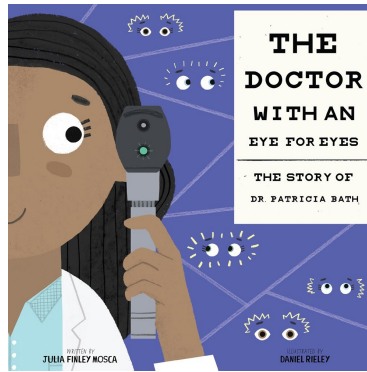


Second Reaction: The Doctor with an Eye for Eyes

Julia Finley Mosca. *The Doctor with an Eye for Eyes*. Seattle, WA: The Innovation Press, 2017. Print.

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The book *The Doctor with an Eye for Eyes* by Julia Finley Mosca is a short biography of Dr. Patricia Bath. The book conveys the struggles and achievements of Dr. Patricia Bath as an individual despite the disadvantageous treatment of her skin color and sex. This First Opinion Second Reaction was held in Anheung Middle School in Gangwon-do of Republic of Korea. Anheung Middle School is a small school in Hoengsung, Gangwon-do, with about 30 students in total (including all three juniors, sophomores, seniors), and the reading class was conducted with the whole students.

Before the actual class, the students have heard briefly of the content of the book, which was a decision made with the English Teacher of Anheung Middle School. The English teacher concerned the students might have a hard time to follow up reading the book together,

noting that the students are not trained with enough English, and had a session that let the students abstractly understand the content of the book before the actual class to grease the wheels. At the end of the day, I realized that that decision helped the class to progress a lot smoother than what it was originally going to be.

The class is divided into three parts – before reading, during reading, and after reading. Before reading, I presented the class a video of a famous youtuber about providing surgeries for blind people to see to gather the children's attention, which ended up successful. After the video came a brief explanation of who Dr. Patricia Bath is, what a cataract is, and what the laser probe of Dr. Patricia is to let the students follow and understand what the achievements of Dr. Patricia is and why it is significant.

During reading, the plan was letting the students read a page per person, and me making corrections or explanations on points students find difficult. I initially asked the students one by one to read the passage to check on participation and how the students are following the class. However, no students volunteered, and no student attempted to read the lines although I picked from random students and asked them directly. As the class resumed and few interactions took place, it turns out the students were not simply shy, but they virtually could not read or understand the passage without my interpretation. The reading was eventually done by me alone, and the process has become much simplified compared to the original plan. In a nutshell, reading was me translating the passage into Korean and explaining vocabulary and expressions the students could miss out. To keep the reading intriguing, I engaged students to share personal experiences or ideas for relatable points found in the passage, such as personal stories of overcoming structural obstacles for achieving goals. Some students thankfully answered delightfully, but those were very few and the answers were mostly still shy.

After reading, I explained the historical background of women and black population o

f the 1960s and 1970s in statistics and social movements. Trying my best to exclude anything that might sound political, the students covered a brief explanation of the second wave feminism and black civil rights movement of Martin Luther King Jr. and Malcom X. Through statistics of education levels and income levels of women of the era, students were able to further figure out what treatments people like Dr. Patricia would have gone through at the time. Additionally, the students watched clips of the movie *Hidden Figures* for a better understanding through visual examples and keep the attention to the class. Due to little time remaining, the plan to review about the content of the book and linking oneself to the scenarios in the book was canceled offhand. Finally, the class had a vocabulary quiz battle between me and the entire class through an online platform the teacher has prepared. The platform has been used frequently for regular classes in the school, and the students looked especially enthusiastic than any time. At the end, the class ended up winning and the session finished.

The biggest thing I felt after the reading class was that the gap of the education level is so huge between the schools in rural areas and in the cities. As grown up in Seoul, a center city of money flow and educational competition, the education level of the students in Anheung Middle School was far low than what I saw growing up. *The Doctor with an Eye for Eyes* is a book for primary school students or kindergarteners with big pictures and short, simple sentences. However, it was a bit shocking how middle schoolers, even seniors could not interpret the passage.

Another impression I received from the experience is about how Korean education system approaches English. Although more people can speak English than the old days and English is treated almost like a basic ability for everyone nowadays, Korea still perceives English as an 'ability' or 'quality', not as a concept of 'language.' Many students did not read the passage written in English because they were shy of their English pronunciations and the lack of v

vocabulary. Korean English education tries to approach an English sentence mathematically, with grammar and rote usage of vocabulary; teachers try to dissect sentences into formulas. I believe this type of attitude towards English hampers students from perceiving English as a 'mean', as a 'language'. As the education focuses on written materials, the students eventually step away from speaking skills and interpreting English with flexibility.

The reading session in Anheung Middle School is not just an opportunity for education but it became an indicator of Korean English education and an alarm of inequality of distribution of infrastructure over Korea. I will likely extend this opportunity to further infiltrate to the blind spots of Education. This project provides a lot of room for discourse.

About the Author

Giwon Yi is a student at Korean Minjok Leadership Academy. He believes in self-discipline and divine purpose. Recently he has been researching Korean English education. Fun Fact: Earth is flat.