

The “Mason Reads” Essay Competition at Mason Korea

Spring 2023

George Mason University Korea announces the “Mason Reads” Essay Competition at Mason Korea, which is open to first-year students of all majors.

The purpose of the “Mason Reads” Essay Competition is to promote the values and [learning outcomes](#) of the “Mason Reads” program as well as to provide an audience for first-year student writers. Since the “Mason Reads” selected book is provided to all Mason Korea first-year students, everyone has an equal chance to participate regardless of their major or prior knowledge on any subject.

This is an essay competition, and as such, a thesis or argument is expected to be presented and developed in the writing. Essays may be any combination of expository, argumentative, persuasive, or narrative in style.

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Working individually, and with the guidance of their instructors, Mason Korea first-year students will develop essays that respond to one of the [writing prompts](#) below. The writing prompts will focus on the current “Mason Reads” book, which is [Kim Jiyoung, Born 1982](#) written by Cho Nam Joo. First-year students who have not received a copy of the book can pick one up at the office of Academic Affairs (G536).

When referencing the ‘Mason Reads’ book in their essay, students should ideally include a signal phrase, quotation marks if quoting the exact text, and a page number in parenthesis at the end of the sentence. Submitted essays do not need to include any outside sources, though students should feel free to include information from researched material along with hyperlinked in-text citations for documentation if they feel that it helps in the logical construction of their essay. The essays for this contest should be written with an intended reading audience of university student peers.

For the Spring 2023 essay competition, prizes in the form of tuition scholarship for the Fall 2023 semester will be awarded to students who place in the top three finalists:

1st place: KRW 500,000 2nd place: KRW 300,000 3rd place: KRW 200,000

DEI award: KRW 200,000*

*This special award will go to the paper that the judges feel promotes understanding and discussion related to diversity, equity, and inclusion. The DEI award can be given to a paper that also places in the top 3, or it can be given to a paper that isn't included in the top finalists.

"Mason Reads" Essay Competition at Mason Korea Rules

1. Who can enter an essay into the competition? Any Mason Korea first or second semester freshman student can apply regardless of major.
2. Students should construct their essay following one of the competition [writing prompts](#), and they should feel free to consult with MK faculty for further help and guidance in the construction of their essay. Papers including researched sources should be written with hyperlinked in-text citations. The length of each essay should be between 1,000 and 1,200 words. Essays may be any combination of expository, argumentative, persuasive, or narrative in style.
3. Due date for entries: Sun., 2 April 2023. Essays should be emailed to Prof. Kifer: jkifer@gmu.edu. Please attach your essay to the email in either MS Word or PDF file format. Please include "Mason Reads" in the subject line of your email.
4. Essays will be judged by a panel of student judges. The judges will be non-freshmen representing different majors in positions of leadership (Student Government, DEI Task Force, Committee for Academic Integrity, The Voice, PAC, ARC, etc.) on the Mason Korea campus. Student names and identifying information will be removed from the essays before being given to the judges, and the judges will be given a [rubric](#) to assist in the scoring of the essays.
5. The winners of the competition scholarship prizes will be announced during the week of Mon., 10 April 2023.

Writing Prompts to Consider

***Note – While the following writing prompts are meant to help guide students towards an appropriate topic for their essay, writers should also feel free to explore topics or areas of interest within the book that stand out to them as important or interesting as well. If you are unsure if the topic of your essay is appropriate, feel free to contact Professor Kifer (jkiifer@gmu.edu).*

1. Explore the themes of gender discrimination and mental illness in *Kim Jiyoung, Born 1982*. What does the author reveal about the relationship between illness—and especially mental illness—and the experience of being a girl/woman raised in South Korea?
2. How does the Confucian patriarchal system that Jiyoung grows up in lead to educational inequalities based on gender? What are some examples from the book that show that the education of boys is prioritized over girls? What are some of the results of this inequality that we see mentioned (directly or indirectly) in the book?
3. How does Cho Nam Joo explore the theme of motherhood and its effects on women's careers and employment opportunities in *Kim Jiyoung, Born 1982*? Also, how is the reverence for the notion of 'motherhood' juxtaposed by the both the treatment of women in workplaces and the preference for sons over daughters by the families represented in the book?
4. Although all generations of women in *Kim Jiyoung, Born 1982* are mistreated, the author subtly suggests throughout the book that it is the intelligence and ingenuity of females that allow not only the families to prosper, but the country as a whole. How do the female characters of Jiyoung's mother, sister, classmates, and coworkers exhibit strength and operate as agents of social change?

“Mason Reads” Essay Competition at Mason Korea Rubric

Judges for the “Mason Reads” Essay Competition are asked to use the following rubric when scoring student submissions. They will use the criteria below to come up with a score out of 100 for each paper. The point totals in the right column represent the maximum number of points that should be given for that aspect of the paper. What you’ll notice, when viewed as a whole, is that more emphasis is placed on developing a thesis or argument and supporting it with evidence than on grammar and formatting.

Grading Rubric:

Audience & Style: The reader is consistently engaged. The argument and approach are thoroughly appropriate for the ‘university student peer’ audience.* The essay carefully and consistently serves the target audience. The tone is consistent, audience and genre aware, and helps the argument.	20 points
Thesis & Support: There is a thought-provoking, easily identifiable thesis or argument. The thesis/argument is supported with relevant, carefully selected, well-considered evidence from the Mason Reads book.* Additional evidence (from personal experience, narration/story, outside sources, etc.) also does the job of supporting the overall thesis/argument.	30 points
Thesis & Reasoning: The thesis/argument of the essay is complex & nuanced (not too simple). The reader can see the logical progression of thought through the structure of paragraphs and paragraph order as the writer supports their thesis or argument.*	20 points
Organization & Genre: The organization and structure are fluid and genre aware – essays do not need to follow a strict formula for where the thesis/argument appears, nor do they need to use ‘traditional’ paragraph structure (though they can!). Transitions between ideas and support occur naturally. ‘Genre Aware’ = understanding the essay style and writing occasion for this competition.	20 points
Correctness: The essay has been proofread and doesn’t contain grammatical or sentence-level mistakes that inhibit the reader’s understanding of the text.	10 points

***These scoring elements are especially important for this competition.**