

DIVIDING THE KOREAN PENINSULA

GRADE: 7 (easily modified for grades 8 through 12) **AUTHOR:** Bridgette Nadzam-Kasubick

TOPIC/THEME: Political Geography/Border Conflicts

TIME REQUIRED: Two to three 50-minute class periods

BACKGROUND

In this lesson, students will draw a physical map of Korea and will define and analyze several boundaries to create spheres of influence on the Korean peninsula. Given the completed physical map, students will think critically about historical events and their knowledge of border conflicts to assess the division of the two Koreas at the 38th parallel. At a minimum, students should already have a working knowledge of World War II and the Cold War Conflict to facilitate understanding of the Korean War and its effects on the Koreas and their neighbors. An initial conversation about border conflicts would be helpful, but is not necessary.

CURRICULUM CONNECTION

Thematic units on government, economics, and religion presented throughout the year expose students to cultural elements and political geography that prepares them for a culminating unit on border conflicts. This particular lesson introduces students to the complex political geography of East Asia and how a unified country can be divided into two spheres of influence based on political and economic agendas. Further, it sets the stage for an in-depth analysis of the North-South Korean border conflict and initial discussions on nuclear proliferation on the Korean peninsula.

CONNECTION TO STUDENTS' LIVES

My students have many questions about North Korea, given its enigmatic characteristics. They often share current events about nuclear proliferation and the North-South conflict, which act as a catalyst for in-depth dialogue. The intent of this lesson and the unit at large is to highlight the difference between natural borders and arbitrary borders and how either can lead to conflict and tension. This lesson will encourage students to think critically about the current relations between North and South Korea based on its geographical location.

OBJECTIVES AND STANDARDS

1. Students will be able to describe how physical features play a role in creating borders.
NCSS Standards: Theme III: People, Places, and Environments
OH Standard: Geography. For each of the societies studied, identify the location of significant physical and human characteristics on a map of the relevant region.
2. Students will be able to differentiate between types of boundaries.
NCSS Standards: Theme VI: Power, Authority, and Governance
3. Students will examine the Korean Peninsula to create several boundaries and will explain their rationale for such placement.
NCSS Standards: Theme III: People, Places, and Environments
OH Standard: Geography. Analyze the cultural, physical, economic and political characteristics that define regions and describe reasons that regions change over time.

4. Students will apply their knowledge of historical events, physical geography, and border conflicts to assess the division of the two Koreas at the 38th parallel.

NCSS Standards: Theme III: People, Places, and Environments

NCSS Standards: Theme II: Time, Continuity, and Change

NCSS Standards: Theme VI: Power, Authority, and Governance

OH Standard: Geography. On a map, identify places related to the historical events being studied and explain their significance.

OH Standard: Geography. Analyze the cultural, physical, economic and political characteristics that define regions and describe reasons that regions change over time.

Common Core Standards

RH 1 Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources

RH 2 Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source

RH 4 Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including vocabulary specific to domains related to history/social studies

SL 1 Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions

MATERIALS REQUIRED

- *How Boundaries Are Established, and Why Do Boundary Disputes Occur* (Handout 1)
- Boundaries and Boundary Dispute Chart (Handout 2)
- Blank Map of the Korean Peninsula (Handout 3)
- Atlas and/or copies of North and South Korea Physical Maps (Handouts 6 and 7; my students found it helpful to have several map sources, as many regarding the peninsula are limited)
- Colored pencils (one red)
- Ruler
- Directions for Mapping the Korean Peninsula (Handout 4)
- A Divided Peninsula Questions (Handout 5)

INTRODUCTION

Students will have been introduced to the concept of border conflicts and how borders are determined through an activity presented at the beginning of the unit. Please see **Addendum 1** for this lesson.

1. **Hook:** Consider the boundaries that divided the classroom at the beginning of this unit and the resources that were unavailable to you. What were some ways that you acquired these resources? Answers will vary.
2. Now imagine that you are in charge of dividing the Korean Peninsula into two spheres of influence. Where would you divide it and why? But before we answer this question, let's read *How Boundaries Are Formed, and Why Do Boundary Disputes Occur*.

PROCEDURE

THE DELIVERY OF THE CONTENT

1. Divide students into pairs and distribute *How Boundaries Are Formed* (Handout 1; one for each student). This can be done randomly or in pre-determined groups. Because of the level of difficulty of the hand-out, I encourage students to read with a partner so they can assist each other with challenging words or concepts. Modify appropriately for your students.
2. While reading Handout 1, partners will complete Boundaries and Boundary Disputes Chart (Handout 2; one for each student) to document the types of boundaries, boundary disputes and their definitions.
3. Discuss reading as a class and document important terms and concepts on board so students can check their notes that they recorded on the chart. Field questions.
4. In the discussion:
 - a. Define the following terms***
 - i. Boundary
 - ii. Define
 - iii. Delimit
 - iv. Demarcate
 - v. Administrate
 - vi. Geometric boundaries
 - vii. Physical-political boundaries
 - viii. Definitional
 - ix. Locational
 - x. Operational
 - xi. Allocational
 - b. Have students draw examples whenever possible and encourage students to make connections to previous lessons to bridge concepts. *** These terms are more advanced than what my seventh grade students are typically used to, so I would either design an exit slip for the end of the class or a pop quiz the next day to gauge their thinking; it all depends on the direction of the conversation. Revise and evaluate as you see fit. Depending on results, spend more time on these concepts or proceed to the next step.
5. Distribute Blank Map of Korean Peninsula (Handout 3) to each student and instruct the class to locate map of Asia in atlas. Also distribute color copies (you can make half the amount and let students share) of physical maps of North and South Korea (Handouts 6 and 7). Students will also need a regular pencil and colored pencils, including red. Students should work independently on this portion of the lesson to apply concepts from Handout 1.
6. Distribute Mapping Instructions for the Korean Peninsula (Handout 4) to each student and read the directions as a class. Allow 20 to 30 minutes for students to complete map independently. Students will show you the map when they are finished to receive A Divided Peninsula Questions (Handout 5). Examine map to check for students' understanding of objectives.
7. Students will complete Handout 5. Once finished, discuss questions as a class. Assess student understanding throughout discussion and look for discrepancies in responses.

THE APPLICATION OF THE CONTENT

1. This lesson will continue to provide the framework for a case study on the North-South Korean Conflict and to analyze other border disputes throughout the world. It will also encourage students to think critically about political and physical borders and the disputes that occur on either side of them.
2. As the class studies the Korean War and the division of Korea, students will be able to recognize geographic features that made fighting difficult for both sides and draw conclusions about who could have won the war based on geo-politics alone.
3. This lesson will provide a stepping stone to further lessons on the Cold War and how the rivalries of this era affected Korea.

ASSESSMENT

1. Exit slip to gauge student thinking on Handout 1 (depends on direction of class discussion); assess throughout discussion to determine if this is needed.
2. Circulate throughout class while students map the Korean Peninsula (Handout 3) to gauge their understanding of expectations. Check map prior to distributing questions.
3. Assess student understanding while discussing their responses to Handout 4 and look for discrepancies in responses.

RESOURCES

“Border Conflicts,” National Geographic Xpeditions, n.d.,

www.nationalgeographic.com/gaza/a004.html. (This link is no longer active)

“East Asia Map Blank,” *Maps of Net*, N.D., <http://mapsof.net/map/east-asia-map-blank>, August 2011.

“Physical Map of North Korea,” *Maps Of the World*, n.d., mapsoftheworld.com, August 2011.

“Physical Map of South Korea,” *Maps Of the World*, n.d., mapsoftheworld.com, August 2011.

Fouberg, E.H., Murphy, A.B., and de Blij, H.J. *Human Geography: People, Place, and Culture*. New Jersey: John Wiley & Sons, 2009.

N.E. *Nystrom World Atlas*. Indiana: Herf Jones, 2007.

HANDOUT 1: HOW ARE BOUNDARIES ESTABLISHED, AND WHY DO BOUNDARY DISPUTES OCCUR?

Fouberg, E.H., Murphy, A.B., and de Blij, H.J. *Human Geography: People, Place, and Culture*. New Jersey: John Wiley & Sons, 2009.

The territories of individual states are separated by international boundaries (borders). Boundaries may appear on maps as straight lines or may twist and turn to conform to the bends of rivers and the curves of hills and valleys. But a **boundary** is more than a line, far more than a fence or wall on the ground. A boundary between states is actually a vertical plane that cuts through the rocks below (called the subsoil) and the airspace above, dividing one state territory from another (Fig. 8.18). Only where the vertical plane intersects the Earth's surface (on land or at sea) does it form the line we see on a map.

Main boundaries were established on the world map before the extent or significance of subsoil resources was known. As a result, coal seams stretch over boundaries, and oil and gas reserves are split between states. Europe's coal reserves, for example, extend from Belgium underneath the Netherlands and on into the Ruhr area of Germany. Soon after mining began in the mid-nineteenth century; these three neighbors began to accuse each other of mining coal that did not lie directly below their own national territories. The underground surveys available at the time were too inaccurate to pinpoint the ownership of each coal seam.

During the 1950s—1960s, Germany and the Netherlands argued over a gas reserve that lies in the subsoil across their boundary. The Germans claimed that the Dutch were withdrawing so much natural gas that the gas was flowing from beneath German land to the Dutch side of the boundary. The Germans wanted compensation for their “lost” gas. A major issue between Iraq and Kuwait, which in part led to Iraq's invasion of Kuwait in 1990, was the oil in the Rumaylah reserve that lies underneath the desert and crosses the boundary between the two states. The Iraqis asserted that the Kuwaitis were drilling too many wells and draining the reserve too quickly; they also alleged that the Kuwaitis were drilling oblique boreholes to penetrate the vertical plane extending downward along the boundary. At the time the Iraq-Kuwait boundary was established, however, no one knew this giant oil reserve lay in the subsoil or that it would help create an international crisis (Fig. 8.19).

Above the ground, too, the interpretation of boundaries as vertical planes has serious implications. A state's “airspace” is defined by the atmosphere above its land area as marked by its boundaries, as well as by what lies beyond, at higher altitudes. But how high does the air space extend? Most states insist on controlling the airline traffic over their territories, but states do not yet control the paths of satellite orbits.

Establishing Boundaries

Establishing a boundary between two states typically involves four steps. First, states **define** the boundary through a treaty-like legal document in which actual points in the landscape or points of latitude and longitude are described. Next, cartographers **delimit** the boundary by drawing on a map. Third, if either or both of the states so desire, they can **demarcate** the boundary by using steel posts. Concrete pillars, fences, walls, or some other visible means to mark the boundary on the ground. By no means are all boundaries on the world map demarcated. Demarcating a lengthy boundary is expensive, and it is hardly worth the effort in high mountains, vast deserts, frigid polar lands, or other places with few permanent settlements. The final step is to

administrate the boundary—to determine how the boundary will be maintained and how goods and people will cross the boundary.

Types of Boundaries

When boundaries are drawn using grid systems such as latitude and longitude or township and range, political geographers refer to these boundaries as **geometric boundaries**. In North America, the United States and Canada used a single line of latitude west of the Great Lakes to define their boundary. During the Berlin Conference, colonial powers used arbitrary reference points and drew straight lines to establish the boundaries in much of Africa.

At different times, political geographers and other academics have advocated “natural” boundaries over geometric boundaries because they are visible on the landscape as physical geographic features. Physical-political (also called natural-political) boundaries are boundaries that follow an agreed-upon feature in the physical geographic landscape, such as the center point of a river or the crest of a mountain range. The Rio Grande is an important **physical-political boundary** between the United States and Mexico; an older boundary follows crest lines of the Pyrenees between Spain and France. Lakes sometimes serve as boundaries as well; for example, four of the five Great Lakes of North America (between the United States and Canada) and several of the Great Lakes of East Africa (between Congo and its eastern neighbors) serve as boundaries.

Physical features sometimes make convenient political boundaries, but topographic features are not static. Rivers change course, volcanoes erupt, and slowly, mountains erode. People perceive physical-political boundaries as more stable, but many states have entered territorial conflicts over physical-political boundaries (notably Chile and Argentina). Similarly, physical boundaries do not necessarily stop the flow of people or goods across boundaries, leading some states to reinforce physical boundaries with human-built obstacles (the United States on the Rio Grande). The stability of boundaries has more to do with local historical and geographical circumstances than with the character of the boundary itself.

Boundary Disputes

The boundary we see as a line on an atlas map is the product of a complex series of legal steps that begins with a written description of the boundary. Sometimes that legal description is old and imprecise. Sometimes it was dictated by a stronger power that is now less dominant, giving the weaker neighbor a reason to argue for change. At other times the geography of the borderland has actually changed; the river that marked the boundary may have changed course, or a portion of it has been cut off. Resources lying across a boundary can lead to conflict. In short, states often argue about their boundaries. These boundary disputes take four principal forms: definitional, locational, operational, and allocational.

Definitional boundary disputes focus on the legal language of the boundary agreement. For example, a boundary definition may stipulate that the median line of a river will mark the boundary. That would seem clear enough, but the water levels of rivers vary. If the valley is asymmetrical, the median line will move back and forth between low-water and high-water stages of the stream. This may involve hundreds of meters of movement—not very much, it would seem, but enough to cause serious argument, especially if there are resources in the river. The solution is to refine the definition to suit both parties.

Locational boundary disputes center on the delimitation and possibly the demarcation of the boundary. The definition is not in dispute, but its interpretation is. Sometimes the language of boundary treaties is vague enough to allow mapmakers to delimit the line in various ways. For example, when the colonial powers defined their empires in Africa and Asia, they specified their international boundaries rather carefully, but internal administrative boundaries often were not strictly defined. When those internal boundaries became the boundaries of independent states, there was plenty of room for argument. In a few instances, locational disputes arise because no definition of the boundary exists at all. An important case involves Saudi Arabia and Yemen, whose potentially oil rich boundary area is not covered by a treaty.

Operational boundary disputes involve neighbors who differ over the way their border should function. When two adjoining countries agree on how cross-border migration should be controlled, the border functions satisfactorily. However, if one state wants to limit migration while the other does not, a dispute may arise. Similarly, efforts to prevent smuggling across borders sometimes lead to operational disputes when one state's efforts are not matched (or are possibly even sabotaged) by its neighbor's. And in areas where nomadic life ways still prevail, the movement of people and their livestock across international borders can lead to conflict.

Allocational boundary disputes of the kind described earlier, involving the Netherlands and Germany over natural gas and Iraq and Kuwait over oil, are becoming more common as the search for resources intensifies. Today many such disputes involve international boundaries at sea. Oil reserves under the seafloor below coastal waters sometimes lie in areas where exact boundary delimitation may be difficult or subject to debate. Another growing area of allocational dispute has to do with water supplies: the Tigris, Nile, Colorado, and other rivers are subject to such disputes. When a river crosses an international boundary, the rights of the upstream and downstream users of the river often come into conflict.

HANDOUT 2: BOUNDARIES AND BOUNDARY DISPUTES CHART

BOUNDARY TYPE	DEFINITION	EXAMPLE
Geometric		
Physical-political		
TYPES OF BOUNDARY DISPUTES	DEFINITION	EXAMPLE
Definitional		
Locational		
Operational		
Allocational		

HANDOUT 3: MAP OF KOREAN PENINSULA



HANDOUT 4: MAPPING THE KOREAN PENINSULA DIRECTIONS

1. Draw the Yalu River that forms the border between Russia, China, and northern Korea.
2. Label the following countries on the blank map of the Korean Peninsula
 - China
 - Russia
 - Japan
3. Label Pyongyang and Seoul, the capitals of North and South Korea respectively.
4. Label the following physical features:
 - East Sea (Sea of Japan)
 - Yellow Sea
 - Korea Strait
 - Jeju Island
 - Taebaek Mountain Range
5. Draw in the Han and Kum Rivers.
6. With your straight edge, draw and label:
 - 40° North Latitude
 - 30° North Latitude
7. Choose a colored pencil (not red) to create your own geometric boundary to divide the peninsula into two spheres of influence. Be prepared to justify your rationale.
8. Choose another colored pencil (not red) to create your own physical-political boundary. Use the physical maps as a reference, but only mark on your map.
9. Create a key for the two types of boundaries in the upper left hand corner.

HANDOUT 5: A DIVIDED PENINSULA QUESTIONS

Name _____ Date _____ Class _____

DIRECTIONS Use the map of the Korean Peninsula and the definitions/reading on types of boundaries to answer the following questions. Question #4 has specific instructions, so please do not forget this step.

1. What did you consider when drawing the:
 - a. Geometric boundary?

 - b. Physical-political boundary?

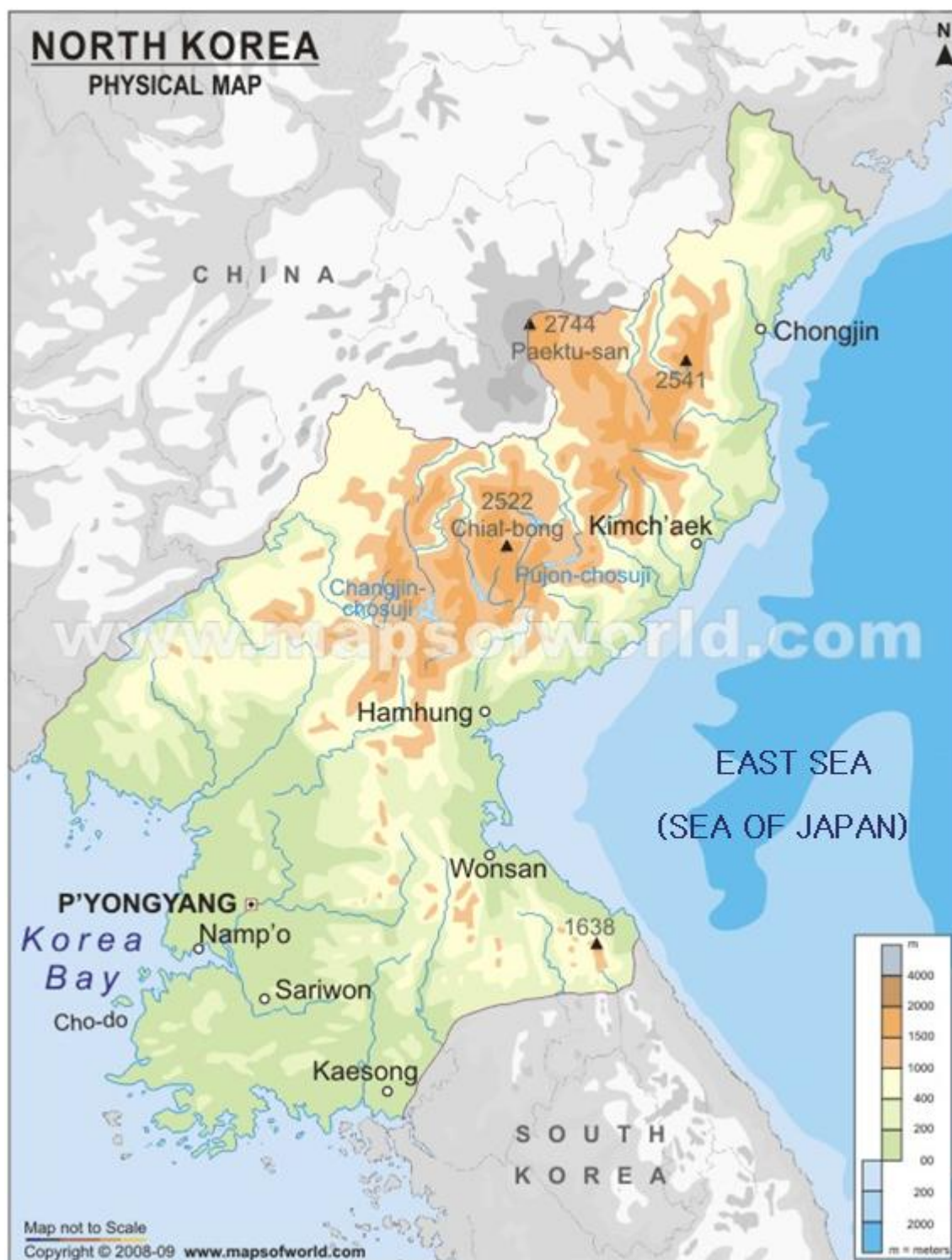
2. Which of the two types of borders seems best for dividing a country into two spheres of influence? Use the two physical maps to explain your answer.

3. Using your red pencil and a ruler, trace the 38th parallel through the Korean Peninsula. What is the most obvious result of this division? How close to this line of latitude did you draw your geometric boundary? Be specific by using degrees of latitude.

4. What are the implications of arbitrarily dividing Korea at the 38th parallel?

5. **Extension:** Presently, the Korean Peninsula is divided at the 38th parallel, a division that ended the Korean War in 1953. What type of boundary is this? Based on your knowledge of border conflicts, historical events, and the map of the Korean Peninsula, who do you think divided the country at this line of latitude? Why?

HANDOUT 6: NORTH KOREA PHYSICAL MAP



ADDENDUM 1: BORDER ACTIVITY

Adapted from www.nationalgeographic.com/gaza/a004.html

OBJECTIVES

Students will be able to:

1. Examine how regional boundaries are incorporated into everyday life;
2. Observe how boundaries are created or changed; and
3. Recognize the significance of borders.

MATERIALS

Masking tape

1 pen/pencil per group

1 piece of paper per group

PROCEDURE

1. Prior to students' arrival to class, use masking tape to divide classroom into several unequal areas or regions. Be sure to think about "resources" (or lack thereof) when demarcating each section.
2. When students arrive, divide them into unequal groups. I like to put a large number of students in a smaller region, and maybe two or three in a larger region to incorporate discussion of population later in the activity. Send them to their assigned region.
3. Once there, explain that the tape represents borders for regions and that they extend from floor to ceiling. They may not be crossed at any time. Students may speak with only their peers in their region. Allow 10-15 minutes for region mates to interact with each other.
4. While they are experiencing the new geography of the classroom, ask students to discuss and answer the following questions:
 - a. What resources do you have in your region? (Symbolism plays a large role in this question, e.g. a bottle of water could represent a water resource, while windows or an open door symbolize access to freedom. An outlet indicates electricity/power, while books, maps, or other school supplies equal education). Encourage students to think outside of the box.
 - b. What resources do you need?
 - c. How will you get those resources?
* Answers will vary depending on size of group and region.
5. Ask students to return to their seats and discuss their answers. When I use this activity with my seventh graders, many questions arise, so be prepared for a lengthy, intricate, and interesting discussions.
6. HW (or this could be the review for the next day): Think about the boundary activity from beginning to end. How did it make you feel? What were some of the problems that your group encountered? Benefits? If the possibility existed, how would you move boundaries? Could this activity apply to the bigger world? Explain.