

KOREAN HISTORY DURING THE COLONIAL PERIOD (1910-1945)

GRADE LEVEL: High School

SUBJECT: Social Studies, History

TIME REQUIRED: One class period

OBJECTIVES: Students will:

- Describe Korean life during the period of colonial rule.
- Provide examples of Korean resistance to colonial rule.
- Draw inferences about the effect of World War II on Japanese colonial rule.

MATERIALS:

- Map of Asia
- Map of Korea, Japan, Russia
- World map
- Handout on the colonial period (attached)

BACKGROUND:

In the 1880s Koreans were advised to accept European institutions and technology for the sake of economic development and to strengthen their defense capabilities in collaboration with China, Japan and the United States in order to prevent Russian expansion. However, many Koreans were against the capitalist principles and did not want to accept European institutions. Turmoil and conflict between the Koreans and Japanese continued throughout the nineteenth century. China began to take a more isolationist stance, but Russia was taking an expansionist approach to neighboring countries. Japan, fearful of Russian expansion, began to apply fierce pressure to the Korean government. Japanese soldiers assassinated Korean Queen Min because they believed she was making secret overtures with both Russian and Chinese officials. The Western countries of Great Britain and Germany supported Japanese aggression as they feared the southward expansion of Russia. The American government decided not to make any negative statements about Japan. Korea, in attempts to protect the people from the Japanese soldiers, formed an alliance with Russia, appointing Russians as consultants for military training and financial administration.

In 1896 So Chae-p'il began a modern reform movement in Korea. He inaugurated a newspaper in which he wrote articles arguing for and against government policies in an impartial manner. So's enlightenment of the Korean people helped them to apply pressure to the government and eventually led to King Kojong's rejection of Russian and Japanese intervention. Meanwhile, the conflicts between Japan and Russia, who were both trying to occupy the land around the Amnokkang river and eventually occupy Manchuria and Korea, continued to mount. The Russo-Japanese war began on February 8, 1904. Korea proclaimed neutrality but with the Japanese victory over Russia Japan strengthened its protectorate in Korea. By 1910 Korea had been annexed by Japan and the official colonial period had begun.

PROCEDURES:

1. Have students look at maps of each of the three countries as well as a world map and discuss the relative locations of Korea, Russia and Japan.
2. Write the words "expansionist" and "isolationist" on the board. Have students define these two terms.
3. Tell students that Korea had an isolationist foreign policy while Japan and Russia were expansionist in their foreign policies in the early 1900's.
4. Ask students what problems might occur, with respect to the above scenario, as a result of the relative location of these three countries? Brainstorm ideas on the board or chart paper.
5. Ask students to look at a world map. Ask students what they think the stance of other world powers, France, Germany, Great Britain, The United States, might be toward Korea in the early 1900's? Japan? Russia? Again, record responses.
6. Draw a timeline on the board and begin to fill in the events of the late nineteenth and early twentieth-century that students recall.
7. Distribute the reading on the colonial period in Korea. Have students organize into groups of four. Ask students to find out the year Japanese colonization began in Korea and to find out the details of that colonization. Have them add significant dates concerning the Japanese occupation to the timeline.
8. Have students locate at least three ways in which the Japanese government attempted to control and oppress the Korean people.
9. Have students identify ways in which the Koreans sought to resist Japanese rule. Why was this resistance unsuccessful until the end of the second world war?
10. Have groups report to the class. Together, complete the timeline and draw up a list of ways in which the Japanese controlled their colony and ways in which the Koreans resisted. Compare to other forms of colonialism the students have studied.

EVALUATION:

Have students write an essay explaining why Korea was vulnerable to Japanese colonialism and how they resisted the colonial power.

REFERENCE:

Nahm, Andrew C. *A Panorama of 500 Years: Korean History*. Hollym International Corporation, Elizabeth, NJ: 1989.

HANDOUT: HISTORY OF KOREA 1910-1945

On August 22, 1910 the Treaty of Annexation was signed between the Korean and Japanese governments. This treaty symbolized the beginning of Japanese colonial rule over Korea. When annexed the Japanese government claimed that all Koreans would be treated as Japanese subjects, but instead the Japanese created a colonial government called the Government-General of Korea.

Under the military rule of the Japanese, the freedoms of speech, press, and assembly of the Koreans were taken away. Many schools were closed down. All Korean language (Hangul) newspaper presses were shut down and the teaching of Korean history banned. Hundreds of patriotic Koreans were imprisoned and the political prisoners caused an overcrowding of jails. Japanese farmers were brought into Korea and received free land or farmland at very low prices. The Japanese decided to make Korea an agricultural colony to produce food grains and raw materials for Japan.

The Japanese did not promote education for the Korean people nor did they allow Koreans to hold professional positions in society. The educational objective for the Koreans was loyalty and obedience to Japan. Many Christian schools were closed when the teachers refused to honor the Japanese Shinto shrine.

The oppression by the Japanese was devastating. In the late 1910s U.S. President, Woodrow Wilson created his Fourteen Points Plan of self-determination for subjugated people. This plan heightened the hopes of the Korean people. Koreans were hoping the outside pressure would stop the Japanese oppression. On March 1, 1919 a national Korean independence movement began. A Korean Declaration of Independence was signed and public rallies were held. Two million people participated in the peaceful independence movement that lasted until May. The Japanese response to the movement was immediate and brutal. Some 2,000 people were killed or wounded and 26,000 were jailed. A 17 year old student named Yu Kwan-sun was tortured and died in prison because she was trying to help the wounded Koreans during the Japanese attacks on the demonstrators.

Many Korean nationalists were forced to flee the country during this period. In April 1919, Korean Nationalists established the Provisional Government of the Republic of Korea and elected Dr. Syngman Rhee as its first president. Several social organizations began to form in Korea. But again, the brutal measures of the Japanese police forced many of these groups to dissolve.

In 1936 a "Japanization" program was instituted. All Korean language instruction was abolished and Japanese was the only permissible language in schools. Christian schools and churches were closed down. The Koreans were forced to change their given and family names and adopt Japanese names. As the pressure in Japan mounted in the late 1930s with the coming of World War II, the Japanese became more desperate for raw materials and food. Many Koreans were shipped to Japanese coal mines and thousands of Korean youth were sent to battle in China and elsewhere.

When World War II broke out the Provisional Government of Korea, under Syngman Rhee, declared war on Japan. In 1943 many Korean college students were forced into the Japanese military under the Compulsory Military Service Law. In December 1943, the Cairo Agreement signed by Britain, China, and the United States stated publicly that "in due course Korea shall become free and independent." In August 1945 with the acceptance of the Potsdam Ultimatum of the Allies, Japanese

colonial rule in Korea ended. However, the promise of the Cairo Agreement would not be realized in Korea.