for Reading

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas & Details, Strands 1–3)

Have students read to find out:

- how the title fits the theme(s) of the story
- who was Chiune Sugihara and his role in the Japanese government
- how Chiune Sugihara played a role in helping Jewish people escape the Nazis
- what inspired Chiune Sugihara to go against his government's orders and help the Jewish people in his community escape
- how Chiune Sugihara demonstrated courage and bravery
- what impact Chiune Sugihara had on Jewish people and their families
- why Chiune Sugihara is a World War II hero and how his legacy changed the world

Encourage students to consider why the author, Ken Mochizuki, would want to share this story with young people about Chiune Sugihara and how he helped thousands of Jewish people escape the Nazis during World War II.

## VOCABULARY

(Reading Standards, Craft & Structure, Strand 4)

(Language Standards, Vocabulary Acquisition & Use, Strands 4–6)

(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1 and 2)

The story contains several content-specific and academic words and phrases that may be unfamiliar to students. Based on students' prior knowledge, review some or all of the vocabulary below.

Encourage a variety of strategies to support students' vocabulary acquisition: look up and record word definitions from a dictionary, write the meaning of the word or phrase in their own words, draw a picture of the meaning of the word, create a specific action for each word, list synonyms and antonyms, and write a meaningful sentence that demonstrates the definition of the word.

### Content Specific

Hanukkah, Japan, Lithuania, Polish, Jews, Nazis, visas, Soviet Union, superiors, Berlin

### Academic

diplomat, refugees, permission, exhausted

## AFTER READING

### Discussion Questions

After students have read the book, use these or similar questions to generate discussion, enhance comprehension, and develop appreciation for the content. Encourage students to refer to passages and/or illustrations in the book to support their responses. **To build skills in close reading of a text, students should cite textual evidence with their answers.**

### Literal Comprehension

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas & Details, Strands 1–3)

(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1–3 and Presentation of Knowledge & Ideas, Strand 4)

1. Who is the narrator of the story?
2. What does the narrator see his father do at a store?
3. What year does the story take place?
4. Where do the Sugiharas live? What does Chiune do for work?
5. Who is in the Sugihara family?
6. When did Hiroki's life change? What happened?
7. Who did Hiroki see outside of their house? What did they look like? What were they asking for?
8. What does Hiroki's mother tell him about what the people need? How does he respond?
9. Who did Chiune meet with? What did they discuss?
10. What does it mean to be a refugee? Why were the people fleeing their homes?
11. What did the people want Chiune to do?
12. What did Chiune have to do to get the visas?
13. What did the Japanese government tell Chiune in response to his request for the visas?
14. What does Hiroki ask his father? How does Chiune respond?
15. After the Japanese government tells Chiune no for the final time, what does Chiune do?
16. What do Hiroki's mother and Auntie Setsuko advise Chiune? What about Hiroki? How does Chiune decide to proceed?
17. How does the crowd of refugees respond to Chiune's decision?
18. Who helped Chiune to continue writing the visas?
19. Which country arrived in Lithuania? What did they tell Chiune to do? How did Chiune continue to work?
20. How do the refugees respond to Chiune's departure? What do they think of Chiune?

### Extension/Higher Level Thinking

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas & Details, Strands 2 and 3 and Craft & Structure, Strands 4 and 6)

(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1–3 and Presentation of Knowledge & Ideas, Strand 4)

1. After reading the book, what is the significance of the title *Passage to Freedom: The Sugihara Story*?
2. Why did Chiune Sugihara and his family decide to help the Jewish people in his community? Was it a difficult decision? Why? What beliefs do you think the family members had that helped them make their decision?
3. Why do you think the Japanese government refused Chiune Sugihara's repeated requests for visas?
4. What does it mean to obey your conscience? How is this story a good example of obeying your conscience?
5. Read aloud the two proverbs facing the title page of the book. Ask students to talk about what the proverbs mean and how they relate to the story.
6. Have students reread the Afterword from Hiroki Sugihara or read it aloud to the class. Explain that Hiroki Sugihara wrote the Afterword as an adult to explain what happened to his family after they left Lithuania. Why do you think the Soviets and Japanese government treated Chiune Sugihara and his family badly after they left Lithuania? How was Sugihara finally honored for helping the refugees?
7. What is the role of community and collaboration in *Passage to Freedom: The Sugihara Story*? How did Chiune Sugihara play a critical role in his community in Lithuania?
8. Hiroki Sugihara now travels all over the world telling his family's story. Why is it important for people to learn about the Sugiharas? What can people learn from them?
9. Hiroki's parents told him to think as if he were in someone else's place. Think about a situation where someone you know, or a group of people need help. What would you want someone to do for you if you were in that situation?
10. In recalling this story, Hiroki Sugihara shows great pride in his father's actions. Are you proud of your caregivers or an important adult in your life? Why? What do they do that makes you feel proud? How are they inspirational to you?
11. Chiune Sugihara's story shows that one person can make a difference in the lives of others. What are some ways you feel you can make a difference? What do you do to make a difference? At home? In school? In your community? How does *Passage to Freedom: The Sugihara Story* inspire you to continue to help others? What are some things that you can start to do in your everyday life that will make a small difference in someone else's?
12. Chiune Sugihara took an enormous risk in disobeying his government to help the Jewish refugees, but he felt it was important. What are some risks you think are worthwhile? How do these differ from foolish risks?
13. What kind of legacy did Chiune Sugihara leave? Why do you think he received a variety of awards for his work? How would you describe his legacy?

14. What did you learn about the atrocities that were committed against Jewish people in *Passage to Freedom: The Sugihara Story*? How did reading this book make you think about World War II differently than what you have learned before?
15. How would you describe Chiune Sugihara to a person who had never heard of him before? What are some of the qualities that you would use to speak about Chiune? What are some of the most important things to say when explaining Chiune Sugihara's life and legacy?
16. Why do you think the author, Ken Mochizuki, chose to write *Passage to Freedom: The Sugihara Story* from the perspective of Hiroki, Chiune's son? How does that impact your reading of the story?

### Reader's Response

(Writing Standards, Text Types & Purposes, Strands 1–3 and Production & Distribution of Writing, Strands 4–6)

Use the following questions and writing activities to help students practice active reading and personalize their responses to the book. Suggest that students respond in reader's response journals, essays, or oral discussion. You may also want to set aside time for students to share and discuss their written work.

1. What do you think the author's message to the reader is? Think about possible motivations behind Mochizuki's intentions to write the book and Hiroki Sugihara's Afterword. What do you think they wanted to tell young readers?
2. Have students make a text-to-self connection. What kind of connections did you make from this book to your own life? What do Chiune's experiences, thoughts, and feelings mean to you?
3. Have students make a text-to-text connection. Did you think of any other books while you read *Passage to Freedom: The Sugihara Story*? Why did you make those connections?
4. Have students make a text-to-world connection. What kind of connections did you make from this book to what you have seen in the world or on the news? Why did *Passage to Freedom: The Sugihara Story* make you think of that?
5. Ken Mochizuki said about *Passage to Freedom: The Sugihara Story*, "*Passage to Freedom* is about a moral choice: Does one do what is considered 'correct' at the time? Or does one do what is 'right' for all time?" What do you think he means by this? What does it mean to you after reading the story? How does this statement reflect the themes in the book?

### ELL Teaching Activities

(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1–3 and Presentation of Knowledge & Ideas, Strands 4–6)  
(Language Standards, Vocabulary Acquisition & Use, Strands 4–6)

These strategies might be helpful to use with students who are English Language Learners.

1. Assign ELL students to partner-read the story with strong English readers/speakers. Students can alternate reading between pages, repeat passages after one another, or listen to the more fluent reader.
2. Have each student write three questions about the story. Then let students pair up and discuss the answers to the questions.

3. Depending on students' level of English proficiency, after the first reading:
  - Review the illustrations in order and have students summarize what is happening on each page, first orally, then in writing.
  - Have students work in pairs to tell what they learned about one of the spreads. Then ask students to write a short summary, synopsis, or opinion about what they have read.
4. Have students give a short talk about why Chiune Sugihara is an important figure and why they admire him.
5. The book contains several content-specific and academic words that may be unfamiliar to students. Based on students' prior knowledge, review some or all of the vocabulary. Expose English Language Learners to multiple vocabulary strategies. Have students make predictions about word meanings, look up and record word definitions from a dictionary, write the meaning of the word or phrase in their own words, draw a picture of the meaning of the word, list synonyms and antonyms, create an action for each word, and write a meaningful sentence that demonstrates the definition of the word.
6. For Spanish-speaking students, the story is also available in Spanish: *Pasaje a la libertad: La historia de Chiune Sugihara* (<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/pasaje-a-la-libertad>).

### Social and Emotional Learning

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas & Details, Strands 1-3 and Craft & Structure, Strands 4-6)

(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1-3 and Presentation of Knowledge & Ideas, Strand 4)

(Writing Standards, Text Types & Purposes, Strands 1-2 and Production & Distribution of Writing, Strands 4-6)

(Language Standards, Vocabulary Acquisition & Use, Strands 6)

Social and emotional learning involves being aware of and regulating emotions for healthy development. In addition to understanding one's own feelings, strong socio-emotional development allows individuals to develop empathy for others and to establish and maintain relationships.

Use the following prompts to help students study the socio-emotional aspects of this book.

1. Hiroki, Chiune's son, was only five-years-old when the story takes place. How do you think he felt about what was happening? How did he feel about the refugees? How did he feel about what his family was doing?
2. How did Chiune Sugihara use persistence and perseverance to help the Jewish people from his community escape? What were some of the ways that he helped Jewish people escape, and how did he use his problem solving and critical thinking skills?
3. What does courage and bravery mean to you after reading *Passage to Freedom: The Sugihara Story*? What does it mean to be courage even though you're afraid, especially when it means helping someone in need?
4. Why did Chiune Sugihara risk his life to save thousands of Jewish people? Despite obstacles and the possibility of his death, how did Chiune continue his mission to save thousands of Jewish people from the Nazis and concentration and extermination camps?
5. Hiroki concludes the book with, "Back then, I did not fully understand what the three of them

had done, or why it was so important. I do now." What do you think this means?

6. How has a family member impacted your life? The story is told from the perspective of Chiune's son, Hiroki. How do you think his father inspired him? How did his father's actions impact the rest of his life?
7. Choose an emotion that interests you: happiness, sadness, fear, anxiety, frustration, hope, perseverance and so on. Illustrate or act out what that emotion looks like in *Passage to Freedom: The Sugihara Story*.
8. In an interview with Lee & Low Books, Author Ken Mochizuki writes, "*Passage to Freedom* is about the moral choice: Does one do what is considered 'correct' at the time? Or does one do what is 'right' for all time? I consider Chiune Sugihara as one of my personal heroes, a man willing to suffer the consequences and risk his life and career to save the lives of others. I've dedicated *Passage to Freedom* to those who place the welfare of others before themselves. Courageous, unselfish actions need to be applauded and reinforced." (<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/passage-to-freedom/interviews>) What does this mean to you? Why?

## INTERDISCIPLINARY ACTIVITIES

(Introduction to the Standards, page 7: Students who are college and career ready must be able to build strong content knowledge, value evidence, and use technology and digital media strategically and capably)

Use some of the following activities to help students integrate their reading experiences with other curriculum areas. These can also be used for extension activities, for advanced readers, and for building a home-school connection.

### English/Language Arts

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas and Details, Strands 1–3, Craft and Structure, Strands 4–6, Integration of Knowledge & Ideas, Strands 7–9, Range of Reading of Text Complexity, Strand 10)

(Writing Standards, Text Types & Purposes, Strands 1–3, Production & Distribution of Writing, Strands 4 and 6, Research to Build & Present Knowledge, Strands 7–9, Range of Writing, Strand 10)

(Speaking and Listening Standards, Comprehension and Collaboration, Strands 1–3, Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas, Strands 4–6)

- **Conduct a biography unit on Japanese historical figures and their impact on the world today.** Lee & Low titles include *Passage to Freedom: The Sugihara Story* as well as *Honda: The Boy Who Dreamed of Cars* (<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/honda>) and *The East-West House: Noguchi's Childhood in Japan* (<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/the-east-west-house>). Analyze the differences and similarities among the Chiune Sugihara, Soichiro Honda, Isamu Noguchi's actions in these texts. What risks did they take to achieve their goals? What did they have to do to overcome obstacles in their lives? What is their legacy and impact on this world today? Students can create a graphic organizer with three columns for each historical figure and then write an essay about what they learned from reading the three biographies.
- **Have students analyze the first page of the story, and discuss why they think author Ken Mochizuki decided to start *Passage to Freedom: The Sugihara Story* in that way.** Why do students think that his son, the narrator, decided to begin with the young Jewish boy not having enough money and his father helping him? Why do you think there is a saying that "the eyes tell everything about a person?" How did this first page set the tone

for the rest of the book? What do you learn about Chiune Sugihara just from the first page? Students can examine other picture book biographies in their classroom and see how authors begin the stories. Have students think about the following questions to inform their own writing: what kinds of powerful words do they use? How do they set the tone of the story? How do they describe the person?

- **Conduct an Author's Study on Ken Mochizuki with his following titles from Lee & Low: *Baseball Saved Us* ([leeandlow.com/books/baseball-saved-us](https://www.leeandlow.com/books/baseball-saved-us)), *Heroes* ([leeandlow.com/books/heroes](https://www.leeandlow.com/books/heroes)), and *Passage to Freedom: The Sugihara Story*.** How are his main figures similar? How are they different? What are their goals? What obstacles do they have to come? What kind of racism or discrimination do they experience during the book? What historical events are featured in each title? Why do students think Ken Mochizuki decided to write a book about these topics and historical figures? What do you think his passions and interests are, and how do they show themselves in his texts? Provide students with a graphic organizer to differentiate the two titles, and then have students write an essay answering the previous questions.
- **Have students write an essay or reaction to Chiune Sugihara's quote during the story: "I have to do something. I may have to disobey my government, but if I don't, I will be disobeying God."** What do students think of when they read this statement? Why do they think Chiune Sugihara said that in response to son's questioning? Why did he have to go against his government to help people? How did he risk their lives for other people? Why did he want to do this? Have students write a reaction essay in response to the quote and after reading *Passage to Freedom: The Sugihara Story*.
- **Have students write an essay or reaction to the Afterword from Chiune Sugihara's son, Hiroki Sugihara.** Afterwards, have students reflect on the following guiding questions in an essay: What did they learn from this section after reading *Passage to Freedom: The Sugihara Story*? What did they learn that was new about Chiune Sugihara? How did this affect what they thought about the book? Why do you think author Ken Mochizuki decided to include this Afterword from Chiune Sugihara's son?
- **Encourage students to read the PBS interview with Solly Ganor and his interaction with Chiune Sugihara** (<https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/sugihara/readings/ganor.html>). Have students take notes during their reading, and afterwards write an essay answering the following guiding questions: what did they learn from this interview with Solly Ganor? How did Chiune Sugihara impact his life? How did he Solly meet Chiune Sugihara? What were his interactions like with him? How did Chiune help Solly escape to a new life? Students can write a reflective essay about reading a firsthand account about a life that Chiune Sugihara saved, and how Solly Ganor reflects on Chiune Sugihara and the impact that he had in his life.
- **How was reading a picture book different from reading a newspaper article about Chiune Sugihara?** Have students read the article, "'A Japanese Schindler': The remarkable diplomat who saved thousands of Jewish people during WWII" from *The Washington Post* (<https://www.washingtonpost.com/history/2021/01/27/chiune-sugihara-jews-holocaust-japanese-schindler/>). Then, students can create a Venn Diagram with the headings, "Picture Book Nonfiction: *Passage to Freedom: The Sugihara Story* and Expository Nonfiction: "A Japanese

Schindler': The remarkable diplomat who saved thousands of Jewish people during WWII." Students can compare and contrast the different formats of the texts and the information they learned in both. What was it like to read a picture book versus a newspaper article about Chiune Sugihara? How did the authors describe Sugihara similarly? Differently? Why is it important to read a variety of books and resources about a historical figure? Students can write an analytical essay detailing their findings.

- **Come up with questions to interview the author, Ken Mochizuki.** What was his process behind creating *Passage to Freedom: The Sugihara Story*? What was his inspiration for writing a biography about hero Chiune Sugihara? Why did he choose to feature an Afterword from Chiune's son, Hiroki? What was it like to conduct research about Chiune Sugihara? What resources did he consult throughout the process of writing the book? Consider reaching out to Ken Mochizuki for more information or for an Author's Visit (<http://kenmochizuki.com/>).

### Social Studies/Geography

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas and Details, Strands 1–3, Craft and Structure, Strands 4–6, Integration of Knowledge & Ideas, Strands 7–9, Range of Reading of Text Complexity, Strand 10)

(Writing Standards, Text Types & Purposes, Strands 1–3, Production & Distribution of Writing, Strands 4 and 6, and Research to Build & Present Knowledge, Strands 7–9, Range of Writing, Strand 10)

(Speaking and Listening Standards, Comprehension and Collaboration, Strands 1–3, Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas, Strands 4–6)

- **Complete the Facing History & Ourselves Unit, "A Rescuer in Lithuania: Chiune Sugihara"** (<https://www.facinghistory.org/rescuers/chiune-sugihara>). Students can watch the excerpt from the documentary, *The Rescuers*, that describes rescue efforts led by Chiune Sugihara. Afterwards, students can answer the guiding questions and read the historical background that provides additional information about the events leading up to World War II, antisemitism, Lithuanian history, and how Chiune Sugihara played a role in the Japanese consulate stationed in Lithuania. Students can complete the guiding questions in an analytical essay. Additional activities on Chiune Sugihara from Facing History & Ourselves also include "Reflections on Sugihara's Motives" (<https://www.facinghistory.org/rescuers/reflections-sugihara>) and "Yukiko Sugihara; Why My Husband Helped the Jews" (<https://www.facinghistory.org/resource-library/yukiko-sugiharas-testimony>).
- **Have students create a timeline of Chiune Sugihara's life from the biography and elaborate on the events that happened during the time period.** To help students understand the historical context of Chiune's life, encourage them to research the events in the book by gathering photographs and other primary source documents about the particular events mentioned and creating a timeline. Display both enlarged timelines in the front of the class so that students have easy access to both the dates and events. Students may work in groups in different years (i.e. 1940–1950) and then add their events and findings to the class timeline. Important resources about Chiune Sugihara's can be found at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (<https://www.ushmm.org/collections/bibliography/chiune-sugihara>), Yad Vashem: The World Holocaust Remembrance Center (<https://www.yadvashem.org/righteous/stories/sugihara.html>), PBS (<https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/sugihara/readings/sugihara.html>), and Facing History & Ourselves (<https://www.facinghistory.org/rescuers/chiune-sugihara>). Students can refer to the PBS timeline of Chiune Sugihara to get started (<https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/sugihara/timeline/text.html>).

- **Conduct additional research on Chiune Sugihara and his lasting impact and legacy while learning about Holocaust history.** The following organizations have lesson plans and additional primary source documents dedicated to teaching about Chiune Sugihara in your respective educational setting:

  - Check out the research-based read aloud and paired text lessons for *Passage to Freedom* (<https://www.readworks.org/lessons/grade3/passage-freedom-sugihara-story>) created by the staff at the award-winning, non-profit ReadWorks.org.
  - Consult the classroom-tested, teacher-created lesson plan ([https://www.leeandlow.com/uploads/loaded\\_document/16/Passage\\_to\\_Freedom\\_lesson\\_plan\\_by\\_Achieve\\_the\\_Core.pdf](https://www.leeandlow.com/uploads/loaded_document/16/Passage_to_Freedom_lesson_plan_by_Achieve_the_Core.pdf)), provided by Achieve the Core (<https://achievethecore.org/>), a Student Achievement Partners website designed to help educators understand and implement the Common Core State Standards.
  - The field-tested lesson plan, Walk a Quote: A Lesson Based on the Sugihara Story (<http://mandelproject.us/Person.htm>), by Valerie Person, provided by the Museum Teachers Fellows (<http://mandelproject.us/>) of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (<https://www.ushmm.org/>) is another guide to teaching about Chiune Sugihara in the classroom.
  - For additional classroom resources, check out the article “What is Good Citizenship? The Story of Chiune Sugihara” (<https://www.socialstudies.org/social-studies-and-young-learner/19/2/what-good-citizenship-story-chiune-sugihara>) by Dr. J. Allen Bryant of Appalachian State University in Social Studies and the Young Learner, a journal from the National Council for the Social Studies (<https://www.socialstudies.org/>).
  - PBS’ lesson plan, “Sugihara” provides details on how to teach about Sugihara in the classroom alongside accompanying videos with interviews from survivors and additional anecdotes from historians about Sugihara’s lasting impact (<https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/sugihara/resources/lesson.html>).
  - Caly Pol Pomona has a lesson plan dedicated to connecting Gandhi and Sugihara’s lives and the similarities in their decision making ([https://www.cpp.edu/~ahimsacenter/k12/documents/Brown\\_Sugihara.pdf](https://www.cpp.edu/~ahimsacenter/k12/documents/Brown_Sugihara.pdf)).
- **Support students in researching additional people who contributed to the resistance of the Nazis and saving people from the persecution and extermination of the Holocaust.** Students can read about Irena Sendler in *Irena’s Jars of Secrets* (<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/irena-s-jars-of-secrets>). Students can learn about people who risked their lives to rescue Jewish people from the Holocaust at The Righteous Among The Nation database (<https://www.yadvashem.org/righteous.html>). Trees have been planted to commemorate the rescuers. Have students conduct additional research on people who saved others from the Nazis during the Holocaust (see the Virginia Holocaust Museum’s lesson plan, “Rescue During the Holocaust” to get started (<https://www.vaholocaust.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/Rescue-lesson-plan-1.pdf>) and prepare a visual presentation of their choosing. Afterwards, students can dedicate a tree or a plant in their school community to that person.

- **Have students conduct a study on the Holocaust.** The following organizations have resources, strategies, and additional texts on how to teach about the Holocaust in the classroom to incorporate in your own unit:
  - Facing History & Ourselves Teaching Holocaust and Human Behavior (<https://www.facing-history.org/resource-library/teaching-holocaust-and-human-behavior>)
  - ADL & Echoes & Reflections' Confidently Teach About the Holocaust Lesson Plans, Webinars, Online Classes, and Programming for Educators & Students (<https://echoesandreflections.org/>)
  - United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's Teaching Materials By Topic (<https://www.ushmm.org/teach/teaching-materials>), the Fundamentals of Teaching the Holocaust (<https://www.ushmm.org/teach/fundamentals>) and Guidelines for Teaching About the Holocaust (<https://www.ushmm.org/teach/fundamentals/guidelines-for-teaching-the-holocaust>)
  - The Holocaust Center for Humanity's "Beginning Your Holocaust Unit" (<https://holocaust-centerseattle.org/intro-to-teaching-the-holocaust>)
  - The Midwest Center for Holocaust Education's Lesson Plans (<https://mchekc.org/resources/teaching-resources/lesson-plans/>)
  - Chalkbeat's "The Holocaust lesson I regret teaching" (<https://www.chalkbeat.org/2021/11/9/22745966/holocaust-lesson-regret>) provides lesson learned about how to accurately teach about the Holocaust in the classroom

### Art & Media

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas and Details, Strands 1–3, Craft and Structure, Strands 4–6, Integration of Knowledge & Ideas, Strands 7–9, Range of Reading of Text Complexity, Strand 10)

(Writing Standards, Text Types & Purposes, Strands 1–3, Production & Distribution of Writing, Strands 4 and 6, Research to Build & Present Knowledge, Strands 7–9, and Range of Writing, Strand 10)

(Speaking and Listening Standards, Comprehension and Collaboration, Strands 1–3, Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas, Strands 4–6)

- **Suggest that students study the illustrations in the book.** Why did the artist, Dom Lee, use brown (sepia) tones instead of bright colors? What mood(s) do the illustrations create? What do the characters' faces show about how they feel? How do people's hands help explain the story? How do students think the artist felt about the story?
- **Have students conduct an illustrator study on Dom Lee.** Dom Lee's other titles at Lee & Low include *Heroes* ([leeandlow.com/books/heroes](https://leeandlow.com/books/heroes)), *Baseball Saved Us* ([leeandlow.com/books/baseball-saved-us](https://leeandlow.com/books/baseball-saved-us)), and *Be Water, My Friend* ([leeandlow.com/books/be-water-my-friend](https://leeandlow.com/books/be-water-my-friend)), all with author Ken Mochizuki. What kind of style does he use in his artwork? What do you think his process is for creating the illustrations for a children's book? How do you think his artwork conveys the message in all of Ken Mochizuki's books? Consider reaching out to Dom Lee for a virtual illustrator visit. Students can investigate other works by Dom Lee and see how his other works compare to the artwork in *Passage to Freedom: The Sugihara Story*.

- **View the documentary on Chiune Sugihara, Sugihara: Conspiracy of Kindness** (<https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/sugihara/>). If acquiring the full documentary is not possible, PBS has video clips from different historians and survivors that provide additional information and context about Chiune Sugihara's heroic efforts (<https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/sugihara/readings/>). After students view the video, have them reflect on the following guiding questions: what was it like to watch a video about Chiune Sugihara as opposed to reading a story about him? What did you learn from the videos that you hadn't gathered from *Passage to Freedom: The Sugihara Story*? How does the documentary and videos make you think differently about Chiune Sugihara? How were his actions heroic, and how did it affect thousands of peoples' lives to this day?
- **Encourage students to select an illustration that resonated with them the most from *Passage to Freedom: The Sugihara Story*.** Have students write a reflection about the illustration. What stood out to them? How did it make them feel? What did it make them think about? How did the illustrator, Dom Lee, capture the words of Ken Mochizuki?

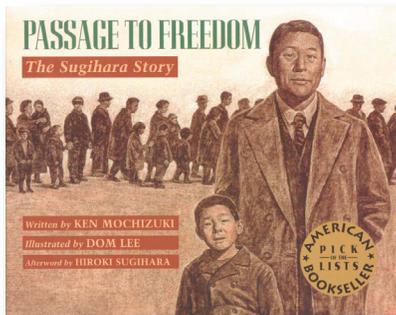
### School-Home Connection

(Reading Standards, Integration of Knowledge and Ideas, Strands 7 and 9)

(Writing Standards, Text Types & Purposes, Strands 1-3, Production & Distribution of Writing, Strand 4, and Research to Build & Present Knowledge, Strands 7-9, Range of Writing, Strand 10)

(Speaking and Listening Standards, Comprehension and Collaboration, Strands 1-3, Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas, Strands 4-6)

- **Ask students to create portraits of people who are their personal role models through drawing, collage, or photograph.** In writing, students should describe what actions and qualities they admire about this person.
- **Have students interview a parent, guardian, or adult mentor about their experiences with fighting for something they believe in or going through a hardship (perhaps someone alive during the 1950s, 1960s or 1970s).** How did this person react to and handle the situation when they were faced with obstacles? What do they remember about the political climate during their youth? What advice do they have for someone trying to take up a cause and stand up for justice? What advice do they have for someone who has been abused or silenced?
- **If accessible, have students and families research other titles featuring Asian historical figures who have made a lasting impact on the world.** What did they learn about these historical figures? What do they admire about them? What is their legacy today?



## Ordering Information

### 🌐 General Order Information:

[leeandlow.com/contact/ordering](http://leeandlow.com/contact/ordering)

### 🔒 Secure Online Ordering:

[leeandlow.com/books/passage-to-freedom](http://leeandlow.com/books/passage-to-freedom)

☎ **By Phone:** 212-779-4400 ext. 25

📠 **By Fax:** 212-683-1894

### ✉ **By Mail:**

Lee & Low Books, 95 Madison Avenue,  
New York, NY 10016

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

**Ken Mochizuki** is the award-winning author of numerous books for children from Lee & Low Books. Mr. Mochizuki lives in Maple Valley, Washington, where he teaches, writes children's books, and gives presentations about his work full time. Learn more at <http://kenmochizuki.com/>.

## ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

**Dom Lee** made his picture-book debut with *Baseball Saved Us*. He grew up in Seoul, South Korea, and went on to illustrate books in both the United States and Korea. His titles for Lee & Low include Ken Mochizuki's *Passage to Freedom* and *Heroes*, as well as the award-winning *Sixteen Years in Sixteen Seconds*. Lee's unique illustration style involves applying encaustic beeswax on paper, then scratching out images, and finally coloring the images with oil paint. Lee and his wife live in Hollis, New York. Find him online at <https://domandk.com/domlee/>.

## REVIEWS

"An afterword by Sugihara's son updates the account: the family spent 18 months in a soviet internment camp, and his father was stripped of his diplomat post. A stirring story." —*Publishers Weekly*

"The immediacy of the narrative will grab kids' interest." —*Booklist*

"This simple but stirring tale of courage and compassion seen through the eyes of a child is a unique contribution to holocaust literature for young readers." —*Hornbook*

"This testament to one man's courage should be read in homes and classrooms across the nation and the world." —*Smithsonian Magazine*

## ABOUT LEE & LOW BOOKS

**LEE & LOW BOOKS** is the largest children's book publisher specializing in diversity and multiculturalism. Our motto, "about everyone, for everyone," is as urgent today as it was when we started in 1991. It is the company's goal to meet the need for stories that children of color can identify with and that all children can enjoy. The right book can foster empathy, dispel stereotypes, prompt discussion about race and ethnicity, and inspire children to imagine not only a world that includes them, but also a world where they are the heroes of their own stories. Discover more at [leeandlow.com](http://leeandlow.com).