SMOE
Teacher’s
EXEMPLARY
ESSAYS 2008
I’m a Seoulite. Not only I but also my parents have lived here in Seoul all our lives. So, I can’t imagine myself living in any other city in Korea than Seoul. Seoul has played a great role in many aspects as a capital city in Korea for more than five hundred years. The National Statistical Office, which undertook a population census recently, said more than 10 million people reside in this city. Nonetheless, a lot of people around me are still dreaming about rural life. However, I prefer living in Seoul because of its indigenous characteristics, public convenience, and cultural diversity.

First of all, Seoul is a city of joining together; the old and the new, the past and the present, as well as many mountains and a river. Seoul is surrounded by plenty of beautiful peaks. The Han River flows through the city from the east and empties into the West Sea. I am sure it’s not easy to find a city where mountains and a river are harmonized completely. Every weekend, I can see a lot of people with mountain-climbing equipment in any subway. Downtown in Seoul, there are several old palaces such as Kyungbokgung, Deoksugung and Changdeokgung. At any time of the year, I can visit there to cherish the beauty of traditional landscape architecture and taste the classic atmosphere with my friends or by myself. At the
same time, Seoul has risen up as a global landmark of modernity with many must-see attractions. Last summer vacation, I took a daughter of my friend from America to the Seoul Tower on top of Namsan mountain and the observation deck of 63-Building, which she was very pleased with. I can also see many high-rise buildings which make up an imposing skyline along the Han River. At night, buildings light up to create splendid views with bridges that have colorful lights. I am happy to live in this gorgeous place which combines something traditional with modern technology to produce a unique circumstance.

Furthermore, Seoul has an incredibly convenient public transportation system. I’m very proud that the subways in Seoul are clean, safe and fast. The eight subway lines help me travel to any place where I want to go. I commute to work every day by the tube without feeling uncomfortable. Also, because buses are supposed to properly connect to a subway or other buses inside Seoul and to the vicinity of Seoul, I can go anywhere without a car. A friend of mine who lives in Beijing told me that she didn’t have any difficulties in taking a bus or a subway in this city. Last summer, my sister and I went to Incheon Beach to see the sun setting on the sea by metro. It took around one and a half hours from the center of the city to the beach. Isn’t it surprising that in an hour or so, people can go to the seashore or their favorite mountain sites by subway or bus? It is certain that Seoul has a really favorable public transport I cannot resist.
Lastly, this cosmopolitan place is full of excitement and effervescence. I can find all the amenities and entertainment I want, while appreciating all kinds of events for movies, concerts, dancing, performances, arts, etc. Once in a while, I visit a gallery for an exhibition of foreign famous artists which is impossible to have a chance to see, unless I travel to that country. I also enjoy going to the classical music concerts and musicals at Art Halls. Insadong is also a favorite place of mine. From time to time, I like roaming around through its labyrinthine alleys to experience the traditional culture like ceramics, oriental paintings, handicrafts, etc. Every time I go there, it stirs me up to feel new and fresh. I am also a movie fanatic. It’s a great pleasure that I can get to the any theater in 30 minutes in the city. Next, Seoul offers a wide variety of shopping opportunities; arcades, department stores and outdoor markets. For example, open-air markets like Namdaemun Market and Dongdaemun Market provide people with items of all kinds with good quality and low prices. These days, modern shopping malls such as Migliore and Doosan Tower are attracting public attention. These malls especially appeal to young people. In addition, there are a lot of elegant and exotic food emporiums which serve nice Korean dishes as well as foreign food. Oh, and talking with close friends over a coffee at a gourmet coffee shop is the part that I can hardly miss. I don’t doubt that this modern metropolis will continue to stimulate my curiosity with various ways of touching to the culture.
Seoul has been the center of politics, economy, culture and transportation of Korea for six centuries, serving as the broadband core of all branches of knowledge. There are some reasons why I am holding fast to living in Seoul, in this country. First, Seoul constantly supplies me with something ancient and modern. Second, people can use mass transit very easily. And last, Seoul has a lot of sights and places to visit and spend time. I’m really happy to live in Seoul which my childhood memories inhabit. So I’d like to be in Seoul for the rest of my life while enjoying the hustle and bustle of the city, just like a Korean pop song says, “Amazing Seoul, I am going to live here in Seoul, forever.” And I’ll always do what little I can to make Seoul a more beautiful and better city.
As I was watching the news program on TV the other day, one phrase shook my mind: “The Death with Dignity”. The moment I heard it, I felt like my breath had stopped --that’s a phrase that breaks my heart. Why don’t we have the right to die in our country? Why is compassionate euthanasia considered homicide in Korea? I can never understand this illogic. I think man has the right to die with dignity.

First of all, the greatest human freedom is to live, and die, according to one’s own desires and beliefs. The most common desire among those with a terminal illness is to die with some measure of dignity. Later when I have my time, I really want to die with dignity in the presence of my children. Nowadays, many countries accept voluntary euthanasia. I agree on that idea because it’s based on one’s voluntary decision between a patient and a physician. However, why not in Korea? I assert all human beings can live and die by their free will.

Second, man is of high birth and has proper pride. My mother had a sharp temper and didn’t want to show her in unpleasant situations. However, when she was in terrible pain as a terminal cancer patient, her pride in being neat and clean was damaged fatally. To her, mental pain was a lot worse than any physical thing. Remembering that how much effort my mother made to get herself cleaned for her visitors always makes me sad. My mother wouldn’t want to be seen without washing hair--without gargling even though she was suffering from the severe pain. However, I couldn’t help watching her--with her injured pride-- until her last minutes. If she had been conscious, she
would have yelled at me, “Remove the oxygen mask from my mouth right now!” As I know, she was the person who really wanted to die with dignity. Of course, so am I because nothing is more precious than human beings.

Finally, doctors have to help people die with dignity. Why can’t doctors stop unnecessary treatments for hopeless patients? It’s so wasteful. For example, my mother, who was a terminal cancer patient, had the misfortune of paying incredible sums only to die without dignity. The unnecessary radiation treatment the doctor recommended destroyed her earlier than expected and worse, a set of special equipment for supporting her neck and spinal bones, which was demanded by the doctor, made her more uncomfortable and miserable. Consequently, my mother’s right to die with dignity was taken from her, despite our family’s sacrifices. As a matter of fact, hundreds of thousands of families in Korea have been in this situation. They have tried to respect the doctor’s treatments—which basically focused on extending the patient’s life span—and waste time and money. Consider how ridiculous it is if you pay a large amount of money for meaningless purposes? Indeed, doctors should give the art of healing for man’s dignity.

In conclusion, it’s essential for human beings to control their lives for death with dignity. It should be optional. Both family members and doctors should help the patient who is in extremely hopeless situation be the history if the person desperately wants to be given physician-assisted dying. I think cherishing dignity until the last minute as a human being is more important than any other thing, aside from ethical or religious matters. Now is time for Korea to make a great decision about death with dignity.
Around the World in 100 Days

Name: Choi Guy Jong(Rhett Butler), Trainee #: 11, Class: 1

What would you want to do if you were to have one hundred holidays? Some people would like to sleep in a log house located in a foliage forest. Others would feel like reading fantastic and romantic novels in order to relax. Still others would go to the gym for their muscles. There is no accounting for tastes. But, as for me, I would prefer traveling around the world to doing anything else. There are several reasons why travel to foreign countries is exciting.

To begin with, you can see new sights. Whenever and wherever you may go, historic sites and tourist attractions wait for you at the right places where they have been located. For example, suppose you fly to Greece. You cannot visit the city of Athens, Greece without seeing the Parthenon which is a temple of the Greek goddess Athena. It was built in the 5th century BC on the Athenian Acropolis. It is the most important surviving building of Ancient Greece. You can feel it as much as you know of it and get to be touched by it in the end.

Second, you can understand and acquire the natives’ culture. Why don’t you try to do in Rome as the Romans do? You can be much closer to them and their lifestyle, especially their unique language by doing in the country as they do! About
ten years ago, the present British Queen, Elizabeth II, visited Korea. During the stay in Korea, she was supposed to go to An Dong Folk Village. She entered a Korean traditional room with her gorgeous shoes off!! At the very moment she was reborn a British-Korean. It has been customary for anyone to enter any Korean room with his or her shoes off.

Most important of all, you can meet many people who come from different countries. For instance, when you take part in a Chiangmai Trekking in Thailand, you must be on a special group which can consist of 3 English, 2 French, a couple of Chinese and a few Vietnamese including you. You with the foreigners, whom you have never met, must hike, swim in a fall, ride on an elephant, and spend one night or two doing many things. You will be good friends with them through such valuable experiences. You come to live in a great world with them ever after!

In conclusion, travel to foreign countries is fascinating for some reasons. First, you can visit many exotic sights and monuments that you have never seen. Second, you can learn the foreigners’ culture and language. And last, you can be friends with the foreigners whom you meet during the travel. Why don’t you try to leave for foreign countries right now? New sights, unique cultures, and a wide variety of people are always looking forward to seeing you!
Eat Healthily

Park Ok-Kyung
October 6, 2008

How many times have you been told to reduce consuming fast foods and eat healthily instead? Fast foods are a huge part of our busy modern life. When you go out of your office or home, fast food restaurants are everywhere. It is truly difficult to resist the temptation of fast food, not just because of its price or convenience but also because of the flavor. However, the best thing you can do to keep yourself healthy is to eat healthily everyday. Eating healthy food should be a long-term lifestyle choice for your health. There are some reasons to choose a healthy diet all the time.

The most important reason is that you can have balanced nutrition our body needs everyday. Our body needs carbohydrate, protein, fat, vitamins and minerals. A healthy diet means it contains these substances in the correct proportions. If you don’t take enough nutrients like these, you will not grow properly or wound may not heal easily. The deficiency of nutrition also makes you feel very tired and depressed. On the other hand, balanced nutrition in the healthy food will surely reduce the risks of the diseases you could get.

Next, a healthy diet helps you stay in shape, because it does not
contain lots of fat. Most fast foods include excessive fat on the contrary. That is why people who enjoy McDonald’s hamburgers are generally overweight. The film, Supersize Me, shows this fact well. In addition, there was news about two American teenagers suing McDonald’s, claiming that it had caused them obese and unhealthy. It is grounded on that obese people are more likely to develop heart disease and diabetes. Though the New York federal judge dismissed their case, it implies the health risks of eating lots of fast foods containing excessive fat.

Lastly, you can avoid artificial ingredients contained in junk food. Artificial additives are added to improve flavor and color, but most of them are chemicals and harmful to us. One of the chemical additives, melamine, has been reported to be included in a lot of foods made in China recently. This news has outraged people all over the world. In China and Hong Kong more than fifty thousand babies have sickened after eating dairy products having melamine used to inflate the nutrition value. It was said that at least four of them died of kidney stones. This scandal reveals how deadly artificial additives can be to health.

In conclusion, you can see there are many good reasons you should eat healthily. You can have enough balanced nutrition, less fat, no artificial ingredients by choosing a variety of healthy food. It
provides us with enough energy, and makes us recover properly when we get sick. It also cuts down the risks of developing diseases, and helps us avoid harmful ingredients. Do you feel hungry now? Look around and choose healthy foods. The more you enjoy eating healthily, the healthier and happier you will get.
Let's boost our teens' extensive reading

Lee, Hyeyoung (trainee no. 36), class 4

When you visit a bookstore, you can see so many parents and children. The parents are eager to choose books suitable for their kids and some of the children are absorbed in fairy tales or comic books. Almost all Korean parents want and even force their children to read many books for their future academic competence. But as the children grow into teenagers, both the parents and children have less interest in reading books. Instead, they try to find a prestigious private institute or academy and many teenagers spend most of time in studying mathematics or English to raise their grades. However, it's still more important for teenagers to read a wide range of books constantly, whether the books are closely related to school textbooks or not.

There are lots of ultimate benefits teenagers can get from reading books. First of all, extensive reading broadens their knowledge about various fields including culture, art, literature, history, science, and so on. There is a famous phrase from a Korean best-seller, 'You can see only as much as you know.' Just like the quotation, our teens can enhance the quality of life not just as a man of working and making money but as a human of living together with other people in this world and understand the people in the past or what happened in the past. In addition, extensive reading contains what is covered in school classes and college entrance examination after all. So, this kind of reading help them to accomplish practical aims at the same time.

Secondly, Reading books can get teenagers to build up their imagination and creativity. Microsoft founder Bill Gates and the famous movie director Steven Spielberg
have one thing in common. - Both of them have been enthusiastic bookworms since their childhoods and now they are the most distinguished figures through their creativity and curiosity. You may still remember vividly the scene or the line from books you read in your adolescence. Teenagers have very sensitive and keen emotions and they have potentials to be another Bill Gates or Spielberg. Reading can stimulate their brain activities and lead them to their own imaginative and inventive world.

Finally, continuous and comprehensive reading can deepen teenagers' logical thinking. These days, many Korean high school graduates tend to sign up for essay academies or institutes, preparing for their college essay entrance test. But without accumulated and profound knowledge about a variety of books, it's a nonsense to write essays well through that short period programs. To make matters worse, we often hear the news that most essays of candidates for college entrance exams have similar writing patterns and logics and even the same citations. That's because the essays are only superficial memorizing trained at their academies rather than their own thinking output. Real meaningful thought and its expression, an essay comes from sustained reading through the years from childhood.

In conclusion, we should encourage our teenagers to read diverse books from classics to modern publications, from easily read stories to profound philosophy. Reading is the major source of expanding their intellectual and emotional realms. And another important thing is that we should try to inspire them to be an active reader. As we know the proverb, 'You can lead a horse to water but you can't make him drink,' a passive or forced reader can't be a steady and earnest reader. So, it's essential that reading should be their enjoyable habit and must-do.
Old Soldiers Never Die.

By Moon, Soon Dan (#1)

Have you ever thought about early retirement? These days some teachers at my age consider honorary retirement instead of remaining at school. According to a statistic, the number of teachers who left school early in Seoul in August of 2008 surpassed the number of teachers who retired normally by almost double (741:400). Due to uncertainty in the future of education, older teachers leave their schools. Some teachers retire because of worries about a possible unfavorable reform of the pension system. Especially among English teachers at my age, every day can be a veritable panic because of the constant demand for English proficiency. Nevertheless, there are some reasons old teachers stay at school.

The first reason that senior teachers stay at school is that they have a desire to keep a regular lifestyle. Keeping regular hours in our daily lives for work is a key to maintaining our health. As I am not a morning person, I always have difficulty getting up early. I can sit up late till 2 or 3 AM with my eyes wide open. Usually in the mornings I cannot concentrate. So whenever I have a very important task to do, I bring it home and work on it in the evenings. If I stay at home after retirement, my daily life will be thrown into a complete chaos. Moreover, we, as teachers, unknowingly walk a pretty long distance to the classrooms, speak a lot and stand for a long time, which naturally results in regular exercise as well. In brief, aged teachers want to enjoy a regular life rather than a disorderly one at home, for the good of their health.

Secondly, elderly teachers usually enjoy their time with fellow teachers. They
start a day with pleasant laughter exchanging small talk with one another over coffee every morning. During the morning hours, they open their hearts to others sharing their joys and sorrows. In addition, they often have quality time in beautiful restaurants in the rural areas for an escape from the routine. Last week I had a great time at a restaurant in a suburb of Seoul which is called 'Little Wood'. I could fully enjoy the awesome beauty of Mother Nature. The most favored time for teachers, however, is lunch time, during which they kill two birds with one stone: delicious food and joyful gossip. Coming back from consecutive classes, teachers relax for a while building up friendly relationships each other. The food is served with a variety of dishes from beef ribs to salads. Today's menu at our school was spaghetti, oyster rice, fruit and vegetable salad, meatballs, fried mushrooms, soybean soup, and gimchi. Eating all of the food, I sometimes feel guilty a little when I think of some of the starving people in Africa. We would miss this lunch very much if we should leave school. In short, there are many things at school that can make older teachers happy.

Lastly, aged teachers can help young teachers as well as the supervisors like principals and vice principals. The most important duty of teachers is to teach students well. Older teachers can be a role model to young teachers in view of their long experienced know-how in teaching and disciplining students. They know how to handle and counsel their disruptive students. In addition, young teachers usually don't know the importance of being kind to parents. Furthermore, experienced teachers can mediate between young teachers and the supervising teachers. Actually I was asked by the vice principal to tell a young female teacher to change her dress which was too short and overexposed. Without elderly teachers like us at school, it is clear that the school supervisory staff has difficulties in communicating with young teachers.
Accordingly, older teachers can play an essential role as a great intercessor between young and supervising teachers.

In conclusion, older teachers are compelled to retire earlier by an ever-changing educational system. But some older teachers realize that keeping the regularity of their daily lives for work is indispensable to a healthy life. Additionally, schools have some important secondary benefits like having quality time for close relationships among teachers as well as having fancy meals together. Aged teachers can be peacemakers between young and old teacher groups, and can counsel young teachers about their teaching methods. In this respect, old teachers should remain at school and perform their own essential roles! Old teachers, just like hardy old soldiers, never die!
When was the last time you smelled the scent of grass freshly cut? Do you remember when you last noticed the shape of the clouds? Or have you ever felt the wind cooling down the sweat from your brow recently? You can have all of this if you take the time to put on a pair of tennis shoes and take a walk. Walking is a convenient and easy way to exercise which is highly enjoyable, too!

First of all, walking is a very convenient way to exercise. There isn’t all the trouble of going to a gym or changing clothes. You don’t have to enroll in any classes or exercise at a fixed time either. All you need to do is start walking wherever you are. You don’t need to buy any special equipment. Any type of ordinary tennis shoes will do, actually walking is possible with any kind of shoes. Have you tried walking barefooted at the seashore? Even no shoes are just fine. In short walking is free, and you can do it anytime anywhere.

Moreover walking brings you physical health. Walking is superior to other exercises in the fact that it is easy on the body. Thus, one can do it consistently. Walking doesn’t stress the joints like jogging so people with pains can walk. Also because it is easy to do, so you can exercise for a longer time. For example, people who are out of shape have a hard time running for 10 to 15 minutes, but they can usually walk over 30 minutes. So with walking you can do it without wearing down, getting tired or feeling pain. Also like all types of exercise regular walking will make you more fit. After a regular program of continuous walking you will find that you have lost a few extra pounds, are tired less easily and have more energy.

Most of all walking brings you peace of mind. After walking one can release a considerable amount of stress. The time spent passing by trees and houses is strangely soothing and is almost like meditating. You can have some quite time to yourself to think about your day or
make new plans. I personally got out of a deep depression through taking a walking trip around the Southern part of Korea for 10 days. At first, every step took a lot of effort and I didn’t look beyond my feet. As the days past I got accustomed to walking and walked for 15 to 20 kilometers a day. I think back to this walking trip and realize that it was a period of renewal, rest and healing for me. Now I take long walks when I find the time, and in result, I am a happier, more optimistic person.

I believe that everybody knows the importance of regular exercise yet many still never get any. Walking is ideal because it isn’t much trouble to do. All you have to do is to get off that sofa and go out of the door. Enjoy what God gave you: your two legs and the entire bonus it comes with. You may find starting to walk everyday to be hard at first, but the beginning is always the most difficult part. Once you start walking you are sure to enjoy it. You too will become addicted to this wonderful sport; walking.
Do you think that smoking is glamorous? No, it is not. There are several reasons why you should quit smoking.

First of all, you can give people a negative impression. Smokers smell bad. Although they clean their clothes and teeth well, they can never clear off the odor of smoke perfectly. Also, ashes and cigarette butts that smokers throw away make streets and parks dirty. Bad smells, littering are always connected to smokers, which give a bad impression. For example, a week ago, I went to a blind date which my friend set for me. She said that he is very smart, handsome and polite. I thanked her for giving me the chance to meet that kind of guy. But, there was one thing that she didn’t tell me: the fact that he is a smoker. As soon as I met him, the first thing I noticed was his cigarette breath. Whenever he said something, I should inhale his smoking smell, which made me sick and disgusted. Even though he put on after shave, that didn’t help him a lot. The cologne which was mixed with the smell of cigarettes was not attractive at all. He asked me to meet again before we said goodbye, but I didn’t want to. Smoking is not glamorous. It just makes your impression bad.

Second, you can save money. One pack of cigarettes costs about eight dollars in Korea. You may think that it’s not a big deal to spend eight dollars every day. But, think about a year, or ten years? It is huge amount of money. You can use it to other more constructive areas like buying books, taking a yoga class or donation to charities. Still, you seem to think that it is not a big deal to use those big bucks to buy cigarettes because you think that the money is used to help you get rid of stress. (Many smokers say that they smoke to reduce their stress.) But, the smoking moment you enjoy can actually threaten your life very seriously.

The last reason why you should stop smoking is that you can live a longer life. Quitting smoking reduces the possibilities of dying of lung cancer. This is not only for you, but also for your family, friends, and people around you. Both regular smoking and secondhand smoking are really dangerous to our health. Since smokers inhale smoke which has been filtered once, secondhand smoking can be more hazardous to a person’s health than actually smoking. In the fumes of smoking, there are carbon monoxide, carbonic acid gas, ammonia, nicotine, tar, phenol, etc (viscusi, p44). Secondhand smoke has 4.4 times more carbon monoxide, 5.1 times more nicotine, and on average, has more than twice the amount of toxic substances than mainstream smoke has (Kim). If we sit
beside smokers, we must inhale these kinds of gases. According to EPA, each year, 6,200 children in the U.S. are dying because of parent’s smoking. Also, we can recognize this effect between smokers wife and nonsmokers husband. Japanese research shows that a wives who live with smokers gets more lung cancers than the wife who lives with nonsmokers(Goh,1996).

In conclusion, since smoking is dirty, wasting, and dangerous to our health, we should stop it as quickly as possible. I know it is not easy, but it is worth trying to do it because becoming a non-smoker is a very glamorous thing. You can give people a good impression. You can save money. And, your health will be getting better.

References


Studying Abroad at an early age

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Date: Oct. 22, 2008

Most high school students in Korea suffer from "death triangle" such as school grades, the national scholastic aptitude test and essay writing to enter the University. Also parents who are not satisfied with the public school system have financial difficulty getting their children the private tutoring. In this situation, parents decide to send their kids abroad at early ages to study in an expensive but less stressful environment. As a result the number of students going abroad for learning English is increasing every year and now their ages are getting younger and younger. People started to worry about the social problems resulted from it.

First of all, it makes family split from one another. Fathers stay at home taking responsible for the financial burden. They send off their children and wives abroad living alone. Most of them lease a house for supporting their kids with school expenses. They often eat instant food or skip a meal and also wash all clothes once a week. They need to drink a few beers to get some sleep. People call them "wild goose father." Excessive passion for English education leads to a broken family, ending up the divorce. Even the students staying with host family in a foreign country in the exchange program go through homesickness and loneliness for the lack of family touch.

Secondly, students studying abroad at young ages are confronted with the identity crisis in their crucial development. They belong to neither of Korean nor American because of the
confusion of identity and tremendous culture shock. When they return to Korea, another problem is waiting for them. After experiencing a different school system, they can not go back to the strict and teacher oriented class environment easily and most of them get poor grades in other subjects except English. So they have no choice but to depend on the private tutoring to enter University or seriously reconsider going back abroad when failing to adjust to the class of home country.

Last but not the least parents can not afford to save money for their own later life to pay the astronomical tuition fees and living expenses. It causes the wasteful outflow of domestic money. This leak will leave Korean economy behind. Also students with high potentials are leaking out of Korea, ending up the weakening of the Korea's international competitiveness. Moreover English is the essential element in getting high scores in the University entrance exam and getting employment. So the financial capability of parents to afford an expensive English education causes the gap between the wealth and the poor bigger and bigger.

In conclusion, studying abroad in early age has more harms than benefits. Even though students can get the best English education in English speaking countries, it has many negative effects on the society. It brings about the family breakdown, weak identity, extreme outflow of national wealth and brain drain, etc. To solve these problems, government should make the practical education policy to strengthen the public school and also provide the humanity oriented environment for the students to get their education based on their aptitude and ability.