

15. THE KOREAN WAR AND ITS AFTERMATH

GRADE LEVEL: 9-12

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SUBJECT: World History

TIME REQUIRED: 1-5 class periods

OBJECTIVES:

1. List and explain the causes of the Korean War.
2. Explore the role of the South Koreans, Americans, and the UN in the war.
3. Analyze the short- and long-term outcomes of the Korean War.
4. Discuss how the Korean War fostered and promoted a lasting friendship between South Korea and the United States.
5. Recognize the vast economic and political differences between South Korea and North Korea.

MATERIALS REQUIRED:

- Brief history of the Korean War (see introduction/background information below)
- Handout 1: Historical Overview
- Handout 2: Study/Assignment Sheet on the Korean War and Its Aftermath
- Handout 3: Comparison of South Korea and North Korea

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

Korea, like Germany, was divided at the end of World War II. At the close of World War II, postwar rivalry among the major world powers set the groundwork for the division of the Korean peninsula and the Korean War. In accordance with a secret decision at Yalta, the Soviet Union moved into the northern part of the Korean peninsula to disarm Japanese troops, while U.S. troops took over the south. The United States had set the thirty-eighth parallel as a dividing line between the U.S. and Soviet troops.

The Soviet Union occupied the northern part of the country above the thirty-eighth parallel, while the United States occupied the southern part. In 1947, the United Nations General Assembly passed a resolution calling for elections in Korea to ensure independence and unification. The Soviet Union strongly objected to this resolution and refused to allow UN delegates to visit the north. An election was held in the south, and the Republic of Korea (ROK), with a democratic constitution, was formed in 1948. In the north, a communist regime, called the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK), was established under Russian influence.

On June 25, 1950, North Korea invaded South Korea in an effort to unify the country by force. In three days, Seoul fell, and soon the entire peninsula was engaged in combat. The United Nations General Assembly voted to send troops to aid South Korea. Because the Soviet Union was boycotting the Security Council meeting, it was unable to veto the measure. An international force comprised of troops from twenty countries was created, and the United States provided the largest number of troops. China, during the war, sent over 200,000 troops to assist North Korea. A bitter and divisive war dragged on for three years until a cease-fire agreement was reached on July 27, 1953. The agreement left Korea divided into North and South, two armed countries with rival leaders and governments. Millions of Koreans were, and still are, separated from their families as the Korean peninsula remains divided today.

In this lesson, students will examine all facets of the Korean War. In doing so, students will identify the causes and outcomes of the war. This lesson will also point out the firm commitment and friendship between two democratic nations. Over the past five decades, since the end of World War II, South Korea and the United States have supported each other. South Korea has become a democratic and a highly developed country. Moreover, South Korea is a major ally of the United States and a bulwark against communism. South Korea has prospered and advanced in all segments of its society both on its own and with some help from the United States.

PROCEDURE:

1. The teacher introduces the lesson by soliciting knowledge about the location and history of Korea. What do students know or what have they heard about Korea and its history and culture? The teacher also asks students who have studied United States history for information about how Korea and the United States became allies and economic partners after World War II to the present.
2. The teacher distributes Handout 1. The location and a brief history of Korea is the focus of this handout. This information serves as a background for the lesson.
3. The teacher informs the students that the Korean War started when North Korea invaded South Korea in 1950 in order to unite the divided country by force and impose its will on South Korea. Through a brief overview lecture, the teacher presents background information on the Korean War and its participants.
4. The teacher distributes Handout 2. This handout takes the form of a study sheet. Fifty relevant points are listed on the sheet. The students will define, identify, or explain the fifty items as a homework assignment. The students will also be able to use this sheet to study and review for their weekly test.
5. The teacher culminates the lesson by presenting an overview of the end of the Korean War and by comparing the development of South Korea and North Korea over the past five decades.
6. The teacher passes out Handout 3. This handout vividly compares the two countries.
7. The teacher uses a written test in order to evaluate learning and comprehension of this lesson.

EVALUATION:

- a. Map assignments
- b. Written assignments
- c. Role-playing
- d. Oral reports
- e. Written tests

Handout 1 HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

Prehistoric Period

Location has been a central factor in Korea's long history. Korea is a peninsula strategically situated on the northeastern coast of Asia. It lies south of Russia, east of China, and northwest of Japan. Events in these neighboring lands had profound effects on Korea, and Korea played an active role as a cultural bridge, sharing important cultural and technological advances with its neighbors.

During prehistoric times, migrating people used the Korean peninsula as a land bridge between the Asian mainland and Japan. Early on, Korea was populated by seminomadic people who hunted and gathered food. Their dwelling sites have been found near rivers and along the coasts.

By about 2,000 BCE, farming communities began to emerge as people adopted technological advances like stone sickles. Early Chinese records reveal that numerous tribal states existed across Manchuria and on the Korean peninsula. In *A Korean History, Memorabilia of the Three Kingdoms* (ca.1280 CE), the monk Iryon wrote that a ruler named Tangun organized the first Korean state, Ancient Choson, in 2,333 BCE.

As Greek and Roman civilizations were emerging in the Mediterranean, the Chinese were consolidating power across East Asia. China's Great Wall was built to protect its northern boundary about 215 BCE. During China's Han Dynasty, it sent soldiers and their families to build fortress communities in the Korean peninsula. Although the local people resisted Chinese rule, the Chinese did introduce advanced technology and elements of Chinese civilization.

Three Kingdoms Period (53 BCE-668 CE)

From 53 BCE to 668 CE, the Korean peninsula was divided among the Koguryo, the Paekche, and the Silla kingdoms. These three kingdoms were military kingdoms that used rigid social structures to control the state. Society was divided into strict classes: the royal family, aristocracy (or nobility), and peasants.

In the north, the Koguryo Kingdom extended into Manchuria. Because it constantly had to fight off the Chinese, Koguryo was a formidable warrior state. Buddhism was brought to Koguryo by a Tibetan monk named Sundo. In time, Buddhism became the state religion, and a community developed that believed in the teachings of Buddha and the promise of enlightenment. Buddhism was also used to reinforce Koguryo's strict social hierarchy.

The Paekche Kingdom was located in central Korea and occupied the most fertile agricultural areas. Paekche was heavily influenced by both Buddhism and Confucianism. Paekche faced frequent military attacks from Silla, its neighbor to the southeast. As a result, many of its people fled to Japan where they helped spread Chinese and Korean culture.

Silla and Koryo Dynasties (668–1392)

The Silla Kingdom, located in the southeast, remained isolated from Buddhist influence for a long time, but it finally accepted Buddhism in 535. Later, it formed an alliance with China's Tang Dynasty, and together they destroyed Paekche in 660 and Koguryo in 668. The Silla Kingdom then turned on its former Chinese ally, defeating the Tang. After an eight-year war, Silla triumphed in this Sino-Korean War in 676, and thus ruled the southern two-thirds of the Korean peninsula.

Silla remained a kingdom until 891. During this time, devotion to Buddhism reached great heights, producing the Sokkuram Grotto with its huge stone Buddha and carved reliefs of guardians. The Silla Kingdom was part of an expanding network of land and sea trade that extended to the Indian Ocean. For a time, Silla traders dominated Chinese, Japanese, and Korean maritime trade routes. They linked up to Arab and Indian

merchants with vast commercial and shipping interests in the Indian Ocean.

In time, the Silla Kingdom declined and was replaced by the Koryo Dynasty (918-1392). Early Koryo rulers maintained diplomatic, commercial, and cultural relations with China's Sung Dynasty. They adopted some Chinese government institutions such as the civil service examination system. Koryo rulers favored Confucian ideals when governing the state, but the people remained loyal to Buddhism.

Preserving Korean Culture

Koreans produced beautiful artwork over the centuries. These works include exquisite gold crowns during the Silla Kingdom, bronze bells, and other ornaments.

In the 1200s, the Koryo Dynasty was a target of the Mongol invaders. These nomadic herding people from Central Asia conquered a vast empire stretching across Asia to north China and Russia. During these invasions, Koreans created the Tripitaka Koreana. These 81,258 wood blocks contain the entire Buddhist canon, or scriptures. In 1232, Mongol forces burned the wood blocks. In a great effort of faith and craftsmanship, Koreans recarved the Buddhist scriptures. Today the Tripitaka is the world's oldest surviving collection of wood blocks and a UNESCO World Heritage Treasure.

By 1270, the Mongols dominated Koryo, requiring Koryo kings to marry Mongol princesses. Their offspring, half-Korean, half-Mongol, ruled Koryo until the Mongols were driven from Korea in the 1350s. Mongol ruler Kublai Khan saw Korea as a bridge to Japan and forced Koreans to participate in his disastrous invasions of Japan in 1274 and 1281.

Most celebrated of all Korean artistic creations are the celadon porcelains developed during the Koryo Dynasty. Their subtle green-blue glaze, simple designs, and elegant lines have drawn the admiration of collectors. The special techniques used by Korean potters to make their celadon were lost during the invasions. In the late 1500s, Japanese invaders kidnapped Korean potters and took them to Japan. The Japanese forced the potters to produce fine wares, saving the Japanese from importing expensive ceramics from China.

The Choson Dynasty (1392-1910)

As the Koryo Dynasty declined, Korean leaders competed for power. Japanese pirates, known as *waegu*, raided the coasts of Korea. General Yi Song-gye rose to prominence due to his successes against the *waegu*. He gained enough support to establish a new dynasty, the Choson (1392-1910). About the same time, a brilliant new dynasty, the Ming, gained power in China.

In Korea, Yi Song-gye moved his capital to Seoul, where he built a royal ancestral shrine called Chongmyo. This huge complex contains the world's largest wooden building and is included in UNESCO's World Heritage List. The Choson Dynasty adopted Confucianism as its official doctrine, replacing Buddhism as the state religion.

About this time, both China's Ming rulers and Korea's Choson rulers began to close their borders to foreigners and to trade. Korea's sealed borders earned it the name of the Hermit Kingdom, and few outsiders knew much about Korean life and culture.

Under the Choson Dynasty, Korea became a model Confucian state. During the reign of King Sejong the Great, a significant breakthrough in communication occurred with the invention in 1443 of hangul, the alphabetic Korean script. The Korean alphabet has earned great respect internationally for its rational simplicity. An emphasis on education and learning led to the growth of scholarly and popular literature.

Korea also made advances in printing. The Chinese had invented nonmetallic movable type in the eleventh century. Koreans improved on this invention, creating metallic movable type to print books as early as 1234. This invention occurred 200 years before Johannes Gutenberg printed the Bible with metallic movable type in Germany.

Korea Faces Foreign Pressure

In the late sixteenth century, 200 years of peace ended with Japanese invasions. Korea's Choson and China's Ming rulers eventually defeated the Japanese, but neither regained its former prosperity. In 1644, Manchurian invaders overthrew the Ming Dynasty and established a new dynasty, the Qing. The Qing demanded and received Korean allegiance as a tributary state.

Korea's isolation grew stricter, and its social structure became more stratified. In 1653, thirty-six Dutch sailors were shipwrecked off the coast of Korea and were captured. Hendrik Hamel, one of these sailors, escaped from captivity and wrote an eye-opening account about Korea for western readers called *Description of the Kingdom of Corea*.

During the next 200 years, French, British, Russian, and American ships tried to open the Hermit Kingdom to trade but without success. The General Sherman, an American merchant schooner, was burned when it sailed up the Taedong River in Korea because a law prohibited foreign ships from entering the waterways of inner Korea. In 1876, Japan forced Korea to sign the Kanghwa Treaty, giving it trading rights. Soon other imperialist powers also imposed treaties on Korea.

By the late 1800s, Japan was expanding its military power. After the Sino-Japanese War (1894-95) and the Russo-Japanese War (1904-5), Japan gained a free hand to expand into the Korean peninsula. In 1910, it ended the Choson Dynasty, annexed Korea, and began a harsh thirty-five-year rule over the peninsula.

Japanese Colonial Rule (1910–1945)

Japanese colonial rule lasted from 1910 to 1945. Japan expanded the railroad transportation system so that it could support the Japanese military forces fighting China and Russia. Korean-owned companies were forced to send products such as rice to Japan, causing severe hardships to Koreans. Koreans had to work dangerous jobs under forced conditions. Culturally, Koreans suffered as well. The Korean language was forbidden in schools, and Koreans had to adopt Japanese family names. Thousands of Korean girls and women were sent to serve as comfort women, or prostitutes, for Japanese soldiers.

While Japan ruled Korea for thirty-five years, Koreans constantly struggled for independence both at home and abroad. On March 1, 1919, Korean nationalists declared independence, setting off widespread demonstrations against the Japanese. Koreans refer to these events as the March First Movement. Korean exiles in Shanghai created a provisional government in China. Koreans in the United States raised money to help the independence movement. Japan responded to nationalist demands with harsh crackdowns, killing many civilians.

Korea Divided

Korea was finally liberated on August 15, 1945, when Japan surrendered at the end of World War II. But as the Cold War began, tensions rose between the United States and the Soviet Union. In 1945, U.S. policy planners in Washington, D.C., divided the Korean peninsula along the thirty-eighth parallel into two military occupied zones. U.S. forces would occupy the southern half of the peninsula, and Soviet forces the northern half. In that way, the United States hoped to prevent the Soviets from occupying all of Korea. The two occupation zones were supposed to eventually be united. Instead, the Cold War deepened the division.

In August 1948, the noncommunist Republic of Korea (ROK) in the south was born. Its first president was Syngman Rhee. In September 1948, the communist Democratic People's Republic of Korea was proclaimed. Its first leader was Kim Il-sung.

Cold war tensions over Korea erupted into war in 1950 when North Korean forces invaded South Korea. Aided by the Soviet Union and China, North Korean forces pushed deep into South Korea. United Nations forces and U.S. forces commanded by General Douglas MacArthur helped South Korea drive back the

invaders. The Korean War dragged on until 1953 when an armistice was signed. The fighting cost the lives of 3 million Koreans, about 900,000 Chinese communists, and 54,000 American soldiers. The Korean people had fought the war primarily to reunify their divided country. However, the Armistice Treaty ended the fighting where it began—at the thirty-eighth parallel. The two rival regimes, North Korea and South Korea, became heavily armed states, and Korea remains a divided land today.

Modern Times

Since 1948, North Korea and South Korea have developed along very different lines. Communist North Korea became a socialist state ruled by a totalitarian dictator, Kim Il-sung. In the 1960s and 1970s, it achieved steady economic growth. However, this growth then stagnated due partly to Kim Il-sung's strict policy of *juche*, or self-sufficiency. Under this policy, North Korea rejected foreign assistance, preferring instead to create a self-sufficient economy. During the cold war, North Korea accepted some aid from the Soviet Union but generally isolated itself from the world. North Koreans were not allowed to travel abroad and received little or no information about the world except what the government chose to give.

With the collapse of communism in the Soviet Union in the early 1990s and Kim Il-sung's death in 1994, North Korea has experienced many setbacks. Since the mid-1990s, it has suffered from floods and droughts that have caused one of the worst famines in this century. Because North Korea is a closed society, no one knows how many millions of people have died from starvation and disease. International relief agencies have been allowed to provide some aid, but their access has been limited. South Korea has offered help, but North Korea has been reluctant to accept it. Today, North Korea remains a closed country with an economy on the edge of collapse and is struggling to survive.

South Korea, too, has faced a sometimes rocky path since 1948. In general, it backed the principles of democracy, open diplomacy, and free enterprise capitalism. At times, however, it was ruled by military dictators. During the 1960s, under the military dictator Park Chung Hee, South Korea achieved what has been called the miracle on the Han River. The country transformed its war-ravaged agricultural economy into an industrial giant. By the 1980s and 1990s, its automobile and electronics exports were known around the world.

The Republic of Korea successfully hosted the Twenty-fourth Summer Olympic Games in Seoul in 1988. In 1992, South Korea celebrated a return to civilian democracy when it conducted free elections. Kim Young Sam became the first civilian president in thirty-two years. Today, the ROK has diplomatic relations with about 150 countries, including Russia and China. With a 90 percent literacy rate, South Koreans enjoy the highest level of education in the world. About 20 percent of South Koreans hold college degrees.

South Korea supports the arts and intellectual pursuits. Its strong commitment to preserving traditional arts and crafts has resulted in renewed interest in *maedup* (knot-making), traditional music, and paper crafts. It has worked to preserve historic landmarks, including royal burial mounds, palaces, fortresses, Buddhist temples, academies, and traditional villages with artisans and their crafts.

Modern art is also thriving. Corporations support artists with gallery spaces and exhibitions. Women writers have experienced commercial and critical success, and they are a significant presence in the modern art scene. Pak Kyong-ri's *The Land* is considered one of the most important Korean novels in this century. *The Land* is a historical chronicle about a traditional land-owning family before, during, and after the Japanese occupation. It deals with cultural conflict between the values of old Korea and those of the modern world.

South Korea's economy experienced a severe setback in 1997. The spreading Asian financial crisis caused many South Korean banks and businesses to collapse. However, these economic setbacks are seen as temporary. The government undertook major reforms, and amid the economic turmoil, a new president with an impressive prodemocracy record, Kim Dae-jung, was elected. Appealing for national unity, President Kim brought together representatives of labor, business, and government to discuss the economic situation and to plan for the future. His goals were to reestablish South Korea's economic stability and continue dialogue with

North Korea. In 2003, Roh Moo Hyun was elected president.

The reunification of South Korea and North Korea has remained the ultimate goal of all the Korean people since 1945. To some, the reunification of Germany and the collapse of communism in Eastern Europe are encouraging signs for Korean reunification. Talks between the two Koreas, however, have yet to make any big breakthroughs toward reunification.

Handout 2
STUDY/ASSIGNMENT SHEET ON THE
KOREAN WAR AND ITS AFTERMATH

Define, identify, or explain the items listed below. Use additional paper if necessary.

1. The Korean War _____
2. Syngman Rhee _____
3. Harry S. Truman _____
4. Stalin _____
5. Mao Zedong _____
6. Security Council _____
7. Republic of Korea _____
8. Democratic People's Republic of Korea _____
9. General MacArthur _____
10. Inchon Landing _____
11. Iron Triangle _____
12. MiG's _____
13. George C. Marshall _____
14. Eisenhower _____
15. Armistice _____
16. Thirty-eighth Parallel _____
17. Yalu River _____
18. DMZ _____
19. Dean Acheson _____
20. General Ridgway _____
21. Repatriation of Prisoners _____
22. Panmunjom _____

Handout 3
COMPARISON OF SOUTH KOREA AND NORTH KOREA

SUBJECT	SOUTH KOREA	NORTH KOREA
1. Population (2003 est.)	47,925,000	22,522,000
2. Area (square miles)	38,400 (99,600 km ²)	47,399 (122,762 km ²)
3. Population Density (people per square mile)	1,248	475
4. Government and Leader	Democracy Roh Moo-hyun President	Communist Kim Jong Il Chairman of the National Defense Commission
5. GDP (2004 est., (purchasing power parity in U.S. dollars)	\$857,800,000,000	\$29,600,000,000
6. Per Capita GDP (purchasing power parity in U.S. dollars)	\$17,800	\$1300
7. Major Industries	Electronics, Ships, Motor Vehicles,	Military Products, Chemicals
8. Capital	Seoul	Pyongyang
9. Defense Spending (percent of real GDP)	2.7% (FY03)	23% (FY02)
10. National Budget	\$128.7 Billion (2004 est.)	Not Available
11. Agriculture (major crops)	Rice, Barley, Vegetable	Rice, Corn, Potatoes
12. Society	Open and Developed	Closed and Developing
13. Food Supply	Ample	Insufficient
14. Political Parties	Several	One (Communist Party)
15. Major Allies	United States, Japan, European countries	China, Russia

Sources: Population and area drawn from Republic of Korea statistics. Economic and political information is from the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency, *The World Factbook*, 2004.

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