

Start with a black screen

Voiceover: K-pop... what is it?

Flash of screaming fans in concerts/meetups in America

Gangnam style music video

Twitter threads

Cardi B video saying how BTS is so big

News video of reporter saying how "kpop is taking over america" or whatever

Cut to black really abrupt

Calm playing in the background.

Voiceover: I think that it comes as no surprise when saying that "K-pop has had a significant impact on the American people, and American society as a whole". K-pop is more than just Korean pop music, its a title for an entire genre of music. K-pop can have the typical teeny-poppy sound, or an American-sounding hip hop, or rnb sound. There is a whole world to explore, and before we get into the chaos of K-pop culture in America, I think we need to start with its origin.

Upbeat music

Voiceover: K-pop is categorized into generations.

GENERATIONS FLASHING ON THE SCREEN.

American soldiers stationed in Itaewon (a small sub-section of Seoul) had a huge influence on the surrounding entertainment. The nightclubs were influenced to play more African American style hip-hop, along with European disco music. With this new influence, young and fresh music producers started remixing traditional Korean music, called (ppongjak) from the 70s to create a new sound. This new sound was essentially a mix of old Korea, and the new West, mostly America. This new mixture of rock and hip hop, and soul music is what became the basic foundation of K-pop.

The first generation of K-pop is between the years of the 1990s and 2000s. Seo Taiji and Boys (in Korean), are most commonly considered as the first formal K-pop group to form. They performed non-traditional songs heavily influenced by African American hip-hop culture on live television. At the time, this was unheard of. Seo Taiji and Boys were the first to challenge television censorship and music. They became a household name in Korea, young girls and their fathers knew who Seo Taiji and Boys were. After their massive success, producers had similar ideas of creating entertainment groups that would consist of singers, dancers, and models. Entertainment companies were formed, and they wanted to create the ultimate, perfect image-- they wanted to create an idol.

Idols are special. Idols are unreachable. Idols are perfect. And a group of them? Are guaranteed to make money.

First generation idol groups mostly just created the foundation that would influence later groups. At this time, K-pop was not a big hit in America just yet. The first generation of K-pop found major success in Korea and Japan. Many idols were based in Tokyo and were able to speak fluent Japanese. Japan had the second most successful music industry in the world. First generation idol, and widely considered "Queen of K-pop", BOA, became a huge influence to idols who came after her, that it was possible to be successful abroad. Major groups like Seo Taiji and Boys, H.O.T, and S.E.S began the mini wave of fandom or fan culture.

The second generation from the early to mid 2000s through the late 2000s was seriously game-changing in terms of popularity and success in the US. The Wonder Girls charted at number 79 on Billboard's Hot 100 List. They were considered the first K-pop idol group to find success in America. Following the Wonder Girls' lead, SNSD or Girls Generation, topped Billboard's World Album chart at #1 six times. Boy groups such as Shinee, Super Junior and Big Bang also found great success in America with their catchy songs and memorable point dances. A point dance is an easy and catchy dance move that is associated with a song. Like this, or this, or this.

If you are not super involved in K-pop, you probably are more aware of the third generation. Starting in the years of 2012 through 2018, this is when K-pop really turned into what it is today. Big names like BTS, BLACKPINK, and TWICE belong to the third generation. The use of Youtube, Twitter, Instagram and other social media platforms greatly helped the globalization and spread of K-pop to America. BTS's accomplishments have really reached no bounds. Performing and being nominated for the Grammys, broke 18 Guinness World Records, and charted #1 on Billboard's Hot 100 chart for 32 weeks. BTS's collaborations with popular American artists are what helped propel K-pop into mainstream success in America. Well-known artists like Halsey, Becky G, and Coldplay have all collaborated with BTS which led to the creation of an American-Korean pop music sound. BLACKPINK became the first and only K-pop act to perform at Coachella. As of April 1st, 2022 when I am writing this script, TWICE is the first ever all-female K-pop group to perform at a stadium concert in America. How impressive. And as of April 12, I have just secured tickets to go to their encore concert on May --. Yay!

The fourth generation spans from 2018 till today. By now, K-pop has already] established a reputation for itself. Entertainment companies are full blown multi-million dollar corporations. There is a rigid and strict training system- in which I will go into more depth

in just a second. Groups such as aespa, TXT, and ITZY have found success quite rapidly with the help of their already distinguished companies. Most groups are extremely popular and successful in the US, because of the existing presence of K-pop in America.

Fourth generation groups have had a much different “training system” compared to the earlier generations as mentioned earlier. Companies now-a-days are worth billions of dollars with a fat budget to spend their “investments” on their trainees. SM Entertainment is worth 1.3 billion US Dollars. HYBE, formerly known as Big Hit Entertainment is worth 5.3 billion US dollars. These well-established companies have huge budgets to hire the best choreographers, vocal coaches, and even plastic surgeons. (Yeah, SM entertainment has their own plastic surgeon. That's why all SM idols have a certain “SM look”). Trainees are young boys and girls around the ages of 10-20 that train under an entertainment company's guidance. However, not just anyone can be a trainee. There is a strict audition process, just to become a trainee! People are either scouted on the streets by chance (which by the way, is not as common anymore because of the sheer amount of people who aspire to become idols now), or people audition at the global auditions in LA, SYDNEY, or SEOUL. If someone passes the initial audition, they have to fly to Korea and audition again, and again, and again. Until they sign a contract and pay a hefty amount of cash. Again, all of this just to become a trainee. Trainees are NOT guaranteed to become idols, in fact, companies see these trainees as investments that the companies are willing to make, in hopes that one day they will debut and make them a lot of money. Trainees spend all of their time perfecting their dance, singing, rap, and even facial expressions. The trainees are not allowed to have personal cellphones and are put on strict diets. Most of the time, they live in the dorms of the company and almost spend 24 hours in preparation of becoming an idol. A huge majority of trainees are young, and drop out of high school to focus on training full time, in hopes of becoming an idol. Only some idols are lucky enough to go to a specialized performing arts high school, in which other idols attend as well. There are monthly evaluations by the CEO and board of the company in order to make sure the trainees are performing and training well (Blackpink documentary). Some trainees do not speak Korean, and left their home country alone to chase their dreams. According to core text, ---- studied Korean for fourteen hours a day, and had been punished because of visa problems that were out of her control. Many Korean-Americans who do not speak Korean are forced to take Korean classes and become fluent. Tiffany Young from SNSD stated how ----- . Most debuted idols have trained for an average of 4 years before debuting. Here are all the most popular k-pop idol groups with their earnings and which entertainment company they belong to. Some entertainment companies have found new ways of making even more money from their idols.

Competition shows are basically reality shows in which trainees compete for a spot in the final lineup of an idol group. These competition shows highlight the personalities and individual talents of the trainees. The most popular trainees are often already considered celebrities. The audience is able to contribute to the final lineup, as each week, the audience votes for who they believe should be in the idol group. However, there was a slight controversy with this, in that extremely popular show created by Korean cable television company Mnet called, Produce 101, had a huge scandal where the idol positions were predetermined, and the show was rigged. The audience had to pay 100 won for each vote, or 10 cents, frauding the audience and giving them the illusion of choice. The companies that represented each of the trainees paid off producers in order to secure a spot for their trainee. There was a huge lawsuit that took place and one of the producers ended up being sentenced to three years in prison. I think it is safe to say that the idol training system is not perfect, and definitely has many flaws to it. But, even with all of this corruption and aggression publicly known, why is it that K-pop is still widely loved in the US?

I guess to start, let's talk about... Hallyu. "Hallyu," or the Korean wave, refers to **the growing global popularity of South Korean culture**. This eventually transformed into a American- Korean culture fusion. Hallyu includes this (korean heart sign), or this (BTS dolls), or these Korean dramas, (Crash Landing on You, Itaewon Class, Goblin), which all have, you guessed it! K-pop idols singing for at least one song on the soundtrack. Many Americans have been drawn to K-pop and embraced hallyu simply because of the fact that K-pop idols are attractive people who can sing and dance. Entertainment companies have coined the term "point dances", which is a catchy and easy dance move that can be associated with a song. For example, I'm sure you have heard of Gangnam Style's point dance. In addition, k-pop groups just have a certain charm to them. Western groups like Little Mix and Fifth Harmony were formed in similar ways to the K-pop groups formed by competition shows. Although both groups have found major success in the American market, they haven't had years of experience training with each other, so they did not have that overall appeal of being a family, only just a group of girls who can sing. Many Americans embraced hallyu so much that they started making their own hallyu merchandise. Small business owners on Etsy and Ebay sell stickers, waterbottles, and even custom art pieces of their favorite idol groups. In addition, thousands of K-pop shops dedicated to selling merchandise of k-pop idols have been opened. If you take a drive down to Koreatown about an hour away (show google map of kpop stores), yeah. You're spoiled for choice. There's even a kpop store that opened up in our own Westfield mall! Wow! If you still aren't convinced that hallyu has taken over America. Just take a look at KCON, an international convention gathering in huge cities such as New York and

Los Angeles that celebrate K-pop, K-dramas and Korean food. Huge K-pop stars have attended and performed at these events, and are returning to Los Angeles this August. Now let's move on to.... The fans

insert a bunch of clips of crazy fans and people explaining that they are afraid of BTS fans

A K-pop fandom is a group of people who are basically fans of the artist. Each fandom has their own name for each group. BTS is ARMY, Blackpink's is Blink, Twice's is ONCE. Many extremely dedicated fans are extremely proud of their artists and make their support and presence known on social media.

Whenever there is a new "comeback" (which is just a phrase for a new release, a comeback could be a new single, mini album, or full length album), fans go absolutely crazy. They tweet and post about how everyone needs to stream the new comeback.

Streaming means listening to the new music on repeat on Spotify, Youtube, Apple Music, basically any streaming service available. This is because the fandom want their idols to top the streaming charts and break records. There are countless streaming guides and streaming goals posted online. Some go as far as to encourage fans outside of America to purchase a VPN service so their streams will be counted for the American charts. Sometimes, fans will post fancams, or just solo videos focusing on one idol during a performance to promote the comeback.

Fans share their excitement with each other, and are often on the Twitter trending page. There are often "fan wars" with other fandoms. Fandoms tend to be extremely competitive with each other, and always want their idol to be the best.

A unique aspect about K-pop is the collection of physical CD albums. In order for entertainment companies to sell CD's (and break records), they pair a CD with a bunch of goodies. This includes a photobook and a photocard. Photocards are a unique part of K-pop, unlike anything else from an American artist. Photocards are like collectible baseball cards for idols. Photocards are just "selfie" photos of an individual idol. You could get k-pop albums with a photocard from K-pop stores, but a majority of huge retailers sell albums like Target. K-pop albums sitting on the shelf next to big American names like Taylor Swift and Billie Eilish, give them more exposure.

Now, when idols go on tour, that's another story. When idols go on tour... it is a big deal. Concert tickets are often sold out in a couple minutes, or even seconds. Fans love making their own merchandise to give out during concerts. Stickers or posters are given out for free to people who want it. Many fans arrive at the venue a couple hours early to meet up with other fans.

If there is anything special or unique about K-pop concerts, it is the lightstick. There's like a strict unspoken rule of what to bring: lightstick. Lightsticks are unique to each group. Lightsticks are complicated hardware- they are all connected to the same system as the lighting and sound boards.

How it fits into American society

After looking at how the individual parts of K-pop have contributed to a general, whole culture of K-pop, let's take a look at how K-pop has made its way into American society, and how the influence of American culture made its way into K-pop.

When thinking about American musical artists, a majority of them focus on just singing and have backup dancers to help dance. K-pop performances focus on the performance, rather than just the vocals. K-pop performances include singing, rapping, and dancing. Performances of idols on famous American talk shows like Ellen and Jimmy Kimmel introduced the idea that a live performance can be more than just singing. For a quick comparison, let's look at the musical performances on Ellen and Jimmy Fallon. As you can see, both Dua Lipa and Camila Cabello give amazing performances. However, we can see that BTS and SuperM have prioritized dancing and choreography in their performances, which is something super unique to K-pop.

After the rise of K-pop, a lot of artists are taking a new approach of incorporating dancing into their performances. As K-pop is becoming more mainstream and popular in America, it is normal for artists to now incorporate some of those aspects into their performances. Now, I am not saying that K-pop was the only reason many artists began dancing in their performances, BUT many artists have expressed how inspired they were by K-pop artists. Popular artists Lorde and Lil Uzi Vert have publicly talked about their admiration for the K-pop industry's performance fusion of dancing and singing.

Selena Gomez, Halsey, and Coldplay are some of the biggest names in American pop. Their music collaborations with K-pop idols have become an essential part of K-pop. Not only do K-pop artists just collab with American artists, but they also completely re-record their Korean songs into English to appeal to their American audience. For example, let's look at Twice's song "Cry for Me".

Many times, the K-pop producers take samples from Americans actually, and base their songs around the sample. Let's look at NCT127's sticker song, vs the sample. Again, it is safe to say that America has had a huge impact on the K-pop sound.

Most of the time, K-pop songs are written in Korean with the occasional English phrase thrown in- which is known as Konglish (the combination of Korean and English). However, some artists create original songs in English! Like BTS's Dynamite and Butter which broke records.

The influence of K-pop and their idols have expanded way further than just the American music industry. The Coachella music festival attended by 125,000 people hosted Blackpink as one of their headliners. On Vogue's official Youtube Channel, they feature Tiffany Young and Jessica Jung from SNSD, and Somi all showing off their Korean skincare and beauty routines. 2NE1's CL attended the Met Gala in a traditional Korean dress called the hanbok. Designed by Alexander Wang and made of denim, her outfit was very much a Korean and American fusion. We see K-pop idols assimilating into American media.

If you do a quick google search of "kpop entertainment companies", you can find the top searches are related to people outside of Korea wanting to become idols.

More and more Americans are learning the Korean language because of K-pop! According to the Vice article, "A Surge of US College Students are Learning Korean Because of K-pop", Savillo shows a graph with an increase of 95% of Korean learners in university.

Americans are now open to learning new languages and engage in a culture outside of their own, creating a beautiful fusion.

Now, K-pop is not all great. South Korea is still a very homogenous country with not a lot of diversity. K-pop often promotes toxic beauty standards and hold their idols to very high standards. Idols are criticized by fans to lose weight or change their appearance. This toxic behavior is reflected back on the fans, which gives many insecurities. Many Americans have felt that they have been more insecure after they got into K-pop.

In addition, MANY k-pop idols have faced backlash from American fans for being insensitive towards other cultures. Oftentimes, the idols do not apologize, and the entertainment companies push these scandals under the rug. It is truly sad, as K-pop has

become so popular, and should be more inclusive and accepting of other people's cultures. If they are taking money from someone, the least the artists can do is respect their culture.

However, on the other side, K-pop has given many Americans a new perspective about entertainment. K-pop introduced a lot of diversity to American music culture. People from all over the country enjoy music sung in another language. Americans took in K-pop culture and enjoyed it so much that entertainment companies began catering toward Americans.

After going on this long adventure with me learning about K-pop and its values and culture system, I want to spend some time going over my personal reason why I chose K-pop culture in America to be my topic for this project.

I was first introduced to K-pop in 2016. I was not really interested because I thought K-pop was lame and stupid. I was never the boy-band type. I was very simpleminded back then, but of course I was, I was 11 years old!

I was then reintroduced to K-pop over quarantine in January 2021. My friend Shanna told me about some K-pop r&nb songs that I still love and associate great memories with to this day. Since then, it's been a downward spiral. I quickly became engulfed in K-pop culture, I watched hours and hours of K-pop related content in a few weeks. I annoyed my friends by talking to them about K-pop extensively.

* insert clips of people talking about my obsession lmao

Now, I am still very much "into kpop", however, I think naturally, as time passed, I became less obsessed with it. After I had learned about the history and details of K-pop, it just became less of a shiny, new thing that I was excited about. Again, don't get me wrong, everytime TWICE has a new comeback, I'm super excited and buying their CD for sure!

However, I'm not so sure that's a good thing (show all my albums and photocards with the receipts)

As proof that I was, and still am engaged in K-pop, here's some clips of me at the TWICE concert in LA in February. I tried buying a lightstick before the concert at our local K-pop store but they were all sold out. I tried buying one before the concert at the venue, but again sold out.

I was texting a friend that I didn't even know was also a TWICE fan, it was just an overall fun time.

This concert really helped me feel like I was apart of a community, just seeing how passionate everyone was about a bunch of idols. Like this guy, who kept his mask on the whole time but took it off just to yell how much he loves Tzuyu while she was introducing herself in English.

K-pop is a huge part of my identity. I think I was so against K-pop when first introduced to it because I didn't have an open mind. I judged it because it was simply just different. I was very American-ized, and thought that American content equaled good content, and that any other content was weird. Living in Santa Clarita for almost my entire life, I wasn't exposed to a lot of diversity in the media, which was completely my fault, but it is why it was so important for me to have this phase in my life. I didn't feel the need to connect to something "Korean" because I was a little bit ashamed of my identity. It is a little embarrassing to admit this, but because K-pop was becoming more mainstream and "acceptable" to like, I gave it a chance.

What was once foreign, became normal to me. Like the weird "point dances" and photocard collecting are exclusive to K-pop culture, yet I became engulfed in it. I was able to truly expand my opinion and mindset and see the world in a different perspective. I think that if K-pop wasn't so American- oriented, I wouldn't have become as invested, which is a shame, but the truth. As we have seen, the K-pop industry has evolved in a way to cater to the American audience, which almost in a way created its own Korean-American fusion culture.

This may sound cheesy, but I am thankful that I researched K-pop culture in America for this project. Like Kayla said earlier, I was able to connect with my identity more, being Korean-American with the help of K-pop. I am thankful that even though I thought that I already knew some aspects about K-pop, I just wanted to know more. I wanted to learn about the deep history, and reasoning behind WHY America loved K-pop so much. I wanted to go deeper into the connection between K-pop and American culture. I was able to reflect on my experience and relationship with myself for the better.