

## A DOCUMENT-BASED ESSAY ON THE KOREAN WAR

**GRADES:** 10-12

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**SUBJECT:** Social Studies

**TIME REQUIRED:** One or two class periods

### **OBJECTIVES:**

1. Interpret primary sources, including written sources, graphs, maps, and political cartoons.
2. Evaluate bias and point of view in sources
3. Using evidence provided in documents and outside information, analyze the factors that made the Korean War different from previous American wars. Be sure to address political, economic and social factors.

### **MATERIALS REQUIRED:**

- Handout 1: Background Information on Korean War
- Handout 2: Document-Based Essay Rubric
- Handout 3: Document-Based Essay on Korean War
- Handout 4: Document Analysis Guidelines for DBQ Essay

### **BACKGROUND INFORMATION: KOREAN WAR**

The Korean War was a civil war between the nations of North Korea and South Korea, which were created out of the occupation zones of the Soviet Union and the United States established at the end of World War II. The failure to hold free elections after World War II throughout the Korean Peninsula in 1948 deepened the division between the two sides; the North established a communist government, while the South established a capitalist one. The 38th parallel increasingly became a political border between the two Korean states. Although reunification negotiations continued in the months preceding the war, tension intensified. Cross-border skirmishes and raids at the 38th Parallel persisted. The situation escalated into open warfare when North Korean forces invaded South Korea on 25 June 1950.

It was the first significant armed conflict of the Cold War. In 1950 the Soviet Union boycotted the United Nations Security Council, in protest at representation of China by the Kuomintang / Republic of China government, which had taken refuge in Taiwan following defeat in the Chinese Civil War. In the absence of a dissenting voice from the Soviet Union, who could have vetoed it, the United States and other countries passed a Security Council resolution authorizing military intervention in Korea.

The United States of America provided 88% of the 341,000 international soldiers which aided South Korean forces in repelling the invasion, with twenty other countries of the United Nations offering assistance. Suffering severe casualties, within two months the defenders were pushed back to a small area in the south of the Korean Peninsula, known as the Pusan perimeter. A rapid U.N. counter-offensive then drove the North Koreans past the 38th Parallel and almost to the Yalu River, when the People's Republic of China (PRC) entered the war on the side of North Korea. Chinese intervention forced the Southern-allied forces to retreat behind the 38th Parallel. While not directly committing forces to the conflict, the Soviet Union provided material aid to both the North Korean and Chinese armies.

The active stage of the war ended on 27 July 1953, when the armistice agreement was signed. The agreement restored the border between the Koreas near the 38th Parallel and created the Korean Demilitarized Zone (DMZ), a 2.5-mile (4.0 km)-wide fortified buffer zone between the two Korean nations. Minor outbreaks of fighting continue to the present day.

Korea remains divided roughly along the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel. The Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) between the two nations is still the most heavily-fortified border in the world. There is constant hope among the peoples in both North and South that Korea will again be united under one flag.

#### **PROCEDURE:**

1. Students read background Information on the Korean War(attached) as well as their textbook chapters on the war.
2. Teacher asks questions of the students to make sure they understand the background of the Korean War.
3. Teacher tells students that they will analyze documents from the Korean War, as historians would do, in order to examine how it differed from previous wars.
4. Pass out scoring rubric (attached) and make sure that students understand scoring criteria. Answer any questions they have.
5. Pass out the Document-Based Essay and give students 15 minutes to read and outline the documents and 45 minutes to write their DBQ Essay.
6. Teacher scores the DBQ essays using the rubric.
7. Teacher passes back the DBQ essays and asks students to analyze each document and answers any questions about the essay or rubric. Teacher may want to ask students to read portions of their essay and allow other students to critique them.

#### **EVALUATION:**

Score student essays based on scoring rubric (attached). Evaluation should measure student's ability to analyze sources accurately, assess the bias and point of view of the authors and to analyze outside information from text, readings, etc.

#### **RESOURCES:**

Bernstein, Barton J. *The Truman Administration: A Documentary History*. New York: Harper and Row, 1966.

Blair, Clay Jr. *The Forgotten War: America in Korea 1950-1953*. New York: Anchor Books, 1989.

"Chart on U.S. Defense Spending 1900-2010." *www.usgovernmentsspending.com*

Cumings, Bruce. *The Origins of the Korean War*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1981.

Cumings, Bruce. *Korea's Place in the Sun, A Modern History*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2005.

Elfin, Mel. "The Forgotten War" *US News and World Report*, June 25, 1990, 30.

Goldman, Eric F. *The Crucial Decade and After*. New York: Vintage Books, 1960.

Lee, Ki-Baik. *A New History of Korea*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1984.

“Map of Korean War Strategy and Truce Line.” [www.koreanwar.org](http://www.koreanwar.org)  
Nahm, Andrew C. *The United States and Korea: American-Korean Relations, 1866-1976*.  
Kalamazoo, MI: Western Michigan University (The Center for Korean Studies), 1979.

“Political Cartoon from Korean War (1950).” [www.cartoonistgroup.com](http://www.cartoonistgroup.com)

“Republican Senator Robert Taft interviewed on Radio Talk Show (1950).” "Capitol Report" No. 60,  
Featuring Senator Robert F. Taft, June 29, 1950.

“Statement by President Truman relieving General Douglas MacArthur of his Military Duties  
(1951).” [www.trumanlibrary.org](http://www.trumanlibrary.org)

“United Nations Security Council Resolution (1950).” [www.trumanlibrary.org](http://www.trumanlibrary.org)

“Text of the Korean War Armistice Agreement.” [www.nara.gov](http://www.nara.gov)

“Views of Korean War by Party Affiliation (1952).” [www.gallup.com](http://www.gallup.com)

## **HANDOUT 1: BACKGROUND INFORMATION ON KOREAN WAR**

The two Koreas: North and South Korea were created out of the occupation zones of the Soviet Union and the United States established at the end of World War II. The failure to hold free elections after World War II throughout the Korean Peninsula in 1948 deepened the division between the two sides; the North established a communist government, while the South established a capitalist one. The 38th parallel increasingly became a political border between the two Korean states. Although reunification negotiations continued in the months preceding the war, tension intensified. Cross-border skirmishes and raids at the 38th Parallel persisted. The situation escalated into open warfare when North Korean forces invaded South Korea on 25 June 1950.

The Korean War was the first significant armed conflict of the Cold War. In 1950 the Soviet Union boycotted the United Nations Security Council, in protest at representation of China by the Kuomintang / Republic of China government, which had taken refuge in Taiwan following defeat in the Chinese Civil War. In the absence of a dissenting voice from the Soviet Union, who could have vetoed it, the United States and other countries passed a Security Council resolution authorizing military intervention in Korea.

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## HANDOUT 2: DOCUMENT-BASED ESSAY RUBRIC

<b>Characteristic</b>	<b>Score 8-9</b> <b>87 or above</b>	<b>Score 5-7</b> <b>77 or above</b>	<b>Score 2-4</b> <b>67 or above</b>	<b>Score 0-1</b> <b>66 or below</b>
<b>Thesis</b>	Clear, well developed thesis	Contains a clear thesis with limited development	Lacks a thesis, or thesis may be confused or underdeveloped	No thesis
<b>Understanding of the Question</b>	Understands complexity of the question; deals with all parts of the question in depth	Limited or lack of understanding of complexity; may deal with one part of the question in some depth, or in a more general way	Ignores complexity; may deal with one part of the question, or all elements of the question in a superficial way	May simply paraphrase or restate the question
<b>Analysis</b>	Provides effective analysis of the question; some imbalance permissible	Limited analysis, mostly describes	Weak or inappropriate analysis	No analysis
<b>Documentary Evidence</b>	Effectively uses a substantial number of documents. Documents supplement analysis and are balanced with outside information	Effectively uses some of documents; may only restate information found in documents	Poor use of documents with only brief citation or paraphrase; not enough documents used to support analysis	Almost no use of or inappropriate attempts to use documents
<b>Supportive Information</b>	Supports thesis with substantial, relevant information. Outside information is balanced with use of documents in the analysis of the question	Supports thesis with some factual information	Lacks supporting information, or information given is minimal	Incompetent, inappropriate responses
<b>Grammar and Structure</b>	May contain insignificant errors	May contain minor errors that do not detract from overall essay	May contain major errors	Contains many major or minor errors
<b>Organization and Writing Style</b>	Well organized and well written	Clearly organized and written, but not exceptional	Weak organization and writing	Disorganized and poorly written

## HANDOUT 3: DOCUMENT-BASED ESSAY ON THE KOREAN WAR

### Instructions:

You will have 15 minutes to read and outline the documents and plan your essay. At the end of the 15 minute period, you will begin writing your essay. You will have 45 minutes to write your essay. Construct a coherent essay that integrates your interpretation of the documents AND your knowledge of the period referred to in the question. High scores will be earned only by essays that both cite key pieces of evidence from the documents AND draw on outside knowledge of the period.

### Essay Question:

Using evidence provided in documents **and** outside information, analyze the factors that made the Korean War different from previous wars in which the United States had participated. Be sure to address political, economic and social factors.

### Document A

#### Map of Korean War Strategy and Truce Line

Source: [www.koreanwar.org](http://www.koreanwar.org)



## Document B

### Truman Doctrine (1947) excerpt:

**Source:** Bernstein, Barton J. *The Truman Administration: A Documentary History*

I believe that it must be the policy of the United States to support free people who are resisting attempted subjugation by armed minorities or by outside pressures.

I believe that we must assist free peoples to work out their own destinies in their own way.

I believe that our help should be primarily through economic and financial aid, which is essential to economic stability and orderly political processes.

The world is not static and the status quo is not sacred. But we cannot allow changes in the status quo in violation of the Charter of the United Nations by such methods as coercion, or by such subterfuges as political infiltration. In helping free and independent nations to maintain their freedom, the United States will be giving effect to the principles of the Charter of the United Nations.

## Document C

### Political Cartoon from Korean War (1950)

**Source:** [www.cartoonistgroup.com](http://www.cartoonistgroup.com)



Document D

United Nations Security Council Resolution (1950)

Source: [www.trumanlibrary.org](http://www.trumanlibrary.org)

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Korea and might lead to open military conflict there;

Noting with grave concern the armed attack upon the Republic of Korea by forces from North Korea,

Determines that this action constitutes a breach of the peace,

I. Calls for the immediate cessation of hostilities; and

Calls upon the authorities of North Korea to withdraw forthwith their armed forces to the thirty-eighth parallel.

II. Requests the United Nations Commission on Korea

(a) to communicate its fully considered recommendations on the situation with the least possible delay;

(b) to observe the withdrawal of the North Korean forces to the thirty-eighth parallel; and

(c) to keep the Security Council informed on the execution of this resolution.

III. Calls upon all members to render every assistance to the United Nations in the execution of this resolution and to refrain from giving assistance to the North Korean authorities.





## Document E

### Republican Senator Robert Taft interviewed on Radio Talk Show (1950)

**Source:** "Capitol Report" No. 60, Featuring Senator Robert F. Taft  
June 29, 1950

**ANNOUNCER:** Senator Taft, as leader of the minority party in the United States Senate, do you approve the action of the President in sending our armed forces to stop this Communist aggression?

**TAFT:** Well, broadly speaking, yes. Of course, from the past philosophy of the declaration of the Administration it wasn't unreasonable for the North Koreans to suppose that we would do nothing about their attack. The President's statement of policy represents a complete change in the programs and policies he has heretofore proclaimed. I myself have always urged a much more determined attitude against communism in the Far East and China and the President's new policy moves in that direction. Naturally, I don't object to the general policy. It seems to me the time had to come when we would give definite notice to the Communists that a move beyond a declared line would result in war. That has been our policy in Europe and the Atlantic Union. Whether the President in this case, however, has chosen the right time or the right place to declare this policy certainly is open to question. He knows more about it than I do. I can't be certain. But certainly the new policy seems to be adopted at an unfortunate time — and involves the attempt to defend Korea, which is a very difficult military operation indeed. I sincerely hope that the policy won't lead to war with Russia. I do believe the general principle of the policy is right, and I see no choice except to back up wholeheartedly and with every available resource the American men in our armed forces who have been moved into Korea.

**ANNOUNCER:** Well, we've heard so much about bi-partisan foreign policy in the past few years, I wonder what extent the President consulted with you and the other Republican leaders before making this very drastic decision?

**TAFT:** Well, the answer is — not at all. The answer is that there hasn't been any pretense of bi-partisan foreign policy in this move. The leaders of the Republican Party in Congress have never been consulted.

## DOCUMENT F

### Statement by President Truman Relieving Gen. MacArthur of his Duties, 1951

Source: [www.trumanlibrary.com](http://www.trumanlibrary.com)

IMMEDIATE RELEASE

April 10, 1951

STATEMENT BY THE PRESIDENT

With deep regret I have concluded that General of the Army Douglas MacArthur is unable to give his wholehearted support to the policies of the United States Government and of the United Nations in matters pertaining to his official duties. In view of the specific responsibilities imposed upon me by the Constitution of the United States and the added responsibility which has been entrusted to me by the United Nations, I have decided that I must make a change of command in the Far East. I have, therefore, relieved General MacArthur of his commands and have designated Lt. Gen. Matthew B. Ridgway as his successor.

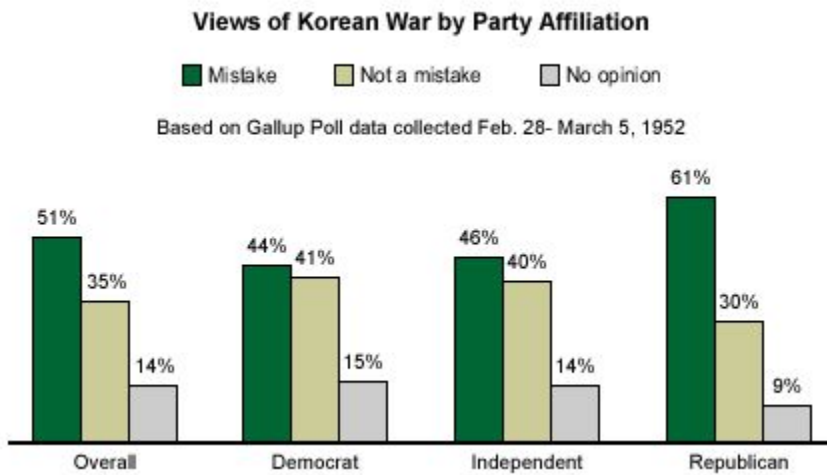
Full and vigorous debate on matters of national policy is a vital element in the constitutional system of our free democracy. It is fundamental, however, that military commanders must be governed by the policies and directives issued to them in the manner provided by our laws and Constitution. In time of crisis, this consideration is particularly compelling.

General MacArthur's place in history as one of our greatest commanders is fully established. The nation owes him a debt of gratitude for the distinguished and exceptional service which he has rendered his country in posts of great responsibility. For that reason I repeat my regret at the necessity for the action I feel compelled to take in his case.

## DOCUMENT G

### POLL-VIEWS OF KOREAN WAR BY PARTY AFFILIATION (1952)

Source: Gallup Poll



## DOCUMENT H

### TEXT OF THE KOREAN WAR ARMISTICE AGREEMENT July 27, 1953

Source: National Archives

Agreement between the Commander-in-Chief, United Nations Command, on the one hand, and the Supreme Commander of the Korean People's Army and the Commander of the Chinese People's volunteers, on the other hand, concerning a military armistice in Korea.

#### Preamble

The undersigned, the Commander-in-Chief, United Nations Command, on the one hand, and the Supreme Commander of the Korean People's Army and the Commander of the Chinese People's Volunteers, on the other hand, in the interest of stopping the Korean conflict, with its great toil of suffering and bloodshed on both sides, and with the objective of establishing an armistice which will insure a complete cessation of hostilities and of all acts of armed force in Korea until a final peaceful settlement is achieved, do individually, collectively, and mutually agree to accept and to be bound and governed by the conditions and terms of armistice set forth in the following articles and paragraphs, which said conditions and terms are intended to be purely military in character and to pertain solely to the belligerents in Korea:

#### Article I

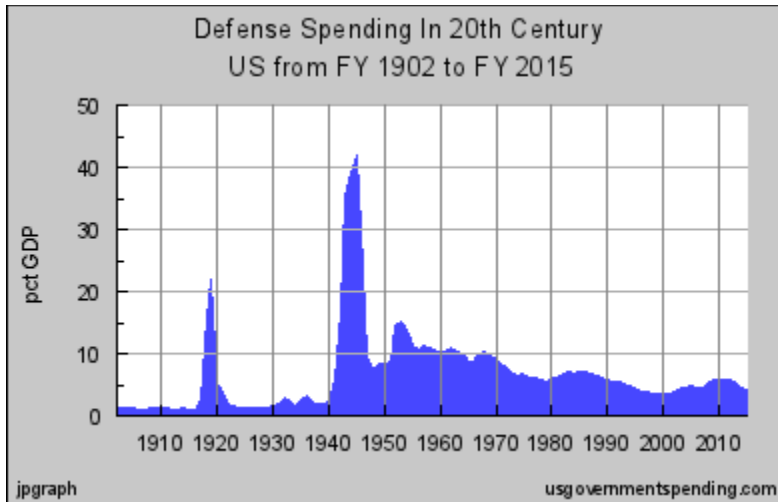
##### Military Demarcation Line and Demilitarized Zone

1. A military demarcation line shall be fixed and both sides shall withdraw two (2) kilometers from this line so as to establish a demilitarized zone between the opposing forces. A demilitarized zone shall be established as a buffer zone to prevent the occurrence of incidents which might lead to a resumption of hostilities.

## DOCUMENT I

### CHART ON U.S. DEFENSE SPENDING (1900-2010)

*Source: www.usgovernmentpending.com*



## **HANDOUT 4: DOCUMENT ANALYSIS GUIDELINES FOR DBQ ESSAY**

### **DOCUMENT A: MAP OF KOREAN WAR**

- Shows involvement of Chinese Communists.
- Demonstrates the fact that U.S. did not win, but signed a truce or armistice.
- Shows successful containment of Communism, but not victory-Korea remained divided.

### **DOCUMENT B: TRUMAN DOCTRINE**

- Outlines containment policy-long-term, defensive wars to defend democracies from Communism-a departure from past
- Shows new U.S. policy of involvement in world affairs as leader of free world

### **DOCUMENT C: POLITICAL CARTOON**

- Demonstrates that the United Nations would take action to stop aggression, unlike League of Nations
- New U.S. policy of multilateral action, backed by nations of United Nations, not unilateral as in past.
- Even though this was the first U. N. police action, the President was the Commander in Chief.

### **DOCUMENT D: U.N. SECURITY COUNCIL RESOLUTION**

- Shows that Korean War was actually a U.N. police action, supported by several other nations.
- The Soviet Union did not veto Security Council because they were boycotting over admission of the People's Republic of China

### **DOCUMENT E: REPUBLICAN SENATOR TAFT**

- Clearly shows political opposition to Korean War by Republicans and Congress.
- Also shows Congress disapproval of police action because they did not declare this war. Began a process of Congress losing war-making power to the President.

### **DOCUMENT F: PRES. TRUMAN RELIEVES GEN. MACARTHUR**

- Demonstrates civilian control of military.
- Pres. Truman fired Gen. MacArthur for opposing Truman's new U.S. strategy of limited war. (Don't provoke China, no nuclear weapons)

### **DOCUMENT G: GALLUP POLL-KOREAN WAR**

-Shows public opposition to Korean War by both parties. Most wars in past had widespread approval.

-Americans were tired of war, some did not see Korea as important enough or as a direct threat to the U.S.

#### **DOCUMENT H: KOREAN WAR ARMISTICE**

-War ends in stalemate. United States was used to victory. Shows limits of U.S. power in Cold War world.

-Might explain lack of coverage in media, textbooks, etc.

#### **DOCUMENT I: CHART-U.S. DEFENSE SPENDING**

-Shows increase in defense spending after Korean War. More military spending would be needed to fight Communism around the globe. In the past, we had de-mobilized and cut defense spending after wars.