

Seoul Subway Stop Research

Developed for NCTA
at the Program for Teaching East Asia, University of Colorado Boulder

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Most recent TEA/ NCTA program you completed and/or the program that motivated this lesson: I recently completed the Winter 2023 *Japan through Children's Literature: Picturebook Biographies* book study. I developed this lesson for the Fall 2022 TEA-NCTA online book study, *Korea through Children's Literature: Urban Geographies*.

Recommended grade level: Middle School (6th, 7th, 8th grade)

Lesson length: Three 40-minute class periods

Lesson overview/introduction: In this integrated social studies and literacy lesson, students will explore neighborhoods in Seoul, South Korea using the picture book, *I am the Subway*. They will consider characteristics of fiction and nonfiction sources and physical and human characteristics of place.

In *I am the Subway* by Kim Hyo-eun, South Korean citizens get on from different local stations and travel to another neighborhood of the city. The story celebrates their home, work, study, and society and how collectively they represent the Seoul community. The Seoul subway featured in this book is Line 2, a circle line connecting the two parts of Seoul that are divided by the Han River—the historic north called “Gangbuk” and the south developed in the 1970s and 1980s, called “Gangnam.”

Korean personal names are provided in the Korean order with surnames first.

Learning outcomes: At the conclusion of the lesson, students will have explained the characteristics of fictional and expository texts and identified distinctive features that give Seoul neighborhoods distinguishing meaning and character. Students will also have conducted research to find information about the subway system in Seoul and composed their own expository texts about the stations.

Instructional objectives: By the end of the lesson students will be able to:

- Identify connections between fiction and expository nonfiction.
- Synthesize research to describe distinct features of Seoul's urban geography.

Ties to standards:

[National Geography Standard 4](#) - The physical and human characteristics of places. 8th grade, 1. Personal, community, and national identities are rooted in and attached to places.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.7.9 - Compare and contrast a fictional portrayal of a time, place, or character and a historical account of the same period as a means of understanding how authors of fiction use or alter history.

CCSS.CRR.R.9 - Analyze how two or more texts address similar themes or topics in order to build knowledge or to compare the approaches the authors take.

Materials:

- Kim Hyo-eun. *I am the Subway*. Deborah Smith, trans. New York: Scribble, 2021.
- Class map of Seoul and Line 2 of the subway system. The subway map of Line 2 will be the base picture that students add information to during the lesson.

Teachers may choose from the following maps or select their own:

- Google Maps:
<https://www.google.com/maps/@37.5678702,126.8028019,11z/data=!5m2!1e4!1e2?authuser=0>
- Seoul Metro Map: <http://www.seoulmetro.co.kr/en/cyberStation.do?action=map>
- Seoul Metropolitan Subway Map: <https://www.metrolinemap.com/metro/seoul/>
- [Thinglink](#). The teacher can create a Thinglink page for the class map to which groups can add their information. If teachers do not have access to Thinglink, they could use a Google Slide or PowerPoint Slide with a map of the Seoul subway system. Students can embed links to their research on the slide. Alternatively, teachers could use a print-based option and create a bulletin board with pictures and typed information.
- At least one electronic device per group is necessary for students' research. In addition, students will need materials to take notes.

Additional resources for group internet research

- Kim, Seungjun. “[Metro] A Driving Force for Sustainable Development and Remarkable Change, Seoul Metropolitan Subway”. Seoul: Seoul Solution, 2014.
<https://www.seoulsolution.kr/en/content/1802>
- Yeong. “Introducing the most convenient Subway Line in Seoul, Line 2 and its Attractions!” Blog. Creatrip. 2022. <https://www.creatrip.com/en/blog/675/Introducing-the-most-convenient-Subway-Line-in-Seoul-Line-2-and-its-Attractions-Hongdae-Myeongdong-Gangnam-Jamsil-and-more>
- Korea Tourism Organization. “Line 2.” Visit Korea. November 10, 2021.
https://english.visitkorea.or.kr/enu/ATR/SI_ENG_2_10_2.jsp

Procedure:

Part 1: Literacy Skills

1. Explain to the class that while fiction is used to tell stories it can also be used to share information about history and geography. For this part of the lesson the students will explore the children's book *I am the Subway*, a text from South Korea, which was translated into English.

2. Begin by asking the students to describe some characteristics of fictional picture books. Students should note that picture books include **pictures** that illustrate the story. Fictional stories also include **characters** who interact with each other in ways to help move the plot of the story along. **Setting** plays a key role in fictional stories as it helps the reader understand when and where the story takes place. Students can also review **point of view**, the perspective from which the story is written, **tone/mood**, the general feeling of the writing, and **theme**, central idea, during the discussion.
3. Divide the students into small groups and ask each group to take notes on one of the characteristics (characters, setting, point of view, tone/mood, theme) of fictional stories while the story is read aloud.
4. Read *I am the Subway* to the class and ask the students to take notes on the information they hear as the story is read.
5. Ask students to share their notes from listening to the story. This can be done verbally and the teacher can write group responses on a chart for the class to view, which could be helpful for the students to refer back to later in the lesson. Students should identify that, in general, the story takes place in Seoul, South Korea. The characters include the individuals who get on the subway car at each station (Mr. Wanju, Granny, Jung Yu-seon, Mr. Jae-sung, Na-yoon, Mr. Gu, Lee Do-young, Yeon-woo) and the subway, who is also the narrator. Students should also describe the plot as the narrator explains the day as the subway makes its way through the city, describing people and places as it stops along the way. The tone is friendly, and the theme is community. Students may also identify aspects of figurative language from the text, such as the use of repetition and onomatopoeia of the sound of the rails “*ba-dum, ba-dum, ba-dum.*”
6. Next, lead a picture walk of *I am the Subway*. Ask the students to explain how the illustrations enhance the storytelling. They should notice that some of the pictures are of subway stations (Line 2), some are of people’s daily lives as they interact with one another on the subway, and some provide background information about the characters’ daily lives in the city (or in one case, Jeju Island).

Part 2: Social Studies Thinking

1. Invite students to think about the ways that Kim Hyo-eun used the fictional text to describe real places through characters rather than listing facts and figures, which can sometimes be the case when we learn about a place. For instance, sometimes when we learn about a place, we learn about how many people live there, how many square miles it covers, what its elevation is, etc. Rather than using numbers, Kim Hyo-eun introduced readers to neighborhoods through characters’ daily lives.
2. As a class, create a list of the subway stations from the story and then add a list of characteristics from the story and illustrations that help the reader better understand the neighborhoods around the stations. Examples are listed below.
 - **The Han River** is a major and historic Korean river which flows through Seoul. It divides the city with the historic city to the north called “Gangbuk” and the new city to

the south developed in the 1970s and 1980s, called “Gangnam.” Many bridges for cars and public transportation span the river and connect the two parts of the city.

- **Hapjeong Station** - Mr. Wanju is running late and gets on the subway at Hapjeong station. Other people are in a hurry too.
- **City Hall Station** (in Jung-gu) - Granny enters the subway car at this station. Granny is a visitor to Seoul from the South Korean island of Jeju, famous for [haenyeo](#), women divers who harvest shellfish at depths of 10 meters without diving apparatus. Students will notice that Mr. Wanju is seated in the subway car as Granny enters the door.
- **Seongsu Station** - Jung Yu-seon and her children get on the subway car at this station. Students will notice that Mr. Wanju and Granny are seated in the subway car as Jung Yu-seon enters the subway car.
- **Guui Station** - Mr. Jae-sung boards at this station on the north side of the Han River. The text tells us he is from Guro district, an older industrial neighborhood on the south side of the Han River where many factories of the South Korean “development era” were located. As with the other station stops, the students will notice that the characters who previously entered the subway car are still in the car as it arrives at this station.
- **Gangnam Station** - Na-yoon gets on the subway at Gangnam station, a neighborhood known for its top-ranking schools and after-school centers. She boards the subway car tired from spending many hours studying. As with the other station stops, the students will notice that the characters who previously entered the subway car are still in the car as it arrives at this station.
- **Sillim Station** - Granny disembarks as Lee Do-young enters the subway car at Sillim station. He is looking for a job. Maybe he is a former student of the nearby Seoul National University? As with the other station stops, the students will notice that the characters who previously entered the subway car are still in the car as it arrives at this station.
- **Sindorim Station** -The book includes pictures of people waiting at the subway car doors at this station as well as pictures of people walking in the station. The students will notice that some of the characters who previously entered the subway car disembark at this station.

Part 3: Social Studies Research Skills

1. Explain that the class will begin a research project to learn more about the Seoul subway stations introduced in *I am the Subway*. To do this, the students will work in seven small groups to conduct research about the stations included in the picture book. Put students in groups of three or four and assign each group a subway station. Students will conduct internet research to identify non-fiction sources about the area around their assigned subway station, and share the information they find about the stations on a class map (using [Thinglink](#), a Google or PowerPoint slide, or a bulletin board). Remind students that expository non-fiction texts include facts and evidence from multiple sources, they utilize headings, and should contain information that is free from bias. Instruct the small groups that their station information should include a written paragraph that synthesizes their research about the station and attributes of the Seoul neighborhood where it is located. They should also include at least two pictures that illustrate characteristics of the neighborhood/station. When a group has completed their research, they should locate their assigned station on the class map and create a hyperlink (or a line in the case

of a class map on a bulletin board) to their pictures and research so their classmates can select the station on the map and view the information.

2. Student research suggestion - As students are preparing to research specific stations and surrounding neighborhoods along the subway line, they can go to Wikipedia to find information about the station. For further information about the surrounding neighborhood, in the Wikipedia search field, they can enter the station name followed by “-dong” (neighborhood) or “-gu” (district). For example, they could search “Hapjeong-dong” or “Gangnam-gu”.

3. Once the class map is created, the students should take a “tour” of all of the stations on the map. Students should be encouraged to carefully read the information written by their classmates and to analyze the pictures selected by their classmates as well. After they have had a chance to tour the subway line information created by the class, ask the students to share the information that stood out to them and any information they had questions about.

4. As a whole class, discuss the ways the fictional story connected to the nonfiction information researched and written by the students. For instance, the teacher could draw students’ attention to the use of Seoul Subway Line 2 as the thread that connected the picture book, the neighborhoods in Seoul, and the students’ research together. All of the information is written about the subway in Seoul, but the type of writing provides different feelings/views toward the subway. The class could discuss that a geographic map uses a line to connect the places while the author Kim Hyo-eun uses the interactions between fictional characters and the subway to connect the places. During the discussion, students can reflect on the distinct features of the stations/neighborhoods surrounding the stations that provide them with meaning and distinguish them from the other neighborhoods/stations.

5. Ask the students to write and submit a brief reflection giving two specific examples from *I am the Subway* and the class research map to explain the connections between fiction and nonfiction sources, and how research informed them about the diversity of the neighborhoods in Seoul. The students should identify that the subway map itself shows geographic locations. The online research students performed about each station provided demographic information about the neighborhood around the station in terms of size and population as well as some of the history and landmarks in the area while the fictional text introduced students to human characteristics of the stations. Students should identify that the stations listed in the fictional text do exist in Seoul and have a rich cultural history. Students can use the chart and list created in class to select two examples from the text to cite within their reflection.

Assessment strategies: Students can be informally assessed on their participation in class discussions. Students can be formally assessed on their writing about the subway station they were assigned for group work and their final reflection on the ways that fiction and nonfiction sources informed their understanding of Seoul neighborhoods.