

RECOMMENDED HISTORY READINGS

(texts provided)

- Schirokauer, Conrad, and Donald Clark. Chapters 3, 9 (section 2), 12 (section 2), 14 (section 3), and 18 (section 1) in *Modern East Asia: A Brief History*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2008.

OTHER RECOMMENDED HISTORY BOOKS OF INTEREST

(texts not provided)

- Eckert, Carter J., Ki-baik Lee, Young Ick Lew, Michael Robinson, and Edward W. Wagner. *Korea Old and New: A History*. Seoul, Korea: Ilchokak, Publishers, 1990.
- Ch'oe, Yong-ho, Peter H. Lee, and Wm. Theodore de Bary, eds. *Sources of Korean Tradition*. Vol. 2, *From the Sixteenth to the Twentieth Centuries*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2000.

KOREAN LITERATURE

Chosŏn Dynasty (1392–1910): Korean Traditions, Confucian Values

The first set of readings presents a survey of vernacular poetry and prose during the Chosŏn dynasty. While the Koreans continued to write in classical Chinese, the creation of han'gŭl, the indigenous script, by King Sejong in the mid-fifteenth century laid the foundations for vernacular literature.

Sijo, a three-line verse form, was the most popular type of poetry during the Chosŏn. The subject matter ranged from politics and philosophy to romance and nature. The poets, likewise, came from a broad spectrum of backgrounds. The following selections, among the most well-known in the traditional corpus, were composed by Yi Pang-wŏn and Chŏng Mong-ju, early Chosŏn political figures; Hwang Chin-i, a kisaeng (courtesan); and Yi Sun-sin, a military hero.

Vernacular prose also proliferated, especially in late Chosŏn. Princess Hyegyŏng's "A Record of Sorrowful Days" is an autobiographical memoir of life at court and a rare example of writing by a Korean woman in pre-modern times. Hŏ Kyun's "The Tale of Hong Kiltong," often claimed as the first Korean novel, tells the adventures of a Robin Hood-like protagonist. "The Song of a Faithful Wife, Ch'unhyang" is Korea's most famous romance.

A common thread that runs through both the poetry and prose is Confucianism. Established as official ideology by the dynastic founders, Confucianism profoundly influenced and shaped politics, society, and culture. The following selections provide examples that reflect the Confucian values, (e.g., loyalty and filial piety), as well as those that challenge them. In spite of Confucian hegemony during the Chosŏn, indigenous customs and ideas (e.g., hereditary aristocracy) persisted, and personal conflicts (e.g., romance) also led to confrontations with prevailing norms.

- [14th c.] "The Sijo Exchange between Yi Pang-wŏn and Chŏng Mong-ju." In *Early Korean Literature: Selections and Introductions*, edited by David McCann. New York: Columbia University, 2000. p. 32.

- [16th c.] HWANG Chin-i. “I will break the back of this long, midwinter night...” and “Jade Green Stream...” In *Early Korean Literature: Selections and Introductions*, edited by David McCann. New York: Columbia University, 2000. p. 56–57.
- [1545-1599] YI Sun-sin. “By moonlight I sit all alone ...” In *The Bamboo Grove: An Introduction to Sijo*, edited and translated by Richard Rutt. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1998. No. 9.
- [1754] Anonymous. “The Song of a Faithful Wife, Ch’unhyang.” In *Virtuous Women: Three Classics Korean Novels*, translated by Richard Rutt and Kim Chong-un. Seoul: Royal Asiatic Society, 1974. p. 250–333.
- [1795] Princess Hyegyŏng [F]. “A Record of Sorrowful Days,” translated by Peter H. Lee. In *Anthology of Korean Literature: From Early Times to the Nineteenth Century*, edited by Peter H. Lee. Honolulu: University Press of Hawai’i, 1981. p. 237–244.
- [1569–1618]* HŎ Kyun. “The Tale of Hong Kiltong,” translated by Marshall R. Pihl. In *Anthology of Korean Literature: From Early Times to the Nineteenth Century*, edited by Peter H. Lee. Honolulu: University Press of Hawai’i, 1981. p. 119–147.

Japanese Occupation Period (1910–1945): “Colonial Modernity”

The annexation of Korea as a Japanese colony in 1910 brought an end to centuries of self-rule and ushered in a humiliating period of foreign subjugation. Korean writers grappled with the issue of colonialism and produced many works that promoted the spirit of national independence. The Japanese occupation period also witnessed another major transition—the birth of modern Korea. Whether it was industrial capitalism or Western-style education, old ways gave way to the new in the first half of the twentieth century. Literature was no exception, as new forms of poetry and prose made their appearance.

The poems of Kim Sowŏl, Han Yong’un, and Yi Sanghwa are anthologized in the Korean canon not only as pioneering works of modern verse but also as literary monuments to nationalism. In what ways do the following selections express the anti-colonial, national spirit of the Koreans under Japanese rule? In what ways are the poems open to other readings?

Nationalism during the Japanese occupation eventually developed into two opposing camps. The so-called “cultural nationalists” advocated a gradual approach toward independence that emphasized education and economic development. In contrast, the radical nationalists, inspired by Marxism, sought immediate liberation through armed struggle and social revolution. Yŏm Sang-sŏp’s “The Rotary Press” and Yi Ki-yŏng’s “A Tale of Rats” are literary representations, respectively, of these competing strains of Korean nationalism. Chu Yo-sŏp’s “Mama and the Boarder,” on the other hand, makes no reference to the political context and instead tells a love story that pits tradition against modernity.

- [1925] KIM Sowŏl. “Azaleas,” translated by David R. McCann. In *The Columbia Anthology of Modern Korean Poetry*, edited by David R. McCann. New York: Columbia University Press, 2004. p. 18–19.

- [1879–1944]* HAN Yong'un. "Your Silence," translated by Sammy Solberg. In *The Columbia Anthology of Modern Korean Poetry*, edited by David R. McCann. New York: Columbia University Press, 2004. p. 27–29.
- [1926] YI Sanghwa. "Will Spring Return to Stolen Fields?" translated by David R. McCann. In *The Columbia Anthology of Modern Korean Poetry*, edited by David R. McCann. New York: Columbia University Press, 2004. p. 24–26.
- [1925] YŎM Sang-sŏp. "The Rotary Press." In *A Ready-Made Life: Early Masters of Modern Korean Fiction*, edited and translated by Kim Chong-un and Bruce Fulton. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1998. p. 32–45.
- [1926] YI Ki-yŏng. "A Tale of Rats." In *A Ready-Made Life: Early Masters of Modern Korean Fiction*, edited and translated by Kim Chong-un and Bruce Fulton. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1998. p. 23–31.
- [1935] CHU Yo-sŏp. "Mama and the Boarder." In *A Ready-Made Life: Early Masters of Modern Korean Fiction*, edited and translated by Kim Chong-un and Bruce Fulton. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1998. p. 89–106.

Contemporary Korea (1945–present): National Division, Democracy, Globalization

The euphoria that followed Korea's liberation from Japanese colonial rule at the end of World War II was short-lived as war and national division soon followed. In the north a totalitarian communist state was established and continues to this day. In the south a succession of dictators eventually gave way to democracy, and the country also emerged as a global economic powerhouse.

Sŏ Chŏng-ju and Ko Ŭn are two of Korea's most prolific poets. Sŏ Chŏng-ju, whose life spanned almost the entire twentieth century, reflected in his vast oeuvre the shifting historical contexts while breaking new ground in imagery and language. Ko Ŭn is the most celebrated poet in Korea today. A former Buddhist monk and political activist, his poetry covers an extraordinary range of subjects and themes, from Zen philosophy to national reunification.

The prose selections below offer examples of literary engagement with various settings in contemporary Korea. Pak Wansŏ's "Winter Outing" explores the tragedy of the Korean War and its personal legacies. Yi Mun-yŏl's Our Twisted Hero can be seen as an allegory that probes the psychology underlying authoritarianism in South Korea. Finally, Kim Yŏng-ha's "Whatever Happened to That Guy Stuck in the Elevator?" is a zany glimpse into the hectic urban life of post-modern Seoul.

- [1915–2000]* SŎ Chŏng-ju. "Self-Portrait," "Winter Sky," and "Autumn 1949," translated by David R. McCann. In *The Columbia Anthology of Modern Korean Poetry*, edited by David R. McCann. New York: Columbia University Press, 2004. p. 96–98, 100–102.
- [1933–]* KO Ŭn. "Impermanence" and "A Slice of Moon," translated by David R. McCann. "Chrysanthemums," translated by Kevin O'Rourke. In *The Columbia Anthology of Modern Korean Poetry*, edited by David R. McCann. New York: Columbia University Press, 2004. p. 182, 184–186, 188–189.

- [1975] PAK Wansŏ. “Winter Outing.” In *Land of Exile: Contemporary Korean Fiction*, translated and edited by Marshall R. Pihl, Bruce Fulton, and Ju-Chan Fulton. Armonk: M.E. Sharpe, 1993. p. 150–164.
- [1987] YI Mun-yŏl. *Our Twisted Hero*. Translated by Kevin O’Rourke. New York: Hyperion, 2001.
- [1999] KIM Yŏng-ha. “Whatever Happened to That Guy Stuck in the Elevator?” In *Photo Shop Murder*, translated by Jason Rhodes. Seoul: Jimoondang, 2003. p. 17–28.

Notes:

- Author’s surnames are in all capitals. Chinese and Korean surnames precede the given name. Japanese naming conventions in the traditional period are somewhat complex. Sometimes an author is referred to by his or her given name, formal title, or nickname. For example, in the case of Murasaki Shikibu, or “Lady Murasaki,” Murasaki is her given name and Shikibu is her title. In modern Japanese names, the surname precedes the given name.
- The date inside the bracket is the year the piece was first published. An asterisk (*) indicates the dates of the author.
- An [F] following the author’s name indicates the author is female.
- All names appear here in *pinyin* romanization.