

Learning Objectives

For pages 240–242

In studying this text, you will focus on the following objectives:

Reading:
Identifying sequence.
Analyzing text features.

Set a Purpose for Reading

Read “Miracle Hands” to find out how Woosik Chung dealt with a childhood accident.

Preview the Article

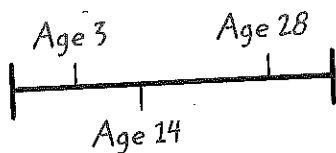
1. Read the **title** and **deck**, or subtitle. Why might Woosik Chung’s hands be called “miracle hands”?
2. What do the **photos** tell you about Chung’s childhood and his life now?

Reading Skill

Identify Sequence

Sequence is the order in which events take place. The article begins when Chung is 28 and then goes back to a time when he was 3 years old. Throughout the article, Chung’s age helps you identify the sequence of events.

As you read, create a time line to follow Chung’s story.



TIME

Miracle HANDS

Woosik Chung’s hands were cut off when he was 3. Now he’s becoming a surgeon.

By CHRISTINA CHEAKALOS and MATT BIRKBECK

When Woosik Chung was in his first year of medical school, a surgeon handed him a scalpel¹ to make a cut during a knee operation. “It was quite a rush,” says Chung, 28. “At that moment, I understood that using my hands as a surgeon was an honor and a privilege.”

In Chung’s case, that moment was very close to a miracle. When he was 3 years old, both his hands were cut off in an accident. Then, in a risky operation, they were successfully reattached.

Chung’s against-all-odds story started in 1978 as he played hide-and-seek with friends in a town in South Korea. Ducking behind a tractor, the curious little boy reached out to touch the moving fan of the tractor’s engine. In a split second, the fan blades cut off both his hands at the wrists.

¹ A **scalpel** is a small, sharp knife used in surgery.



"I hated that I had hurt myself," says Chung (near Seoul, South Korea after the accident).

Courtesy John Chung

Chung's horrified father saw the accident from his apartment window. He and his wife filled a bucket with ice and frantically ran to their screaming son. Both of his hands lay on the ground.

The boy's parents carried him to a hospital just blocks away. Since it was a national holiday, there weren't any doctors available who specialized in reattaching limbs. So Chung's father, John, an army surgeon, reattached Woosik's hands himself in a nine-hour operation. "I had never completed a surgery like that," says John. "But I was desperate.² I prayed and did my best."

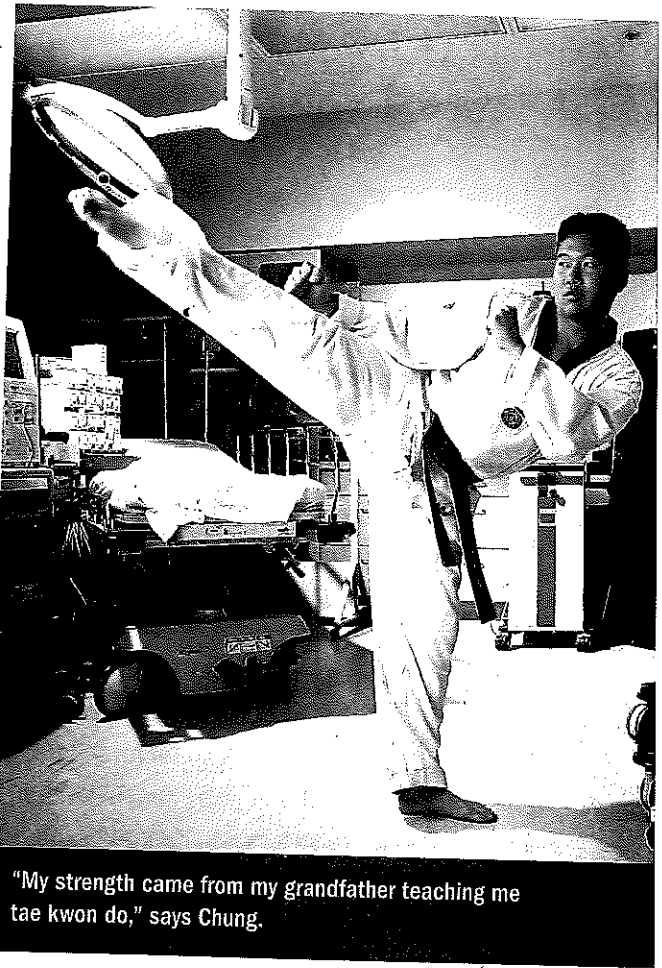
His best, it turns out, was first-rate. It didn't seem that way, however, when the doctors removed Chung's casts two months later. The young boy couldn't move his hands. No one knew if Chung would ever regain the use of them.

² Chung was *desperate*, or so needy as to be willing to try anything.

But a couple of years later, Chung was able to move his hands, eventually regaining full use of them. For that, Chung thanks his grandfather, a tae kwon do grand master who used this martial art as his grandson's physical therapy.³ Chung says his grandfather taught him the discipline⁴ he needed to practice several hours a day.

³ Like karate and judo, *tae kwon do* is a *martial art*. All three are forms of fighting and exercise. *Physical therapy* exercises help a person recover from an illness, an injury, or surgery.

⁴ *Discipline* means "control of behavior, especially self-control."



Andrew Kist

"My strength came from my grandfather teaching me tae kwon do," says Chung.

When Chung was 14, his family moved to the United States. After high school, he went to Yale University, where he earned a degree and was also a tae kwon do champ, ranking second in the U.S. He considered trying out for the 2000 Olympics but chose instead to study medicine. "When he told me," says his father, "I was very happy."

When he finishes his five-year program, Chung knows exactly what he wants to be: a hand surgeon. "The best way I can thank my dad," says Chung, "is to help others in similar situations."



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View the Photograph In what way does this photo relate to the title of the article?

Respond and Think Critically

1. Summarize the main events of Chung's life. State the main events in your own words and in a logical order. [Summarize]
2. Why do you think Chung chose medical school over the Olympics? [Analyze]
3. In what way was Chung's father as courageous as Chung? Explain. [Compare]
4. **Text-to-Self** What qualities does Chung possess that helped him overcome his injury? How might Chung's story inspire you or other readers? Explain. [Connect]
5. **Reading Skill** Identify Sequence How many years after his accident did Chung begin to regain the use of his hands? Review your time line to answer this question.
6. **BQ** **BIG Question** What did you learn from this article? What ideas and information in the article might prove helpful to you?

