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FOLKLORE & LANGUAGE

THE BROTHER, SISTER, AND TIGER

Every culture has legends—how the sun and moon were created or how the nation got its beginning. The story of The Brother, Sister, and Tiger and the myth of Dankun Shinhwa help people understand early influences in Korea that affected their religious and cultural beliefs.

Starting Points

1. Discuss myths and traditions in America, such as Santa Claus, or a fairy tale, such as Little Red Riding Hood. Tell the story of The Brother, Sister, and Tiger and the myth of Dankun Shinhwa. This will help the students relate better to Korean folklore.

2. Show pictures of the sun and the moon. Emphasize that people all over the earth can see the sun and the moon. Show pictures of different ethnic children; let the last picture be of Korean children. This will draw the students into the story on their level. Display maps of ancient Korea and a picture of Dankun—Korea’s first ruler. Briefly explain to the class that Korea’s history began more than five thousand years ago.

3. Write these words on the board in English and Korean, and ask the students what they think they all have in common. (They are all part of the Korean story.)
   a. Tiger Horangi
   b. Sun Hae
   c. Moon Tal
   d. Trees Namu

Information

Background of the Legend The Brother, Sister, and Tiger

The Brother, Sister, and Tiger was a story passed down orally and is now a popular children’s story. How it began is not exactly known, but we assume it was in response to a child wondering how the sun and moon came to be. It is probable that a mother, a father, or a teacher taught the story to children to help them understand why the sun and moon are in the sky.

The Brother, Sister, and Tiger: A Korean Story

One day a single mother told her son and daughter she was going to the market to buy some rice (see Folklore & Language Visual 1). She told them she would be back before nightfall and to be careful while she was gone. She put on her coat and shoes and left the house. The son and daughter watched her go and then finished up their daily chores before going outside to play in the fields.
The mother walked quickly to the market and bought her rice, but on her way home she had to walk slowly because the rice was so heavy. She carried it in a bag on top of her head. Carrying the rice on her head, she could walk more easily. She was following the road to her house when suddenly, a tiger jumped out in front of her (see Folklore & Language Visual 2).

The mother dropped the rice and ran away from the tiger, but the tiger was too fast. He was starving and he thought the mother would make a nice dinner. He chased after her and as she was running, her coat and shoe came off. The tiger caught her and in one big bite he ate her up! The tiger thought the mother was so delicious that he decided he would eat her children too.

The tiger put on the mother’s coat and shoes and picked up the rice and carried it on his head the way he had seen the mother do. He was able to walk faster than the mother, and he made it back to the house several hours before nightfall.

The children were playing in the fields and saw the tiger come home, but because they were far away, they thought the tiger was their mother. They shouted for joy because she was home so early, and they raced across the field, hopping over the vegetables and rice plants. “Mom, Mom!” they shouted as they ran to the house. The tiger did not answer back, and the children thought this was strange.

The children finally made it to the house. The tiger was inside, standing by the fireplace, so the children could not see his face (see Folklore & Language Visual 3). The children said hello, and walked toward the tiger, but the brother noticed that his mom had yellow and black hair. The sister noticed that her mom had paws instead of hands, and they both yelled out, “TIGER!”

They turned and ran out the door with the tiger chasing them closely. They climbed up a tree and began to pray to heaven that they would be saved (see Folklore & Language Visual 4). The tiger was climbing the tree too but because he did not have hands to grab the tree branches, it was harder for him to do. The children got to the very top and suddenly, a rope fell from the sky. Heaven had sent down a rope for them to climb up. They began to climb as fast as they could. By the time the tiger got to the top, they were far enough out of his reach that they were safe (see Folklore & Language Visual 5).

The tiger was very hungry, so he used his giant teeth to hold onto the rope, and he too, began to climb it. But the tiger was too heavy for the rope, and it began to break. The brother and sister were very scared, and they prayed for more help.

Heaven wanted to protect them, and it knew they did not have a mother. Heaven let them climb high into the sky, and when they were high enough, the clouds covered them. When the clouds disappeared, out came the sun and the moon. The brother had turned into the sun, and the sister had turned into the moon. And the tiger? Because he was so big and heavy the rope broke and he fell to the earth and died.

But every day and night, the brother and sister are protected, because they are high in the sky. They give light in the day and in the night so that little children can always see danger before it comes (see Folklore & Language Visual 6).
About the Story

Koreans show a great deal of respect to their parents. Because the little boy and girl were respectful to their mother by doing all their chores before going out to play, the heavens saved them from being eaten up by the tiger. Though respect to parents is important in America, in Korea is it a way of life. Children do not go against their parents’ wishes, even when they are grown up.

Background of the Myth of Dankun Shinhwa

Tangun, the mythological progenitor of the Korean people and the founder of Old Choseon, the first state of Korea, is mentioned in a number of sources. Therefore, it is concluded that the myth of Tangun has some historical foundation, though it has been distorted through time.

The Myth of Dankun Shinhwa

Once upon a time, Heavenly God, Hwan-in, noticed that one of his sons, Hwan-woong, always had his heart set on the world of mortals below. God looked down upon the world and found the Samwi-Taebaek Mountains the most fitting place for human beings to live. He told his son he could go live in this place.

He gave his son three Cheon Bu-In, God-given seals of a king, and let him go down to the earth to rule over the human beings. Hwan-woong, with three thousand subordinates, took leave of his father and came down to the human world and built his city under the Shindan-soo, sandalwood trees used to make an altar for God, on top of Taebaek Mountain.

He named the place Shin-Si, or Divine City, and called himself Hwan-woong Cheon-wang, or Divine King. He gave his people their first lessons in living uprightly and ruled over them, taking care of three-hundred and sixty challenges such as farming, death, disease, punishment, etc. He also used Poong-baek, wind; Woo-san, rain; and Woon-sa, clouds.

At this time, there was a bear and a tiger living together in a cave. They always prayed to Divine King Hwan-woong that they would be made human beings. Taking notice of their admirable wish, the divine king gave them a bundle of sacred mugworts and twenty cloves of garlic and said to them, “If you eat these and do not see sunlight for one hundred days you will become human beings.”

The bear and the tiger immediately began living on the mugworts and garlic in their cave. After twenty-one days the bear became a woman, but the tiger, unable to endure, violated the instruction of the divine king, and failed to become a human.

Now the woman could not find any man to marry her, so she always prayed under the sandalwood to be given a child of her own. Hwan-woong took notice of her prayer and transformed himself temporarily into a man and married her. She gave birth to a son, Dankun-Wangeum a half-mortal half-god, who grew up to be the king who unified the various tribes that migrated to the Korean peninsula from Central Asia.
Activities

1. On paper plates, have the students draw masks of the face of their favorite character in either of the stories. Choose a student to represent each character in one of the stories and have them reenact the story for the rest of the class.

2. Have the children write a poem about what they would like to be changed into if they were the boy or the girl from *The Brother, Sister, and Tiger*.

3. Do the word search puzzle made from words found in the stories (see *Folklore & Language Visual 7*).

4. Have the students play charades using characters, key words, and scenes from the stories.

5. Have the students make up myths or legends to explain mysteries we see around us or to tell the story of one of their ancestors.

Discussion Questions

1. Why do you think the boy was turned into the sun? Why do you think the girl was turned into the moon?

2. If you had been the boy or girl, how would you have reacted when you first saw the tiger? What would you have done?

3. Why do we need a sun and a moon?

4. Why do countries have their own myths? What myths do we have in America?
The Brother, Sister, and Tiger
Folklore & Language Visual 5: The Brother, Sister, and Tiger
Folklore & Language Visual 6: *The Brother, Sister, and Tiger*
**KOREAN FOLKLORE WORD SEARCH**

Find the words forwards, backwards, upwards, downwards, and diagonally.

```
T K O R E A T P I B H Q Z R
I D A U G H T E R I I O B C
G O U S E Y S K E E E R T Y
E R T G G M R R Y B P R I
R O S S L M O O N E L Y E E
N W U E B M M E K N H K S R
U E N M O C A P R I C E E P O
L I I E H O U S E Q I O E P
A L I N E V A E H S L D C E
C Y M C S C A R E D O N T E
E R U T L U C S O T K N T Q
K A A T M V A T I N S O N S
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**Words**:
- Heaven
- Rope
- Mom
- Tree
- Sons
- Cared
- Daughter
- Climb
- Sun
- Culture
- Respect
- Rice
- Korea
- Tiger
- House
**KOREAN FOLKLORE WORD SEARCH**

**ANSWER KEY**

Find the words forwards, backwards, upwards, downwards, and diagonally.

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T K O R E A + + + + + + + + + + 
I D A U G H T E R + + + + + + + + 
G + + + + + + + E E R T + + 
E + + + + + M + + + + + + R + 
R + S + + M O O N + + + E + 
+ + U + B + M + + + + + S R 
+ + N M + + + + R I C E P O 
+ + I + H O U S E + + + E P 
+ L + N E V A E H + + + C E 
C + + + + C A R E D + + T + 
E R U T L U C + + + + + + + + 
+ + + + + + + + + + + S O N S
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HEAVEN  
ROPE  
MOM  
TREE  

SONS  
CARED  
DAUGHTER  
CLIMB  

SUN  
CULTURE  
MOON  
KOREA  

RICE  
RESPECT  
TIGER  
HOUSE  

International Outreach CultureGuides