

Chung Hyo Ye Essay Contest

Lauren Peterson

I have a deep admiration for the characters in Chung Hyo Ye, Tales of filial devotion, loyalty, respect and benevolence form the history and folklore of Korea. Their dedication to the noble values that shape Korean culture and history serves as an inspiration for people of all ages in every country. Especially as physical beauty and material wealth become more and more important to society, it is crucial that we remember to reflect on traditional values. These stories have been carried on for centuries, presenting their messages of filial love, loyalty, respect, and benevolence to the Korean people. I am grateful that these stories are being published and distributed internationally so that everyone can reflect on such heartfelt tales. The book moved me and challenged me to look upon my own life and reconsider the way I treat those around me, most importantly, my parents, peers, and ancestors.

Filial devotion to ones parents serves as the focal point for many of the stories in Chung Hyo Ye. Children are taught from an early age that they are to have the utmost respect and dedication to their parents. However, as a child, I know I did not always appreciate my parents like I should have. Like the boy in *My Mother's Troubles*, I sometimes took for granted the hardship and sacrifice my mother and father went through to raise me. Now that my parents are supporting me in school, it is my responsibility to put my best effort into my studies. After reading *The True Practice of Hyo*, I know fully realize how important it is for me to do well in college. My mother is similar to Hyo's mother in that she works very hard so that I can have even more opportunities in life than she did. Never having reflected on this before, these stories put me in a motivated mindset for college. It is not only for my benefit to work hard, but it is also my responsibility to make sure my parent's gift does not go to waste.

These traditional stories also display instances of genuine love. In *The Girl Who Became the Eyes of Her Father*, Chong willingly sacrifices her life so that her father may one day see. There is much to learn from such a selfless act. It hurts me to see children yelling at their parents when the love between family members should be the greatest. It reminds me too, that sometimes I will have to sacrifice for my parents. Just like Chong, I must realize that my parents that my parents are human too. They make mistakes and have wants and desires just as I do. It is tempting to focus on oneself and forget that adults have feelings just as children do. Reading these stories of filial devotion reminds me of my duties as a child and as a part of a family unit.

Working together and respecting your peers is important to a balanced life. In *Hwarang Kwisan and Chuhan*, friendship and respect is revered and builds upon each other to benefit both men. Being a high school student, it is often hard to avoid stereotyping. Judging others and fitting them into categories is not fair or right. By examining the stories of cooperation found in Chung Hyo Ye, I am reminded to have faith in my peers and friends. Much more can be accomplished by working together and treating others as equals. Especially noted in *The Pure Heart of Sadaham*, age and rank does not make one person more capable than another. Even a young boy such as Sadaham can be smart enough to lead an entire squad. When I begin to lose faith in my peers or feel that they are not fit to get the job done, I can now look back on these stories that show the goodness and capabilities of men.

My ancestors are also a part of who I am and deserve remembrance and respect. Not being of Buddhist or East Asian decent, my ancestry has not been a fundamental part of my life. I often think about and miss my deceased relatives

but I had never previously heard of the chesa ceremony. These stories educated me on a tradition Korean service that I did not know about. I am much impressed by the focus put on respecting ones ancestors and I hope to incorporate this into my life in the future. While I may not practice the chesa ceremony myself, these stories have inspired me to set a special time aside to pray for my dead ancestors that watch over me on earth. In *A Strange Memorial Ceremony* the characters show true love and devotion to their ancestors. I think ones past history and relatives are an extremely important part of who they are. It is crucial that the traditions and stories of past generations are carried on.

The stories found in Chung Hyo Ye, Tales of filial devotion, loyalty, respect and benevolence form the history and folklore of Korea are still applicable to everyday modern life. As a student in the United States, I found reading this book to be a very rewarding and enriching experience. Many of the ancient Korean values have allowed me to reflect and restructure my own life. I hope to use these stories as a warm, guiding inspiration for my own life ahead of me.