



K-Dramas

Exploring Key Genres and Narrative Structures



Introduction

- Exploring the fusion of fantasy, thriller, and time-travel elements in Korean storytelling



01

Genre Diversity

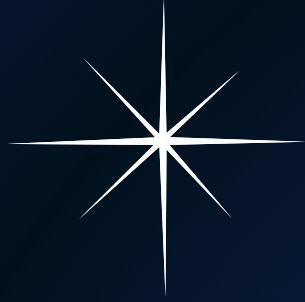
- Hybrid genres: K-Dramas rarely stick to a single genre, blending elements to create emotional depth
- Cultural context: Historical influences, mythology, and modern societal themes
- Unique storytelling structures: Parallel timelines, reincarnation, fate vs. free will

Why are K-dramas so diverse in genre?

K-dramas explore a wide range of genres due to cultural influences, target audience preferences, and the industry's creative innovation. This diversity allows for varied storytelling techniques and broader viewer engagement, making K-dramas appealing to both local and international audiences.

**Common genres:
romance, fantasy,
crime thriller,
historical, sci-fi,
horror, slice of life.**

K-dramas encompass several prominent genres, including romance, which often serves as the emotional core; fantasy, introducing supernatural elements; crime thriller, focusing on suspenseful narratives; historical dramas, rooted in cultural heritage; sci-fi exploring technological themes; horror, invoking fear; and slice of life, reflecting everyday experiences. Each genre enriches the storytelling and appeals to different viewer interests.



**Significance of genre hybridization
and its impact on popularity.**

02

Key Genres

Historical Dramas: aesthetics, accuracy, tragic arcs.



Historical dramas in K-dramas, or 'sageuk', emphasize elaborate costumes and sets to reflect the period accurately. They often incorporate actual historical events and figures, providing viewers with an authentic experience. The narratives typically involve tragic character arcs, showcasing themes of love, betrayal, and societal struggles, which resonate deeply with audiences, making them both educational and emotionally impactful.

Sageuk (사극)

is a genre of Korean historical dramas that typically focus on the history, politics, and culture of ancient Korea, particularly during the **Goryeo (918–1392)** and **Joseon (1392–1897)** dynasties. The term "sageuk" is a combination of two Korean words: "sa" (사), meaning "history," and "geuk" (극), meaning "drama" or "play."

Crime & Time-Travel –

Signal: A Thriller Across Eras

- **What makes Signal a standout crime drama?**
- **Based on real-life cases:** Inspired by South Korea's most notorious unsolved crimes
- **Parallel timelines:** Police officers from past and present communicate through a mysterious walkie-talkie
- **Emotional and societal depth:** Explores corruption, justice, and the impact of time on human choices
- **Pacing and suspense:** A masterclass in mystery storytelling



Fantasy Romance— A Mythological Epic with Existential Themes

K-drama Fantasy vs. Western Fantasy

- Unlike high fantasy (e.g., *Game of Thrones*), K-dramas prefer **urban fantasy**—blending supernatural elements with contemporary settings.
- Often rooted in **Korean folklore** (goblins, grim reapers, gumiho) rather than Tolkien-esque creatures.
- Focuses more on **fate and reincarnation** than hero's journey-style narratives.



The image is a promotional poster for the Netflix series 'Alchemy of Souls'. It features two main characters, a man and a woman, dressed in traditional Korean Hanbok. The man, in the foreground, wears a light blue Hanbok and holds a sword with a white scabbard and gold accents. The woman, behind him, wears a purple Hanbok. The background is a dark, misty setting with a blue and purple gradient. The title 'Alchemy of Souls' is written in a white, elegant serif font. At the bottom, the release date 'JUNE 18' and the Netflix logo are displayed.

Alchemy of Souls

JUNE 18 | **NETFLIX**



Sci-Fi & Dystopian: time manipulation, dilemmas.

In K-dramas, sci-fi and dystopian genres often explore themes like time travel and the consequences of advanced technology. They present characters



우리들의 연애



Why did you send me to space?

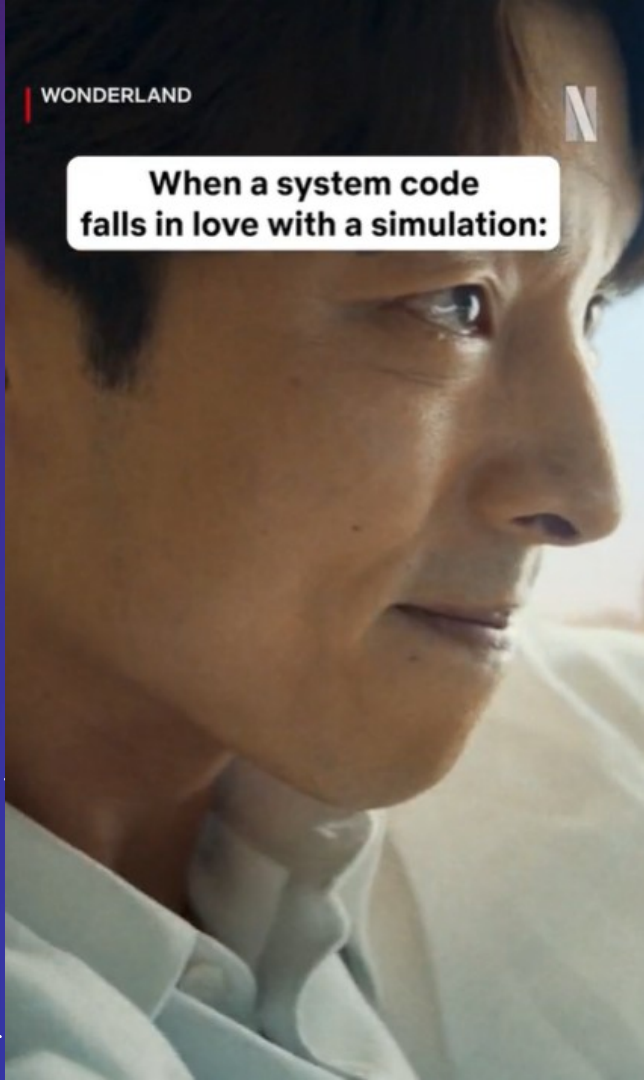


It was the furthest place I could think of.
That's where I felt like you were.

WONDERLAND



**When a system code
falls in love with a simulation:**



Did you miss me?



coffee
prince

Gender-bender

Exploration of Identity & Social Expectations

Challenges traditional gender roles and societal norms.

Empowers characters to explore different aspects of their identity.

Entertainment Value

Creates humor through situational comedy and misunderstandings.

Adds dramatic tension through mistaken identity and hidden secrets.

Romantic & Emotional Conflict

Leads to unconventional, complex romantic dynamics.

Characters explore love and self-discovery in new ways.

Cultural Fascination with Gender Fluidity

Reflects evolving global conversations on gender.

Offers inclusivity and represents changing perceptions in society.



#10. Splash Splash Love

SBS




#1. To the Beautiful You




Slice of Life: storytelling, relationships, emotional depth.

Slice of life K-dramas focus on everyday experiences, portraying the nuances of human relationships and emotions. They often explore themes of friendship, family, and personal growth, emphasizing relatable storytelling.



 **Lee Yun**
@LeeYunnes

I felt this like a fast paced version of Go Ahead. Though lot of things happened in first two episodes I have not connected with kids characters that much except Kim San Ha..

 **Sonia**
@drama_living

Just after #FamilyByChoiceEp1 I think I can already say that I'm loving it ❤️

I was a bit afraid cause #GoAhead is just too good, but I think they are doing an amazing job with the remake. I'm so happy to be able to relive this beautiful story once again 😊😊





03

Goblin

A Timeless Classic in K-Drama

Goblin

the LONELY and
GREAT GOD



KEY GENRES IN *GOBLIN*

- **Fantasy:**

Goblin immerses viewers in a magical world where immortality, spirits, and ancient curses coexist, offering a unique blend of reality and fantasy.

- **Romance:**

The heart of *Goblin* lies in the blossoming love story between the immortal goblin Kim Shin and the optimistic high school student Ji Eun-tak, whose connection is both profound and fateful.

- **Mythology:**

Rooted in Korean mythology, *Goblin* incorporates legendary tales and supernatural elements, such as gods, spirits, and curses, to create a rich, lore-filled narrative.

- **Drama:**

The emotional weight of the characters' internal struggles and external challenges adds deep layers of drama, exploring themes of love, loss, redemption, and sacrifice.

□ The Unique Narrative of *Goblin*

- The protagonist, Kim Shin, is a **goblin** (**dokkaebi**), a supernatural being tied to a tragic past. His immortality is not a gift but a punishment, leading to a **philosophical exploration of life, suffering, and redemption**.
- The Grim Reaper isn't just a cliché harbinger of death—his role includes **erasing painful memories, managing past-life karma, and enforcing divine justice**.
- Time loops and reincarnation play a key role, reinforcing the **Buddhist-Confucianist concept of fate**.

□ Why Is *Goblin* Emotionally Devastating?

- The drama plays with **emotional investment through delayed catharsis**—long separations, missed opportunities, and inevitable deaths.
- It uses **cinematic cinematography** (e.g., slow-motion snow scenes, poetic framing, deep blues and golds to signify destiny).
- The OST (*Stay With Me, Beautiful*) **enhances the immersive fantasy** experience—almost all major K-dramas feature a carefully curated soundtrack to heighten emotions.

Cultural Impact

Since its release in 2016, *Goblin* has become a cultural phenomenon in Korea and beyond, spawning parodies, memes, and fan tributes. The show's iconic soundtrack, composed by indie band Crush, topped music charts and became inseparable from the drama's identity. *Goblin* also paved the way for future fantasy-themed dramas and influenced the trajectory of the K-drama industry.

Stay:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qc7tZ0oliWo>

Visually Stunning

Goblin is a visual masterpiece, featuring stunning cinematography and elaborate set designs. The show transports viewers to a variety of mesmerizing locations, from ancient palaces to modern-day streets. The seamless integration of visual effects enhances the fantasy world, making every moment magical.

GOBLIN FILMING LOCATIONS





The first meeting between Kim Shin and Eun Tak was shot here.

How to get there: Take Seoul subway line 3 (orange line) to Anguk station, get out at exit 1, walk straight and turn right after Shinhan Bank.



-DAEGORR-

ICONIC CHARACTERS

Shopping with style:

<https://youtu.be/a31POfsTEG4?si=GHtCGQ5yds37u-bj&t=91>

HOW CHILDREN SEE 30+ WOMEN



HOW THEY ACTUALLY LOOK LIKE



WATCHING A DRAMA WITH NO SUBTITLES LIKE

EXPLAINING TECHNOLOGY TO 900 YEARS OLD MEN



☆ 우주어신 위장취업 로맨스 ☆

#그날그날의
*가만히..있어줄래요?
#당연히요..왜냐구요?



刘寅娜
Yoo In Na

李栋旭
Lee Dong Woo

觸及真心

Touch Your Heart

VOL. 1-16 END



Unique Aspects of K-Drama Storytelling Across Genres

1. Open-Ended Tragedy & Emotional Manipulation

Many K-dramas lean into **bittersweet endings**—a direct contrast to Western series' need for resolution.

Tragedy is often used **not as a plot twist but as an inevitability**, reinforcing the themes of fate and destiny.

Example: *Mr. Sunshine* (historical drama), *Goblin* **denies viewers emotional closure** by keeping the protagonists separated by war and politics.

□ 2. The Cultural Significance of Food Scenes

In crime thrillers, food is used to **humanize characters and establish relationships** (*Signal*—detectives bonding over instant noodles).

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L4uw2zwhgdo>

In fantasy romance, **eating together signifies intimacy**—in *Goblin*, Eun-tak makes Ji Eun-tak a homemade meal, breaking his 900-year loneliness.

K-dramas use **food as a storytelling device**, not just background aesthetics.

04

Discussion Time

- **1. Why are gender-bender K-dramas so popular?**
- Do they challenge traditional gender roles in Korean society?
- Do they offer female characters more freedom in male-dominated spaces?
- **2. What is the significance of historical dramas (sageuk) in Korean culture?**
- Is it just nostalgia, or do they reflect contemporary issues?
- Why do themes of royal intrigue and power struggles remain relevant?

- **3. Why do K-dramas often include fantasy elements?**

- Does this come from Korean folklore, where spirits and gods frequently interact with humans?
- Does fantasy deepen the emotional impact of the story and make it more universal?

- **4. Why do romantic K-dramas emphasize slow-burn relationships?**

- Is this influenced by Confucian values, which emphasize patience and respect?
- Does this contrast with the fast-paced modern world, where relationships form and dissolve quickly?

- **5. Why do K-dramas have strong second-lead characters?**

- Do they represent alternative paths that the protagonist could have taken?
- Do they reflect the kinds of relationships that viewers have often experienced in real life?

- **6. Why is the concept of "fate" so important in K-dramas?**

- Does this reflect traditional Korean beliefs about destiny?
- Why do audiences continue to enjoy stories where the main characters inevitably reunite?

- **7. What is the significance of chaebols (wealthy heirs) in modern K-dramas?**

- Why is this trope so common, despite being unrealistic for most people?
- Does it highlight tensions between economic elites and ordinary citizens?

- **8. Why are medical and legal dramas so popular?**

- Is it just fascination with professional settings, or a deeper desire for justice?
- Do these dramas create strong moral messages for viewers?

- **9. Why do K-dramas frequently feature food and communal dining scenes?**

- Is it just for visual appeal, or does it emphasize the importance of family and social bonds?
- Why does food in K-dramas symbolize more than just nourishment?

- **10. What role does music play in K-dramas?**

- Why are OSTs (original soundtracks) often as famous as the dramas themselves?
- Does music create a deeper emotional connection between the audience and the story?