

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, it's 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. With this new influence, young music producers started remixing traditional Korean music, called (ppongjak) from the 70s to create a fresh, new sound. This new sound was essentially a mix of old Korea, and new 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. Self-made producers began singing and dancing, which became a huge success, and led to other producers having ideas of creating entertainment companies, which would manage these singers and dancers. 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 second generation from the early to mid 2000s through the late 2000s was when K-pop was just starting to break through in America because of 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.

The third generation, starting in the years of 2012 through 2018, is when K-pop really turned into what it is today. The use of social media platforms greatly helped the globalization and spread of K-pop to America. Kpop artists' collaborations with popular American artists are what helped propel K-pop into mainstream success in America. The fourth generation spans from 2018 till today. By now, K-pop has already established a reputation for itself. Many idol groups have found success quite rapidly with the help of their already distinguished companies.

Entertainment companies now-a-days are worth billions of dollars with a fat budget to spend their "investments" on their trainees. These entertainment companies are worth a lot of money! These well-established companies have huge budgets to hire the best choreographers, vocal coaches, and even plastic surgeons for their trainees. According to my core text, the Kpop Evolution, 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, which includes many rounds of exclusive and strict auditions. Once a trainee signs a contract with a company, they would spend all of their time perfecting their dance, singing, rap, and even facial expressions. A huge huge majority of trainees are young, and drop out of high school to focus on training full time, in hopes of becoming an idol. 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). Most debuted idols have trained for an average of 4 years before debuting.

So, with this crazy trainee process, 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 combination. 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 and exotic people who can sing and dance.

Many Americans embraced hallyu so much that thousands of K-pop shops dedicated to selling merchandise of k-pop idols have been opened. Let's take a look at KCON, an international convention gathering in huge cities such as New York and Los Angeles that celebrate Korean culture, which have been attended by huge K-pop stars in the past. Now let's move on to.... The essential part of k-pop culture, 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. 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 wild. They tweet and post about how everyone needs to listen to the new comeback.

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, and are like selfie photos and collectible baseball cards for idols. You could get k-pop albums with a photocard from K-pop stores, but a majority of huge retailers sell albums like Target next to big names like Taylor Swift and Billie Eilish.

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.

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, or even record original English songs to appeal to their American audience.

Many times, the K-pop producers take samples from American producers, 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.

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.

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. 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.

After going on this long adventure with me learning about K-pop and it's 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. 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&b 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 the span of 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, honestly I think naturally, as time passed, I became less obsessed with it. But, 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, heres some clips of me at the TWICE concert in LA in February.

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 different. I didn't feel the need to connect to something "Korean" because I was a little bit ashamed of my Korean-American identity. 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 culture.

Personally, I was able to connect with my identity more, being Korean-American with the help of K-pop. 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 a part of it. I am thankful that even though I thought that I already knew some aspects about K-pop, that I continued to want to know more. I was able to learn about how much of an influence K-pop has had on America and vice versa, as well as being able to reflect on my experience and relationship with myself for the better.