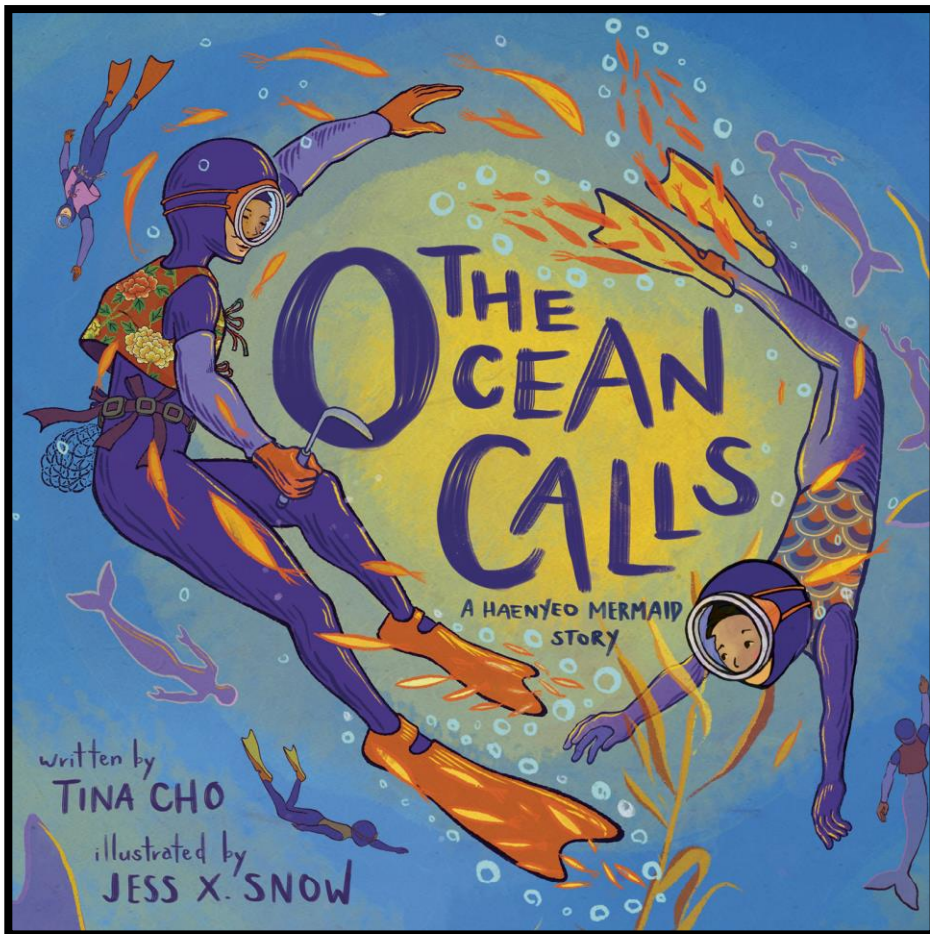


# The Ocean Calls: A Haenyeo Mermaid Story Teacher's Guide



By Tina Cho,  
Illustrated by Jess X. Snow



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About the author:



Tina Cho is the author of four picture books-- *Rice from Heaven: The Secret Mission to Feed North Koreans* (Little Bee Books August 2018), *Korean Celebrations* (Tuttle August 2019), *My Breakfast with Jesus: Worshipping God around the World* (Harvest House June 2, 2020), and *The Ocean Calls: A Haenyeo Mermaid Story* (Kokila/Penguin Random House Aug. 4, 2020). Her lyrical middle grade graphic novel, *The Tune Without Words*, debuts from Harper Alley in 2023.

For ten years, Tina, her husband, and two teenagers lived in South Korea, and Jeju was her favorite vacation spot. When she's not writing, she's teaching elementary. Find out more: <http://www.tinamcho.com>

About the illustrator:

Jess X Snow is an Asian Canadian artist, filmmaker, and Pushcart-nominated poet based in Brooklyn. They are working to build a future where migrants and people of color see themselves as heroes on the big screen, city walls, and pages of children's books and feel empowered to create their own art. By merging community arts activism, healing practices, and film in their stories, Jess hopes to encourage others to discover sanctuaries inside themselves.

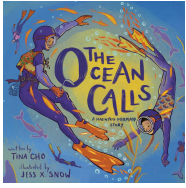
Jess holds a BFA from the Rhode Island School of Design and is currently an MFA student at NYU Graduate Film. Find out more: <http://www.jessxsnow.com/>



# The Ocean Calls: A Haenyeo Mermaid Story

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## Teacher's Guide



This teacher's guide is to be used with the picture book *The Ocean Calls: A Haenyeo Mermaid Story*, written by Tina Cho and illustrated by Jess X. Snow.

This is a powerful picture book about intergenerational bonds, facing your fears, courage, and our connection to the natural world. It also shows the strength of elderly women divers.

### Introduction:

- Show the cover. What do children notice? There's a girl diver and a woman diver surrounded by smaller divers and mermaid shapes. The woman diver has a tool in her hand and a belt and net. Both divers have unique designs on their suits. Point out the title, *The Ocean Calls*. How do you think the ocean calls? We'll find out!
- Before you read the book, you might show a map or globe. Point out South Korea and then find the island of Jeju off the southern tip. This is the setting of our story.
- Ask the children if they have grandmothers who dive. On Jeju island, there really are grandmothers who dive for a living.

### After reading:

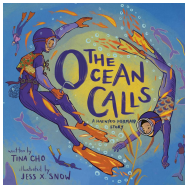
- Question Cards: Beforehand, cut out the question cards and put them in a basket. Ask students to come up and choose a question to answer.

### Activities:

- Story Map: Discuss what happened in the beginning, middle, and end. Have students write or draw their answers. This is a good way to check comprehension.
- Map of Korea: Label the map of Korea: North Korea, South Korea, Jeju Island.
- Word Search: Find key words from the story.
- Coloring Sheet: Color Dayeon and Grandma.
- Writing prompt: What is something you would like to learn from a grandparent or elderly person? Why?

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## More Activities

- Informative Writing: Write a nonfiction, informational paragraph about haenyeo and illustrate.
- Compare/Contrast 1: Compare/contrast haenyeo with fictional mermaids. Make a Venn Diagram.
- Compare/Contrast 2: Compare/contrast Dayeon's character from the beginning to the end of the story. How did she change?
- Research the sea life mentioned in this book: Draw each and write a sentence about each one: abalone, dolphins, sharks, urchin, sea anemone, seaweed, turban shell, octopus.
- Write a recipe for abalone stew: You can view Korean abalone cooking here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u5aZJKo2sLE>
- Seashell Exploration: Collect seashells. Let children feel them, sort them, count them, and find out which creature each belongs to. You can write math problems using seashells. For example, if Dayeon found 10 sea gifts, can you write all the ways to make 10?
- Figurative Language: Have students find similes in the story. Can they identify & explain each?
  - *You're like a treasure-hunting mermaid. (simile)*
  - *Grandma carried her tools to pluck treasures from the sea. (metaphor)*
  - *They swam like mermaids. (simile)*
  - *After collecting ten sea gifts... (metaphor)*
  - *She pointed to a garden of sparkling treasures. (metaphor)*
  - *Her arms felt like the lead weights in Grandma's belt. (simile)*



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For further information:

*Haenyeo Women of the Sea Documentary video:*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4IT4YWuc8Aw>

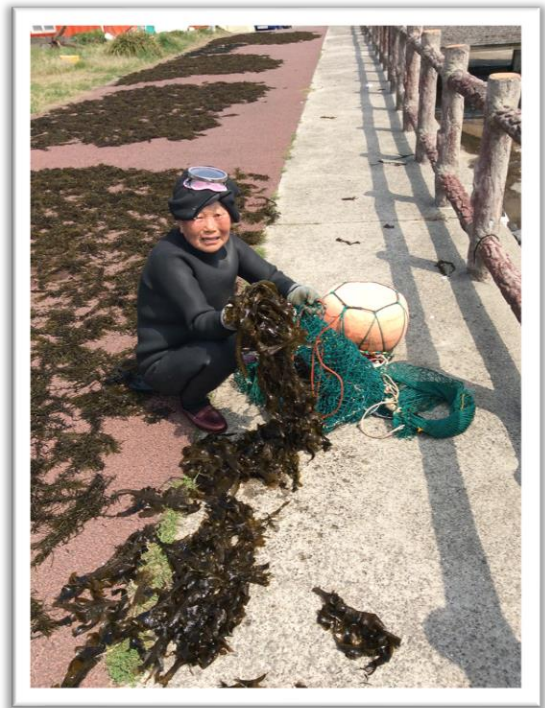
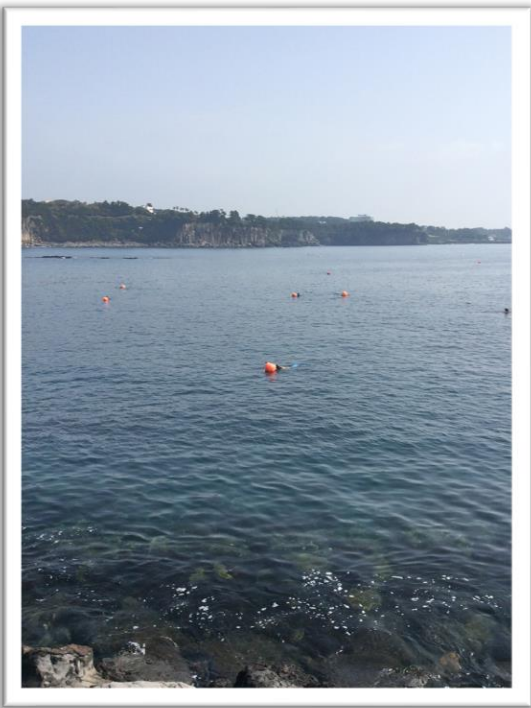
*Culture of Jeju Haenyeo Documentary video:*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ik7DQLMKBTE&t=10s>

<https://ich.unesco.org/en/RL/culture-of-jeju-haenyeo-women-divers-01068> Article on UNESCO's website

<https://www.newyorker.com/culture/photo-booth/sea-women-of-south-korea>

<https://www.pri.org/stories/2015-06-10/diving-last-generation-korea-s-mermaids>



## Characters

Name the characters in this story.

Dayeon, Grandma



## Setting

What is the setting of this story?

Ocean, Jeju Island of South Korea



## Infer

“Know the sea and find its gifts.” What are the gifts of the sea?

Anything in the sea—plants, animals, shells,



## Infer

How is the sea like a haenyeo's home?

The haenyeo seem to live in the sea because they spend a lot of time there. They know the ocean floor like their own house.

## Evaluate:

Do you think *The Ocean Calls* is fiction or nonfiction? Why?

It is fiction but based on real people.

## Evaluate Illustration

Look at the picture of the octopus surrounding Dayeon when she's sitting in the tide pool. Is the octopus real? Why or why not?

The octopus is not real. The illustrator added this in to show Dayeon's fear.

## Compare/Contrast

How are haenyeo like mermaids?

Haenyeo are women who swim really well like mermaids in the sea and find treasure.



## Define

What does the word haenyeo mean?

The Japanese word means sea, but the word refers to the diving women of Korea who swim without breathing equipment.

## Recall

What does Grandma cook for Dayeon and why?

She makes abalone porridge to help her become a haenyeo. Grandma got the abalone from the sea.

## Contrast

How was Dayeon different at the end of the story?

Dayeon was no longer afraid. She called herself a haenyeo.



## Recall

At the end of the story, what was Dayeon's treasure?

A turban shell that Grandma got for her

## Recall

Why was Dayeon scared of swimming?

She had a bad experience the summer before when water filled her ears & nose, scared of sharks.

Story Map

Name \_\_\_\_\_



beginning



middle



end





Map of Korea

Name \_\_\_\_\_



X Y F L W D I A M R E M I S  
S E K O W H I S T L I N G W  
K B S I E N O L A B A B H O  
R C R M I C V E T A O B A A  
A Y T P W A V E S F C V E N  
H X O C T J H L R X S O N O  
S Y L D A R J L L C F P Y E  
S N O O A C E H A E K U E Y  
E A M L M A J A W I H R O A  
B E V P D J U O S Z T S A D  
A C K H N A Z X I U V H T V  
U O L I A J Q D D N R E L B  
J G U N R P X Q U K J E X N  
R E C S G I M K Q K F L M G

DAYEON  
HAENYEO  
GRANDMA  
OCEAN  
ABALONE  
SHELL  
DOLPHINS

SHARKS  
MERMAID  
JEJU  
WHISTLING  
WAVES  
BOAT  
TREASURE



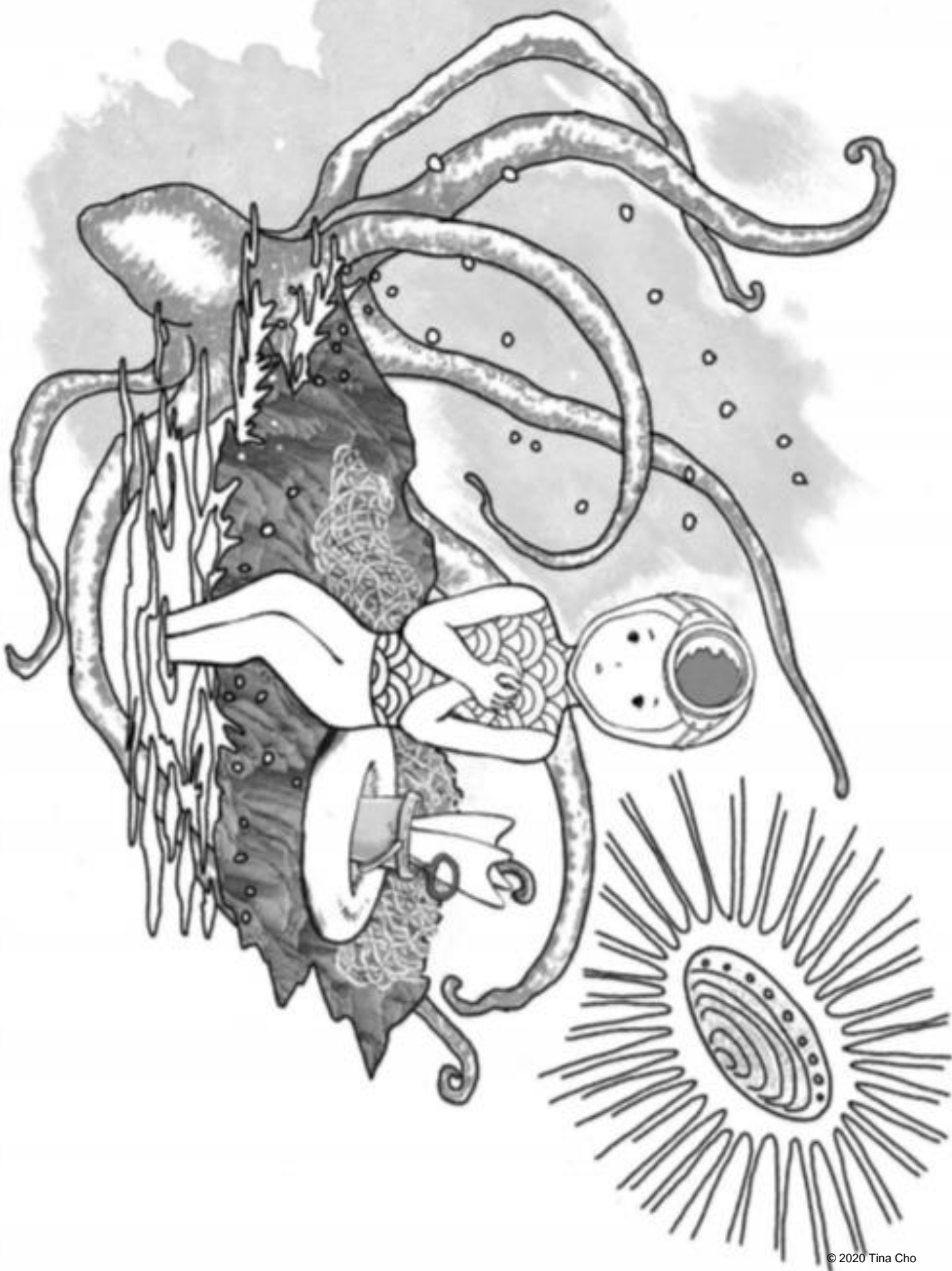
Word Search

Name Key

X Y F L W D I A M R E M I S  
S E K O W H I S T L I N G W  
K B S I E N O L A B A B H O  
R C R M I C V E T A O B A A  
A Y T P W A V E S F C V E N  
H X O C T J H L R X S O N O  
S Y L D A R J L L C F P Y E  
S N O O A C E H A E K U E Y  
E A M L M A J A W I H R O A  
B E V P D J U O S Z T S A D  
A C K H N A Z X I U V H T V  
U O L I A J Q D D N R E L B  
J G U N R P X Q U K J E X N  
R E C S G I M K Q K F L M G

DAYEON  
HAENYEO  
GRANDMA  
OCEAN  
ABALONE  
SHELL  
DOLPHINS

SHARKS  
MERMAID  
JEJU  
WHISTLING  
WAVES  
BOAT  
TREASURE







What is something you would like to learn from a grandparent or elderly person? Why?



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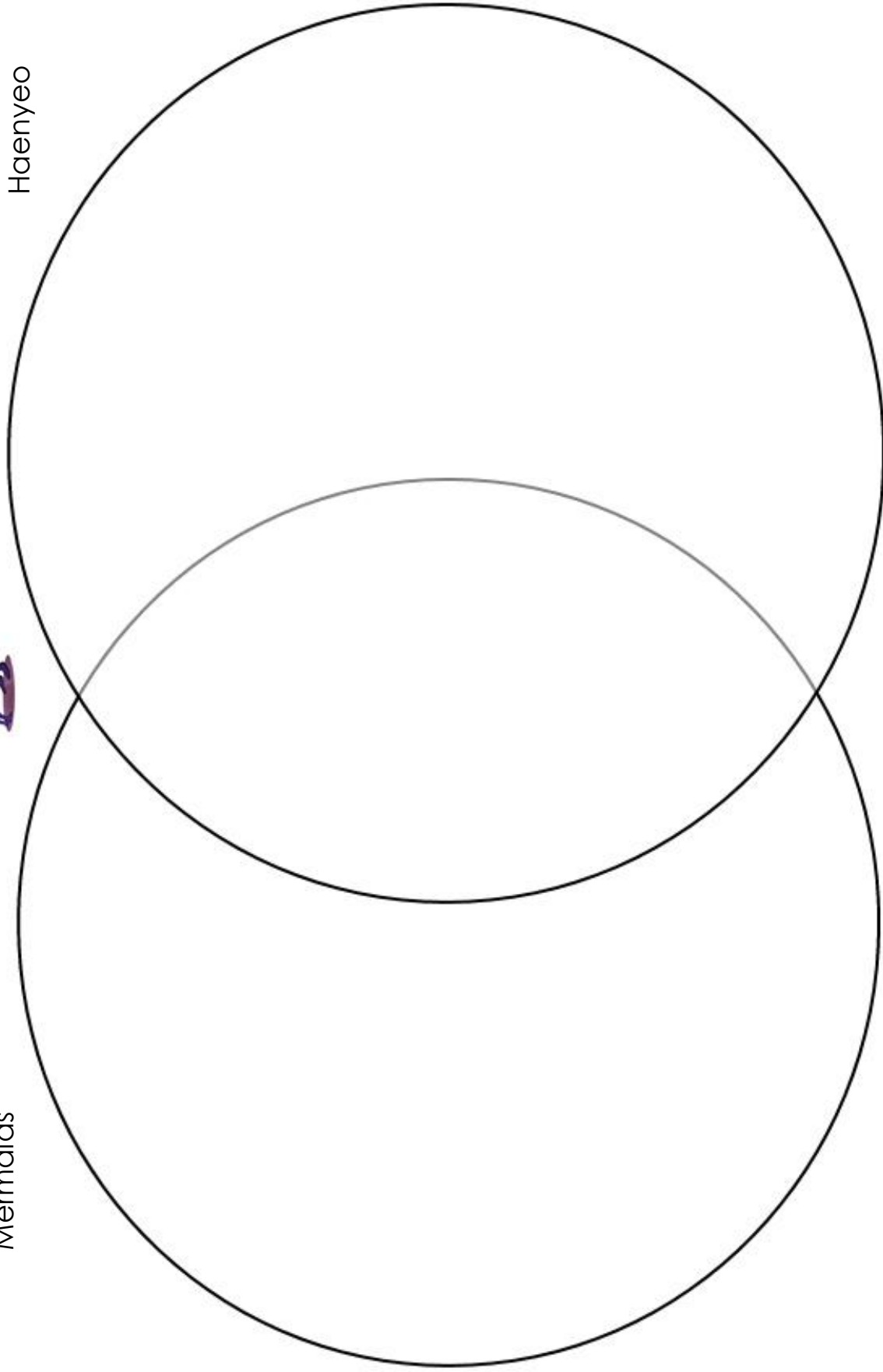
Compare/Contrast

Mermaids



Name \_\_\_\_\_

Haenyeo







Name \_\_\_\_\_

Compare/Contrast

Dayeon in the beginning

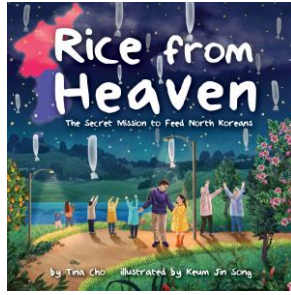
Dayeon in the end

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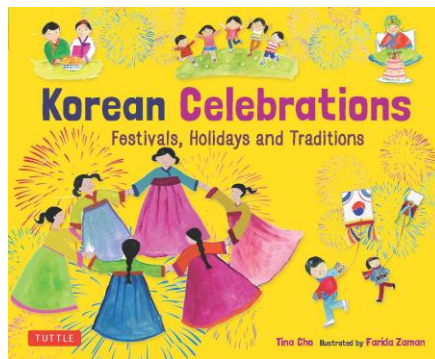
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