

THE KOREAN WAR AND MOCK UN REUNIFICATION DEBATE

GRADES: 9–12

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SUBJECT: U.S. History

TIME REQUIRED: Three to four class periods (on a 90-minute block schedule)

OBJECTIVES:

1. To understand the events that led up the Korean War.
2. To understand the events that transpired during the Korean War.
3. Be able to locate both North and South Korea on a map, along with relevant countries like China and the former USSR.
4. Understand what the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) is and where it is located.
5. Understand the current debate about whether North and South Korea can and should be reunified.
6. Apply personal knowledge to the reunification question by participating in a mock UN debate.

MATERIALS REQUIRED:

- PowerPoint slides on the Korean War era
- Copies of President Truman's press release on the U.S. entry into the Korean War
- Copies of blank maps of the Korean Peninsula
- Access to laptops or an internet ready computer lab
- A list of approved Web sites that students can use when preparing their position papers for the classroom debate.

BACKGROUND:

Students in U.S. history classrooms need to be able to see the contemporary relevance of historical events. The reunification debate over North and South Korea is a perfect example of a current topic with roots in the past. The best time to have students learn about the ongoing arguments for and against Korean unification is at the end of a unit on the Korean War.

PROCEDURE:

1. Introduce students to the Korean War through assigned textbook reading supported by a PowerPoint presentation.
2. Give students a blank map of the Korean Peninsula. Instruct them to locate North and South Korea, the capitals of each country, the 38th Parallel (the DMZ), China, the former USSR and Japan.
3. Form students into small groups of two to three and hand out a copy of Harry S. Truman's statement on why he was sending troops to defend South Korea. This document is available from the Harry S. Truman Library at http://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/study_collections/korea/large/week1/kw_27_1.

4. Have each group record the reasons Truman gives for entering the conflict. Share these reasons as a class. Discuss whether they are they sound reasons. Do they match the information given in the textbook?
5. Give the groups copies of pictures and items from the DMZ. These should include the visitor's pass, the questionnaire each visitor fills out, pictures of North and South Korean guards, etc. Have each group share their reactions to the materials with the class.
6. Assign each student the position of a UN ambassador in a mock UN debate. The countries the students represent should include the U.S., China, South Korea, Russia, Japan, Britain and France (the five permanent members of the Security Council). They should also include Belgium, Italy, Qatar, the Congo, Panama, Peru, Ghana, South Africa, Indonesia and Slovakia (the current rotating members of the Security Council). The rest of the countries given to students do not matter as long as the country is a UN member.
7. Using available school computer labs and laptops, have students research the current arguments for and against the reunification of Korea. This will include the economic, political and social ramifications of reunifying the two countries. Each student will prepare, as homework, a collection of articles he/she has read. Each student will also write a position paper on the pros and cons of reunification and what his or her personal opinion is. This will be used at a mock UN debate.
8. Set the classroom up like the UN, with desks arranged in a semi-circle. The teacher will act as the moderator. The five permanent Security Council members will each offer their positions on reunification. A classroom debate will then proceed with each student able to offer evidence and support for the pro and con arguments from their homework assignments. At the end of the debate, a vote will be taken by member countries of the Security Council on whether a recommendation for reunification should be adopted or not.

EVALUATION:

Evaluate students on their participation in the small groups. Also evaluate the articles they collected, the position papers they wrote for homework and their arguments in the mock U.N. debate.

RESOURCES:

<http://www.un.org/Docs/sc/>

<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/kn.html>

<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ks.html>

<http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/korea.html>

<http://www.globalsecurity.org>