

Test Yourself is where you can improve your reading skills. Whether it's for tests like University Entrance Exams or IELTS and TOEFL, or even just for fun, these stories help you to read, understand and improve your English.

Korean content goes global by Gary Boyle



Photo courtesy of Netflix

Read the following story by Melalin Mahavongtrakul from the Bangkok Post. Then, answer the questions that follow.

From *Parasite*'s historic triumph at the Oscars earlier this month to the hype generated by Netflix's romantic drama *Crash Landing on You*, South Korean content is a hit on our big and small screens.

TWO DECADES

From romances to thrillers, and everything in between, it seems Korean cinema and TV have what it takes to capture the international imagination. This has had a profound impact on other industries in the country, through fan tourism, fashion, beauty, food and even cosmetic surgery trends.

This success hasn't happened overnight. "Hallyu", or Korean Wave, began to spread through Asia as early as 2000. One of the first Korean series to be broadcast in Thailand was *Autumn in my Heart*, which is considered a pioneer in Korean melodrama. It became a big hit in several countries. Around the same period, *My Sassy Girl* was in cinemas. The romcom was such a success that it has inspired many international remakes and adaptations.

Two decades on, the South Korean presence has solidified on our screens. The wide range of hits over the years — consider the likes of *Dae Jang Geum*, *Oldboy* and *Train to Busan* — have served to make sure Korean TV and cinema are never far from our minds. This in turn has made filmmakers and showrunners more confident and ambitious. We're now seeing unlikely genre hybrids, such as Netflix's *Kingdom*, which sees a Joseon dynasty prince battling zombies. Its second season is due for release on March 13. Jessada Salathong, lecturer of Communication Arts at Chulalongkorn University, says that many factors have played a part in pulling off this global takeover. For one, the Korean government chose to take the creative economy very seriously and was determined to make it a success.

GOVERNMENT SUPPORT

The country's film commission helps promote Korean films and support their productions through funding and education. It offers incentives and cash rebates to encourage foreign productions to film in Korea. There have been talks about the possibility of establishing a screen quota to limit Hollywood blockbusters and promote local, independent titles in cinemas. And of course, the Busan International Film Festival has helped put the Korean film industry on the world map.

“The world has observed South Korea’s progress from agriculture to producing cars and TVs, to their move into the hospitality and tourism sectors, and beyond. But as we can see during the current coronavirus epidemic, tourism can be a pretty fragile industry. The creative content industry — including film, TV shows, games, manga and anime — on the other hand, remains strong,” said Jessada. “South Korea has a clear road map for the direction they want to go in.”

HONEST FEEDBACK

An important factor that contributes to the success is the collaborative effort shown by everyone from the public and private sectors to the people — the audiences — themselves.

As evidence for this, Jessada cites the speech by Miky Lee, vice chairwoman of CJ Group, at the Academy Awards when *Parasite* won Best Picture. Towards the end of her speech, she thanked Korean audiences for their honest criticism. This says a lot about audience participation in the country, he says.

“Public support doesn’t come through box office revenue only, but also through feedback and comments, which Lee takes as constructive criticism. To do that, audiences not only watch a film or series, they also actively reflect on what they like and dislike. Creators are willing to listen and adapt. This is huge. It’s a good creative process which shows that their society is open to criticism and development. In the end, all this collaborative effort has ended up making Korea a powerhouse,” Jessada concluded.

Section 1: Read through the story and answer the following questions.

1. Korean culture has influenced a variety of industries. True or false?
2. Which film was remade in different countries?
3. Korean TV shows never mix different genres. True or false?
4. The Korean government helps foreign films made in Korea. True or false?
5. Korea currently limits the number of Hollywood films in cinemas. True or false?
6. Jessada gave a speech at the Academy Awards. True or false?
7. Lee dislikes criticism of Korean films. True or false?
8. Honest audience feedback has strengthened the Korean film industry. True or false?

Section 2: Write the noun form of the following words in the space provided.

9. historic 10. romantic 11. wide 12. strong 13. honest

Section 3: Read the following passage. Then, fill in the blanks with the correct words from the choices given.

Making ...14... versions of these series ...15... with a significant amount of pressure.

“We have to ...16... that the quality of Korean productions is very high, and the casts and crews are very talented. Their industry ...17... great development for a long time. They also have big budgets. Now that we’re adapting their works, if we can’t be ...18..., or even better than the originals, it would be hard for Thai audiences to ...19... the remakes,” one director said.

- | | | |
|--------------------|----------------|----------------|
| 14. a. locality | b. local | c. locally |
| 15. a. come | b. comes | c. coming |
| 16. a. understood | b. belief | c. admit |
| 17. a. sees | b. has seen | c. have seen |
| 18. a. on equal to | b. on par with | c. at par with |
| 19. a. accepted | b. except | c. accept |

Section 4: Find words that match the following definitions.

- 20. a great victory
- 21. one of the first of something to exist
- 22. things made of a mixture of other things
- 23. things that motivate or help someone to do something
- 24. the expression of disapproval of something

Find the answers online at <https://www.bangkokpost.com/learning/>