

The Tale of Hong Kiltong

Hō Kyun

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Pine Grove Area High School  
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Tenth Grade: World Literature

Time requirement: Two 42 minute class periods

### 1. *Summary:*

“The Tale of Hong Kiltong”, written by Hō Kyun, describes the main character’s travels amongst the social classes of Korea during the late 16<sup>th</sup> and early 17<sup>th</sup> Centuries.

The hero, Hong Kiltong, is the son of a minister and his maid-servant. Hong Kiltong was extremely intelligent and athletic; however, being the son of the minister’s maid-servant meant that Hong was not valued in his father’s house. The story continues with Hong embarking on a coming-of-age journey which incorporates heroic elements with traditional Korean religious values and social norms.

### 2. *Historical/Literary Context:*

“The Tale of Hong Kiltong” was written during the Chosen Dynasty by Hō Kyun . Kyun based his hero, Hong Kiltong, off of the Chinese novel *The Water Margin*. “The hero in the work attempts to correct social ills single-handedly, but does not repudiate the nobility and what it stands for. He desires to be accepted as a legitimate member of the literati and to share their privileges” (Kyun 119). Kyun emphasizes elements of Confucian principals throughout his work.

### 3. *Discussion questions and answers:*

Please see Appendix E. Please note the page citations are from the original text.

### 4. *Activities:*

*Materials needed for both class periods:* Computer with presentation capabilities, printer, projector, “The Tale of Hong Kiltong”, copy machine to copy Text Dissection Sheet, writing utensil and paper.

Class Period #1, 42 minutes:

- Teacher presentation (See Appendix A):
  - Historical Context
  - Author Background Information
- Confucius Relationship Sheet (See Appendix B)
- Distribution and Explanation of Text Dissection Sheet (See Appendices C and D)
- “The Tale of Hong Kiltong”- The first two pages of the piece should be read in class (teacher preference-individual or group).
- Homework should be assigned per student reading level and understanding of Text Dissection Sheet.

Class Period #2, 42 minutes:

- Review of previous day’s in-class work (See Appendix E).
- Continue reading “The Tale of Kong Kiltong” per teacher preference.
- Discussion Questions (See Appendix E).

- Complete Text Dissection Sheet (See Appendix C) and review Text Dissection Sheet (See Appendix D) as a class.
- Homework: answer Essay Question (See Appendices F and G).

**5. Citations:**

*Confucius: The Secular As Sacred*. Indiana University Northwest. N.p., n.d. Web. 4 Sept. 2013.

Fulton, Bruce. "Korea's Literary Tradition." *Koreasociety.org*, 2007: 25-33. Web. 18 Jun 2013.

Kyun, Hō. "The Tale of Hong Kiltong." *Anthology of Korean Literature*. Trans. Marshal R. Phil. Ed. Peter H. Lee. Honolulu: University Press of Hawai'i, 1981. 119-147. Print.

Map of Korean Peninsula. *Worldatlas*. Web. 3 September 2013.

"Traditional Korean Literature." *Indiana University East Asian Studies Center*. N.p., 11 Sep 2011. Web. 13 Sep 2013.

## Appendix A

### Teacher Presentation

#### Historical Information:



- Map of Korean Peninsula (worldatlast.com)
- Chosŏn Dynasty:
  - Classical Chinese was the official written language of government and scholarship; however, the creation of a vernacular language (han'gŭl) by King Sejong laid the foundations for vernacular literature
  - Confucianism ideals established as official ideology by dynastic founders (“Traditional Korean Literature”)

#### Author Information:

##### Hŏ Kyun:

- Born: 1569 Died: 1618-executed
- Third son of Minister Hŏ Yŏp
- Rose to a high position at court
- Had an association with a group of discontented illegitimate sons (Hŏ Kuyn 119)

#### The Story Itself:

- Story is based upon The Water Margin (a Chinese novel), but also considered to be pseudo- autobiographical
  - Not written in first person (Hŏ Kuyn 119)
- Considered Traditional Korean Literature
- Written in Vernacular and is considered first Korean novel
- Confucian norms, to a certain extent, analyzed within the piece (“Traditional Korean Literature”)

## **Appendix B**

### Confucius: the Secular As Sacred

*Confucius: The Secular As Sacred*. Indiana University Northwest. N.p., n.d. Web. 4 Sept. 2013.

Confucius (551-479 B.C.) was reputedly the great synthesizer of the Shang and Zhou practices. Confucius upheld the Shang practices of ancestral worship, the early Zhou Dynasty development of the Mandate of Heaven, and established the highest social ideals as restoring the style of rule practiced by legendary kings Yao, Shun, and Yu during the Golden Ages. Compared with the writings of the Shang Dynasty and earlier, Confucius laid greater emphasis on individual practice and established the belief in the ethical human nature--his central concept, humaneness (ren), defines ethical behavior as something essential to being a human being, or being a gentleman (jun zi). Furthermore, he built a greater connection between ancestral worship and the heavenly order. What he did was giving more moral meaning to ancestral worship, so that it was not just about following the demands and expectations of the ancestors, but these demands and expectations also accorded with the will of Heaven and the ethical imperatives of individual humans. One of the most prominent characteristics of Confucian teachings is that they are not abstract, and principles are always stated in the context of practices.

#### 1. Confucian learning and self-cultivation

The focus of Confucian learning is practice, but Confucian learning is also about a state of being, which covers one's attitude toward life, one's social relationships, and one's view of oneself. To Confucius, human beings were born similar in the ethical nature they were endowed with, but environment contaminated many, (17:2, 17:3) therefore education to help one develop one's original ethical nature becomes very important. Such education is called self-cultivation, and it is only through such education one achieves humaneness. A healthy emotional state of being helped one better grasp the proper ways to approach life, therefore to be constantly joyful was important. (1:1) Despite that the ultimate goal of Confucius was to serve in a government office, there were many passages where Confucius expressed joy and contentment at a life of learning and observation. (6:18; 6:21; 7:15; 7:18)

#### 2. Confucius's development of ancestral worship

Ancestral worship played a very important role in Confucian learning. But it went beyond the rituals of incense burning and divination, rather, it upheld the respect for one's ancestors, a respect that was extended to one's parents and seniors, and formed the basis for a socially hierarchic society where rulers and elders were respected. (1:2, 1:6, 2:7, 2:11, 13:18)

#### 3. Confucian emphasis on rituals:

Despite that Confucius believed ancestral worship was more than a mechanical exercise of rituals, rituals were extremely important for him, and the correct performance of rituals would help reenact ancient practices. (11:25, 14:18, 17:21, 20:3) During the life of Confucius, China was divided up into many small principalities, and Confucius himself was born into one of them, called Lu, in today's Shandong Province in eastern China. To Confucius, the preservation of

rituals lay first in the rectification of names (13:3): e.g., a king should be called king and a prince a prince, not a prince a king, as many of the princes of the small duchies in China aspired to do. To preserve the correct naming hence the correct social relationships between king and ministers, Confucius, in writing Zhou Dynasty history, would even hide instances where the Zhou king was defeated by the dukes who tried to eventually overthrow his power, or use some euphemisms to avoid any form of disrespect for the Zhou king.

#### 4. Confucian view of the transcendental world

In early Zhou Dynasty before Confucius, China was already developing an idea of a transcendental, willful heaven often identified with ti (god), and the transcendental moral mandate of heaven. Confucius, however, reversed the trend of developing a transcendental view of the world. (6:20: respect spiritual beings, while keeping at a distance from them) Although Confucius accepted the idea of heaven and the Mandate of Heaven, he never talked about God and talked about heaven in terms of a continuum with the human world, as heavenly principles were rooted in human nature and realized through human practices.

#### 5. Confucian development of principles

Perhaps the biggest difference between Confucian writings and Shang writings was the Confucian emphasis on principles--the heavenly principles realized in each individual. These principles included observation of certain types of social relationships (19:1; 19:6; 17:6; 16:8), and those who practiced them. These social relationships embodied principles that Confucius would privilege to his life, should he be given a choice between the two. Confucian principles were seldom abstract, such as the concept of humaneness below, but always discussed in association with specific practices. (e.g. 1:6)

#### 6. Confucian definition of humaneness

Confucius defined humaneness in different ways to different people. To Yan Yuan he emphasized rituals (12:1), to Fan Chi, it was love (12:22), to Ran Rong, it was do unto others as if doing unto yourself (12:2); etc. The focus is tailoring the concept to the needs of different students. It also reflected Confucius's belief that heavenly principles were always realized in individual practices.

The Confucian concept of humaneness became the distinction of the cultivated Chinese man, or junzi. It transcended all social classes (15:38; 16:9) and became the basis of the future Chinese meritocratic system that replaced hereditary aristocratic rule. Those who resisted education and self-cultivation, according to Confucius, would fall to the bottom of society. But along with these education-resistant people (xiaoren, literally, small people), women were permanently subordinate to men (17:25).

**Appendix C**

Text Dissection Sheet

Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Culture: \_\_\_\_\_

Author: \_\_\_\_\_

MLA Citation: \_\_\_\_\_

*Significant Author Information:*

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

*Literary Terms & Examples of Literary Terms:*

Literary Term	Definition of Literary Term	Example of Literary Term within Literary Work	Why is this an example of the literary term?	Page Number

*Symbols:*

Element	Textual Information to Support	Why is this an example?	Page Number

Main Character: \_\_\_\_\_

Central Conflict: \_\_\_\_\_

Narrator: \_\_\_\_\_

**Appendix D**  
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## Text Dissection Sheet

Title: “The Tale of Hong Kiltong”

Culture: Korean, during the Chosen Dynasty

Author: Hō Kyun

MLA Citation:

Hō Kyun. “The Tale of Hong Kiltong.” *Anthology of Korean Literature*. Trans. Marshal R. Phil. Ed. Peter H. Lee. Honolulu: University Press of Hawai’i, 1981. 119-147. Print.

Significant Author Information:

- Killed for his possible connection to a group of discontented illegitimate sons
- Son of a Minister
- Rose to a high position at court

Literary Terms & Examples of Literary Terms:

Literary Term	Definition of Literary Term	Example of Literary Term within Literary Work	Why is this an example of the literary term?	Page Number
Hyperbole	an exaggeration	“In no time, several hundred fearsome bandits...”	Exaggerates the total amount of bandits	Kyun 129
Imagery	Author described scenes which create mental pictures for the reader	“...sudden thunderbolts resounded and a green dragon with flailing whiskers leaped at him...”	Creates a vivid picture of Minister Hong’s dream	Kyun 120

Symbols:

Element	Textual Information to Support	Why is this an example?	Page Number
<i>Lit Candle</i>	“On this night, he had lit a candle...”	<i>Symbolizes knowledge</i>	<i>Kyun 124</i>
<i>Looted Treasures</i>	“ ‘ He has looted treasures from every township... ’ ”	<i>Symbolizes giving back to poor</i>	<i>Kyun 131</i>

Main Character: Hong Kiltong

Central Conflict: Cultural Self-Awareness

Narrator: Third Person-Omniscient



**Appendix E**

## Class Review Questions

1. Who is Kiltong's father? Who is his mother?  
*Minister Hong and his maid-servant Ch'unsōm (Kyun 120)*
2. Why is Kiltong unable to call his father *father* and his brother *brother*?  
*Kiltong was born via an ignoble relationship (Kyun 120).*
- 2A. How does this effect Kiltong?  
*"This grieved him deeply and he could not still the turmoil within himself" (Kyun 120).*
3. What is the significance of education within the piece?  
*Kiltong tends to use education as a means of escape from his grief of non-acceptance from his father and brother. "Kiltong grew steadily and when he was eight years old he could already grasp a hundred things from hearing only one" (Kyun 120). "On this night, he had lit the candle and to steady his wits had turned to the Book of Changes...(Kyun 124)" Additionally, education is a part of Confucian principals which would have been practiced and understood during the Dynasty.*
4. Why did Kiltong choose not to tell his father of the murders? *His father would lose face within his social class knowing that his son, even if ignoble, ended someone's life. "When all this was finally reported to the minister, he went white with shock and said, 'Kiltong came to me last night and with heavy heart bade me farewell. I thought it very strange at the time –but now, this'!...Greatly angered, the minister had Ch'onan driven out of the house and the bodies quietly removed. He then called in the servants and ordered them never to speak of the matter" (Kyun127).*
5. Why was it important for Kiltong to become leader of the "Save-the-Poor" Band? *He finally felt as if he was a part of something greater than himself. Additionally, he was "hurting" his father's social class. "I am told the governor of the Hamgyōng province with his rapacious officials has been squeezing the citizenry to a point where the people can no longer endure it. We cannot just stand by and do nothing'" (Kyun 130).*
6. What is the significance of the ending of the piece? *The cycle of learning and self-cultivation.*

*Appendix F*

The Tale of Hong Kiltong  
Hŏ Kyun  
Korean Literature Essay

*Directions:* In a five paragraph MLA formatted and formal essay define and illustrate the roll of cultural hero within Hŏ Kyun's "The Tale of Hong Kiltong." The essay should be based upon Confucian information we have learned in-class.

**Appendix G**  
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The Tale of Hong Kiltong  
Hǒ Kyun  
Korean Literature Essay

*Directions:* In a five paragraph MLA formatted and formal essay define and illustrate the roll of cultural hero within Hǒ Kyun’s “The Tale of Hong Kiltong.” The essay should be based upon Confucian information we have learned in-class.

Students should have the following elements cultural included in their essay with information from class notes and quotations from “The Tale of Hong Kiltong” to support their answer:

Element	Emphasis of Element and Example
1) A-D Confucian learning of self-cultivation	<p>A) Environmental contamination of self-cultivation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “You’re not the only child born to a maidservant in the home of a minister. How dare you show such willful arrogance...” (Kyun 121).</li> </ul> <p>B) Education-via books:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Kiltong grew steadily and when he was eight years old he could already grasp a hundred things from hearing only one” (Kyun 120).</li> </ul> <p>C) Constant Joy:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Your Majesty has bestowed his gracious benevolence on me, freeing me of my lifelong anguish...( Kyun 139).</li> </ul> <p>D) Serve in a Government Office:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “ ‘Wondrous is he, for there will be no capturing Hong Kiltong. Only if he be appointed Minister of War can he be apprehended” (Kyun 138).</li> </ul>

<p>2) Confucius's development of ancestral worship</p>	<p>A) Respect of Rulers and Elders</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “[Mother]...But I beg you not to worry about me and to take care of yourself” (Kyun 122).</li> <li>• “...Kiltong, in his rage, thought to kill Ch'onan. But the through of the ministers' love for her dissuaded him; he threw away the dagger and resolved to seek an exile's life” (Kyun 126).</li> </ul>
<p>3) Confucian emphasis on rituals</p>	<p>A) Ratification of Names</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “The minister felt compelled to rebuke him (Kiltong) promptly whenever the child called him <i>father</i>, or his brother <i>brother</i>” (Kyun 120).</li> <li>• “...how can I regard myself as a man when I can address neither my father as <i>father</i> nor my brother as <i>brother</i>” (Kyun 121)?</li> </ul>
<p>4) Confucian view of transcendental world</p>	<p>A) Heavenly principals rooted in human nature and realized through human practice</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Message on the notice for Hong Kiltong to turn himself in “The life of men in this world is governed by the five relationships; and these relationships are realized through the constant virtues of humanity, righteousness, propriety, wisdom, and faithfulness. But if one, ignorant of this, disobeys his sovereign's commands and behaves in a manner disloyal and unfilial, how can he be countenanced by the world” (Kyun 136)?</li> </ul>

5) Confucian development of principals	<p>A) Observation of certain types of social relationships</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Even after Kiltong had reached the age of ten he could not presume to address his father and brother as such. Moreover, he was scorned even by the servants. This grieved him deeply and he could not still the turmoil within himself” (Kyun 120).</li> </ul>
6) Confucian definition of humaneness	<p>A) Realized in individual practice, but keeping in mind social relationships</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “I am told the governor of the Hamgyōng province with his rapacious officials has been squeezing the citizenry to a point where the people can no longer endure it. We cannot just stand by and do nothing” (Kyun 130).</li> </ul>

*\*Please note:* Not all elements maybe discussed in a student’s essay. Analysis and length of assignment may lend itself to only a few examples of Confucian elements to be discussed in an essay. Please adjust the assignment according to your needs.