

NORTH KOREA'S NUCLEAR POSSIBILITIES

GRADES: 6-12

AUTHOR: Heather Longstreth

SUBJECT: World History

TIME REQUIRED: One week

OBJECTIVES:

1. Locate North Korea on a world map and identify surrounding countries.
2. Explain how North Korea came to be and its current economic and political situation.
3. Identify when North Korea first began manufacturing nuclear weapons and what this implies for its neighbors as well as the United States.
4. Write an opinion essay regarding the North Korean nuclear weapons issue.

MATERIALS:

- Colored pencils
- Ruled paper
- Handout 1: What Do You Think? (all handouts attached)
- Handout 2: History of Nuclear Weapons
- Handout 3: The Korean War
- Handout 4: North and South Korea at Night
- Handout 5: North Korea Goes Nuclear
- Handout 6: New York Times Upfront Article
- Handout 7: Opinion Essay

PROCEDURE:

1. Post Handout 1: What Do You Think? questions on the board and have students discuss them in groups of three to four. Have one person be their record keeper and rotate turns sharing what their group thought about each question. Hold a class brainstorming session based on these thoughts.
2. Day 1: After opening activity, show a video clip that illustrates what atomic bombs are and how they have been used in the past, e.g., the three minute clip, "Atomic Bombs" from *Physical Science: Nuclear Energy* video on United Streaming. Read Handout 3: History of Nuclear Weapons, and discuss as appropriate. (Hint: Be sure to emphasize the damage that nuclear weapons cause and that they are not a subject to discuss lightly.)
3. Day 2: Pass out Handout 3: The Korean War and have students work in partners to read the worksheet and answer the questions at the top of the page on lined paper. On the back of the lined paper have them create a timeline detailing the items listed in the handout. Have student volunteers share their answers when everyone is done and discuss. Post Handout 4: North and South Korea at Night to emphasize economic conditions in North

Korea today. Provide statistics to compare and contrast economic and political situations in North and South Korea today. Students hand in finished timelines.

4. Day 3: Put Handout 5: North Korea Goes Nuclear on the overhead and read aloud. After reading the world reactions section, discuss what students believe the United States reaction was or should have been.
5. Day 4: Read Handout 6: New York Times Upfront Article as a class. Have students take notes on the Frequently Asked Questions section of Handout 5. Take an unofficial poll on what reaction they United States should have.
6. Day 5: Students complete assignment on Handout 7: Opinion Essay.
7. Students share their opinion essays in small groups and then volunteers share to whole class. Discuss as appropriate. Take a class poll as to which response they feel the U.S. should take on the North Korea nuclear issue. Revisit opening activity and see if students have changed their opinions.

EVALUATION:

- Korean Timeline
- Opinion Essay

RESOURCES:

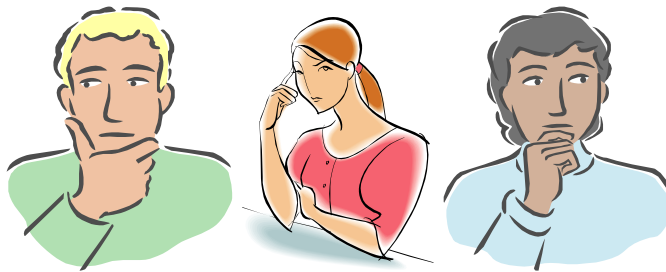
Freeman, Suzanne. "Nuclear Test: North Korea defies UN in testing bomb." October 9, 2006 article available at www.scholastic.com

Keenan, Charlie. "The World Reacts." *Scholastic.com*. 2003 article available at www.scholastic.com

Keenan, Charlie. "Korea Drops Weapons Treaty." January 10, 2003 article available at www.scholastic.com

<http://www.askasia.org/teachers/lessons/>

Handout 1: What Do You Think?



Directions: In small groups, discuss the following questions.

1. Does every nation have the right to possess nuclear weapons for self-defense?
2. Who should decide which countries may or may not have nuclear weapons?
3. Now that more countries have nuclear weapons, what new rules do we need to keep peace?
4. In countries where people have no political voice, (they are not allowed to take part in free elections to select their government leaders) is it fair to punish them for the action of their government?

HANDOUT 2: HISTORY OF NUCLEAR WEAPONS



1945: The United States drops atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, ending World War II. Within a few years, the Soviet Union announces its nuclear weapons program. (The scale of destruction and suffering is so shocking that no nuclear weapons have been used since.)

1940's-1950's: The U.S. and Soviet Union race to develop nuclear weapons, starting the Cold War.

1957: The United Nations (U.N.) create the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) to guide peaceful development of nuclear power. They conduct inspections, assuring proper use and development of nuclear materials and adherence to international treaties.

1968: U.N. adopts the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). Under the treaty, only the five declared nuclear states at the time (the United States, the Soviet Union, the United Kingdom, France, and China) are allowed to possess nuclear weapons. These five countries also agreed to freeze and eventually reduce the number of nuclear weapons in their arsenals. The other signers agreed to limit themselves to the peaceful application of nuclear technology. The philosophy behind the agreement is that the fewer countries that have the bomb, the less chance there will be for the weapon to fall into the wrong hands.

However, some disagree with a policy that allows a few countries to possess powerful nuclear weapons but not others. Many question the current effectiveness of the IAEA and NPT, pointing to ambiguities and inconsistencies in enforcement. Several countries that never signed the NPT agreement, including India, Pakistan, and Israel, are all countries with nuclear weapons now.

But why are so many eager to join the “nuclear club?” The pattern seems to be that if one country masters nuclear technology and announces that it has weapons, its neighbors and enemies will also immediately develop weapons, both for national defense as well as national pride. As more countries develop weapons, more share technology and resources, enabling yet further nuclear developments. Is it still possible today to use rules developed during the Cold War to keep the peace, when weapons of mass destruction are becoming more widespread?

Countries that have Nuclear Capabilities

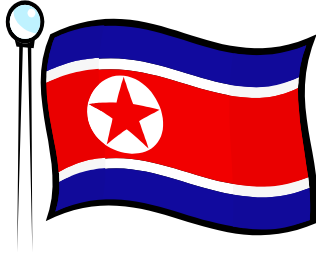
United States, Russia, Great Britain, France, China, India, Pakistan, N. Korea
(Israel has never confirmed it, but is widely believed to have them)

HANDOUT 3: THE KOREAN WAR

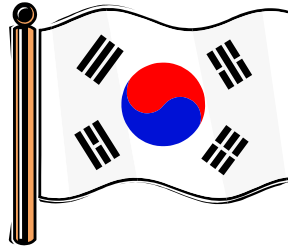
This reading will answer the following questions:

- Why is the Korean Peninsula split into North and South Korea?
- What is the U.S. relationship with North Korea and South Korea like today?

North Korea's Flag:



South Korea's Flag:



All of Korea was occupied by Japan from 1910 until 1945. At the end of World War II, the Soviet Army occupied the northern half of the country and installed a Communist regime, while Allied forces assumed control over what became South Korea.

The Korean War

In 1950, North Korea, backed by the Communist regimes of the Soviet Union and China, invaded the South. In response, the U.N. called up an international force to defend South Korea. About 90 percent of the troops and equipment came from the U.S. In 1953, the U.N. and North Korea signed an armistice which ended the fighting. However, North and South Korea have never signed a peace treaty, which is why American troops remain on the peninsula.

In the late 1980s, the Soviet Union and other Communist regimes collapsed, leaving North Korea as one of the world's few remaining Communist states. Its dictator, Kim Jong Il, known as "Dear Leader," took power when his father, Kim Il Sung (the "Great Leader"), died in 1994.

North Korea's economy began a catastrophic decline in the late 1980s, with the loss of its Soviet patron. Around the same time, a series of disastrous droughts and floods led to massive crop failures. The country has since relied heavily on international aid to feed itself. By some estimates, as many as 2 million people have died of starvation over the last decade, even as the regime spends a fortune to maintain its vast military and its nuclear program.

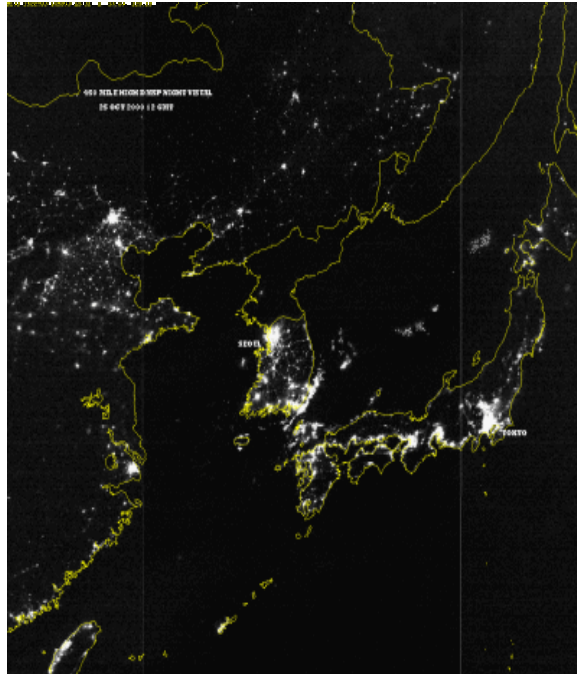
South Korea, by contrast, has transformed itself in the last 20 years into one of the world's most vibrant democracies, with an educated population and a booming high-tech economy. (Eighty percent of South Koreans have broadband Internet access at home, the highest rate in the world.)

Evidence of North Korea's economic collapse is everywhere. There are almost no cars on the road, even on the biggest highways. Because of power shortages, electricity is turned off in most of Pyongyang at night. The streets of the capital are lined with monuments to founder Kim Il Sung, who was revered almost like a god, and to Kim Jong Il.

"It's kind of like a medieval kingdom, with Kim Jong Il deciding just about everything," says Ralph Hassig, co-author of *North Korea Through the Looking Glass*. "If I had to sum up the whole country in one word, I think 'stifling' would be it."

HANDOUT 4: NORTH AND SOUTH KOREA AT NIGHT

North Korea's economic condition is evidenced in the pictures below...



The above nighttime satellite photo shows numerous city lights that typically give some indication of population density. It was taken on October of 2000 from a Defense Meteorological Satellite Program satellite at an altitude of approximately 450 miles.

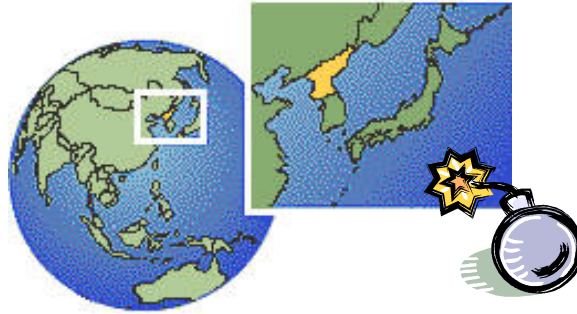
On the photo above, the huge city complexes are very obvious. In addition, it's hard not to notice that North Korea is nearly completely dark. Even though North Korea has an estimated 22 million people (about 45% of the population of South Korea), their presence is invisible on this photo. Very difficult political and economic times have dimmed the lights in this part of Asia.

(Interesting fact about right hand picture: The faint lights in the Sea of Japan are fishing vessels, which use bright lights to attract squid)

HANDOUT 5: NORTH KOREA GOES NUCLEAR

January 10, 2003: North Korea announces that they would no longer follow the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty.

October 9, 2006: North Korea explodes its first underground nuclear test in the mountains above the town of Kilju. Experts say it was a small nuclear blast, which might indicate that it was only partially successful.



World Reaction

“The North’s withdrawal from the treaty brought the situation on the Korean Peninsula from bad to worse by one step,” says South Korean President Kim Dae Jung.

“We are deeply concerned. We see this is a very serious matter.” Japanese Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi

“China feels concerned about North Korea’s announcement of its withdrawal from the Nuclear Nonproliferation Pact,” the Foreign Ministry says.

...The international community was shocked and worried. North Korea has enough plutonium- or nuclear fuel-left over from a nuclear power plant to make 5 or 6 weapons by summer time, some experts say. With a nuclear program running at full speed, North Korea could book up dozens of bombs a year...



Frequently Asked Questions...

Why would North Korea want to build these weapons?

- Some people believe that North Korea may simply want attention and money in exchange for joining the treaty again. After all, North Korea quit the treaty once before, in 1993. But, it reversed its decision after the U.S., Japan and South Korea agreed to supply the country with oil and build two nuclear reactors to generate electricity.

- Leader of North Korea thinks they need nuclear weapons as a deterrent against attacks by its larger, richer neighbors (South Korea, China, Japan, United States).

If North Korea makes the weapons, what will it do with them?

- It is unlikely North Korea would use them. But they could sell them to another nation or even a terrorist organization. North Korea is a very poor country, so selling weapons could raise a lot of money to pay for food and oil.

What potential threats does this create?

- North Korea has a habit of selling weapons systems to others. The U.S. and other members of the U.N. Security Council are concerned because North Korea has sold weapons and technology to Iran and Syria. These two Middle East countries are home to terrorist groups that have attacked the U.S. and Israel.
- Other countries might feel the need to speed up their development of nuclear weapons.
- Threatens stability of Korean Peninsula and Northeast Asia

How should the United States respond?

- Economics Sanctions: North Korea is already a poor and isolated country. After the 2006 testing the U.N. passed a resolution calling for economic sanctions to punish North Korea. “This action by the United Nations, which was swift and tough, says that we are united in our determination to see to it that the Korean Peninsula is nuclear weapons free,” said President Bush. This action was criticized for being weak and largely unenforceable.
- Threaten to use Military Force: When the U.S. suspected that Iraq was building nuclear weapons, they threatened them with military force. But, a conflict with North Korea could hurt their neighbor and American ally, South Korea. After all, South Korea’s capital, Seoul, lies only 32 miles from the North Korean Border. Also, 28,000 U.S. troops stationed in South Korea. Finally, If the North Korean government collapses, that could send millions of starving refugees into South Korea and China.)
- Peace Talks: Convince them to stop their nuclear program. How reliable is this?

HANDOUT 6: NEW YORK TIMES UPFRONT ARTICLE

North Korea goes nuclear: an authoritarian, unpredictable regime now has the bomb. What are the implications for the U.S. and the world?

New York Times Upfront Nov 13, 2006 by David E. Sanger

North Korea may be a starving, friendless, authoritarian nation of 23 million people, but it certainly got the world's attention last month when it exploded its first nuclear weapon.

What concerned the United States and the rest of the world was not just the entry of another nation into the nuclear club, but also North Korea's habit of selling whatever weapons systems it develops to anyone willing to pay for them. So while the obvious fear is that North Korea might use nuclear weapons against its neighbors or other nations, the larger worry in this era of terrorism is: Who else might end up with North Korean nuclear technology?

The underground test was conducted October 9 in the mountains above the town of Kilju. Experts say the explosion was small for a nuclear blast, which might indicate that it was only partially successful.

Five days after the test, the United Nations Security Council passed a resolution calling for economic sanctions to punish North Korea. "This action by the United Nations, which was swift and tough, says that we are united in our determination to see to it that the Korean Peninsula is nuclear-weapons free," said President Bush.

But the U.N. resolution was widely criticized for being too weak and largely unenforceable. (In fact, both South Korea and China have indicated they intend to maintain some economic ties with the North.) Meanwhile, the North Koreans announced that they considered the sanctions a "declaration of war," and there were indications that they intended to test a second nuclear device.

President Bush has said he will rely on diplomacy, not military force, to disarm North Korea. No one doubts that the U.S. could swiftly defeat North Korea. But the fear is that its 1-million-man army could easily destroy Seoul, South Korea's capital, only 35 miles from the North Korean border--and put the 28,000 U.S. troops stationed in South Korea at risk.

Tensions between North Korea and the U.S. go back more than 50 years. All of Korea had been occupied by Japan from 1910 until 1945. At the end of World War II, the Soviet Army occupied the northern half of the country and installed a Communist regime, while Allied forces assumed control over what became South Korea.

THE KOREAN WAR

In 1950, North Korea, backed by the Communist regimes of the Soviet Union and China, invaded the South. In response, the U.N. called up an international force to defend South Korea. About 90 percent of the troops and equipment came from the U.S. In 1953, the U.N. and North

Korea signed an armistice which ended the fighting. However, North and South Korea have never signed a peace treaty, which is why American troops remain on the peninsula.

In the late 1980s, the Soviet Union and other Communist regimes collapsed, leaving North Korea as one of the world's few remaining Communist states. Its dictator, Kim Jong Il, known as "Dear Leader," took power when his father, Kim Il Sung (the "Great Leader"), died in 1994.

North Korea's economy began a catastrophic decline in the late 1980s, with the loss of its Soviet patron. Around the same time, a series of disastrous droughts and floods led to massive crop failures. The country has since relied heavily on international aid to feed itself. By some estimates, as many as 2 million people have died of starvation over the last decade, even as the regime spends a fortune to maintain its vast military and its nuclear program.

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"It's kind of like a medieval kingdom, with Kim Jong Il deciding just about everything," says Ralph Hassig, co-author of *North Korea Through the Looking Glass*. "If I had to sum up the whole country in one word, I think 'stifling' would be it."

American spy satellites saw North Korea building a good-size nuclear reactor in the early 1980s, and by the early 1990s, the C.I.A. estimated that the country could have one or two nuclear weapons. But a series of diplomatic efforts to "freeze" the nuclear program--including a 1994 accord signed during the administration of President Bill Clinton--ultimately broke down. Three years ago, North Korea threw out the few remaining weapons inspectors living at its nuclear complex in Yongbyon.

THE OTHER CHALLENGE: IRAN

The North Korean crisis comes as the world tries to deal with Iran--another hostile, autocratic, and unpredictable regime--and its suspected nuclear-weapons program. The broader issue is concern over the growing number of nuclear powers: The more countries that have nuclear weapons, the bigger the risks for the world at large--especially when these weapons end up in the hands of nations that might sell them to terrorists.

The North Korean test puts the number of countries with nuclear weapons at nine. The other members of the nuclear club are the United States, Russia, Great Britain, France, China, India, Pakistan, and Israel, which has never acknowledged having nuclear weapons but is widely believed to have them.

The North's decision to set off a nuclear device could profoundly change the politics of Asia. The test occurred only a week after Japan installed a new, more nationalistic Prime Minister, Shinzo Abe. (Japan--which saw two of its cities incinerated by atom bombs in 1945--has a ban on possessing nuclear weapons.)

It's not yet clear what the impact will be on South Korean attempts to forge better relations with the North. China, which has been North Korea's main ally for 60 years, also condemned the test.

MILLIONS OF REFUGEES?

While none of the nations in the region want to see a nuclear-armed North Korea, they're also afraid of taking measures that would threaten the regime there. If the North Korean government collapses, that could send millions of starving refugees into South Korea and China, a prospect both nations fear.

Figuring out North Korea's intentions has always been difficult. But most experts say that Kim's first priority is the survival of his government, and that he may think that North Korea needs a nuclear weapon as a deterrent against attack by its larger, richer neighbors (South Korea, China, and Japan) as well as the United States.

"The nuclear test is a response to the threat that North Korea feels," says Bruce Cumings, a professor of history at the University of Chicago and an expert on North Korea. "It's entirely real. It's not a figment of their imagination. They were put in the axis of evil. We have nuclear weapons pointed at them."

Others wonder if North Korea is hoping to use this nuclear crisis for leverage in negotiations. "Every time they've played this crisis-escalation strategy with us before, it's worked," says Scott Snyder, a Korea expert with the Asia Foundation in Washington.

Three years ago, President Bush said the U.S. "will not tolerate nuclear weapons in North Korea." Now that North Korea appears to have those weapons, it's unclear what the U.S. can do, or is willing to do, about the situation. And what that means for the security of the Korean Peninsula, the U.S., and the world remains a big question mark.

NUCLEAR TIMELINE

1905

Part of Albert Einstein's theory of relativity, this formula says that mass can be converted into energy, and is the basis for the development of nuclear power and weapons.

1942

MANHATTAN PROJECT

During World War II, the U.S. begins a program to develop an atom bomb.

1945

WORLD WAR II

In August, the U.S. drops atom bombs on the Japanese cities of Hiroshima [above] and Nagasaki. More than 200,000 people, mostly civilians, die. Six days later, Japan surrenders.

1949

SOVIET UNION

The Soviet Union successfully tests an atom bomb, becoming the world's second nuclear power.

1962

CUBAN MISSILE CRISIS

A 13-day standoff between Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev and President John F. Kennedy (above) over Soviet missiles in Cuba brings the world close to nuclear war.

1981

NON-PROLIFERATION TREATY

Intended to limit nuclear weapons to those states that already possessed them--the U.S., the Soviet Union, France, the United Kingdom, and China.

1981

IRAQ

An Israeli airstrike destroys the Osirak nuclear reactor (above) in Iraq, to prevent Saddam Hussein from developing a nuclear capability.

1998

THE INDIAN SUBCONTINENT

Pakistan and India carry out nuclear tests.

2005

IRAN

Defying world pressure, Iran resumes its nuclear program. President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad (above) insists the work is for peaceful purposes but refuses to allow international inspections.

2006

NORTH KOREA

In October, North Korea tests a nuclear weapon.

LESSON PLAN 3

BACKGROUND

North Korea's test of a nuclear weapon signaled the entry of yet another nation (the 9th) into the nuclear club--this one ruled by an authoritarian, secretive regime that could try to sell its technology to other nations or even terrorists. The U.S. and the U.N. are struggling with how to respond.

DEBATE

- * Note that North Korea depends on aid from abroad to feed its starving people, while it spends heavily to maintain a 1-million-strong military and build nuclear weapons.

- * Split the class in two. Have students defend or oppose the addition of food aid on the list of U.N. sanctions against North Korea. Students should defend their positions.

CRITICAL THINKING

- * Study the timeline. Look at 1968 and the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. Ask why some nations might agree not to develop nuclear weapons while others would develop such weapons.

- * Factors could include the cost involved and the political calculations of the leaders. Ask: Is it fair for nuclear powers to ask other countries not to develop such weapons?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- * Do you think President Bush meant it literally when he said he "would not tolerate" a nuclear North Korea? Why would the President rely on diplomacy to disarm North Korea?

WRITING PROMPT

- * Write a five-paragraph letter to a North Korean student explaining why other countries are concerned about North Korea's test of a nuclear device.

FAST FACT

More than 33,600 Americans died during the fighting in the Korean War. This figure does not include more than 2,800 noncombat deaths.

WEB WATCH

www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB87 National Security Archive The National Security Archive is a 501(c)(3) non-profit research and archival institution located within The George Washington University in Washington, D.C.. Founded in 1985 by Scott Armstrong and Thomas Blanton, it archives and publishes declassified U.S.

..... Click the link for more information. declassified de·clas·si·fy

tr.v. de·clas·si·fied, de·clas·si·fy·ing, de·clas·si·fies

To remove official security classification from (a document).

de·clas document on North Korea and nuclear weapons.

QUIZ 2

1. The West has special concern about North Korea joining the nuclear club because

a it is more likely that North Korea will actually use nuclear weapons.

b of North Korea's habit of selling its weapons to anyone willing to pay for them.

c the Korean Peninsula is more susceptible to nuclear damage than other regions.

d Korea's plutonium--used to make nuclear weapons--is more dangerous than plutonium produced elsewhere.

2. When the United Nations passed a resolution calling for sanctions against North Korea, the North

a said this was a declaration of war.

b refused to attend further U.N. meetings.

c blamed the U.S., China, South Korea, and Japan for turning U.N. members against North Korea.

d published a long explanation of its need to develop nuclear weapons.

3. Briefly describe what some experts believe is North Korea's rationale for developing a nuclear weapon.

4. In the late 1980s, North Korea's economy began a catastrophic decline. Two factors were primarily responsible, a series of floods and droughts and

a decline in its manufacturing capacity.

b a boycott of North Korean goods by South Korea and other regional powers.

c the demise of the Soviet Union.

d the fact that South Korea's economy left its neighbor to the north far behind.

5. The North Korean nuclear-weapons crisis comes as the world tries to deal with--, another hostile, autocratic country suspected of developing nuclear weapons.

1. [b] of North Korea's habit of selling weapons to anyone willing to pay for them.

2. [a] said this was a declaration of war.

3. It believes it needs a nuclear weapon to stave off larger powers around it. (Similar wording is acceptable.)

4. [c] the demise of the Soviet Union.

5. Iran

IN-DEPTH QUESTIONS

1. If North Korea sells nuclear weapons to a terrorist group, would you regard that as an act of war by North Korea against the U.S.? Explain your position.

2. A recent New York Times article said that North Koreans with access to cash

can bribe their way out of the country, something once unthinkable. What might this say about future developments in the country?

David E. Sanger — born on July 5, 1960 in White Plains, New York — is White House correspondent for The New York Times. A 1982 graduate of Harvard College, Sanger has been writing for The New York Times is a Washington correspondent for The New York Times. Additional reporting by Howard W. French of The Times and Patricia Smith.

HANDOUT 7: OPINION ESSAY



Directions: Write a one page essay describing your opinion regarding the following issues. Use complete sentences and be sure to include examples to support your opinion.

Essay Topics

- ❖ Is North Korea having nuclear weapons a threat to world peace? Why or why not?
- ❖ What course of action do you think the U.S. should take in response to North Korea developing nuclear weapons?

Hint: Use the back side of this page as a brainstorming area. Gather facts and examples from your notes and worksheets that support your opinions and outline what you want to write. Do not write your essay on this paper.

Grading Rubric: (20 points Total)

- ✓ Takes a clear stance on each issue above (5 points)
- ✓ Uses facts and examples from notes and worksheets to support their opinion (10 points)
- ✓ Complete sentences and correct spelling/grammar (3 points)
- ✓ Neatly hand written or typed (2 points)

Length:

Single spaced = 1 page OR Double spaced = 2 pages (front and back)