

# KOREAN REUNIFICATION

**GRADES:** 11<sup>th</sup> grade

**AUTHOR:** Fatima Pistone

**TIME REQUIRED:** Three class periods.

## **OBJECTIVES:**

Students will be able to:

- Define the background of the present situation on the Korean Peninsula.
- Understand the nature of the current relationship between North Korea and South Korea.
- Analyze a variety of documents
- Categorize the information in the documents
- Evaluate and use document information to support a position

## **STANDARDS:**

Common Core:

WHST 1 Write arguments focused on discipline-specific content

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 3 Evaluate various explanations for actions or events

RH 6 Evaluate authors' differing points of view on the same historical event or issue

RH 8 Evaluate an author's premises, claims and evidence by corroborating or challenging them with other information

RH 9 Integrate information from diverse sources, both primary and secondary, into a coherent understanding of an idea or event

SL 1 Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions

SL 3 Evaluate a speaker's point of view, reasoning and use of evidence and rhetoric

## **MATERIALS REQUIRED:**

- Pens
- Paper
- Organization charts
- Chart paper
- Marker
- Chalk
- A blackboard

**BACKGROUND:** By the mid-nineteenth century Korea was one of the last Asian holdouts against Western imperialism, which had conquered much of southern Asia and was making

inroads in China. Following the successful opening of Japan to trade with the West in 1854 through the "gunboat diplomacy" of Commodore Perry of the US Navy, the British, the French, and the Americans all attempted to open Korea in a similar fashion. Korea, however, refused to comply with Western demands, and engaged in naval skirmishes with the French and the Americans in the 1860s and early 1870s. By the end of the nineteenth century, rivalry over Korea led to war between Japan and China (1894-95) and, ten years later, between Japan and Russia (1904-5). Japan won both wars, and in 1910 Japan annexed Korea as a colony, ending the Choson dynasty after more than 500 years of independent rule.

The Japanese surrender to the Allies on August 15, 1945, which ended World War II, led to a time of great confusion and turmoil in Korea. The country was divided into zones of occupation by the victorious Americans and Soviets, and various individuals and organizations across the political spectrum from Communists to the far Right claimed to speak for an independent Korean government. The Soviets and Americans failed to reach an agreement on a unified Korean government, and in 1948 two separate governments were established, each claiming to be the legitimate government of all Korea: the Republic of Korea in Seoul, in the American zone, and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea in Pyongyang, in the Soviet zone.

On June 25, 1950, North Korean forces invaded the South. The Korean War drew in the Americans in support of South Korea and the Chinese in support of the North. In July 1953, after three years of bloody fighting in which some three million Koreans, one million Chinese, and 54,000 Americans were killed, the Korean War ended in a truce with Korea still divided, at the 38<sup>th</sup> Parallel, into two mutually antagonistic states, separated by a heavily fortified "De-Militarized Zone" (DMZ). Korea has remained divided ever since.

At the end of the Korean War in 1953, both Koreas lay utterly devastated. In addition to the loss of millions of lives, the two Koreas were beset with a ruined economic infrastructure, millions of displaced persons, and hundreds of thousands of war orphans. South Korea in 1953 was one of the poorest countries in the world. Despite a huge amount of economic assistance from the United States, the United Nations, and other Western countries for post-war reconstruction, the South Korean economy did not really begin to pick up again until the early 1960s. In 1961 the civilian government was removed in a coup led by Major General Park Chung Hee, who ruled South Korea until his assassination in 1979. The Park Chung Hee era saw both extraordinary economic growth and deepening political dictatorship. In the 1970s

and 1980s Korea was known as one of the four "Little Dragons" of newly industrialized East Asian countries, which also included Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Singapore.

North Korea also recovered from the destruction of war with a great deal of assistance from the Soviet Union, China, and several Eastern European states. In the 1960s North Korean leader Kim Il Sung began advocating a policy of *juche*, or "self-reliance," partly to avoid becoming entangled in the growing conflict between China and the USSR. Although North Korea was not completely isolated and continued to receive some outside aid, it generally pursued a policy of economic self-sufficiency. After the East European communist states collapsed and the Soviet Union disintegrated in 1989-90, many observers predicted that North Korea would follow suit. The absorption of East Germany into the German Federal Republic (West Germany) suggested that a similar kind of unification could occur in Korea, with the collapse of North Korea and its absorption into the far more affluent South. Such a scenario did not occur but hope for reunification remains alive.

### **ESSENTIAL QUESTION: Is the Reunification of North Korea and South Korea Inevitable?**

#### **PROCEDURE:**

##### **1. Motivation:**

- a. Students will answer the question: when comes to mind when you hear the word **Korea**? They will use a semantic web to record their answers.
- b. Students will share their answers.

##### **2. Lesson Introduction:**

- a. Students will read the background information individually.
- b. In groups of four, they will discuss/predict whether Korea will reunite in the manner of Germany.
- c. Groups will share/explain their predictions.

##### **3. Document Analysis:**

- a. In groups of four, students will read each document in the DBQ packet, answer the questions.
- b. Students will group the documents into the following categories: geographic, political, economic, and social.
- c. Students will determine which documents they think support reunification of the two Koreas and which documents they think are against it.
- d. Students will record their findings on chart paper and post it.

##### **4. Debate: "Will the two Koreas reunite?"**

- a. Students will take a position, in writing, as to whether they think the two Koreas will reunite or not. They have to use evidence from the documents to support their position.
- b. Students will move to the pre-designated area of the classroom according to their position on the issue.
- c. Students will take part in the debate.

**ASSESSMENT:** Students will write a document-based essay in which they will answer the Essential Question. This must be a well-organized essay that includes an introduction, several paragraphs, and a conclusion. Students must use evidence from *at least six* documents and support their response with relevant facts, examples, details and include additional outside information.

**RESOURCES:**

<http://afe.easia.columbia.edu/>

<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/media/70868/>

*Divided Nation, Embodied Time*, Nan Kim, Assistant Professor, History University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee Fellow, Center for 21st Century Studies 2009-10

The Korea Herald, 2012-07-30

The Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses (IDSA). August 25, 2011.

**Document 1a**



"Korean War: June–August, 1950". Map. *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*. Web. 09 Aug. 2012.  
<<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/media/70868/>>

1a. According to Document 1, what action did North Korea take between June and August of 1950?

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**Document 1b**



"Korean War: September–November, 1950". Map. *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*. Web. 09 Aug. 2012. <<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/media/70874/>>

1b. According to Document 1b, how did the United Nations Command react to North Korea's action?

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**Document 1c**



"Korean War: November 1950–January 1951". Map. *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*. Web. 09 Aug. 2012. <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/media/70875/>

1c. According to Document 1c, what forces were involved in countering the attack of UN Forces? And how successful were they in their action?

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**Document 1d**



"Korean War: February 1951–July 1953". Map. *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*. Web. 09 Aug. 2012.  
<<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/media/70876/>>

1d. What conclusions can you draw from this document regarding the outcome of the Korean War?

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**Document 2**

**Korean War: Civilians Retreating**



U.S. troops advance past a stream of retreating civilians in the Naktong River area, South Korea, August 1950. © *Bettmann/Corbis*

"Korean War: civilians retreating". Photograph. *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*. Web. 09 Aug. 2012.  
<<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/media/71892/US-troops-advance-past-a-stream-of-retreating-civilians-in>>

2. According to the image in Document 2, what immediate effects did the Korean War have on civilians?

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### **Document 3**

While civilians were able to cross the dividing line ( 38th Parallel) in 1948, subsequent hostilities hardened the border, and it became heavily militarized after the Korean War’s ceasefire in 1953. A permanent peace treaty was never reached, however, and technically the Korean War has still not ended. During this period of irresolution between the two states on the peninsula—neither at war nor at peace—millions of Koreans were left unable to learn the fates of family members who have been missing since the war. Unlike in divided countries such as East and West Germany, where people could correspond and maintain contact, it was impossible for Koreans to re-establish ties amidst the complete cessation of civilian telephone service and postal delivery, and the prohibition against movement of persons across the border.

*Divided Nation, Embodied Time*, Nan Kim, Assistant Professor, History University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee Fellow, Center for 21st Century Studies 2009-10

3. How did the division of Korea affect Koreans after the Korean War?

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### **Document 4**

Following are some facts about separated Korean families:

\* About 127,000 in the South reported in 1988 that they believed missing family members were in the North. About 45,000 of these South Koreans have died since then, with most of them never taking part in reunions, the South Korean government said.

\* Border crossings were possible before the Korean War at places not heavily guarded.

Numerous North Korean civilians followed the North's army when it advanced deep into the South in the early stages of the war. Many stayed after the troops were forced back.

\* After the war, travel between the two Koreas ended for civilians ceased, phone lines were cut and the mail service ceased. A heavily patrolled four-km (2.5 mile) wide buffer zone running the length of the entire peninsula was drawn up between the two states with razor wire fences and land-mine strewn fields.

\* The first of only two summits between the leaders of the two Koreas in 2000 led to the first round of family reunions. Seventeen rounds have taken place, the last in September 2009.

\* An additional 3,748 people have spoken to family members on the other side of the border over a closed-circuit video link beginning in 2005.

(Reporting by Jack Kim; Editing by Jeremy Laurence) © Thomson Reuters 2011 Wed, Oct 27 2010.

4. What efforts did the governments of North Korea and South Korea make to reunite Korean families separated by the war?

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**Document 5**

*Seoul to support family reunions in 3rd countries*

South Korea will increase financial aid for separated families holding privately arranged reunions in third countries with long-lost relatives from North Korea, the unification ministry said Monday. The plan comes as government-arranged reunions of families separated by the 1950-53 Korean War have been suspended for years due to the chill in relations between the two Koreas, while an increasing number of separated family members are dying of old age.

Some families have sought to hire private agencies to set up reunions with their loved ones from the North in third countries like China in recent years. Last year, a total of 28 such private reunions took place, according to the ministry. Announcing a three-year plan to facilitate exchanges for separated families, the ministry said it will increase financial assistance to 2 million won (\$1,759) for citizens who try to find their parents, children or siblings in the North through non-governmental agencies, an increase from the current 1 million won.

Seoul will also conduct a far-reaching survey of separated families here in order to better help them meet with their relatives in the North, the ministry said. It also said the government will try to revive government-arranged reunions by restoring dialogue between the two Koreas as well as between their Red Cross societies, it said. About 81,800 South Koreans are registered with the government as separated families and the majority of them are between the ages of 70 and 89. South Korea wants to resume regular reunions but none have taken place since October 2010. (Yonhap News) The Korea Herald, 2012-07-30.

5. What accommodations does the government of South Korea offer Korean families who choose to reunite in third countries? How effective were these accommodations?

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## Document 6

### *Attempts of Reunification between North Korea and South Korea*

**February 25, 1998:** At his inaugural speech, South Korean President Kim Dae-jung announces his “sunshine policy,” which strives to improve inter-Korean relations through peace, reconciliation, and cooperation.

**June 15, 2000:** Following a historic summit, North and South Korea sign a joint declaration stating they have “agreed to resolve” the question of reunification of the Korean Peninsula. The agreement includes promises to reunite families divided by the Korean War and to pursue other economic and cultural exchanges.

**October 2-4, 2007:** South Korean President Roh Moo-hyun travels to Pyongyang to meet with North Korean leader Kim Jong Il to discuss prospects for reconciliation and economic cooperation. It is the second time in history that such summit-level discussions have been held.

The summit concludes with a an eight-point joint declaration in which both sides agree to take steps toward reunification, ease military tensions, expand meetings of separated families, and engage in social and cultural exchanges. The declaration also expresses a “shared understanding” by the two countries “on the need for ending the current armistice mechanism and building a permanent peace mechanism.”

**December 19, 2007:** Grand National Party candidate Lee Myung-bak is elected president of South Korea, ushering in the first conservative government in Seoul in 10 years. During his campaign, Lee pledged to review the “Sunshine policy” of short-term reconciliation with North Korea adopted by his two predecessors, instead favoring the application of greater pressure on Pyongyang to denuclearize.

**March 26, 2010:** The South Korean patrol ship *Cheonan* is sunk near the South Korean-North Korean maritime border.

**April 14, 2010:** Kurt Campbell, assistant secretary of state for East Asian and Pacific affairs, tells reporters that the United States supports South Korea’s decision to stop engagement with North Korea until after the *Cheonan* sinking incident is resolved.

6. What hurdles did North and South Korea encounter in their attempt to achieve long lasting peace?

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**Document 7**

***The Reunification of the Two Koreas***

“My 70 million fellow compatriots, we have yet to resolve the greatest issue in modern Korean history. That is the issue of national reunification.” – Myung Bak Lee, in his Presidential Address by Myung Bak Lee on the 66th anniversary of national liberation, August 15, 2011

In this year’s speech, President Lee conveyed a simple message to the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK). He urged DPRK to stop indulging in provocative activities and suggested that the two sides cooperate to develop and be prosperous together. This was in line with the ‘Grand Bargain’ that Lee had suggested during the early part of his tenure, which sought to persuade the DPRK to abandon its nuclear weapon and in return receive the overall support of the ROK. However, despite recent nuclear talks and foreign ministers level contacts between the two Koreas, the South-North relationship remains frosty.

Jiye Kim. The Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses (IDSA). August 25, 2011.

7. What message did President Myung Bak Lee have for North Korea in his speech?

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**Document 8**

**South Koreans Expectations of Reunification by Age Group**

	<b>20s</b>	<b>30s</b>	<b>40s</b>	<b>50s</b>	<b>60s</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>As Quickly as Possible</b>	8.0	10.6	13.9	15.2	20.9	13.8
<b>When Circumstances Permit</b>	53.2	60.3	61.7	58.4	44.1	55.7
<b>No Need to Rush</b>	28.8	22.2	18.8	20.8	27.6	23.5
<b>Don't Need to Reunify</b>	10.1	6.9	5.5	5.5	7.4	7.0

Source: Annual Public Opinion Survey on the Issue of Reunification by age group in South Korean Public Opinion on North Korea & the Nations of the Six-Party Talks by Jiyeon Kim and Karl Friedhoff. October 2011.

8. a. When does the majority of Koreans expect the two Koreas to reunify?

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b. Which two age groups are most enthusiastic about reunification? What do you think are the reasons behind such enthusiasm?

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**Document 9**

While the majority of South Koreans seem to favor reunification, there is growing ambivalence about the timing and nature of reunification. Nearly half of the respondents in the KBS survey (January 2011 survey by the Korean Broadcasting System (KBS) envisioned a relatively gradual process of unity, with 24.6% indicating that it could happen within 10 years and 24% citing a time frame of 20 years. This protracted time frame recognizes that there are very complex and difficult issues involved in reunification. There are the seemingly intractable political differences and mistrust between the two Koreas, some of which are embedded in ideological conflicts. In addition, the North Korean nuclear weapons issue over the past two decades has only made reunification even more difficult to achieve. Finally, the social cleavages stemming from division and war and the generation shift to a younger generation that grew up in a divided peninsula all make the idea of reunification more a long-term dream rather than a near-time reality that requires preparation.

"The Economic Costs of Korean Reunification" Joon Seok Hong, SPICE, *Inter-Korean Relations: Rivalry, Reconciliation, and Reunification* (2010).

9. What reasons does the author give for the survey’s protracted time frame for reunification?

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**Document 10**

Consider for a moment the disparity in wealth between the North and South. South Korea’s approximately 49 million people enjoy a per capita income of about \$30,000 USD, compared to \$1900 for their Northern kin. Studies have indicated a \$3 trillion dollar price tag and a 10-year timeline to bring incomes in the North to even 60% of those in the South, and the example of Germany suggests that high unemployment and mass migrations will be just a few of the economic challenges that will drive the cost even higher.

That is the reason the South has not pushed especially hard for a peaceful reunification, and it’s why they literally can’t afford to start a war with the North – because it would cost their citizens about 1/3 of their annual income to establish a degree of equality in distribution of wealth.

10. What economic challenges does reunification pose for South Korea?

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**Document 11**

**South Korea approves bill to set up unification fund**

South Korea's cabinet on Tuesday endorsed a bill which sets up a special fund to cover the huge cost of potential reunification with North Korea. The bill calls for dividing the existing Inter-Korean Cooperation Fund into two accounts one for promoting cross-border cooperation and the other for covering unification costs, said the unification ministry.

The bill, endorsed at a cabinet meeting chaired by President Lee Myung-Bak, needs approval from parliament. The unification account will draw funds from government and private donations, said the ministry, which handles cross-border affairs. Estimates vary widely on the cost of reuniting the prosperous capitalist South and the impoverished socialist North, which have grown far apart over the past six decades. Gross national income per capita in the South is now around 19 times larger than in the North. A study sponsored by the ministry has estimated that basic welfare spending on North Koreans would cost 55 trillion won (\$48.7 billion) for the first year after reunification. The first-year figure could rise to 249 trillion won almost one quarter of the South's 2010 national economic output if medical costs, pensions and other benefits were factored in.

Muhammad Iqbal, *Copyright AFP (Agence France-Presse)*, 07 August, 2012.

11. What effects would the recent actions of the South Korean government have on any potential reunification with North Korea?

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