

LESSON 3

Korea's Geography: How Do You Describe a Nation?

Korea's turbulent history is due in part to its geographic location at a crossroads of Asia, open to attack by land and sea. Its position in Asia has not only exposed it to ambitious conquerors but also has allowed it to serve as a cultural bridge between the Asian mainland and Japan. Korea is also a country of rugged natural beauty with a remarkable and unique culture. This lesson provides students with different ways of using geography to describe the Korean nation.

LINKAGE WITH CURRICULUM

- *Word Geography
- *East Asia Studies

MATERIALS

- *Handouts 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6
- *Statistics
- *Maps
- *Web Sites

Purpose of Lesson and Overview

The purpose of this lesson is to introduce students to varying ways of seeing Korea's position in the world. Korea may be seen as, "a shrimp among whales," as an, "economic tiger," and as a notable tourist destination. Geography is not necessarily a static science, but one that can present changing views of a nation. This look at Korea also helps correct some inaccurate stereotypes of this major Asian nation.

Content Focus

Korean geography may be considered in a variety of ways, but this lesson is primarily concerned with the resources, location, peoples, natural beauty, historic places and strategic value of Korea. Korea stands at a crossroads of Asia. It has been invaded both by land and by sea during its long history. Korea has survived and preserved its own unique history and culture. Although today two nations, calling themselves North Korea and South Korea, divide up the peninsula, both see the Korean people as a single unit and both hope for reunification.

The research students will do to answer the questions in the handouts will reveal Korea's geographic advantages and the resources that have attracted invaders. The protection of historical sites suggests the loyalty Koreans feel toward their past and how Korea's natural beauty has sustained its people in times of trouble. Students will discover that while Korea may be divided politically, its people are united by language and culture. The research on geographic issues will provide an understanding of the Korean War and Korea's location in Asia.

Objectives

After completion of the lesson, students should be able to:

- Explain why Korea is located at a major world crossroads
- Cite six major geographic factors which have shaped Korean history
- Evaluate the advantages and disadvantages of Korea's geography
- Choose one geographic feature of Korea of interest

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MATERIALS

Materials for the lesson include the maps and handouts supplied with the lesson. Students should prepare group assignments with either library or Internet research.

WORLD WIDE WEB

- <http://www.fas.harvard.edu/korea>
- <http://www.koreaherald.co.kr>
- <http://www.koreatimes.co.kr>
- <http://www.odci.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/ks.html>
- <http://www.odci.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/kn.html>

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The Lesson: Korea's Geography

OPENING 1. Have students compare maps of showing Korea in different contexts. The lesson should begin with the teacher showing (1) a large map of Korea, (2) a world map with Korea on it and (3) a map of Asia alone. Help students see that on a world map Korea, like Great Britain, may seem small, but on a map of Asia its location as a crossroads country is easier to see.

READING 2. Divide the class into six groups and assign each with a specific perspective all dealing with the central topic, "How do you describe a nation?" After each group has looked over its assigned handout, have them conduct their own research on Korea.

Six Perspectives on Korea (see handouts for each):

- 1: Resources
- 2: Location
- 3: People
- 4: Natural Beauty
- 5: Historic Sites
- 6: Strategic Value

INVESTIGATIONS 3. Ask each group to give three major points based on its analysis of Korean geography.

ASSESSMENT 4. As a final activity, have students write a two-sentence lead to a short essay on Korea and its geography.

5. To summarize, have the class discuss such questions as:
- a) Is a crossroads location an asset or a danger?
 - b) Are other people enticed to a country by historical sights, natural beauty or economic considerations?
 - c) Do resources determine a country's power or is it the energy of its people?
 - d) What parts of Korea are likely to change? What will stay the same?

ADDITIONAL ACTIVITIES 6. Materials on the geography of Korea can be found in many books and Web sources. The teacher may expand the lesson to include additional topics. Students may wish to develop their own information center on Korea with suggestions for travel or developing economic resources.

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Handout I Resources

Group Assignment

Your group's task is to describe Korea's significant natural resources. Review your textbook, the Internet, travel guides and other resources on Korea. The resources of a nation can be viewed in various ways. Here are a few points to start your search, but develop and examine some questions of your own.

- 1) Does Korea have good agricultural land in both North Korea and South Korea? Is the climate likely to help agriculture for home use? For export?
- 2) What mineral resources does Korea have? Are they easy to get at?
- 3) Does Korea have adequate forests? Is deforestation an issue? Explain
- 4) Does Korea have enough water for its population? How can water be used for navigation? Hydroelectric power?
- 5) What resources do the seas around Korea provide?
- 6) How would you evaluate the geographic resource of Korea? Does Korea have adequate resources for survival? Does it need outside resources to survive? Explain.

Map Exercise

- 1) Create a map showing the natural resources of Korea.
- 2) Analyze your map by answering the following questions: What are Korea's greatest natural resources? How do these resources help Korea's economy? What are the differences in North Korea and South Korea natural resources, if any?

Summary

List three key points to make to the class about Korea's resources based on your research.

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Handout 2 Location

Group Assignment

Your group's task is to evaluate how Korea's location has affected its history and status. Look at a map of the world and Korea's position in it. Which description of Korea below do you think is most accurate? You will need to do more research on Korea and its relationship with its neighbors in the past and present to understand these descriptions. Choose the description your group finds most appropriate and explain your choice to the class by citing at least three supporting points.

Descriptions of Korea

- 1) Korea is a, "shrimp among whales." (The whales are China, Russia and Japan.)
- 2) Korea is a land bridge, a crossroads connection China, Japan and Russia.
- 3) Korea is the heart of the East.
- 4) Korea is a, "torturous valley for invaders, with mountains making no easy highway."
- 5) Korea is so mountainous that "it resembles a sea in a heavy gale [storm] surrounded by more seas."
- 6) Korea is a land with natural trading partners, not the end of the line.

Map Exercise

- 1) Identify the absolute and relative location of Korea.
- 2) Create a map depicting the terrain or physical features of Korea and its neighbors. Label major oceans, seas, rivers and mountains. Analyze your map by answering the following questions: How is the terrain relevant to the quotations your group chose? What features dominate the Korean terrain? How has Korea's location and terrain influenced its history?

Summary

Which quotation did your group think best suited Korea? List three reasons for your choice.

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Handout 3 People

Group Assignment

Your group's task is to research and provide an overview of the Korean people. You will need to consult population tables and descriptions of Koreans to answer the questions below. After you have answered the questions, select three key points about the Korean people to present to the class.

- 1) How would you describe the population of Korea in terms of (a) urban-rural distribution; (b) growth rate; (c) gender divisions; (d) age divisions?
- 2) What are the minority groups, if any, live in Korea?
- 3) Do Koreans stay in Korea or emigrate to other countries? If so, where have they emigrated? Why?
- 4) Has Korea's population grown steadily over the past 60 years, or have there been sharp ups and downs? What other patterns of change, if any, do you see in Korea's population?
- 5) Do Koreans speak and write the same language? Are there dialects which make a difference?
- 6) What are Korea's major religions? How do they compare in terms of numbers of believers?
- 7) What might be some potential difficulties based only on population in reuniting the two Koreas?
- 8) Does the wealth and education of South Koreans seem fairly evenly distributed? Explain.

Map Exercise

- 1) Create a map of Korea's population distribution. Analyze your map by answering the following questions: What is the highest concentration of people? Why do you think people live in these areas?
- 2) Create population pyramids for North Korea and South Korea. Analyze your pyramids by answering the following questions: Are there any indents or bulges in the pyramids? What events (wars, famines, economic growth) may have caused these? Given the current famine in North Korea, how might its population pyramid look in the future? What similarities and differences occur between North Korea's and South Korea's population pyramids? Why did this occur?

Summary

What three points seem most significant about the people of Korea?

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Handout 4

Natural Beauty

Group Assignment

Your group's task is to create a tourist brochure to highlight Korea's natural beauty. Among a nation's geographic assets is its natural beauty that inspires its citizens and attracts tourists. Use the Internet and books to choose the natural features that you want to highlight to tourists.

Places to consider for your brochure:

- 1) Diamond Mountains
- 2) DMZ nature preserves
- 3) Chejudo (do means island)
- 4) Kyongpo and Hwajinpo lagoons
- 5) Soraksan (san means mountain)
- 6) Han River

Are there places you might warn tourists to avoid? If so, where and why?

Map Exercise

- 1) In your brochure, create a map or maps showing the location of areas of great natural beauty. Show various transportation routes (roads, railroads) to these sites.
- 2) Analyze your map(s) by answering the following questions: What makes these sites special? What would happen if a dam or highway was placed near these sites?

Summary

Show the class at least three pictures you have chosen for your brochure? How might these pictures help attract tourists to Korea?

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Handout 5 Historic Sites

Group Assignment

Your group's task is to select three historic sites to show a U.S. historical preservation society that is visiting Korea. The United Nations has already designated five sites for its World Heritage Cultural Treasures to be preserved (see Lesson 1). Choose sites not on that list. For each selected site, write a brief description and explain why your visitors should see it.

Some possible sites

- 1) Temples: Chogyesa, Pulguksa, Haeinsa, Songkwangsa
- 2) Palaces: Kyongbokkung, Changkyongkung
- 3) Gates: Independence Gate, East Gate, South Gate
- 4) Tombs: General Kim Yusin's tomb in Kyongju, Dongkunjung in Seoul
- 5) Korean War Sites: Inchon Landing site, War Memorial in Seoul, Demilitarized Zone
- 6) Folk Villages: Korean Folk Village in Yongin, Hahoe Village near Andong, Nakan Upsong Folk Village near Suncheon
- 7) National Pride: Hyonchungsa in Onyang, Independence Memorial Hall of Korea in Chonan
- 8) Crafts: Korean Folk Craft Museum in Seoul, Ichon Kilns Village in Ichon

Map Exercise

- 1) Create a map showing the location of the three sites your group has chosen.
- 2) Draw on your map what transportation you would take to get to these locations.
- 3) Create an itinerary to visit these locations considering distance and time.
- 4) Explain what historical preservation is and why it is important.

Summary

Describe each of the three sites your group chose. Explain why you selected it, including its historical significance.

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Handout 6 Strategic Value

Group Assignment

Your group's task is to evaluate the strategic advantages and disadvantages of Korea's geography. John Keegan, a British historian, noted that most of the world's major battles have taken place within 15 miles of the sea. Korea is a peninsula with water on three sides. The seas have both protected Korea and served as invasion routes. Consider the following questions and research Korean military history to support your arguments:

- 1) Although Korea is surrounded on three sides by water, is the country vulnerable to sea attack? (i. e. how are the tides, depth of water, ports for enemy attacks or for maintaining a Korean fleet?)
- 2) How easy would it be to fight on the terrain? Is it flat and likely for tank combat or are there obstacles to mechanized warfare? How would air power be used?
- 3) Which countries might consider expanding into the Korean peninsula?
- 4) Would the Korean river system have to be considered in planning or are the rivers so small or shallow they would easily be crossed and not provide much defense?
- 5) How much would climate be a consideration? In many areas, the "war season" lasts from April to October. Would this be true in Korea?
- 6) Besides the capital of Seoul, which two cities would you see as having the greatest strategic value? Why? (ports, on rivers, mountain pass?)
- 7) Korea is currently divided. What difference might it make to the balance of power in Asia if it were re-united?

Map Exercise

- 1) Create a map showing the physical landscape of Korea. Label the major oceans, seas, rivers and mountains.
- 2) Overlap the climate of Korea on the physical landscape map. Make a climograph of North and South Korea.
- 3) On your map, place Xs in vulnerable spots and *s in strong spots in North and South Korea. Be sure to consider the DMZ between North and South Korea.
- 4) Analyze your climograph and map by answering the following questions in a paragraph: What makes vulnerable and strong locations? How are they related to the physical geography and climate of Korea? How would the climate inhibit warfare? When would fighting occur more frequently? Why? If time permits, research the warfare strategies of the Korean War. What style of warfare was used? What were barriers?

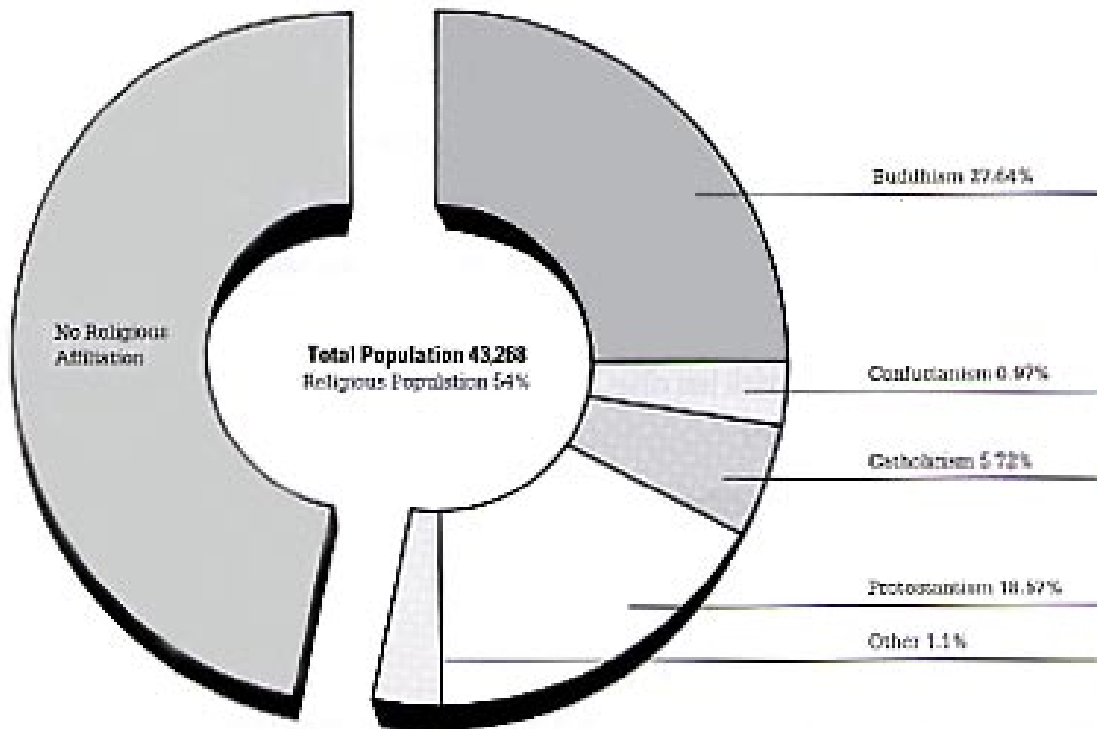
Summary

Describe at least three strategic advantages or disadvantages of Korea's geography. Would you say Korea's geographic advantages outweigh its disadvantages? Why or why not?

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Religions of South Korea (Based on 1991 Data)

(Unit: thousand persons)



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Population Trends in Korea

(Unit: thousand persons)

	Population of South Korea	Population of North Korea
1936	21,374
1940	24,326
1944	25,900	9,710
1949	20,189	9,032
1955	21,527	10,600
1960	25,012	12,100
1965	28,705	12,100
1970	31,466	13,510
1975	34,707	15,450
1980	37,436	17,580
1985	40,448	19,900
1990	42,869	19,900
1995	45,093	15,450
1998	46,430

(Source: National Statistical Office. *Monthly Statistics of Korea*. 1990 & 1998 June)

Population By Area in South Korea

(Unit: thousand persons)

	Total Population
Whole Country	44,609
Seoul Metropolitan City	10,231
Pusan Metropolitan City	3,814
Taegu Metropolitan City	2,449
Inchon Metropolitan City	2,308
Kwangju Metropolitan City	1,258
Taejon Metropolitan City	1,272
Kyonggi Province	7,650
Kangwon Province	1,446
Chungchongbuk Province	1,397
Chungchongnam Province	1,767
Chollabuk Province	1,902
Chollanam Province	2,067
Kyungsangbuk Province	2,676
Kyungsangnam Province	3,846
Cheju Province	505

(Source: National Statistical Office. *Monthly Statistics of Korea*. 1998 June)

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Population By Age And Gender In South Korea

(Unit: thousand %)

	Total	0 - 9	10 - 19	20 - 29	30 - 39	40 - 49	50 - 59	60 - 69	70 - 79	80 -
1949	20,166 (100%)	5,877 (28.1)	4,536 (29.1)	1,672 (22.5)	2,407 (15.9)	1,721 (12.0)	1,297 (8.5)	1,075 (6.5)	...	35 (0.2)
Male	10,188 (100%)	2,991 (29.4)	2,311 (22.7)	1,622 (15.9)	1,241 (12.1)	881 (8.6)	634 (6.2)	485 (4.7)	...	16 (0.2)
Female	9,978 (100%)	2,888 (28.9)	2,225 (22.4)	1,589 (16.0)	1,165 (11.6)	839 (8.4)	662 (6.6)	...	590 (5.9)	18 (0.2)
1955	21,502 (100%)	6,234 (29.0)	5,015 (23.3)	3,193 (14.9)	2,557 (11.9)	2,001 (9.3)	1,293 (6.1)	839 (3.9)	298 (1.4)	55 (0.3)
Male	10,752 (100%)	3,237 (30.1)	2,627 (24.5)	1,443 (13.4)	1,264 (11.7)	1,026 (9.5)	632 (5.8)	373 (3.5)	123 (1.2)	20 (0.2)
Female	10,749 (100%)	3,004 (28.0)	2,378 (22.2)	1,749 (16.3)	1,293 (12.0)	974 (9.1)	661 (6.2)	466 (4.3)	173 (1.6)	34 (0.3)
1960	24,989 (100%)	7,897 (31.6)	5,201 (20.8)	4,014 (16.0)	2,898 (11.6)	2,149 (8.6)	1,464 (5.8)	912 (3.6)	445 (1.8)	...
Male	12,543 (100%)	4,073 (32.5)	2,719 (21.7)	1,979 (15.8)	1,390 (11.1)	1,083 (8.6)	716 (5.7)	400 (2.2)	176.4 (1.8)	...
Female	12,445 (100%)	3,823 (30.7)	2,482 (19.9)	2,034 (16.3)	1,507 (12.1)	1,066 (8.6)	747 (6.0)	512 (4.2)	269 (2.2)	...
1966	29,159 (100%)	9,092 (21.2)	6,298 (21.6)	4,452 (15.6)	3,511 (12.0)	2,462 (8.4)	1,735 (5.9)	987 (3.4)	438 (1.5)	84 (0.3)
Male	14,684 (100%)	4,709 (32.1)	3,256 (22.1)	2,319 (15.8)	1,709 (11.6)	1,218 (8.3)	841 (5.8)	430 (2.9)	166 (1.1)	28 (0.2)
Female	29,159 (100%)	9,092 (21.2)	6,298 (21.6)	4,452 (15.6)	3,511 (12.0)	2,462 (8.4)	1,735 (5.9)	987 (3.4)	438 (1.5)	84 (0.3)
1970	31,435 (100%)	8,847 (28.1)	7,481 (23.8)	4,727 (15.0)	4,407 (12.9)	2,745 (8.8)	1,879 (6.0)	1,099 (3.5)	490 (1.8)	113 (0.4)
Male	15,779 (100%)	4,577 (29.0)	3,847 (24.4)	2,314 (15.2)	2,023 (12.8)	1,319 (8.4)	913 (5.8)	543 (3.0)	180 (1.2)	34 (0.2)
Female	15,655 (100%)	4,269 (27.2)	3,633 (23.2)	2,331 (14.9)	2,023 (12.9)	1,425 (9.1)	964 (6.2)	615 (3.9)	308 (1.9)	78 (0.5)
1975	34,678 (100%)	8,680 (25.0)	8,680 (25.1)	5,630 (16.2)	4,313 (12.7)	3,198 (9.2)	2,136 (6.2)	1,279 (3.7)	529 (1.5)	134 (0.4)
Male	17,445 (100%)	4,491 (25.8)	4,472 (25.7)	2,882 (16.5)	2,242 (12.9)	1,534 (8.8)	1,025 (5.9)	563 (3.2)	191 (1.1)	37 (0.2)
Female	17,233 (100%)	4,188 (24.3)	4,194 (24.3)	2,746 (16.0)	2,169 (12.6)	1,662 (9.6)	1,109 (6.4)	716 (4.1)	337 (2.0)	97 (0.6)

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	Total	0 - 9	10 - 19	20 - 29	30 - 39	40 - 49	50 - 59	60 - 69	70 - 79	80 -
1980	37,406 (100%)	8,214 (21.9)	8,679 (23.2)	7,135 (19.0)	4,742 (12.6)	3,912 (10.5)	2,450 (6.5)	1,442 (3.9)	654 (1.7)	171 (0.5)
Male	18,749 (100%)	4,245 (22.7)	4,479 (23.9)	3,607 (19.2)	2,420 (12.9)	1,948 (10.4)	1,130 (6.0)	633 (3.4)	235 (1.3)	42 (0.2)
Female	18,657 (100%)	3,968 (21.3)	4,198 (22.5)	3,526 (18.9)	2,321 (12.5)	1,964 (10.5)	1,319 (7.0)	807 (4.3)	418 (2.2)	128 (0.2)
1985	40,419 (100%)	7,618 (18.9)	8,791 (21.8)	8,315 (20.6)	5,696 (14.1)	4,276 (10.6)	2,962 (7.3)	1,728 (4.3)	813 (2.0)	213 (0.5)
Male	20,227 (100%)	3,947 (19.5)	4,537 (22.4)	4,212 (20.8)	2,913 (14.4)	2,150 (10.7)	1,369 (6.8)	746 (3.7)	293 (1.4)	51 (0.3)
Female	20,192 (100%)	3,669 (18.2)	4,253 (21.0)	4,102 (20.3)	2,781 (13.8)	2,124 (10.5)	1,592 (7.9)	982 (4.9)	518 (2.5)	162 (0.8)
1990	42,869 (100%)	7,046 (16.4)	8,369 (19.5)	8,669 (20.2)	7,177 (16.7)	4,645 (10.8)	3,612 (8.4)	2,058 (4.8)	992 (2.3)	302 (0.7)
Male	21,568 (100%)	3,678 (17.1)	4,318 (20.0)	4,461 (20.7)	3,687 (17.0)	2,369 (11.0)	1,740 (8.1)	868 (4.0)	366 (1.7)	80 (0.4)
Female	21,301 (100%)	3,368 (15.8)	4,051 (19.0)	4,209 (19.8)	3,491 (16.4)	2,275 (10.7)	1,870 (8.8)	1,189 (5.6)	626 (2.9)	223 (1.0)
1995	45,093 (100%)	6,713 (14.9)	7,721 (17.1)	8,693 (19.3)	8,389 (18.6)	5,414 (12.0)	4,019 (8.9)	2,537 (5.6)	1,226 (2.7)	382 (0.9)
Male	22,705 (100%)	3,558 (14.1)	3,989 (17.6)	4,470 (19.7)	4,301 (18.9)	2,754 (12.1)	1,977 (8.7)	1,096 (4.8)	460 (2.0)	102 (0.4)
Female	22,388 (100%)	3,154 (14.1)	3,733 (16.7)	4,223 (18.9)	4,088 (18.3)	2,661 (11.9)	2,041 (6.0)	1,441 (6.4)	767 (3.4)	281 (1.2)

(Source: National Statistical Office. *Monthly Statistics of Korea*. 1990 & 1998 June)

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Trends In Household Size

	Whole Country	Urban Area	Rural Area
1925	5.2	4.5	5.3
1930	5.3	4.7	5.3
1935	5.3	4.8	5.3
1940	5.3	5.1	5.3
1944	5.3	4.9	5.3
1955	5.5	-	-
1960	5.6	5.4	5.6
1966	5.5	5.1	5.7
1970	5.3	5.0	5.5
1975	5.0	4.8	5.3
1980	4.5	4.4	4.7
1985	4.1	4.0	4.2
1990	3.8	3.8	3.8
1995	3.3	3.4	3.1

(Source: National Statistical Office. *Population Census, 1925-1995*)

Trends In Household Composition

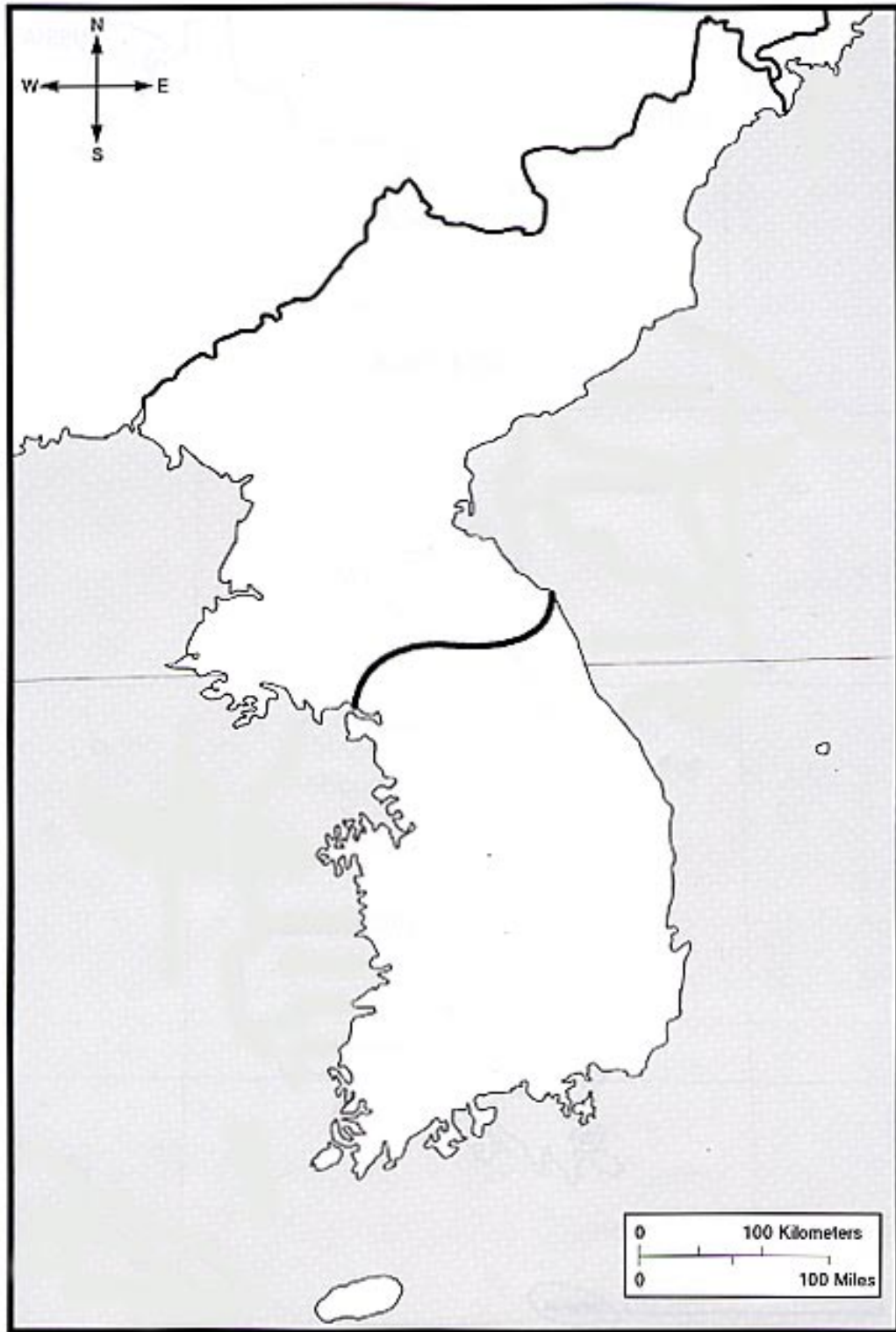
(Unit: %)

	1966	1975	1985	1995
Nuclear family	65.2	67.7	70.0	69.5
Extended family	31.4	26.2	20.5	15.9
Single-person	2.3	4.2	7.0	12.9
Others	1.1	1.9	2.5	1.7
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

(Source: National Statistical Office. *Population Census, 1966-1995*)

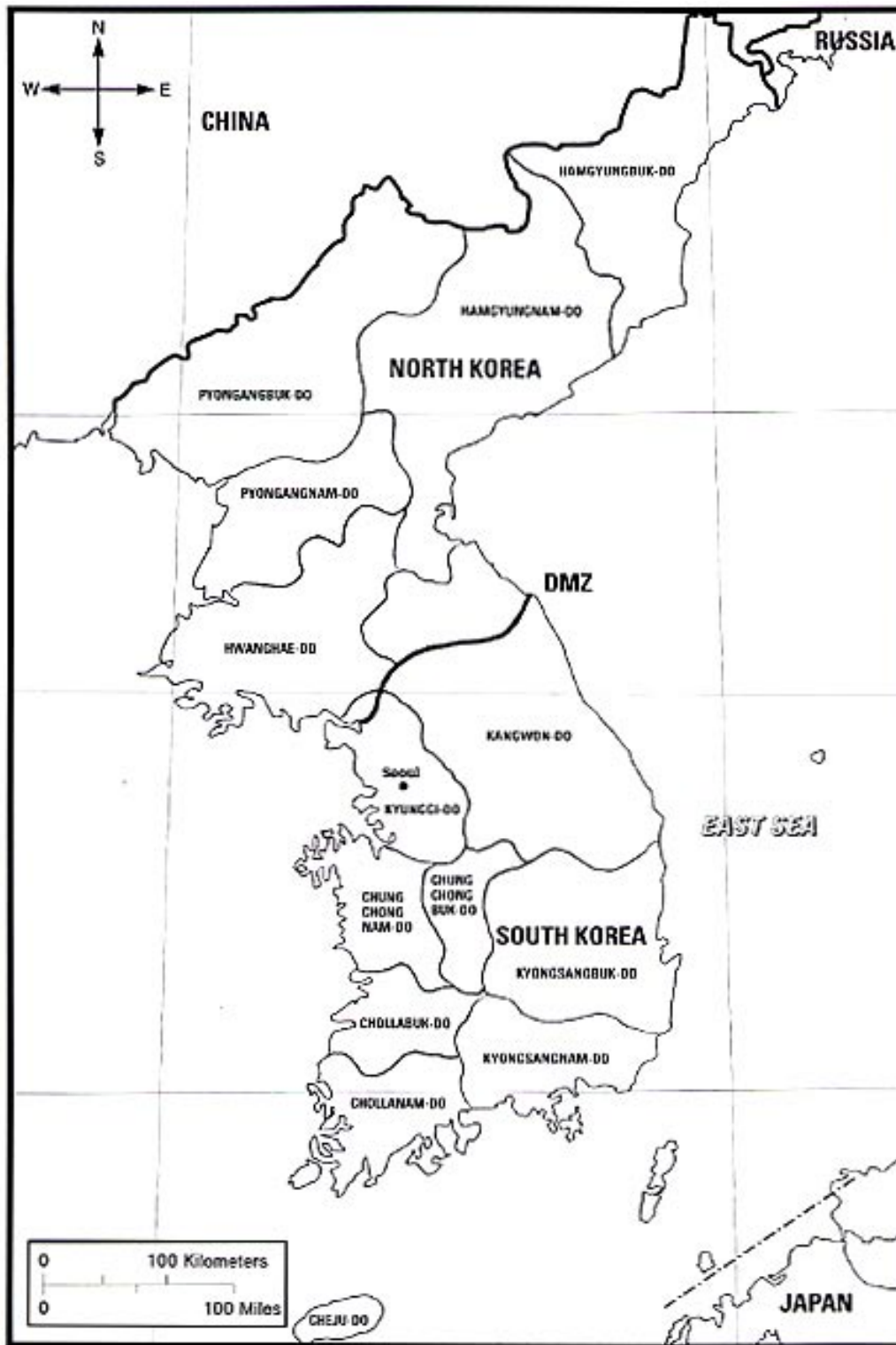
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Korea Today



LESSON 3

Map Of Korea With Provinces



LESSON 3

Map Of Asia



LESSON 3

World Map

