

## **KOREAN REUNIFICATION**

**GRADES:** 10<sup>th</sup> Grade

**AUTHOR:** Brad Seidman

**TOPIC/THEME:** History

**TIME REQUIRED:** Two class periods

**BACKGROUND:** This lesson exposes students to the current North-South relations and the possibilities of reunification. It also compares the circumstances in divided Germany to those in Korea.

**CURRICULUM CONNECTION:** This lesson is meant to complement a lesson on the Korean War as part of a unit on the Cold War. Students will look at the possibility for reunification in Korea and, in turn, understand the ongoing effects of the war on the Korea population, politics, and world relations.

**CONNECTION TO STUDENTS' LIVES:** This more detailed topic of reunification in Korea will engage students into an understanding of the conditions on the Korean peninsula, and will provide them with a greater understanding of the difficulty when a nation attempts to unify (or divide). An investigation of the latter will be useful as students study the Cold War and look at German reunification, as well as the division of Eastern European satellite nations.

### **OBJECTIVES:**

Students will be able to:

1. Examine the issue of reunification in regards to the Korean peninsula.
2. Identify the steps that need to be taken for reunification of Korea,
3. Understand the similarities and differences between Korean and German unification.
4. Discuss the possibility of reunification and determine the importance of it.

### **NATIONAL AND STATE STANDARDS:**

#### **NCSS Standard:**

Theme II: TIME, CONTINUITY, AND CHANGE

Learners will understand the experiences that provide for the study of the past and its legacy.

Theme IV: INDIVIDUAL DEVELOPMENT AND IDENTITY

Learners will understand the experiences that provide for the study of individual development and identity.

Theme V: INDIVIDUALS, GROUPS, AND INSTITUTIONS

Learners will understand the experiences that provide for the study of interactions among individuals, groups, and institutions.

**NYS Standard:**

- 2. World History
- 3. Geography

**Common Core Standards:**

RI 7 Analyze various accounts of a subject told in different mediums

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

RH 3 Analyze in detail a series of events described in a text

**MATERIALS REQUIRED:**

Video: Korea Seeks A Way to Peaceful Unification:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HLfw-SHPkMw>

Handout- Video Questions (attached)

Handout- In Focus Interview with German Representative (attached)

Wall Street Journal Article- [Contemplating Korean Reunification](#) (attached)

Political Cartoon- [Over the Edge](#)

**INTRODUCTION and EXPLORATION:** The Korea War ended in 1953 with an armistice that divided the country along the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel. Since that day, June 27, 1953, the country has remained divided. While ideological differences exist between the two nations, efforts and plans exist to reunify the peninsula. We will try to determine whether unification can be a reality or not.

**PROCEDURE:**

**Day One:**

1. Students should be introduced to the idea of reunification by using the video. Require that students answer the questions then discuss their answers (Note: Teachers may choose to show the video twice, so the students have the opportunity to focus on the text without answering questions).

Divide students into groups so they can work on the handout on German reunification. While students may not know the circumstances surrounding the end of the Cold War, they should know the reasons why the country was split. As students work on the Handout, they should answer the accompanying questions below each selection.

2. At the end of the period on the first day, review their answer by listing the conditions surrounding German reunification and a possible Korean reunification with a T-chart.

**Day Two:**

1. Reintroduce the topic of reunification with the political cartoon. Students should identify the two sides and the depiction of the United States. Explain to students that the United States and South Korea are strong allies.
2. Students should read the article from the *Wall Street Journal*. They may read it individually, with a partner, or in groups.

**ASSESSMENT:** At the end of the second day, hang four signs in each corner of the classroom. The signs should read Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, Strongly Disagree. Present students with the suggested statements (attachments), one at a time, and ask students to verbalize their support for their decision. The oral discussion should serve as a way to prove understanding.

**RESOURCES:**

Beck, Peter. "Contemplating Korean Reunification." *Wall Street Journal* 04 Jan 2010, Print.

Kang-Graham, Hyunjin. "Asia Peace Network : VANK- Voluntary Agency Network Of KOREA." 2007. [http://www.prkorea.com/english/e\\_peace/e\\_peace4\\_5.htm](http://www.prkorea.com/english/e_peace/e_peace4_5.htm) (accessed 08 14, 2011).

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Topic: Korean Reunification

Global 10R

Directions: Answer the questions below while watching the video distributed by VANK (Voluntary Agency Network of Korea).

1. According to VANK, what do most people think of in regards to Korea?
2. How does VANK criticize the role of the foreign press? Explain.
3. What is the overall purpose of the video?
4. Why might this video be considered propaganda?
5. Towards which population is the video aimed to engage the most?
6. What action does this video encourage? Give examples.
7. List 3 things you learned about Korea after watching this video.

## **In Focus**

Peace-building effort in the Korean peninsula

From division to reunification: the case of Korea and Germany

The issue of a divided Korea affects peace and prosperity not only for the Korean peninsula but also for the entire Asian-Pacific region. The division of Korea has made the two Koreas heavily armed and has provided an excuse for the arms race in the region. Japan pursues rearmament in the cause of national security against the threat from North Korea, which in turn spurs China's arms buildup. The United States has also been deeply involved in this military tension.

### **1. What effect has the division of Korea had on the peninsula and the region?**

To end this competitive armament, the reunification of Korea is a necessary step. However, reunification will be a long and difficult process. Consequently, I think it can be useful to learn from the experience of Germany because it has gone through a similar process. At the same time, in order to create an appropriate model for Korean reunification we need to consider that the conditions of division and reunification in the two countries are not the same. Thus I conducted an interview with a German about how Germany was divided and reunified, and about what has changed since reunification. I hope this interview will provide useful lessons for the two Koreas to achieve reunification or peaceful co-existence.

### **2. Why did this reporter interview the German representative?**

**Interviewer:** Hyunjin Kang-Graham

**Interviewee:** Jakub Piwowarski

Kang-Graham:

I am interested in the circumstances of Germany's division in 1949. Would you tell me about the division of Germany? First, let me tell you about how Korea was divided. Korea was liberated from the 36 years of Japanese occupation (1910-1945) after the Japanese Empire unconditionally surrendered in World War II. Many Koreans had fought for independence, but it came suddenly with the victory of the Allied Forces. Soon after, U.S. and Soviet forces came to the Korean peninsula to disarm Japanese troops. As a result, the U.S. Army Military government ruled over Southern Korea (1945-1948), while the Soviet army exerted influence on Northern Korea. Two contrasting ideologies were implanted into the minds of Koreans, which were to become the seeds of the long conflict

among Koreans. Subsequently, the Republic of Korea (ROK) was established in the South in August of 1948 and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) in the North in September of the same year. Although separate governments were declared, few Koreans expected the long division of the peninsula. Both governments pursued reunification, but their versions of reunification were centered on their own ideology, with the expectation that the other's ideology would be defeated.

### **3. What happened in Korea during the years following World War II?**

### **4. How were the seeds for a longer conflict laid after the war?**

In June 25, 1950, the North invaded the South to reunify Korea under communism. That was the beginning of the Korean War, which is often called the tragedy of a fratricidal war. The war lasted until the Armistice Agreement on July 27, 1953. The agreement was signed by Mark W. Clark (U.S. Army General and commander of the U.N.), Peng De-Huai (commander of the Chinese People's Volunteers) and Kim Il-Sung (Supreme commander of the Korean People's Army). South Korea refused to sign because President Syngman Rhee did not agree to the armistice and instead insisted on unification through defeating the communist North by force. The armistice solidified the division of the Korean peninsula. Hence, contrasting ideologies (Communism versus Capitalism) were a crucial factor of the division of Korea, under the influence of the two Cold War superpowers. Although the Cold War has ended, Korea remains divided and represents one of the last remnants of the Cold War legacy.

### **5. What was the result of the war?**

#### **Piwowski:**

The division of Germany was a product of the dispute between the Soviet Union and the Allied Forces, mainly the United States. After World War II, they could not reach an agreement on how to manage the post war situation, and the whole situation escalated in the so-called Cold War era led by the Soviet Union and the United States. A collision of ideologies and a struggle over power between the two power blocs resulted in the division of Germany.

## **6. What happened in Germany during the years following World War II?**

The Soviet Union occupied the eastern part of Germany, and the Western Allies (the USA, the UK, and France) occupied the western part of Germany. And in 1961, the Berlin wall was built and secured the border between East and West Germany. Germans were not allowed to go to the other part freely from then until the fall of the wall in 1989.

## **7. How was the nation divided between the Allied powers?**

Kang-Graham:

Reunification is the long process of overcoming mistrust and enhancing mutual understanding for the purposes of a peace settlement. Korea is in the beginning stage of the process, while it seems that Germany is getting close to the last stage, reconciling differences and rebuilding a nation. I would like to give an account of what Korea has done to move toward Korean reunification and to learn about what Germans did to attain the reunification of Germany in 1989. Over a half century has passed since the two Koreas have begun to exist under different ideologies and political systems. This history has made cultural differences become more significant. Both Koreas have defined their counterpart as a puppet regime, not a legitimate government. North Korea is still designated as an anti-state organization under South Korea's National Security Law. Also, painful memories of the Korean War brought distrust and enmity against each other. However, hope for one nation, inherited from the same ancestry, led Koreans to take steps toward reunification.

## **8. What problems exist that may hinder the steps towards reunifying Korea?**

The door for inter-Korean economic cooperation was opened in 1998 when Chung Ju-yung, the Hyundai Group founder, drove through Panmunjeom - a village in the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) dividing the Korean peninsula - with a herd of 501 cattle. Chung Ju-yung met North Korean leader Kim Jong-Il and secured an agreement to let South Koreans and foreigners visit Mt. Kumgang, a part of North Korean territory. On June 13, 2000, the first South-North Summit since the division of the peninsula took

place. South Korean President Kim Dae-Jung and Kim Jong-Il signed the South-North Joint Declaration, which allowed separated families to be reunited. Over three thousand separated families were reunited from the first round to the fifteenth round of family reunion sessions (August 2000-May 2007). Also, during the first summit, an agreement was reached on the construction of the Kaesong Industrial Complex for the sake of inter-Korean economic cooperation. As of 2007, 45 companies operate in the complex. On October 2, 2007, South Korean President Roh Moo-Hyun walked through the Military Demarcation Line (MDL) to participate in the second South-North Summit. The two leaders signed a Declaration on the Advancement of South-North Korean Relations, Peace and Prosperity. They also shared an interest in establishing a peace regime by declaring the end of the Korean War. Considering the importance of dialogue and contacts, they agreed to open direct air flights between Seoul and Mt. Baekdu. Mt. Baekdu is located on the border of North Korea and China and has been considered the ancestral mountain of the Korean nation. Separated family reunions will be expanded as well. Most importantly, both parties agreed not to antagonize each others and to oppose war on the Korean Peninsula and to adhere strictly to their obligation to nonaggression Declaration on the Advancement of South-North Relations, Peace and Prosperity, October 4, 2007). These are the things the two Koreas have done for reunification.

### **9. Generally speaking, what have the Koreans done to move towards reunification?**

Piwowarski:

The division of Germany separated many families from their husbands/wives, grandfathers/grandmothers and uncles/aunts. They really wanted to see them again. For the sake of the separated family, money is no matter, but of course nobody expected that it would cost that much. It is impossible to estimate the future expense precisely. West Germany put a huge amount of money into the East. This is the primary factor that made the reunification possible, but is also the cause of many troubles that have prevailed until today. What brought the 1989 reunification was the strong will of the population to reunite, and the political situations where the East ran out of money to sustain itself while the West made a big effort toward reunification. The communist leadership had failed to provide the most essential supplies for the population, which put a lot of pressure on the leadership. Also, the people in the East knew about the situation in the West, even though access to West German media was restricted. I don't know about the situation exactly because I was only nine years old at the time. But I know there was a lot of illegal radio listening. East Germans thought the West was a kind of "dreamland" where everything would be possible, and many tried to flee to the West, even risking their lives. Still, nobody expected the wall to comedown so fast.

### **10. What conditions existed in Germany that lead to reunification?**



## **11. What perceptions did the East Germans have of West Germany?**

Kang-Graham:

The unification of territory is not necessarily followed by the unification of the people. Since people have lived under different systems, there are cultural differences and misperceptions of each other. An increasing number of North Korean defectors reside in South Korea, but many of them have a lot of difficulty fitting into South Korean society. They feel like they are discriminated against, disrespected, and treated as second-class citizens by arrogant South Koreans. On the other hand, many South Koreans think that North Koreans are ignorant, lazy and poor.

## **12. What differences exist between North and South Koreans?**

Kang-Graham:

I am curious about how the East and West Germans have felt about each other. Also, what are the biggest issues that Germany has had to deal with since reunification, and what has it done to resolve them? Are there any classes or programs in school to reduce cultural differences among the German people?

Piwowarski:

Even though Germany was unified in 1989, there is still a line between the East and the West in the minds of Germans. We can easily tell who came from which side by the way they talk, dress, or style their hair. Just like Koreans, we also have the same stereotypes and a lot of prejudices against each other. First of all, the sudden reunification of Germany made the people from the eastern part have to be confronted with a capitalist society very quickly. In a capitalist society, most people tend to be a little bit more concerned with their own interest. So, people from the East regard those from the West as selfish and not so nice, and still often say before, everything was better. It means better before the reunification. Truly, their situation has really been improved, but now they just have different expectations for social life and people's behavior. The left-wing has gained huge popularity again in Germany, and most of its supporters are in the eastern part of

Germany. One of the present problems is that the West is still spending so much money to rebuild the East. Since the development gap between the two was very big, massive investment is needed to narrow the gap. What makes it worse is that people from the West still refuse to go to work in the East, while those from the East try to come to the West at any cost. In the East, the unemployment rate is almost 25%. On the other hand, in the West, a lot of people complain about all the people from the East coming to the West and taking away their jobs. Additionally, the education in the eastern part is not as good as in the western part. Highly qualified professors and teachers refuse to work in the East not only because of the low salary but also the cultural differences. So there are a lot of prejudices about the qualification of people from the East for jobs. However, I remember that when I worked for a bank, most of my co-workers came from East Germany, and we made a lot of jokes about being the only three people from West Germany out of twenty. So the situation has changed. I think the whole unification process needs more time. Germany is still far away from a perfect unification. There are no special courses or classes to reduce cultural differences. However, in my personal opinion, those kinds of courses are only partially useful, but in a lot of cases they don't fulfill their aim. On the contrary, they may even deepen the differences because they can show very strongly how different they and their ways of thinking are.

### **13. What problems presently exist in reunified Germany?**

---

• **OPINION**

• JANUARY 4, 2010, 10:43 A.M. ET

Contemplating Korean Reunification

*The North could collapse more quickly than we think.*

By **PETER M. BECK**

North Korea's nuclear program has preoccupied foreign policy makers for years, but it's not the only problem on the Korean Peninsula. Kim Jong Il's regime looks increasingly unstable and could collapse. That could lead to North Korea's reunification with the South and could present foreign leaders with the expensive task of modernizing the North's economy.

There are three plausible scenarios for a Korean reunification. One would be **sudden and bloodless** like what Germany experienced. The worst would be a reunification **marked by the kind of violence Vietnam suffered**. The third is **somewhere between the first two** and akin to the chaotic post-Communist transitions of Romania and Albania.

Any one of these outcomes would be expensive. The North's economy is in shambles. It collapsed in the 1990s amid a famine that likely killed hundreds of thousands of people. Fixing the economy will require new infrastructure, starting with the power grid, railway lines and ports. This alone will cost tens of billions of dollars. Few of the North's factories meet modern standards and it will take years to rehabilitate agricultural lands. The biggest expense of all will be equalizing North Koreans' incomes with their richer cousins in the South, whether through aid transfers or investments in education and health care.

Even the best-case German model will cause South Koreans heartburn. Despite the \$2 trillion West Germany has paid over two decades, Bonn had it relatively easy in the beginning. East Germany's population was only one-quarter of West Germany's, and in 1989 East German per capita income was one-third of the West's. The two Germanies also had extensive trade ties.

North Korea's per capita income is less than 5% of the South's. Each year the dollar value of South Korea's GDP expansion equals the entire North Korean economy. The North's population is half the South's and rising thanks to a high birth rate. North and South also barely trade with each other. To catch up to the South, North Korea will need more

resources than East Germany required if living standards on both sides of the peninsula are to be close to each other.

More than a dozen reports by governments, academics and investment banks in recent years have attempted to estimate the cost of Korean unification. At the low end, the Rand Corporation estimates \$50 billion. But that assumes only a doubling of Northern incomes from current levels, which would leave incomes in the North at less than 10% of the South.

At the high end, Credit Suisse estimated last year that unification would cost \$1.5 trillion, but with North Korean incomes rising to only 60% of those in the South. I estimate that raising Northern incomes to 80% of Southern levels—which would likely be a political necessity—would cost anywhere from \$2 trillion to \$5 trillion, spread out over 30 years. That would work out to at least \$40,000 per capita if distributed solely among South Koreans.

Who would foot such a bill? China is the greatest supporter of the current regime in Pyongyang, with trade, investment and economic assistance worth \$3 billion a year. Even if that flow continues, it's only a fraction of the \$67 billion a year needed to equal \$2 trillion over 30 years. Japan is willing to pay \$10 billion in reparations for having colonized the North in the 20th century, but that too would barely make a dent.

That leaves international institutions like the World Bank as well as South Korea and the United States. Building a modern economy in North Korea would be a wise investment in peace and prosperity in North Asia. Policy makers need to think about where that money will come from and how it should be spent to minimize the risk of wasting it in post-reunification confusion.

1. In general terms, what are the three possible scenarios for Korean reunification?
2. What differences exist between North and South Korea in terms of population, wealth, and economy?
3. What would be the impact of reunification on South Korea, and it's allies, perhaps?
4. Based on the article, do you think reunification is a reality? Is it worthwhile?

## Recommended Statements for Application Activity

1. Culture and history should outweigh the economic costs of reunification.
2. Korean reunification would be beneficial to the United States and other Asian nations.
3. Koreans should use the German model to understand why reunification is not a viable solution.
4. Korean reunification is merely a dream that will not become a reality.