

## Common Core: Korea

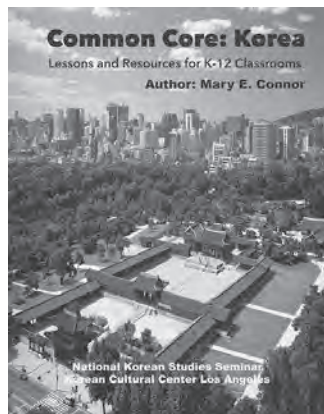
### *Lessons and Resources for K–12 Classrooms*

BY MARY E. CONNOR

NATIONAL KOREAN STUDIES SEMINAR AND THE KOREAN CULTURAL CENTER, LOS ANGELES, 2015

155 PAGES, INFORMATION ON HOW TO ORDER PRINT AND E-BOOK COPIES IS AVAILABLE AT [HTTPS://NATIONALKOREANSTUDIES.COM](https://nationalkoreanstudies.com)

Reviewed by Charles Newell



Do not let the words “Common Core” in the title of this curriculum guide cause you to dismiss it too quickly. It has certainly become an educational fad to use the phrase “Common Core” on about every classroom resource. Ironically, it has also become clear that not all states will adopt the Common Core standards, and thus far, some (and perhaps eventually many) states are changing the way they are implementing Common Core standards with their own set of state standards. Although the content in the

guide can be applied to Common Core standards, this edited volume should probably more accurately be considered as a starting point and source book for anyone who wants to include Korean content in their classroom. The subtitle, *Lessons and Resources for K–12 Classrooms*, indicates its broad scope and reminds the reader that it can be used in almost any classroom setting.

The author, Mary Connor, is a great champion for the inclusion of Korean content in American schools. She taught US history and Asian studies for decades in California, but more importantly helped organize and run the Korea Academy for Educators (KAFE) at the Korean Cultural Center in Los Angeles from 2004 to 2012. This nationwide program provides teachers with content and resources to teach Korea in their respective schools. Thus, Connor has invaluable experience and knowledge about what works in American classrooms when it comes to Korea. This knowledge is clearly reflected in the breadth of material included in this volume. The chapters cover such diverse topics as history, art, language, literature, and religion, with lessons for various grade levels. Not surprisingly, Connor is the author of many of the lessons and articles herself.

The book begins in an obvious place, with a chapter for social studies teachers titled “History–Social Science.” This section starts with a list of the standards that the state of California uses for Korean content in its social studies classrooms. Again, this should not dissuade non-California teachers from using this book. The list serves as a helpful guide for those within the state and food for thought for other educators on what is most important to teach about Korea. The rest of the chapter provides useful information and lessons for any teacher who wishes to teach about the history of Korea. The content of this chapter ranges from lessons for elementary students about famous Koreans to document-based questions (DBQs) for AP history classes. The chapter also includes source material for the social sciences, and lessons on economics and politics.

The next chapter, “Language,” is very brief, but the editor does a good job of introducing the history and syllabary of the Korean language, along with some basic vocabulary. Since it is rare to find Korean taught

in American K–12 schools, this chapter can help teachers provide a quick introduction to the Korean language.

The longest chapter in the book is the one on literature. It takes up more than a quarter of the book’s pages. This may seem disproportionate, but perhaps the easiest way to introduce a country’s culture and history into a classroom is through its literature. This section highlights various examples of Korea-related literature applicable from Pre-K to undergraduate general education courses. Teachers in each of these levels interested in Korea should find one or more useful Korea literature source materials. The chapter ends with a great way to introduce Korean literature into a high school English or creative writing class, the *sijo*, a classical Korean poetic form that is similar to haiku but longer and more complex.

The literature section is followed by shorter chapters on art and philosophy/religion. While these sections are not nearly as comprehensive as the history or literature chapters, they introduce important aspects of Korean folk art and belief systems. There is a brief article about Korean folk art and its important symbols, but if an art teacher wanted to try something more complicated, there is a lesson plan about how to make *bojagi*, a traditional Korean wrapping cloth involving sewing and textiles. The religion–philosophy section is also brief, but its three articles cover the three most important belief systems in Korea: Confucianism, Buddhism, and Christianity. To understand modern Korea, a student would need to be familiar with these three cultural influences.

This collection of articles and lessons about Korea is an uneven but a multifaceted one. It should be noted that it does contain many lessons and articles that first appeared in *Education About Asia*. However, it is by no means a comprehensive collection of Korea resources for the classroom. A teacher who would like to include more Korea-related content would certainly find this book a very useful jumping-off point, an introduction of sorts, to the many possible ways Korea could be taught. To emphasize this point, the final section of the book is titled “Resources,” which obviously leads the curious teacher toward websites, film, and other media with Korean content and lesson plans. So whether or not you teach in a Common Core state, California, or another state, you should find a lesson that you can adapt to your classroom needs, or at least a resource to locate other lessons and information about Korea. ■

CHARLES NEWELL is an English Teacher at Notre Dame High School in Chattanooga, Tennessee, and has published articles and curriculum materials on Korea. He has also taught a high school film class, with an emphasis on *anime* and the samurai films of Akira Kurosawa.

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