

A Guide for Educators and Readers



The Legend of Hong Kil Dong: The Robin Hood of Korea

An award-winning graphic novel by
by Anne Sibley O'Brien

An Educators and Readers Guide to The Legend of Hong Kil Dong:
About the Book



About the Book

Like the Western world's Robin Hood, the legendary Hong Kil Dong of 15th century Korea stood as a champion for the poor. Gaining knowledge and power denied to him by class, Hong Kil Dong led an army of peasants against corruption and injustice. Children's book author/illustrator Anne Sibley O'Brien depicts the drama, action and historical splendor of Korea in the frames of a stunning graphic novel from Charlesbridge Publishers.

Hong Kil Dong was the son of a powerful minister, denied a birthright because his mother was a commoner. Wandering in the mountains in search of his destiny, Hong Kil Dong stumbled into the lair of outlaws. At their fireside, he discovered that these outlaws were good men who had been thrown from their homes or otherwise left destitute by corrupt regional officials.

Driven by the need to fight these injustices, Hong Kil Dong trained the men to become the Hwal Bin Dang, the Save-the-Poor Army. As his army created havoc in every Korean province by wresting goods from unjust officials and returning them to the poor, the king called for the arrest of Hong Kil Dong. Finding that no jail could hold the hero and unable to deny his magical powers, the king finally saw Hong Kil Dong as a champion of the people and through him, learned to rule justly.

Anne Sibley O'Brien, who grew up in Korea as the daughter of medical missionaries, had heard many stories of Hong Kil Dong. The subject of a 17th century novel by Ho Kyun, the hero is portrayed in popular Korean books, comics, TV shows, movies, and animation. After finding an English translation of Ho Kyun's classic novel, O'Brien decided she wanted to tell the story for children.

Using the Korean brush painting she had studied at Korea's Ewha Women's University, O'Brien placed her illustrations within the narrative boxes of a graphic novel. Readers of graphic novels can 'read between frames' or fill in missing parts of the narrative and dialogue by using their own imagination. This format both allowed O'Brien to tell more of Hong Kil Dong's story and to leave aspects of the story open to the engrossing ambiguities of Hong Kil Dong's magical life.

The Legend of Hong Kil Dong: The Robin Hood of Korea received the Aesop Award, the Asian/Pacific American Award for Literature, and the Global Korea Award, and was named one of *Booklist's* "Top 10 Graphic Novels for Youth," and one of Bank Street College of Education's "Best Children's Books of the Year (Outstanding Merit)."

Available from Charlesbridge Publishing in Hardcover and Paperback, (800) 225-3214

An Educators and Readers Guide to The Legend of Hong Kil Dong: About the Author/Illustrator



About the Author/Illustrator



The defining event of my life occurred when I was seven years old. My parents were hired as medical missionaries with the United Presbyterian Church and our family moved halfway around the world to South Korea. As we learned a second language and culture, Korea became a second home.

Koreans were fascinated by how different I looked: my height, my light brown hair, my big nose, my round eyes. When I greeted them in Korean, they were amazed.

I returned to the United States to attend Mount Holyoke College, but spent my junior year back in Korea at Ewha Women's University. One of the subjects I studied at Ewha was Korean painting.

After returning to the States and graduating from Mount Holyoke with a degree in Studio Art, I began a career writing and illustrating children's books. My first books were a series of toddler board books which I wrote and illustrated. Since then I have illustrated the *Jamaica* books by Juanita Havill, and the *Talking Walls* books by Margy Burns Knight, among others.



Over the years, I looked for book ideas in the Korean tales I had heard growing up. One day while I was doing research at the Harvard-Yenching library at Harvard University, I came upon an English translation of the 17th century novel, *The Tale of Hong Kil Dong*. The novel was the basis of the well-known story of the boy hero, Hong Kil Dong.

The story was a rich source of material for me in many ways. I was drawn to the poignant struggle of the boy who could not claim his father, to the theme of justice for the poor and to the opportunity to immerse myself in traditional Korean culture. It was exhilarating to design the book as a comic, a brand new format for me. Throughout the process, I felt as if the story and the form were not being controlled by me, but rather coming through me. I continue to be surprised and delighted by where this book takes me.

I now live and work on Peaks Island, Maine with my musician husband, O.B.. We have two grown children.

An Educators and Readers Guide to The Legend of Hong Kil Dong:
Glossary



Glossary

abbot - the head of a group of monks

assassin - one who is paid to murder

corrupt - dishonest, disloyal or unjust

destiny - what happens to someone because of fate or luck

disciple - one who follows a teacher

divination - the art of telling what will happen in the future

Eight Virtues - ancient Chinese virtues: devotion to parents, brotherly affection, loyalty, trust, courtesy, righteousness, integrity, and a sense of shame

emissaries - people sent out on a mission to represent the king

filial devotion - the honor of a child for parents

I Ching - an ancient Chinese method of gaining guidance and direction; also called the Book of Changes

magistrate - a government officer with the power to enforce law

minister - a high government official in charge of a department

monastery - the dwelling place of a community of monks

monk - a man who has taken religious vows and joined a monastery

Nine Standards - ancient Chinese ideals by which to lead a country, a state or a family

nobility - people with high rank by birth

official - one who holds a position in government

province - a territory of a country with its own local government

regalia - the decorations and symbols worn by someone to show their position

sage - one who is recognized as being wise

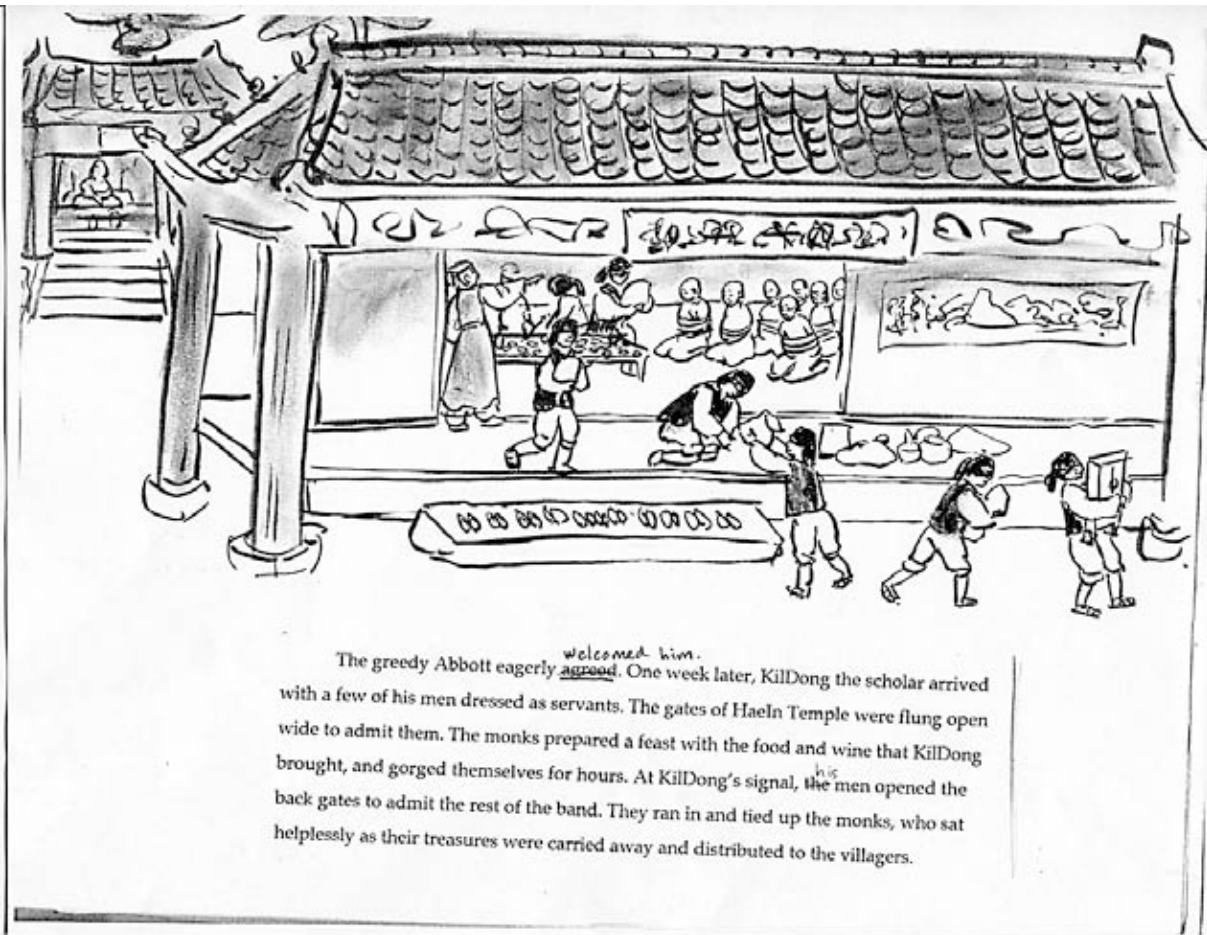
venerable - deserving respect because of age, position or wisdom

An Educators and Readers Guide to The Legend of Hong Kil Dong:
Making a Story into a Comic (Pg. 1)



Making a Story into a Comic

A **picture book** usually has a single picture for a single scene, with a block of words called **text** to tell the story. Here is a rough sketch of one scene from a **dummy** (practice book) I made of the story of Hong Kil Dong. At that time, I thought I would be telling the story as a picture book.



An Educators and Readers Guide to The Legend of Hong Kil Dong:
Making a Story into a Comic (Pg. 2)



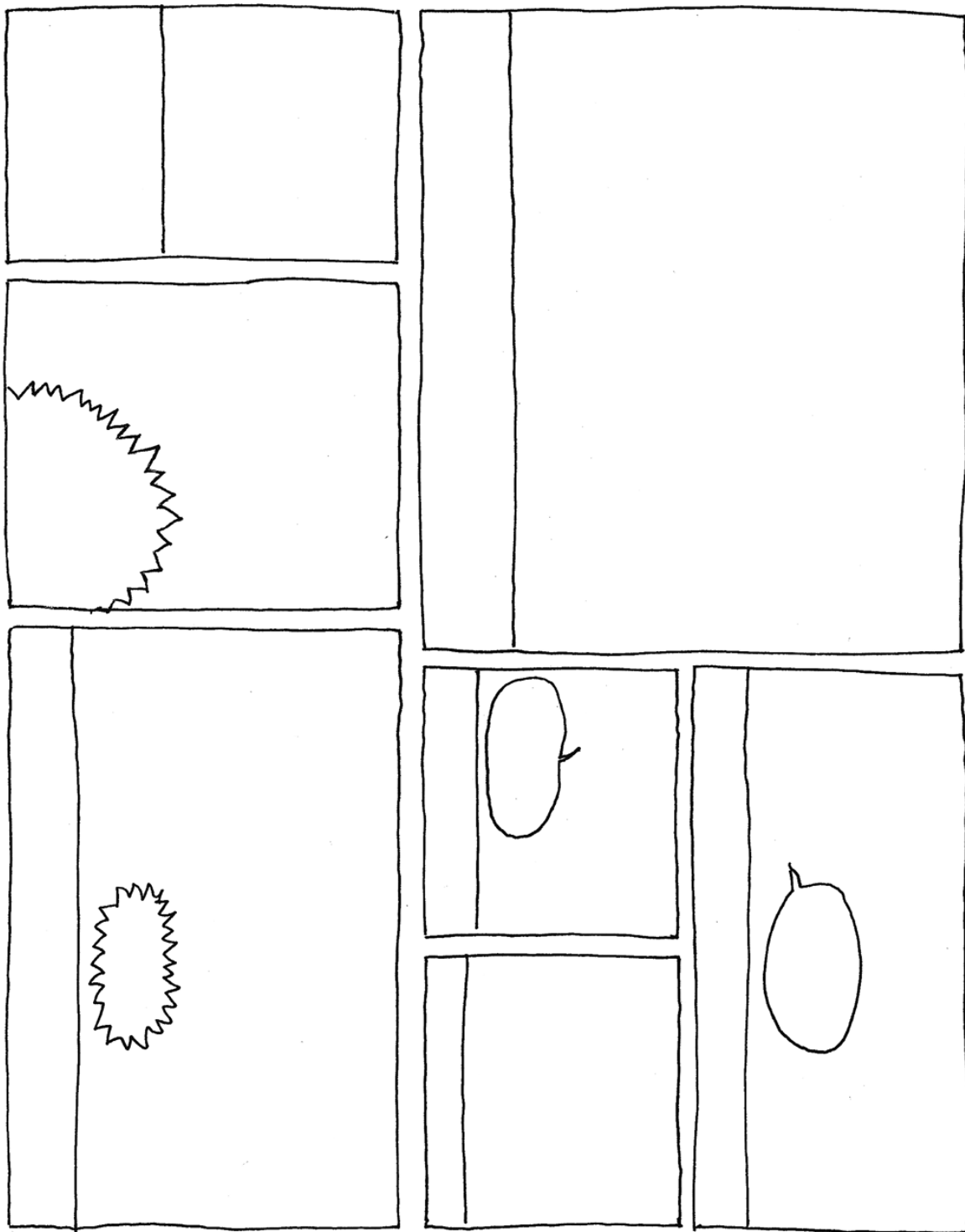
Making a Story into a Comic (Pg. 2)

Once I decided to use the comic book or graphic novel form, I had to think differently about the scenes. Instead of choosing a single action, I could now draw many actions in each scene. I had lots of new tools to use, including **panels** to show action, **balloons** for speech, and **narration boxes** for the parts of the story I wasn't showing.



Now you can try putting a scene into comic book form. Think of a story you know well, maybe a folk or fairy tale, or something you've written yourself. (Or you could use the story of Hong Kil Dong, but illustrate it your own way.) Choose one thing that happens in the story to make into a scene. Now break the scene down into lots of small actions, and decide which ones you want to draw. You can use the next page, or make up your own combination of panels, balloons and narration boxes.

An Educators and Readers Guide to The Legend of Hong Kil Dong:
Making a Story into a Comic



An Educators and Readers Guide to The Legend of Hong Kil Dong: The Korean Alphabet



The Korean Alphabet

The Korean alphabet, called **han-gul**, was created more than 500 years ago by order of King SeJong, one of the most beloved of Korea's historical figures. Until King SeJong's reign (1419-1450), the only writing system in use in Korea was Chinese characters. The difficulty of learning thousands of characters meant that reading and writing were out of reach for commoners. Only the upper class had the leisure time to study.

King SeJong ordered his scholars to create a simple alphabet for spoken Korean so that everyone could learn to read and write. Modern Korea's literacy rate is among the highest in the world.

The alphabet has 24 letters, 14 consonants and 10 vowels.

Here are four of the consonants:

Letter	Pronunciation	Practice (by tracing over the lighter letters)
ㄱ	g/k (between a g and a k)	ㄱ
ㄴ	n	ㄴ
ㄷ	d/t	ㄷ
ㅈ	j/ch	ㅈ

Here is the first vowel:

ㅏ	ah (a as in father)	ㅏ
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An Educators and Readers Guide to The Legend of Hong Kil Dong:
The Korean Alphabet (Pg. 2)



The Korean Alphabet (Pg. 2)

Han-gul is written in syllables. Here's how you put them together:

7 + ㅏ = 가
(k/g) (ah) (kah) This is the verb meaning "to go."

7 + ㅏ = 가

To make a word, you put syllable blocks together.

Let's make a syllable with another consonant.

ㅈ + ㅏ = 자
(j/ch) (ah) (jah)

ㅈ + ㅏ = 자

An Educators and Readers Guide to The Legend of Hong Kil Dong:
The Korean Alphabet (Pg. 3)



The Korean Alphabet (Pg. 3)

Now put the two syllables together:

가 + 자 = 가자
(kah) (jah) (kah-jah) It means "Let's go."

가 + 자 = 가자

(This is the short, informal form of speaking that's used by children and among close friends. There are more complex forms of speech which show respect for someone older.)

If a syllable has a final consonant, it goes on the bottom.

ㄱ + ㅏ + ㄴ = 간
(k/g) (ah) (n) (kahn)

ㄱ + ㅏ + ㄴ = 간

An Educators and Readers Guide to The Legend of Hong Kil Dong:
The Korean Alphabet (Pg. 4)



The Korean Alphabet (Pg. 4)

Let's add another syllable:

ㄷ + ㅏ = 다
(d/t) (ah) (dah)

ㄷ + ㅏ = 다

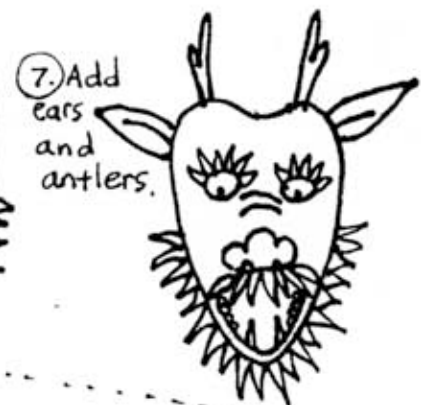
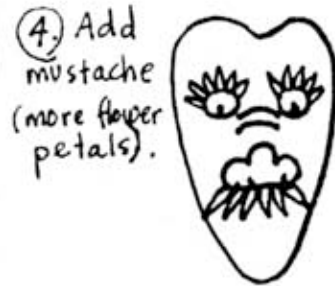
and put them together:

간 다 (kahn-da) It means "going".
간 다

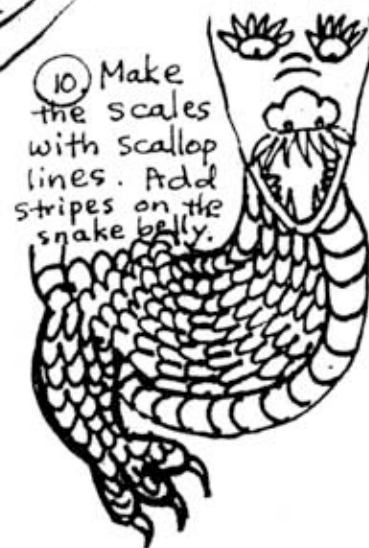
If you'd like to learn more about **Han-gul**, visit these websites:

www.omniglot.com/writing/korean/htm

www.lifeinkorea.com/Language/korean.cfm

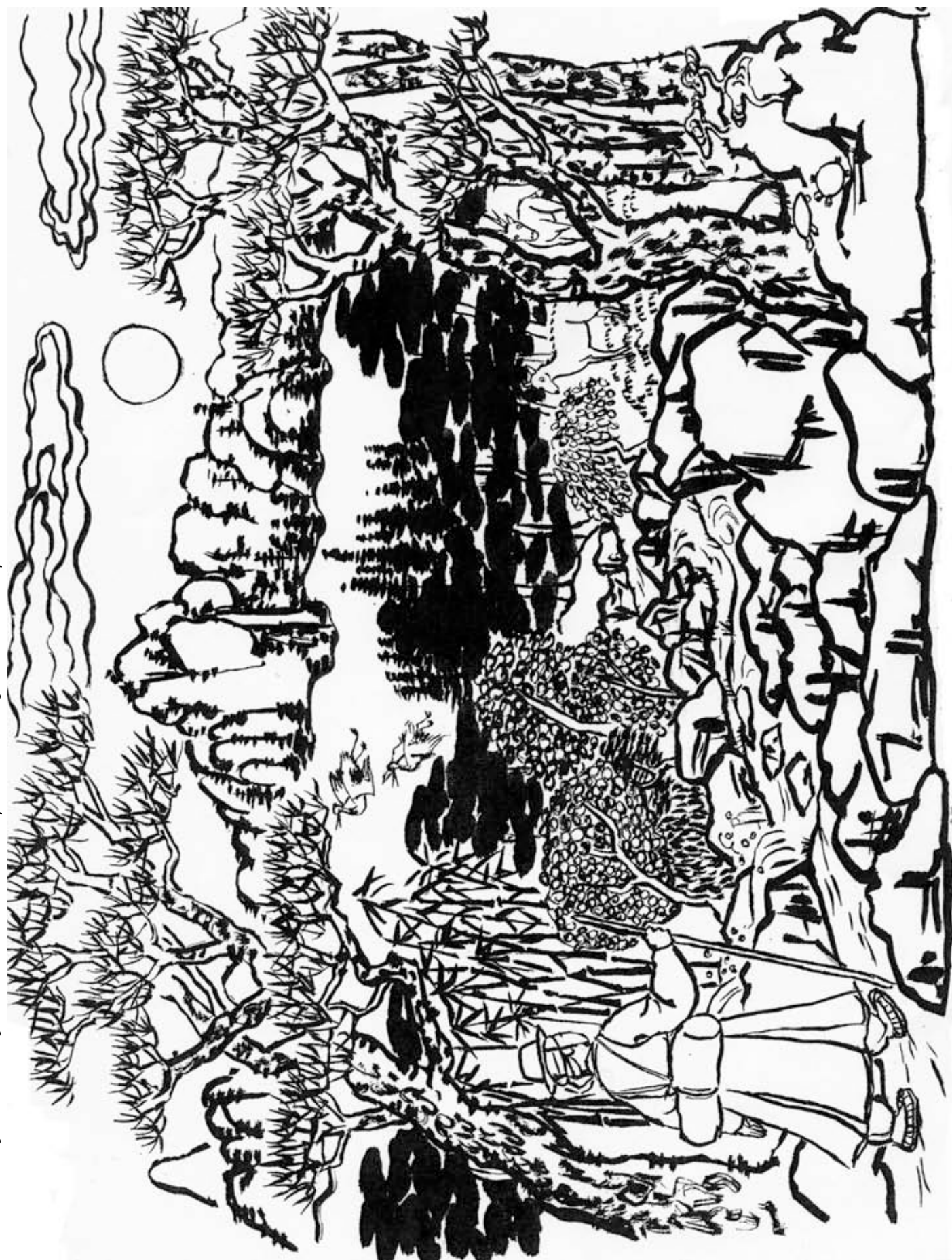


Add a leg (if you like), toes & claws.



11. Add curvy clouds wherever you like. Include a tail poking out from behind a cloud if you like.) That's all!

Can you find 10 symbols of long life in this picture? They are bamboo, pine, cloud, rock, water, crane, deer, turtle, fungus, and sun.



An Educators and Readers Guide to The Legend of Hong Kil Dong:
Author/Illustrator Presentations



Author/Illustrator Presentations

Anne Sibley O'Brien would be delighted to present *The Legend of Hong Kil Dong* to public and independent schools, the Korean American community, adoptive families, educators, and other organizations.

Justice & Magic: Creating *The Legend of Hong Kil Dong* (Grades 3-8)

A digital slide show and interactive talk about adapting the 17th century Korean hero tale into an illustrated book for children, including:

- Research
- Korean history and culture
- Korean alphabet
- Creating illustrations using traditional Korean brush painting
- Different considerations for making a picture book and a comic book
- Revision process, working collaboratively with an editor and art director

Justice Speaks: Readers Theatre Using *The Legend of Hong Kil Dong* (Grades 4-10)

Using a script written by the author and a digital slideshow of the graphic novel illustrations, students can present a dramatic reading of *The Legend of Hong Kil Dong*.

Presentations for Adults & Educators

- Using *The Legend of Hong Kil Dong* in the Classroom
- What Is a Graphic Novel, Anyway?
- From the Heart: Illustrating Across Cultures

Residencies

The author-illustrator is available for residencies of 3 days to one week. As an artist-in-residence, in addition to presenting scheduled programs to classes, she can conduct an open studio during which students can observe work on a book-in-progress.

"Anne Sibley O'Brien visited the Fay School as part of the School's Author-in-Residence program. Her visit provided something for everyone, and her work resonated for our community on so many levels... All were fascinated by Ms. O'Brien's multicultural childhood, and they were eager to offer suggestions and give input on her latest work during Open Studio time in the library. Overall, Ms. O'Brien's visit affected us all deeply. To have someone with Ms. O'Brien's experience, perspective, talent, and joyous personality was a real gift to Fay."

-Laura D'Elia, Librarian, Fay School

School Presentation Fees

All fees are negotiable. Fees for conferences, organizations, and residencies vary--please inquire.

- New England \$ 1000/day plus travel and lodging
- Outside of New England \$1200/day plus travel and lodging

Booking Anne Sibley O'Brien

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