

MODERN KOREAN/JAPANESE GEOPOLITICAL CONFLICTS

GRADE LEVEL: 9-12

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SUBJECT: Geography, Current Events

TIME REQUIRED: Five to eight class periods

OBJECTIVES:

1. Understand the current geopolitical controversies between Japan and Korea over Dokdo/Takeshima and East Sea/Sea of Japan
2. Develop an understanding of how the conflicts developed.
3. Interpret and analyze the validity of each country's arguments.
4. Analyze the present and potential effects of these conflicts on the region and the world.
5. Understand how the intertwined history of Japan and Korea over thousands of years, as well as historical memory in the last century, often trumps rational debate and creates the potential for heated political conflict.
6. Understand the potential of the Internet and electronic media to both inform and distort public debate.

BACKGROUND:

In a year-long geography or current events course, the students should already have a working knowledge of the basic events of world history outside of Asia. Thus, student knowledge of WWII and its players should be assumed to have been covered in earlier lessons on other units in the world, or as a previous unit to this lesson.

MATERIALS REQUIRED:

1. Kristoff, Nicholas D. and Sheryl WuDunn, "Prisoners of History," in Thunder from the East: Portrait of a Rising Asia, Vintage: 2001, pp. 227-249.
2. Analysis of Dokdo/Takeshima conflict by Global Security.org (viewed at the following Web site:
<http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/war/liancourt.htm>)
3. A brief description of Korean reaction in 2005 to the Dokdo/Takeshima issue from the BBC (viewed at the following Web site: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/4347851.stm>)
4. Korea.net movie, "The Island of Peace, Dokdo," on the validity of Korean claims to Dokdo (viewed at the following Web site:
http://www.korea.net/news/issues/issueView.asp?issue_no=45)
5. Official Position of Korea.net on Dokdo/Takeshima (viewed at the following Web site:
http://www.korea.net/News/Issues/issueDetailView.asp?board_no=5728)
6. Official Position of the Japanese government on Dokdo/Takeshima at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan website (viewed at the following Web site:
<http://www.mofa.go.jp/region/asia-paci/takeshima/position.html>)

7. Official opinion of Shimane Prefecture Government in Japan of the Dokdo/Takeshima conflict (viewed at the following Web site: http://www.pref.shimane.lg.jp/soumu/takesima_eng/)
8. Dokdo/Takeshima entry at Wikipedia, an online encyclopedia that can be altered by the public (viewed at the following Web site: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dokdo>)
9. Discussion forum at Wikipedia as to the validity of its entry on Dokdo/Takeshima (viewed at the following Web site: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Talk:Dokdo>)
10. Sea of Japan/East Sea Naming Dispute article at Wikipedia (viewed at the following Web site: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sea_of_Japan_naming_dispute)
11. Photograph of map of East Asia from South Korean classroom (attached: Appendix A)

PROCEDURE:

Part 1: Understanding Korea's Place in Asian History

1. Provide students with a basic outline of Korean history which emphasizes Korea's vision of its place as a conduit for Chinese flowing to Japan (Note: Prof. Young Ick Lew's brief [approximately 60 pages], but comprehensive, overview of Korean history is highly recommended as background reading into this viewpoint: Brief History of Korea: A Bird's Eye-View, Young Ick Lew, *The Korea Society: New York*, 2000 available online at: http://www.koreasociety.org/component/option,com_docman/Itemid,35/task,cat_view/gid,120/)
2. For homework, students should read pp. 227-236 of *Thunder from the East: Portrait of a Rising Asia*, by Nicholas D. Kristoff and Sheryl WuDunn. While reading, students should actively take notes in the margins of their handout in order to better prepare for the next day's lecture and discussion on the atrocities committed by the Japanese against Koreans, among others, in the first half of the twentieth century.

Part 2: Understanding Japanese Aggression in the Early Twentieth Century

1. Through a combination of lecture and discussion, students should be able to identify specific events, such as comfort women and Japanese experiments on prisoners of war, which still resonate in the collective historical memory of many people in Asia.
2. Focus on the character of Shinzaburo Horie, a former Japanese soldier involved with Japanese experiments on prisoners of war, and described as a genuinely evil man by the authors.
3. For homework, students should finish reading the "Prisoners of History" chapter of *Thunder from the East* (pp. 237-249) while again taking active notes in order to prepare for a combination of lecture and discussion.

Part 3: Understanding the Burden of Historical Memory in East Asia

1. Through a combination of lecture and discussion, students should understand the burden of shared historical memory on East Asia and how difficult it is for many people of this region to forgive and forget.
2. Students will be expected to understand the political significance of the lack of remorse by some Japanese soldiers and the government in regards to its activities as imperialist aggressors, specifically in its colonization of Korea.
3. Through this understanding of Korean historical memory of Japanese atrocities, the students will be able to effectively look at the current geopolitical controversies of the Dokdo/Takeshima and East Sea/Sea of Japan issues.
4. For homework, the students should read two articles:
 - A brief description of Korean reaction in 2005 to the Dokdo/Takeshima issue from the BBC (viewed at the following Web site:
<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/4347851.stm>)
 - The Global Security.org analysis of the Dokdo/Takeshima conflict (viewed at the following Web site:
<http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/war/liancourt.htm>)

Students should be expected to read actively, taking notes in the margin, in order to better participate in the project on the Dokdo/Takeshima controversy.

Part 4: Outlining the Basic Concepts of the Dokdo/Takeshima Controversy

1. The first half of the class should be a discussion of the basic facts of the Dokdo/Takeshima debate, as laid out by the Global Security.org analysis; ensure that students take notes on important points so as to have a basis from which to work.
2. In the second half of class, watch the approximately 20 minute Korea.net documentary, “The Island of Peace, Dokdo” (viewed at http://www.korea.net/News/Issues/issueView.asp?issue_no=45); students must take notes during the viewing on Korean claims to Dokdo and its version of Japanese imperialism in Asia, especially in regards to Korea—while watching the documentary, the students should consider whether or not the facts presented coincide with the analysis of Global Security.org.
3. For homework, the students will need to actively read the official position of Korea.net on Korea’s rightful claim to Dokdo/Takeshima (viewed at http://www.korea.net/News/Issues/issueDetailView.asp?board_no=5728)
4. Additionally, students should be prepared to discuss the differences between the previous classroom lectures on Korean history and its relations with Japan with what is presented in the films. Students should be ready to discuss the underlying tone and theme of the documentary

Part 5: Analyzing the competing claims of Korea and Japan

1. Class should begin by breaking up the students into various small groups. It is the job of each of these groups to simplify the arguments of Korea as to why Dokdo/Takeshima belongs to Korea and not Japan.

2. After reconvening as a class, and allowing each group to voice their findings, the teacher should place these arguments on the board for the students to copy down in their notes.
3. Next, in these groups, the students will be given the official position of the Japanese government on the conflict (as stated on the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan Web site at <http://www.mofa.go.jp/region/asia-paci/takeshima/position.html> and the Shimane Prefecture Government in Japan, as stated at http://www.pref.shimane.lg.jp/soumu/takesima_eng/). The goal of the students is to then come up with the reasons why Japan should claim sole sovereignty over Dokdo/Takeshima.
4. For homework, the students will compile a chart listing the various arguments of Korea and Japan.
5. After completing the chart, the students will begin to brainstorm ideas for a short, succinct five paragraph essay listing their belief as to what should be done in the Dokdo/Takeshima debate. The essay should take into account the claims of each nation [including its historical memory] and come up with a just and equitable solution that will be most agreeable to each nation. It will be due on Day 7.

Part 6: Debating the various claims of the Japanese and Koreans

1. Students will be given time to discuss and compare their compilations of Japanese claims to Dokdo/Takeshima.
2. Additionally, students will view, as a class, the Wikipedia entry and forum on Dokdo/Takeshima (entry viewed at the following Web site: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dokdo> and the forum at <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Talk:Dokdo>). Students will be required to discuss the merits of Wikipedia as an entity for research, as well as the various comments in the discussion forum regarding this heated issue.
3. For homework, the students will finish their short essays and be prepared to defend their arguments in class.

Part 7: Coming to a consensus on the Dokdo/Takeshima debate

1. Students will be asked to present the thesis of their arguments over the Dokdo/Takeshima debate in a roundtable format.
2. Students will then be given a handout from Wikipedia (viewed at the following Web site: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sea_of_Japan_naming_dispute) detailing the controversy surrounding the Sea of Japan/East Sea, which they must then finish reading and analyzing for homework. Students will also be given a handout with a photograph from a Seoul, Korea Middle School's map that has "Sea of Japan" obscured by white-out, leaving only the name "East Sea."

Part 8: The Sea of Japan/East Sea debate

1. Students will be placed into three different groups: Japan, Korea and the United States [depending on the size of the class, there can be multiple groups arguing from each viewpoint]. Students will then be required to spend about 20 minutes together formulating an argument, utilizing the information read for homework as

- well as learned in the previous lessons, as to what the body of water between Japan and Korea should be named.
2. Students will come back together and engage in a debate as to what the East Sea/Sea of Japan should be named.
 3. This unit on Korean and Japanese geopolitical conflicts should end with the teacher emphasizing the fragility of peace in the Far East (among other places already studied earlier in the year) and the importance of shared historical memory in dealing with seemingly non-critical issues.

EVALUATION:

Students will be evaluated on the:

1. Organization, mechanics and insight of their position paper on Dokdo/Takeshima conflict.
2. Information from this unit that will be included on a unit test on East and Southeast Asia.
- 3.

REFERENCES:

Recommended Internet links for further study and to keep up-to-date with the rapidly changing events surrounding the geopolitical conflicts between Korea and Japan:

1. Analysis of Dokdo/Takeshima conflict in *Asia Times*, May 2006 by Michael Weinstein (viewed at the following Web site:
<http://www.atimes.com/atimes/Japan/HE11Dh01.html>)
2. Compilation of English-language articles on the Dokdo/Takeshima conflict (viewed at the following Web site: www.dokdoneews.net/)
3. A scholarly approach to the Dokdo issue, "Dokdo or Takeshima? The International Law of Territorial Acquisition in the Japan-Korea Island Dispute," as published in the Stanford Journal of East Asian Affairs by Sean Fern (viewed at the following Web site:
<http://www.stanford.edu/group/sjeaa/journal51/japan2.pdf>)

APPENDIX A [Photograph of Map on the Wall of Middle School Classroom in Seoul, Korea, Summer 2006, taken by the author]



[Note that the “Sea of Japan” has been covered by white out, leaving only “East Sea” as the name of the disputed body of water between the Korean Peninsula and the islands of Japan]