

# A CHOICE FOR THE CHOSŎN KINGDOM

**GRADE LEVEL:** 10

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**SUBJECT:** World History

**TIME REQUIRED:** Three class periods

## **OBJECTIVES:**

1. Help students understand the political challenges Korea was facing at the beginning of the twentieth century
2. Establish a foundation of Korean history so students will be able to understand the Korean War and current issues on the Peninsula.

## **BACKGROUND:**

The purpose of this lesson is to help students understand the difficult position that Korea was in during the nineteenth century and at the beginning of the twentieth century China, Korea's traditional protector, had been beaten by European powers, the United States and even the Japanese. During the Sino-Japanese war, Japan proved it was no longer a passive recipient of Chinese culture, but a potential heir to China's traditional domination of the East Asia.

Korea had maintained an isolationist policy until 1876. All around it however, changes were taking place that Korea would not be able to ignore. The Korean monarch, King Kojong had to make a decision about what to do about the war between Russia and Japan. After completing background readings, students will become advisors to King Kojong, trying to convince him of a particular path. Students will already be familiar with imperialism, particularly the affect in China and Japan through their readings in Jackson Spielvogel's *World History: The Human Odyssey* (Chapter 24). Ultimately, King Kojong resisted reforms and Korea was colonized by Japan, ending the Chosŏn kingdom.

## **PROCEDURE:**

Part 1:

1. Homework: Students should come prepared for class by reading pages 19–27 from *Brief History of Korea* by Young Ick Lew ([http://www.koreasociety.org/component/option,com\\_docman/Itemid,35/task,cat\\_view/gid,123/](http://www.koreasociety.org/component/option,com_docman/Itemid,35/task,cat_view/gid,123/)) and “Causes of War,” parts one and two from the Web site [process.portsmouthpeacetreaty.org](http://process.portsmouthpeacetreaty.org). Students should study the maps and visual images from the Web site and answer the following questions:
  - How did the opening of Japan create a new balance of power in East Asia?
  - What interests did Russia have in East Asia?
  - What was the Triple Intervention and why was it a cause of conflict between Russia and Japan?
  - How did the Boxer Rebellion affect Korea?

2. Go over the homework questions and view the images from the Web site.
3. Ask discussion questions such as:
  - Following the map image: What economic and military interests did Russia have in East Asia? Did Japan have reason to fear Russian expansion?
  - Following the *Harper's Weekly* political cartoon "In A Tight Place": Who is in a tight place? Why?
4. Explain the project to students.
5. Break students into role-playing groups
  - Group A: King Kojong, Queen Min and other family members
  - Group B: "Eastern ways, Western Machines," advocating intervention by the U.S. and modernization of technology on Western lines, but keeping Confucian principals. Philip Jaisohn, Ch'oe Kyong-sok, Namgung Ok, Chong Kyo and others
  - Group C: Pro-Japanese group, advocating for an alliance with Japan and a Meji style reform. Kim Hong-jip, Yu Kil-Chun and other members of the Deliberative Council
  - Group D: Pro-Russia group advocating for an alliance with Russia. Yi Pom-jin and Yi Wan-yong
  - Group E: "Reject Heterodoxy" group, advocating no alliances with the West or Japan and encouraging Chinese resurgence. Members are Neo-Confucian literati, such as Yi Hang-no. Encourage China's resurgence.
6. If there is any time left, students should begin to understand their arguments. Their job is to convince King Kojong and Queen Min of their position.

Part 2:

### 1. January 1904: The Moment of Decision

War is imminent between Russia and Japan. An alliance between the English, United States and Japan has acknowledged Japan's special interest in Korea, while the Boxer Rebellion has allowed Russia to occupy a large section of Manchuria. Russia has also occupied a port in Yongamp'o in northern Korea. Negotiations have failed to find a diplomatic solution. King Kojong sees the coming storm and members of his court are advocating action, knowing that Korea will be a battlefield in any war between Russia and Japan.

### 2. Options:

1. Pursue Diplomacy: Based on previous agreements ask Theodore Roosevelt, president of the United States to intervene and establish five party talks between Korea, Japan, Russia, China and the United States. Korea would ask for demilitarization of the entire peninsula while allowing for free trade to all five nations.
2. Stay neutral: Declare your official neutrality in hopes that both countries will respect this and not engage in war on your territory. Build up your defenses.

3. Choose sides and go to war: Form an immediate alliance with either Russia or Japan giving them complete access to your country in order to stave off destruction.

### **3. Group A:**

Members of this group are in charge of providing a timeline of important events in the history of Korea from the Three Kingdoms period until 1904. The King and Queen will present this to the class at the beginning of the debate. The other members of the group (attendants to the King and Queen) are in charge of researching this history and making the timeline. The timeline should be able to be seen by the whole class on a poster board, overhead or computer.

### **4. Groups B-E:**

There are five roles for members of each group:

- Additional Researcher: Finds one good source that supports their case. During class they will go to the library.
- Speaker: Presents their case and refutes the other options.
- Debater: They will provide points / counter points after the formal presentations are over.
- Visual guru: They will choose a visual from the Web site [www.process.portsmouthpeacetrety.org](http://www.process.portsmouthpeacetrety.org) which they will use to support their team's case or refute another team's point. They will present this after the speaker presents his/her case.
- Scribe: They will write the argument in outline form for the group, making sure to include the logic and order of the team's reasoning.

Steps for Group Members:

1. Decide on roles.
2. Group should decide what points from the reading they will use to support their position
3. Speaker, debater and scribe should begin to write up the argument, while the visual guru looks for a visual to use and the researcher goes to the library to find one additional point to use in the debate.
4. After 35 minutes the group should convene and the visual guru should explain which visual they chose and why. The researcher should come back with information to help the group, which will be incorporated into the outline.
5. For homework, each member of the group will put the finishing touches on their portion of the presentation. Speakers should develop note cards, scribes should type up the outline, visual gurus should present the visual through an overhead, computer or poster. Researchers will put together a bibliography for the group using proper MLA style.

Part 3:

Members of each group will present their points, starting with the King/Queen. Then each group will formally present their options, with the King/Queen group allowed to ask

questions. Visuals will then be presented and the debaters can then provide additional points, ask questions of the other groups. The King/Queen group will decide on a course of action when they have heard enough (or when there are 20 minutes left in the block). They will announce their decision to the whole class. The teacher should then process the discussion and help students to understand why the decision was made by the King/Queen. At the end of the class the teacher should tell the students what actually happened. In this process, the teacher should hand out the copy of the Taft-Katsura Agreement (<http://www.geocities.com/mlovmo/temp25.html>) and discuss how Japan and the U.S. conspired to allow Japan to take over Korea.

Source Quotes:

Huang Tsun-hsien: Argued that the time for Korea's seclusion was over, and the time for internal strengthening had arrived. Korea needed to buy time. The United States, had always "upheld justice" and had never allowed the European power "to freely perpetrate their evil deeds." "Stay close to China, associate with Japan, ally with America."

Cummings, Bruce. *Korea's Place in the Sun*. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1998.

Commodore Shufeldt:

"China must look to the shores of America for a new Civilization and a more vigorous regeneration. This is the natural course of events, the true march of human progress, the irresistible flow of the human tide...The Pacific is the ocean bride of America—China & Japan & Corea—with their innumerable islands, hanging like necklaces about them, are the bridesmaids, California is the nuptial couch, the bridal chamber, where all the wealth of the Orient will be brought to celebrate the wedding."