

# Uniting the College Through Reading:

## The Morningside One Book Programme

General Education Team:

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### ABSTRACT

Morningside College is a fully residential college with a diverse student body of over 300 students who represent more than 50 majors and 15 countries. The college's General Education team launched a common reading initiative in fall 2018 for the incoming class of 78 students. The **One Book Programme** supplies each new student with a copy of a chosen book and encourages students to read and discuss the selection with peers. Related programming supports students' engagement with College Fellows, students from other colleges, and the wider community of readers in Hong Kong. The 2018 One Book selection was *Without You, There is No Us: Undercover Among the Sons of North Korea's Elite* by Suki Kim. Supplementary programmes included a book discussion, public lecture, and meet-and-greet with the author. Overall, the programme encourages extracurricular reading, fosters conversations and a sense of inquiry around ethical dilemmas, and strengthens college culture.

### DESIGN

Inspired by common reading initiatives at major American universities, Morningside's One Book Programme aims to gather students around a common text and encourage peer-level discussion. The General Education team considered multiple factors in selecting a text for the pilot programme.

### SELECTING THE RIGHT BOOK

#### ACCESSIBILITY

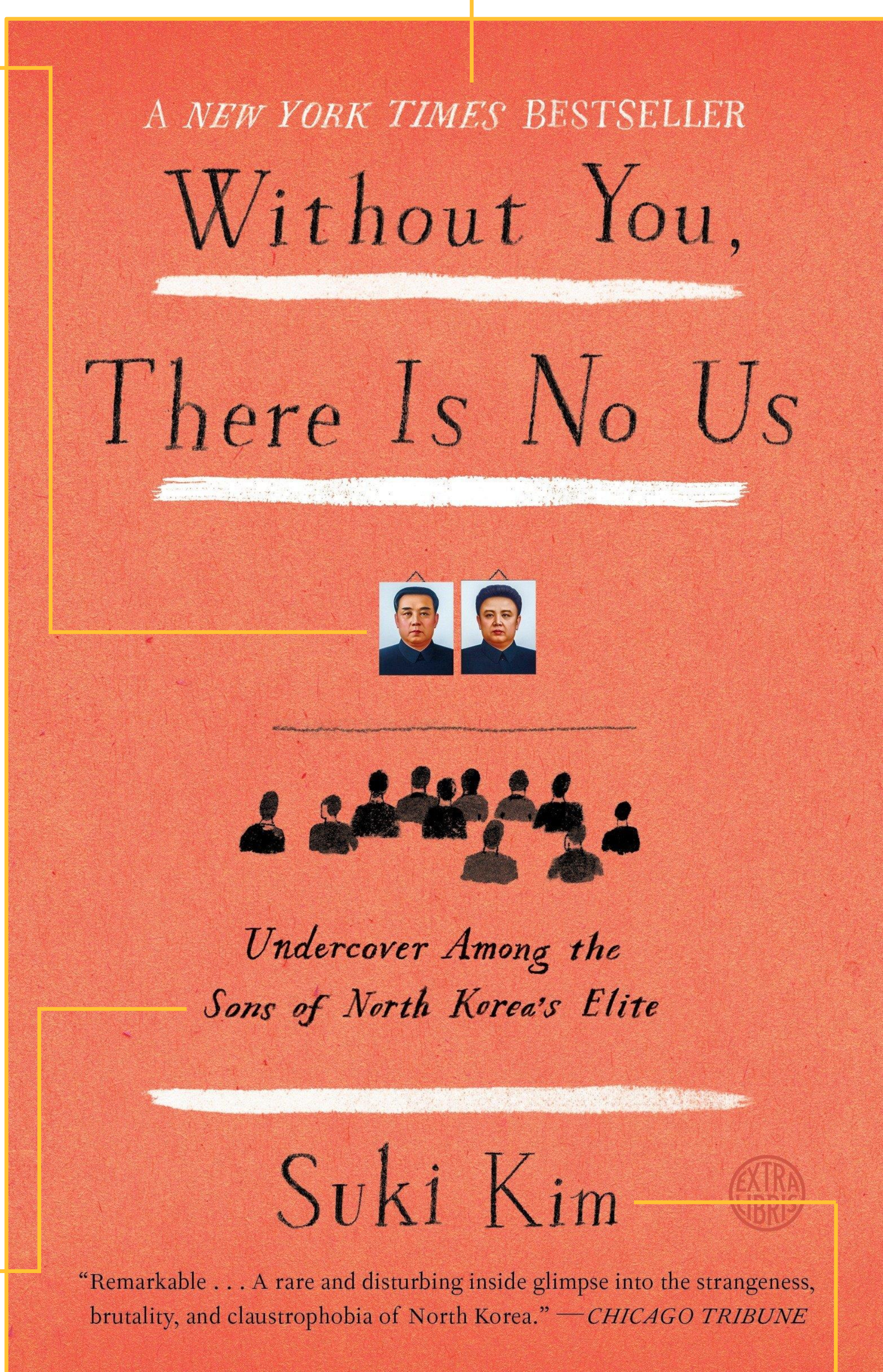
- relevant to student interests
- capable of engaging students across academic disciplines
- high quality writing that is accessible to all students

#### ETHICAL DILEMMAS

- enable students to discuss and explore an ethical dilemma
- support College GE coursework, in which students examine dilemmas using philosophical frameworks

*"Compared to students from other colleges who were also at the lecture, Morningsiders who had been given the book and who had been a part of the One Book Programme were more well-prepared to engage with Suki Kim on the issues she talked about."*

- Year 1, Biomedical Engineering



#### PROGRAMMING

- conducive to a variety of programming
- new ways for students to engage with the text and related themes

#### GLOBAL RELEVANCE

- addresses complex global themes
- prepares students to be informed leaders at home and abroad
- inspires curiosity about current affairs

*"The One Book Programme not only encouraged me to read a fascinating book but it also presented me with the opportunity to interact with the author, Suki Kim, which was an inspiring experience. It was exhilarating to ask her questions which had been in the back of my mind since the day I started reading the book."*

- Year 1, Engineering

### CONTACT

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### IMPLEMENTATION

The One Book Programme follows students through their first term: they are introduced to the book during Orientation Camp, discuss the text as they progress, and cap off the term by meeting the author. The programme augments Morningside's first-year General Education course, GEMC1001: Current Dilemmas and Their Histories. The book serves as a reference point as students develop an understanding of ethical frameworks and dilemmas across fields including journalism, foreign policy, and media.

#### August

The One Book Programme was introduced to all incoming first-year students during **College O'Camp**.



Each student received a copy of the book with a letter detailing the reasoning behind the choice of book and listing upcoming events.

#### October

The General Education team hosted a **book discussion** to give students the opportunity to ask questions and discuss the themes of the book.



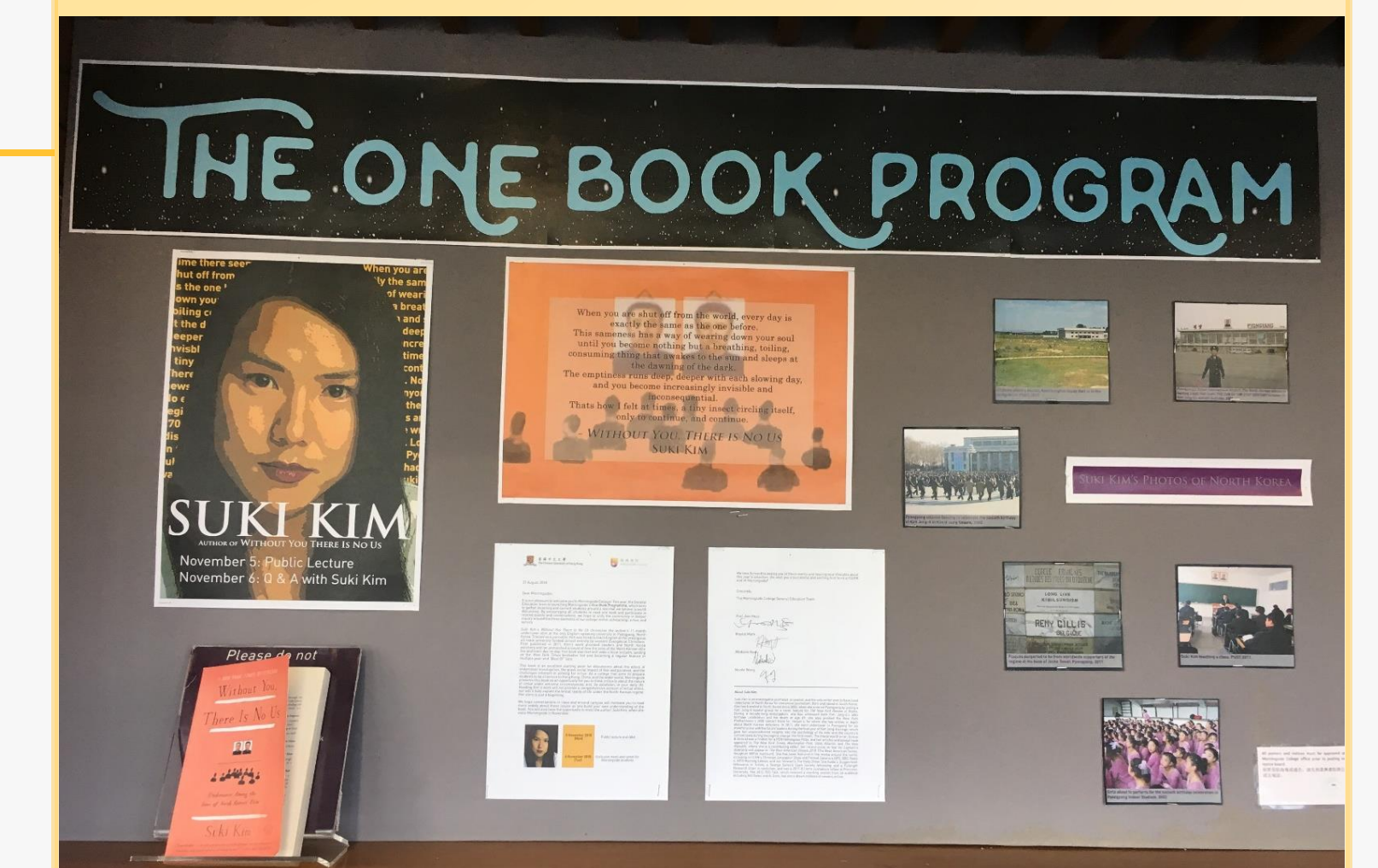
Participants were encouraged to focus on **specific chapters**.

Morningside hosted a full-house **public lecture** by Suki Kim in an interactive classroom in the Chung Yu Tung Building, attracting more than 90 attendees.



#### September

A **bulletin board** in a public area of the college promoted upcoming events, displayed photos of the author taken during her time in North Korea, and housed **copies of the book available on loan** to non-first year students.



Five copies of the book were also **raffled off** to non-first year Morningside students during communal dinner.

#### November

Suki Kim hosted an **exclusive meet-and-greet** for Morningside students where she answered questions and signed books.



Morningsiders spoke one-on-one with the author, gaining valuable insight into the writing and research process, as well as her first-hand experiences.

During the event, students also won copies of Suki Kim's first book *The Interpreter* in a **raffle**.

### CONCLUSIONS

Based on attendance at the public lecture and meet-and-greet and student feedback, the General Education team has concluded that this year's One Book Programme was a success. Students who participated in the book discussion and attended the author events expressed their excitement about the continuation of the programme. In the future, the team will consider how to better advertise related events throughout the term to encourage wider student interest. This might entail including the book discussion in initial advertising and a book raffle earlier in the semester to spark the interest of non-first year students. Given the distinct goals of the One Book programme, the team anticipates some difficulty in selecting a book for the coming year that will replicate the success of this year's selection. Finding a new text that meets the criteria established in the selection process (outlined in the Design section) will require careful consideration and foresight.