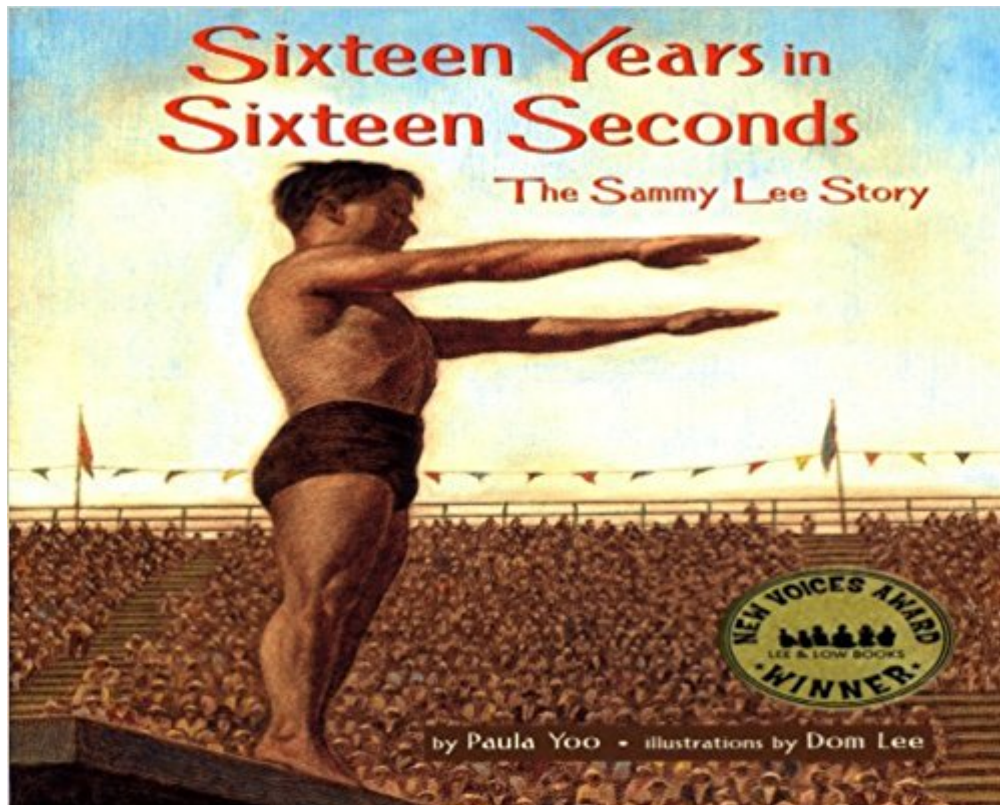




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Sixteen Years In Sixteen Seconds: The Sammy Lee Story



Synopsis

The inspirational true story of Sammy Lee, a Korean American who overcame discrimination to realize both his father's desire that he become a doctor and his own dream of becoming an Olympic champion diver.

Book Information

Lexile Measure: 880 (What's this?)

Paperback: 32 pages

Publisher: Lee & Low Books; 1 edition (April 30, 2010)

Language: English

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Product Dimensions: 8.1 x 0.2 x 10.7 inches

Shipping Weight: 3.2 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 5.0 out of 5 stars 19 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #272,940 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #20 in [Books > Children's Books > Sports & Outdoors > Olympics](#) #79 in [Books > Children's Books > Sports & Outdoors > Water Sports](#) #128 in [Books > Children's Books > Geography & Cultures > Multicultural Stories > Asian & Asian American](#)

Age Range: 6 - 10 years

Grade Level: 1 - 5

Customer Reviews

Kindergarten-Grade 3 -- This inspirational biography recognizes the life of the first Asian American to win an Olympic gold medal, at the 1948 Games in London. Even though he grew up in California when "people of color" were only allowed to use the public swimming pools one day a week, Lee was never discouraged from his dream. In college, he made an agreement with his father that he would keep good enough grades to enter medical school, but continue to enter diving competitions. Yoo brings the biography to a dramatic conclusion with the 16 seconds of a three-and-a-half somersault dive. Lee's painterly illustrations give texture and depth to the full-page spreads. More than a story about discrimination and unfair treatment, this story shows one young man's determination and resolve toward accomplishing a goal in life. --Blair Christolon, Prince William Public Library System, Manassas, VA Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. --This text refers to the Hardcover edition.

Starred Review Gr. 2-4. In her first picture book, winner of the publisher's New Voices Award, Yoo introduces Sammy Lee, the son of Korean immigrants who overcame formidable odds to become an Olympic diving champion as well as a doctor. In 1932, at the age of 12, Sammy fell in love with diving, but his local pool was open only once a week to nonwhites. He faced opposition at home, too; his father wanted him to focus on a "respectful" profession--medicine. Yoo describes how Sammy found a coach, maintained a grueling balance between academics and training, and finally earned both a medical degree and an Olympic gold medal. The minimal, well-shaped language focuses on powerful scenes that demonstrate Sammy's indestructible determination, his struggles with his father, and the prejudice he faced. Washed in nostalgic sepia tones, Dom Lee's acrylic-and-wax textured illustrations are reminiscent of his fine work in *Ken Mochizuki's watershed Baseball Saved Us* (1993), and like Yoo's understated words, the uncluttered images leave a deep impression; an aerial view of Sammy facing the blue expanse of the Olympic pool is particularly affecting. A page of facts closes this handsome, inspiring biography, which will make both an excellent read-aloud for younger children or a read-alone for confident older ones. Gillian Engberg

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This book was a gift to a family member who had a direct connection to Dr. Sammy Lee. I know this book was well received.

Wonderful addition to any school or child's personal library.

Before reading "Sixteen Years In Sixteen Seconds", I'd never heard of Dr. Lee. After reading this incredible book, I was moved and inspired by this courageous, fascinating human being. Though classified as a children's book, "Sixteen Years In Sixteen Seconds" can be enjoyed by adults as well as kids. With its beautiful illustration, thoughtful prose and universal themes of perseverance and beating the odds, Sammy Lee's story will continue to be enjoyed by generations of readers to come.

My kids were amazed that Dr. Lee accomplished so much after dealing with so much discrimination. He is an inspiration to everyone and is a proud citizen of this country. The illustrations are wonderful. Just a note - the book implies that his father only wanted him to be a doctor - he says his

father supported both of his dreams - to become a doctor and to be a diver. He became successful at both, and more.

A wonderful tribute to a wonderful man whom I only met once, told in such a way as to educate and inspire children. Beautifully and tastefully presented.

Well it was a nice story and I am glad to read this little history of the olympic swimmer someone I had no idea about

Did you know that in 1932, a sign on a public swimming pool that read "Members Only" really meant that only whites were permitted to enter except on certain days? That year, Sammy Lee, the twelve-year-old son of Korean immigrants who ran a restaurant in Highland Park, CA, stood outside the swimming pool fence one hot summer day and saw a boy diving high in the air and breaking the water with hardly a splash. Sammy decided that he wanted to learn how to do that. The following Wednesday, when people of color were allowed to use the pool, his African American friend Hart Crum showed him how to dive doing somersaults. With the summer Olympics being held in nearby Los Angeles that year, Sammy dreamed of becoming an Olympic champion diver. However, Sammy's father wanted him to become a doctor rather than an athlete. Six years later, when he was eighteen, Sammy was attending a swim and diving competition, and between meets, he sneaked into the pool area to practice. Jim Ryan saw him and agreed to become his coach. Sammy managed to keep his grades up while practicing diving, becoming the first nonwhite elected student body president in his high school and being offered a full scholarship at Occidental College in Los Angeles. Yet, he still faced discrimination, and his grades fell during his first year of college because he spent more time diving than studying. After seeing a rude customer berating his father in the restaurant and his father responding without losing his temper, Sammy understood why his father wanted him to do well in school. They struck a deal that Sammy could continue diving as long as his grades were good enough for medical school. The 1940 Olympics were cancelled because of World War II, and Sammy thought his Olympic dreams were dead. He did go on to become a doctor in the Army in 1946, but that year he also entered the national diving championship, winning the high-platform dive with the highest score ever, and was able to enter the London, England, Olympics in 1948. While he continued to face discrimination, rather than getting angry he decided to prove his worth in the Olympics and show that people should not be judged by the color of their skin. What happened in those sixteen seconds that followed sixteen years of training? Sixteen

Years in Sixteen Seconds, the true story of Dr. Sammy Lee, has deservedly won numerous book awards including the New Voices Award. It is a wonderful story of dreaming, working hard, overcoming challenges, and being victorious. While it will be of special interest to children of Asian American descent, it illustrates for us all what Sammy's father had told him. "In America, you can achieve anything if you set your heart to it."

This is one of those fabulous books that makes kids curious about learning. The story of Sammy Lee's fight for racial freedom, his struggle balancing his father's wishes and his own, and of his determination in all his endeavours is nothing short of inspiring. His struggle as a Korean American trying to become an Olympic swimmer was so inspiring that I almost cried. Any child who reads this book will, by the end, have no doubt that the final phrase is true: "In America, you can achieve anything if you set your heart to it." As such, this is a great story for a teacher to read with his class. Young students have often been known to be lazy and to feel entitled. This book will help them understand that it is not that way for everyone, that struggling is a part of life, and it will hopefully inspire them to work harder, especially in the face of difficulty. In the summary, it says "Sammy Lee's story of determination and triumph sets an extraordinary example for anyone striving to fulfill a dream." I couldn't have said it better myself. I can't over-express how true that statement is. All this raving, and I haven't yet said anything about the gorgeous illustrations. Each image was beautifully drawn with such obvious love and care that they were all inspirations in and of themselves. I think most people could benefit from this book, and it is such a pleasant read that I think anyone would enjoy it. It is especially great, though, for classroom reading, especially in more underprivileged areas.

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