



STORIES HIDDEN IN CLASSICAL MASTERPIECES

EXPLORING SYMBOLISM, HISTORY, AND PERSONAL NARRATIVES BEHIND FAMOUS PAINTINGS

Every year on April 15, the birthday of Leonardo Da Vinci, World Art Day celebrates the power of art and creativity around the world, and it reminds us that art is not only about beauty but also about meaning and freedom of expression. In celebration of World Art Day, let's learn more about classic masterpieces famously known all around the world.



"The Starry Night" by Vincent Van Gogh is an iconic piece of art. The painting depicts a quiet village under a starry night sky, creating a calm and peaceful atmosphere. However, the masterpiece goes beyond a simple landscape. The painting was created during a difficult period of Van Gogh's life, when he was staying in a mental asylum and using art to express his struggles. "The Starry Night" represents Van Gogh's inner conflict and chaos. While the village below portrays a sense of calm and stability, the sky above expresses restless energy, which describes the artist's emotional state. The painting also features symbolic elements, such as the tall cypress tree, which is often associated with death. "The Starry Night" is not only a landscape painting, but also a direct representation of the artist's emotional state.



"The Arnolfini Portrait," painted by Jan van Eyck in 1434, holds interesting stories behind it. A man and a woman, who are assumed to be Arnolfini, a rich Italian merchant, and his wife, are holding each other's hands in the masterpiece. The painting is full of exquisite details. The luxurious red bed, a fancy chandelier hanging above, the couple's fine clothes, and the oranges scattered on the floor in the background represent their wealth. There are two main theories about the story behind this masterpiece. Early scholars claimed that the painting depicts a wedding ceremony, while recent research suggests that it is a commemorative painting of Arnolfini's deceased first wife. At the back of the painting, an elaborate mirror reflects the couple and two men standing by the door. Above the mirror, the artist's signature reads, "Jan van Eyck was here. 1434." One of the men by the door may have been Jan van Eyck himself, as a witness to the scene.

"The Kiss," painted by the Italian artist Francesco Hayez, portrays a simple scene of two lovers embracing, capturing a moment of intimacy and farewell. The subjects, lighting, and gentle interaction make the painting a lasting symbol of love and passion, and it is now widely recognized as an icon of romance. However, the painting also contains an important political message. The man's posture, with his foot on the step, and the concealed dagger suggest that the man is a patriot ready to leave for battle or a mission, transforming the scene into a sacrifice rather than pure love. There are several versions of the painting, where colors play an important role. The most famous version - featuring red, white, and blue tones - symbolizes the alliance between Italy and France at the time, while the third and last version includes colors resembling the Italian flag. Overall, "The Kiss" tells a story of love, departure, and uncertainty while also conveying a political message.



"Primavera," meaning "spring" in Italian, is a masterpiece by Sandro Botticelli. The painting exquisitely describes nine figures from classical mythology, with the goddess of love and beauty, Venus, at the center. Above her is Cupid, the god of love and affection, ready to fire his arrow of love. To Venus's right, there are three figures: Zephyrus, the god of the west wind; Chloris, a nymph; and the goddess of spring and flowers, Flora. On the left side of Venus, three goddesses are dancing in a circle, with Mercury, the messenger of the gods, next to them. More than 138 species of plants are in the painting, all portrayed by Botticelli.



By Han Tae-yeong hty_herald@pukyong.ac.kr / By Lee Ye-lim ly_herald@pukyong.ac.kr / By Fontana Alessiaaf_herald@pukyong.ac.kr

Cancer: No Longer Ignored by Young Adults

The rising threat of cancer among people in their 20s and 30s

Cancer is no longer a disease limited to the elderly. In recent years, the number of cancer cases among people in their 20s and 30s has been rapidly increasing, emerging as a serious health concern known as "young-onset cancer." This shift has drawn significant attention, as it challenges the long-standing perception of cancer.

Traditionally, cancer has been considered a disease that primarily affects individuals aged 65 and older, developing over time as factors such as dietary habits, immunity, underlying conditions, and genetics accumulate and reach a critical point. However, this perception is no longer accurate, as cancer has become a health issue that can affect anyone, regardless of age.

According to the Health Insurance Review and Assessment Service in South Korea, colon cancer cases among Koreans in their 20s and 30s increased by more than 80 percent in 2024. Colon cancer is a type of colorectal cancer that refers to malignant tumors that occur in the mucous membranes of the large intestine. Colon cancer shows the sharpest rise among people in their 20s, and the increase continues with those in their

30s. Additionally, thyroid cancer, whose cases rose by 14 percent in the last five years, also indicates a clear upward trend in younger adults, which signifies this pattern is not a short-term issue anymore. Then, how can we deal with these cancers as young adults?

Diet plays a key role in reducing the risk of colon cancer. Many young adults consume high-calorie and high-fat meals, and now intake significantly more processed meat and refined carbohydrates, which are foods made from processed grains, such as white bread, than in the past. These habits contribute to rising obesity rates. The recent popularity of high-calorie desserts, such as Dubai chewy cookies and butter rice cakes, highlights unhealthy eating habits among young adults. As obesity develops, fat tissue grows, leading to long-term inflammation and the release of substances that damage colon cells. Over time, this process can lead to mutation or changes in genes. Korea's National Health Data show that obesity rates among people in their 20s and 30s have increased by approximately 8 to 10 percent over the past decade.

In Korea, national health examina-



▲The word "cancer" magnified (Photo: Pixabay)

tion starts at age 50, which excludes younger adults from regular checkups. Since many individuals visit hospitals only after the first symptoms appear, the disease has already advanced by the time it is detected. Although early detection has improved due to better diagnostic tools, many cases show no symptoms at first.

Since cancer has become a condition that no one can feel completely safe from, it is important to practice preventive habits in daily life. Experts emphasize the importance of early detection above all. An official from the

National Cancer Center stated, "The earlier cancer is detected, the higher the chances of successful treatment, making regular check-ups and health management essential." Maintaining a healthy lifestyle, paying close attention to one's health, and not overlooking even minor symptoms are crucial. By raising awareness about cancer and focusing on prevention, individuals can lead healthier lives.

By Kim Gang-ri
kgr_herald@pukyong.ac.kr
By Ma Yun-seo
mys_herald@pukyong.ac.kr

— | World | —

Parallels Between the Titanic and the Sewol Ferry

What these two disasters teach us

The parallel theory refers to the perspective that similar patterns recur across different events. The sinking of the Titanic in 1912 and the Sewol Ferry tragedy in 2014, occurring almost exactly a century apart - April 15th and April 16th respectively - illustrate this pattern. Beyond the coincidence of timing, these two tragedies share similar patterns in various aspects. They both feature preventable man-made disasters and critical failures in the initial response. Such parallels suggest not a mere coincidence, but systemic issues being repeated in our society.

To begin with, both accidents shared a parallel in that they were preventable. According to a study published in the Korean Association of Science and Technology Studies, the Sewol disaster was largely attributed to basic safety failures, such as excessive modifications, overloading, and improper cargo securing. The study also pointed to the authorities' reliance on inadequate safety inspections as a key factor in the accident. Similarly, the Titanic disaster, as an-

alyzed by Jon Ivar Havold, involved multiple ignored iceberg warnings, while the ship's operators prioritized efficiency and familiar routine practices over safety regulations. Reports from the British Wreck Commissioner's Inquiry and the United States Senate Inquiry into the Sinking of the Titanic, conducted immediately after the disaster, also highlighted the lack of lifeboats and other safety shortcomings, showing how regulatory and operational limitations contributed to the scale of the tragedy. In both cases, safety regulations existed but failed in practice.

Secondly, both disasters were marked by early response failures. A study on the Sewol ferry disaster by Hanyang University found that repeated instructions for passengers to "stay put" wasted valuable evacuation time, while rescue agencies struggled with confused command structures and delayed information, limiting rescue efforts. The Titanic disaster also showed that poor judgment of the situation after the collision, partially empty lifeboats, and passengers'

delayed awareness of the danger reduced rescue efficiency. These early response failures in both disasters further amplified the consequences.

The tragedies shocked the world, triggering major changes in safety standards. The Titanic disaster led to the 1914 International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea, which established a regulation to have enough lifeboats for all passengers and 24-hour wireless monitoring. The Sewol disaster led to the passage of three related laws, which established a legal "national disaster control tower" to oversee rescue operations and strengthened measures to prevent those responsible from hiding their assets. Both disasters also changed public attitudes toward safety and the right to life. After the Titanic disaster, maritime rules in the UK and the US put passenger safety above efficiency, influencing other transport sectors. In Korea, the Sewol disaster sparked debates about the state's role, emphasizing that safety is a basic right, not a cost to cut.



▲The sinking of the RMS Titanic in 1912

The Titanic and the Sewol Ferry disasters resulted from prioritizing efficiency over safety, failures in response, and inadequate safety oversight. Even though these accidents shocked society, the persistence of similar accidents today demonstrates that the underlying issues remain unsolved. To break this cycle, we must shift from a system of profit to one that prioritizes human life. Now is the moment when action is needed to break the cycle of recurring tragedies.

By Lee Ye-lim
lyl_herald@pukyong.ac.kr
By Lim Han-bi
lhb_herald@pukyong.ac.kr

| Reader Submissions |

A ROK Navy Cadet's Leadership Journey in Texas



GYURI KIM

Republic of Korea Navy ROTC Cadet

For a Navy ROTC cadet, the path to global experience often requires a difficult trade-off. To remain dedicated to the rigorous training of the Republic of Korea Navy, I had to forgo the typical exchange programs that my civilian peers often take for granted. While I never regretted my commitment to the Navy, I harbored a deep-seated desire to test my leadership on an international stage.

That opportunity arrived in 2026 with the "Overseas Leadership Development Program," hosted by the ROK Army Cadet Command. Out of applicants nationwide, only 114 elite cadets were selected, including just three from the Navy. The selection was a grueling evaluation of military

science, GPA, physical fitness, and English proficiency. Being selected as one of the few Navy representatives was a moment of profound pride and the culmination of years of quiet dedication.

My fellow representatives' and my journey to Tarleton State University was an exercise in adaptability. Due to severe flight cancellations, our route was diverted through Los Angeles. We finally arrived at the campus at 3 a.m. on February 28th. Although exhausted, the sight of American cadets already forming up for their morning routines immediately sharpened our focus. We were no longer just students; we were representatives of our nation among fellow future officers.

The most transformative aspect of the program was the 24/7 immersion with our fellow American cadets. Unlike traditional tours, we lived the life of a US ROTC cadet. I was assigned a dormitory room with an American cadet, which turned out to be the highlight of the trip. We spent late nights discussing the differences in our respective military cultures, the weight of the responsibilities we carry, and our shared aspirations as future

officers. I realized that the core values of an officer - honor, courage, and commitment - transcend borders. These informal interactions built a level of rapport that no formal meeting could achieve. These weren't just conversations; they were the seeds of a lifelong professional network.

The program's schedule was a masterclass in balancing academic rigor with cultural immersion. We had a professional tour of Fort Cavazos, the largest military installation in Texas. Seeing the scale of their operations provided a profound perspective on global defense logistics. We also visited the Texas State Capitol and toured world-class athletic stadiums to analyze infrastructure management, often guided by the insights of our local hosts. A significant portion of our time was spent in the classroom, led by retired high-ranking military officers. We delved into complex topics such as Adaptive Leadership & Learning from Failure and Decision Making Under Stress and Uncertainty. A quote from these seminars, "There is no such thing as a wrong decision; the worst decision is making no decision at all," resonated

deeply with me. In the split-second environment of maritime operations, the ability to act decisively is what defines a successful commander.

Coming from a Foreign Language High School and majoring in International Area Studies, I was confident in my English. However, being the 'bridge' for my team as a translator and presenter among American cadets was a humbling reality check. The three weeks of constant negotiation and debate highlighted areas for growth that I had never noticed in a classroom. I realized that true linguistic proficiency for an officer is about the ability to command respect and build trust through communication.

Being part of the "First Cohort" at Tarleton State University was a historic honor. I returned to the ROK Navy ROTC not just as a student, but as a more sophisticated, globally minded leader. To my fellow cadets: this program is the top of the ROTC experience. It is a chance to make brothers in arms across the ocean and to return with a vision as vast as the Texas horizon. I am ready to bring these lessons to the fleet, serving as a bridge between nations and a leader for our Navy's future.

| Study |

Can the Tablet Replace Paper?

A neuroscience perspective on learning with paper or tablets

What is the difference between paper and tablets in terms of learning efficiency? Until recently, most students primarily relied on paper for studying. However, tablets have become widely used due to their portability and convenience. They are lightweight, portable, and allow users to organize content quickly using multimedia, improving study efficiency. However, convenience does not necessarily lead to better learning outcomes. Evidence suggests that paper remains more effective for learning. This article examines how paper may support student learning more effectively than tablets.

A study published in *Frontiers in Human Neuroscience* in 2021 compared handwriting with an ink pen on paper and a digital pen on a tablet. While overall test performance did not differ between the two groups, brain activity revealed a key distinction. Researchers focused on the N400, a brain signal that shows how easily the brain understands meaning and learns new words. The stronger N400 effect associated with

handwriting varied depending on participants' familiarity with the tool. For participants unfamiliar with digital pens, a stronger N400 signal was observed when writing with a pen on paper. In contrast, participants familiar with digital pens showed similar N400 responses when writing on paper and on a tablet. This suggests that unfamiliar tools increase cognitive load, diverting attention from learning. In contrast, writing on paper is more natural and requires less effort to control the hand, allowing learners to focus more on processing and memorizing words rather than on controlling the writing tool itself.

A second study by the University of Tokyo and Japan's NTT Data Institute of Management Consulting studied how paper and tablets affect information retention. Participants read dialogues on personal schedules and were asked to enter appointments into a monthly calendar. After completing the task and briefly reviewing the information, they performed a memory task about an

hour later while undergoing fMRI (functional Magnetic Resonance Imaging) scanning, a brain imaging technique that measures brain activity. The results showed that participants using paper completed the task more quickly and demonstrated higher accuracy on simpler recall questions. More importantly, brain imaging revealed stronger activation in regions associated with memory, spatial understanding, and forming mental images, including the hippocampus - a key brain structure involved in memory formation and spatial navigation - for the paper group compared to the tablet group. Together, these studies point to a shared mechanism: paper reduces cognitive load and helps people remember information by connecting it to space, leading to more effective memory formation and retrieval.

In conclusion, rather than replacing paper entirely, tablets should be used as complementary tools that enhance convenience. The effectiveness of both paper and tablets depends on how they



▲ A paper book and a tablet

are used. Writing on paper remains valuable, as it encourages greater focus and active engagement. People tend to be more involved in the learning process when they write on paper, which can lead to deeper understanding. Therefore, despite the growing use of tablets, paper continues to play an essential role. With midterm exams approaching, students should consider incorporating paper-based writing into their study routines.

By Lee Ye-lim
lyl_herald@pukyong.ac.kr
By Choi Yeon-woo
cyw_herald@pukyong.ac.kr

Hidden Gem at PKNU?

Discovering history and evolution through the PKNU museum

The legacy of the PKNU museum

Since its establishment, the PKNU Museum has focused on curating marine biological specimens and historical artifacts, reflecting the university's Marine-specialized academic heritage. These foundational collections have played a major role in shaping the university's unique identity.

Originally established within the main building of the National Fisheries University of Busan, the museum was renamed the Pukyong National University Museum in 1996 following a historic university merger. Recently, the museum has entered a new chapter with its relocation to the newly built facility in Cheongun Hall.

One of the museum's most treasured items is the Coelacanth specimen, a rare prehistoric fish. Donated by the Comoros government in 1985 as a symbol of diplomatic cooperation, the gift recognized the academic prestige of the National Fisheries University of Busan, which is now PKNU. As the only marine-specialized university in Korea at the time, this exhibit remains a key symbol of the university's distinguished standing.

Interview with the museum curator

Q: Which exhibit do you recommend most to students?

A: I highly recommend the Coelacanth. Not only is it one of only two specimens in the country, but PKNU is also the only place in Korea where you can see both the fossil and the actual biological specimen in a single location.

Q: What are the most notable changes since the relocation to Cheongun Hall?

A: The most visible change is the display of the Pukyongosaurus in the lobby, which was made possible by the expanded space. However, the most meaningful change is the creation of a dedicated exhibition hall for students. The museum has evolved into a student-centered, open space where students can lead their own exhibitions.

Q: What do you want the museum to represent to the students?

A: I want it to be a place of learning for current students and a space where graduates can revisit their college memories with nostalgia, and a symbolic landmark that represents PKNU.



Named as "Pukyongosaurus," this prehistoric creature belonged to a group of long-necked herbivorous dinosaurs related to Titanosaurus. Known for its distinct dark coloration, it is estimated to have reached a length of 15 to 20 meters and was discovered in Hadong, Gyeongsangnam-do. Displayed at the museum's first-floor lobby, this fossil was discovered by the research team of Professor Paik In-sung of the Department of Earth Environmental Sciences, Pukyong National University. The first discoverer was Park Jeong-kyu, a graduate student in the department.



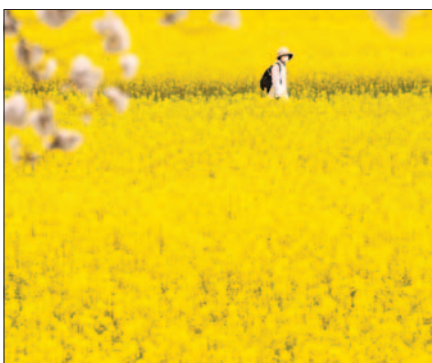
Known as "Gangchi" in Korea, this marine mammal once inhabited the coastal regions of the East Sea. Historically, large populations were said to live around Dokdo. However, the species is now extinct, making museum exhibits like this especially meaningful. Located in the Marine Biology Room on the second floor, both male and female specimens are on display. The male sea lion measures approximately 2.5 meters in length, while the female reaches up to 2 meters.

By Yun Ye-seo
yys_herald@pukyong.ac.kr
By Sharma Aanshi
aanshiherald@pukyong.ac.kr

News

Blossoms Across Korea

Exploring Korea's most vibrant spring festivals



As flowers bloom across Busan, spring has fully arrived in the city. Now, most cherry blossoms have already fallen, yet people continue to enjoy the atmosphere of the season.

One of Busan's representative spring events, "The 22nd Busan Urban Agriculture Expo 2026," was held alongside the canola flowers for four days beginning on April 9 at Daejeo Ecological Park. Surrounded by blooming canola flowers, the park formed yellow waves across the landscape, highlighting the ongoing beauty of spring in Busan, creating a warm and lively seasonal atmosphere for visitors.



The "2026 Taeon World Tulip Flower Festival," held in Taeon, began on April 1 and will continue until May 6. Every spring, the festival attracts numerous visitors and is widely recognized as one of Korea's major flower festivals, offering a chance to appreciate a wide variety of tulip species from around the world.

Millions of tulips are currently in full bloom at the place, where visitors can also enjoy themed sections such as Dutch-style gardens and various photo zones. Mid-April is the best time to visit to see tulips at their peak, which draws even more visitors during this period.



Held along the scenic Edenbeotkkot-gil in Gapyeong, the "Eden Cherry Blossom Road festival" will take place from April 11 to April 19.

Designed to engage all five senses, the visitors can enjoy stage performances, browse a handmade flea market, and explore the local specialties of Gapyeong. A major highlight of the event is the festival's food zone, where visitors can taste a wide range of international dishes. The festival also features multiple photo zones and diverse bands ranging from orchestral performances to military bands, promising an unforgettable celebration of the season.



The 2026 azalea season is expected to peak from March to late April, drawing visitors to scenic destinations. The "Goryeosan Mountain Azalea Festival" on Ganghwa Island offers an adventurous experience with trekking and vivid red azalea peaks. Alongside azaleas, visitors can also enjoy cherry blossoms, plum blossoms, and forsythia. With mild weather and vibrant floral displays, early April is the perfect window to explore Korea's azalea festivals.

By Sharma Aanshi
aanshiherald@pukyong.ac.kr
By Oh Ye-jin
oyj_herald@pukyong.ac.kr