

South Korea



Stories about the country and culture of Korea.

SUMMARY:

Each story delves into the country of Korea, discussing the food, culture, and things to see in Korea. Part entertainment and part social studies, these stories should enlighten and delight as students learn more about the interesting and important country.

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Visiting Korea

Susan was fourteen, but she had never been to another country before. Her father was going to Korea on business, so he let her come with him. She would have to spend some of the time in the hotel, but when he had time her father would take her out to do things. Her father had also mentioned that one of the other businessmen going had a daughter almost her age. They might be able to go do things together.



It was a long and tiring flight, but it was amazing to land in another country. It seemed a lot like home at first, because airports were all quite similar, but then she heard a lot of people talking a language she didn't understand. When they got their bags and went to the taxi, all the signs were in Korean. It was interesting, but weird.

At the hotel, she immediately flopped on the bed and turned on the TV. Most of the shows were in Korean, but there were a few English shows that had been translated into Korean. She couldn't read their language as it played across the screen. Their shows were very different!

While her father was at work, she ordered room service on the TV using the remote control. She didn't know the names of the foods, but they had pictures. She ate something called Kimbap, which was a little like sushi rolls. It wasn't bad. It was fun to eat with chopsticks.

After work, her father took her on a tour of a palace. It was like a castle, with walls and guards and gardens. It was like nothing she'd ever seen before. They didn't have places like that back home! It was so fascinating. She could imagine living there hundreds of years ago.

Then next day, the other businessman's daughter, who was a fifteen year-old named Mandi, came to say hello. She was a nice girl, and they quickly became friends. Together, they took some of the money they had been given by their parents and went to a store near the hotel. It was strange buying things that had such huge prices, like 15,000 Won. That was only like 12 dollars, though. Shopping was fun in every country.



Together, they toured more with their fathers when they weren't at work. They saw a temple, rode a train, went to a small island, saw people dressed in old-fashioned costumes, and ate lots of different foods. Things were very different, and while she didn't like everything, she did enjoy trying new things.

Eventually, it was time to go home. Susan was sad to go, and sadder still to have to part ways with her new friend, Mandi. They exchanged phone numbers and said goodbye to each other, and to the country of Korea.

Susan wondered what country she'd visit next. She already had a few ideas!

Visiting Korea

Use the information in the story to answer the questions below.

1. What is Susan doing for the first time?
 - A. visiting her grandmother's new house
 - B. going to another country
 - C. eating at a Chinese restaurant
 - D. playing hockey

2. Who is Susan going to Korea with?
 - A. her father
 - B. her mother
 - C. her uncle
 - D. her friend

3. Which of these does Susan NOT do in Korea?
 - A. go to a store
 - B. eat new foods
 - C. go to a castle
 - D. visit a fish market

4. Who is Mandi?
 - A. Susan's mother
 - B. A Korean girl
 - C. another businessman's daughter that Susan makes friends with
 - D. A mean girl

5. How does Susan feel about traveling to other countries in the end?
 - A. she wants to see more places now
 - B. she wants to go home
 - C. she didn't enjoy it much
 - D. it was different, but okay

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Korean New Year

Su Min was getting ready for New Years! It was February. What? Yes, February. It wasn't just any New Year's celebration; it was Korean New Year. In Korea, China, Japan, and several other Asian countries, they celebrate not only the New Year on December 31st and January 1st, but also another one, usually in late January to Mid-February.



Long ago, people in some countries had a different calendar. They looked up at the skies and based their years on the cycles of the moon, instead of the sun, like ours. This is a lunar calendar. Each year, the Lunar New Year is celebrated as the beginning of a new year in that calendar. In Korea, this means everyone gets a year older on that calendar's first day, which might be in February or January.

It must have been hard to keep track of birthdays long ago, so a huge celebration for making it through the year was in order for everyone! These days, everyone has cell phones and calendars to keep track of birthdays, but they still remember their Lunar New Year. It sure is a different way to think about things, isn't it?



Just how do they celebrate the Lunar New Year? Well, they eat long foods like noodles, which symbolize long life. They eat round foods like grapes and rice cakes, which symbolize money. Then, they give thanks to their ancestors, too. They set up a table for their relatives that have passed away, putting out special favorite dishes and beverages. Everyone prays or takes a moment of silence to remember those who came before them. It is a happy time, though, because families have gathered from all over to be together, much like our Christmas or Thanksgiving.

Next year, what New Year's celebration will you participate in? Will you use the Solar New Year, like most of us, or will you try the Lunar New Year? You can always do both!



Korean New Year

Use the information in the story to answer the questions below.

1. What holiday was Su Min getting ready for?
 - A. Christmas
 - B. Halloween
 - C. Korean New Year
 - D. Thanksgiving

2. What nationality is Su Min?
 - A. Korean
 - B. Chinese
 - C. Mongolian
 - D. Japanese

3. What months is the Lunar New Year usually in?
 - A. December and January
 - B. January and February
 - C. February and March
 - D. December and February

4. What two types of foods do people usually eat for Korean New Year?
 - A. square and soggy
 - B. round and short
 - C. round and long
 - D. long and short

5. Why do people set up a table of food for relatives who have passed away?
 - A. Ghosts get hungry, too.
 - B. To remember their ancestors
 - C. To waste food
 - D. There is no real reason.

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Kimbab

Mi Jin was making kimbap for a picnic with her friends. Kimbab was one of her favorite foods, and there were so many ways to make it. Kimbab literally meant seaweed and rice, but there was more to it than that, even if those were the two main ingredients.

Kimbap started with a sheet of roasted, salted seaweed a little more than half the size of a sheet of writing paper. Fresh rice, not too warm and not too cold, was spread thin across the sheet. Then the toppings were added. Once the toppings were carefully arranged, the whole thing had to be rolled up with a bamboo mat, pressed into a nice cylinder shape, and then sliced into pieces like sushi. It was great fresh, but it also traveled pretty well in lunches or for picnics. In some ways, it was a little like making a burrito, wrapping rice and meats and vegetables in a wrapper.

Toppings usually consisted of thin fried egg, like in an omelet, and a meat or two. This might be canned tuna, sliced ham, hamburger, imitation crab, fried pork cutlet, or just about any meat you really wanted. Vegetables were added as well. That was usually crunchy cucumbers, sautéed shaved carrots, some pickled radish, maybe spinach, and a variety of other healthy roots and vegetables. If tuna was added, usually minty sesame leaves were added, too. Sliced hot peppers were occasionally added to make things interesting. Sauces were used sparingly, but mayonnaise went well with tuna, or some hot pepper paste added a kick to other toppings, too.

There were other shapes of kimbap, too. In American convenience stores, you might find hot dogs and hamburgers in the cooler section next to the drinks. In Korea, you usually found kimbap. Sometimes it was long rolls of kimbap, but sometimes it was triangle-shaped, too. These were a bit like Japanese onigiri, with just a small piece of seaweed covering a packed triangle of rice that had meat and vegetable fillings in the middle.

Kimbap was a great food, with rice, meats, and vegetables in every bite. It was a balanced, whole meal, like a sandwich can be. Even better, people who are scared of sushi and sashimi, because they contain raw or cured meats and fish, don't have to worry. Kimbab as a rule is almost always completely cooked ingredients, other than a few vegetables like cucumbers that don't need to be cooked.

Try it some time! Mi Jin and her friends certainly like it.



Kimbap

Use the information in the story to answer the questions below.

1. Why is Mi Jin making kimbap?
 - A. for a picnic
 - B. for a party
 - C. for her sick grandma
 - D. for breakfast

2. According to the story, kimbap is most similar to which of these?
 - A. hot dogs
 - B. sandwiches
 - C. burritos
 - D. cookies

3. Which of these is not one of the meats that you might find in kimbap?
 - A. pork cutlet
 - B. ham
 - C. hamburger
 - D. steak

4. TRUE OR FALSE: Kimbap is considered junk food.
 - A. TRUE
 - B. FALSE

5. Which of these vegetables is not mentioned in the story as a topping for kimbap?
 - A. carrots
 - B. sesame leaves
 - C. tomato
 - D. spinach

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Korean BBQ

Su Yeon was having Korean Barbecue at a restaurant. It was different from regular barbecue that you might know. It wasn't just ribs, burgers, chicken, and sausages. It was quite different, really.

To start with, the meat wasn't cooked when they brought it out to the table. It was long strips of marinated pork in a sweet and savory sauce. The table wasn't even the same. It had a big hole in the middle of the table where they put a pot of flaming hot coals. It was like when you roast hot dogs over a campfire after the fire burns down. They put a grill over the top of it, and pulled a big metal vacuum hose down from the ceiling. Those hose pulled more air over the coals and heated them up more, as well as sucking away the smoke.

Mom and Dad handled the tongs and scissors. He placed the strips of meat on the hot grill and mom cut them into smaller pieces. Immediately, the smells of roasting meat and seasonings filled everyone's noses. If they weren't hungry before, they were now.

Another difference in Korean Barbecue was the side dishes. If you had steak or ribs or brisket in an American style BBQ restaurant, you might get corn, potatoes, French fries, or coleslaw. Here, there were tons of side dishes. There was an apple-vegetable salad in cream sauce, a type of coleslaw, some spicy pickled vegetables, kimchi, and about a dozen things all-in-all. Whenever they ran out, you could ask for more for free!

When the meat was browned and cooked, it was cut down a bit more, to make nice bite-sized pieces. Using chopsticks, everyone grabbed pieces, but they didn't eat it right away. Instead, they took leaves of lettuce from the dish, thin slices of raw garlic, some marinated onions, and some other sauces if they wanted, and wrapped the meat up into a ball. Each bite was with vegetables. All together it tasted so wonderful! There was sweetness, spiciness, crunchiness, chewiness, and even a bit of savoriness.

They continued to eat, putting on fresh meat to replace what they ate. Each morsel disappeared quickly with a family of four. They ate until they were all stuffed, washing it down with tea and soda. It was a great meal.

Don't you want to try Korean Barbecue now?



Korean BBQ

Use the information in the story to answer the questions below.

1. What kind of restaurant is Su Yeon at?
 - A. Korean
 - B. Japanese
 - C. Chinese
 - D. Mongolian

2. What is different about Korean BBQ restaurant tables when compared to American ones?
 - A. They are round.
 - B. They are rectangular.
 - C. They are taller.
 - D. They have a big hole in the middle.

3. What is different about the meat at a Korean BBQ restaurant?
 - A. It's spicier.
 - B. It comes to the table uncooked.
 - C. It is a different animal.
 - D. It's saltier.

4. How is each piece of meat eaten?
 - A. You just eat it plain.
 - B. You only dip it in sauce.
 - C. You wrap it up with lettuce and other stuff.
 - D. You wait until it's blackened to eat.

5. What is not true about Korean BBQ?
 - A. You eat it raw.
 - B. You eat it with slices of garlic.
 - C. You wrap it up in lettuce to eat it.
 - D. You cook it at the table.

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The Princess Disease

Jin Hee was a young Korean girl that suffered from *gong-ju-byung*. It was a terrible disease. It threatened to push away all of her friends, and her family didn't even want to see her. It was a horrible thing that wasted away at one's social life and people's tolerance. Literally, it meant: the princess disease.

Jin Hee, you see, was a bit conceited. She thought she was a bit better looking than her friends and generally most people that she met. It was, as far as she was concerned, a well-known fact that she dressed better, sang better, and danced better than most people in her school, too. She was popular, but she was also disliked, because people were jealous, right?

Call it arrogance, call it conceit, all the students around her called it the *gong-ju-byung*. It was a Korean word. *Gong-ju* means princess, and *byung* means disease. It was a phrase reserved for people who thought they were way better than everyone else, without a real reason. Certainly there are people who are prettier, smarter, nicer, taller, and more fashionable than others, but when you thought that this meant you and most people didn't agree, they would say you had *gong-ju-byung* – unless you were a boy, and then they'd say *wang-ja-byung*, which meant: the prince disease.

So was Jin Hee justified in believing that she was better than everyone else? She was cute, but not amazingly so. Quite a few of the boys were interested in her, and several of the girls wanted to be her. She dressed well, because her family had some money. They were well-to-do without being filthy rich. She sang well, but not quite well enough to get a lead spot on the choir. Of course, they thought this was because the choir coach hated her, since the choir coach had bad skin and a bad haircut, and was jealous of her. Maybe her attitude was the real reason, right?

She was thin and athletic, but she wasn't the strongest, fastest, or even the best at any of their school's events. She also didn't join teams, because it put too much of a restriction on her important time. She ran for class president, but came in third. She, again, thought it was because of the 'haters.' After losing, she pretended she'd just run for fun and it was no big deal, but to her it was a HUGE deal.

Jin Hee also surrounded herself with friends that were less than her in some way. They weren't as pretty, as fashionable, as rich, or something like that, so that she was in some way their superior. This allowed her to be the most important one in their group. She never let them forget it, either.

Jin Hee definitely had the disease. The diagnosis was certain. The treatment was not easy: stop being so mean and get a little humility. Then things would get better for her. However, once someone caught the disease, it was hard to get rid of. Watch out so that you don't catch it!



The Princess Disease

Use the information in the story to answer the questions below.

1. What disease has Jin Hee caught?
 - A. gong-ja-byung
 - B. gong-ju-byung
 - C. wang-ja-byung
 - D. gong-wang-byung

2. TRUE OR FALSE: The disease Jin Hee has is a real one that affects her body and health.
 - A. True
 - B. False

3. Which of these is NOT one of Jin Hee's symptoms?
 - A. She thinks she is better than most people around her.
 - B. She thinks that she isn't the choir lead because the coach hates her.
 - C. She thinks her mom is jealous of her looks and steals her clothes.
 - D. She keeps friends around her that are less than her in some way.

4. What language is *gong-ju-byung* from?
 - A. Japanese
 - B. Chinese
 - C. English
 - D. Korean

5. Which of these words does NOT describe someone with the Princess Disease?
 - A. humble
 - B. conceited
 - C. arrogant
 - D. prideful

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What is Kimchi?

Kimchi is the national food of South Korea. It is a bit of a mystery to people who don't live in the area or don't eat a lot of international foods, though. So what exactly is this food?

Kimchi is basically pickled vegetables. Already, I'm imagining noses turning up. Don't give up yet! I'm sure you have pickles and relish from time to time. This is a bit different. In fact, it's more like sauerkraut, if you know what that is. It is a German pickled cabbage in vinegar. You might have had it on a hot dog or a sausage before. It's tangy and bitter, but good.

Now, take that and make it spicy! Lots of people like spicy food. Some kimchi is very spicy, some is very mild, and some is not spicy at all. The classic cabbage kimchi that everyone seems to think of as "real kimchi" is usually somewhat spicy. It is cabbage that has been soaked in salt, hot pepper flakes, ground garlic, ground ginger, maybe some fish sauce, and a few other things like chopped radishes and some green onions perhaps. It is savory, sweet, spicy, and salty all at once. It's not a meal – it's a side dish.

Kimchi is a way of life, really. Imagine long ago when there were no refrigerators. People everywhere used to dry or smoke meats so they could eat in the winter, but they still needed vegetables, right? Salt was a man's best friend. They salted and canned vegetables, putting them in barrels or jars to keep the vegetables from rotting. Instead of just plain salt, Korean people started adding other seasonings to their vegetables, especially veggies like cabbages, radishes, onions, cucumbers, and that sort. Now, they could eat them all winter long and even in the spring before the new crops came in. Families still get together in the fall to make pots of kimchi for the winter, even if they now have special kimchi refrigerators to keep their kimchi fresh longer.

So, if you ever go to a Korean restaurant, you might order a rice dish, and find a dish of cabbage kimchi next to it. You might see some chopped radishes in sweet and spicy sauce. You might find some pickled onions and garlic, or even some sliced cucumbers pickled in a way that is similar to what we know. These are kimchi, and there are dozens of varieties. They even have kimchi museums!

Now you know a little about Kimchi, the national food of Korea. Go try some! You might even find some on a shelf in a store near you. Remember, it's a side dish, just like the coleslaw next to your fried chicken or the mashed potatoes next to your steak.



What is Kimchi?

Use the information in the story to answer the questions below.

1. What country is Kimchi from?
 - A. Korea
 - B. Japan
 - C. China
 - D. Mongolia

2. Kimchi is basically a kind of what?
 - A. sauce
 - B. pickled vegetable
 - C. coleslaw
 - D. dessert

3. What is different about Kimchi when compared to the pickles we eat?
 - A. It's usually spicier.
 - B. It's made from meat.
 - C. It's only eaten on one day of the year.
 - D. It's fresh instead of canned or put in jars.

4. TRUE OR FALSE: Kimchi is a side dish, not a main meal food?
 - A. TRUE
 - B. FALSE

5. What ingredient might you NOT find in kimchi?
 - A. garlic
 - B. radishes
 - C. salt
 - D. mustard

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The Old Castle

Jacob was visiting the city of Suwon in South Korea. He had heard about a giant fortress there that was a bit of a hike, and he wanted to see it. Hwaseong fortress was only a bus ride away from where he was staying, so he got up early to go see it.

In Korea, the buses are cheap and efficient. They run often, and people don't mind riding them as much as a lot of people do in America. A subway also ran nearby, so he could have taken that, but the bus was a more direct route, and he could sit down. If he rode on the subway, he'd likely have had to stand up the whole way, and he already planned on walking!

His first impression of the fortress was a mixed one. He was dropped off in the middle of the city, a few blocks from the place. Amidst the rush of traffic and modern buildings, it was hard to see more than the roof of a large gate from where he stood. It seemed disappointing – not at all what he expected of a large castle. Yet, as he approached on foot, it quickly grew in size and scope.

It was different than he imagined. He'd expected a towering castle with walls and threatening arrow slits, like you saw in a fantasy movie. Instead, it was like a long snake, wrapping its tail through the city, up hills, and around the area. It seemed to go on forever, surrounding buildings and trees like a pair of giant swooping arms. He took a deep breath, and passed through the large gate.

Once inside, he found some giant steps that seemed not very fun to climb. He powered up them and got to the top of the wall. It was only about 15 or 20 feet up where he climbed, but some parts were much higher. Still, looking down and around he could see how the city had grown around these walls. It was nice that they hadn't torn them down to make way for apartments and other buildings. He started to walk, enjoying the view of the modern on the outside and the old on the inside.

If he thought it was an easy walk, he had something to learn. The whole track around was nearly four miles. It was unbelievable to think of all the manpower it must have taken to building this snaking set of walls, towers, and gates that wrapped around the hills and even crossed a river. He tried to imagine people two or three hundred years ago carrying wheelbarrows of rocks and dirt, lifting heavy blocks, and sweating to make this place.

He continued to walk, feeling like a sentry guard from long ago. He saw the secret gates hidden in the walls. He saw small towers and gun turrets, where soldiers would have held off attackers. There were pavilions and towers where soldiers must have gathered. A giant drum and a bell must have signaled important things to the people within the walls and those guarding them. The floodgates near one of the gates were guarded waterways, and there were small settlements of old buildings where kings, princes, diplomats, and important nobility once lived.

It was a great experience, looking around. It was a great workout, too! Jacob loved seeing Hwaseong Fortress, and looked forward to exploring more of Korea's past by visiting castles, monasteries, palaces, and temples.



The Old Castle

Use the information in the story to answer the questions below.

1. What is Jacob visiting?
 - A. a fortress
 - B. a palace
 - C. a monastery
 - D. a temple

2. TRUE OR FALSE: Jacob was a bit disappointed when he first arrived.
 - A. True
 - B. False

3. What is one way the fortress surprised Jacob?
 - A. It was much older than he thought.
 - B. It was much smaller than he thought.
 - C. The wall was a lot longer than expected.
 - D. It was huge and tall and scary.

4. How does Jacob feel as he walks the walls?
 - A. Tired, bored, and a little bit thirsty...
 - B. He imagines what it would be like to build them or to be a guard long ago.
 - C. He imagines what it must have been like to be an attacker trying to get over the walls.
 - D. He feels hot and sweaty.

5. Which of these is NOT one of the places that Jacob wants to visit next?
 - A. a palace
 - B. a palace
 - C. a monastery
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Hangul



In South Korea, students do not have to learn their ABC's unless they are learning a foreign language. Instead, they learn their own alphabet, which is called Hangul (pronounced han-gool with a short a) .

Hangul is an interesting story. You see, Korea is a very old country, thousands of years old in fact. For a long time, people spoke the language without being able to read or write it. There *was* no real way to write it. Then, because of Korea's early ties with China, the educated and the religious began to use Chinese writing. If you have ever seen Chinese writing, it is VERY complex. It requires learning thousands of symbols, each of which is way more complicated than even English cursive writing. Who had time to learn all of that when you were farming, hunting, fishing, or working all day? Usually only the rich could be educated to write then, and most Koreans couldn't read or write. That is, until their great King Sejong came along.

He invented the alphabet in the 1440's, about 50 years before Columbus set sail. He began putting symbols and rules to the language's written form. Although Korean was once only a spoken language, it now had an alphabet of its own, so people could learn to read and write. What's more, the symbols were actually quite simple! Instead of having symbols that basically meant words, which required a lot of them to be learned, he developed a series of consonants and vowels, which represented phonemes. It's actually not that different from our alphabet, once you get the hang of it.

There are only a few consonants. Several of them make different sounds, depending on where they are in a syllable. This seems strange at first, until you remember that our G can make a G or a J sound, and our C can make a K or an S sound. Like English, they also have blends.

Consonants:			
ㅂ = B or P	ㅃ = B or P (Strong)	ㅍ = P	
ㄷ = D or T	ㄸ = D or T (Strong)	ㅌ = T	
ㄱ = G or K	ㄲ = G or K (Strong)	ㅋ = K	
ㅅ = Sh or S	ㅆ = Sh or S (Strong)	ㅈ = J	ㅊ = Ch
ㄴ = N	ㅇ = M	ㄹ = R or L	
ㅇ = -ng or nothing	ㅎ = H		
Consonant Blends:			
ㄱㅅ gs, ㄴㅈ nj, ㄴㅎ nh, ㄹㅇ lg, ㄹㅁ lm, ㄹㅂ lb, ㄹㅅ ls, ㄹㅇ lt, ㄹㅍ lp, ㄹㅎ lh, ㅂㅅ bs			

Vowels are interesting, too, because most of them make a slightly different sound if you combine two vowels. It's sort of a special compound vowel. Usually the extra sound makes a W or a Y sound. There are several combinations.

Vowels and Compound Vowels:		
ㅏ = aw	ㅑ = yaw (like yaw)	
ㅓ = a (like ah)	ㅕ = ya (like yah)	
ㅗ = o (long o)	ㅛ = yo (long o)	
ㅜ = oo (like zoo)	ㅠ = yoo	
ㅓ = e (long e)	ㅡ + ㅣ = ㅟ ui	
ㅡ = eu (like hook)		
ㅓ + ㅣ = ㅞ = a (like ay)	ㅞ + ㅡ = ㅞㅓ yay (yay-ee)	
ㅓ + ㅓ = ㅞ = e (like eh)	ㅞ + ㅡ = ㅞㅓ ye (yeh)	
ㅗ + ㅓ = ㅜㅓ wa	ㅓ = ay	ㅗ + ㅞ = ㅜㅞ way
ㅜ + ㅓ = ㅜㅓ we	ㅜ + ㅞ = ㅜㅞ weh	ㅜ + ㅓ = ㅜㅓ wo

Another way that Korean varies from English is how it's written. We write from left to right, spelling each sound as they go in a word. Although they did write top to bottom originally, today they write left to right, just like English. However, they write by making syllables and stacking them into words. Imagine if you had to write cookbook as cook-book, or constitution as con-sti-tu-tion. They also have something called a badchim, which is sort of like a bottom character. We never write our letters on top of each other. To write their syllables, they stack them up, and there are only a couple ways to do them: consonant vowel, or consonant-vowel-consonant. Let's look at a quick example, so you can see how letters are stacked in syllables:

한글 = Hanguk			
한	HA	글	G
	N		EU
			L



Another example to look at is my name, made phonetically in Korean. Notice how the syllables are different than in English, where my name would only be two syllables. They don't have a way to do the D+R+EW sound in one syllable, so it has to be broken into two. Also note that the circle character is silent in the first syllable of my name written in Korean.

앤드 루= Anduru (Andrew)					
앤	A	드	D	루	R
	N		EU		OO

This is a quick look at the modern version of Hangul. It has changed a little since being made, but really not as much as English has in the same time period. Today, people still celebrate their alphabet on Hangul Day, and King Sejong is depicted on Korean currency and his life is celebrated during the year.

Korea is a country of over 50 million people, and there are many Koreans living around the world. Their culture, their companies, and their brands are spreading. Some day you might want to learn another language. How about Korean? It is pretty fun and different, isn't it?



Hangul

Use the information in the story to answer the questions below.

1. When did Hangul get created?
 - A. In the 1400s
 - B. In the 1500s
 - C. In the 1600s
 - D. In the 1700s
2. What kind of person created Hangul?
 - A. A farmer
 - B. A monk
 - C. A King
 - D. An ambassador
3. Which of these was not a problem with using Chinese characters for Korean?
 - A. There were so many to learn!
 - B. Only the rich and powerful had time to learn.
 - C. Regular people didn't have a good chance to learn them.
 - D. They looked prettier.
4. TRUE OR FALSE: There are over 50 million Koreans in the world.
 - A. True
 - B. False
5. TRUE OR FALSE: Korean is written in syllables instead of by word like English.
 - A. True
 - B. False

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Harvest Festival

South Korea has several major holidays, much like we do. However, lots of them are different from ours. Let's take a look at the similarities and differences between their holidays and America's, focusing especially on their version of Thanksgiving or a Harvest Festival.



They do celebrate Christmas, but it's a lot lower key. It's a time to hang out with friends and families and exchange small gifts – not the huge pile of stuff under the tree and food overload that it is with us! Easter and Halloween are pretty much unknown over there. They do celebrate New Year's Eve and Day, but it is often on a different calendar, so it might be in January or February. They have their own Independence Day, but it is not on July 4th obviously. They do a Buddha's Birthday instead of some of our President's Day or other religious holidays we might find familiar. Koreans were traditionally Buddhist, after all. They also have a sort of Thanksgiving, which I want to explain.

Korean Harvest Festival or ChuSeok, as it is called, is similar to our Thanksgiving, but also very different. It is at the beginning of fall, so usually September. It is earlier than ours, which is at the end of November. They give thanks for a big harvest, but they didn't have pilgrims and Indians in their history. Instead, they give thanks to their ancestors. We might go around the table and say what we are thankful for, but they take it one step further! They even prepare the favorite foods of their parents and grandparents who have passed on. The foods are put on a table and offered with prayers to those who came before them. It is a show of respect for one's elders and for one's ancestors.

They don't really eat Turkey for thanksgiving either. Rice is in every Korean meal, and several house favorite foods will be included. ChapChae, which is a type of stir-fried Korean noodle served with vegetables and meat, is usually served. There might be some sliced pork, fried dumplings, fresh fruit like apples and pears, and grilled fish, too. It really depends on what the family likes to eat. Very few families would be without SonPyeon, which is a rice cake often filled with sweet bean paste. It's a traditional dessert, along with other kinds of rice cakes, which are chewy and delicious.





ChuSeok is also a time to wear Korean traditional clothing, called HanBok. The men will wear colorful trousers and light-colored long-sleeved shirts. A vest usually goes over them. Women and girls will wear large skirts, often red in color, and striped vests with many colors. Not everyone still wears these traditional clothes, but they are very pretty to see, and people like to see people in traditional clothes. It is not weird or strange, as we might find it if people walked around dressed as pilgrims for the day.

Korean Thanksgiving sure is different from ours, isn't it! Would you like to participate in the festivities? Wouldn't it be neat to partake of this holiday and others like it from around the world? Talk about your favorite holidays with friends.

Harvest Festival

Use the information in the story to answer the questions below.

1. What holiday in America is ChuSeok most like?
 - A. Christmas
 - B. Easter
 - C. Thansksgiving
 - D. New Year's

2. What is the name for the Korean Rice Cake Dessert?
 - A. SonPyeon
 - B. ChapChae
 - C. HanBok
 - D. ChuSeok

3. What is the name for Korean traditional clothing?
 - A. SonPyeon
 - B. ChapChae
 - C. HanBok
 - D. ChuSeok

4. TRUE OR FALSE: Koreans eat Turkey on the day of their Harvest Festival.
 - A. True
 - B. False

5. TRUE OR FALSE: Koreans have their Harvest Festival in December.
 - A. True
 - B. False

Harvest Festival

Use the information in the story to answer the questions below.

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 - A. Christmas
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