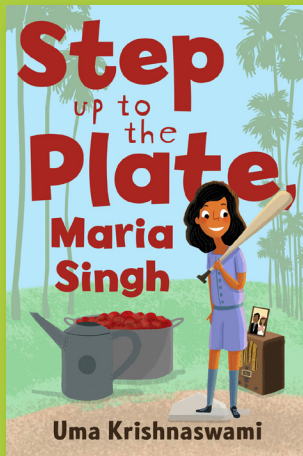


## TEACHER'S GUIDE



LEE & LOW BOOKS

## Step up to the Plate, Maria Singh

written by Uma Krishnaswami

### About the Book

Genre: Historical Fiction

\*Reading Level: Grades 5–6

Interest Level: Grades 5–8

Guided Reading Level: V

Accelerated Reader® Level/  
Points: N/A

Lexile™ Measure: N/A

\*Reading level based on the Spache  
Readability Formula

**Themes:** Asian/Asian American Interest, Biracial/Multiracial Interest, Breaking Gender Barriers, California, Civil Rights Movement, Cultural Diversity, Discrimination, Dreams and Aspirations, Economics/Finance, Families, Farming, History, Immigration, India, Mexican/Mexican American Interest, Multiethnic Interest, Respect and Citizenship, Siblings, Sikh Interest, Siblings, Softball, Sports, War, World War II

### SYNOPSIS

Nine-year-old Maria Singh longs to play softball in the first-ever girls' team forming in Yuba City, California. It's the spring of 1945, and World War II is dragging on. Miss Newman, Maria's teacher, is inspired by Babe Ruth and the All-American Girls' League to start a girls' softball team at their school.

Meanwhile, Maria's parents—Papi from India and Mamá from Mexico—can no longer protect their children from prejudice and from the discriminatory laws of the land. When the family is on the brink of losing their farm, Maria must decide if she has what it takes to step up and find her voice in an unfair world.

In this absorbing middle grade novel, award-winning author Uma Krishnaswami sheds light on a little-known chapter of American history set in a community that celebrated America's multicultural spirit long before the term became a catchword.



## BACKGROUND

### **The History Behind Uma's Story from Uma Krishnasawmi:**

“The characters in this book are fictional, but families like Maria’s did live in California’s Sutter and Yuba Counties. Men from Punjab, India, came to California as farm workers, and many of them married women from Mexico. Descendants of these so-called Mexican-Hindu families still live in California today. In fact, most of the men were not of the Hindu religion. They were either Sikh or Muslim. The word “Hindu” at the same simply meant “people of Hindustan,” which was another name for India.

In 1945, immigrants from the Indian subcontinent were not allowed to become citizens of the United States of America. In some states, they could not own land. Some Punjabi men like Papi bought land in their children’s names, as the children were US citizens by birth. The parents then took care of the land until their children were old enough to farm it themselves. An Act of Congress in 1946, the Luce-Celler Act, allowed people from India to enter the United States once again as immigrants who were eligible to apply for citizenship.

By California law, people of different races could not marry. Punjabi men and Mexican women sometimes persuaded the county clerks to register their marriages by stating that they both belonged to the same race—“brown.”

Children in families like Maria’s were mostly raised Catholic, although many of the descendants still remember stories they heard from their fathers’ religious traditions. The parents sometimes disagreed about how best to raise their daughters—whether the girls should date, for example, or wear pants!

In 1945, the American flag had forty-eight stars because Alaska and Hawaii hadn’t yet joined the Union. The pledge of allegiance did not yet contain the words “under God.”

The Little League was formed in 1938, but it was only for boys. Girls didn’t join until 1974. Stories of women and girls playing ball, however, go as far back as the late 1800s. In 1945, girls in Yuba City played softball. That year, the official softball rulebook called for ten players on a team, with four in the outfield. Games consisted of seven innings. Sliding and stealing bases were not

allowed. Today, in Yuba City, California, there are plenty of places, including a major sports complex, where young people can play softball.

On the other side of the world, at the time of this story, India was still ruled by the British. Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit, who later became India’s first ambassador to the United Nations, did in fact visit the Sikh temple in Stockton, California, to seek money and support for India’s independence movement.

India became free in 1947, two years after the end of World War II.”

### **Punjabi-Mexican Population in Yuba City, California:**

“According to Outlook India, “the story of the Sikh community in Yuba City begins at the turn of the 20th century, when early immigrants from the Punjab province in erstwhile British India came down here. The first Sikh family to settle in the Yuba/Sutter area reportedly was that of Puna Singh. The handful of immigrants, over the century, have burgeoned into a thriving community of thousands of prosperous farmers, business owners, and professionals. Even so, Sutter is still one of the poorer counties in California. Male immigrants then faced a peculiar problem—the existing laws prohibited them from marrying whites. They consequently entered into nuptial ties with co-workers, mostly Mexican women . . . .” (“Our Pind in Yuba,” <https://www.outlookindia.com/magazine/story/our-pind-in-yuba/213126>)

### **India Independence from Britain:**

India won its freedom from British colonial rule after more than a century of oppression and struggle. Mohandas Gandhi, known as Mahatma Gandhi, joined the fight in 1915. Gandhi and other leaders and activists from India led the country to independence using nonviolent protest. Gandhi encouraged Indians to stop buying British goods, avoid paying taxes to the British government, and take part in peaceful protests. Britain announced India’s independence and also its partition into two countries, India and Pakistan, in 1947. (<https://www.dkfindout.com/us/history/modern-india/indian-independence/>)

### **The Story of India:**

PBS and the BBC created a six-part historical series called, “The Story of India.” The website includes a timeline of the country’s history, and a series of lesson



plans for students from Grades 5 to Grades 12. (<http://www.pbs.org/thestoryofindia/teachers/lessons/>)

***Becoming American Museum:***

The “Becoming American” museum project was conceived by a group of individuals interested in documenting and preserving the migration history of Punjabis to the United States, the Yuba-Sutter area in particular. There are a variety of photographs and videos to show students in order to further their knowledge about the Punjabi and South Asian influence in Yuba City, California. (<http://punjabipioneers.com/Exhibits>)

***All-American Girls Professional Baseball League:***

Baseball team owners organized the All-American Girls Professional Baseball League in the spring of 1943. Most of the nation was involved in the war effort, and many women worked in factories that produced military machinery. Women’s roles were changing throughout the country because many men had been drafted into the military, and the environment was much friendlier and accepting of women as professional ball players. Although women still experienced sexism and had to briefly attend charm school classes while they played, the league was the one of the first forays into professional sports for women in the United States. (<http://www.aagpbl.org/index.cfm/pages/league/12/league-history>)

## Additional LEE & LOW Middle Grade Titles

***Ahimsa*** written by Supriya Kelkar  
<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/ahimsa>

***Chess Rumble*** written by G. Neri, illustrated by Jesse Joshua Watson  
<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/chess-rumble>

***Etched in Clay*** written and illustrated by Andrea Cheng  
<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/etched-in-clay>

***Yummy*** written by G. Neri, illustrated by Randy DuBurke  
<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/yummy>

***Dear Mrs. Parks*** written by Rosa Parks with Gregory J. Reed  
<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/dear-mrs-parks>

***Galaxy Games: The Challengers*** written by Greg Fishbone  
<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/galaxy-games>

***Mama’s Window*** written by Lynn Rubright  
<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/mama-s-window>

***Jingu*** written by Dr. Ralph E. Pray, illustrated by Xiaojun Li  
<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/jingu>



## VOCABULARY

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

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.

### Content Specific

Goatgrass, burr, Yuba City, Babe Ruth, half-and-half, Punjab, Mexican Hindu, Sikh, Muslim, adha-adha, turban, ink blotter, Jerries, Japs, President Roosevelt, Adolf Hitler, Tía, underhand, left field, center field, right field, black market, Camp Beale, bucking bar, riveter, rivet, Punjabi, cilantro, curry, roti, enchilada, Muslim, Catholic, kara-parshad, kirpan, Sacramento Northern Railroad, Imperial Valley, Angrez, chabacanos, comprende, All-American Girls' Professional Baseball League, frijoles, kuriye, first base, second base, third base, deferment, oso, ladrones, House of Representatives, gup-shup, grounders, goatgrass burrs, bobbin, sari, Gandhiji

### Academic

Taunted, pig-headed, ragtag, exasperation, famine, parroting, dawdle, salvaged, diligently, indignation, ruffians, despise, sluggish, calluses, conscience, interrogate, foreigner, resentment, heedless, deferred, tussock, dismayed, next generation, pandemonium, surrender, legal, eavesdropped, lucrative rationing

## 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:

1. Ask students about their involvement with sports. What sports do you play? Why do you like to play them? Were you ever told that you can't play a sport? Why not?
2. What do you know about World War II? What do you know about daily life on the domestic front?
3. What do you know about immigration? Have you or your family immigrated to this country? What about friends? What is it like or what do you think it's like to immigrate to a new country?
4. What are your thoughts on gender differences in sports? What kinds of things do you hear, typically about girls in sports? Why do you think you hear those things?
5. What is your perception of the American criminal justice system? What experiences have formed your view? What do you know about racial profiling? Police violence?
6. How do you think sports can bring people together? Why do you think sports are important activities? How are sports or clubs meaningful to you?

**NOTE:** The book depicts a moment where characters use the racial terms "Jerries," "Japs," and "dirty Indian." Students may need additional historical context and awareness concerning the use of these offensive terms.

### 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)

1. **Book Title Exploration:** Talk about the title of the book, *Step up to the Plate*, Maria Singh. 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?
2. **Read Author's Biography:** Read about Uma Krishnaswami. What other books has Uma Krishnaswami written?



3. 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.
4. Have students quickly write a feeling in their notebook during reading. After reading, ask students why they wrote that feeling down 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 Maria experiences and overcomes discrimination
- how Maria and her family encounter racism in their daily lives
- the importance of Maria’s relationship with her family
- the importance of friendship and how it can transcend hatred and fear
- how sports bring together people from all different cultures, races, and backgrounds
- how Maria dedicates herself to her softball team, both on and off of the field
- Uma Krishnaswami’s message for readers about racial and gender identities

## 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 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)

#### Chapters 1-8

1. What did the families in Yuba City joke about that they were called?
2. What did Maria stay behind from school to do? What did she tell Emilio?
3. What war does Maria first talk about in the book?
4. Why did Maria think she was not going to be allowed to wear shorts to baseball practice?
5. Where does Tía Manuela visit from? What does she say about her new job and home?
6. What advice does Miss Newman give to Maria during their first practice?
7. Why does Papa call Gian Gill and Ahmed Khan his “brothers?” Where did they work together?
8. Why did Ahmed Khan, Connie’s papa, say it was a sad day? Whose father died? How did he die?
9. What other world conflict, besides World War II, is happening in Step Up to the Plate, Maria Singh? What does Papi call it?

#### Chapters 8-16

10. What happens to Emilio after school? What do the other students tell him?
11. What could people from Asia not do in California?
12. Why did Papi say people wouldn’t hire him when he came to the United States from Mexico?
13. What does Papi tell the family that Becker is going to do? Why can Papi not buy the farm?
14. Why does Connie get mad at Maria? What does deferment mean?
15. What is Arnold Becker like? How does the author describe him? How does Maria feel about him?
16. What does Tía Manuela call the Revolution?



“This feminist book doesn’t shy away from the political (“They knew how democracy worked, how some people were allowed to be a part of it and others were not”) and will pair well with other middle-grade historical novels about the struggle for civil rights.”

– *The Horn Book*

“Provides a rich basis for a discussion of prejudice and the importance of standing up for one’s beliefs.”

–*School Library Journal*

“A testament to the power of family, identity, faith, and one girl’s strong drive for fairness. At the same time, it also shows us how difficult it is to evoke change, especially in the face of the twin forces of racism and sexism...”

–*Newbury Honor Winner Kathi Appel, author of The Underneath*

### Chapters 16-24

17. What happens after Elizabeth gives Maria the copy of *La Familia*? What do they say to each other?
18. Why does Mamá call Elizabeth a “poor girl”?
19. What does Papi tell Maria and Emilio when they ask for a story? How do they react?
20. What story does Tía Manuela tell Maria about Mamá?
21. What does Miss Newman tell the team about the field? What could possibly happen?
22. Who does Maria want to tell about the field possibly being deferred? How do her teammates and coach react?
23. What meeting does Papi go to at the El Rancho restaurant? What do they do at this meeting?
24. How does Maria get shorts to play in?
25. How does Maria try to help Janie feel better after the news of her father?
26. What happens during the game between Maria, Janie, and Elizabeth? What does Elizabeth call Janie? What does Maria do? How does Miss Newman react?
27. What does Maria admit to her parents after the fight?
28. Why does Maria start to sew with Mamá? What’s her reason behind sewing?

29. What does Miss Newman tell the team the county board decided to do?
30. What happens with Maria and Mr. Becker?

### Chapters 24-32

31. What does Elizabeth do to Maria during the game?
32. What does Papi tell Maria to do after the incident with Elizabeth? How does Maria react?
33. What does Maria say at the county board meeting? How does Miss Newman give Maria more responsibility at this meeting?
34. Who comes to visit Maria when she’s at home? What does Elizabeth say to Maria?
35. Why does Papi bring the family to the Stockton Sikh Temple?
36. What does Maria tell her papi with regard to their land? What is the significance of her decision?
37. What does Tía Manuela give Maria? Why is that important? How does it make Maria feel?
38. What does Maria do in the last seconds of the game? How does she win the game for her team?

### Extension/Higher Level Thinking

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas & Details, Strands 1-3; and Craft & Structure, Strands 4 and 6)  
(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1-3; and Presentation of Knowledge & Ideas, Strand 4)

1. What does the title *Step up to the Plate, Maria Singh* mean to you after reading? Why do you think the author chose this particular title?



2. What motivated Maria to play softball? Why do you think she enjoyed it so much? What did it mean to her?
3. What role does Maria's family play in her life? What was her relationship like with her brother, Emilio? Her mamá? Her papi? Her tía? How did they all influence her character? What does she learn from each of her family members?
4. How does Maria help the softball team throughout the book? What does Maria do to make sure that the team is able to play? What kinds of things does she do and say in order to play the sports that she loves? What obstacles does she overcome to make sure that everyone can play together? What kinds of things does she sacrifice and do to play softball?
5. How does Maria and Elizabeth's relationship change over the book? What happens between these two characters? What do the characters say and do to each other? Why did those things happen?
6. How does race play a role in this book? What does the term "adha adha" mean to you after reading? How does Maria encounter racism? What does she do to combat racism and how does she stand up for herself despite the discrimination that she faces?
7. How does Maria's suggestion of helping her father buy the land affect her family? How does this decision impact their livelihood?
3. Have students make a text-to-self connection. What kind of connections did you make from this book to your own life? What do Maria's experiences, thoughts, and feelings mean to you? Have you experienced anything similar to Maria, specifically in sports?
4. Have students make a text-to-text connection. Did you think of any other books while you read *Step up to the Plate, Maria Singh*? Why did you make those connections?
5. 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, such as on television or in a newspaper? What did this book make you think of that?
6. What kinds of conflicts are presented in *Step up to the Plate, Maria Singh*? Discuss Maria's conflicts within her own self, with other peers, and conflicts in the world. Compare and contrast the different conflicts within the text.

### 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)

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:
  - Have students work in pairs to retell either the plot of the story or key details. Then ask students to write a short summary, synopsis, or opinion about what they have read.
4. 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

### Reader's Response

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

1. What is one big thought that you have had after reading this book? Think about how Maria changes over time during the book, and what she learns from her family and from playing softball. What is your takeaway from this book? What would you tell a friend about this book?
2. What do you think Uma Krishnaswami's message to the reader is? Think about possible motivations behind Uma Krishnaswami's intentions to write the book. What do you think she wanted to tell her readers? Why did she write this book for young readers?



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.

5. Show students pictures or video clips of a baseball or softball game in action. Draw out a softball field and label the different positions. Keep this up for students to refer to while reading the text. Note to students that baseball and softball rules vary slightly.

## 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)

1. Review/introduce plot and theme with students. Create a T-chart that lists “Plot” on one side and “Theme” on the other side. According to *The Reading Strategies Book* (<http://www.heinemann.com/products/eo7433.aspx>), explain to students that plot is “what happens in the book” and theme is the “big idea about the book.” What is the plot in *Step up to the Plate, Maria Singh* and what are the themes that emerge from the plot? Have a group discussion and write both on chart paper.

2. Have students select a quote or a few sentences from the book to write about featuring Maria’s actions or feelings. Why did they choose to write about that particular quote? What are their reactions to those statements? Have students choose a quote from the beginning, middle, and end of the book. What do they notice about the change in those statements throughout the book?
3. Provide students with an “It Says, I Say, and So” graphic organizer to work on inferencing from *Assessing and Correcting Reading and Writing Difficulties*. (<http://amzn.to/zzXZysT>) Tell students that “it says” is a quote from the book that made you think. “I say” is what kind of knowledge you bring to understanding this part from the book. “And so” means combining what the book says and what you know to make an “inference,” or figuring out what the author is trying to tell the reader without exactly saying it in the book.

It says (What the book says)	I Say (What I know)	And so (this could mean) ...
P. 177: “ ‘Fine, sir,’ said Papi in an extra-polite voice. Because Gramps is Anglo, Maria thought in surprise. She’d never noticed before how Papi spoke differently to white people. For some reason, it dismayed her.”		

4. Have students read the LEE & LOW interview with Uma Krishnaswami and then come up with a list of additional interview questions to ask author. Students can read the interview, “Uma Krishnaswami on Citizenship, Culture, and Community.” (<http://blog.leeandlow.com/2017/05/15/interview-uma-krishnaswami-on-citizenship-culture-and-community/>) Encourage students to think about asking questions in relation to her writing process. When does Uma like to





write? How does she plan out her ideas? A further activity to build off the original interview is to have students look at the different resources that Uma used during her research for the book, such as Jayasari Majumdar Hart's documentary, "Roots in the Sand." (<https://www.pbs.org/rootsinthesand/>) Before reading: Provide students with a list of the vocabulary words to sort into categories (e.g. very familiar, somewhat familiar, unfamiliar).

5. Have students analyze the historical contexts in the book. *The Reading Strategies Book* (<http://www.heinemann.com/products/e07433.aspx>) suggests that students create a chart that has a column for "environmental condition" and "definition." Underneath "environmental condition," create rows for "social," "economic" and "political." In the right column, define what those mean (i.e. "social" is interactions between people). Have students brainstorm on sticky notes the different social, economic, and political conditions during the time period of 1945. Have students analyze the historical contexts in the book. *The Reading Strategies Book* (<http://www.heinemann.com/products/e07433.aspx>) suggests that students create a chart that has a column for "environmental condition" and "definition." Underneath "environmental condition," create rows for "social," "economic" and "political." In the right column, define what those mean (i.e. "social" is interactions between people). Have students brainstorm on sticky notes the different social, economic, and political conditions during the time period of 1945.
6. Have students generate a list of characteristics for Maria, and then a theory about her character. What traits do they notice about Maria throughout the book, and what can they say about her character in the end? Consider giving students a graphic organizer with three rows for "Beginning," "Middle," and "End" for students to record her traits. Have students write a short paragraph about how they came up with their claim and justify why they chose to write about those specific qualities. Finally, as a reader, what can they learn from Maria?
7. Have students identify a place where Maria's character changes in the book. Why do students think that was a point where Maria's character

changed? How does Maria feel before the change, what causes the change, and then how does she feel after? Create a graphic organizer with a column on the left that says "before"; a column in the middle that says "Event—what happened that caused the change"; and then a column that says "after."

8. Have students conduct a "Setting Study" on Yuba City, California. Have students think about: Where does the story take place? When does the story happen? Why is Yuba City important for the book? Why do you think Uma Krishnaswami chose to have her setting be Yuba City, California? How would the book change if the setting changed?
9. Conduct a historical fiction unit featuring *Step up to the Plate, Maria Singh* and *Ahimsa* by Supriya Kelkar. (<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/ahimsa>) Have students research the historical time periods of both of these LEE & LOW titles. How are the characters similar? How are they different? How are their families similar? How are their families different? What did they learn about the fight for independence from Britain in India in both of these books?

### 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; Research to Build & Present Knowledge, Strands 7–9; and Range of Writing, Strand 10*)

1. Create a month-by-month timeline for the year 1945. Have students work together in groups to figure out what was happening in the world during that time. Have students focus on warfronts in Europe and Asia, in the United States, and in India. Divide groups according to region.
2. Have students identify the locations mentioned in the book on a map. Students can work together or as a class to identify Yuba City and early-twentieth-century Punjab. Students can also investigate the path that Papi took from India to get to California (from Panama, then north through Mexico and into California). Students can also identify other



important places during the fight for independence in India in addition to other World War II landmarks.

3. Have students research the Yuba City-inspired spiced corn on the cob. Students can find out more information about chipotle elote. What is the significance of this dish in that region? Make the recipe with students if possible in your classroom.
4. Have students investigate more about South Asian pioneers in California. Guide students to *Echoes of Freedom: South Asian Pioneers in California* (<http://guides.lib.berkeley.edu/echoes-of-freedom>) where they can find more information about the history of Indians from Punjab in the United States. *Echoes of Freedom* tells the story of early Indian immigrants to California through photographs, documents, and publications, drawn from the South/Southeast Asian Library's rich archive of material on South Asians in North America.
5. Show students the short PBS documentary about American Sikhs. Have students write a reflection after viewing. What stood out to them in this documentary? Have students write a reaction about the documentary and about the book, *Step up to the Plate, Maria Singh*. What connections did they make? (<http://www.punjabheritage.org/pahs/media/Video.mpg>)

### Science/STEM

(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 and Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas, Strands 4–6)

1. Have students research the fruits and vegetables that were planted in the Yuba City, California, region in 1945. What did farmhands harvest in that community? Why were those fruits and vegetables important?

### Arts/Performing 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, and Range of Writing, Strand 10)  
(Speaking and Listening Standards, Comprehension and Collaboration, Strands 1–3, Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas, Strands 4–6)

1. Have students create their own cover for *Step up to the Plate, Maria Singh*. What did they choose to include in their cover? Why did they make those decisions? Consider displaying the covers in the classroom.

### Home-School 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)

1. Provide students with a list of other titles from Uma Krishnaswami. Have students investigate other titles by Uma Krishnaswami at their local or school library with their family through her website. (<https://umakrishnaswami.org/books/>) Make sure to compare both picture books and chapter books. What themes do these books have in common? What topics do these books share? How are the character similar? How are they different? What do you think Uma's message is for young readers across these books?
2. Interview a family member about the history of their family. Have them talk about their country of origin. Why is it important to understand your family history? Why is it important to know the different parts of the world where your family is from? If you do not know your family history, interview someone about the history of your town or city.



## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

**Uma Krishnaswami** is the author of more than twenty books for young readers. She teaches in the low-residency MFA program in Writing for Children and Young Adults, Vermont College of Fine Arts. Born in New Delhi, India, Krishnaswami now lives and writes in Victoria, British Columbia, Canada. Visit her online at [umakrishnaswami.org](http://umakrishnaswami.org).

Uma Krishnaswami has won many awards for her books. Some of them include:

- A Junior Library Guild selection (*Step up to the Plate, Maria Singh*)
- South Asia Book Award and Kirkus Best Middle-Grade Books (*Book Uncle and Me*)
- Notable Books for a Global Society (*Naming Maya*)
- Scientific American Young Readers Book Award (*The Broken Tusk*)
- Bank Street College of Education Best Children's Books of the Year and Paterson Prize for Books for Young People (*Chachaji's Cup*)

## 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).

## ORDERING INFORMATION

### On the Web:

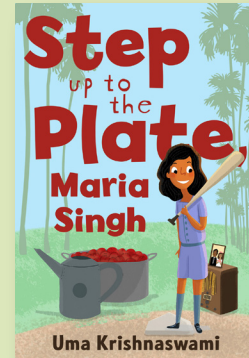
[www.leeandlow.com/contact/ordering](http://www.leeandlow.com/contact/ordering) (general order information)  
<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/step-up-to-the-plate-maria-singh>  
 (secure online ordering)

**By Phone:** 212-779-4400 ext. 25 | **By Fax:** 212-683-1894

**By Mail:** Lee & Low Books, 95 Madison Avenue, New York, NY 10016

## Book Information for

*Step up to the Plate, Maria Singh*



\$16.95, HARDCOVER

978-1-60060-261-0

288 pages, 5 X 7-1/2

\*Reading Level: Grades 5–6

Interest Level: Grades 5–8

Guided Reading Level: V

Accelerated Reader® Level/  
Points: N/A

Lexile™ Measure: N/A

**THEMES:** Asian/Asian American Interest, Biracial/Multiracial Interest, Breaking Gender Barriers, California, Civil Rights Movement, Cultural Diversity, Discrimination, Dreams and Aspirations, Economics/Finance, Families, Farming, History, Immigration, India, Mexican/Mexican American Interest, Multiethnic Interest, Respect and Citizenship, Siblings, Sikh Interest, Siblings, Softball, Sports, War, World War II

## RESOURCES ON THE WEB:

<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/step-up-to-the-plate-maria-singh>

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