

**KOREA AND THE RED CROWNED CRANE: HOW THE NATURAL
WORLD IS REFLECTED IN KOREAN CULTURE AND A
POSSIBLE MODEL FOR REUNIFICATION**

GRADE: 10

AUTHOR: EDWIN H. PIERCE

TOPIC/THEME: Culture/Art: Use of natural symbols to frame national identity.

TIME REQUIRED: Three class periods.

BACKGROUND:

Korea's culture and art, as is the case with any country, is influenced directly and symbolically by its floral and fauna: in geographic terms the theme of "place". This lesson will use the Red Crowned Crane as a prime example of an animal taking on great importance socially, economically, and politically in Korean culture. The crane itself has a rich cultural representation in all East Asian countries as it is revered as a representation of longevity (the crane can live up to forty years) and constancy (the birds mate for life). The motif of the crane can be found in Chinese and Japanese art and culture as well as Korea's. The symbol of the crane was also appropriated by the upper class in Korea as its image decorated celadon, wall screens, embroidered "rank badges", and other objects of the wealthy. Because of the crane's ritual mating dance there were even court dances based on the cranes' movements. Lower classes having fewer non-utilitarian possessions had fewer representations of the crane, but had a strong sense of the crane's importance in terms of oral tradition.

Finally the Red Crowned Crane also figures heavily in the two Koreas future as both North and South Korea have been working, although not officially together, to help save and enlarge the current Red Crane population which has taken advantage of the relatively "pristine" ecology of the DMZ. Eventually the crane could present the ultimate symbol for the two Koreas to reunite. The crane is a symbol rich in meaning for all Koreans and the fostering of the crane population in the DMZ by both Koreas could present an opening for negotiations toward a unified Korea. It should also note that the Korean War leading to the implementation of the DMZ and then to a de facto wildlife refuge is a great example of the geographic theme of human environmental interaction. The theme of changes over time is also in play here.

CURRICULUM CONNECTION:

This plan will be implemented in a unit introducing Korea. This plan will serve to demonstrate how Korea is culturally similar to China and Japan yet also unique. Using this plan will also reinforce students' learning: applying East Asian cultures' fascination with cranes to the adaptation of Confucian values. This lesson will also reinforce the love of the natural world which is evident in all three East Asian countries: Japan/Shinto, China/Taoism, and Korean /Shamanism. This lesson could also be used to demonstrate the use of metaphor and symbol in a historic and cultural sense. The crane's migratory patterns include all three countries of East Asia just as all three countries' history and culture are inextricably tied to each other.

CONNECTION TO STUDENTS' LIVES:

Students can make the connections mentioned above as well as others. What birds loom large in America's cultural landscape? (Eagle, turkey) How are they manifested in the visual culture? What other animals could students connect to the subject matter and themes of this lesson? (Bison, wolf, whooping crane) Why do we place animals on the endangered species list? What are the similarities between our attempts to prevent the extinction of the whooping crane and Korea's assistance of the red crowned crane? Students could make connections to their lives by making origami cranes for a particular cause. Students could donate time to a local wildlife refuge or a pet rescue agency. In my town we have a Wildlife Sanctuary that takes in injured wildlife and cares for them till they can fend for themselves. Local students volunteer their time at the facility and hold fundraisers. This lesson will expose students to another culture about which they will likely have little knowledge, but hopefully through this exposure they will find commonalities. The more exposure students have to other culture the more likely they are to see all cultures in a global sense: connected economically, culturally and most importantly connected by our humanity.

OBJECTIVES AND STANDARDS:

1. Students will be able to apply an understanding of symbols and metaphor to a variety of Korea's artistic medium. and apply this same understanding to a short story, "Cranes" as well as to historical events in a nation's history.

NCSS Standard: Theme I: Learners will describe ways in which language, stories, folktales, music, and artistic creations serve as expressions of culture and influence behavior of people living in a particular culture.

ME. Standard: Social Studies: E. 2. Individual, Cultural, International and Global Connections in History.

Common Core Standards:

SL 1 Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions

SL 2 Integrate multiple sources of information presented in diverse media or formats

RH 1 Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources

MATERIALS REQUIRED:

- Computer access
- LCD projector
- Computer article: New World Encyclopedia: Crane. Use this for general information, but have students pay particular attention to the section entitled, “Cranes in culture” where the cranes human attributes are listed.
- Computer article: International Crane Foundation: Red-crowned Crane. This provides background on the international efforts to save cranes and protect their habitat. Have students open map and pictures of cranes.
- Copies for each student of article, “Living On The Edge”, by Eric Wagner, published by Smithsonian Magazine in April 2011. This is available at <http://smithsonianmag.com/science-nature/The-DMZs-Thriving-Resident-The-Crane.html>
- Copies for each student of the short story, “Cranes”, by Korean writer Hwang Sunwon. Included
- Vocabulary sheet of terms to know. Included.
- “Cranes” questions to be answered after reading the text.
- YouTube. Japan Red Crowned Crane Dance (3:58 minutes)
- You Tube. Red Top Cranes Taking Off.. (:09)
- YouTube. The Korean Traditional Dongnae Crane Dance. (3:14)
- Power Point of images depicting the use of the crane motif in different mediums.

INTRODUCTION and EXPLORATION:

█ This lesson should be introduced early on when introducing a unit on Korea. However, it could also be used at the end of a unit on Korea given the theme of Using the DMZ as the locus of reconciliation and reunification. More prior knowledge of Korea would make the lesson richer.

█ Introduce the concept of humans’ tendency to anthropomorphize the natural world . Ask students why this might be.

1. Class discussion of students’ pets and their human traits. These attributes can go on the board. What general statements can you make about the list generated? To what extent do students really believe animals have human qualities? Why do humans do this?
2. Introduce the idea of countries borrowing animals as symbolic of their national attributes. Suggest using China-the dragon, Russia-the bear. Gather responses and be sure they are looking for national attributes.
3. Then ask what might be examples of American totems and how and where do we use them. The Eagle as our national symbol should show up, perhaps the turkey, maybe the bison. Why did we choose the eagle as our national symbol? They should do this as individuals and then compare with a partner and then go to a full class discussion.
4. Check for understanding and then assign for homework the general reading on cranes, paying particular attention to the cranes human attributes , and the Smithsonian article; “Living On The Edge”. Also give students **Handout #1: Vocabulary Sheet.**

PROCEDURE:**DELIVERY OF THE CONTENT:**

1. After reading the general information on cranes and the Smithsonian article the teacher will lead a discussion of the cranes human attributes and why Koreans and other cultures assigned these to the crane.
2. Show clip of crane dance(Clip #1). Have students write down brief reflection /reaction to the clip. Pause and then show clip of cranes in flight(Clip #2)
3. Students write down their reactions to this clip and then view Traditional Korean Crane Dance (Clip#3) and write down their observations.
4. Students think–pair-share, then whole group discussion. List their conclusions on board. Then show them the power point on Crane motifs in Korean Arts. Discuss students’ reactions. Then assign reading of “Cranes”, Handout #2 and questions, Handout #3 for homework. Students will compare and contrast the optimism and pessimism represented in both texts. What allows both authors to ultimately believe in the healing power of nature and the human spirit?

THE APPLICATION OF THE CONTENT:

1. Provide students with a wider worldview. When you teach about other cultures students learn more about their own as well as the newly introduced culture: in this case Korea. Ex: compare and contrast the importance of the stork to Korean culture as opposed to the eagle in American culture.
2. Will provide students with insights into the power of symbols to shape national identity and culture.
3. National symbols when endangered can challenge nations to change policies, invest resources and energy to implement major changes in environmental policies, which in turn can effect citizens’ perceptions and beliefs. Ex: The banning of DDT to save the American Bald Eagle and other raptors.
4. The regenerative power of nature to heal the land: the DMZ as a wildlife sanctuary. The growing crane population in the DMZ that joins both North and South Korea in a single purpose beyond their political ideologies.
5. How are the attributes of cranes reflective of Confucian values? Note that Confucius and cranes both favor orderly societies that recognize norms and rituals that stabilize and benefit the group.
6. This lesson could also be tweaked to include origami with the folding of cranes for a local or global cause.

ASSESSMENT:

1. Use one of the last three questions from the review sheet and either use it as is or adapt it as a writing piece to demonstrate understanding of the lesson.
2. Have students read the Japanese story of Sadako and the Thousand Paper Cranes on their own and then write a paper on the similarities and differences in the use of the crane imagery.
3. Perhaps there is a local charity, wildlife refuge, or other cause that raises money by having students pledge to fold paper cranes. This could be a great service-learning project.
4. Research the plight of the whooping crane in the United States. Evaluate its importance to American in light of what students have learned about the importance of the Red Crowned Crane e in Korea.
5. Throughout this lesson, exit and entrance tickets could be used to gage students' level of understanding.
6. All of the above are suggestions. Tweak at will or use your own ideas

RESOURCES:

“Birds of Korea.” <<http://www.birdskorea.org/BK-Startpage.shtml>>

“ International Crane Foundation.”. < <http://www.savingcranes.org/red-crowned-crane.html>

“Life in Korea.” <http://www.lifeinkorea.com/Business/about.cfm>

Moore, Nial. “The Crane in a Pine Tree:

<<http://www.birdskorea.org/Habitats/Wetlands/BK-HA-Crane-in-a-pinetree.shtml>>.

The State of Wetlands in Korea>”New World Encyclopedia Contributors, "Crane (bird),"

New World Encyclopedia. <http://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Crane%28bird%29?oldid=679021>

Pickrell, John. “In DMZ, Elsewhere, Cranes’ Rest Stops Need Protection, Study Says.” National Geographic. March 16, 2004

Sunwon, Hwang. *Cranes*, 1953

Wagner, Eric. “Living On The Edge.” Smithsonian, April, 2011.

Westing, Arthur. “Toward Environmental Sustainability and Reduced Tensions on the Korean Peninsula.” Environment Magazine. January-February, 2010.

YouTube Clip #1: Japan Red Crowned Cranes Dance (3:58)

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-o4xsvE1p-g>

YouTube Clip#2: Red Top Cranes Taking Off (.09)

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K9lrQAW3ljk>

YouTube Clip#3: The Traditional Korean Donghae Crane Dance: (3:14)

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2VDSqnqYtJI&feature=related>

Handout #1**Vocabulary For Lesson On Red Crowned Crane**

You are expected to know the definitions/meaning of the following words. Feel free to add more words as you read the lesson plan documents.

Totem

Anthropomorphizing

DMZ

Migratory

Armistice

Infiltration

Symbol

Metaphor

Celadon

Motif

.

Vocabulary from the story, *Cranes*

Averted

Thirty-eighth parallel

Handout #2



Cranes

[Hwang Sunwŏn](#)

Translated by [David R. McCann](#)

Beneath the high, clear autumn sky just north of the 38th boundary the village was quiet and alone.

In the empty houses, there might be just a white gourd on the dirt floor between rooms, leaning against another white gourd.

Old people met by chance would turn aside, pipes held behind their backs. And children, being children, turned away at some distance. Everyone's face was marked by fear.

The area showed no signs of what might be called the broken remnants of the present conflict. But it somehow did not seem like the old village where he had grown up as a youngster.

In the chestnut grove on the back hill, Sŏngsam halted his steps. There he climbed one of the trees. It seemed as if he could hear from a distance the shouts of the old grandfather with the wen: "You little son-of-a-guns, climbing someone else's tree again!"

[End Page 305] The old grandfather with the wen had probably passed away in the time since. He hadn't been among the old people encountered in the area so far.

Holding on to the chestnut tree, for a moment Sŏngsam looked up at the blue autumn sky. Even without the branch being shaken, one of the remaining chestnuts opened, and the nut slipped out, and fell.

As he reached the front of a house, the temporary headquarters for the Public Peace Corps, he saw there was some young fellow tied up in handcuff rope.

It didn't seem to be anyone he had seen before in the village, so he went up close for a look at his face. He was stunned. Wasn't it his closest childhood friend, Tŏkchae?

What was going on, he asked the Public Peace Corpsman who had come over from Ch'ŏnt'ae with him. *Vice chairman of the Farmers Collective Committee, this one was, caught hiding out in his own house.*

Sŏngsam squatted down there on the dirt floor, a lighted cigarette in his mouth.

Tŏkchae was going to be sent off to Ch'ŏngdan. One of the Public Peace Corps members was going to take him.

Lighting a new cigarette from the one he had just finished, Söngsam stood up again.

"I'll take this sunnavabitch."

Tökchae all this time kept his face turned away and did not even try to look in Söngsam's direction.

The two came out of the village.

Söngsam smoked one cigarette after another. The cigarettes seemed to have no flavor. He just kept drawing the smoke in deep, and letting it out. After a while, the thought came to him that this Tökchae fellow, he might want a cigarette too. He remembered when they were young, how they would make cigarettes out of pumpkin leaves and smoke them behind the wall, so the grown-ups wouldn't know. But how could he offer a cigarette to a guy like this one, today? **[End Page 306]**

Once, when they were young, he had gone with Tökchae to swipe chestnuts from the old grandfather with the wen. It had been Söngsam's turn to climb the tree. Next instant, the old grandfather was shouting at them. He slipped and fell out of the tree. The chestnut burs pierced his backside, but they just ran. Only when they had gone far enough so the old grandfather with the wen couldn't follow, did he turn his backside to Tökchae. It hurt like anything, pulling out the chestnut burs. He couldn't help the tears that trickled down. Tökchae suddenly reached out with a fistful of his own chestnuts and stuck them in Söngsam's pocket. . . .

Söngsam threw away the cigarette he had just lit. He makes up his mind not to light another while escorting this fellow Tökchae.

They reached the hill road. The hill is where he and Tökchae had gone all the time to cut fodder, until two years before Liberation when Söngsam moved to a place near Ch'önt'ae, south of the 38th.

Söngsam, overwhelmed by sudden anger, gave a shout.

"You son of a . . . ! How many people have you killed so far?"

Only then does Tökchae look over, then lower his head again.

"Sunnabitch . . . ! How many people have you killed?"

Tökchae raises his head and turns his way. He shoots a look at Söngsam. His expression turns darker, and the edges of his mouth, surrounded by his dangling beard, quiver and shake.

"So, that's how you killed people?"

Sunnabitch! Somehow Söngsam's heart feels relieved at its core. As if something blocking it has eased and fallen loose. But,

"Some guy gets to be vice chairman of the Farmers Collective Committee, why didn't you run off? Hiding out with some secret mission?"

Tökchae says nothing.

"Go ahead, tell the truth! What sort of mission was it you were hiding out to do?"

But Tökchae just keeps walking silently along. Clear enough, this one is feeling caught. It's good to see their faces at a moment like this, but he keeps his face turned away, and doesn't look over.

[End Page 307]

Grasping the pistol that he carried at his waist, Söngsam says, "It's no use trying to defend yourself. You're going to be shot, no doubt about it. So you might as well tell the truth right here and now."

Without turning his head, Tökchae replies,

"There's nothing to defend myself about. I'm just the son of a dirt-poor farmer. I'm known as a guy who can handle the hard work, and that's why I was made vice chairman of the Farmers Cooperative Committee. If that's a crime to get killed for, there's nothing to be done about it. All I'm good at, all I ever was good at to stay alive, is digging in the dirt."

He pauses for a moment.

"My father is laid up now. It's half a year already."

Tökchae's father was a widower, a poor farmer getting old, caring just for his son Tökchae. Seven years ago his back had already given out and his face was covered with age spots.

"You married?"

A moment, and

"Yeah, married."

"Who with?"

"Short Stuff."

No. Short Stuff? This is great. Short Stuff. Kind of fat, and too short to know the skies were high, just how wide the earth is. Sort of a loner. They hadn't liked that, so he and Tökchae, together they used to tease her all the time and make her cry. And now Tökchae had gone and married Short Stuff.

"So, any kids?"

"The first is coming this fall."

At this, Söngsam could hardly keep himself from laughing. He was the one who had asked with his own mouth if there were any kids, but when he heard that the first was coming this fall it was almost more than he could bear. Even not pregnant, Short Stuff's little body had a tummy almost too big to reach around. But realizing this was not the time to laugh or make jokes about such a thing, he says, **[End Page 308]**

"But don't you think it's suspicious, you hanging around, not trying to get away?"

"I thought of trying to get away. They said when they came up from the south this time, all the men, all of them would be caught and killed, so all the males between seventeen and forty, they were made to go north. I thought of getting away too, even if I had to carry my father on my back. But he said no, he couldn't. Where would a farmer go, and leave the farming? And besides, my father, he grew old doing the farming, trusting in me; I wanted to be the one to close his eyes with my own hands. People like us, all we know is working the earth to stay alive. What good would it do us to run away?"

Last June, it was Söngsam who had fled. He had told his father secretly at night that he was going to flee. Söngsam's father had said the same thing then. If farm workers left the farming, where would they go? So Söngsam had fled alone. As he wandered the strange streets and hamlets of the south, always in his head was the farm work he had left to his old parents and young family. But **[End Page 309]** fortunately, they were all as healthy now as they had been then.

They crossed the ridge of the hill. Now it was Söngsam who walked along with his face turned away. The autumn sun was hot on his forehead. He thought, a day like this, the weather was perfect for threshing.

As they came down from the hill, Söngsam gradually slowed down and halted his steps.

Over in the center of the fields, looking like some people wearing their white clothes, backs bent, surely that was a flock of cranes. The place that had become the demilitarized zone along the 38th parallel. Even though people had stopped living there, it was still a place where the cranes continued to live as before.

Once when Tökchae and Söngsam were about twelve, without the grown-ups knowing, the two of them had set a trap and caught a crane. It was a Tanjöng crane. They had tied it up, even its wings, and every day the two of them would come and stroke its neck, ride on its back, making a fuss over it. Then one day, they heard the

grown-ups in the area whispering about something. Someone had come from Seoul to shoot a crane. He even had some permit from the government-general for collecting specimens. The two had run off down the road. It did not matter that the grown-ups might find out and give them a scolding. All they could think was that their crane must not die. Without stopping to catch their breath, they crawled through the weeds to untie the lasso around the crane's legs and loose the rope from its wings. But the crane could hardly walk. Probably from being tied up for so long. Holding it together, the two of them heaved the crane up into the sky. Suddenly there was a shot. The crane flapped its wings two, three, four times, then sank down again. Had it been shot? But at the next instant, as another Tanjŏng crane spread its wings wide in the bushes right beside them, their own crane, the one that had come down to earth, stretched out its long neck, gave a cry, and flying up into the sky, sweeping in a circle over the heads of the two boys, vanished into the distance. For a long time the two boys could not take their eyes **[End Page 310]** away from the blue sky into which their crane had vanished . . .

"Hey, time for us to go crane hunting," Sŏngsam suddenly announced.

Tŏkchae was stunned, not knowing what was going on.

"I'll make a snare with the rope here. You chase a crane over."

Sŏngsam had untied the rope and was crawling away into the weeds.

The color drained from Tŏkchae's face. The words flashed through his mind from just before, "You're going to be shot." Soon a bullet would come from where Sŏngsam had gone crawling off.

Sŏngsam turned his head back toward him.

"Hey, what are you waiting for? Chase a crane or something over here!"

At last Tŏkchae understood, and began crawling through the weeds.

Just then, two or three cranes, their huge wings spread, went soaring through the clear autumn sky. **[End Page 311]**

Hwang Sunwŏn

Hwang Sunwŏn, born in 1915 in Daedong, Pyŏng'annam-do, made his literary debut as a poet during middle school in 1931. He studied English literature at Waseda University in Japan. After 1937, however, Hwang Sunwon devoted himself exclusively to writing fiction, producing many collections of stories and several novels. A member of the Academy of Arts since 1957, Hwang was the recipient of such honors as the Asia Freedom Literature Prize and the Academy of Arts Award and the March First Culture Prize. He died in 2000.

David R. McCann

David R. McCann is Korea Foundation Professor of Korean Literature at Harvard University. He has translated the work of many Korean poets-including Kim Chiha, Sŏ Chŏngju, Ko Un, and Kim Namjo-and is the author or editor of many books, including *The Columbia Anthology of Modern Korean Poetry* and *The Way I Wait for You*, a collection of his own poems.
Copyright © 2007 President and Fellows of Harvard College
(Story originally published in 1953)

Handout #3

“Cranes” by Hwang Sunwon Study Guide. By Rachael Tullar

****I found this on line and thought the questions were thoughtful. I suggest you reformat this and use the questions that make sense to your approach to the lesson plan.

E. Pierce

Comprehension Questions:

1. What is Songsam’s motivation for letting Tokchae go free?
2. Do you think Songsam makes the right decision in the end? Give reasons for your answer.
3. What do you think the significance of the cranes in the story is?
4. What conclusions can you reach about the author’s views on war and friendship?

Opinion Question:

Think of situations when loyalty to friends comes into conflict with duty. In such cases, which do you think should take priority-loyalty or duty?

Weekly Assignment: On your weekly you are going to be writing an expository essay and a fictional account of what the story could have ended like if Songsam would have chosen duty over friendship.

This one is mandatory:

1. Imagine that Songsam chose duty over friendship in the end. Create an alternate ending; rewrite the last few paragraphs of the story, changing Songsam’s and Tokchae’s thoughts and actions and the final image of the crane. This should be about ½ a page in length.

Choose one of the following two to complete:

2. The story takes place during the Korean War, a conflict that often pitted friend against friend and even brother against brother. Much of the war took place near the 38th parallel, the border between North and South Korea. One of the villages located there is the setting of “Cranes”. Find out some of the facts that lead to the Korean War. Create an expository essay about the Korean War. This should be about one page in length.
3. Research Hwang Sunwon, the author of “Cranes”. In an expository essay write about Hwang Sunwon’s life, his accomplishments as a writer and the influence place has on his stories. This should be about one page in length.

The Red Crowned Crane in Korean Art with examples
of Chinese and Japanese crane art.





Celadon of various shapes with Crane Motifs.



Crane badge of a government official on the left and an embroidered decorative crane badge on the right.



Imitating crane movement in a traditional Korean Crane Dance




Traditional Korean tea set used in tea ceremony with crane motif.



Korean room Screen



Korean room screen depicting four pairings of birds which represent

marital happiness in the house. Note  on right end; cranes in a Pine tree. Circa 1880. 58" high x 83" wide.



Chinese Painting. Auspicious Cranes, Northern Song period, 1112.
Handscroll, ink and colors on silk. 1'8' x 4'6".



Japanese scroll painting of Mt. Fuji with cranes. Circa 1930

