

PARK, SUMIN

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How did 'Squid Game' Be

instance, characters in *Squid Game* were given “dalgona candy,” a cookie made of brown sugar and baking soda. Players in *Squid Game* had to cut out specific shapes imprinted on the honeycomb candy using a needle without breaking the shape; if they did, they were eliminated. This game along with several others trended on TikTok as “*Squid Game* challenges.” Even popular gaming platforms, such as Roblox, were flooded with *Squid Game*-themed games that fans have created.

Halloween Costumes and Cosplay

As a person who has a sweet tooth, Halloween has always been my favorite celebration of the year; getting sugar headaches after eating a bucket of candy should be everyone’s tradition. But along with Kit Kat and Skittles, dressing up in staggering costumes has been the hot topic of every Halloween season. And this year, on October 31, American, Korean, and European streets were all full of *Squid Game*-inspired costumes. The infamous pink soldier onesies and the green tracksuits worn by the contestants in *Squid Game* flooded online markets such as Amazon and eBay. Furthermore, professional cosplayers, such as M4STIFF, took inspiration from the robotic doll, Younghee, in *Squid Game* and transferred it to reality. The vivid orange pinafore dress, knee-high white socks, black pigtails, and the expressionless face of the robot was mastered in M4STIFF’s cosplay. *Squid Game* costumes will resurface next Halloween, for sure.

Growing Popularity of K-Cultures

Have you ever listened to K-Pop or watched a K-drama before? Over the span of under 30 years, South Korea experienced phenomenal growth regarding its traditional culture as well as popular culture. For the past few decades, South Korea was largely known for its Hyundai cars and Samsung phones, while its music and movies were limited to regional audiences. But now, Korea has become a cultural juggernaut: a major cultural exporter around the world. For instance, in September of 2021, K-Pop girl group Blackpink surpassed Justin Bieber as the most subscribed artist on the YouTube platform. With a whopping 65.5 million subscribers and combined YouTube views of about 10 billion, Blackpink now stands as one of the top global artists. However, the rapidly growing popularity of K-Pop also stirred a massive attraction to another aspect of Korean pop culture: K-dramas and Korean films. In 2020, *Parasite* marked the new Oscar history by winning 4 Academy Awards at the 92nd Academy Awards. The parasite was the first Korean film to receive Academy Award recognition as well as the first non-English film to win Best Picture. Streaming platforms, especially Netflix, have torn down geographic and language barriers and allowed Korean shows such as *Squid Game* and *Sweet Home* to be popularized among global audiences.

Our lives in the 21st century are surrounded by greed, competition, and self-interest. We, humans, have naturally deceived, lied, and beguiled others to drape ourselves in valuable resources. Maybe we are the murder and tyrants of our modern-day society. *Squid Game* directly and crudely displays the inherent evil that resides within us. Throughout the show, contestants murdered, blamed, and misinformed others to win 456 million won. By the end of the series, Gi-hun, a player who eventually wins the game’s final round, receives the promised 456 million dollars. However, when Gi-hun comes back to his mundane reality, he does not carry out an extravagant lifestyle; Gi-hun lives in poverty of heart, full of guilt and sin.

By the final episode of *Squid Game*, audiences can grasp the true meaning and moral of the show: people will do anything for wealth and luxury, even if it means risking their lives. But the even deeper message *Squid Game* sends out to the audience is that people naturally favor choices that will benefit themselves under extreme situations. Maybe we are the tyrants of this modern-day society. *Squid Game* made the audience, including myself, ponder on the genuine facade of human beings.