

Year of Impossible Goodbyes

LEARNING TARGETS

Compare life under Japanese occupation (1910-1945) with life prior to the occupation.

Understand the relationships in the traditional Korean family.

Identify major elements of Korean culture.

PREPARATION

One copy of Year of Impossible Goodbyes per student.

One copy of questions for Chapters One and Two per student.

Remove the Korean flag if it has been on display.

Hang a Japanese flag in its place if possible.

(Note: an audio tape of the story may be necessary for some students.)

GETTING STARTED

Ask the students to imagine how life would be different for them if another country took over the United States and imposed their ideas on them. This is what happened in Korea under the occupation. The Year of Impossible Goodbyes tells the story of one family through the eyes of a young girl.

DEVELOPING UNDERSTANDING

Explain that the author, (Choi Sook-nyul), was born in Pyongyang, North Korea. She was a teacher in New York City schools for almost twenty years while raising her two daughters. She lives in Massachusetts now and devotes her time to writing. The author lived through the difficult time of the Second World War in Korea. She explains, "So little is known about my homeland, its rich culture and its sad history. My love for my native country and for my adopted country prompted me to write this book to share some of my experiences and foster greater understanding."

ACTIVELY ENGAGING THE LEARNER

Distribute the books. Ask students to look through the book. Examine the map opposite page one. Note the date at the beginning of Chapter One. Comment about the connection to World War II in Europe. Distribute the list of questions for Chapters One and Two and read through them with the class. Read the first page of Chapter One aloud to the class. Ask them to read the rest of Chapter One and Chapter Two and answer the questions. Have each student keep individual word lists for vocabulary development with a minimum of three words per chapter. Ask that a definition or sentence indicating meaning be included for each word. (Teachers may wish to create a system that separates Korean and English vocabulary.) See directions for Korean Bingo below.

ASSESSMENT

Monitor progress in reading, vocabulary, and answering of the questions by a checklist, point system or pop quizzes as needed.

EXTENSION

Consider creating a vocabulary wall of cards with the words most commonly identified on the individual word lists. Enhance the vocabulary with illustrations when possible.

A KOREA Bingo game is fun and strengthens the knowledge of Korean terminology. When the list of Korean words from the story and from the expanding knowledge of Korea is sufficient, write words and definitions on index cards. Have students write the words on their grids in any order. The caller gives the definitions and students place markers over the correct terms. The game continues until someone calls “Korea” when markers cover in a vertical, horizontal or diagonal line. Students may suggest other patterns such as cover-all, four corners, or postage stamps (the four boxes in the upper right hand corner).

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