

# **A LAND DIVIDED: EXPLORING THE REALITIES OF SEPARATION AND UNIFICATION ON THE KOREAN PENINSULA**

**GRADES:** 10

**AUTHOR:** Kevin Witte

**SUBJECT:** World History

**TIME REQUIRED:** 1-2 Class Periods

## **INTRODUCTION:**

This lesson will attempt to introduce students to the challenges and struggles that have taken place over the last sixty years as a result of the separation of North and South Korea. Many students hear and see stories about the Korean Peninsula in the media, but they fail to understand the complexity of the political, psychological, and strategic relationship between North and South Korea and the larger region. In order to more fully grasp these realities, students need to have a basic understanding of the history behind separation, the current geographical layout and purpose of the De-Militarized Zone, and explore divergent opinions about the impacts that unification or continued separation may have on the people of Korea.

## **OBJECTIVES:**

1. To investigate the impact of the Post WWII/Cold War Era on the Korean Peninsula and how the separation of Korea was carried out by major world powers.
2. To explore the geography of the border zone between North and South Korea through images and Google Earth.
3. To discuss the personal, psychological and social realities of what it might be like to live in a divided country immediately after division and fifty years later.
4. To explore the viewpoints of experts and scholars regarding the benefits and challenges of seeking unification between the two Koreas.
5. To formulate future road maps for Korea based on the understanding gained through other lesson activities.

## **MATERIALS:**

- Gerdes, Louise. *North and South Korea: Opposing Viewpoints*. Greenhaven Press/Thomson Gale, 2007.
- Lew, Young Ick. "Nation-Building and Modernization in a Divided Korea: From a Hot War to an Armed Truce," *Brief History of Korea: A Bird's-Eye View*. New York: The Korea Society, 2000, 26-29. Available for free download at [http://www.koreasociety.org/brief\\_history\\_of\\_korea/view\\_category.html](http://www.koreasociety.org/brief_history_of_korea/view_category.html)
- Stout, Mira. *One Thousand Chestnut Trees: A Novel of Korea*. New York: Riverhead Books, 1998.
- Computer able to access Google Earth and the internet
- Poster paper and markers.

## PROCEDURE:

1. Students will first be invited to brainstorm on the board the things they already know about North and South Korea. A number of dry-erase markers will be passed out and students will be invited to write what they know on the board and then pass the marker to another student. This brainstorming will continue for a few minutes in the hopes of involving as many students in the class as possible. At this point, we will discuss as a class the ideas written on the board with particular focus on any mention of separation or the Korean War.
2. After establishing this idea of division, students will be asked to identify other eras or situations in history where nations have been divided: Germany, America during the Civil War, issues in the Balkans, etc.
3. After identifying separation and unification throughout history, we will return to the Korean Peninsula and begin to look at the history behind this separation and prospects for change.
4. Students will read pages 26-29 of Young Ick Lew's *Bird's-Eye View* in order to supplement the background reading they have already done in their textbook on the Korean War.
5. Students will be asked: *How is this separation between the North and South maintained? Who defends this dividing line? What are the differences that have arisen over time between the North and South?*
6. Using Google Earth, students will tour the DMZ area, visiting points of interest such as the following:
  - a. Imjingak Park and the Bridge of Freedom
  - b. Dorasan Station
  - c. Dora Observatory
  - d. 3<sup>rd</sup> Tunnel
  - e. Camp Bonifas
  - f. Panmunjom, Military Armistice Commission Building, Bridge of No Return
  - g. Armistice House or Peace Museum
  - h. North Korean Flag and Kijŏng-dong Village
7. Students will then get into groups of four and discuss the following questions:
  - What immediate effects did this separation have on the Korean people?
  - How did it impact families?
  - What impact did the Korean War have on the relationship between Koreans in the North and South?
  - How might the events that transpired have impacted the way Koreans viewed the American, Chinese and Soviet decisions and policies?
8. Then students need to consider what impact this separation may have on Koreans today:

- How has the passage of time changed the motivations for unification?
  - What proof is there from the Google DMZ Tour that unification is very much hoped for?
  - Do you think there are generational differences in the views held by Koreans about unification? Why might this be?
  - What would be the positives of bringing the two nations together?
  - What would be the challenges of unification?
  - How have the two nations changed over the last 60 years?
  - How might those changes create difficulties in creating unification?
9. Students will stay in these same groups and be given articles from *North and South Korea: Opposing Viewpoints* that address issues of North-South relations and unification. They will read these articles and identify arguments for both sides of the issue. After identifying these arguments, students will give a brief presentation based on what they have read.

### **EVALUATION:**

Within these groups, students will prepare a road map for future relations. They need to look at the current situation facing North and South Korea, as well as their neighbors. They need to consider what the next 50 years could look like for the region. Keeping these issues in mind, they need to map out on poster paper the direction relations need to go in five-year intervals. At each five-year juncture, students need to identify the focus of those five years regarding relations and provide a rationale for why this is the most prudent course. Students need to keep in mind the challenges that may be faced politically, economically, ideologically, regarding issues of human development, etc. These road maps will be presented and evaluated upon completion.