1 Level

KOREAN CLASSIC READER

어둠이 깊어질수록
별은 더욱 빛난다

The deeper the darkness,
the brighter the stars shine

Written by Lee-Anne Davis and Sung-ju Kim
Illustrated by Hyo-sun Kang

Sophora Books

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The Deeper the Darkness, the Brighter the Stars Shine —
Korean Classic Reader — Level 1 — Korean Edition | Charlotte Bronte;
adapted by Sung-Ju Kim; illustrated by Hyo-sun Kang

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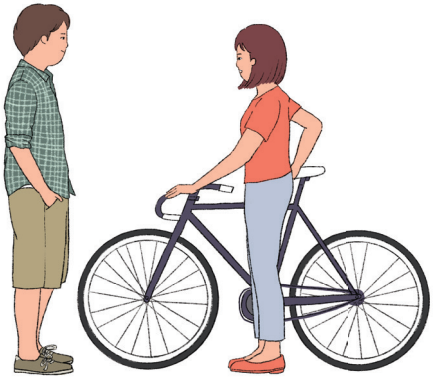

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Connecting you to your target language through stories

제1부

◎

ABOUT THIS BOOK
General information about this series

Introduction to the Korean Classic Reader

This new Korean Classic Reader series is specifically aimed at Korean language learners who are on a journey to becoming more proficient in Korean as an additional language.

This series focuses on adapting world literary classics set in modern-day South Korea, written entirely in Korean. This series will not use any Korean folktore stories.

The purpose of this book is for Korean language learners to have easy-to-read stories – without reaching for a dictionary – that are enjoyable, simple stories and help progress in their language learning.

The book you are reading is to bridge the gap between textbook materials and other resources into a leisurely reading activity that can be read in addition to formal language studying to help build confidence and speed in reading over time.

Reading in Korean

Reading in Korean will help you build fluency in your language journey. It is a good way to begin reading at your level and help you practise reading at your pace until you develop speed and confidence to read naturally in Korean.

In terms of Korean reading materials, seems to be lots of difficult content that leaves learners feeling discouraged in their reading skills. Completing a book in this series will have you feeling a sense of accomplished that you read through an entire novel in Korean.

Graded readers are books that have been written for language learners at their ability using a range of controlled grammar, vocabulary, and sentences, accompanied with illustrations within a simple plot to explore a range of topics that the reader can read without constantly turning to a dictionary.

Research have shown that people who read frequently in their native language are exposed to more vocabulary in context and have ease expressing themselves. Research has also shown that the same is true in foreign language acquisition, where language learners who read in their desired language improve their comprehension and fluency due to reading.

The Levelling System: Level One

Level 1 | A2

At Sophora Books, we created our own levelling system for easy-to-read Korean stories. Each level was developed through research and analysis of Korean language programmes, textbooks, proficiency test expectations, and everyday conversational Korean.

Each story is written so that readers can enjoy and understand it using simple Korean, while naturally building their language abilities along the way.

Level 1 is equivalent to A2 on the CEFR.

Kimbap Level features common, everyday Korean words that readers at this stage are likely to already know or have encountered in their studies. A limited set of key words is repeated throughout each story to help readers remember new vocabulary in context.

Every story comes with a dedicated word list that highlights both the familiar and the new words readers will meet as they read. At the end of the book, you will also find Culture Notes and Comprehension Questions to deepen your understanding of the story and the world it takes place in.

More information on sophorabooks.com.

Is this level right for me?

If you are comfortably reading this book and you know a large portion of the words then this level is right for you. There will be new words or some words you are not familiar with, which is fine, because throughout the book you will get to practise those new words. If you do have to reach for the dictionary for a large majority of the book then perhaps build up your vocabulary and grammar and return to this book at a later time.

Further information about this series

The language used in this series is based on elementary to pre-intermediate level Korean language textbooks searching proficiency tests and university created textbooks so that readers can find common words they have studied in their textbooks. The footnotes are the anticipated new word that is needed to understand the story but within the appropriate level.

For readers who like to gather new vocabulary, all vocabulary is listed at the back of the book in the order of when the new word is introduced.

Who is Sophora Books?

Sophora Books is named after the *Sophora japonica*, also known as the Scholar Tree — a symbol of wisdom and learning in Korea since the Joseon Dynasty.

One day, while walking through a university campus, our founder noticed a particular tree among many others. Its wide, sprawling branches and small, vibrant green leaves exuded a natural elegance. Standing under its shade, she whispered aloud,

"It's so elegant, so beautiful."

The label on the tree read: Sophora japonica — the Scholar Tree.

The Scholar Tree holds deep cultural significance in Korea. During the Joseon Dynasty, it was traditionally planted in schools and academies, symbolizing knowledge and intellectual growth.

At Sophora Books, we believe books are seeds of knowledge — planted with care, nurtured with intention, and destined to grow in the hearts of readers. Just as the Scholar Tree spreads its roots and branches far and wide, we hope our books spread curiosity, wisdom, and a love of learning around the world.

Every book we publish is a seed. Every reader is a garden.

sophorabooks.com

Acknowledgements

This book would not exist without the many readers, students, friends, and fellow language lovers who have walked alongside Sophora Books from its earliest days.

Special thanks to everyone who shared ideas throughout the writing process, who encouraged us when the journey took longer than anticipated, who read the story and gave honest feedback, and who simply supported the work behind the scenes.

To our test readers — the students, teachers, and Korean learners around the world who read early drafts and helped this story become what it is today — we are deeply grateful.

To Hyo-Sun, whose illustrations have turned these characters into more than just words on a page. Your simple and delicate drawings bring Korean culture to life for readers across the world.

To Leanne, whose search for a Korean graded reader started this entire journey back in the spring of 2018 — thank you for asking the question that made this series possible.

And to every reader and supporter — thank you for being part of the Sophora Books community. We hope you will grow with us over the years to come.

Adaptation Notes

This story is loosely based on Charlotte Bronte's Jane Eyre. The characters have been adapted to modern-day Busan and Seoul. Not all characters from the original novel have been used, their roles have been altered, and the story does not follow the plot of the original exactly. Instead, this adaptation takes up the theme of light found in darkness — of a lonely child who slowly builds a family and a home of her own.

We follow the protagonist, Ji-su, as she grows up without her parents, endures unkindness at home, makes true friends, and steps into new stages of her life — a dormitory, an internship, and a city of her own — much like the original heroine, Jane Eyre. Along the way she uncovers the secret of her own birth and, in the end, chooses forgiveness over resentment.

This story fits snugly into the "slice-of-life" genre in order to aid learners who have studied functional language such as daily routines, introductions, or expressing feelings, providing a broader context for learners to see how to use this language outside of the classroom environment.

Character Adaptations

Here is a list of the characters with the original story's characters also listed.

Jane Eyre – 김지수 – [Kim Ji-su]

Eliza Reed – 박다미 – [Park Da-mi]

Jone Reed – 박태영 – [Park Tae-young]

Helen Burns – 이혜림 – [Lee He-rim]

Miss Temple – 담임 선생님 – [Homeroom teacher]

Mrs. Reed – 이모 – [Aunt]

Additional Character – 김나희 – [Kim Na-hee]

Additional Character – 박서진 – [Park Seo-jin]]

Context

Time: 2000 ~ 2009

Cities: Busan and Seoul, South Korea

Genre: A slice of life story

Character

김나현

김지수

이모

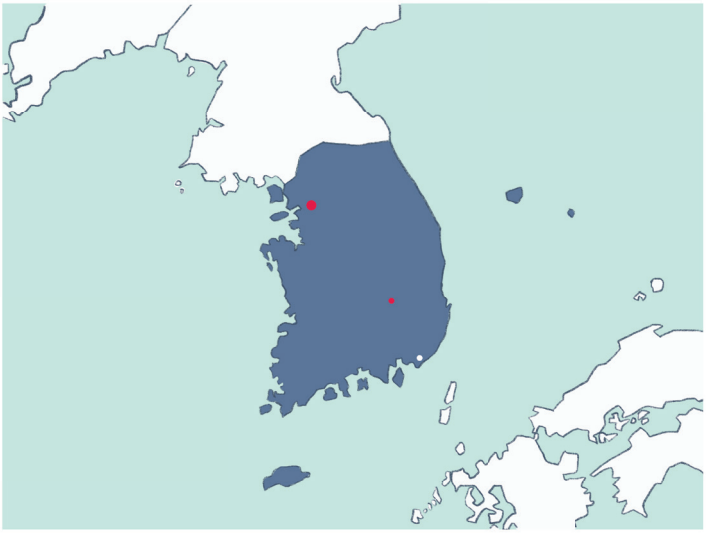
박태영

이혜림

Locations

서울 (Seoul)
Seoul became capital of South Korea in 1948, and the cultural and educational centre of the nation.

부산 (Busan)
A metropolitan city in the southeastern region of Gyeongsangnam-do, or South Gyeongsang Province; the biggest city second to Seoul, it has the largest trade port in Korea.



Connecting you to your target language through stories

제2부

◎

어둠이 깊어질수록
별은 더욱 빛난다

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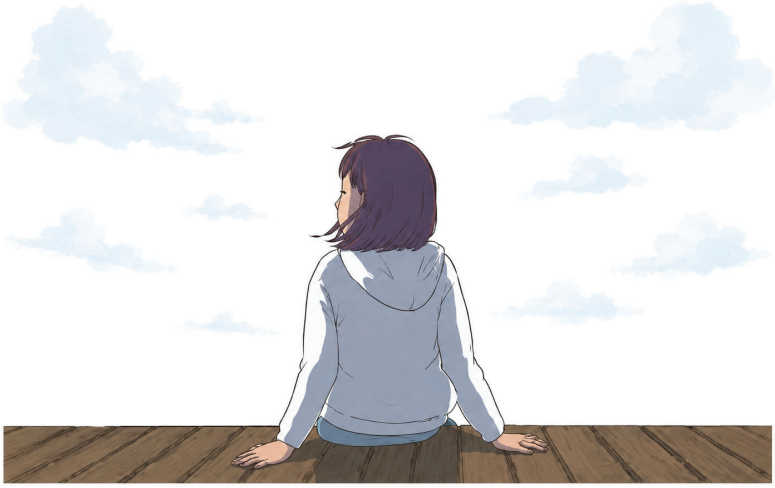
외로움

Track 1

▼

항상 혼자 바다를 보러 갔다.



2000년 겨울

한국, 부산

지수는 부산에 살았다[1]. 지수는 친구가 없었고, 항상[2] 혼자 바다[3]를 보러 갔다. 사촌[4] 태영은 지수를 괴롭혔지만[5] 사촌[4] 다미는 지수에게 잘해 주었다. 지수는 초등학생[6]이었고 다미는 고등학생[7]이었다.

"지수야, 앞을 봐야지."

선생님이 창밖[8]을 보고 있던 지수에게 말했다. 지수는 학교를 좋아했고 미술[9] 수업이 좋았다. 영어 수업도 재미있었다.

선생님은 지수에게 잘해 주었다.

1 살다 – v. live
2 항상 – adv. always
3 바다 – n. sea
4 사촌 –n. cousin
5 괴롭히다 – v. bully
6 초등학생 – n. schoolchild
7 고등학생 – n. high school student
8 창밖 – n. outside the window
9 미술 – n. art

금요일 오후 지수는 수업이 없었다. 친구들은 학원[10]에 갔지만 지수는 학원[10]에 다니지 않았다. 지수는 도서관[11]을 좋아했다. 지수는 점심을 먹고 도서관[11]에 갔다. 요즘 '제인 에어'를 읽고 있었다.

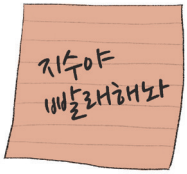
도서관[11] 쉬는[12] 날

'오늘 도서관[11] 쉬는[12] 날이었어?' 지수는 생각했다.

지수는 바다[3]에 가고 싶었지만 추워서 집으로 갔다. 집은 학교에서 가까웠다[13]. 집에 도착하자마자[14] 지수는 방에 들어갔다.

10 학원 – n. private educational institute
11 도서관 – n. library
12 쉬다 – v. close
13 가깝다 – a. close
14 도착하다 – v. arrive

방은 작고[15] 어두웠다[16]. 얼마 지나지 않아 배가 고팠다. 냉장고 문을 여는데 냉장고 문 앞에 '지수야, 빨래[17]해 놔.'라는 메모[18]가 있었다.



냉장고 안에는 김밥이 있었다.

지수는 김밥을 먹고 빨래[17]를 했다. 빨래[17]를 끝낸 지수는 거실[19] 식탁[20] 위에 있는 태영의 색연필[21]을 보았다. 태영의 색연필[21]로 그림을 그렸다. 얼마 후에 이모[22]와 태영이가 집에 왔다.

15 작다 – a. small
16 어둡다 – a. dark
17 빨래 – n. laundry
18 메모 – n. memo
19 거실 – n. living room
20 식탁 – n. table
21 색연필 – n. colored pencil
22 이모 – n. aunt

"그거 내 거야!"

태영이가 소리치며[23] 지수가 들고 있던 색연필을[21] 뺏었다.[24]

"조금만 쓸게."

지수도 태영에게 소리쳤다.[23] 그러자 이모는[22] 지수를 방에 가뒀다.[25]

다음 날 토요일 아침 사촌[4] 다미는 지수에게 몰래[26] 빵을 주며 말했다.

"쉿! 비밀이야."[27]

23 소리치다 – v. shout(out)
24 뺏다 – v. take away
25 가두다 – v. shut (sb) up (in)
26 몰래 – adv. secretly
27 비밀 – n. secret

Further Materials and Other Books

Audiobook

"Scan this QR code to instantly access all Audio tracks."

This graded reader comes with an audiobook to help you practice your speaking and listening skills. Hearing the language will help you become more familiar with intonation, sentence rhythm, and natural pronunciation — essential for understanding Korean in context. This will also support your comprehension when watching or listening to Korean content.

The audiobook is available as a digital download on the Sophora Books website.

https://sophorabooks.com

You can also explore our other books by visiting the website.

Continue with Korean Mate

Reading and listening build your understanding.
Speaking makes it yours.

Korean Mate is our story-based learning platform, where you can read Korean with intonation guides, arrange sentences to test what you know, and record yourself speaking — one story at a time.

https://koreanmate.net

Sophora Books

You've just finished reading a Korean Classic Reader by Sophora Books.

Well done — that was no small thing, and we hope you're proud of yourself.

At Sophora Books, we believe that language learning should be joyful, meaningful, and rooted in stories that stay with you.

We hope this story has not only helped you grow your Korean reading skills, but also given you something to feel, reflect on, and carry with you.

There are many more stories waiting for you.

Let's keep reading, together.

Find us at

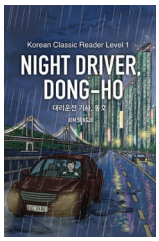
https://sophorabooks.com

Also in the Korean Classic Reader Series

More stories. More Korean. More Sophora Books.

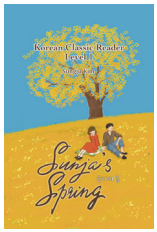
Korean Classics, Retold

The short stories Koreans grow up reading — moved into a Korea you would recognize today.



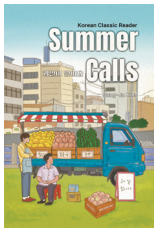
대리운전 기사, 동호 *Night Driver, Dong-ho*

One rainy night in Busan, a substitute driver picks up a passenger who changes everything. Based on 운수 좋은 날, one of the most beloved short stories in Korean literature. (Level 1)



순자의 봄 *Sun-ja's Spring*

After a spring of quarrels with the landlord's daughter, a quiet farm boy in a Jirisan village finally understands what she has been trying to tell him all along. Based on 동백꽃 (Camellias) by Kim Yu-jeong. (Level 1)



과일이 왔어요 *Summer Calls*

Loosely based on When Buckwheat Flowers Bloom by Yi Hyo-seok, this is the story of Cheor-i and a quiet fruit-truck driver. One summer in 1997 Jinju, a memory kept for twenty-three years slowly rises to the surface. (Level 1)

World Classics, Set in Korea

Stories you already know, replanted in Korean soil — Gatsby in Seoul, Jane Eyre in Busan. Knowing where the story goes leaves you free to notice the Korean.

김장미를 찾아서
Looking for Kim Jang-mi

Inspired by The Great Gatsby. A successful man looks back on a lost love in a story of longing and illusion. (Level 1)

비밀정원 ***Where the Garden Blooms***

Inspired by The Secret Garden. On a quiet Korean island, Sujin finds healing through friendship and a hidden garden. (Level 1)

봄은 다시, 여름으로 첫 번째 이야기
Spring Again, and Summer Part One

Inspired by Jane Austen. Seo-ha navigates friendship, first love,and the moments that change everything. (Level 1)

봄은 다시, 여름으로 두 번째 이야기
Spring Again, and Summer Part Two

The story continues with a time-travel twist as Seo-ha learns to take control of her own destiny. (Level 1)

어둠이 깊어질수록 별은 더욱 빛난다
The Deeper the Darkness, the Brighter the Stars Shine

Inspired by Jane Eyre. Set in modern Busan, young and determined Ji-su carves out her own path. (Level 1)

Connecting you to your target language through stories

어둠이 깊어질수록 별은 더욱 빛난다 (개정판)

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