

Losing Important Things

OVERVIEW

Note: This unit may be difficult and not appropriate for very young students. However, it could serve as a helpful start in introducing elementary students to understand the value of getting along with other people and the importance of global harmony.

People all over the world have been victims of aggression of other countries. The reasons often involve fights for land, religious differences, or colonialism.

In the late 19th century, Korea was the focus of imperialist competition among China, Japan, and Russia. Because of its prominent location in Asia, Korea was frequently a target of other nations. From 1910-1945, it was colonized by Japan.

During these periods of occupation, Koreans experienced hardship and loss of many kinds: loss of their family names, land, families, and their own lives.

During the Japanese colonization, students and “picture brides” left their homeland to move to Hawaii to look for a better life. In the mainland U.S., some Koreans were put into “camps” after the attack on Pearl Harbor until after the end of World War II. Koreans were assumed to be Japanese because “Asians all looked alike.”

PURPOSE OF THE LESSON

- Students will learn about Korea’s recent history.
- Students will understand the impact of major historical events on individuals and families.

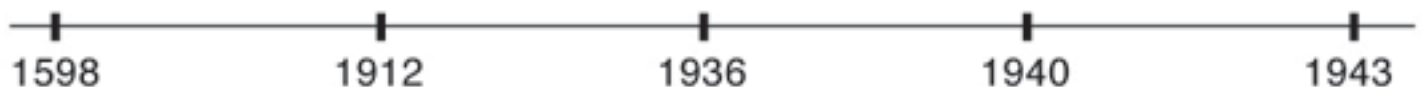
MATERIALS

- five readings
- worksheet #1

Time Frame: 1 day

THE LESSON

1. Briefly talk about losses that students have experienced: loss of a pet, friend, family member. Tell students that they are going to learn about losses that some Korean people experienced in Korea and in the U.S. Tell the students that these are real stories that have happened in recent history.
2. The lesson may be done through group-work or individually. Each student can be given a story to read aloud or silently. Have students complete the accompanying worksheet #1.
3. After the stories are read and worksheet #1 is complete, have students share the stories that they read with their classmates.
4. Make a timeline by putting the stories in chronological order. This can be done by creating a timeline on the chalkboard (see below). Have students give you the dates from their stories.



CONCLUSION

1. Invite students to share similar experiences that their families may have had due to immigration, discrimination, current events or government policies.

ASSESSMENT

1. Ask students to list losses that some Koreans experienced, writing a sentence about each loss.
2. Ask students to write several paragraphs about a loss that they faced, including what they appreciate or miss about that person or thing.

READING 1

LOSING MY NAME

4

My name is Kim Jin Hi. Did you know that in Korea, the family name comes first and the given name comes second? So, if your family name is Clark, and your given name is Susan, you would be called Clark Susan in Korea.

Names are very meaningful everywhere. This is especially true in Korea, where family is central. You might be named after your father or grandparent or aunt. My name symbolizes my family and my Korean heritage. My given name has two characters, Jin and Hi. The second character identifies the generation of my family that I am in. So when I “lost my name,” it was a time of great sadness.

You may wonder, “How does a person lose a name?” When the Japanese military came to Korea, they took over our country and our lives. If you look at a map of East Asia, you will notice that Japan is one of Korea’s neighbors. But Japan was not always a friendly neighbor. Korea means “The Land of the Morning Calm.” But our country was no longer calm when the Japanese came in.

The Japanese forced us to discard our Korean names and to use Japanese names instead. This was in 1940. Why did they do that? They wanted us to forget about our wonderful Korean past. They wanted Koreans to lose connection and loyalty to their country.

My whole family and I had to go to the local police station to get our new names. One minute I was Kim Jin Hi, and the next I was Kyosh. My whole family got new names. You may ask why it was so terrible. In Korea, people feel connected to their ancestors by their names. We honor names in Korea. Now we felt that we had broken with our past.

Back in school, my classmates no longer had Korean names. Their faces were the same, but their names were different. We would not again feel connected in the same way to each other. We had to speak Japanese in school. We cast our eyes down when our Japanese teacher called on us by our new names. We did not recognize each other.

READING 2

LOSING MY HOME IN THE UNITED STATES

4

No, I am not Japanese. But I am in this camp. My entire family is here. Our home, our furniture, everything that we owned was left behind. They moved us from our home to this camp. It is 1943.

How could this happen? Why am I here in this camp? How long will I be here? Why am I not free to go home? My home is in California, and I am Korean-American. I was born in the U.S. after my family came here from Korea. My family came to the U.S. to leave behind a land where the Japanese had forbidden the Korean language to be used or taught in schools. If we spoke in Korean, we were punished.

But now I am in the U.S. And I am not Japanese. I am Korean. Some people think that all Asians look the same. They think that because we have black hair and almond-shaped eyes, we are all the same and all from the same country. That is not true. My family is in this camp because the U.S. is fighting Japan in an international war. They want to make sure that the Japanese in the U.S. are not spies. So the U.S. government has taken Japanese people from their homes and placed them in camps.

But I am Korean. And I am not a spy. I just want to go back home.

READING 3

LOSING MY FAMILY

4

My family is poor. They have little food, barely enough for me, their daughter. So I have decided to leave my home in Pusan, Korea. It is 1912.

I have heard of a land far away from Korea. It will be hard for me to leave Korea, the beautiful land of my people. The new land is called Hawaii. It is an island. I wonder how far away it is. I wonder how long it will take to get there. I wonder if I will like Hawaii.

But I will do it. I will send my picture to a Korean man in Hawaii. He will take me as his bride and we can work together for food. I hear that there is much farming of sugar cane in Hawaii. Are there mountains there? Korea is full of beautiful mountains. Sometimes there is snow on them. Will there be snow in Hawaii?

I will be called a "Picture Bride." When I get off the ship in Hawaii, a man will meet me. He will know me from the picture that I send him. He will become my husband. Will I like him?

Someday, I want to come back and live in Korea. That is my dream.

READING 4

LOSING MY COMMUNITY

4

My name is Sim Sue-kwan. I would like to tell you about my family. For many generations we have been artists. From the clay and feldspar of Korea, we create beautiful pottery. We turn the clay on wheels and make jars for food, tea pots, tea cups, vases and many other vessels. We are a humble family, but we know that our work is honored by others. It is 1598.

My country, Korea, is known for its excellent pottery. If you visit a museum anywhere in the world, you will see pottery that was made in Korea. We learned much from Chinese artists, who are our neighbors. Chinese pottery is very dramatic and colorful. Korean pottery is more subtle and quiet. We developed our own "secret." It is a special green glaze. It is called "celadon." The glaze covers the clay before it is baked in the oven. After the pot is fired, a beautiful color greets your eyes.

Sometimes people use force to get what they want. The Japanese looked at our pottery and our pottery makers and decided that they wanted both. They forced us to move to Japan. I lost my home.

No, I would never go to a strange land and leave my family. My ancestors lived on this land and my children will live here as I grow old. But I had no choice. I was taken from this land with other artists. We were put on ships and kidnapped to Japan. The pottery that we made now came from Japan. It had the same superb quality of Korean potters but now we were Japanese potters. The pottery we were forced to make became Japanese.

READING 5

LOSING MY VICTORY

4

For many years, I have been running across my country. Sometimes my body hurts from the running. My dream is to run in the Olympics. I want to bring honor to my country. So I keep running.

Do you know Korea? It is 70 percent mountainous. On a map, you can see where the mountain ranges are. My country is very beautiful. There are more than 3,000 islands in Korea. Mountains, rivers, islands, rice fields are all part of my land.

I keep running and dreaming of bringing honor to my country. But I wonder if I will ever be able to do that. You see, my country is no longer free. Japan says that Korea belongs to them. The Japanese have changed many things in my land. They have said that I cannot run in the Olympics unless I change my name. Change my name? My family's name is sacred. It was my grandfather's name. They have said that I cannot run in the Olympics unless I run for Japan, not Korea. How could I do that?

I want to honor my country. It is 1936, and the Summer Olympics will be held in Berlin, Germany. That country is far from Korea. I need to decide if I will change my name and say that I am running for Japan.

What shall I do? I will run because I know that I am a Korean no matter who says that I am not.

WORKSHEET #1

LOSING IMPORTANT THINGS

Name: _____ Date: _____

Directions: Please answer the following questions about the story that you read.

1. What is the title of your story?

2. Who is the story about?

3. What was the loss that the person experienced?

4. Why did the loss take place?

5. Did you realize that your story really happened to someone?

6. What was the year of your story?

7. List three important facts from your story.

8. How did the story make you feel?
