

# CULTURAL DIFFUSION IN KOREAN SOCIETY

**GRADES:** High School

**AUTHOR:** Mary Bisheh

**SUBJECT:** World Geography, World Cultures, Contemporary Korea

**TIME REQUIRED:** 50-55 minutes

## **OBJECTIVES:**

1. Students will define cultural diffusion and globalization.
2. Students will identify unique elements of Korean culture.
3. Students will analyze elements of Korean society and culture to categorize whether they are examples of cultural diffusion.

## **NATIONAL GEOGRAPHY STANDARDS**

4. Places and Regions: The student will understand physical and human characteristics of places.
10. Human Systems: The student will understand characteristics, distribution, and complexity of Earth's cultural mosaics.

## **COMMON CORE STANDARDS**

RH1. Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources, attending to such features as the date and origin of the information.

RI By the end of grade 9 and 10, read and comprehend literary nonfiction at the high end of the grades 9-10 text complexity band independently and proficiently.

## **MATERIALS REQUIRED:**

- Cultural Diffusion PowerPoint
- Stations handouts for each student
- Two printed out Station papers posted around the walls
- Timer (to time the stations)
- Tape or a stapler (to hang the stations)

**BACKGROUND or INTRODUCTION:** Cultural or spatial diffusion is the process of the spread of an idea or innovation from one culture to another. This process is more likely to occur from cultural hearths, or centers of culture that are closer in proximity to each other. With the rise of globalization and technology the spread of culture is more prevalent than ever before. Barriers to cultural diffusion include time and distance it takes for the ideas to travel, known as time distance decay, as well as the prevailing attitudes and taboos which might hinder the

adoption of new culture. South Korea is an ideal case study to examine both elements of unique culture and cultural diffusion. Sometimes described as the “shrimp between two whales,” and a dominant economic power in Asia, South Korea is no stranger to the forces of foreign influence and cultural diffusion. Yet as a modern industrialized country who has embraced globalization, they have also maintained many elements of vibrant and unique culture. In examining South Korean culture, both of these trends can be readily observed.

### **PROCEDURE:**

1. Pass out English adult novels written in different languages. Ask “what is the different about these books?” (Can use other examples of cultural diffusion including ads for Coca cola, as an example, from different countries).
2. Transition into a discussion with the students about cultural diffusion and how the warm-up exercise above represents cultural diffusion.
3. Ask students to identify the following: What are some examples of cultural diffusion? What are factors that increase cultural diffusion? What are barriers to cultural diffusion? Let them answer the questions on Step 3 in the handout.
4. Introduce the stations activity with the students, and explain they will analyze five elements of Korean culture to determine whether or not they are examples of cultural diffusion.
5. Have the stations papers hung up around the perimeter in the room in order (#1-5, #1-5). Outline the stations expectations with the students and model how to fill out the handout and to rotate to the different stations.
6. Then split the students into ten groups to the ten stations (two being repeats around the room). Explain to the students that they will rotate five times around the room to complete all five of the stations.
7. Give students about 3-5 minutes at each station using the timer and then tell them to rotate after each station.
8. Ask them to work on their closure questions in their groups and then discuss answers in a full class discussion.
9. As students exit the room, have them turn in their completed handouts.

### **ENRICHMENT:**

1. Have students research and find other examples of Korean cultural diffusion (both aspects of Korean culture that have spread to other areas and ideas/innovations that have come into Korean society).
2. Have students create their own cultural diffusion stations using and have a classroom gallery walk of the stations.
3. Have students create a map showing what elements of Korean society are examples of cultural diffusion and from what countries they are influenced.

### **EVALUATION or ASSESSMENT:**

Students will be assessed by completing the stations handout and justifying their answer to which elements of Korean society are examples of cultural diffusion and which are unique. In addition, students will also be asked to complete closure questions evaluating their knowledge.

**RESOURCES:**

Fouberg et al., *Human Geography: People, Place, and Culture*. New York: Wiley, 2009.

Korean Language Nerd: <http://www.koreanlanguagenerd.com/hangul>

Korean Tourism Organization: <http://english.visitkorea.or.kr/enu/index.kto>

Lee, Sang-Dawn, *Big Brother, Little Brother: The American Influence on Korean Culture in the Lyndon B. Johnson years*. New York: Lexington Books, 2002.

# Station #1: Kpop



**Kpop** otherwise referred to as Korean popular music includes other musical styles such as electronic, R&B, and hip hop. Originating from South Korea, Kpop has become a very popular musical genre throughout Asia and other parts of the world. Kpop singers are often fluent in and sing in English, Japanese, Chinese, as well as Korean to appeal to a larger audience. As a genre, Kpop has its influences from musical styles coming from Japan and the United States. An older variation of Korean popular music called *Trot* was very popular during the 20<sup>th</sup> century Japanese colonial period, was also influenced by the Japanese style of music *Enka*. Later during and after the Korean War period (1950-1953) with the presence of American troops, western music became more widespread and popular throughout Korea, influencing Korean popular music even more.

Globalization has only helped to increase the popularity of Kpop artists whose music and presence is enhanced through social media mediums like Facebook Twitter, and Myspace, causing them to gain a massive following in which fans from around the world can listen to them. Dance and fashion are also an important part of the Kpop industry whose artists are both well versed in both. Some of the most popular groups include Junior Senior, BigBang, Shinee, and Beast just to name a few.

# Station #2- Kimchi



**Kimchi** is a popular Korean dish made from fermented vegetables. There are many varieties of kimchi mainly using cabbage, radish, cucumber, and other vegetables. Some possible reasons why kimchi was developed as a fermented food especially in Korea are as follows: (1) vegetables were popular to the ancient people in Korea whose main industry was agriculture; (2) Koreans had a remarkable technology for salting fish which was frequently used as a seasoning; (3) cabbages (brassica) appropriate for making kimchi were widely grown. The development of kimchi began before the era of the Three Kingdoms on the Korean Peninsula. Due to the cold Korean winter, they had to come up with the storage technology for vegetables as a means of securing food. Kimchi is high in nutrition and is often recommended as a valuable food source both at home and abroad. In fact, there has been a significant increase in kimchi exports in recent years. Korean immigrants to China, Russia, Hawaii and Japan first introduced kimchi abroad, and have continued to eat kimchi as a side dish. It gradually gained popularity even among foreigners. Accordingly, kimchi may be found wherever Koreans live. In America and Japan especially, where relatively many Koreans live, packaged kimchi is easily available. In the past, the production and consumption of kimchi was confined to Korean societies, however, in recent years it has become a globally recognized food.

# Station #3- Hangul



**Hangul** is the Korean written language which was first documented 1446 in a manuscript called *Hunminjeongeum*, which means “to teach the correct sounds to the people” and was explicitly made to replace the Chinese characters used up to this point. This occurred in the Choseon Period during the reign of the well-known Korean leader, Sejong the Great. The Chinese language and the Korean language differ greatly and therefore Chinese characters could not be used to reproduce actual language. Scholars had to learn classical Chinese first in order to read and write. King Sejong wanted all Koreans to be literate, which was difficult to accomplish learning classical Chinese. To make literacy more accessible and easy for everybody, Hangul was created. Throughout Korean history, Hangul has fallen in and out of favor as the official written language of the nation. This can be observed particularly during the Japanese occupation period in which the official language of Korea became Japanese. Today however Hangul remains the main written language of the Korean peninsula. Hangul is known to be one of the most efficient languages in the world and is regarded as being easy to learn.

# Station #4-Pagodas



A **pagoda** is the general term in English for a tiered tower common to Nepal, China, Korea, Japan and other parts of Asia. Modern pagodas originated from the Nepalese stupas which serve as memorials and a symbol of the Buddha. In the early days, before Buddha statues were enshrined in temple halls, a pagoda was a place of worship. Traditionally, stupas are built in the center of temples. On the surface of a pagoda you will sometimes find carved figures of the Buddha, bodhisattvas, or other guardians. Occasionally, wind-chimes hang from the corners of its roof and make beautiful sounds when a breeze blows.

Pagodas in Korea were made of wood, earth, brick, stone or other materials. Ever since Buddhism was first introduced to Korea in the late 4th century, the custom of building wooden pagodas became popular. Until recently, there were only two wooden pagodas remaining, preserved in Korea as cultural heritage objects: the Palsangjeon at the Beopjusa Temple and the Daeungjeon at the Sangbongsa Temple, both used as main halls. There are many stone pagoda remains preserved in Korea. The first stone pagodas were built in the middle of the 6th century after two centuries of building wooden pagodas.

# Station #5-Hanbok



More than three decades ago, **hanbok**, a traditional form of Korean clothing, was very much a part of every Korean's wardrobe. Like all clothing, hanbok also changed over the years with fluctuating fashion trends. Hanbok designs underwent many changes throughout Korea's turbulent history. The hanbok worn today are reminiscent of the late Joseon Dynasty (early 20th century). Traditional women's hanbok consists of *jeogori*, a blouse shirt or a jacket and *chima*, a wrap-around skirt, which is usually worn full. The ensemble is often called *chima jeogori*. Men's hanbok consists of *jeogori* and *baji* which means pants in Korea. Hanbok can be worn as semi-formal or formal wear during traditional festivals and celebrations. The modern hanbok does not exactly follow the actual style as worn in Joseon dynasty since it went through some major changes during the 20th century. Throughout history, Korea had a dual clothing tradition, in which rulers and aristocrats adopted different kinds of mixed foreign-influenced and indigenous styles, while the commoners continued to use a distinct style of indigenous clothing that today is known as Hanbok. In traditional hanbok design, curved features are important. As they are not meant to be tight fitting, the inherent beauty of hanbok is apparent in its elegance and style created by the abundance of material. The curves and vibrant colors of hanbok have had a significant impact on the Korean fashion industry. By combining traditional dress with modern fashion, a series of fusion hanbok designs were introduced. Designs and patterns of hanbok have even been applied to architecture.



Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Period: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

### Cultural Diffusion Stations

**Step 1:** Warm-up question: What is different about these books?

**Step 2:** Complete the following notes using the PowerPoint slides.

What is cultural diffusion?	
Examples	
Factors increasing cultural diffusion	
Barriers to cultural diffusion	

**Step 3:** Determine which of the following are examples of cultural diffusion or not, explain your answer.

1. A sushi bar in New York. Y or N (Circle one) Explain \_\_\_\_\_
2. Hip hop from China. Y or N (Circle one) Explain \_\_\_\_\_
3. Celebrating the 4<sup>th</sup> of July in North Carolina. Y or N (Circle one) Explain \_\_\_\_\_

### Stations Activity

**Step 4:** Using your knowledge, determine which of the following elements of Korean culture are examples of cultural diffusion. Explain your answer.

#### Station 1

Element of Korean Culture: \_\_\_\_\_

Description: \_\_\_\_\_

Example of Cultural Diffusion? Y or N (Circle one) Explain \_\_\_\_\_

#### Station 2

Element of Korean Culture: \_\_\_\_\_

Description: \_\_\_\_\_

Example of Cultural Diffusion? Y or N (Circle one) Explain \_\_\_\_\_

Station 3

Element of Korean Culture: \_\_\_\_\_

Description: \_\_\_\_\_

Example of Cultural Diffusion? Y or N (Circle one) Explain \_\_\_\_\_

Station 4

Element of Korean Culture: \_\_\_\_\_

Description: \_\_\_\_\_

Example of Cultural Diffusion? Y or N (Circle one) Explain \_\_\_\_\_

Station 5

Element of Korean Culture: \_\_\_\_\_

Description: \_\_\_\_\_

Example of Cultural Diffusion? Y or N (Circle one) Explain \_\_\_\_\_

**Step 5:** Closure Questions- Answer using complete sentences.

1. What are some of the countries that have greatly influenced Korean culture? Give examples and explain.
2. How has South Korea's physical geography contributed to the cultural diffusion of other cultures?  
\*\*Think about where they are located\*\*
3. What elements of Korean culture have remained unique? Why do you think this is? Give examples and explain.
4. What factors do you think have led to increased cultural diffusion in the last fifty years globally?

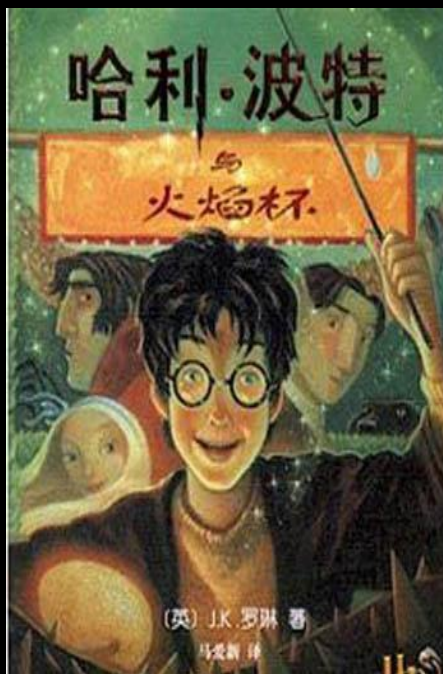


# Cultural Diffusion in Korean Society

Warm-up: What is the difference between these books?



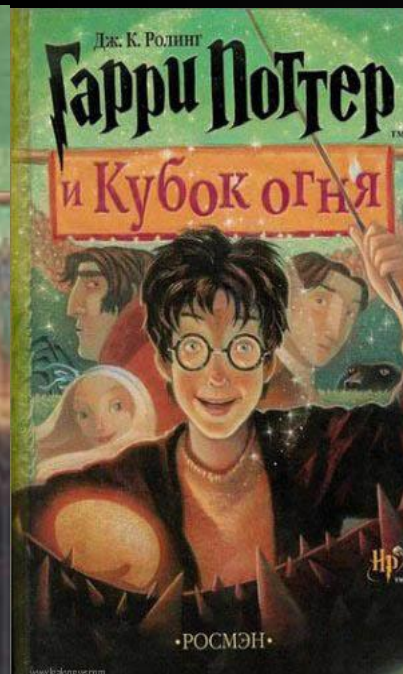
They are all written in different languages.



Chinese



Korean



Russian



Arabic

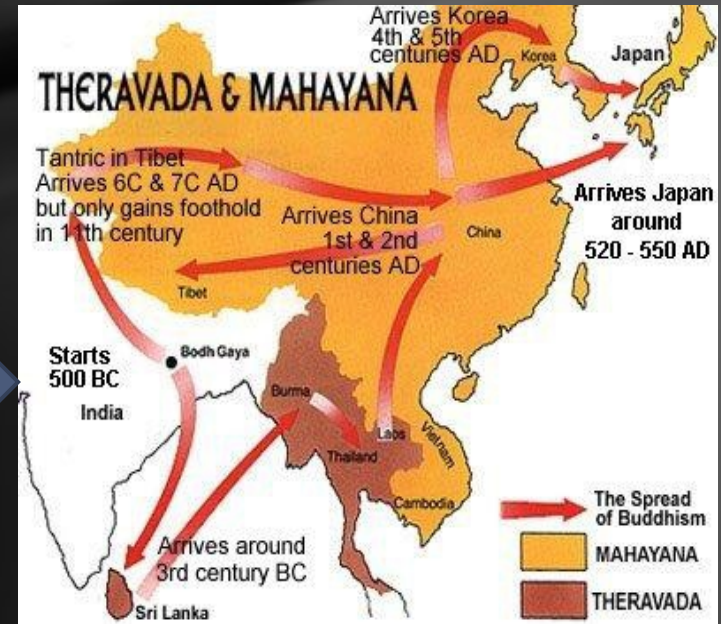
# What is Cultural Diffusion?

- Cultural diffusion is the process of the spread of an idea or innovation from one culture to another.
- This process is more likely to occur from cultural hearths, or centers of culture.
- For example:



McDonalds  
around the  
world

The Spread  
of  
Buddhism



# Factors Effecting Cultural Diffusion

Factors increasing cultural diffusion

- Proximity (Closeness)
- Globalization
- Technology

Barriers to Cultural Diffusion

- Prevailing attitudes/taboo
- Distance Decay (how far apart by time/distance)



# Cultural Diffusion Mini-Quiz

**Directions:** Determine which of the following are examples of cultural diffusion or not, explain your answer.

1. A sushi bar in New York. Y or N (Circle one) Explain.
2. Hip hop from China. Y or N (Circle one) Explain.
3. Celebrating the 4<sup>th</sup> of July in North Carolina. Explain.





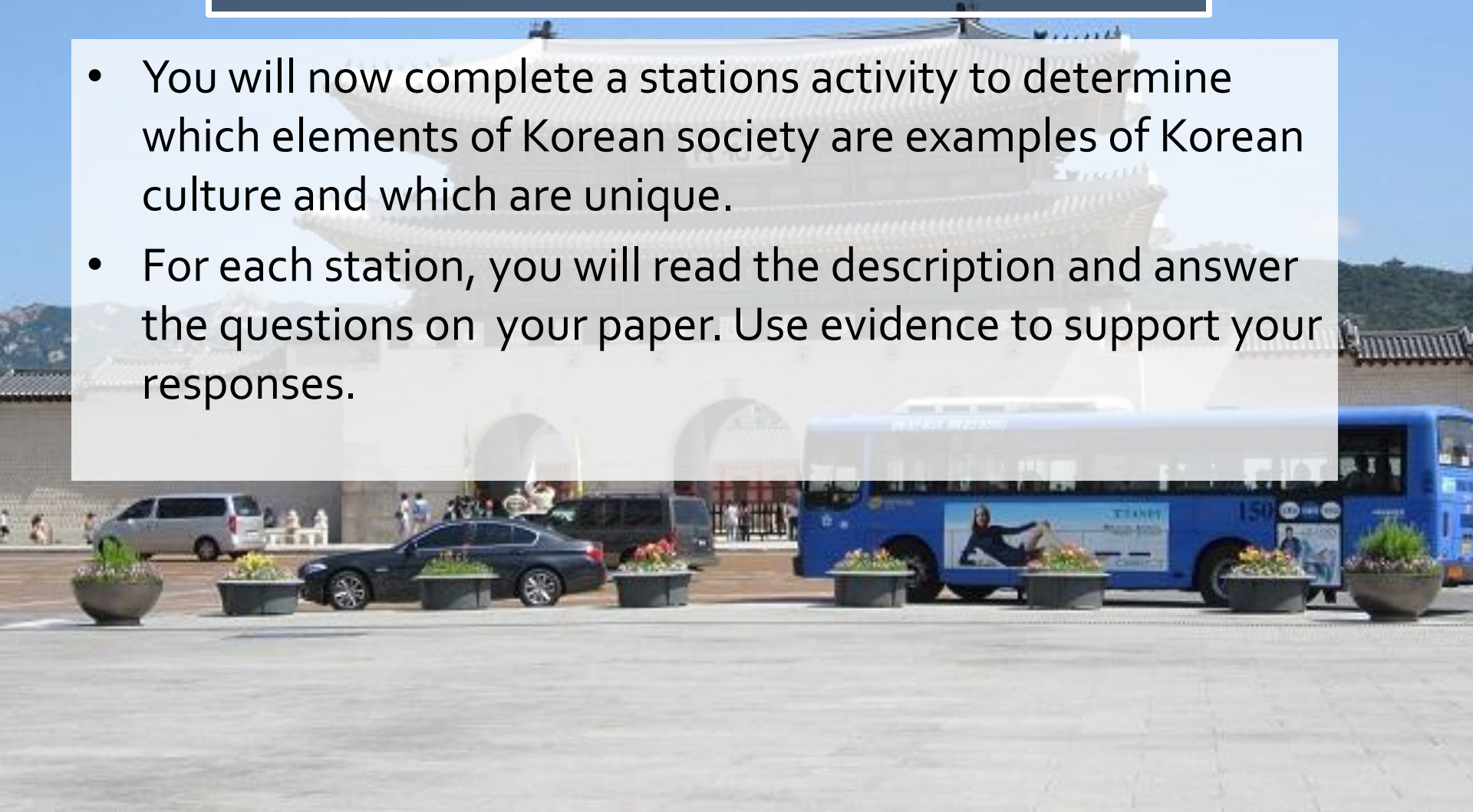
# Cultural Diffusion in Korean Society

- South Korea is sometimes called “the shrimp between two whales because of its unique location between Japan and China
- South Korea is a modern industry country that has embraced globalization yet also maintained elements of traditional culture
- An ideal country to observe cultural diffusion and unique culture



# Cultural Diffusion Stations over Korean Culture

- You will now complete a stations activity to determine which elements of Korean society are examples of Korean culture and which are unique.
- For each station, you will read the description and answer the questions on your paper. Use evidence to support your responses.



# Stations Expectations

- Work with your group to answer the questions
- Do not move on to the next station until you hear the timer
- Rotate even if you are not finished; there may be time at the end to complete missing stations
- If you get done early; wait until you here the time to rotate with the next station.
- Write in complete sentences

Have fun and be productive 😊