

AN INTRODUCTION TO SOUTH KOREA

GRADE LEVEL: Middle School

SUBJECT: Social Studies integrated with Math and Language Arts

TIME REQUIRED: Three to four class periods

OBJECTIVES:

1. State at least three conclusions about Korean society today.
2. Explain what is meant by “population density” and how it impacts South Korea.
3. Apply problem solving and critical thinking skills to information about Korea.

MATERIALS REQUIRED:

World map

Handouts

Calculators (if necessary)

Resource material on Korea—can include internet (see sites on internet lesson plan)

PROCEDURE:

1. As an introductory activity, point to Korea on a world map. Ask students what they know about Korea. Ask students to write in their reflective journals or on a sheet of paper: “Why should we learn about Korea? What connections do we (personally or as a people) have with Korea?”
2. Have students share their responses. Draw a web on the board or on a transparency with all of our links to Korea. If students have few ideas, explain manufactured products we get from Korea (e.g., Samsung, Goldstar and Hyundai Corporation), U.S. military presence in Korea, Korean immigrants and adoptees in the U.S., etc. Ask students to try to find additional connections (for bonus points?) for the next day.
3. As a second activity, rather than giving an introductory lecture on Korea, tell students that they are all going to demonstrate some key information about the country. Distribute profile cards to all but two students. These two students need to serve as “statisticians.” Tell the students to study their profiles and to stand (or raise their hands) based upon the information on the card. For example, when the teacher says, “How many of you speak Korean?” all should stand. The statisticians will count and figure percentages (with calculators, if necessary) and list them on the board.

Note to teacher. The sample profile cards are based on a class of ten. The cards and data must be adjusted for class size. The larger the class, the more accurate the data will be (less rounding off necessary). Any data about the country can be adapted for this activity. The attached cards include:

Percentage of South Koreans Who*

Speak Korean – 100%

Are literate – 100%

Live in an urban area – 75%

Live in Seoul – 25%
 Live in a rural area – 14%
 Work in a service industry – 54.1%
 Work in mining/manufacturing – 30.3%
 Work in agriculture/forestry/fishing – 4.4%
 Are under the age of 25 – 24.3 %
 Own a TV – 100%
 Eat kimchi – 100%
 Go to college – 54.1% (of high school graduates)
 Have a religious affiliation – 54%
 Are Buddhist – 27% (of those having a religious affiliation)
 Are Confucianist – 2% (of those having a religious affiliation)
 Are Christian – 24% (of those having a religious affiliation)
 Favor reunification with North Korea – 46% (according to a recent poll)

*Handbook of Korea. The Korean Overseas Information Services, 2003.

4. After students produce the demographic and statistical picture of South Korea, discuss with them the significance of some selected figures. For example, students might be asked, “How does having 24.3% of the population under the age of 25 affect a country? How does this compare with the U.S.?”
5. The third activity involves the concept of population density. Begin by telling students that South Korea is one of the most densely populated nations in the world. Tape off a 5’ x 5’ area in the front of the room. Tell students to imagine that this is South Korea and that it is about the same size as our state of Indiana (point out on map, if necessary). Tell students that Indiana has about five million people.
6. Have five students come forward to stand in the square. Stress that they each represent 1 million people. Tell students that South Korea’s population is 48 million. Ask students how many more students need to stand in the square to approximate this population (40 students).
7. Also teach them that these 48 million people do not live evenly all around the country. Ask 25% of the students to stand packed together to represent Seoul. Overall, 75% live in the cities. Discuss how this would impact living there. Distribute a population density map of Korea and further discuss the distribution of population. Mountain areas have sparse population distributions.
8. As a final activity, begin by dividing the class into groups of three to five. Tell students that they all work for the ACE Detective Agency, and each group will be given a mystery about Korean history or culture. Do a couple mysteries with the students to explain the process. (See attached “Mystery Sheet”).
9. Have the “mysteries” on note cards and distribute three to five cards to each group. This activity is designed to develop problem solving skills. While there are numerous problem solving models, it may be best to let students devise their own. As the teacher, just insist that students share their best guess or guesses and their reasons (evidence) for believing they have the solution. The mysteries below vary in difficulty and should be adjusted for ability levels. There should be numerous resource materials on Korea in the room to assist students in solving their mysteries. If they get stumped, allow them to ask the teacher “yes or no” type questions about

their scenario or give them some clues to keep them on track. While solutions are suggested, please note that students may find other alternatives that could also be acceptable.

10. After allowing for sufficient time to solve the mystery, bring the class back together. Have each group share their mystery and solution. Help students solve the unanswered mysteries, and lead discussion based upon responses and questions.

EVALUATION:

Have students brainstorm what they've learned about Korea over the course of these last few days. Ask them to write a brief essay discussing this for homework.

COUNTRY PROFILE CARDS

You live in South Korea
You live in an urban area
You live in Seoul
You work in the service industry
You are literate
You speak Korean
You eat kimch'i daily
You own a TV
You are a Christian
You went to college

You live in South Korea
You live in an urban area
You work for a manufacturing company
You are literate
You are under 25
You speak Korean
You eat kimch'i daily
You have a TV
You favor reunification with North Korea
You went to college

You live in South Korea
You live in an urban area
You work in a manufacturing plant
You are literate
You speak Korean
You eat kimch'i daily
You have a TV
You went to college

You live in South Korea
You live in an urban area
You work in the service industry
You are literate
You are under 25
You speak Korean
You eat kimch'i daily
You own a TV
You are a Christian
You went to college

You live in South Korea
You work in the service industry
You are literate
You speak Korean

You eat kimch'i daily
You own a TV
You are a Buddhist

You live in South Korea
You live in an urban area
You live in Seoul
You work in the service industry
You are literate
You speak Korean
You eat kimch'i daily
You own a TV
You favor reunification with North Korea

You live in South Korea
You live in an urban area
You are literate
You are under 25
You speak Korean
You eat kimch'i daily
You own a TV
You favor reunification with North Korea

You live in South Korea
You live in an urban area
You work in agriculture or fishing
You are literate
You are under 25
You speak Korean
You eat kimch'i daily
You own a TV
You favor reunification with North Korea

You live in South Korea
You live in an urban area
You live in Seoul
You work in the service industry
You are literate
You speak Korean
You eat kimch'i daily
You own a TV
You favor reunification with North Korea

You live in South Korea
You live in a rural area
You work in the service industry

You are literate
You speak Korean
You eat kimch'i daily
You went to college.

You own a TV
You are a Buddhist

KOREAN MYSTERIES

SAMPLE

Mystery 1: In Korea, it is very common to ask people of all ages how old they are. There is a good reason for doing this. What could it be? (Everything is related to age and it is needed so the person can address you properly. Elders get more respect.)

MYSTERIES FOR GROUP PROBLEM SOLVING

2. U.S. couples used to adopt more children from Korea than from any other Asian nation. Why do you think this is so? (Along with our good relations and military presence in South Korea, Koreans don't tend to adopt children in the country because of the importance placed on blood ties.)

3. Almost half of those with a religious affiliation in Korea are Christian, despite the fact that western nations invested a lot more time and people trying to convert Japan and China to Christianity. Why do you think Christianity has taken root in Korea but not in China or Japan? (It was introduced and propagated by volunteers within the country and not by outsiders/foreign missionaries. Also, the promise of equality appealed to the disenfranchised.)

4. In 1960, South Korea was the second poorest nation in the world. Today, it is one of the wealthiest (12th in the world in 1997). How could a country emerge from such poverty in such a relatively short period of time? (It has a well-educated population with Confucian ideals of hard work and respect for education.) It developed an outward looking view with an emphasis on exports. Japan also gave the economy a jumpstart, by paying Korea \$60 billion for damages inflicted during World War II.

5. In past times, during the last dynasty of Korea, it was possible for a woman to be a widow before she was born! Since in those days, it was improper to marry more than once, she would never remarry. How could this be? (The practice of prearranged marriages often resulted in daughters being promised before their actual birth).

6. The West Point Class of 1950 had the highest number of deaths and injuries of any West Point class in the Twentieth Century. There were 125 casualties with 41 killed and 84 wounded. Why might this be? (When the Korean War broke out, there was a need for military leadership. Many of the World War II leaders had retired.) These young men lacked real experience in the battlefield. In years, many viewed the decision to send so many inexperienced cadets to the war a mistake.

7. In 1996, the North Korean army lowered the height requirement for new recruits by 10 cm. Why might this be? (North Korea is very poor and suffering from famine. It is reported that twenty-year-old men are the size of thirteen-year-old boys as a result of malnutrition.)

8. Korea has been invaded 950 times in its history! How do you think a nation could survive this? (The people are very resilient and unified, sharing a common cultural heritage. They also have a very long history of over 4,000 years.)

9. The personal characteristics of Koreans were described as both selfish and selfless. Is it possible for a person to be both? How? (People are described as such because of the importance of family. Parents often put their children and their parents first. They are both selfless and selfish when it comes to looking after them.)

10. Most Korean teenagers know a lot more about the United States than U.S. teens know about Korea. On a daily basis, Korean teens are bombarded with information about the United States even though, they may never be around an American. How can this be? Is it mainly because U.S. culture is globally popular today? (Because of the U.S. military presence in Korea, there is an armed forces television station that is shown throughout the country. There is CNN, other international television channels, and foreign movies that show U.S. programs and news about the United States.)

11. Among Korean elementary school children, there are 115 boys for every 100 girls. In most countries, there are the same number as boys and girls. Why is there a difference in Korea? (Boys are preferred in many families because boys can continue the family lineage, and conduct the ancestor worship ceremonies. There is a problem with families aborting girls or trying to determine the sex of their unborn children.)

12. Korea has many historical sites and antiquities that are national treasures. Although, less than a quarter of the population is Buddhist, over 70% of Korea's antiquities are associated with Buddhism. Why might this be? (Buddhism was a driving force for national development. It was the religion of royalty over 1,000 years. Many Buddhist temples, pagodas and images were created in the hopes of bringing peace and prosperity to the state.)