



NETFLIX

Culture

7 Best K-Dramas of 2025, So Far

Add these to your list ASAP.



BY **JAE-HA KIM**

JUNE 30, 2025

2025 isn't over yet, but it's already been an exciting year for some of the best K-dramas. Though *Squid Game* has come to an end (for now) that doesn't mean there aren't still plenty of Korean dramas to obsess over.

The selections below tackle a variety of relevant topics (even if they're not wholly relatable), including high school bullying, revenge, and the kind of poverty that leads citizens to despair. And no one does slice-of-life shows like Korean creatives, who present everyday life in such a compelling way that serves as a reminder that sometimes the most ordinary action can also be the most profound.

Read more: [38 Best K-Dramas of All Time](#)

Below, check out the 7 best K-dramas of 2025 — so far — that you'll want to check out immediately.

When Life Gives You Tangerines

If a green flag was a man, it would be Gwan-sik (Park Bo-gum). Devoted to Ae-sun (IU) since their childhood, he repeatedly proves his devotion for her throughout this gorgeous slice-of-life K-drama. When he learns that Ae-sun – orphaned at a young age – is being treated as *less than* at her uncle's house, he brings her fish every day to ensure that she is eating everything her relatives do. After she cries out for him as he sails away to another city, Gwan-sik literally jumps off the ship to swim to her. And when his mother and grandmother pick away at Ae-sun's self worth – something they feel entitled to – he defies tradition and removes her from the toxic environment into their own home.

Read more: [When Life Gives You Tangerines Stars IU & Park Bo-gum on Their Buzzy Netflix K-Drama](#)

The show's deconstructed storyline moves from the 1960s to present day, focusing on the hardships the couple overcome in order to have their happily ever after. Park and IU play their characters as young adults, and the latter also tackles the role of the couple's strong-minded daughter, Geum-myeong. But even Geum-myeong internalizes generational trauma as she deals with what her potential in-laws expect from her. As Ae-sun watches her daughter put herself last before them, she realizes that Geum-myeong learned to do this by watching her. As for the series finale, *warning!* It will tie up loose ends, but it will also break your heart. (Netflix)



Study Group

Ga-min's love for academics is as strong as his grades are weak. Even as a middle school student, none of his classmates would cram with him. They feared they might do worse on exams just by being in his proximity. In high school, the studious but grade-challenged teen (played by Hwang Min-hyun) hopes to better his chances to get into a good university by transferring to a less prestigious and academically easier high school, but his grades are still at the bottom.

So he puts that effort into forming a study group and finding classmates who will join him, in a testament to his determination to better himself. *Study Group* also is a fast-moving action series where teenagers fight nonstop and rank each other by who can beat up everyone else. Like Clark Kent, who turns into Superman when he removes his glasses, Ga-min proves to be a skilled martial artist who can take down anyone when he removes his. Shout out to Ga-min's mother, who unlike other K-drama parents push academic excellence above all else. "Who cares if you don't do well on tests," she tells him. "That's not the important thing." (Wiki)



Heavenly Ever After

In an innovative take on a May-December romance, *Heavenly Ever After* centers on a couple in their eighties. Hae-sook (played by the legendary Kim Hye-ja of *Mother*) is a hardworking money lender who also takes care of her bedridden husband Nak-joon (Son Suk-ku). Not long after he tells her that she is at her most beautiful at her current age, he dies. Her will to live wanes and she follows him up to heaven. Given the choice to remain the same age or younger, she remembers his words to her. So she's surprised, disappointed, and embarrassed when she is reunited with Nak-joon ... who chose to look like his 30-something self.

This show could've used the five-decade physical age gap for cheap laughs. But what it does is present a deeper look at a complicated relationship and how that manifests when you are given a second chance at life (amongst the dead). Once Nak-joon gets used to seeing Hae-sook again, he flirts with her, showing that he's still very much in love *and* attracted to her physically. *Heavenly Ever After* is a slice-of-life series that tackles ageism, sexism, poverty, child trafficking, and alcoholism. (The worst offenders are relegated to hell in a shockingly gross episode where the punishment for an immoral life on earth includes tongue ripping.) And while all people may not go to heaven, all dogs clearly do. In a beautifully-filmed short but memorable sequence, newbies sent up to heaven are

apprehensive and frightened – until they recognize their pets, who’ve patiently waited for them to arrive. (Netflix)

Heavenly Ever After | Official Trailer | Netflix



Mercy For None

So Ji-sub (*My Secret, Terrius, Oh My Venus*) is *back* in this brutal revenge series that depicts how desperate people get pulled into doing bad things. And even when they try to remove themselves from that scenario, they are never completely free of their previous life. In this highly watchable, but *extremely* violent revenge series — think along the lines of Keanu Reeves’ *John Wick* franchise or the K-drama *The Worst of Evil* — So plays a retired gangster who’s brought back into the fold when his brother is killed.

As he navigates between a pair of dueling gang leaders trying to protect their *kinda sorta* legitimate businesses, we learn who killed his brother and why. Because South Korea doesn’t have gun culture, this K-drama relies primarily on fists, and just about any sharp object that a fist can grab, as lethal weapons. This series isn’t for the faint of heart, but for those who love action-packed shows that offer a sense of justice, *Mercy For None* is not to be missed. (Netflix)



Melo Movie

This emotionally-engaging show is less of a rom-com than it is a slice-of-life K-drama that explores how familial loss greatly impacts who we are today. As Gyeom (Choi Woo-shik) and Mu-bee (Park Bo-young) explore their budding flirtation, we learn more about the traumas that led them to where they are today. Mu-bee was literally named after the word *movie*. After her father worked himself to death in the film industry, Mu-bee tackles her own demons by becoming a director – a way for her to pay homage to her dad’s love of films.

Meanwhile, Gyeom’s career as an actor never flourished, but he found his niche as a photogenic film critic. Though he doesn’t get as much screen time as the leads actors, Kim Jae-wook steals this series with his heartachingly nuanced portrayal of Gyeom’s older brother, Jun. At 20, Jun became Gyeom’s guardian when the latter was just 9. Though he does everything he can to provide a happy life for Gyeom, the younger brother lives with a constant feeling of guilt, knowing that he benefited from Jun’s sacrifices. (Netflix)



Weak Hero Class 2

No one tops South Korean creatives when it comes to telling high school-centered bullying stories. In the sequel to 2022's *Weak Hero Class 1*, our protagonist Si-eun (Park Ji-hoon) wants nothing more than to be left alone and study. But as with the first season (available on Viki, Kocowa, Netflix), the quiet student's plans are thwarted by his surroundings. His classmates fight incessantly as a way to curry the favor of the school's alpha bully. When they hear rumors about why Si-eun had to transfer schools – *did he really kill someone?!!* – he becomes everyone's target.

The fight scenes are well choreographed. But the most deadly weapon is Si-eun's pen, not because it's the ultimate weapon (though it can be), but because his clicking of it signifies that he is ready to hold his own. I'd like to think that the pen also signifies that being educated provides a path to a better future. But then again, a pen is sometimes just a pen. I won't ruin the surprise, but there are a couple of notable cameo appearances that fans of the first season will appreciate. (Netflix)



Squid Game 3

The final season of *Squid Game* has arrived, and with it, a brutal end (for now) to the saga of Seong Gi-hun (Lee Jung-jae) and his attempts to bring the exploitation of the games to an end. While parts two and three didn't pack quite the punch that first *Squid Game* did, there's still plenty of things to appreciate about the final effort in the series. (The annoying and hedonistic VIPs aren't one of them.)

But on the plus side, favorites like North Korean defector No-eul (Park Gyu-young), idealistic cop Jun-ho (Wi Ha-joon), and pregnant Jun-hee (Jo Yuri) have compelling and complex storylines that propel *Squid Game* to its conclusion. At the end of season 1, Gi-hun's goal was to end these cruel games that prey on the desperately poor for a chance to win millions of dollars. What the series finale asks is, was it worth it? (Netflix)