

THE LEGEND OF HONG KIL DONG

THE KOREAN ROBIN HOOD

BY ANNE SIBLEY O'BRIEN

CHARLESBRIDGE, 2006

NOVEL RESOURCE # 5 SUBMITTED BY SUSAN REIFF

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Anne Sibley O'Brien was born in Chicago in the year of the dragon – 1950. She lived in New Hampshire until she moved to South Korea at age 7. She became educated in 2 cultures as her parents were medical missionaries in that country. She returned to the U.S. and Mount Saint Holyoke College at age 17. O'Brien completed part of her education in South Korea in Korean Painting

As an adult she became an author and an artist. She has 25 illustrated books, and she has authored 10. In 1990 she found herself doing research at Harvard University and started regaining her interest in the Korean culture. She put those thoughts aside until 2004 when she actually acted on them. It was Korean folklore that rekindled her interest in writing this legend. She also researched artwork that would be correct for the time period, and she used storyboards as she progressed in writing "The Legend of the Korean Robin Hood". Awards she has won for this novel include: Booklist Top 10 Graphic Novels for Youth, Asian/Pacific American Award for Literature, the Global Korean Award, and nominee for the Young Hoosier book Award. She has 2 grown children and currently lives in Maine with her husband. A personal photo cannot be located at the below websites.

Another book O'Brien has written is The Princess and the Beggar, Scholastic. She has partnered with Margy Burns Knight on Talking Walls and Talking Walls: The Story Continues, Tilbury House Press.

Her 4 websites are; <http://www.koreanrobinhood.com>
<http://www.charlesbridge.com>
<http://annesibleyobrien.com/>
<http://whitelies.ws>

ANNOTATION

The Legend of Hong Kil Dong the Robin Hood of Korea, by Anne Sibley O'Brien, Charlesbridge Publishing, 2008.

The author of this graphic novel is clearly qualified in both art and her knowledge of Korean Folklore. Her main purpose of writing this book was to give the reader an enticing view of a familiar legend in another culture.

She clearly researched everything from the appropriate use of panels in the artwork to the code of honor in martial arts. O'Brien's target audience is the reader who succeeds in relishing the comic book format. The importance of this book is for the reader to understand the classic tale of Robin Hood existed in other countries' past history.

GENRE

The genre of this Young Hoosier nominee is that of graphic novel.

POINT OF VIEW

The Legend of Hong Kil Dong is told from the third person point of view.

THEME

The theme of this graphic novel is a classic good always wins over evil. The reader also learns that a person's parenting and birthright doesn't necessarily determine their destiny. The champion of the unjustly treated opposes corruption and outwits the enemy.

CONFLICT

The internal conflict in this novel is mainly between Kil Dong and himself. He watches his older brother get recognition, and he can't be recognized. Also, he watches his mother treated poorly, and his inner spirit is being extinguished. Kil Dong's father, Hong has internal conflict also. He realizes his younger son is smarter and has more potential, but he is powerless to change the situation.

External conflict is seen between Kil Dong and the other servants. He is especially treated poorly when Cho Ran feels threatened by his presence and spreads rumors and lies about him. This forces him to leave. Kil Dong has a brief conflict with the bandits until he proves he has magical powers he learned in the mountains.

The first battle Kil Dong and his save-the-poor-army are in is a victory against the Monks. Conflicts continue between his growing group of followers and the wealthy.

CONFLICT RESOLUTION

Hong Kil Dong is able to resolve his inner turmoil when he travels the mountains and learns martial arts and magic. He is joined by a growing band of men, and they begin to rob from the rich and give to the poor. Kil Dong's father resolves his inner conflict by realizing his younger son is truly smart, generous, righteous, and deserving to be recognized.

After the various battles between his army of men and the undeserving wealthy, Kil Dong is appointed Minister of War by the king

CHARACTERS

The most important character, or major character, is Hong Kil Dong. His father is a respected minister, but his mom is a common servant. Kil Dong's character is strong, healthy, and intelligent, but he does not have a noble birthright. A red birthmark he had meant he was headed for greatness, but he grew up feeling his inner spirit would be extinguished. Since he couldn't actually refer to his dad as "father", he couldn't decide what his destiny would be or how he could become a man. Kil Dong wandered and studied in the mountains. They taught him the secrets of martial arts and magic. Just like a more modern Robin Hood, Kil Dong wouldn't accept injustices and robbed from the rich to pay the poor.

The minor characters appear in the following order:

Mother—Kil Dong's mother is a common servant who is not married to his father. She is very sorrowful when her son needs to leave her.

Father—His father owns the home Kil Dong was born in. His father was a minister of the king which gave only him nobility status. Father was called Minister Hong, and his son was referred to as Hong Kil Dong. The family name is used first then the given name. Older half-brother, In Hyung—His brother shares the same father, but since the Minister is married to his mother, he is treated like royalty.

Group of Bandits—Once Kil Dong passes their test he learns why the bandits had to resort to thievery. Kil Dong gains their respect after completing an impossible feat, and they become his band of followers. This "Save-The-Poor" army is called Hwal Bin Dang.

SETTING

The setting for this story is during the 1400's. The actual years that she based her story on were 1419-1450. The action of the story begins in Kil Dong's father's house at the time of his birth. As he matured he moved to the mountains and lived in a monastery. At the high point of the story the setting changes to places of battle throughout the 8 provinces of Korea

INTEREST LEVEL AND READING LEVEL

The Guided Reading level listed on the Charlesbridge website is "S". The interest level is 4th -8th grade.

BOOKTALK

Reluctant readers be weary no more. Young readers occasionally find it difficult to locate topics of interest. Often times these reluctant readers enjoy the comic book format over traditional books. This novel by Anne Sibley O'Brien will interest these readers and many more. The Legend of Hong Kil Dong The Robin Hood of Korea is written in graphic novel format. How can a young hero so easily escape an assassin and a group of bandits? As readers discover these answers they happen upon the thrill of martial arts and the magic of sorcery along the way.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Pre-reading

During reading

Post-reading

LANGUAGE

Diligently – working very hard on studying

Examination – a final test taken

Discipline – to be trained and serious

Sorrow – extreme sadness

Ancient – very old times

Chanting – talking in a sing-song way

Assassin – a hired killer

INDIANA ACADEMIC STANDARDS

Third Eng/LA 3.1.3, 3.3.3, 3.3.6, 3.3.8 Math 3.6.2 Sci. 3.6.3, 3.6.5 SS 3.4.2

Fourth Eng/LA 4.1.6, 4.3.3, 4.3.7, math 4.7.2, 4.7.7 Sci. 4.4.9, 4.7.7 SS 4.3.6, 4.3.7

Fifth Eng/LA 5.1.2, 5.3.2, 5.3.8 Math 5.7.1, 5.7.2 Sci. 5.6.1, 5.6.3 SS 5.2.8, 5.2.10

ANTICIPATION STATEMENTS

Before you are introduced to this novel read the following questions. Write A if you agree with the statement and D if you disagree. Repeat the same process when you have completed this novel.

1. It is silly for readers to think reading comic books is really reading. _____
2. There can really be only one Robin Hood. _____
3. It is not really stealing if you rob to get your own items back. _____
4. The martial arts are an acceptable form of exercise. _____
5. Stories that take place several years ago have nothing to offer readers today. _____
6. Exciting illustrations can enhance the value of a book.

READ-ALoud PAGES-PASSAGES

Hong Kil Dong's father knows that Kil Dong is more worthy than his other son, In Hyung. This passage shows the reader how young Kil Dong feels and reacts to the injustice that he bears. "I cannot sleep for sorrow. I can never be called a man... Though I am grateful for all you have given me, my life has one great sadness. How can I become a man when I cannot even claim my own father?" This quote comes near the beginning of the story.

In the middle of the story when we hear the stories of the bandits, the reader begins to see the destiny of Kil Dong will be to rob from the rich and give to the poor.

"My father was a farmer, when his crops failed, he was thrown in jail because he could not pay his taxes."

"The taxes line the pockets of the officials... but our children's bellies are empty."

"When our father died, my mother and sisters were taken to serve the local magistrate. I had no where to go."

Kil Dong's thoughts after this interview were; "These are fine men, brought low by adversity...Perhaps this is the very purpose for which I was driven from my home."

IF YOU LIKE THE LEGEND OF HONG KIL DONG THE ROBIN HOOD OF KOREA, YOU WILL REALLY LIKE.....

The following four suggestions follow the same genre as Hong Kil Dong, and that is graphic novel.

Baby Mouse: Puppy Love by Jennifer L. Holm, Random House, 2007, for grades 2-5, a story with a female protagonist.

Grampa & Julie: Shark Hunters by Jef Czekaj, Top Shelf Books, 2004, grades 3-7.

Owly a Time to be Brave series by Andy Runton, Top Shelf Books, 2007, grades 2-5.

Coraline by Neil Gaiman, Harper Collins, 2008, grades 4-8.

The following suggestion follows the same theme of martial arts and its code of honor.

Shaolin by Kah Joon Liow, Silkroad Networks, 2006 hardback.

The next recommendation contains the same character, Robin Hood.

Stories of Robin Hood Told to Children, by H.E. Marshall, Yesterday's Classics, 2005.

ACROSS THE CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS

RESOURCES

BOOK ACTIVITIES

BIBLIOGRAPHY

<http://www.boldoutlaw.com>

<http://www.benturner.com/robinhood>

<http://www.koreanfilm.org>

<http://www.asianinfo.org>

<http://lifeinkorea.com>

<http://www.koreanrobinhood.com>

<http://www.charlesbridge.com>

<http://annesibleyobrien.com/>

<http://whitelies.ws>