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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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# The Era of High Exchange Rates and the Korean Publishing Market

Written by Joseph Lee (President of KL Management)

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The structure of the Korean publishing market and translation-oriented publishing in the 1990s

I vividly remember the days when the Asian Financial Crisis hit Korea. The value of foreign currencies jumped one day. I waited for it to fall, but things didn't go as expected. The value of foreign currencies continued to skyrocket, and the value of the Korean won plummeted. This was the situation in 1997. Until then, the Korean publishing market had been heavily dependent on importing translation rights to titles that could compete in Korea from overseas markets, mainly Japan and the English-speaking countries. In this climate, Korea was hit by the era of high exchange rates. By the time we had to pay the advance for

a title contracted at 800 won per dollar, the exchange rate had nearly doubled to 1,600 won per dollar, which we had to settle and remit overseas. At the time, Korean publishers responded in different ways. Some publishers waited for the value of the foreign currency to drop, but when it didn't, they gave up and canceled the contract, while others (after negotiating with foreign rights holders) halved the size of the advance again and paid it. Given the burden of the high exchange rate, it can be said that the willingness to import Korean translation rights from abroad has been significantly dampened. One thing was certain: the publishing market in countries that are facing the pressure of high exchange rates in the process of importing and exporting published works is bound to be less willing to import translated rights than usual. Nevertheless, even though the volume of imports decreased during the Asian Financial Crisis, the import of translation rights continued steadily. By and large, general non-fiction titles, such as business books, were imported from Japan and the US, fiction titles were imported from the Anglo-American countries centered on the US, and humanities, liberal arts, and children's picture books were imported from the US and Europe. This is partly because the Korean publishing market had been heavily dependent on works produced in overseas publishing markets. At the same time, it can also be seen that it had been somewhat limited in securing books written by Korean authors that could cover a wide range of domestic readers with different interests.

## The growth of the Korean publishing market and diversification of content since the 2000s

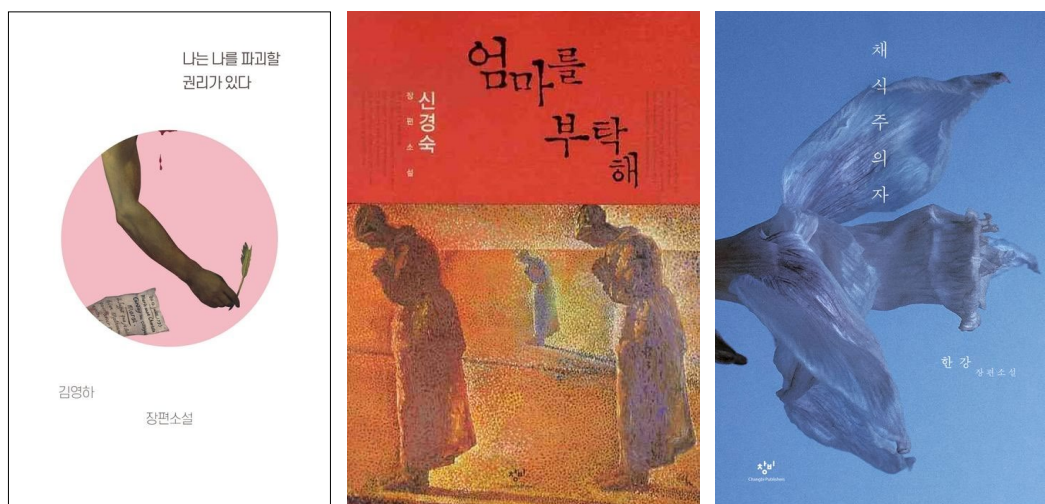


Yerimdang's *Why* series and Mirae N's *Survival* series

However, from 2000 onward, the Korean publishing market began to evolve and develop rapidly. Prior to this point, it had been largely centered on the import, translation, and publication of foreign titles. However, from this point onward, titles in various fields developed and produced in Korea began entering the overseas publishing market. Since 2000, Korean children's educational comic book series, such as the *Why* series by Yerimdang and the *Survival* series by Mirae N, have started to be actively exported to countries such as China, Taiwan, and Thailand, with a competitive edge in the Asian publishing market. At the same time, fiction titles related to visual content, including TV dramas and movies, such as “Winter Sonata,” “Autumn in My Heart,” and “Jewel in the Palace,” have been exported to Japan, China, and Taiwan, marking the beginning of

the export of Korean literature.

Then, from 2005, Korean literature began to enter the Anglo-American and European publishing markets in earnest, starting with Kim Young-Ha's *I Have the Right to Destroy Myself* (Bokbok Seoga). Then, from 2010 onward, Korean literature, represented by Shin Kyung-Sook's *Please Look After Mom* (Changbi Publishers) and Han Kang's *The Vegetarian* (Changbi Publishers), began to win prestigious literary awards in the Anglo-American and European publishing markets, maximizing its potential in the publishing industry while communicating with global readers. With this trend expanding to areas other than literature, Korean-published works have secured worldwide competitiveness and have advanced to the center of the international publishing market.



*I Have the Right to Destroy Myself; Please Look After Mom; The Vegetarian*

The fact that publishers within a country's publishing market are able to plan and produce their own content in a variety of fields

has many important implications. First and foremost, Korean publishing has reached a stage where it is able to produce titles that are competitive in the Korean market on its own, with the ability to cultivate the knowledge and education of its own readers. This means that Korea has become less dependent on other countries' knowledge and cultural content, and as a result, the level of Korean knowledge and cultural content production has grown to be globally competitive. The second important implication is that Korea's globally competitive cultural publications have entered a stage where they can be translated and published in various language regions overseas. This means that Korea has acquired the "content power" to plan, develop, and produce content with a unique character that only Korean authors can write or only Korean publishers can publish. The third important implication, which is directly related to the previous point, is that Korea is entering a phase where it may become less dependent on importing Korean translation rights from other countries such as the US and Europe.

However, self-sufficiency in knowledge and cultural contents is not always desirable. Even if a country's publishing market has reached a stage where a group of authors with diverse abilities and qualities has been formed, and they have published rich content to satisfy local readers, it is only unfortunate for readers if published content produced in other languages and cultures is not translated and published as they cross over. In the global publishing market, there are many titles with unique identities

and voices that address universal thoughts, as well as knowledge and cultural content based on new research and sharp insights. However, if they are not imported, translated, and published, readers in that particular area will not be able to experience such excellent content, and will therefore miss out on new experiences of knowledge and culture. As such, the export, import, and translation of cultural publishing content between countries or language regions is very important. In the end, communication and exchange through published works are necessary values for bridging the gap in knowledge and culture between countries and languages, and for creating and maintaining a “global community” through understanding and respect for each other’s “differences.”

### Compelling content transcends environment

Korea is currently going through a period of high exchange rates. As mentioned in the beginning, this is definitely a burden for publishers who pay the advance in dollars. It is therefore understandable that publishers who plan to import titles from overseas publishing markets and translate and publish them in Korea will choose carefully when selecting the titles, and will try to negotiate a contract that reduces the size of the advance in dollars as much as possible. For publishers that bring in translation rights, the burden of paying translators for translations, in addition to the high dollar cost, makes it even

more burdensome to import foreign books. This could be read as a sign that the popularity of translated books in the Korean publishing market is on the decline. But, is the popularity of translated books really dropping in the Korean publishing market? Well, it's hard for anyone to say for sure, because a phenomenon is caused by a combination of reasons and backgrounds over a period of time. However, a few things can be attributed to this phenomenon.

One of the reasons for the shrinking size of the translated foreign book market in the Korean publishing industry is that publishers' strategies to survive in the weak domestic publishing market are shifting toward planning and publishing titles written by Korean authors rather than translating and publishing foreign books imported from abroad. In doing so, they are trying to expand the market area for publishing, distribution, and sales to the global stage by exporting the translation rights of their titles in various languages. One reason for this is that in the era of high exchange rates, they will not have to pay expensive dollars for foreign titles, nor will they have to pay translation fees, which can be a burden, but they will be able to turn the high exchange rate into an advantage by earning foreign currency by exporting translation rights to various foreign language regions. Another reason is that, as mentioned earlier, Korean authors' writing capabilities in various publishing genres and their influence in the publishing market have increased compared to the past. Consequently, this environment is leading to the diversification of Korean

cultural and publishing content as well as the expansion of their competitiveness in the global publishing market.

The good news is that, despite the potential for the market for translated titles to shrink in an era of high exchange rates, as of the end of March 2025, the overall bestseller lists of online bookstores such as Kyobo Book Centre and Yes24 included a wide range of translated titles, from fiction and non-fiction to comic books, in the upper ranks. Some of those titles include Ethan Mollick's *Co-Intelligence: Living and Working With AI*, Yuval Noah Harari's *Nexus*, Ryunosuke Koike's *The Buddha's Voice Reinterpreted in Modern Words*, and John Williams' *Stoner*, all of which are currently popular with Korean readers. This is both an achievement of these titles' market competitiveness in Korean bookstores and a reminder that Korean readers still have a steady appetite for good foreign books. Ultimately, it shows that titles with strong competitiveness, whether in Korea or in the global publishing market, remain within the realm of interest for readers in any market environment, whether they are written by native authors or are translated titles.

## SPECIAL PROJECT

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[New Ways of Walking Through Cities ④]

# A Utopia for Travelers Who Love Romance and Art: Paris

Written by Kim Young-lhm

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From the Eiffel Tower, the Louvre Museum, Montmartre Hill, and Notre Dame Cathedral, to the Etoile Arc de Triomphe, Luxembourg Park, the Seine and Pont Neuf bridge, and the Palace of Versailles, Paris is an incredible landmark in itself. It is a romantic city full of travelers from all over the world and a place where you can breathe in the scent of art. It is also a city of revolutions, with the French Revolution and the Paris Commune demonstrating the power of popular uprisings, and today, it is a charming place where Parisians live their lives in peace and freedom.

Paris, the world's cultural and artistic epicenter, is a city that has enriched and stimulated artists' sensibilities from the Middle Ages to the present day, and is a mecca for those who wish

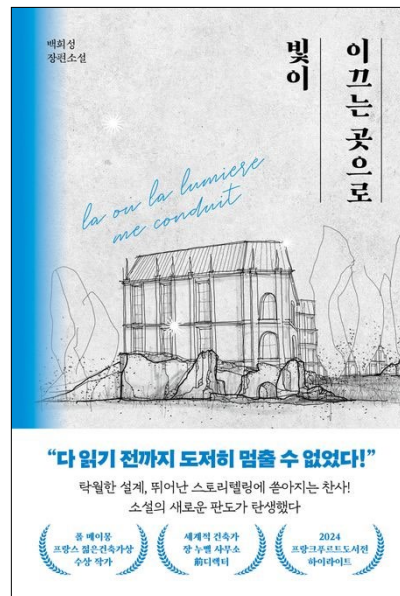
to appreciate them. Yet, it is also a city that does not dwell on the past, but uses its great heritage as a springboard to create a contemporary interpretation of its own French flair and atmosphere, exuding an “ongoing” charm. Paris is as colorful as its fairy pitta, captivating the hearts of all who visit. Perhaps it is the city’s magical charm that makes its visitors, like the characters in the movie “Midnight in Paris,” continue to sing its praises.



**Architecture is sometimes not just about space,  
but a force that sustains life**

One of the highlights of traveling to Paris is architectural exploration - visiting old buildings of various styles. Stunning buildings with a sense of antiquity and elegance elevate the city to a new level of sophistication, and even impress the most

casual observers. In particular, it is even more special to see them through the eyes of an architect. The book, *To Where the Light Leads* (Book Romance), by Baek Hee-Sung, the first Asian to win the Paul Maymont Award in France as a working architect, focuses on the ancient architecture of France. The author’s vivid architectural descriptions, drawn from his expertise, give readers a sense of immersion as if they were the protagonist, Lumière.



*To Where the Light Leads*

“The architect François Walcher encountered this destroyed medieval monastery, and instead of restoring it to its original state, he recreated it in his own way. The ruined medieval monastery and the glass and steel structure that he made habitable again felt like a parent and child growing old together over time. Despite the different materials, the old stone space and the glass and

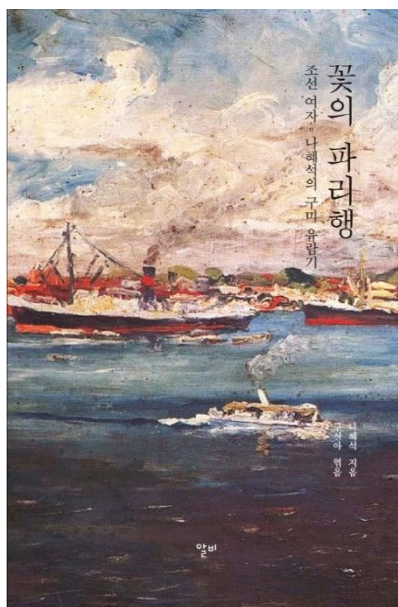
steel structure he built perfectly complement each other, and to me, a modern architect, they are a perfect piece of history.” - from *To Where the Light Leads*

Buildings hold special meaning to people with memories of them. *To Where the Light Leads* builds on this universal truth - it tells a touching story with detailed descriptions of the buildings, heartfelt human emotions, and a message of love for family. The story, which portrays the message of love that a father wanted to convey to his son in his own way, is told through the lens of architecture, and the journey from darkness to light that the novel takes us on shows us the hope and driving force of life. The old memories inscribed in buildings may not be just the past, but a force that sustains the lives of those who share them.

### **The artistic shock and delight of Korea's first female Western painter**

Korea has a painful and chaotic history, with its enlightenment period coinciding with the Japanese occupation of the country. Yet, even during this turbulent time, there were pioneers who used their talents to carve out their own niches, claiming the title of being the “first.” Na Hye-Seok, who made a name for herself as a Western painter at a time when Oriental painting was the dominant form of art, was recorded as Korea's first female Western painter. However, this honorary title did not guarantee her a smooth path to success. As a promising Western painter, Na Hye-Seok experienced a moment of excitement when she

traveled to Europe for a month-long artistic journey, which was quite unconventional at the time. But, in the whirlwind of history, her talent became a shackle that stifled her life.



*A Flower's Journey to Paris*

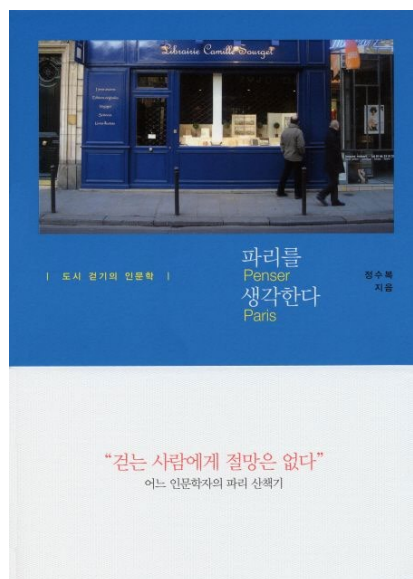
“When you first come to Paris and go to museums or art dealers and look at the paintings, you feel discouraged because they are so enormous and yours is so unremarkable. Just like if there is a lump of pollock roe, the master’s painting is as great as the lump, and yours is just a little, single roe. As a result, it takes a lot of wandering and deliberation to learn and study the situation and tricks of the painting world. A year or two passes in the meantime, and usually one has to make a detour to settle down. All in all, once a person comes to Paris, it will take him or her at least four or five years to learn his or her way of painting and to settle down.” - from *A Flower's Journey to Paris*

*A Flower's Journey to Paris* (RB Books) is an account of Na Hye-Seok's travels through Europe and the United States. Na traveled to Harbin, Moscow, Warsaw, Bern, Paris, Brussels, Berlin, London, New York, Hawaii, Yokohama, and other cities to experience the exotic atmosphere of the cities through the eyes of an artist, and to explore artistic ideas and people. *A Flower's Journey to Paris* captures this beautiful period in Na Hye-Seok's life. In particular, the writings she kept during her eight-month stay in Paris during the era of Picasso, Braque, and Matisse reveal her struggles and aesthetic sensibilities as an artist and woman. The journey awakened her senses and changed her identity nearly 100 years ago. Among them, the time in Paris must have been Na Hye-Seok's most blossoming time, a time she will miss dearly.

### The true colors of Paris captured through walks and reflections

The city you live in and the city you see through the eyes of a traveler will always be very different in appearance and impression. While a traveler's eyes may be filled with fascination and excitement, for locals, cities are sometimes fierce scenes of life and sometimes the stage on which affectionate daily routines unfold. Nevertheless, it is the people who live there who can give us a deeper insight into the city. *Penser Paris* (Munji Publishing), an essay by a humanities scholar who lived in Paris for more than a decade and saw the city through the eyes of both a

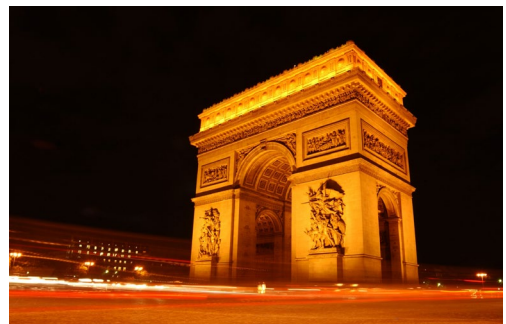
stranger and a local, sheds a colorful light on the city. The author enjoyed the everyday life in Paris up close and deep, and his deep affection for the city can be felt throughout. Above all, *Penser Paris* follows the author's steps, who chose to get to know the city by walking through its narrow streets and alleys.



*Penser Paris*

“Parisians call the fairly self-sufficient neighborhoods where they can get around and do everything on foot, “quartiers.” There are markets, daycare centers, schools, hospitals, pharmacies, cafes, restaurants, parks, banks, post offices, churches, and everything else you need to live. If Montaigne said that he feels French only through Paris, Parisians feel that they are Parisians through their attachment to the “quartier” that they live. - from *Penser Paris*

*Penser Paris*, based on the author's extensive reflections on the city of Paris, crosses the boundaries of literature, art, history, philosophy, sociology, anthropology, geography, and other disciplines, drawing on his long walks through the city. As a result, readers can see the city from a broader perspective and get a glimpse of the people living a high-quality life there. It is also an opportunity to deepen your knowledge of the city. Following the author's steps through *Penser Paris* will give you the gift of time to truly understand the city. This book is a great place to start if you want to go beyond the vague excitement and fantasies and see the real Paris.



“You see as much as you know” is an unquestionable truth. And, there are some things that become more fascinating the more you know about them. Paris, a city with a long and storied history that has shaped its identity, leaves a lasting impression on all who remember it. Sometimes through its inspiring art and culture, sometimes through its citizens’ revolution for a new society, and sometimes through the elegant and stunning everyday life of Parisians, Paris remains a beautiful city. If you spend some quality time in Paris, you may find yourself smiling softly as you realize that you can relate to what the French say every day. “La Vie est Pleine de Petits Bonheurs (Life is full of little blessings).”

## EXPORT CASE

## Cultural Empathy Blossoms in Japan: Korean Literature

Shueisha's story of the popularity and publication of  
Korean literature

Written by Kaori Sato (Shueisha Inc.)

This article is written in Japanese.  
The original Japanese text is also included at the bottom of the article.

Shueisha (集英社) is a general publishing company founded in 1926. It has a wide range of publishing titles and businesses. It is particularly well known for teen and young adult comics, girls' comics, and fashion magazines, including the *Weekly Shōnen Jump*. In addition, it is active in publishing literary journals and novels. In the field of overseas literature, the company publishes books from various countries based on the belief that "We want to introduce good books from all over the world to our readers." Among them, Korean literature has been gaining more and more attention in recent years. Starting with Park Min-Gyu's *Castella* (Munhakdongne Publishing) and *Pingpong* (Changbi Publishers),

works with outstanding literary qualities by authors such as Han Kang and Hwang Jung-Eun have been steadily published by many publishing company in Japan. Moreover, works by young and popular authors such as Chung Se-Rang are also gaining ground in Japanese bookstores, especially among young female readers.

The average readership of foreign literature in Japan has traditionally been relatively older, and one of the challenges was how to appeal to younger Japanese readers, who tend to be more introverted. Western literature was often difficult to read due to differences in grammar and sentence order, not to mention differences in culture, customs, and mindset. Korean literature, however, easily overcame these barriers. Of course, there are still differences in customs between Japan and Korea, but there are many commonalities in terms of social issues. Plus, the growing popularity of K-POP, dramas, movies, and more has increased interest in Korean culture as a whole. In this context, we had the chance to publish Jeong So-Yeon's SF short story collection, *My Neighbor Younghee* (Changbi Publishers). It was exactly what we were looking for: a story that takes a sympathetic eye toward the weaker members of modern society with a touch of SF. Many Japanese readers responded that it "touched their hearts," and we knew we wanted to introduce more books like it.



*My Neighbor Younghee*

One of the works we discovered along the way was *Welcome to the Hyunam-dong Bookshop* (Clay House). Set in a small bookstore, it's a heartwarming story that follows a woman in her 30s. While the story talks about social issues that Korea and Japan have in common, such as overwork and non-regular workers, various real-life books appear in the story. Although we don't usually publish healing novels, the idea of a "book about books" has a strong appeal to Japanese readers; the protagonist's age, gender, and environment fit well with the main audience as well. Most of all, I myself wanted to believe in the power of books and bookstores. The competition with other publishers was fierce, but Shueisha was fortunate enough to take on the publication. As it is a "book about bookstores," our bookstore sales and PR teams were especially attentive. They distributed proof copies to bookstores in advance, created promotional flyers and

bookmarks, and opened a website (<https://lp.shueisha.co.jp/hyunam-dou/>).



Japanese edition of *Welcome to the Hyunam-dong Bookshop*

We also invited author Hwang Bo-Reum to Japan for a talk event and interview at the K-BOOK Festival (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6VufnhjOX80>), a Korean literary event held in Japan in the fall. We felt a little guilty about making her so busy, since the book is all about “let’s not work too hard.” However, author Hwang was very charming, and the Japanese readers who attended the event immediately fell in love with her. Also, the fact that we used artist Banzisu’s tender illustrations from the original book seems to have had a positive impact on readers. This led to the book winning first place in the Japan Booksellers’ Award for Translated Fiction. We were so surprised when we heard the news that we “thought our stomachs were going to jump out.”



*Welcome to the Hyunam-dong Bookshop,*  
winner of the Japan Booksellers' Award for Translated Fiction in 2024

I think the appeal of Korean literature to Japanese readers lies first and foremost in its “cultural similarities” and “ease of reading.” In addition, the poetic sentences and strong messages about historical and social issues are compelling. I believe this is due to Korea’s long “cultural background of valuing poetry” and its diverse historical experiences. In recent years, Korean literature has spread mainly among female readers in Japan, but with Han Kang’s winning of the Nobel Prize in Literature, male readers are becoming increasingly interested as well. We would like to continue publishing works that will resonate with a wider range of readers, especially younger readers.

## Original Japanese Text

集英社は1926年創業の総合出版社です。出版物や事業は多岐にわたり、「週刊少年ジャンプ」をはじめとする少年・青年向けの漫画、少女漫画、ファッション雑誌が特に有名ですが、文芸誌と小説も大きく展開しています。

海外文学については、「世界中の良い本を出したい」という考えに基づき手掛けているため、様々な国の本を刊行しています。そのうち、韓国の本がだんだんと人目を惹くようになってきました。パク・ミンギユの『カステラ』と『ピンポン』にはじまり、ハン・ガンやファン・ジョンウンなどの文学的な作品がどんどん刊行され、さらにチョン・セランなどの若くエンタメ寄りの作家も日本の書店に並ぶようになりました。しかもどうやら若い女性のファンがついているようです。

もともと海外文学の読者は年齢層が高く、内向き気味の若い読者にどうやって興味を持ってもらえるかが課題のひとつでもありました。しかし欧米の作品では、文化や習慣、考え方の違い、加えて文法の語順の違いによる読みにくさがどうしても差異として表れてしまう。そのハードルをぽんと超えてきたのが韓国文学です。もちろん日韓でも慣習などは大きく異なりますが、社会問題は共通項も多く、K-POPやドラマ、映画も人気になりつつありました。

…といったタイミングで、チョン・ソヨンの『となりのヨンヒさん』というSF短編集を出版する機会に恵まれました。現代社会の弱者とその真摯な眼差しを空想的なモチーフと共に描いた作品で、まさしく求めていたものでした。心に刺さったという読者も多く、こうした本をもっと出版したいと考えるようになりました。

そこで出会ったのが『ようこそ、ヒュナム洞書店へ』です。小さな書店を舞台にした心温まる物語で、30代の女性が主人

公、過労や非正規労働といった日韓で共通する社会情勢、さらに様々な実在の本がたくさん登場します。普段ヒーリング・ノベルはあまり刊行しないのですが、「本の本」というのは日本人読者にとって大きなフックになりますし、主人公の性別と年齢、環境が読者層に合致します。そして私自身、本と書店がもつ力を信じたかった。他社との競合になりましたが、無事集英社での刊行が決まりました。

「書店に関する本」ということで、書店営業や宣伝チームも特に頑張ってくれました。書店へのゲラ配布、チラシと広告用のしおり作成、ホームページの制作、そして秋に日本で行われる『K-BOOKフェスティバル』という韓国文学のイベントにあわせて 著者のファン・ボルムさんをお呼びして、トークイベントとインタビューを開催しました。「働きすぎない」がテーマの本なのに結局かなり働かせてしまいました。ファンさん自身もとても魅力的な人で、私も会場にいらした読者のみなさんもあつという間に好きになりました。また、よかった点としては原書と同じバン・ジスさんの穏やかなイラストも後押ししたのではないかと思います。こうして本屋大賞の翻訳小説部門第1位を受賞することができましたが、連絡を受けた時は驚きのあまり胃が飛び出そうでした。

韓国文学の良さは、日本人読者にとってみればやはり文化としての近さ、読みやすさだと思います。それに加えて、詩的な文章と、歴史や社会情勢に対する意思の力強さも魅力です。これは詩により深く親しんできた国民性と、これまでおかれてきた歴史の影響もあるのではないかと考えています。

近年韓国文学は主に女性読者を中心に広まっていますが、ハン・ガンさんのノーベル文学賞受賞をきっかけに男性読者にも注目されています。今後も幅広い読者層、できればなるべく若い皆さんにささる作品を刊行できればと思っています。

**ONE-LINER QUOTES**

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**The Beginning of the 100-Year  
History of Modern Korean Literature****Literary journalist's pick**

Written by Choi Jae-Bong

(Senior journalist specializing in publishing and literature at *The Hankyoreh*)

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Choi Jae-Bong worked as a journalist specializing in literature at The Hankyoreh for 30 years and is currently a senior journalist in the publishing and literature department at the same organization. His books include *A Literary Journey into History* (Hankyoreh), *Writers in the Mirrorland* (Hankyoreh), *Stories Last Long* (Hankyoreh), and *Inquisition, What Writers Write With* (Viche Book).

In the history of Korean literature, the relevance of ancient and medieval literature to modern and contemporary literature, and the origins of modern or contemporary literature, have been the subjects of ongoing and fierce debate. These arguments are based on the fact that until just before the 20th century, most literary works were written in Chinese characters rather than Hangeul, and the fact that the Western word “literature” was

imported to Korea via Japan. After much debate, many scholars have come to a consensus that 1908 is the year that modern Korean literature began. This is because Choi Nam-Seon's *From the Sun to the Boy*, a *shinchesi* (신체시; a new type of poem that emerged in the early days of Korea's new literature movement), was published that year.

However, some argue that this poem falls short of literary modernity in the most accurate meaning of the word, and that other works should be considered as the starting point of modern Korean literature. One of the most prominent alternatives to 1908 is 1925. This is because Kim So-Wol's poetry collection *Azaleas* was published in that year, and Han Yong-Un wrote the works that would be included in his poetry collection *The Silence of My Love*, although it was not published until the following year. In that sense, this year marks the 100th anniversary of the true beginning of modern Korean literature.

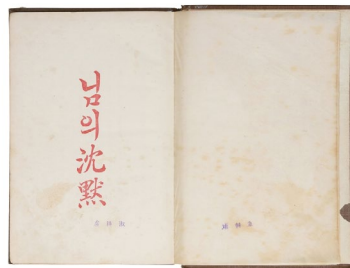


*Azaleas*  
Kim So-Wol



Since *Azaleas* and *The Silence of My Love* have both meaningful similarities and differences, it seems appropriate to introduce the

two books by comparing them. First of all, they both assume the absence of a loved one. Azaleas' title piece, and many others, are about a loved one who has left or is expected to leave. Beginning with "When you'd leave me/ in distaste of my show/ I would let you go without saying a word" and ending with "When you'd leave me/ in distaste of my show/ Never will I weep though I perish," in *Azaleas*, the poem's speaker foreshadows the other person and the attitude he or she will take when, at some point in the future, he or she leaves him or her. Though some interpret this as an ironic plea for the speaker not to leave him or her, it's clear that the possibility of his or her absence is at the heart of the poem.



*The Silence of My Love*  
Han Yong-Un

Though my love is gone,  
I am not parted from love.  
*The Silence of My Love*



Beginning with "Love is gone, gone is my love," *The Silence of My Love* starts with the absolute absence of the loved one. The title, "The Silence of My Love," is a sound metaphor describing the absence of the beloved. However, in Han Yong-Un's poetry, the silence, or absence, of the loved one paradoxically emphasizes the extent of his or her love for the other. The obstacles or impossibilities of love, whether in the East or the West, are often

designed to be the catalysts and facilitators of that love. Similarly, the line, “Though my love is gone, I am not parted from love,” reveals the speaker’s willingness to build up the intensity of love in the absence of the loved one.

Another common thread is that Kim So-Wol’s and Han Yong-Un’s poems about the absence of a loved one are mostly in the voice of a female narrator. The farewell song of a female narrator is a genre rule, one that extends back to the tradition of Korean poetry that goes back to poetry during the Joseon dynasty, the lyrics of Goryeo, and even further back to the songs of Baekje. Despite these similarities, the two poetry collections have distinct characters and differences. While *Azaleas*’ tone leans toward *han* (a complex emotion that combines anger, resentment, grief, and regret) and sadness, *The Silence of My Love* is relatively strong-willed and optimistic. Whereas *Azaleas* is emotional and uses almost formal rhythms, *The Silence of My Love* is more logical and philosophical, with run-on sentences that resemble prose poetry. The differences between the two poets’ poetic worlds may be attributed to the fact that Kim So-Wol enjoyed singing personal emotions while refraining from social activism and public statements. At the same time, Han Yong-Un was a fighter for independence under Japanese occupation and a religious reformer who led the reform of Buddhism. These similarities and differences between the two poetry collections hold literary historical significance, as they serve as two primary sources from which Korean lyric poetry has since developed.

## KNOWLEDGE

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# Books Loved Across Generations: Korean Steady Sellers

Written by Kim Hyun-Jung  
(Brand Communication Team, Kyobo Book Centre)

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Bestseller lists reflect the issues of the times and the interests of readers. You can get a glimpse into readers' thoughts and interests by looking at why a book gained traction. On the other hand, steady sellers are not only reflective of the times, like bestsellers, but they have the power to transcend time. A steady seller refers to a book that goes beyond just being a trend, and has a long-lasting lifespan through the power of its story. There are many books that become overnight bestsellers simply because they are written by popular authors with a fandom, or because they are endorsed by influencers. However, steady sellers are the ones that stay with readers across time. These books have stood the test of time and are more than just a fad;

they resonate with readers and deliver a deeper message about life. They are not just books published a long time ago, but books still being read and revisited today.

### Books passed down as a legacy of the times

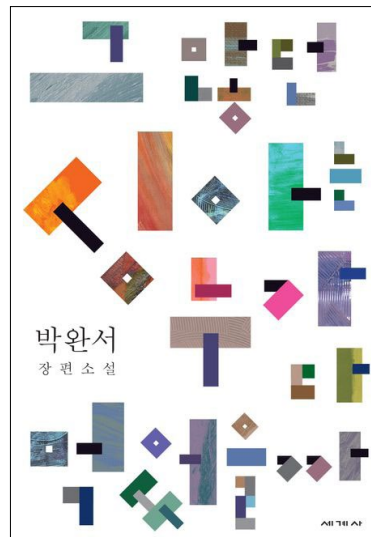
People today find it increasingly difficult to spare much time for reading, and they feel overwhelmed by reading full-length novels with complex character structures and narratives. As a result, short and medium-length novels have become popular in Korean literature. However, sagas and serialized novels, which have been around for ages, still shine with value. Written over 26 years, Park Kyung-Ri's grand saga *Land* (Dasan Content Group) is a monumental legacy of Korean literature and a representative steady seller. Set against the backdrop of Korea's turbulent history from the Korean Empire to liberation, it captures the lives and changes of its many characters. Despite its enormous length, this title continues to be loved by readers for its vivid portrayal of human joys and sorrows. It remains a novel with a strong presence, as evidenced by the recent appearance of reading challenges and content that summarizes the historical context.

Park Wan-Suh's novels also resonate with many readers for their realistic yet heartwarming stories, standing the test of time. Among them, *Who Ate Up All the Shinga?* (Segyesa), an autobiographical coming-of-age novel published in 1992, tells the story of the protagonist who grew up during the Japanese

occupation, liberation, and the Korean War. This tender, vivid recollection of her childhood touches a deep chord and has been consistently selected as a recommended book for teenagers across generations. Many generations often read epic sagas that capture human characteristics in the context of Korean history and become classics.



*Land (20 volumes in total)*



*Who Ate Up All the Singa?*

## Cross-generational resonance through common stories about life

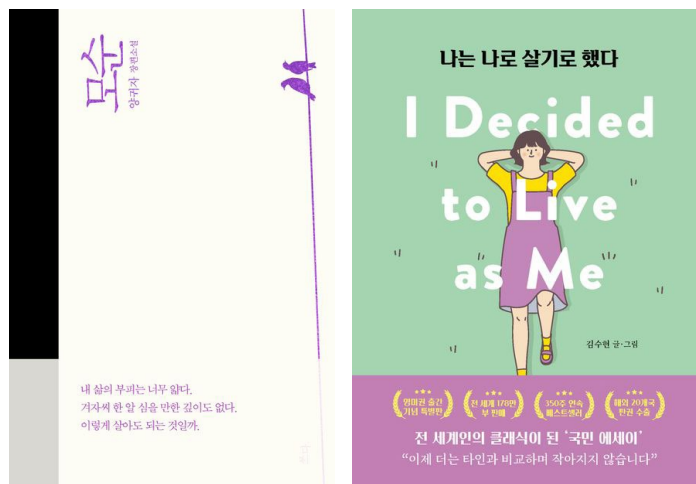
Stories about life that are universally relevant and timeless resonate across generations. Some works that shed light on the social issues of an era become steady sellers. Cho Nam-joo's *KIM JIYOUNG BORN 1982* (Minumsa Publishing), which realistically depicts the patriarchal culture of Korean society and the problems faced by women, sparked the interest of many readers. Since its publication in 2016, the book has steadily gained popularity; it is a representative example of how an ordinary individual's story can draw empathy across generations for a long time. It has also been translated into various languages and exported to various countries beyond Korea, such as Japan, Taiwan, and the English-speaking regions.



Korean, Japanese, Taiwanese, and English editions of *KIM JIYOUNG BORN 1982*

Yang Gui-Ja's *Contradictions* (Write Publishing Co.), published before that, also realistically captures women's diverse life choices and concerns, such as life, relationships, love, and marriage. When it was published in 1998, it became a bestseller

with great popularity among readers in their 20s, and it is still sought after by readers in their 20s today - the children of the 40s and 50s generations that first read it. Revised and re-covered editions have continued to be published, expanding its readership. More recently, word-of-mouth and recommendations have added to its popularity, and it's back on the bestseller list again, showing that its popularity has never waned. Meanwhile, Kim Su-Hyun's *I Decided to Live as Me* (Clay House) is an essay that offers compassionate advice on self-esteem and human relationships in the modern world. Many readers find comfort and encouragement in this book as they design their lives and make resolutions. Long a favorite among readers looking to find their true selves, *I Decided to Live as Me* has become a book that conveys a timeless message.



*Contradictions; I Decided to Live as Me* (special edition commemorating its publication in the Anglo-American market)

## The new generation of readers looks for books that have been popular with readers before them

It is difficult for practical books to become steady sellers given the rapidly changing information they need to reflect. However, books that provide reliable information and practical help are often loved over time and become steady sellers. For example, Ha Jung-Hoon's *Bbibbo bbibbo Symptom-Specific Tips for Sick Babies* (Yuni Chaekbang), one of the best steady sellers in the family category, provides reliable information on baby healthcare and illnesses, and has become a must-have for parents preparing to give birth and raise children. It is constantly being revised to reflect the latest information, reaching new audiences.

In the category of children's books, the educational comic book series *Magic Hanja* (Magic Chinese Characters)(Owl Book) is one of the representative steady sellers. The series has pioneered the educational comics market, garnering solid popularity for over 20 years. Its fun stories and educational values have made it an entertaining read for kids and an educational choice for parents. Meanwhile, a new steady seller for children is the *Common Siblings* (Mirae N Co., Ltd.) series, an example of a series with the characteristics of a YouTuber which succeeded in building a strong fan base. The series is expanding to include a variety of educational content using the characters, enriching the children's book market.

For young adult fiction, there's *Almond* (Darjeeling Books)

by Sohn Won-Pyung. The coming-of-age story of a boy who cannot feel emotions delicately explores the universal theme of “empathy” and has been loved by readers of all ages. It has been well-received not only in Korea but also overseas, gathering a stable readership.



*Bbibbo Bbibbo Symptom-Specific Tips for Sick Babies; Magic Hanja; Common Siblings; Almond*

### Timeless favorites: steady sellers

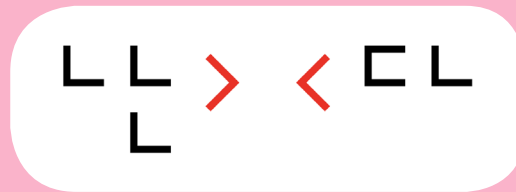
Steady sellers are not just books that sell a lot of copies but works that continue to resonate with and impress readers. They convey universal human experiences and values that transcend time and are read across generations. Although many new titles will be released in the Korean publishing market in the future, I hope that steady sellers that resonate with readers and deeply permeate their lives will continue to be published.

## KOREAN PUBLISHERS

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### Nanda

Adding wings with books



The logo of Nanda

Publishing is more than just making books – it’s about opening up new worlds to readers. Nanda, which started as an imprint of Munhakdongne Publishing and has since established itself as an independent literary publisher, is making a fresh wave in the Korean publishing industry by exploring the unique identity and tactile properties of books. Nanda’s name reflects its desire to give people invisible wings through books, which it publishes in a variety of genres, including non-fiction, fiction, and poetry. Following is an interview with CEO Kim Min-Jung, who is

pushing the boundaries of literature through ingenious planning and experimental sensibilities.

It's a pleasure to have you on *K-Book Trends*. Please introduce Nanda to our international readers and explain the meaning of the company's name.

Nanda is a literary publishing house that started as an imprint of Munhakdongne in 2011 and became independent as an affiliate in 2016, with the catchphrase "Sensuous armament of deep stories." As books are the spirit that makes people achieve the impossible, and are the wings that make people fly, the company was named Nanda, meaning "giving wings to people." The name also emphasizes the terms or acts of "Na (me)" and "Da (all)," by putting a dot between "Nan" and "Da." We often play around with different variations of the word "*Nanda*" because it has a face that changes depending on what word you put in front of it. It can be hard to convey in translation, but I dare say that it's our mission to make our language more playful. Just look at "*Matnanda* (it tastes good)," for example.

Can you elaborate on what you mean by the catchphrase "Sensuous armament of deep stories"?

It is based on the idea that the outward manifestation of a book's beauty is as important as the solidity of its inner depths.

Just as every book in the world is different, so it is natural that every book in the world should be designed differently. I have a philosophy that the spirit of writing should be dressed in appropriate clothes, especially from the very foundation of paper. I believe that if you don't armor your sensitive senses, if you don't try to armor them, there will be no improvement in the material of a book. That's where the one-line subtitle came from.

You are building the realm of not just poetry collections, but prose written by poets. For poets, the experience of writing prose can be a boundary-breaking one. What was the response from the poets who participated?

Everyone's reaction will be different, but I have had people tell me that even though the genre they were writing was prose, the tension of writing poetry and the side stories about implications and thematic aspects that I sometimes interjected were challenging. For me, a book is supposed to make sense anyway - and by make sense, I mean it should make sense backwards and forwards. It's all about the belief that a book should start with something that makes sense.

The monthly prose collection series, *Shiuijeokjeol*, started last year with a piece by Nanda's CEO Kim Min-Jung, and over the course of twelve months, you published a variety of works. What was the message you wanted to convey through the series?

I often hear that poetry is a difficult genre. Readers frequently ask me to recommend books to them. Moreover, the reading population has decreased a lot. The *Shiuijeokjeol* series is a project that started from my desire to show various characteristics of poetry through collaborations with poets and to encourage people to read a book a day, as little as one poem a day. Not only that, I thought it would be beneficial for readers to try to read not only poetry but also various genres of writing, because not all genres of writing are best for them. It was a pilot program, but the response was not bad, so I decided to continue it for another year.



Monthly prose collection series, *Shiuijeokjeol* (January – May, 2024)

You are also organizing book talks with the authors who participated in the *Shiuijeokjeol* series. It seems like it would be an event where poets and readers can talk in-depth about their works. What has been the response to the book talks from poets and readers?

The *Shiuijeokjeol* book talks are being held at local bookstores across the country. Since most poets don't usually get to meet their readers in person, very close and in small numbers, it's a new experience for them as much as it is for the readers. They say that hearing their readers' reactions in the voice of a person rather than in the voice of a "written review" gives them a new mindset for writing on the way home. People need to be met, and meeting people makes a difference. So, the book talk is a project that continues to follow Nanda's spirit of "meeting."

Nanda is one of the imprints of Munhakdongne Publishing, which is known for giving management opportunities to those who have a passion for books and the ability to organize. How did you get the opportunity to run a publishing house, and what do you think are your strengths as a poet and publisher?

In addition to organizing and launching the *Munhakdongne Collection of Poems*, I have been a literary editor for a long time. I think it's the belief that I have been reading authors' books all along, and the bond I have with them, or in other words, the loyalty between me and them, and the understanding that comes

from the camaraderie of being their peer since I am also a poet. I mean, instantly being able to be in their shoes matters.

You are constantly making new literary attempts, such as publishing prose by poets or multi-author poetry collections. What role do you hope to play in expanding this literary spectrum and engaging with readers?

I'm not a great, brilliant person who thinks about the history of Korean literature and its big spectrum and makes books. But I'm a person who can hold a pen and a piece of paper in my hand when I'm having fun, excited, or thrilled. Fun keeps you immature - it makes you a child. It infuses you with innocence. And, I think that's what brings the future to the paper market. A world with lots of children touching paper - wouldn't that be healthy? Wouldn't that be peaceful? Wouldn't that be nature itself?

Nanda is publishing books that excite readers. Are there any books you would recommend to international readers, and why?

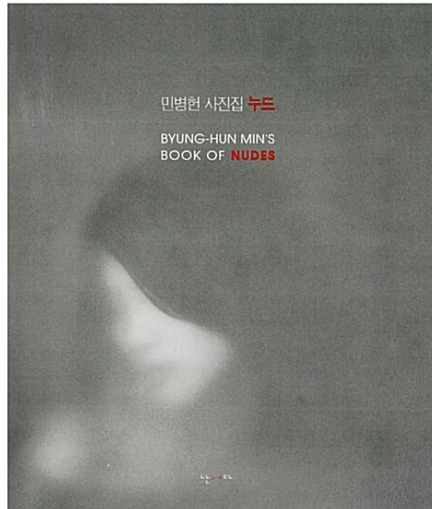
*Presenting K! - All The Korea You May Not See* is already available in Korean and English versions. I don't think there's any other book in English written by a Korean that introduces Korea. It's hard to believe that a book about K-culture could be written

in such an entertaining and in-depth way that even a Korean wouldn't know. When I gift the English version of this book to foreigners, they always love it. I highly recommend reading it.

*Byung-Hun Min's Book of Nudes* is a photography book by world-renowned photographer Min Byung-Hun. It contains all of his nude works, which are popular all over the world, as well as interviews with the artist and commentary on his works in Korean, English, and French. His nudes are full of linear beauty, capturing the body as a universal language, especially in Korea, where nudity is often considered to be something that isn't quite appropriate. He is known to have international artists such as Cigarettes After Sex and Rick Owens as his fans.



Korean and English editions of *Presenting K! – All The Korea You May Not See*



*Byung-Hun Min's Book of Nudes*

We look forward to seeing what Nanda will bring to the publishing world as you continue to reinvigorate the industry with sensible, fresh ideas. Please tell us about the direction you hope to take, your future goals and plans for new titles.

Nanda started out as a non-fiction publisher, but it was actually a warm-up for publishing poetry and fiction. This year, we are going to take a step into poetry and fiction. Of course, I can't really envision that right now, because I can't say that I can envision it until I have done it. I hope that you will continue to support Nanda's poetry and fiction with as much interest and affection as you have so far.

## KOREAN AUTHORS

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### Writer Choi Deok-Kyu

Breaking down language barriers and encompassing generations

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Picture books, a combination of pictures and words, are more than just children's books; they can be a window to intergenerational communication. With this belief, writer Choi Deok-Kyu has been expanding the form of picture books and creating works that blend humanistic narratives with visual art. He believes that picture books can resonate deeply with children and adults who read them, and dreams of the butterfly effect that picture books can create. As a writer and the head of a one-man publishing house, he continues to dedicate himself to encouraging more people to empathize and communicate through picture books.



Thank you for accepting the interview. Please say hello to our readers with a brief introduction of yourself.

It's a pleasure to meet readers from many different countries. I am a father and husband, and I make picture books by re-creating stories from ordinary life. As a picture book author and producer, I am trying to expand the possibilities of picture books by creating various experimental works.

It has been over a decade since you debuted at the Good Children's Book Competition in 2015. How has your journey as an author been over the past decade, and how would you describe the trajectory of your writing career?

Before I got into picture books, I started my creative career in 2004 with a comic book called *Parenting Stories of Yeoreum's Family*. I began working on picture books in earnest in 2011 with *I'm a Monster* (Yun Edition). I have been wandering and transforming in the realm of creativity for more than 20 years. The transition from comic books to picture books was natural as I raised my children. I see comics and picture books as the same in their organic relationship between words and pictures. However, I think picture books focus more on changes and visual variations within a limited scene. I think the boundary between comics and picture books is the difference in how they look at universal themes.

Aside from the content of picture books, I have been thinking about the formal aspects of picture books since I started running a publishing house. The book, *Light In Us* (Yun Edition), is an exquisite combination of content and form that explores the various meanings of light in our lives. Light brightens the surroundings, shares warmth, and allows life to grow and bear fruit. In line with the idea that there is also light in our hearts that we can share, the book is designed to reveal the content when you actually shine a light behind the paper. Since its

publication in 2018, it has sold 25,000 copies in Korea alone. As a writer and producer, I have been expanding the scope of my work through closer communication with readers while producing and selling books. Through this new format of picture books that retains the physicality of paper books, I am gradually expanding into a picture book creator that crosses language barriers and encompasses generations.



The cover and inside page of *Light In Us*  
(the content appears when you shed light from behind the paper)

*Father's Big Hands* (Yun Edition), published in 2020, was an autobiographical story that made a big splash despite being self-published, and was honored with the Bologna Ragazzi Award in 2022. Tell us about the book and what it means to you.

The overall theme of my works is rooted in daily life. If my first picture book, *I'm a Monster*, was a story about desire revealed through a child playing inside an envelope, *Father's Big Hands* is a picture book about the unspoken, heartfelt love that passes from father to son. It was when I went to my parents' house for

the weekend to drop my kids off. I found my dad dozing off, leaning against the dresser in the master bedroom, spending his old age with nothing of interest to do. He looked like he had taken a step back from life after living his entire life breathlessly. He was becoming more like a child: his fast walking pace when we went out was getting slower and slower, and I had to help him up and down the stairs. His teeth were falling out, his beard and nails needed to be trimmed, and his clothes needed to be smoothed. I was saddened to see that it was time for him to need someone's hands. He was going back to the beginning of his life.



The cover and inside pages of *Father's Big Hands*

The son, who resembled his uptight father, couldn't bring himself to say "I love you." During a year of repeated hospitalizations and discharges, all I could do was shave and clip his nails. When I thought of my father in the shower at home, I would get a lump in my throat. I would feel sorry for him as he lay in the hospital, alone, without the comfort of a warm shower. That's why I wanted to create a picture book that captured a blunt son's

affection for his father while he was still alive. I wanted to share the words that had been stuck in my throat all my life through the wordless picture book *Father's Big Hands*.

It seems that your background in Western painting might give you an advantage as a picture book writer, being able to work with both words and pictures. What do you think are the strengths of being able to do both roles?

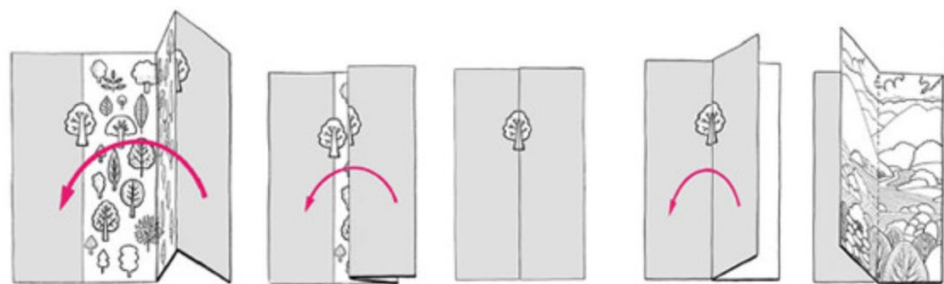
Linguistic and visual expressions are at opposite ends of the spectrum. I think things that are more holistic and emotional that can't be explained in words are brought out in pictures. It seems to me that the clarity of words is the linguistic strength. There are scenes that are effective when shown in pictures, and scenes that are more convincing when expressed clearly in words. I also like it when the words and illustrations tell their own independent stories, amplifying the effect. This is when the text and illustrations are not dependent on each other, but are able to speak for themselves, like a coordinated couple. When the words and pictures meet, the picture book becomes more than just  $1+1=2$ .

Together with your wife, author Kim Yun-Jung, you are running a publishing house called Yun Edition, taking care of all the processes from creation to design, production, and sales. It seems that *Fold and Unfold* (Yun Edition) is the perfect example of this. Please give us a brief introduction to the book and share with us the charm and value of picture books that you wanted to capture in *Fold and Unfold*.

*Fold and Unfold* is a work in which the actual act of folding pages creates an extension of the text, drawings, and other unexpected spaces for the reader. In the case of *Light In Us*, we couldn't find a publisher who was willing to publish it at first because of the production difficulties, which led us to start our own publishing company. We call ourselves a publishing company, but we don't take on other authors' books, only our own. It's a good thing that we can do diverse and experimental works, but we are always busy with things other than creating.

The form of a picture book is just as important as the content, and the way it's made can bring out the best in its themes. Flap books, where folded pages are unfolded, are a popular form for children's hidden object games. Kim Yun-Jung's *Long, Long, Fold-out Book* (Yun Edition) is another example of a flap book that features unexpected surprises as you unfold and unroll the pages. I once asked a silly question: what if you folded the pages instead of unfolding them? As we were folding the pages and talking about the sample illustrations, Kim asked, "What if you unfolded the folded pages?" The question turned out to be the

answer. Take the right half of the unfolded page, which shows a dense forest, and fold it over to meet the left half. The dense forest is gone, and you are left with a single tree. When you unfold the folded page, the scene expands to show those trees clustered together to form a tall mountain. The rhythm of folding and flipping creates a cyclical movement.



*Fold and Unfold*, a book that presents a new experience in picture books through spacial expansion

Without a doubt, we were both enthused by the new format of turning the pages. While Kim was organizing the text and thinking about the themes that the story could touch, I began designing the illustrated scenes in earnest. It was a challenge to create transitions to new scenes that were unexpected when folded, and it was important that the design felt natural, like

putting together the pieces of an intricate puzzle. And so, after several revisions to capture the visual beauty of the illustrations along with the compelling nature of the scenes themselves, the book made its debut at the Seoul International Book Fair in 2023, after a long COVID-19 period.

In the past, Korean picture books have been dominated by foreign translations; however, in recent years, Korean original picture books have become more diverse in topic and have gained in popularity. Why do you think Korean picture books have become one of the most important genres of K-Culture and are loved by readers around the world?

I think it's because they are doing a great job of capturing active, dynamic transformations. I feel that the growing cultural stature within the globalized trend has made our picture books more compelling. I think it's also because they go beyond being deeply personal and bridge generations - picture books that spark joy and happy feelings in even the adults who read them to their children.

You often give talks at places like public libraries and do various activities to help children become more familiar with books. How do these experiences influence your creative process, and what message do you ultimately want to convey to readers?

The range of readers is expanding from young children to adults and even seniors. Readers' voices from the field also expand our thoughts about creating books. There is a dual reader structure of adult readers who approach picture books as a learning tool for educational purposes and young readers who see them as a fun way to play. I hope that people can stop seeing them as just an educational object for children and approach them as a genre of art and literature that can enrich their lives. This is where the primary efforts of authors and publishers who produce good works are urgently needed.

Picture books are often referred to as a "universal language" as they can cut across language barriers and resonate with people of all ages. What do you think makes your works more appealing to international readers?

It never ceases to amaze me how *Father's Big Hands*, followed by *Light In Us* and *Fold and Unfold*, are so well received by readers when they go to book fairs abroad. I think it's a hunger for something new; I also think it's a tie-in with a shift in readers enjoying the unfamiliarity of a new format that doesn't require

hours of focused attention to read a book, and that touches an immediate and emotional point that only picture books can. In the case of *Light In Us*, I have even had locals in Italy who have heard the buzz and requested copies, even paying for international shipping, which is more than the cost of the book.



Recently, there has been a growing interest in Korean literature and picture books overseas, and you are playing a big role in this. Besides *Father's Big Hands*, do you have any other works that have been well received by overseas readers?

*Father's Big Hands* has been published in Italy, Brazil, Portugal, Spain, China, Taiwan, and Japan. *Light In Us* continues to be a

favorite at the Bologna Children's Book Fair every year, selling Korean-edition copies, but has yet to break through the export barrier due to production difficulties. *Fold and Unfold*, the follow-up to *Light In Us*, was published in China last year and met with local readers at the Shanghai International Children's Book Fair. *Where Are You Going, Mr. Turtle?* (Yun Edition), a follow-up to *What Are You Doing, Mr. Turtle?* (Yun Edition), will be published in Taiwan this year.



*What Are You Doing, Mr. Turtle?; Where Are You Going, Mr. Turtle?*

You are broadening the spectrum of the picture book genre with works that cover a variety of audiences and topics. Please tell us about your future plans and goals, and what books you are currently working on.

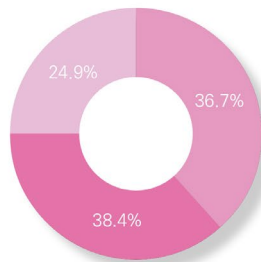
I mentioned earlier how picture books are a collaboration between words and pictures, and how they are a fascinating medium that combines humanistic narratives with visual art. Also, what makes picture books so compelling is the interplay

of content and form. I am trying to produce books that are at the delicate point where the properties of paper and the shape of the book carry the content. I tend to be drawn to making picture books with a unique format that requires a human touch rather than a mechanical process. It would be a bonus if it had a humanistic depth that conveys the meaning of that format. My dream is to create a three-dimensional picture book that can be touched, folded, and unfolded by hand and reflect on its meaning. I'm currently working on a follow-up book that takes the format of *Light In Us*. In a world that is changing rapidly day by day, I dream of making picture books that people can show to their children as the ones they enjoyed as children, and that will be loved for generations to come. Thank you.

## IMAGE OF K-BOOK

## A Festival Where Cherry Blossoms and History Blend: Jinhae Gunhangje Festival

Q. What are the best travel destinations in Korea for spring?



**No. 1**  
Jinhae-gu  
**38.4%**



**No. 2**  
Jeju Island  
**36.7%**



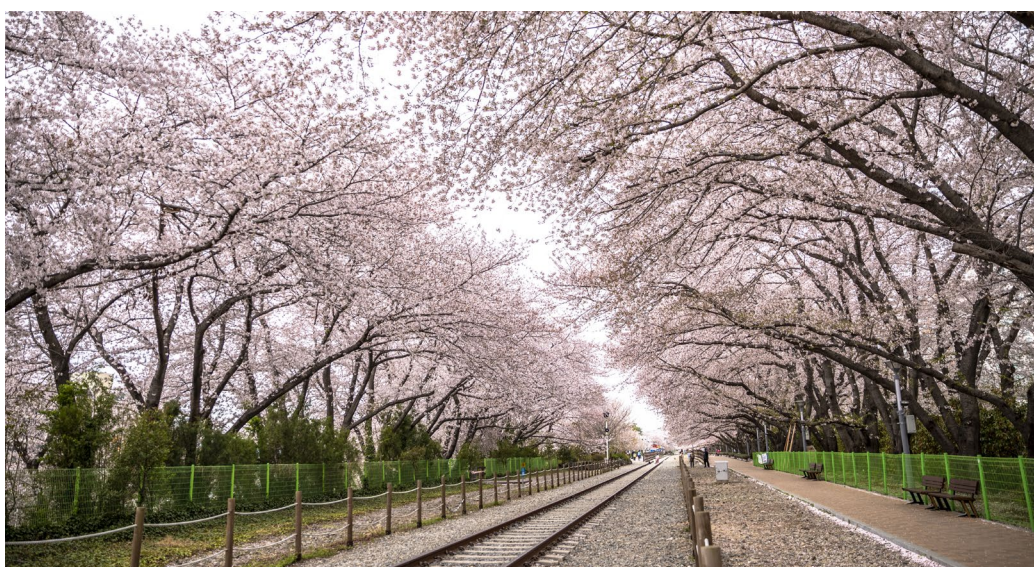
**No. 3**  
Yeouido  
**24.9%**

Spring in Korea is full of colorful flowers and a variety of festivals. While there are many springtime events, such as the Cherry Blossom Festival in Yeouido and the Canola Flower Festival in Jeju Island, the Jinhae Gunhangje Festival is a favorite among many. Voted number one in the “What are the best travel destinations in Korea for spring?” poll by *K-Book Trends*, Jinhae is a popular destination for cherry blossoms and springtime fun, attracting many people every year.

Every year, from late March to early April, Jinhae-gu, Changwon-si, and Gyeongsangnam-do become a feast of cherry blossoms. Walking through the pink tunnels created by the 360,000 Yoshino Cherry trees that line the streets, it feels like walking into a fairy

tale. As you walk along the blossom-strewn paths and breathe in the warm spring breeze, the stresses of everyday life seem to melt away. In particular, the railroad track at Gyeonghwa Station, the Romance Bridge over the Yeojwacheon Stream, and Jehwangsang Park are great places to take photos of the beautiful cherry blossoms.

However, did you know that the Jinhae Gunhangje Festival is more than just a cherry blossom festival? Jinhae is the center of the Korean Navy, and the Republic of Korea Naval Academy and naval port are open to the public during the festival. Visitors can get up close to naval facilities and warships that they wouldn't normally get to experience, and there are various programs held, such as parades by the Navy Band, guard of honor performances, and warship unveilings. Being able to experience the history and culture of the Navy while enjoying the cherry blossoms makes the Jinhae Gunhangje Festival different from other festivals.



“Jinhae Gunhangje Festival” held in Jinhae-gu, Changwon-si, Gyeongsangnam-do is the biggest cherry blossom festival in Korea

There's a book that makes readers realize that the cherry blossoms in Jinhae are not just a natural landscape, but rather something that holds the history and memories of people. It's the short story collection, *Cherry Blossoms in Jinhae* (Minum IN), by Kim Tak-Hwan. Kim is one of Korea's leading novelists, known for his extensive historical references and tightly plotted stories. His works include *The Immortal Yi Sun-sin* (Goldenbough), *The Last Nineteen Days of Heo Gyun* (Minumsa Publishing), and *The Banggakbon Murder Case* (Goldenbough). Yet, *Cherry Blossoms in Jinhae* is quite different from his previous works.



*Cherry Blossoms in Jinhae*

In *Cherry Blossoms in Jinhae*, the first short story collection to be written by Kim Tak-Hwan in a decade since his debut, he tells stories about his life and inner thoughts, rather than the historical events he has been writing about. From how he

started reading books after giving up sports as a child due to pulmonary tuberculosis (the short story *Sleet*), to his memories of studying in Seoul after his father passed away (*29 Years From Jinhae*), his memories of Jinhae, where he was born and raised, are interspersed throughout the book. What makes this book even more remarkable is that it's a new literary attempt that organizes one's memories into narratives. What story will an autobiographical novel by Kim Tak-Hwan, who has been described as "the preeminent storyteller of our time," tell?

What makes the cherry blossoms in Jinhae so beautiful is not just the allure of the flowers themselves. They hold history and the memories of the people who have lived there. And, like writer Kim Tak-Hwan, some people use them as a backdrop to tell their stories. When we look at cherry blossoms, we are not only reminded of their beauty, but also of someone's life that has gone on in the space where the blossoms bloom and fade. So, if you are looking to take a break from your busy life and enjoy nature, history, and literature together, why not read *Cherry Blossoms in Jinhae* and enjoy spring in Jinhae Gunhangje Festival?

\* Go to the voting event for the next month issue  
<https://forms.gle/gKBTpDsVEpCwhemm8>

## LET'S TRY

# Transcribe One Page a Day for Your Vocabulary!

### Event

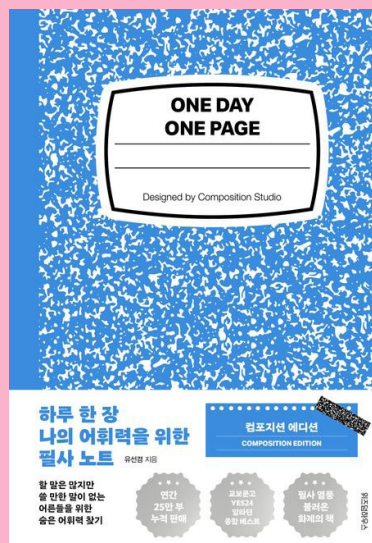
Let's Try introduces various useful, practical books published in Korea every month.

Also, don't miss gift events related to the introduced books!

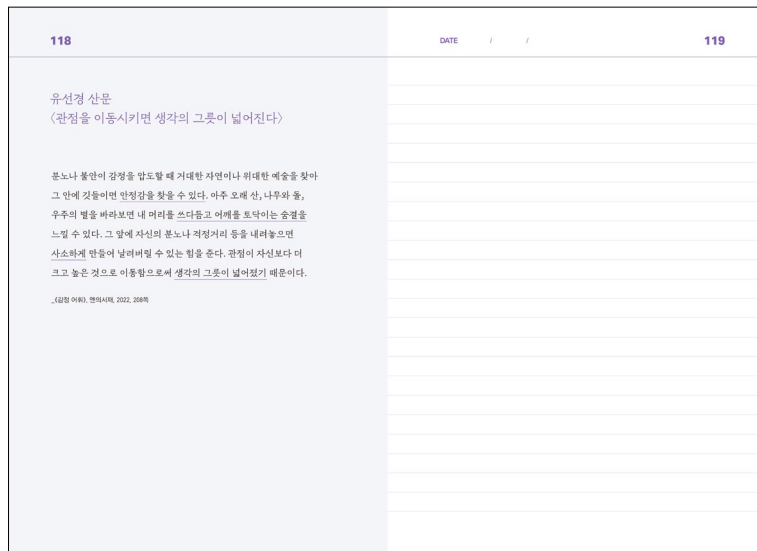
Simply click on the link below and make an entry to the event! Let's Try!

*One Page a Day: A Transcribing Note for Your Vocabulary*

- Written by Yoo Sun-Kyong, published by Wisdom House



An all-in-one transcription book with friendly, detailed instructions!  
 Improve your vocabulary, literacy, and focus with just one page a day.



Do you ever find yourself going blank and frozen when you try to write something - like a letter to your family or a loved one, or a thank you note to your boss at work? You just can't seem to find the right words, your sentences flow awkwardly, and often, you just sigh in frustration at how bland it all feels.

If that sounds like you, then *One Page a Day: A Transcribing Note for Your Vocabulary* is for you! Chosen by 200,000 readers, this book is a hands-on exercise book for anyone who wants to write natural, polished sentences. More than just transcribing activities, it is designed to help you analyze and reform your sentences to develop a better sense of writing. It also uses texts from a variety of genres, such as novels, columns, and essays, to help you strengthen your writing in everyday life.

Take just 10 minutes a day, and you will notice a difference in your writing, and also in your thinking. This book gives you practical tips to help you think about the meaning and nuances of words as you write, rather than just reading and copying them. Once you practice rephrasing key expressions, combining sentences, and expanding your vocabulary, you will soon find yourself writing compelling sentences. Strong writing isn't something you are born with – it's something you build! With consistent practice, you will eventually realize that the correct sentences will start popping into your head as you write.

[Go To Article](https://www.kbook-eng.or.kr/sub/event.php?ptype=view&idx=1583&code=knowledge&category=67)

<https://www.kbook-eng.or.kr/sub/event.php?ptype=view&idx=1583&code=knowledge&category=67>

## I READ

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### *Lemon* by Kwon Yeo-Sun

Written by Julia Kaminska (Reader of *K-Book Trends*)

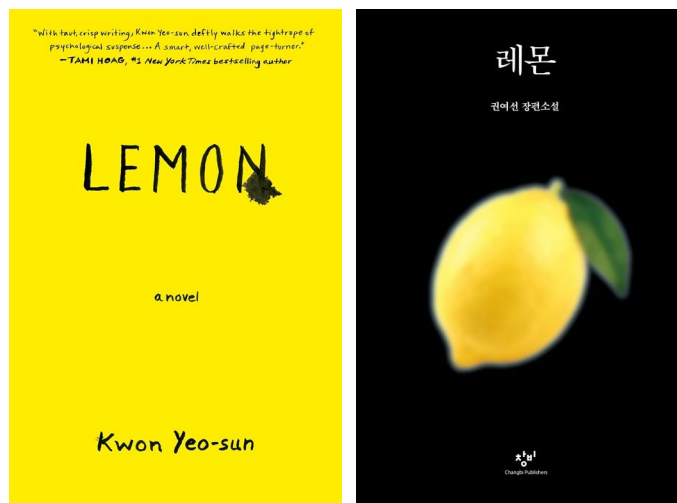
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This article is a review written by a Polish reader of *K-Book Trends* after reading a Korean book. If you want to share your wonderful experience of reading Korean books with other overseas readers, please send us an email!  
[kbooktrends@gmail.com](mailto:kbooktrends@gmail.com)

Are you interested in psychological thrillers that leave you questioning everything? Do you enjoy stories that aren't just about solving a mystery but about the aftermath of tragedy? Then *Lemon* (Changbi Publishers) is the book for you!

Kwon Yeo-Sun's *Lemon*, translated by Janet Hong, is a gripping dive into the unresolved tragedy of the "High School Beauty Murder" in South Korea. In the summer of 2002, when everyone

was caught up in World Cup fever, nineteen-year-old Kim Hae-on was murdered. But here's the catch: the case goes cold when neither of the main suspects—rich kid Shin Jeongjun or delivery boy Han Manu—can be definitively tied to the crime. So, what's left? Grief, guilt, and years of unanswered questions.



English and Korean covers of *Lemon*

Fast forward seventeen years, and Hae-on's sister, Da-on, is still trying to put the pieces together. But instead of a simple detective plot, *Lemon* takes you deep into the emotional wreckage left behind. It's about the people who were left behind, still haunted by the unknown, and how the unresolved can fester into something much darker.

If you're looking for a quick whodunit, this might not be your cup of tea. *Lemon* isn't so much about who committed the crime, but about what happens to the people left behind when they can't move on. The alternating perspectives of Da-on and two of Hae-on's classmates add layers of depth to the mystery, revealing how

the unsolved crime continues to haunt their lives.

What really sets *Lemon* apart is how it explores grief—what do you do when you're stuck in the past, unable to let go? The book isn't just about the pain of losing someone; it's about the confusion and darkness that come when there are no answers. It's a slow burn, filled with moments of haunting clarity and complex emotions.

So, if you're into stories about grief, trauma, and the psychological aftermath of an unresolved crime, this novel will hit you right in the feels. *Lemon* isn't just about uncovering the truth—it's about the emotional baggage that comes when the truth remains hidden. Get ready for a read that will stay with you long after you turn the last page. Trust me, this one's worth it.

## NEW BOOKS

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# Origins of Scientific Terms

## *Origins of Scientific Terms*

How did science become “science”?

Do you think that science and language are two different realms?



And yet, the moment we understand and explain science, the power of language is already at work.

## How did scientific terms originate?

This book takes you back to the moment when the concept of “science” first emerged to explore the nature of science.

At the crossroads of the history of science and the history of concepts, you will come to a new understanding of how scientific terms are born.



**And, you will be able to understand language and science from a broader perspective, breaking away from any preconceptions!**

## Time to dig into the language of science!



The author traces the origins of 17 key scientific terms that we use every day without questioning. He also provides an interesting perspective on how different countries have interpreted and accepted scientific concepts.

## Here's an example.



Today, “technology” is often translated as “*giseul* (기술)” in Korean.

However, the traditional Chinese character “技術” also appears in Sima Qian’s *Shiji* (91 BC), and it had a very different meaning than it does today.



**BEST SELLERS**

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## Spring Blooms With Books: The Beginning of a New Semester

Best seller Trends in the Three Biggest Online Bookstores in Korea for the 2nd week of March, 2025

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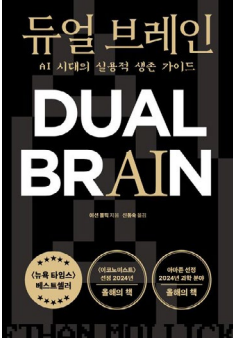

Though climate change is causing more extreme weather events, the season is coming to spring. In Korea, where winter and spring cross paths, it seems like everyone is busy preparing for the new semester after the winter vacation.

As if to prove the staying power of the Nobel Prize in Literature, Han Kang's *Human Acts* has reclaimed the top spot. It wasn't the only novel that made a comeback. Yang Gui-Ja's *Contradictions*, ranked No. 5 in the overall ranking, has been on the best seller list for months, creating a new boom. The novel, which has gone through 132 printings since its first publication in 1998, delicately depicts the life of Ahn Jinjin, a 25-year-old single woman whose life is full of contradictions. Another best seller, *Adult Happiness is Quiet*, which has been a consistent pick for readers, is an enlightening read for those waiting for the vibrant season of spring.

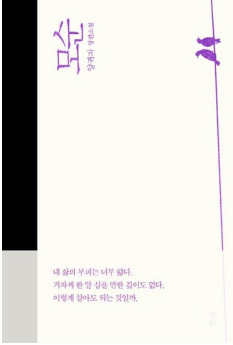
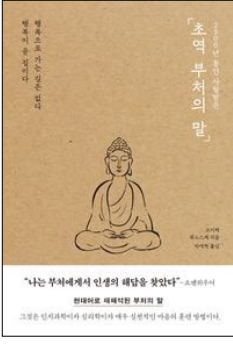

Young adult best sellers were generally dominated by literary titles, a sign of what's on the minds of teenagers as they head back to school. The No. 1 title in the young adult category was *The Kid I Want to Kill*, an unconventional account of a high school girl's death that raises questions about truth and belief through an unpredictable plot. Coming in at No. 2 was *Grit*, which applies the theory of internal communication to child education. It offers teenagers a mindfulness training program that encourages them to study "for themselves, with fun, and all the way to the end." The book, *The Last Day of My Life*, is a full-length novel that explores the issue of teen suicide in Korea from the perspective of a middle school student, capturing the reality of teenagers that adults may not realize. Another book, *A Few Words of Encouragement for You*, is a philosophical essay for teenagers enduring a time of uncertainty, and has been a consistent favorite.

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

Top 10 best sellers for the 2nd week of March

<p>1</p>		<p><b><i>Human Acts</i></b></p> <p>Author   Han Kang          Publisher   Changbi Publishers          Genre   Fiction</p>
<p>2</p>		<p><b><i>Sakamoto Days 20: Belonging</i></b></p> <p>Author   Yuto Suzuki          Publisher   Daewon C.I.          Genre   Comics</p>
<p>3</p>		<p><b><i>Co-Intelligence: Living and Working with AI</i></b></p> <p>Author   Ethan Mollick          Publisher   Sangsang Square          Genre   Self-help</p>
<p>3</p>		<p><b><i>Stoner</i></b></p> <p>Author   John Williams          Publisher   RH Korea          Genre   Fiction</p>



Top 10 best sellers for the 2nd week of March

<p>5</p>		<p><b><u>Contradictions</u></b></p> <p>Author   Yang Gwi-Ja          Publisher   Tsuda Publishing          Genre   Fiction</p>
<p>6</p>		<p><b><u>The Buddha's Voice Reinterpreted in Modern Words</u></b></p> <p>Author   Ryunosuke Koike          Publisher   Forest Books          Genre   Humanities</p>
<p>7</p>		<p><b><u>Kuiju No. 8: B-Side (Vol. 2)</u></b></p> <p>Author   Kentaro Hidano and others          Publisher   Seoul Media Comics          Genre   Comics</p>
<p>8</p>		<p><b><u>Hackers TOEIC Vocabulary: TOEIC VOCA</u></b></p> <p>Author   David Cho          Publisher   Hackers Education Group          Genre   Foreign Language</p>

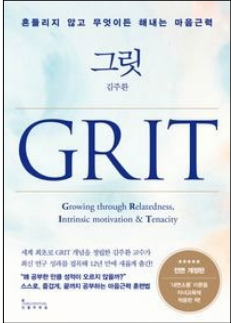

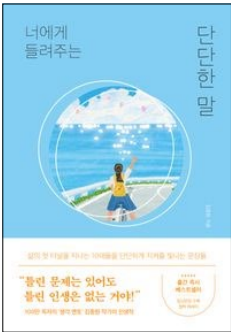
Top 10 best sellers for the 2nd week of March

8		<p><b><i>Shirley</i></b></p> <p>Author   Charlotte Brontë          Publisher   EunHaeng NaMu Publishing          Genre   Fiction</p>
10		<p><b><i>Adult Happiness is Quiet</i></b></p> <p>Author   Taesoo          Publisher   Page 2 Books          Genre   Poetry / Non-fiction</p>

Top 5 young adult books for the 2nd week of March

1		<p><b><i>The Kid I Want to Kill</i></b></p> <p>Author   Lee Kkochnim          Publisher   Woori School</p>
2		<p><b><i>A Window to Literature</i></b></p> <p>Author   Kim Yoo-Jeong and others          Publisher   Spoon Book</p>

Top 5 young adult books for the 2nd week of March

<p>2</p>		<p><b><i>Grit</i></b></p> <p>Author   Kim Ju-Han          Publisher   Influential</p>
<p>4</p>		<p><b><i>The Last Day of My Life</i></b></p> <p>Author   Baek Eun-Byeol          Publisher   Barun Books</p>
<p>4</p>		<p><b><i>A Few Words of Encouragement for You</i></b></p> <p>Author   Kim Jong-Won          Publisher   First Penguin</p>

## #K-BOOK

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## #Hope

### KPIPA Introduces K-Books for Global Publishing Markets through K-Book Platform

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#### *The Giant's Garden*

##### 1. Publication Details

Title | The Giant's Garden  
Author | Choi Jung-in  
Publisher | BOISFORET  
Publication Date | 2021-12-30  
ISBN | 9791187991182  
No. of pages | 56  
Dimensions | 181\*247



##### 2. Book Intro

A girl who has trouble communicating with her friends goes on an adventure in the woods. She finds the garden of a giant she has heard about in rumors, and experiences inner growth and comfort through her encounter with the giant. A girl who is always outside looking in when she is with her friends enters the deep forest, led by a gentle voice. She finds a giant's garden in the woods and makes pleasant memories in nature. When night falls, the girl is lonely. Just then, the giant speaks to her, and she shares all that is in her heart, fully expressing her feelings and reflecting on her inner self. The girl, who has now gained confidence in the giant's forest, runs to tell her story to her friends.

The Giant's Garden portrays the adventure of a child who has trouble communicating with the world. The book conveys hope and comfort, showing readers that they all have someone, a giant, protecting them somewhere. Choi Jungin invites readers to a garden full of the writer's unique style—splendid colors and bold compositions—in The Giant's Garden, and she hopes they can reflect on

their inner self and face any unfamiliar emotions in a garden of their own, and gain the strength and wisdom to live in this world.

[See more details >>](#)

## *The Dialectics of Van Gogh*

### 1. Publication Details

Title | The Dialectics of Van Gogh

Author | Sim Eunsin

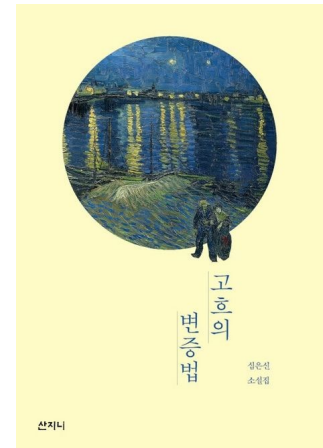
Publisher | SANZINI

Publication Date | 2021-10-20

ISBN | 9788965457558

No. of pages | 256

Dimensions | 140\*205



### 2. Book Intro

Will my night come to an end soon?

Finding a sliver of hope amid one's dim reality

This is the second anthology of short stories by Sim Eunsin in which she introduces diverse literary spaces where her characters breathe and live most vividly in the spaces the author created, such as the Amur River in Russia, Taehwa River in Ulsan, the South Pole base where penguins live, and Arles, France, where Vincent Van Gogh lived.

The eight short stories contained in the anthology of Sim Eunsin present characters who reflect on themselves in the course of everyday life; they feel alone and bleak about their reality yet a sliver of hope shines on them and the readers who are reading their stories.

Here is where we take our roots

And here begins "the narrative of nesting"

Sim Eunsin's stories are composed of literary space where one can reflect on the meaning of life. This literary space is found at times in faraway places and sometimes right here where we are rooted.

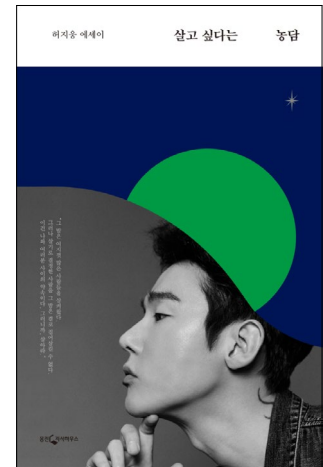
The characters in her short stories are not special. They are ordinary persons who are injured by love, who are conflicted about a stagnant life, or who are weighed down about becoming a parent. Their situations do not change much at the end of the story. But they discover a sliver of hope. As in the story, can hope also enter the mind of readers who live a lonely and difficult life? We hope we, too, can get a glimpse of it in this mundane space we live in.

[See more details >>](#)

## *Joking about Wanting to Live*

### 1. Publication Details

Title | Joking about Wanting to Live  
Author | Her Jiwoong  
Publisher | Woongjin ThinkBig Co., Ltd.  
Publication Date | 2020-08-12  
ISBN | 9788901244600  
No. of pages | 276  
Dimensions | 124\*488



### 2. Book Intro

This book contains 25 stories that he wants to tell to those who are tired and don't have a place to rest, as well as those who carry a heavy burden on their shoulders and struggle to remain steadfast. In this book, Her says, "Misfortune is not the villain riding in the front car of the Snowpiercer but the snow that continues to fall outside of the train." He suggests that readers acknowledge unhappiness as an emotion to be embraced in one's life and urges them to examine their lives subjectively.

[See more details >>](#)

## *You Wanna Be My Dream?*

### 1. Publication Details

Title | You Wanna Be My Dream?  
Author | Yang Euna; Park Boogeum  
Publisher | Pulbit Media Publishing Co  
Publication Date | 2018-10-08  
ISBN | 9788967340940  
No. of pages | 132  
Dimensions | 165\*225



### 2. Book Intro

This book is a children's story that shows elementary school students that finding a career is a process where one finds the works he/she enjoys slowly by identifying and developing his/her own strengths.

Hamin feels unmotivated as there is a 10-week creative experience activity at his school. A 5th grade elementary school student, he is interested in many things without being particularly good at any of them. But he gets annoyed when adults press him to decide on one future "career."

One day, Hamin changes his mind after meeting a boy wizard, Jini. He goes to the future world via Fujobs and experiences jobs he has been wondering about. He realizes as he gets to know what he likes more precisely that it is easy to find a job he can enjoy. Now, he also understands his parents and teacher who are so interested in his career.

This book helps students draw the futures that they want by emphasizing their strengths. A supplement, “Project of Developing What I Like to What I Am Good at” worksheet is included.

Students who want to open a new world must find their career direction!

In step with the rapidly changing trends of our hyper-connected society, people are interested in developing the potential and individuality of students and planning work that suits them, even when the students are still in elementary school.

This is a children’s book that helps student readers deepen their understanding of themselves by reading about the various job experiences of the main character, Hamin, and naturally learning how to apply their strengths to their career.

Also, the extra “Project of Developing What I Like to What I Am Good at” worksheet will be helpful for getting students to think about and find their strengths.

[See more details >>](#)

## *The True Beginning*

### 1. Publication Details

Title | The True Beginning  
Author | Park Nohae  
Publisher | Slow Walking  
Publication Date | 2016-05-24  
ISBN | 9788991418219  
No. of pages | 144  
Dimensions | 128\*207



### 2. Book Intro

“In the winter that year, my beginning was my defeat. My defeat was my true beginning” (Park Nohae). In 1991, when socialism collapsed along with its ideal of human liberation, Park was sentenced to death. At that moment, he wrote about the “beginning” at the “end of life”, the end of all things. The true hope has brought up in such agony and despair that a person could hardly endure. Let’s meet with the courage to begin again.

[See more details >>](#)

## Who Decides My Dream?

### 1. Publication Details

Title | Who Decides My Dream?

Author | Kim Hyo

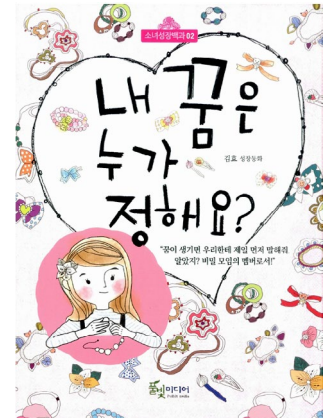
Publisher | Pulbit Media Publishing Co

Publication Date | 2014-10-14

ISBN | 9788967340155

No. of pages | 127

Dimensions | 153\*210



### 2. Book Intro

Jiyeong, an elementary school student, is looking for a job she likes. Her mother believes that Jiyeong's older sister was able to enter a prestigious university because she had decided on her dream job of "journalist" early on and studied for it. That is why her mother asks Jiyeong what she wants to become whenever she has the opportunity.

Jiyeong's friends Sumi and Songi already have their own dreams. Sumi wants to be a student counselor and Songi a traveler. Jiyeong worries, "Why don't I have a dream?" and "Why does my dream change so frequently?"

One day, Jiyeong becomes interested in the hair pin wholesaling that her parents do. When she goes to her father's hair pin shop in Namdaemun on an errand, Jiyeong is surprised at fancy wholesaling accessory store. After experiencing it, she has a dream of becoming an accessory designer. She also wants to inherit her father's store.

But watching her father, who meets foreign buyers, Jiyeong resolves to study English hard, which she always hated learning. She fills up two design notes quickly and shows them off to her friends. Jiyeong is very happy when she thinks about people using hairpins she will design in their hair.

But, Jiyeong's mother strongly objects to her dream. She hates the idea of Jiyeong making and selling hairpins in Namdaemun. Saying that Jiyeong does not know how hard sales is, her mother tells her to find another dream.

Can Jiyeong persuade her mother and follow to her own dream? Why does her mother object? This is children book that enables young readers to consider the proper view of occupations through Jiyeong, who is stuck between what she dreams about and what her mother wants.

[See more details >>](#)

## *The Great Chinking Adventure of Five Hundred and Ten Won*

### 1. Publication Details

Title | The Great Chinking Adventure of Five Hundred and Ten Won

Author | Park Jaehyun; Kim Jinhyung

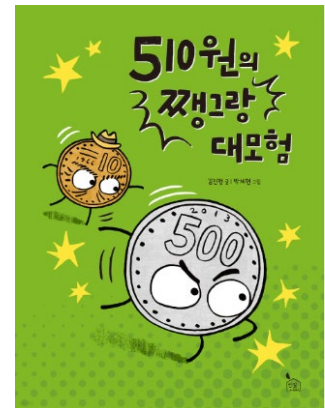
Publisher | KINDERLAND/BANDAL

Publication Date | 2022-07-18

ISBN | 9791160560640

No. of pages | 96

Dimensions | 168\*220



### 2. Book Intro

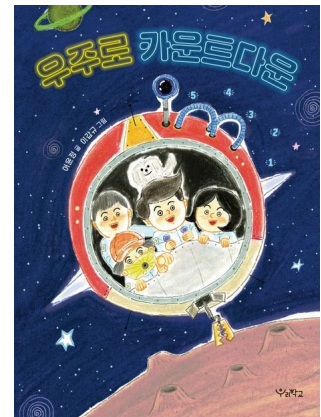
One dark night, a remarkable thing happens in the pile of coins at Lucky Supermarket. Two coins escape to the outside world! They are Orongy, a five-hundred-won coin, and Sipjo, an elderly ten-won coin. It happens as old Sipjo tosses and turns, unable to sleep after hearing the news that ten-won coins may vanish from the world. When Orongy calls on old Sipjo to comfort him, he learns the story of the “piggy bank,” where all kinds of coins come together, become friends, and even help fulfill the desperate wishes of the piggy bank’s owner! Moved by the story, Orongy persuades the elderly coin to embark on an adventure. They break away from the other coins that try to stop them, and sneak out of the supermarket, only to find they are surrounded by danger. The duo get stuck to the bottom of a man’s shoe, end up in his pocket and are even separated. After they roll eagerly to a traditional market, they try to help children who want to eat tteokbokki but don’t have enough money. However, they are mistaken for a bug. That’s not all. They go in search of a child who owns a piggy bank to make his dream come true, but they suffer a mishap when they come across a terrifying neighborhood dog. But whenever they face such challenges, Orongy and old Sipjo cling tight to each other and overcome the crisis. The moment a five-hundred-won coin unites with a ten-won coin to become five hundred and ten won, there is nothing the two coins fear. Before this, Orongy used to think that he was insignificant and had not much of an existence. He even imagined what it might have been like if he was born as a cooler unit of currency, like the fifty-thousand-won bill, which people liked. But his thoughts change after he sees the elderly Sipjo, always proud despite being a small unit of money. After many twists and turns, Orongy meets a child named Junseo. And now, inside Junseo’s piggy bank, Orongy has a new and marvelous dream!

[See more details >>](#)

## Countdown to Space

### 1. Publication Details

Title | Countdown to Space  
Author | Lee Gap-kyu; Eo Yunjung  
Publisher | Woorischool Co.  
Publication Date | 2022-06-10  
ISBN | 9791167550576  
No. of pages | 152  
Dimensions | 168\*228



### 2. Book Intro

A spacecraft returns to the planet after completing a Mars expedition. Lights are turned on while the spacecraft fades out on the screen at a movie theater. Teo excitedly thinks that astronauts are the true heroes. He's so impressed by the movie that he promises to become a member of a Mars exploration team like the protagonist of the movie. He expresses his aspiration to his family only to be rejected.

Teo recruits Saerom, the only one who's on his side, Su-Ho, a mysterious boy, and Jun-Su, who had become estranged from him, to the Bulldozer Project, a project that defies the odds to go to Mars.

Each and every one of the children in this novel has their own inner wounds. They grow while sympathizing with their friends' pain, as they support one another. Teo is a boy who goes after what he wants, undaunted by other's discouragement. Saerom tries to accept what she is now, letting go of her dazzling life in the past. Su-Ho starts chasing hope even though he can't live without a respirator. Jun-Su is a boy who acts out to hide his inner pain but misses a warm touch.

All these kids have different stories but gather to pursue the dream of traveling to Mars. They may have already achieved their dream during the course of training with the almost impossible plan. They learn how happy and exciting it is to live in pursuit of a dream and how it's possible to manage their lives while supporting and loving their friends. The author says that she created this story in the hope that children can grow with their dreams no matter how ridiculous or unattainable.

[See more details >>](#)

## *Swan, the Forest's Child*

### 1. Publication Details

Title | Swan, the Forest's Child  
Author | Choi Do-eun; Shin Eunyeong  
Publisher | sowonnamu  
Publication Date | 2021-04-30  
ISBN | 9791170440864  
No. of pages | 116  
Dimensions | 173\*220



### 2. Book Intro

Swan, the fairy without thorns is born in the forest of thorns where the thorny trees transform into fairies at night. The other fairies alienate and ridicule her, calling her "oddball" for having no thorns. Swan is injured physically and emotionally by the sharp words and thorns of the other fairies. One day, there are visitors to the thorn forest that is isolated from outsiders. Swan is punished for violating the regulation of engaging in a talk with a stranger. As she witnesses the forest turning more and more hostile, Swan is determined to bring the thorn forest back to the days of warm and beautiful time. Will Swan be able to achieve her dream?

[See more details >>](#)

## *The Whale in My Pocket*

### 1. Publication Details

Title | The Whale in My Pocket  
Author | Lee Geum Yi  
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Publication Date | 2021-02-25  
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Dimensions | 135\*200



### 2. Book Intro

This is the story of a small whale that is yet to see the world. Three boys and one girl are the main characters in this novel, and with their strong, uniquely memorable personalities, they each attempt to fulfill the small dreams they keep deep in their hearts. Handsome Minki hopes to become a celebrity one day, while Yeonho was born with the gift of song yet has trouble chasing his dreams

because of his poor upbringing. Junhee is loved by her adoptive parents but still agonizes over a love-hate relationship with her birth mother. While Hyunjoong may have the worst grades in class he is the politest, street-smartest kid you'll ever meet, with the most winning personality. The four kids, each from different backgrounds and with different approaches to life, become intertwined after a fateful, slightly silly decision on the part of Minki, and they soon grow to learn more about each other. Minki and Hyunjoong yearn to become famous, while Yeonho and Junhee have the talent, but they couldn't care less about becoming a celebrity. What will happen to these four teenagers? Each harboring a small whale deep in their hearts, the four protagonists attempt to go after their dreams, and in the process experience grief and despair. Yet, even at the darkest moments when they feel their dreams have escaped them, they refuse to give up, and cheer each other on, to the delight of readers everywhere.

Today's teenagers must go through life with a heavy weight on their shoulders. How good would it be if they could float through life weightlessly? And yet, teenagers are forced to deal with school problems, friendship issues, and an uncertain future. All the while, adults bury them in schoolwork and consider their jobs done.

In the novel, Minki's father has always dreamed of studying without the need to worry about money or time, so when his son, who has no need to worry about time or money, comes home with poor grades, his father can't understand why. Minki is disappointed at his father for not recognizing his dreams. Hyunjoong, quick on his feet and great with computers, has an amazing personality and is what our society needs today. However, just because his grades aren't stellar, his friends and teachers underestimate him. These challenges are difficult for Minki and Hyunjoong, but fortunately, they remain sunny and positive as they go after their dreams.

Kids who study hard, kids who practice singing to become musicians one day, and kids who work on computers to become IT specialists in the future all have one thing in common—they're going after their goals in life. Just as their looks and voices are all different, their interests and passions are different as well. If we can recognize that, then teenagers today would have a more positive future than they do now. The author wants to communicate the message that teenagers need not let their dreams be dashed or changed because of what the adults say; it is up to all adults to be cheerleaders for the teenagers' dreams.

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