Book: The Girl with Seven Names: A North Korean Defector’s Story by David John and Lee Hyeon-seo

Level of Difficulty:
Difficult

My Thoughts about its suitability for my group:

North Korea has been headline news, now more than ever, so when I came across this book among the new arrivals last summer, I got very excited. We really don’t know much about North Koreans, except for the news. I wanted my group and I to learn more about them together. This is the 13th book that my group has read, and I know they love memoirs. I was quite pleased that they chose to read this book too.

Students’ reaction to the book:

They enjoyed the book immensely. It vividly portrayed life in North Korea, and more. When we first started reading it, we had no idea that it was going to be a thriller. It is quite long, but is a page-turner. Three students finished reading it before the term was over. They were all in awe of the girl’s dogged determination and her quick thinking when faced with perilous situations. Her story is incredible. One student said, “it is like watching a movie.” It was also handy that a student, who had lived in two of the places in China where the girl spent most of her time before defecting, helped answer some questions raised. At our last meeting, we watched on You-Tube the author, Lee Hyeon-seo, delivering the speech she mentioned in the book. That was amazing. The only criticism they had is the size of the font, not senior friendly.

Tips for other tutors who may want to use this book:

Because it’s a long book, we had to skip some chapters in order to get to the end. It was not easy to decide which ones to skip. I made summaries of the chapters we skipped, probably a total of 6. There are lots of difficult words and we had to spend at least 20 minutes going over the vocabulary words before reading.

Submitted by:

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