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# K-Book Trends

offers Korea's highly informative publishing content to those in the global publishing industry.



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TOPIC

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## Books and Book Clubs

Talks Bridged by Books

Organized by Choi Ha-Yeong

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Book clubs are where book lovers naturally gather to read books together and share ideas. As more people share each other's preferences and hobbies, the number of book clubs is also increasing today. Book clubs in Korea receive applications for both

free and paid memberships, and members usually read selected books for a certain period and have regular on and offline meetings. The hosts of book clubs vary from big bookstores and independent bookstores to regional bookstores, publishers, libraries, and individuals.

Below are the stories of three representative book clubs in Korea: Book N Us, Agreeable Bookclub, and Check N Grow. Let's look at the characteristics of each, and what kind of books they recommend.

### **Meet & Talk with Books: Book N Us ([booknus.co.kr](http://booknus.co.kr))**



Logo of Book N Us

#### **Meetings where not people but books are the main topic**

The introduction of Book N Us begins with a catchphrase - “Meet & Talk with Books.” After reading the same book, people gather and share what they felt about the book and ask each other questions related to the story. Book N Us says that on the way, they take away knowledge and experience from the book, and get to share a time of sympathy and understanding by learning from each other through

conversations.

Book N Us runs different book clubs everyday. Book N Us is constantly putting effort into avoiding the priority of the book club from being about "people," and instead put "books" at the center.



A book club meeting of Book N Us

Also, Book N Us is paying extra attention to the joy and usefulness of the meeting itself that goes beyond establishing relationships. While introducing knowledge you can apply to the outside world and creating a fun and bright atmosphere during discussions and debates, the book club is striving to improve the meetings so that they are more helpful. A sense of connection and human relationships are formed naturally later on within Book N Us, which encourages many members to join again. Book N Us is working further to provide fun and helpful book-based meetings.

## Recommendations of Book N Us



*Shoko's Smile, The Reason of Travel, If We Cannot Move at the Speed of Light*

*Shoko's Smile* (Munhakdongne) is a collection of short novels of writer Choi Eun-Young. Book N Us says it is a sorrowful but heartwarming novel that makes readers think about relationships with others as they live with various stories written in a sensitive and comfortable narration.

Book N Us's second recommendation is a travel essay *The Reason of Travel* (Munhakdongne) by writer Kim Young-Ha. This book is filled with the witty self-reflection of the writer based on the experiences he had while traveling throughout his life. The book will make you ask yourself "What is traveling?" from various viewpoints.

Another book Book N Us recommends is the space science fiction short story collection *If We Cannot Move at the Speed of Light* (Hubble), written by writer Kim Cho-Yeop, a former science expert. After reading the book, you will be able to "feel as if you

have physically traveled the universe, and also feel something that emotionally resonates in your mind.”

**Cheerful and Pleasing Book Meetings: Agreeable Bookclub  
([agreeablebook.com](http://agreeablebook.com))**

# AGREABLE BOOKCLUB

Logo of Agreeable Bookclub

**Open conversations through the medium of “books”**

The name “Agreeable” is derived from the French word “agreeable” which means “cheerful and pleasing.” Agreeable was born as a book club where you can have fun and easy discussions about books just like its name, even though the books themselves could be challenging and difficult. The founder of the book club says that she decided to create one after being frustrated by the complex sign-up procedures or early-closed registrations of other book clubs. Reflecting her idea, Agreeable allows readers to join freely to improve the inconvenience she felt as a participant and relies on the values of diversity and autonomy to diversify the scope of book selection.



A meeting at Agreeable Bookclub

Unlike various fixed programs or classes that you need to participate in for a certain number of times, Agreeable suggests diverse types and schedules of meetings which you can apply for any time on the website. An “Open Bookclub”, where you can bring the book you read and introduce it to others in turn was held for the first time as well, upgrading the value of Agreeable. The biggest Open Bookclub was when 100 people had to be divided into sub-groups to have book discussions. Agreeable says that they suggested various types of meetings to readers so that they do not need to be constrained to a certain style, and can have a fun experience in them. There are experts in each field among the book club leaders, but most of the leaders are like a “super fan” of the field of the book that they play the role of a pathfinder that helps others to read the shared book further afterwards. Yet, Agreeable is not pursuing a certain preference in fields such as politics or religion. It is to have

open and free discussions only through the medium of books.

Agreable is now working to create “slow reading book clubs” where those that are uncomfortable participating in such a meeting after reading a book or those that find reading difficult can build a reading habit. So even though it is an offline-based book club, online meetings for reading habits are being held as well. Agreable says that with the help of group leaders that read and interpret books deeply, it will not stop providing good content for meetings to help participants take away more ideas and values shared by others than just thinking to yourself after reading a book.

### Recommendations of Agreable



*Contradictions, A Good Discriminator*

Agreable also chose *If We Cannot Move at the Speed of Light* by writer Kim Cho-Yeop. It is a novel written by a promising writer, and with its heartwarming SF contents, you can share ideas about things that we have been neglecting in our daily life.

Other recommendations were *Contradictions* (Sseuda) by Yang Gui-Ja and *A Good Discriminator* (Changbi) by Kim Ji-Hye. Even though it has been 20 years since *Contradictions* was published, it is often chosen as one of “the best books in life” by many people and has received continuous appreciation. Agreeable explains that “You can feel the story soothing your heart and going beyond the boundary of time.”

Also, Agreeable commented that *A Good Discriminator* is a book where you can see the naked discriminatory perception that you could not notice through real cases; it provides multiple topics for discussions as it implies that such a perception can exist anywhere in life including words or behaviors you thought were good.

**A Book Platform where Books and People Get Together:  
Check N Grow (<https://checkngrow.modoo.at>)**



Logo of Check N Grow

### Saturday Morning Book Meeting: “A good morning at Check N Grow!”

Check N Grow is a neighborhood bookstore opened in Mapo, Seoul, in Autumn last year. After becoming famous for its wide Han River view, more visitors are stopping by. Check N Grow, a book cafe and a bookstore at the same time, provides an opportunity for people to get closer to books by opening various events such as book meetings, lectures, and seminars, not to mention providing a convenient space for reading books. Check N Grow welcomes anyone that finds book reading difficult – it is the goal of the crew to help rookie readers to build up mental fitness.



Interior of Check N Grow and Saturday Morning Book Meeting “A good morning at Check N Grow!”

The most significant characteristic of “A good morning at Check N Grow!”, a book meeting held every Saturday, is that it begins at 7 am. Before the sun has totally risen, participants breathe in the cool morning air and gather at Check N Grow to talk about books. It is good that you can experience “miracle mornings” as you begin the weekend fully when it can be easy to spend the two days idly doing nothing. Check N Grow says that the participants are filled

with passion and will power. They gain energy for self-development and are stimulated by others just by participating in the meeting at 7 am. The Saturday morning book club is divided into two parts: during the first hour, people spend time summarizing the book led by the Check N Grow captain, and during the next hour, people share their ideas about the book and have free discussions.

### Recommendations of Check N Grow



*Rest in 30 Years, Emotionally Born Rich, Emotionally Born Poor*



*Eight, Wind, Water, and Fire*

The first recommended book of Check N Grow is *Rest in 30 Years* (Duranno), which was praised for its simply-written story about psychoanalysis by a well-known psychiatrist in Korea. Check N Grow says that the book helps you to face and recognize your true self and further understand those that broke your heart to ultimately achieve inner peace.

Another recommendation is *Emotionally Born Rich, Emotionally Born Poor* (Hainaim). In Korea, people often use the expressions “born with a silver spoon (born rich) in the mouth” and “born with a plastic spoon (born poor) in the mouth” depending on the economic level of the parents. In the book, the writers call those that are emotionally secure and healthy with high self-esteem as “emotionally born rich”, and those that are not as “emotionally born poor.” They argue that the type of spoon is determined by a stable relationship established with parents during childhood; Check N Grow adds that the book suggests solutions to raise children as emotionally born rich kids.

Check N Grow also recommended *Eight* (Chai Jungwon), a best seller by Lee Ji-Sung. It explains that the book talks about ways to prepare and survive in this era in which AI has begun to replace manpower.

The next recommended book was *Wind, Water, and Fire* (Max Education) which it says is a masterpiece that organizes about 100 books written by Bertrand Arthur William Russell of Korea (the author is a comparative linguist, a historian, and a mathematician). Adding that you can feel as if you are in a time machine while

reading through a lively story so vivid it is like talking with the author, Check N Grow explains that not a single sentence is trivial in the book – everything is like a precious jewel.

Apart from the introduced book clubs, a countless number of book clubs in Korea are reading diverse books and sharing stories together. Even though COVID-19 restricted them from having offline meetings, nothing can stop them – meetings are continuing on Social Media and online platforms. Amidst the busy daily life and social crisis induced by a disease, the passion for reading and talking about books hasn't faded.

SPECIAL PROJECT

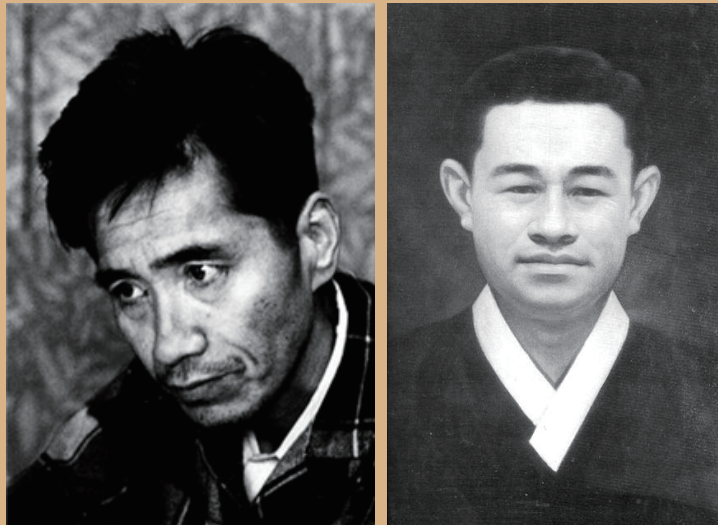
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## Korea's Flagship Literary Awards for Poems

“Kim Su-Young Literary Award” and “Sowol Poetry Award”

Written by Kim Kyung-Soon (Freelance interpreter/translator,  
Export Advisor at Publication Industry Promotion Agency of Korea)

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Poet Kim Su-Young (1921-1968), Sowol Kim Jung-Sik (1902-1934)

### Kim Su-Young Literary Award

Kim Su-Young, a representative poet in Korea who participated in movements with literature, entered the literary world in 1947 when his poem *The Song of Myojeong* was published in a literary

magazine *Art Village (Yesul Burak)*. His passion for art never faded amidst the gloomy reality during the Japanese occupation. With endless efforts to equalize poems with life, the language used in his poems did not draw a line between poetic and daily expressions for the first time in Korea's modern poems. He began as a modernist in the beginning criticizing the modern civilization and urban life; Kim Su-Young's poetic world encountered a drastic change when historical incidents, the fraudulent election on March 15, 1960, and the April 19 Revolution took place. Through a rough but powerful tone, he strongly called for civil participation and social justice while vehemently criticizing the social reality. This gave birth to "acting poetics" where the poems themselves become a social activity. Also, along with his famous poems, his other popular prose *Spit, Poetry!* is praised as an innovative comment that breaks the boundary of existing perceptions of poems.

He passed away in an accident at the age of 48 in 1968. Led by representative writers in Korea including Kim Dong-Ni and Park Mok-Wol, a monument on which a poem is engraved was set up to honor his life and his literary works. Celebrating the 60th anniversary of his birth, Minumsa established the "Kim Su-Young Literary Award" in 1981. The award played a role as a gateway for numerous poets that represent Korea, including Jung Hee-Sung, the 1st winner with the work *Rinsing the Shovel in the Twilight River*, Lee Sung-Bok, the 2nd winner with *When do rolling stones wake up?*, Hwang Ji-Woo, the 3rd winner with *Even Birds Leave the World*, and not to mention *No, It Is Not* (1984) by Kim Kwang-

Kyu (1984), *The Hedgehog Village* (1985) by Choi Seung-Ho, *A Sunny Day* (1986) by Kim Yong-Taek, and *Meditation on Burgers* (1998) by Jang Jeong-Il. Also in the 1990s, *Love of the Sewoon Shopping Mall's Kid* (1996) By Yoo Ha, and *That Place Isn't Far away* (1998) by Na Hui-Duk won the award, while *Natural Walk* (2004) by Hwang In-Sook and *Soft Power* (2005) by Hahm Min-Bok were the winners in the 2000s.

The Kim Su-Young Literary Award receives more than 50 poem submissions written by rookie poets or those whose career is less than 10 years old every year, and the winner is announced in the quarterly journal of Minumsa *World Literature* in winter along with 10 million won of cash prize. The collection of winning works that has been published by major publishers such as Changbi, Munji Books, Segyesa, Munse Books and Minumsa began to be published as the *Poems of Minum* series by Minumsa since 2006.

By opening the gate for the award to professional poets and prospective poets in the future that have not yet made a debut since 2006, the award discovered talented poets including Kim Kyung-Joo with her work *For the Parallax* (2009) and Hwang In-Chan with his work *Washing the Mynah* (2012).



The 7th winner of Kim Su-Young Literary Award, *Meditation on Burgers* (Minumsa), Jang Jung-il  
 The 38th winner of Kim Su-Young Literary Award, *Time to Understand* (Minumsa), Kwon Bak

## Sowol Poetry Award

More famous for his pen name “Sowol (素月; white moon)” than his own name, Kim Jung-Sik is referred to as a representative poet of Korea for his poems expressing the emotions and unique resentment rooted deep inside the minds of Koreans rather than pursuing the Western-style of writing poems during the Japanese occupation. Encouraged by his Korean language teacher and a poet Kim Eok who early appreciated Kim Jung Sik’s talent, he made a debut in 1920 with five poems including *Wanderer’s Spring* in the 5th volume of the magazine *Changjo*. Even though he lived a short life of 33 years, his one and only poem collection *Azaleas* published in 1925 has 127 invaluable poems most loved by Koreans such as *Mother*, *Sister* and *Unforgettable*. He is known as the number one poet in Koreans’ heart as some even say that you are not a true

Korean if you do not know Kim Sowol, as his work *Azaleas* is the number one beloved song of Koreans; Kim Sowol is the best poet picked by poets and a poet whose works were most turned into a song.

Established in 1986 by Literature & Thought to honor and inherit the poetic ideals of Sowl Kim Jung-Sik, the Sowol Poetry Award is presented every year. The first winner in 1987 was Oh Se-Young with his work *A Bowl 1*, followed by *By the Imjin River* (1988) by Jung Ho-Seung, *Painful Regret* (1993) by Hwang Ji-Woo, *Why Don't the People Know* (1997) by Kim Yong-Taek, *Waiting for the Whale* (1998) by Ahn Do-Hyun, *Ripen Apples* (2000) by Kim Hye-Soon, *Autumn of Earth* (2002) by Lee Mun-Jae, and *My Heart Slightly Leans* by Na Tae-Joo in 2019, marking its 30th anniversary.

Centering around literary magazines, the Sowol Poetry Award awards the Main Prize and Special Prize to works published in all types of regular publications. Winners of the Grand Prize and Excellence Prize are published in *Sowol Poetry Award Winners Collection*. Then, as the awarding system was abolished in 2012, winning works have been published in the “Commemorative Poem Collection of Sowol Poetry Award” in the form of a representative poem collection of winners.



Sowel Poetry Award Winners Collection in 2001, 2010, and 2011

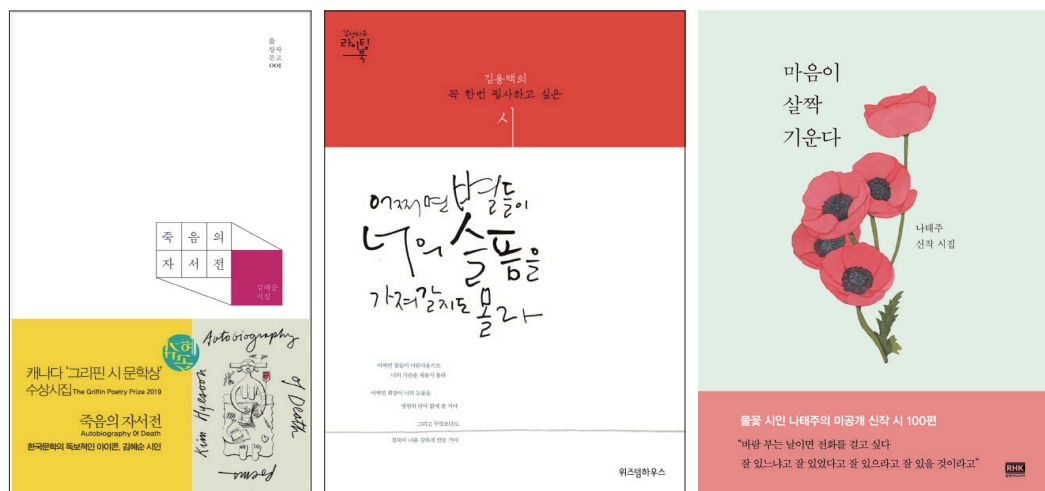
Below are the poets and their works who are actively continuing their career today among the awardees of the Kim Su-Young Literary Award and the Sowel Poetry Award.

There are poets who won both the prizes: Lee Sung-Bok in 1982 and 1989, Hwang Ji-Woo in 1983 and 1993, Kim Yong-Taek in 1986 and 1997, Kim Hye-Seon and Na Hui-Deok in 1998 and 2007. Kim Hye-Soon, in particular, won Kim Su-Young Literary Award in 1997 with her work *Poor Love Machine* and Sowel Poetry Award in 2000 with *Ripen Apples* in 2000. And as the first poet in Korea, her *Autobiography of Death* (Munhaksilhumsil, translated by poet Choi Don-Mi) won the 2019 International Griffin Poetry Prize, which is the most prominent literary award in Canada.

Famous for the *Seomjingang River Series*, Kim Yong-Taek is appraised as a “poet that walks in the footprint of Kim Sowol and Baek Seok by bringing nature into the center of life with temperate language.” His work *A Sunny Day* and *Why Don't the People Know*

won the Kim So-Young Literary Award and the Sowol Poetry Award in 1986 and 1997 respectively, while he published *Maybe The Stars Will Take Your Sorrow* (2015, Wisdom House) in 2015. He also starred as a supporting actor in director Lee Chang-Dong's movie "Poetry" who produced an independent movie "Field (Deul)" in 2001 and won Award for Best Screenplay at Cannes Film Festival in 2010.

Na Tae-Joo's short poem *Grass Flower* (2002) which consists of only three lines – Pretty, with a close look/ Lovely, with a long gaze/ So are you – has been loved nationwide receiving greatest support among the countless number of poem phrases displayed on the giant banner board in Gwanghwamun (the banner board is hung on the Kyobo Bookstore building) for the past 25 years. He has also produced several best-selling poem collections including *I See You Like a Flower* (2015, Jihye), *With You, Life is a Journey* (2019, Yolimwon), and *My Heart Slightly Leans* (2019, Changbi).



*Autobiography of Death, Maybe The Stars Will Take Your Sorrow, My Heart Slightly Leans*

## EXPORT CASE

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# Korean Children, Young People's Literature

Still, we grow up reading books

Written by Joseph Lee (President of KL Management)

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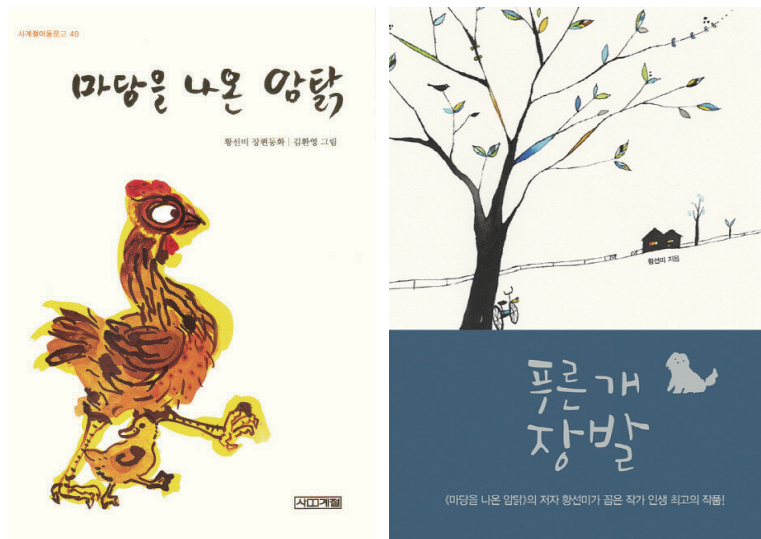
The translation publication rights of *Almond* (Changbi), a full-length novel written by Sohn Won-Pyung have been sold to 14 countries across the world including the Americas and Europe

(the US, France, Italy, Spain, Greece), Asia (Japan, China, Taiwan, Thailand, Indonesia, Vietnam), Mexico, and Israel. The thing we need to pay attention to next is the reaction of readers in English speaking countries. The book *Almond* is set to be published on May 5th in the US. After its publication in Japan in 2019, it has been receiving positive comments from the local readers, and its popularity is confirmed by its 3rd printing only in a short period of time. Categorized as Young Adult Literature, the book features a special coming-of-age story of a boy that cannot feel emotions. It is a best seller in Korea with 400 thousand copies sold between its publication in 2017 and March 2020. It is also a wake-up call for the “zero-sympathy” society where people became indifferent to other’s feelings, and it has been commented that the storyline in which the characters build relationships with one another and grow up is magnificent. Writer Sohn Won-Pyung won the 10th Changbi Prize for Young Adult Fiction.

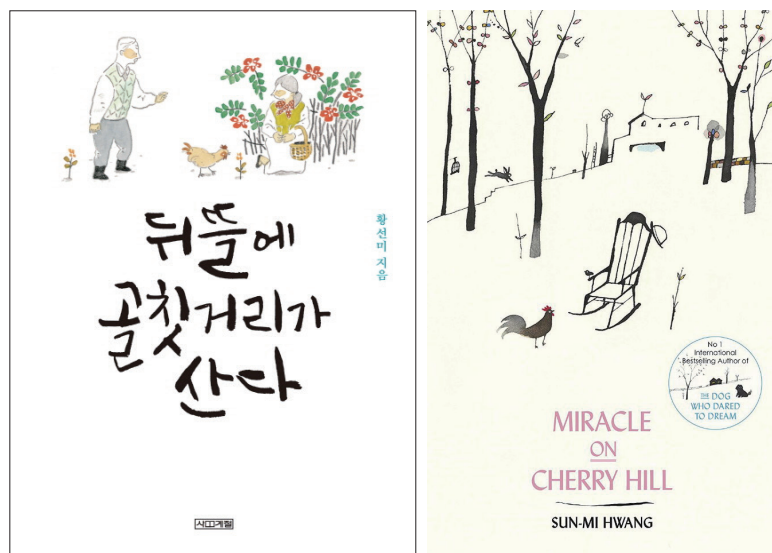


Korean, Spanish, and Japanese covers of *Almond*

The literary works of Hwang Sun-Mi have been translated and published in 29 countries until today including those published by Penguin Books in the US in 2013. One example is *The Hen Who Dreamed She Could Fly* (Sakyejul), described by some as the Korean version of *Charlotte's Web*. More than 2 million copies were sold in Korea alone, and it made its way to the list of best sellers in 2014 in Britain which was a first for Korean literature. The interesting thing is that while the book was published as a children's book in Korea, most of the western countries, including the US and Britain, targeted adult readers. This phenomenon can be understood that while having a unique and clear main idea like a fable, it features the universal life of humans and philosophical elements that enable more diverse age groups to enjoy the book. It was the first book written by a Korean author to be chosen as the "Book of the Year" for children's books in Poland in 2012. Other works of writer Hwang Sun-Mi were exported too; steadily loved by local readers, *The Dog Who Dared To Dream* (Imaju Books) was translated and published in Europe and Asia, while *Miracle on Cherry Hill* (Sakyejul) did the same in Britain in July 2019.



*The Hen Who Dreamed She Could Fly, The Dog Who Dared To Dream*



Korean and British covers of *Miracle on Cherry Hill*

*One Day I Died* (Baram Books) by Lee Kyung-Hye is also notable. This book was translated and published in various countries, including France, Thailand, Taiwan, and Vietnam. The book has become one of the representative books of Korea's Young Adult Literature with more than 300 thousand copies sold since its domestic publication in 2004. It entered the Thai market in 2019,

and only in 3 months, it underwent a 3rd printing. The story begins as Yumi, a ninth-grader, gets to read the diary of Jaejun who died in a motorbike accident. Reading through the diary that begins with the sentence, “One day I died. What would be the meaning of my death?”, she recalls the good memories she had with him. Through the lens of an ordinary middle school student’s life filled with one-sided love, school grades, after school classes, and teachers, the realistic conflict and division of teenagers, families, and schools across the world are vividly described. This book is expected to reach more countries in the future and meet more readers.



Korean and Thai covers of *One Day I Died*

## BOOK TRIP

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# The future of bookstores seen in Gyeongju

A City of Ancient Secrets

Written by Hwang Jin-Ah

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For about 1,000 years from 57 B.C. to 935 B.C., Gyeongju was the capital of the ancient kingdom Silla; it is a city of history and culture treasuring ancient heritage. Royal Tombs - where the tombs of ancient kings are gathered, Cheomseongdae Observatory

- the best observatory in the Eastern world built with 365 stones, Bulguksa Temple and Seokguram - world cultural heritages, and the Underwater Tomb of King Munmu – where the king was buried underwater and urged to protect the kingdom from the afterlife as a dragon, are all located in Gyeongju. Gyeongju, the treasure chest of mysterious secrets in history has been a popular tourist destination for a long time.

The first thing that comes to your eyes as you step into the downtown of Gyeongju is the giant tomb standing among low-roof houses. It is rare to see such a heritage site in the middle of downtown; in recent years this area was named “Hwanglidangil” with cafes, bookstores, and restaurants, invigorating the town with unique scenery.



Daereungwon Ancient Tombs and Hwanglidangil ©Gyeongju-si



Cheomseongdae Observatory, Seokguram, and night view of Bulguksa Temple ©Gyeongju-si

Hwanglidangil is right next to the giant tomb, and small but tidy stores built in the 1960s and 70s stand closely together. There are two bookstores where tourists stop over for longer: Sosomilmil and EoseoEoseo (quick-quick).

### **A pretty picture book you want to give to your lover**

The name “Sosomilmil” means “looser where it is loose, denser where it is dense.” Sosomilmil is a picture book-based bookstore run by a couple – easygoing “Soso” Ji-Hye and meticulous “Milmil” Gu Seo-Bo.

You can meet books selected by editor Ji-Hye and Illustrator Gu Seo-Bo, picture postcards the couple made, and drawing notes in

Sosomilmil. The book *Sosomilmil Walk with Pictures of Gyeongju*, elaborately made by the couple, is composed of 50 pictures drawn with a pencil and short paragraphs; it is a unique present of Sosomilmil that wishes Gyeongju to be cherished for good.



Interior and exterior of Sosomilmil

Sosomilmil irregularly runs not only bookstore tour programs but also picture book nights where you can look deeper inside the book per field, DIY picture books, book review classes, and meet & greet with writers. Ji-Hye wants Sosomilmil to be a bookstore that has a story, a sustainable bookstore, and a bookstore you want to visit again, saying “I believe that Sosomilmil can become a sustainable bookstore if we do things we want to do in our unique way. Along the way, just as the bookstore gets old, pictures will pile up, and writings will gather together, creating our own story.”



Ji-Hye and Goo Seo-Bo, and their *Sosomilmil Walk with Pictures of Gyeongju*

### Short Interview with Sosomilmil

**What are the exclusive things you can only find in Sosomilmil?**

Sosomilmil has “Sosomilmil’s Collection.” Well, usually people call this kind of book a sample book, but then it would give the readers an idea that they can treat the book without care. So we named it “Sosomilmil’s Collection” after thinking over it for a long time to imply that the book is the bookstore’s asset, owned by us.

**What do the visitors say about Sosomilmil?**

As Gyeongju is a tourist destination, guests in diverse age groups come. When they look at the picture books inside, they think of buying one for their kids, lover, niece, nephew, and granddaughters and sons. When we hear visitors’ conversations about their loved ones, we feel the greatest as the bookkeeper.

### What is the charming point of Gyeongju?

Gyeongju is a city of recharge. Even though you visit the same place, again and again, it feels like a whole new place the next time, and you can enjoy looking at the sky so often as there are no tall buildings. The scenery with tile-roofed houses is pleasant and elegant. You can walk in between ancient tombs or go to the East Sea. So you can regain vitality after being exhausted in your daily life here in Gyeongju.

### Book Prescription Available: a delicately selected book collection

In a place not so far from Sosomilmil, you can find EoseoEoseo, a bookstore that mainly focuses on poems, novels, and essays. While it seems to be proper to call it a select shop rather than a bookstore, you can easily find the traces of hard work of bookkeeper Yang Sang-Gyu who particularly puts effort into book displays and the interior of EoseoEoseo to shed the image of an ordinary bookstore. This is why many people visit the bookstore with curiosity even though they do not find books interesting as anyone would go to a famous landmark in the region, and buy a book as a souvenir.

The unique point about EoseoEoseo is that all the books sold are the ones bookkeeper Yang Sang-Gyu has read until now. As the books reflect the taste of their owner, it feels like peeking at a

delicately chosen book collection – no wonder why many visitors ask him for a recommendation. But, to choose just the right book for the guest even though it may be only a single book, he carries out a short conversation with him/her and recommends a book of his/her taste and preference.



Interior and exterior of EoseoEoseo

Currently, the books sold are mainly poems and novels, but as the bookkeeper is reading books in the fields of humanities, science, and art by running a reading club, the shelves are expected to become more colorful in the future. If you are visiting Gyeongju, how about a book prescription just right for you?



Yang Sang-Gyu, book prescription envelopes

### Short Interview with EoseoEoseo

What are the exclusive things you can only find in EoseoEoseo?

To help online buyers to find interest, I write the name and date on the book prescription envelop when a visitor picks one. There are even people who buy books to have this. Also, I give out one bookmark per book purchased, and display stamps in the bookstore to let visitors make their own bookmarks.

### What do the visitors say about EoseoEoseo?

Visitors who did not know about EoseoEoseo are bewildered when I ask their names at the counter, but looking at the books put inside the prescription envelop, they turn so happy. And naturally, they get to buy books not only for themselves but also for gifts. Now many people come in groups and recommend a book to each other.

### Is there a tourist site you recommend in Gyeongju?

I recommend my favorite Hwangnyongsaji (Hwangnyongsa Temple Site). When Silla was in trouble, this huge wooden temple was built to overcome the crisis. Now there are only traces after a fire burnt it down. When I think of the temple that would have had solemnly kept the area, it makes my heart heavy. It is also good to meditate while sitting there, enjoying the sunshine and wind.

## KOREAN PUBLISHERS

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### BIR

**A pond of growth: spreading its wings toward the broader world**

Organized by Choi Hyo-Joon

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Logo of BIR

If there is a place where a child must stop by before becoming a grown-up, where would it be? Would it be the world of smartphones that are already rooted deep inside our life? Or, would it be the world of digital screens? If these two worlds are not the

answer you are looking for, then how about the world of books, even though it feels a bit outdated? BIR hopes children stop by the pond of books where their imagination spreads its wings. Let's take a deeper look at the hidden world of BIR – ceaselessly improving the quality of the pond.

**It is the 26th anniversary of BIR Publishing Co., Ltd. Please introduce BIR to the readers overseas.**

Established in 1994, BIR has been a publisher specializing in books for children and teenagers by publishing books from children's stories and teen novels to information-providing non-fiction books. Readers often get curious about the meaning of the name BIR. In Chinese characters, Biryongso (BIR, 飛龍沼) means "a pond where dragons soar into the sky." There is at least one pond in rural villages in Korea. And our ancestors would call the pond "Biryongso." That is where we got our name from.

BIR is also a children's book affiliate of Minumsa. The hometown of president Maeng-Ho Park of Minumsa is Boeun, Chungbuk, and there is actually a pond named "Biryongso." We expanded its dictionary meaning of "a pond where dragons soar into the sky" into "a pond of growth where imagination spreads its wings" adding the company's value. In short, we reflected our desire in the name to be "a pond of growth" for children who shall stop by at least once before they reach into the greater world. We shortened the brand name to "BIR" in English.

Just as the meaning of the name Biryongso implies, BIR does not lean in to the educational effect of books and has been producing books that can wholly understand and show the minds of children, which young readers can enjoy flipping through the pages of. We try to clearly differentiate them from books for adults to let children have an interest in them by striving to present books in which pictures and paragraphs of various content and design are mixed in harmony.

**BIR has multiple “first in Korea” titles. And various Literary Awards catch our eyes. How were the Awards established, and how are you organizing them today?**

BIR desires to entertain and engage with children readers. Even though books may look like a little bit outdated media compared to various video-based media today, it has been publication that always presented fresh and diverse contents to the world as a cultural channel. If we just look at movies, musicals, and animations that are based on book titles, we can see the absolute world of imagination that books possess. To be in tune with the world with such contents, BIR is holding various types of literary awards or contests, aspiring to form various channels. Discovering new writers, stories, and pictures through literary contests is the core pillar of BIR.

The contest is open for a certain period every year, and by carrying out active discussions with the judging panel composed of experts

from various fields, we select contents that can be produced as books. Also, going beyond merely choosing a “good” work, we continuously mull over during the process of editing, designing, and producing as to how the work can be presented to the readers as a complete physical medium. In other words, it does not end as a “contest”, but by going through a strict process, we put our utmost effort into making the contents as one complete physical book that readers can feel “the affection and desire to own the book.” After such hard work in editing and design, the outcome leads to endless communication with the readers. Through advertisement and marketing, we continue to put the effort in the long run until the release of good books so that the readers can “easily discover” them on shelves.

The contests “Story King” and “Marshmallow Fiction” introduced a system in which children readers get to evaluate the works for the first time in Korea. What is the reaction from participants and readers?

Well, if you liked reading books during your childhood, you may have had found a book of your taste, not letting your parents know. They are unique children’s book contests that cherish the eyes of children readers, rather than prioritizing those of adults.

The panel of judges for Story King and Marshmallow Fiction is divided into two: adults’ panel and children’s panel. Two to three works for the final evaluation screened by the adult judges are sent

to 100 or 101 children judges. Then the children choose the best work after reading the dummy manuscript. The points given by both panels are added to determine the winner.

Every year, 100 and 101 Children between the age of 11 and 12 participate in the panels for Story King and Marshmallow Fiction respectively. So it is like children choosing the “best seller of us that grown-ups don’t know” by engaging in the evaluation themselves. In particular, as only girls can join the panel for Marshmallow Fiction, it is hugely loved for its new concept of “Girl’s Fiction.” After the submission of evaluation comments and points online, they have an offline meeting for further evaluation. Almost 100 children across the country participate and have fierce debates upon the works each of them has chosen. There are comments about the works themselves, but some of the children even took sales into consideration, saying “This type of book is a hot seller in the market” - their passion and enthusiasm are amazing. There are also sharp comments about the work that some of the dropouts say that it was a valuable opportunity to receive comments directly from the children readers even though they could not make it to the final.

As the contests have the meaning of thinking together to make good books adding to just choosing the right books for children, many children apply for the panel every year. And the chosen books are well received in the market indeed after publication. The first winner of Story King, *Detective Twenty Questions Series* was made into a series and is scheduled to be a complete series of 12 books

soon. A whopping 300 thousand copies were sold, and the winner of the second Story King, *Geon-bang's Audacious Martial Arts Training Series* settled as the best martial arts story for children with its 5th book released with its Season 2 coming ahead. In short, it was a good opportunity to realize that children have a powerful influence.



*Geon-bang's Audacious Martial Arts Training Series*

BIR has published diverse book series from children's picture books to Story King. Each of the series has its unique characteristics. Please introduce us to the newly launched field that BIR is weighing in on.

The essence of BIR is indeed the picture books. They are like the heart of us. Not only the series "BIR's Picture Books for Children" (currently no. 273 released) filled with global masterpieces that are like a milestone in the picture book history, but also "BIR's Fairytale and Traditional Tales of the World" series can be called as

art themselves. Recently, in particular, works such as *Miffy* by Dick Bruna are adding a distinct flavor to the picture books of BIR. We also launched Sagaksagak Picture Book series lately as well. The 23rd book is on its way. This series that begins with novelty books for 3-year-olds to paper picture books began receiving positive comments from the readers.

Also, the winners of the Story King series is continuing its uptrend in the fiction field, and the series of the winners of BIR Literary Awards instantly become best sellers as soon as they are released in the market. Story King winners including *Bong-Gu Yoon, the Clone* and *Poong-Woon Tak, the Ghost Supervisor*, and picture book series such as *Moonlight Diner in the Midnight*, *My Sister, Trash*, and *100% Winning Random Capsule Vending Machine* are the winners of BIR Literary Awards that are set to be steadily published.



*Bong-Gu Yoon, the Clone, Poong-Woon Tak, the Ghost Supervisor, My Sister, Trash*

BIR launched 'Beaver', a book club for separate volumes for the first time in Korea. Beaver provides book curations customized to different age groups from preschoolers to elementary school students. What is the planning and marketing concept of Beaver?

We get to meet many parents that feel puzzled about the standard for which books they should recommend to their kids. They have to consider whether the necessary contents for their children's development and education are well reflected, and think of how to expose them to various genres while looking for books that they might like. So Beaver took the solution for those struggles as the concept for planning and marketing. Beaver suggests books with the right educational values, diverse, balanced genres, and reading fun for kids customized to different age groups. You can commonly see book curation programs where experts help children's educational development and academic learning in Korea. However, the unique thing about Beaver is that it provides exciting books that children chose themselves. So the belief that children are the ones that best know the fun for children is reflected in the planning process. When children get close to books they like, books can become a lifelong best friend. This is the goal of the book club Beaver.

## Books with Exported Publication Rights

### *THE SEVEN FRIENDS IN A LADY'S CHAMBER* by Young-Kyung Lee

The setting of this story is a Lady's Chamber, where a young lady sews clothes. The Lady has seven friends for her needlework: they are Mrs. Ruler, Miss Scissors, Miss Needle, Maid Thread, Grandma Thimble, Miss In-du (a little iron with a long handle), and Maid Iron. When the Lady dozes off one day, the seven friends argue about who is the best part of sewing. As their arguments became louder and louder, their landlady awakens and becomes angry, declaring "I am the most important part of needlework." Soon the Lady falls asleep again and has a dream in which in trying to do her needlework, she couldn't find any of her seven friends. Feeling sad, she bursts into tears and is awakened by her seven friends. At last, they all realize that all of them make sewing possible, and that they cannot carry out the needlework without the help of friends.



### *THE ZOO* by Suzy Lee

\* Awarded as 2008 Notable Children's Book in the Language Arts by NCTE (National Council of Teachers of English), U.S.A.

This book is about the zoo, a strange place where children and adults alike learn about nature, but also about its deprivation and despair. Curiously, children see the zoo differently from the adults' perspective; they know how to make friends with animals. I went to the zoo with mom and dad today. We went to the gorilla's house and the bear's hills. We also went to the hippo's swimming pool, the elephant's palace and the giraffe's village. We even visited the water bird's cage and the monkey's world. The zoo is truly an exciting place to be! Mom and dad, you guys had fun, too, didn't you? While the child is having fun with the animals at the zoo, mom and dad were panicked as they find that the child has wandered away. This original picture book offers amusement as well as refreshment as the child's imaginary space overlaps the reality of the adult world.



### **TIPTOE TAPIRS** by Han-Min Kim

Once upon a time, in a jungle of Malaysia, animals were busy making noise as a way of showing their powers, except for Tapir. Tapir always walked with soft steps. Nobody recognized she was passing by. One day, while Tapir and her daughter were eating mud, a leopard approached to them. As always, Tapir ran away with soft steps, but soon got caught. Then, she heard the “bang” of a shotgun. It was the scary hunter. The leopard was scared and started running away, following Tapir and her daughter with soft steps. From that day, something weird happened in the jungle…….

Han-min Kim grew up in various places like Denmark, Sri Lanka and Peru. Now he is into storytelling through which he hopes to give a simple message: love nature.

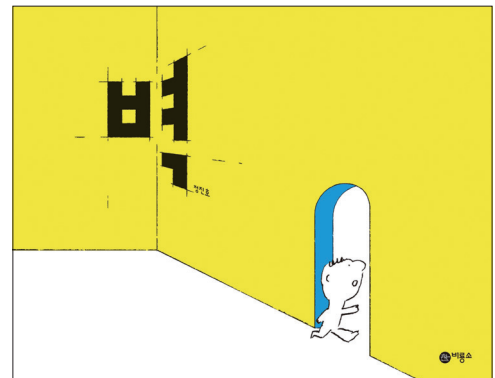


### **THE WALL** by Jin-Ho Jung

\* The special mention of the BolognaRagazzi Award 2018 in the ART, ARCHITECTURE AND DESIGN category

What if there was a picture book that easily translated the concept of “space” in a way that was approachable for children along with fresh interpretations? This is a simple and clear picture book. After following in the footsteps of the child featured in the book, children will be able to understand and learn concepts such as “inside and outside,” “front and back,” “convex and concave” and “right and left.”

The author says in the book, everything has an inside and an outside and everything changes depending on our viewpoint. Through this, he stresses the importance of diversity of views, and that we should be able to look at “all sides” of everything with a warm standpoint.



## **LULLABY FOR GRANDMOTHER** by Iwona Chmielewska

\* The winner of the BolognaRagazzi Award 2020 in the New Horizons category

This unique illustrated book features Hulda seen through the eyes of her granddaughter. Lodz is a small city in Poland, filled with loud noise from endlessly spinning machinery and cotton dust floating like snowflakes. Set in the city, Hulda and a number of women workers live, work and raise children during their lifetime. The book poetically illustrates the life of Hulda from childhood to adolescence and adulthood, with the collage of fabrics of different patterns and textures that the illustrator collected for years to make a perfect harmony with illustration, pictures and textures in the book.



## **DETECTIVE TWENTY QUESTIONS** series by Kyo-Bum Heo, Sang-Mi Ko



It won the Story King Award specially selected by a panel of 100 special judges all between the ages of 9 and 12. In book #1, Moonyang an 11-year-old boy wanted to have a new series of the plastic models of Warriors, his favorite characters. Mom said they were for a younger kid, not for an 11-year-old boy. To buy the new plastic models, Moonyang bet 30,000 won which was originally supposed to be his tuition fee for a Chinese Language Institution on card games with 'The Magician', which results in losing all the money. Moonyang requested the investigation to get back the money to a new boy in class 6 called 'The Twentyquestion Detective'. He is famous for solving any problem only with 20 questions. Could Moonyang have the money back with his help?

\* *DETECTIVE TWENTY QUESTIONS* (11series)

1. *Detective Twenty Questions and the Magician*
2. *The Cat Attack Incident*
3. *The Treasure Box in the Dark*
4. *The Friend from the Past*
5. *The Four Cases*

6. *The Crisis of the Elite Club*
7. *The Villain and The Detective*
8. *Blue Mustache*
9. *The Hidden Card*
10. *Detective Tournament: Part 1*
11. *Detective Tournament: Part 2*

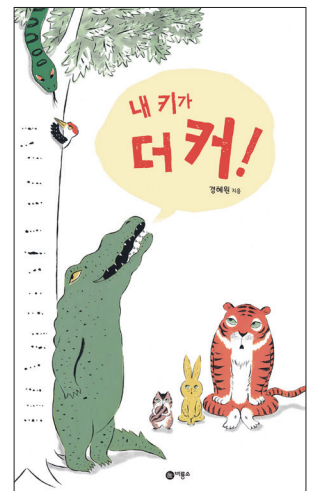
### **MIDNIGHT MOONLIGHT CAFÉ by Bun-hee Lee, Tae-kyu Yoon**

This fantasy novel is about events set in Moonlight Diner, where customers can buy delicious food with bad memories. Yeon-woo, a lonely child who feels like the last person left on earth, happens to stop by Moonlight Diner in the middle of the night, where he meets Fox Eyelash and Fox Husky. Being told that he can trade one bad memory for a piece of a strawberry cake with a whipped cream filling, Yeon-woo recalls what happened at school earlier that day: He found 50,000 won that his classmate had lost, and he decided to keep the money and used it to buy school slippers and stationery, instead of returning it to the owner. The humiliating memory of stealing is used to pay for the fancy cake. Yeon-woo visits the diner again the next day to exchange two out of his box filled with abundant bad memories with food. What are the two bad memories he has sold to Fox Eyelash and Fox Husky? A profound question of "If you remove all the bad memories you have, will you become happy?" is explored in an easily approachable way.



### **I am taller than you by Hye-Won Kyung**

A Cute and humorous story about children's height measuring. Comparing height and length can be fun!



### ***My Spring Training of my Life* by Yoo-Jung Jung**

The first book by Jung Yoo-Jung, a novelist hugely loved for her works *Seven Years of Night* (EunHaeng NaMu), *Shoot Me in the Heart* (EunHaeng NaMu), and *The Origin of Species* (EunHaeng NaMu). The story begins in a village near Suwon on a summer day in August 1986. Joon-Ho, a 15-year-old main character, is asked by his friend to deliver a passport and a little bit of money to his legendary student activist brother to help him flee abroad. The scheduled meeting place was Imjado, Shinan, in the Southern part of Korea. Joon-Ho planned to go alone, but uninvited friends from his neighborhood Seung-Joo and Jeong-Ah mess up the journey. What's more, an unidentified old man and a Dobermann named Roosevelt join the team; the journey of this chaotic team unfolds like a road movie with the unstoppable narration and humor of the speaker Joon-Ho.



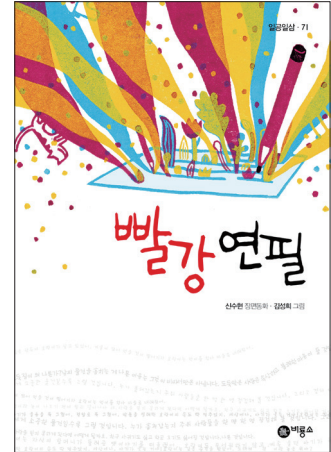
### ***THORN CONFESSION* by Ryeo-Ryeong Kim**

Trust, Listen, and Accept. The novel begins with a confession: “I am a thief.” The protagonist Hale is a sophomore in high school. He is such a natural when it comes to taking other people's stuff that sometimes he even surprises himself. His family isn't rich, but dad, a superintendent of a large apartment complex, is relatively affectionate. Mom used to be a wig technician and Hale's 30-year-old brother, ever since he was discharged from the army, runs a curious website in which he claims he is an “emotion design expert.” With all the emotional support he receives from this family, Hale cannot comprehend why he has become the kleptomaniac he is, but just cannot stop. To Hale, who as a child had to stay home alone while both of his parents worked, stealing is as much a part of him as the loneliness he felt. One day, he steals a fairly new electronic organizer from a locker in the back of the classroom.



## ***THE RED PENCIL* by Soo-Hyeon Shin, Sung-Hee Kim**

A Story about the growth of a boy named Min-ho through handling secrets and lies after obtaining a magic "red pencil" with which he can write any story without hesitation. This book was awarded, with a review that "it successfully explores confrontation with a hard-to-avoid temptation, a rare subject for a Korean youth book, in an interesting and effective way. Moreover, it creates an independent child who makes a decision without the help of assistants," illustrating his mind in a detailed way.



## ***The last Event, The Birth of Ilsu* by Eun-Sil Yoo**

A brilliant story that depicts death and a funeral in a touching and humorous way.



## Prospective Works of BIR

### *I'm a Lion* by Kyung Hey-Won

A picture book about the rough but beautiful life of a lioness and her heartrending love for her cubs. The life of lionesses that become a mother after herding and giving birth to little cubs is described in a heartwarming and beautiful story; their story, feeding and protecting their cubs from all the threats in the tough and merciless jungle unfolds as if we are watching a movie. The courage and power of the lionesses lead to the story of mothers today, and the cubs grow up to be lionesses that protect their kids once again.

The new work by Kyung Hey-Won, a globally promising illustrator.



### *100% Winning Random Capsule Vending Machine* by Kwak Yu-Jin, Cha Sang-Mi

The grand prize winner of the 9th BIR Literary Award in 2020. It is a fantasy story for children that describes a magical story about a random capsule vending machine that you can always win. It is a composed and heartwarming story about one sorrowful kid feeling a sense of loss who reorganizes his relationships step by step with the 100% winning capsule vending machine... Everything helps him to return to an ordinary daily life with energy again. The unique concept that there is a capsule vending machine that you can win anything with a 500-won coin grasps readers' attention and increases immersion. Written by Kwak Yu-Jin, and illustrated by Cha Sang-Mi.



KOREAN AUTHORS

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## Writer Lim Hong-Tek

Understanding the “generation (age)” in the “generation (era)”

Organized by Choi Hyo-Jun

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One book created multiple discourses and discussions, shaking the market for more than a year after making a meteor-like debut in the sluggish Korean publishing market. It is *People Born in the*

*90s are Coming* (Whalebooks, 2018) written by author Lim Hong-Tek. Now, what is this “born in the 90s” concept that made Korean society have such a great interest in the book and those born in the 90s? Let’s take a more in-depth look at the stories surrounding the work.

It’s been already more than a year since *People Born in the 90s are Coming* was published, but the people born in the 90s are still a hot issue. Reflecting the influence of the book, do you think that we are now free from a world in which anyone can become a “*ggondae*” (usually a middle-aged person who tries to use authority and power to lead people instead of humane influence)?

No, I don’t think so. I think that we have become free from *ggondaes* as anyone would “naturally” become one with time. To be more clear, I am a bit careful as the main topic of the book is not “*ggondaes*.” I also do not agree with the divided discussion frame of “people born in the 1990s vs. *ggondaes*.” The only reason I used the word “*ggondae*” in the book was not to say that the older generation is a “*ggondae*” generation, but to suggest readers to think whether everything including the customs and knowledge that we knew are appropriate in this generation while the world is newly changing, and many things get used to it. In this aspect, I hope that we can more focus on understanding and respecting each other rather than being buried into the word “*ggondae*.”

Your work *People Born in the 90s are Coming* is your understanding of the people born in the 1990s. But you would not want the book to be confined to a mere “issue about the generation.” What was the message you truly wanted to deliver through the book?

The message I wanted to deliver was this: when you feel like you cannot understand someone, rather than cursing the person (which is the easy way), try to listen to what the other person has to say (even though it may be uncomfortable). As the book is categorized in the economics and business administration section and is based on my very personal experience, I did not think of raising a generation-related issue or include a critical social implication. Searching for various bits of things to get closer to the friends of other generations that I found it difficult to understand (in the beginning) was the only motivation for the book. A message such as “One of the common topics of debate, “generational conflict”, existed from the past, and it will not fade away forever” will not be something of great help around this time. And I also think that there is nothing as a magical solution that can resolve all the conflicts surrounding it. We can only narrow down one gap by talking and working each other out and endlessly thinking to solve the issue.



*People Born in the 90s are Coming*



(Left) Re-covered version of the Special Edition.  
 (Right) Cover of the Special Edition marking the 1st anniversary

You have been busy doing lectures on a related topic after the publication. What is the audience's reaction like? If there is a reader's comment that you particularly remember, please share it with us.

People leave various comments. I tend to receive comments from the young generation that thank me for trying to understand their generation, and also from the older generation that the lecture helped them understand the new generation to an extent.

Sometimes people ask me whether I got to build some sort of prejudice or stereotype of the people born in the 1990s as I wrote the book. And when I ask back why, they reply that most of them experienced being asked by their senior supervisors, “I hear that you guys born in the 90s are always like this” or be belittled “I now get why your generation is so clueless.” I wrote in the middle and later part of the book, but I never concluded those born in the 1990s in a single-story nor generalized them unconditionally. I got to think that those people did not say so after reading my book but had such a tendency from the beginning. I don’t think I can take responsibility for the ideas of those with already wrong bias.

You are known to have made a debut as a writer through “Brunch”, a representative writing platform. Did you plan to do so?

No, it was not in my plan. I just uploaded the revised manuscript online that I already finished writing in 2014 through the Brunch Book Project in 2017. And as I already published another book in 2011 before this one, I think it isn’t clear to say that I made a debut through Brunch. It’s just that I saw the stark reality that people recognize you as a writer after your book is sold and known by readers to an extent no matter which book you wrote in the past. As I first opened my work to the public and received feedback through an online platform called Brunch, I could learn a lot of things about the publication process; since then many publishers said that they could discover fresh works and new writers through Brunch,

which makes me happy. I hope that many writers can share good opportunities through such a platform in the future as well.

**You turned into a full-time writer from an office worker. What is your next agenda as a writer?**

Well, I am planning to go back to a company within this year after the next book, but the next topic I am thinking of is “attention seekers.” Rather than just a very trendy story about “attention seekers”, I am searching in various fields and mulling over the topic of “attention” that is hidden behind.

**If *People Born in the 90s are Coming* is published overseas, how would you like it to be introduced?**

Well, rather than just a book about global “Millennials” or “Z-generation”, I hope it can be introduced as a book that talks about another story experienced by the generation in Korea’s unique situation.

## Publishing Industry

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# Current status of each field in the Korean publishing market

### 3. Philosophical and Religious Publications

Written by Won-Keun Baek (Books & Society Research Institute, President)

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Religion was the origin of publishing in both the East and the West. The common ground of *42-line Gutenberg Bible* (1455) which is regarded as the beginning of modern publication and *Jikji: Anthology of Great Buddhist Priests' Zen Teachings* (1377), the world's first Buddhist scripture made with movable metal types

which predate the Bible, is that they are both religious books. It is possible to say that philosophical and religious publications are from the same source in that they both talk about the ongoing struggles of humanity – what is a human being and how should one live.

According to the statistics of the Korean Publishers Association, the number of titles published in Korea was 2,291 for philosophical books, while it was 2,958 for religious books in 2019. In terms of philosophical books, an average of 1,000 copies (1,232 copies in 2019) of around 2,000 titles are published annually, while 3,000 titles of religious books publish an average of 1,000 copies (1,050 in 2019) per year. In detail, psychology and ethics (moral philosophy) in the philosophy field accounted for more than 700 titles, taking two-thirds of the total published copies. Also, Christianity, Catholicism, and Judaism accounted for an overwhelming proportion of more than 80% (2,547 titles as of 2018), followed by Buddhism with more than 400 titles. Compared to its religious influence, Buddhism books have relatively less published copies.

According to Statistics Korea (based on Population and Housing Census in 2015), 43.9% of the Korean population (21.55 million) have a religion; 98% of them mostly consist of Buddhists, Christians, and Catholics. Muslims and others have a minor religious influence in Korea. As not all the religious people enthusiastically purchase books, the proportion of religion does not always match the size of sales. Yet, the general trend is reflected in the publishing statistics. In particular, as Christians regard

literary mission to be important, Christian publishers created the Korea Christian Publishers Association, while Christian bookstores have the Korea Christian Bookstores Association. Each of the associations has hundreds of member publishers and bookstores all active in publishing and sales. Even though Christian books are sold in general bookstores too, Christian bookstores sell more diverse types of religious books. Sermon collections of pastors are sometimes directly sold by churches as well. Meanwhile, in terms of Buddhism, there is the Buddhism Publishers Association consisting of publishers for Buddhism books.

Last year, many of the popular books in the philosophy field were related to psychology and philosophy that people can easily relate to in daily life. In short, they were very close to self-development books. This kind of area is categorized as “humanities” in Korea. The book *How Philosophy Becomes a Weapon of Life* (Dasan Books) written by Yamaguchi Shu which ranked first in humanities was also read as a book for business. With the sub-title “50 thinking tools to break through an uncertain life,” this book features how one can strategically utilize the core ideas of major philosophers centering on people, organization, society, and ideology. The book *12 Rules for Life* (Maven) written by psychologist Jordan B. Peterson who was a professor of psychology at Harvard University and *The Courage To Be Disliked* (Influential) by a Japanese philosopher Kishimi Ichiro were loved by readers as well.

*You're Right* (Hainaim) written by a Korean psychiatrist Jung Hye-Shin suggests a mental cure based on “sympathy” building

on 30 plus years of consultations she has had with patients and *Self-Esteem Lesson* (Simple Books) written by Yoon Hong-Kyun also explains how one can boost self-esteem based on his years of clinical experience. Meanwhile, *On Ways of Living* (Beautiful People Books) by a former politician and an eloquent speaker Rhyu Si-Min and essay *It is good to think of death in the morning* (Across) by Kim Young-Min, a professor at Seoul National University offer advice to ordinary people on the best attitude for life. Even though “It is good to think of death in the morning” can make you feel uncomfortable, it is actually a variation on the idea that “it gives you hope to persevere through life as you’re already dead.”

One thing these books share is that by telling a story or “kindly talking to the readers,” people can be encouraged to overcome difficulties in life and regain confidence. While traditional philosophical books encompassing Korean, Eastern, and Western philosophies struggle selling all of their first circulation, popular books help readers to look at their life and its value with better eyes by guiding practical philosophy they can apply in daily life. Meanwhile, *Kludge* (Galleon), *The Organized Mind* (Wise Berry), and *The Laws of Human Nature* (Wisdom House) showed the whole new evolution of philosophical books by fusing psychology and brain science.



*You're Right, Self-Esteem Lesson*



*On Ways of Living, It is good to think of death in the morning*

The sales trend in religious books has been mainly determined by those written by popular religious people (influential pastor or monk). However, the book that ranked first in this field in 2019 was by two writers with the nickname “Sunshine Beans (Kim Nadan, Kim Yeon-Sun).” Meditation book *God’s Timing for Your Life* (Kyujang) and *God’s Letter for Your Life* (42 Media Contents)

became bestsellers, and their new book *God's Present for Your Life* (Kyujang) also hit the top sales list this year. This couple has been communicating with more than 100 thousand followers on their Social Media every day since 2015, which shows that the power of Social Media can be a greater influence on the field of religion. The trailer videos for books, phrases, calligraphy, and illustrations the couple wrote and made can be seen when you click the list on an online bookstore, and these ordinary, not-so-special contents show that the dynamism of Social Media does have a great influence on their popularity in the market.

The five best-selling books in religion include *The Meaning of Marriage* (Duranno) by Timothy Keller, a former pastor at Redeemer Presbyterian Church in the US and *True Happiness* (NamuMind), *Words of Wisdom for Newlyweds* (Hyu, 休; Hanibook), and *Lessons for Life* (Hyu, 休; Hanibook) by the Venerable Pomnyun which have been steady sellers for a long time. Entering this year, the posthumous collection *The Most Reverend Monk Jeokmyeong* (Bulkwang Media) by the Most Reverend Monk Jeokmyeong of Bongamsa Temple received highlight among Buddhism books. Also, *The 5 Love Languages* (Life Book) by Gary Chapman, *153 Thanks Note* (Kyujang) by Lee Chan-Soo, *One Hour Prayer* (Kyujang) by Yoo Ki-Sung, a great Christian book in the 20th century *Mere Christianity* (Hongsungsa) by Clive Staples Lewis who is a former professor of English literature at Oxford University, 3 series (including hardcover and complete translation) of *Pigrlim's Progress* (Poieima), a classic by John Bunyan, are

keeping their popularity among readers. A book based on long years of theology research, *I am Jesus* (Tongnamu) by Kim Yong-Ok, who has celebrity-like popularity in Korea, is currently topping the list.



*God's Timing for Your Life, God's Letter for Your Life, God's Present for Your Life*



*True Happiness, Words of Wisdom for Newlyweds, Lessons for Life*

Regarding philosophical books, Seokwangsa (established in 1974) is the unrivalled publisher. It has been adhering to publishing philosophical books including Eastern and Western philosophy

and religion. Also, Dongnyok (established in 1982) is a humanities and social science publisher that published milestone philosophical books every 10 years beginning with the popular *An Essay of Philosophy* (1983) to *An Essay of East Asian Philosophy* (1993) and *An Essay of Korean Philosophy* (2003), etc. Meanwhile, Tongnamu (established in 1986) focused on publishing books related to oriental studies, which in particular concentrated on the books of Kim Yong-Ok. Ehak Publishing Co. (established in 1996) is also a specialized publisher in philosophy, aesthetics, and religion. Plus, not only EJB that published *Plato: Complete Work* but also Hangilsa, Chaeksesang, Greenbee, Gil, and Acanet are publishers that have been publishing Western philosophical books in a significant amount.

Both religious publishers and general publishers produce religious books in Korea. Regarding Buddhism, Bulkwang Media (established in 1974) is the flagship publisher which began with *Monthly Bulkwang*, a Buddhism journal. Hanibook, an affiliate of Hankyoreh sold a total of more than 500 thousand copies of 3 titles written by a psychological mentor, the Venerable Pomnyun through its publishing brand “Hyu (休).”

Established in 1888, the Catholic Publishing House is the oldest publisher in Korea run by the Catholic Church. Bundo Book (Bundo means “Benedictus”; established in 1962) and Pauline Books & Media (established in 1962) are famous Catholic publishers. Life Book (established in 1953), a Christian publisher, has been steadily producing approximately 3,000 titles of Christian books,

while Kyujang (established in 1978) has published 1,400 titles as a specialized publisher for separate volumes. Duranno (established in 1980) is the cradle of best-selling Christian books. Hongsungsa (established in 1974) had been famous for humanities and social books, but from the 1980s, it has been concentrating on Christian publication, publishing 900 types of books for professionals. Agape and Qumran Publishing Co. also have a high reputation as specialized Christian publishers.

Publishing Policy

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Korea Foundation (KF)  
Publication Support Program

Publish your  
**Korea-related books**  
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**Korea Foundation!**



Publication Support  
Program of  
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#1

Supports **Korea-related books**  
in non-Korean languages

#2

Promote **knowledge about Korea**  
to global citizens

#3

Provides an opportunity to **indirectly**  
**experience Korea** through books

### Application

\* **Domestic and overseas publishers**  
(Individual writers and translators are not eligible  
to apply)

\* **Maximum of 2 publications**

\* **Apply and submit all required**  
**documents via the KF Online**  
**Application System**

(<http://apply.kf.or.kr>)



### Program Support

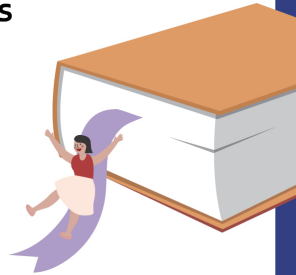
\* **Newly written works** (Max. USD 10,000)  
: for previously non-published works

\* **Translation works** (Max. USD 20,000)  
: for already published Korean or  
English works translated into  
another language



## Evaluation Criteria

- \* Quality of the manuscript
- \* Ability of publisher
- \* Appropriateness of the budget
- \* Expected effects



## Works supported in 2019



〈Selection of 100 Korean Movies  
(韩国映画100選)〉  
CUON



〈Public Service Advertising:  
The Korean Way〉  
Pakhmutov Publishing



〈Top-Down Democracy  
in South Korea〉  
University of Washington Press



〈Korea in the Accounts  
by Western Writers〉  
Dmytro Burago publishing house

Please refer to the  
**website for more details!**

Inquiry : <https://kf.or.kr>

KOREA **KF**  
FOUNDATION

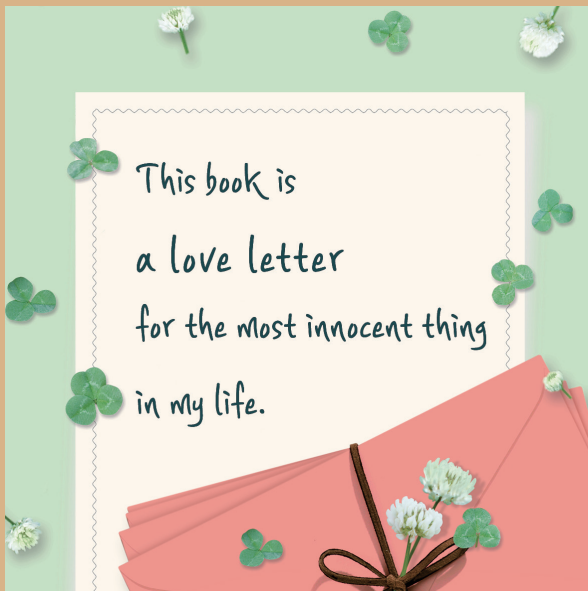
KF Publication Support Program



New Books

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Plants for those who are suffering





© Bada Publishing Co.

Plants wholly reflect the extraordinary stages of life by sowing and budding seeds in their little pot.



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Absorbing enough water and looking at the bright sunshine, plants moderately wash away your gloominess.



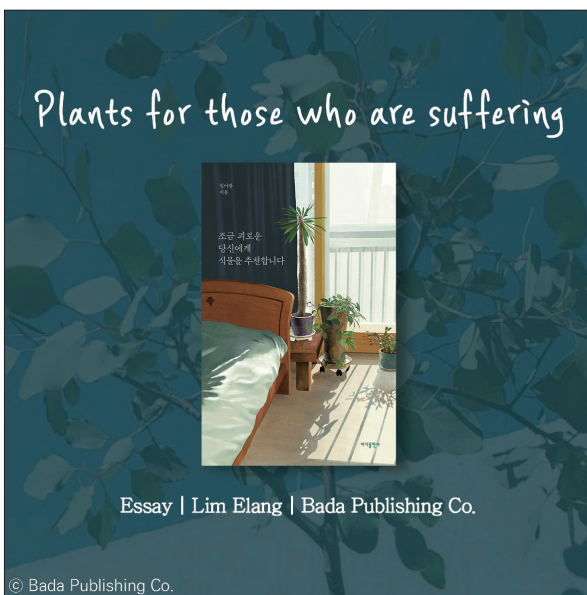
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We are often beholden to plants  
on both happy and sad days.



A heartwarming  
story about the life  
of growing plants and  
taking care of yourself.

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Plants for those who are suffering

Essay | Lim Elang | Bada Publishing Co.

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## Best Sellers

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## 2nd Week, March

### Bestseller Trends in the Four Biggest Online Bookstores in Korea

Written by Choi Ha-Yeong

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Due to the globally threatening virus COVID-19, Korea is campaigning for “Social Distancing.” Kindergartens and schools are postponing the new semester, and office workers are refraining from going outside, working at home, having a time-out moment from their busy lives. What books are Korean readers reading while overcoming the tough situation today?

The top best seller for the 2nd week of March in the four major bookstores in Korea was *The Plague*, a famous novel written by a French author Albert Camus. This book became a hot issue again after having been introduced in a TV program “Book Reading for You (tvN).” The book is mainly about a city devastated by an


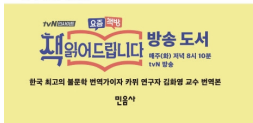

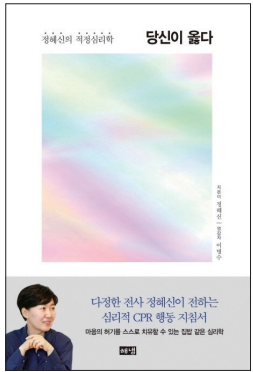

infectious disease called “The Plague.” Due to its background similar to the situation of Korea currently struck by COVID-19, it was highly relatable to many readers which is why it seems to be ranking top on the list.

Another book that draws attention on the bestseller list is *When the Weather Is Fine* written by Lee Do-Woo published in 2018. This book was republished as a Special Edition commemorating the launch of a TV series broadcast by JTBC that is based on the book. A special volume comes together with the edition where you can find the after-story of the novel. Thanks to this, the fans of the TV series gave new momentum to the popularity of the novel.



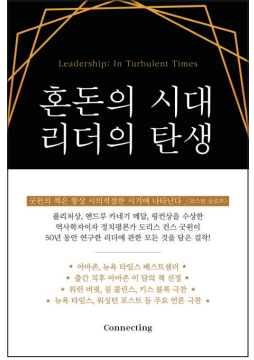
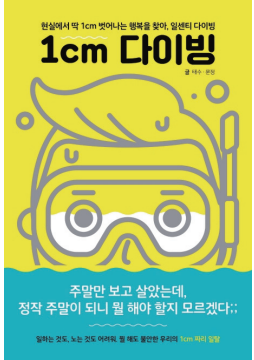
Also, as people have more time spent at home due to COVID-19, many readers are looking for books that suit their taste. Books that target children readers including *Seol Min-Suk’s Great Adventure in Korean History 13* and *100% Winning Random Capsule Vending Machine*, and also books of various genres such as liberal art, essay, self-development, and politics including *You’re Right* and *Myungri Psychology* were listed as best sellers.

\* The rank of bestsellers below was organized after integrating domestic best sellers in the second week of March from the four biggest online bookstores in Korea - Kyobo Bookstore, Aladdin, Yes 24, and Interpark.

BEST SELLERS

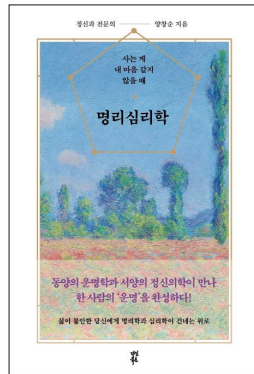
<p>1</p>	 <p>세계문학전집 369 <b>페스트</b> Le Plague 말레르가 기원 100주년 기념</p> 	<p><i><b>The Plague</b></i></p> <p>Author   Albert Camus Publisher   Minumsa Genre   Novel</p>
<p>2</p>	 <p>설민석의 <b>한국사</b> 대모험 13 역사의 진실한 이야기</p>	<p><i><b>Seol Min-Suk's Great Adventure in Korean History 13</b></i></p> <p>Author   Seol Min-Suk, StoryBox Author   I Human Genre   Children</p>
<p>3</p>	 <p>정혜신의 차용심리학 <b>당신이 옳다</b> 정혜신의 차용심리학 정혜신 지음   2019년 10월 10일 발행   288쪽   15,000원</p> <p>다정한 진시 정혜신이 전하는 심리적 CTR 행동 지침서 마음이 바뀌면 스스로 치유할 수 있는 행동 지침서 심리학</p>	<p><i><b>You're Right</b></i></p> <p>Author   Jeong Hye-Shin Publisher   Hainaim Genre   Liberal Arts</p>
<p>3</p>	 <p>당신이 옳다 정혜신 지음   2019년 10월 10일 발행   288쪽   15,000원</p> <p>당신이 옳으면 상이하겠죠 정혜신 지음   2019년 10월 10일 발행   288쪽   15,000원</p> <p>인생 반박수장이 인생 드라마로 돌아옵니다 당신이 옳으면 상이하겠죠! 정혜신</p>	<p><i><b>When the Weather Is Fine (Limited Edition Commemorating TV Series)</b></i></p> <p>Author   Lee Do-Woo Publisher   Sigongsa Genre   Novel</p>

BEST SELLERS

<p>5</p>		<p><i><u>The secret of the top 1% in Harvard (Re-Covered Edition)</u></i></p> <p>Author   Chung Ju-Yung          Publisher   The Korea Economic Daily          Genre   Self-development</p>
<p>6</p>		<p><i><u>When I Don't Even Know What I Want</u></i></p> <p>Author   Jeon Seung-Hwan          Publisher   Dasan Books          Genre   Liberal Arts</p>
<p>6</p>		<p><i><u>Leadership in Turbulent Times</u></i></p> <p>Author   Doris Kearns Goodwin          Publisher   Connecting          Genre   Politics</p>
<p>8</p>		<p><i><u>1cm Diving</u></i></p> <p>Author   Taesoo, Munjung          Publisher   FKA          Genre   Essay</p>

BEST SELLERS

9



***Myungri Psychology***

Author | Yang Chang-Soon  
 Publisher | Dasan Books  
 Genre | Liberal Arts

10



***100% Winning Random Capsule Vending Machine***

Author | Kwak Yu-Jin  
 Publisher | BIR  
 Genre | Children

## Book Summary

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# Export Prospects of Korean Books

KPIPA's Choice for Supporting Abstract · Sample Translation

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### *A Sad Goodbye (New Edition)*

#### 1. Publication Details

Imprint | NEXUS Co., Ltd.  
Title | A Sad Goodbye (New Edition)  
Subtitle | Seventeen stories about love and partings  
Author | Hwang Kyung Sin  
Genre | Literature  
Format | 127×188  
Binding | Paperback  
Pages | 272pages  
ISBN | 9791157525201

#### 2. Contact

Name | Chung, Hyejin Jinny  
Phone | +82-2-330-5529  
Email | [copyright@nexusbook.com](mailto:copyright@nexusbook.com)  
URL | <https://www.nexusbook.com:446/>

#### 3. Marketing Information

Keyword | Novel; Essay; Love; Parting; Life  
Target Readership | Adults



#### **4. About the Author**

Born in Busan, South Korea, Hwang Kyung Sin graduated from the Department of English Language and Literature at Yonsei University. Hwang is the author of *I Started with a Single Lemon*, *A Picturesque World*, *A Happy Ending for Everyone*, *The Chocolate Post Office*, *Seventeen*, *Picturesque Mythology*, *The Thought Occurred to Me*, *A Recipe for Comfort*, *When I Close My Eyes*, *Eleven at Night*, *Sparkling Variations*, *The Bite-Sized Elephant*, *I Listened to You with Ears Like a Rabbit's*, *A Sad Goodbye (New Edition)*, and more.

#### **5. About the Book**

"We all want to believe that somewhere out there is a rose-tinted life made just for us."

In response to the warm reception for *The Thought Occurred to Me*, which was picked up by over five hundred thousand readers, Hwang Kyung Sin releases a new edition of *A Sad Goodbye*.

"People think goodbyes happen at the end of a relationship. But that's not true. It happens when love begins, and builds towards the climax. When love plummets from the climax, and even before it begins. Goodbyes happen in and between each moment. If that parting was something that politely waited its turn and only came to us once love was over, it would never cause us so much pain."

-Excerpt from "Rehearsal"

The seventeen pieces that make up this anthology include autobiographical essays and short stories. With a distinct style that weaves between fiction and reality, the author's bittersweet tales of love and parting converge into a singular mosaic.

"Isn't it strange how endings are so similar to beginnings?"

-Excerpt from "The End of the World and the Last Killer"

For this edition of *A Sad Goodbye*, Hwang makes extensive edits to the original publication, appending and removing sections to craft an entirely new book. Book's design has also been updated to suit contemporary tastes.

## *The Light's Past*

### 1. Publication Details

Imprint | Moonji Publishing co.,Ltd.

Title | The Light's Past

Author | Eun Heekyung

Genre | Literature

Format | 128×188

Binding | Paperback

Pages | 344pages

ISBN | 9788932035635

### 2. Contact

Name | Yun SeoHee

Phone | +82-2-338-7224

Email | copyright@moonji.com



### 3. Marketing Information

Keyword | Women; Feminism; 1970; Neutro; Youth; College life; Seoul; Coming from the provinces; Popular culture; Dictatorship

Target Readership | Adult

### 4. About the Author

Eun Heekyung began her writing career when she won the Donga Daily New Writer's Award with her novella, The Duet. Her collection of short stories are, Talking to a Stranger, A Happy Person Does Not Look at the Clock, Inheritance, Beauty Looks Down On Me, A Snowflake That Closely Resembles All Other Snowflakes and Chinese Roulette. She published the following novels: The Bird's Gift, Do the Last Dance with Me, Minor League, Secret and Lie, Comfort the Boy, Composed Life and Was It a Dream? She is the winner of the following literary awards by, Munhakdongne, Dongseo, Yi Sang, The Korean Novel, The Korea Times, Dongin, and Hwang Sunwon prizes.

### 5. About the Book

Eun Heekyung has won many major Korean literary awards, such as those of Munhakdongne, Dongseo, Yi Sang, Korean Novel, The Korea Times, Dongin and Hwangsunwon. She has now written a new novel, The Light's Past, of which she laboriously worked on it for seven years after completing her last book, Composed Life, which was published in 2012.

The book begins in 2017 with the story of the protagonist, "me," and her old friend, "her." The protagonist met "her," the novelist, forty years ago in 1977

at a dormitory of a woman's college. The protagonist had always been self-conscious about her stammering, which had shaped her into a non-committal and unassertive personality, while she felt comfortable with her friend's self-centered, direct, and both inferior and superior attitude. Her friend had published a book, entitled *For the Princesses Who Are No Longer There*, recounting their dormitory days. Although the protagonist had known her for many years, she did not get to read the book until much later and found out that their memories of the shared time were completely different.

The author delineates the world of "difference" and "integration" that the young women, who have come of age, encounter in a new milieu called the dormitory. The literary critic, Shin Hyeong-cheol, stated in his introduction that Eun Heekyung's book does not let the readers down—no matter what their expectations were; be it the detailed description of the culture of that era, and fluid and apt writing or her truthful observation of women's experience that is sharply captured. The author presents a scrupulous visage of Korean culture in 1970s through the female students sharing communal space in a college dormitory. It was during a time when "Virtuosity, Hard Work, and Chastity" were the motto for these women from the provinces who began living in Seoul for the first time.

Above all, what stands out is the straightforward confessions of a person as she comes face to face with her naked self, who has used evasion as a shield against life. She does this by traveling back and forth in time. "A person with a weakness has an extra antenna for the world." The author's meticulously crafted writing discloses the universal problematic of an individual in life, which will mirror the reader as well. That is how "the stories of that period" filters through a writer called Eun Heekyung to become "my story" for everyone.

## *Aagh! It's a Monster!*

### 1. Publication Details

Imprint | goraebok library

Title | *Aagh! It's a Monster!*

Author | Kim Bo-mi

Genre | Picture book

Format | 220×240

Binding | Hard cover

Pages | 30pages

ISBN | 9791187427001



## 2. Contact

Name | LEE GYU SOO

Phone | +82-31-955-9680

Email | goraebook@naver.com

URL | <https://blog.naver.com/goraebook>

## 3. Marketing Information

Keyword | Alien; difference; monster

Target Readership | Ages 6-8

## 4. About the Author

Kim enjoys life writing and illustrating picture books. She hopes that with time, the pictures books she has made will be stained from the hands of children and plastered with slimy boogers. She gives glory to God for giving her imagination and support when she works on the books.

## 5. About the Book

As you go through life in this world, you tend to meet many different people. Some look different, and others speak a different language. But just because they are different from you doesn't mean that they are strange. There is nothing wrong with them, just because they are not like you. The writer wanted to tell children that they were different, not wrong. There's no need to have stereotypes or prejudices because someone doesn't look like you or because they look scary or weak. The author wrote this book hoping that children would grow to recognize and respect the differences in the problems of social loners and multicultural families. She also wanted the children to create a world different from the one we have now.

We call life forms outside Earth aliens. The alien in this book is affectionate and looks cute, but in the eyes of humans, it is simply a scary monster. Looking at the frightened faces of the people avoiding the alien, readers will wonder if that's the look on their own faces. The hero in this story came to Earth from outer space and he happily greets the people upon his arrival. But when he says "Hi!" the people all scream, "Aagh, it's a monster!" and flee. "No, I'm not. I'm not a monster." His words are useless. The people all run away calling him a monster, simply because of his appearance. They even ask, "Are you going to eat us with your big mouth and pointy teeth?" He answers, "No! No! I'm going to munch on the delicious chips." The people ask, "Are you going to destroy our houses with your huge horn?" He says, "No! No! I'm going to shine a bright light on dark places." When asked, "Are you going to torture us with your sharp nails?" he says, "No! No! I'm going to have fun and play by tickling people." When the hero makes a friend, he returns home with this new friend. The child warmly greets the people on the new planet, but hears the words, "Aagh, it's a monster!"

## *Go Stoppy-go*

### 1. Publication Details

Imprint | Borim Press

Title | Go Stoppy-go

Author | Sim Mia

Genre | Picture book

Format | 225×225

Binding | Hard cover

Pages | 38pages

ISBN | 9788943312855



### 2. Contact

Name | Park Sunjoo

Phone | +82-31-955-3456

Email | sunjoo@borimpress.com

### 3. Marketing Information

Keyword | cat; vegetables; vegetarian

Target Readership | Children aged 6–8 years

### 4. About the Author

Sim Mia is a writer and illustrator. Her book *Kitty Sun* won the Commendation Prize at the Borim Picture Book Contest. Sim's works include *A Way Home* and *A Princess Wearing Boots*. She also illustrated the children's picture books *At Seven O'clock on a Sunday Morning* and *The Sun and the Moon*.

### 5. About the Book

Go Stoppy-go is a cat living in a beach village. His last name is Go and first name is Stoppy-go. He's a wily cat with a weak spot for fish. But one day he begins to act a little strange. He only stares at the fish but won't eat them. People say that they saw Go eat lettuce and cucumber. Has Go gone vegetarian? What on earth has happened to him?

## *The Children of God*

### 1. Publication Details

Imprint | Book in Hand Publishing Company

Title | The Children of God

Author | Choo Jong Nam

Genre | Literature

Format | 145×195

Binding | Paperback

Pages | 400pages

ISBN | 9791186572467

### 2. Contact

Name | Park Kwang Un

Phone | +82-2-325-2375

Email | bookinhand@nate.com

URL | <https://cafe.naver.com/bookinhand#>

### 3. Marketing Information

Keyword | Mystery; thriller novel; crime novel

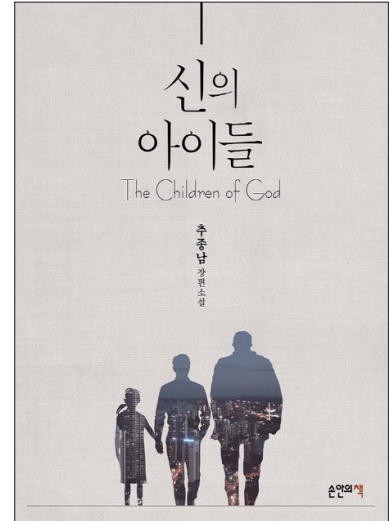
Target Readership | Adults

### 4. About the Author

Choo Jong Nam studied literature and film at Seoul Institute of the Arts and Chugye University for the Arts. He started working as a writer when his script In Good Company was made into a part of the omnibus film Family Cinema. Currently, Choo works in various fields. His musical One Day was selected as an awardee in CJ Creative Minds, and Choo also received the second Kyobo Bookstore Story Contest Award for his novel Romantic Boxer Lee Kwonsuk. He is also an award recipient of the Story Contest sponsored by the Korea Creative Content Agency for his novel The Children of God. He wrote the script for the soon-to-be-aired TV animation series Animal Rescue. Choo Jong Nam is his real name, not a pen name.

### 5. About the Book

The Children of God was inspired by real events that took place in October 1992: a group of Christians belonging to a church claimed the rapture would occur on October 28, 1992. An awardee of the Story Contest sponsored by the Korea Creative Content Agency, The Children of God is a story about a cult group, but it is not limited to certain religious teachings or creeds. Told in a mystery-thriller narrative, the novel addresses the universal themes of hope, despair,



and redemption. The writer said, "The Children of God is not a story about religion. I did not want to talk about religious redemption or argue about the truth or falsity of a certain religion. Rather, I wanted to talk about people who live without any hope in life, and about us who are indifferent to the pain and suffering of others." The story is about people who are in despair and people who are using the desperation of others for their own gain. It begins with the suicide of a prophet followed by a mysterious murder case, and it weaves these stories with another story about a father who must get his money back from a cult group to pay for his son's treatment.

## *YOU DON'T HAVE TO GET ALONG WITH EVERYBODY*

### 1. Publication Details

Imprint | Sam & Parkers Co., Ltd.

Title | YOU DON'T HAVE TO GET ALONG WITH EVERYBODY

Subtitle | The Solutions to Various Problems in Life from Self-help YouTuber, Omar.

Author | Omar

Genre | Self-development

Format | 135x200

Binding | Paperback

Pages | 276pages

ISBN | 9788965708629

### 2. Contact

Name | Bae Hyelim

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Email | hyelim@smkr.kr

### 3. Marketing Information

Keyword | YouTuber; problems; romantic relationships; human relationships; empathy

Target Readership | Adult

### 4. About the Author

As a prominent YouTuber, Omar sometimes talks on the radio, gives lectures, and writes at home.



## **5. About the Book**

This book contains the original contents of "Omar's Life," a popular YouTube channel with over 330,000 subscribers. You Don't Have to Get Along with Everyone is a selection from more than 100 videos that were particularly beloved among viewers. Some additional stories and the contents of Omar's most recent uploads can also be found.

Everybody has some problems, not big enough to destroy one's life, but little ones that constantly pester and irritate. We live on, trying to suppress or endure or let the anger build up inside. However, if you meet Omar, things will change. His stories will make us consider the various problems that fester inside us insignificant and trifle.