

## 2021-2022 Korean Literature Essay Contest Guidelines (High School Division)

### Mission:

The GW Institute for Korean Studies (GWIKS) aims to introduce Korean culture through literature to high school students.

### Eligibility:

The contest is open to 12<sup>th</sup> grade students who are enrolled in high schools in the metropolitan Washington, D.C. area [the District of Columbia, Maryland, and Virginia] for the 2021-2022 Academic Year. 11<sup>th</sup> grade students may participate if they submit a letter of recommendation via email from a teacher certifying that they are capable of writing a critical analysis paper.

### How to participate:

**1. Register** at [go.gwu.edu/essayhs2021](http://go.gwu.edu/essayhs2021) by March 4<sup>th</sup>, 2022.

**2. Find the book:** You may purchase the book online through [Amazon.com](http://Amazon.com) or [Google Play](http://Google Play). A free digital copy of the book can also be accessed through [JSTOR](http://JSTOR). Many high schools throughout the metropolitan Washington D.C. area offer JSTOR access for their students. You can search for your high school's J-STOR log-in page at [this link](#).

**3. Write the essay:** After reading the book, you will write an essay based on the judging criteria listed below. The essay has to be a format of critical essay and must be from 3 to 4 pages in length.

**4. Submit your essay:** Registered participants will be sent an online submission link where they can submit their final essay by March 4, 2022. Please submit your essay in either PDF or Word format and label the file as [Last Name, First Name\_ Essay Title]. At the top of your essay, please include: your name, high school, grade (i.e. Senior, 12th), and your e-mail address.

### Subject of Essay:

#### *I Met Loh Kiwan, by Cho Haejin*

This poignant short novel follows North Korean refugee Loh Kiwan to a place where he doesn't speak the language or understand the customs. His story of hardship and determination is gradually revealed in flashbacks by the narrator, Kim, a writer for a South Korean TV show, who learned about Loh from a news report. She traces his progress from North Korea to Brussels to London as he struggles to make his way and find a home in an unfamiliar world.

Readers come to see that Kim, too, has embarked on a journey, one driven by her need to understand what drives people to live, even thrive, despite tremendous loss and despair. Her own conflicted feelings of personal and professional guilt are mirrored in the novel's other characters: Jae, Kim's romantic interest and producer of the TV show she once wrote for; Yunju, a young cancer victim whose illness she now regrets exploiting; Pak, a doctor who helped Loh in Brussels, yet suffers deep remorse over the many life and death decisions he has made for his patients. Cho Haejin weaves these characters into a story of hope and trust, one that asks basic questions about what it means to be human and humane.

**Author Information:**

**Cho Haejin** (b. 1976) Since winning the Munye Chungang's Newcomer's Award for her writing debut in 2004, Cho Haejin has solidified her reputation as one of South Korea's major writers with four novels and three collections of short stories. Her works have been shortlisted for most of the major literary awards in Korea and won several, including the 2016 Yi Hyo-seok Literary Prize and the 2013 Shin Dong-yup Prize for Literature for the novel *I Met Loh Kiwan*. Described as a writer of compassion and tenderness, her works highlight people pushed to the margins of society, people viewed as "others" (t'aja) by those, both within Korea and beyond, who inhabit society's presumed mainstream. (Retrieved from [University of Hawaii Press](#))

**Judging Criteria:**

- Writer demonstrates close reading and critical thinking.
- Writer addresses the central theme of the story revealed through plot, setting, characters, symbols, dialogue, and visual elements.
- Writer demonstrates clear understanding of main ideas of the novel.
- Writer demonstrates clear understanding of author's use of language in developing the story.
- Writer describes author's tone and style of writing.
- Writer demonstrates clear understanding of the novel's structure.
- Writer demonstrates clear understanding of the literary and historical context of the novel.
- Writer's essay demonstrates clarity, structure, spelling, grammar, and usage.

**Rules:**

- Essays must be no shorter than 3 pages and no longer than 4 pages in length.
- Essays should be word processed in 12-point Times New Roman font, and double spaced.
- One entry per contestant is permitted.
- All entries must be written in English.
- We reserve the right to use all submitted pieces in future publications of Gwiks with no compensation to the authors.
- Winners are announced by mid-March. The time to announce the winners is subject to change depending on the number of total entries received. The award ceremony will be held Friday, April 1, 2022.

**Prizes:**

- First Place (1): \$500

**Registration Deadline: 11:59 PM EST, March 4, 2022**

**Submission Deadline: 11:59 PM EST, March 4, 2022**