

## The Korean War — A Magazine Project

*This activity was designed for high school United States history classes.*

By Ann Kennedy

### PURPOSE/RATIONALE

High school world history and United States history textbooks generally downgrade the Korean War to a footnote of the Cold War. This activity asks students to research, summarize, and draw conclusions about an often forgotten war in United States history. This assignment could be made part of a unit on the Cold War.

### OBJECTIVES

#### Knowledge—Students will

1. Investigate the reasons for the division of the Korean Peninsula at the close of World War II.
2. Identify the political and military leaders of the Korean war and their contributions to war and to the peace process.
3. Construct arguments supporting and/or opposing U.S. policies in the war.
4. Summarize the strengths and weaknesses of North and South Korea during the war.
5. Examine the decisions made following the armistice.
6. Understand the issues that continue to divide North Korea and South Korea.

#### Skills—Students will

Identify, analyze, and interpret primary and secondary sources and make generalizations from them.

#### Attitude—Students will

Empathize with the hardships faced by the Korean people and American soldiers during the war.

Gain an appreciation for views of Koreans and Americans as a result of the war.

### TIME ALLOTTMENT

Students will need approximately two days of class time, including time for library and/or Internet research.

Most of the work will be done outside of class. Students will need approximately three weeks to gather resources and complete the requirements.

### RESOURCES NEEDED

Access to computers/printers and the Internet.  
Paper, scissors, and glue.

### PROCEDURE

1. Using lecture or class discussion, explain the background leading up to U.S. involvement in the Korean War. (See teacher notes).
2. Distribute copies of the magazine assignment sheet, including the rubric.
3. Explain what students will be expected to do on the project and the time commitment involved in preparing their magazine.
4. Have magazines available for students to examine so that they can gather ideas on how to present their magazine.
5. Depending on the level of the students, it may be necessary to practice writing an obituary and an editorial.

6. Arrange for students to have research time in the library, and when available, on the Internet.
7. During the course of the study, invite a Korean War veteran to speak to the students. You may also want to invite a Korean immigrant to talk about life in Korea, the impact of the war, and the current division of Korea.

### ASSESSMENT

Assess students using the rubric that accompanies their assignment sheet.

### EXTENSION AND ENRICHMENT

The magazine project has many possibilities. You may want to assign extra credit options such as a sports page, personals column, advertisement, book or music reviews, etc. Advanced students would benefit from completing an annotated bibliography.

### TEACHER RESOURCES

Cummings, Bruce. *Korea's Place in the Sun—A Modern History*. New York: W.W. Norton, 1997.

<http://www.nsa.gov/korea>

Korean War 50th Anniversary (1950–1953) Commemoration.

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## LESSONS

The National Security Agency has free materials available for teachers and students, including posters and books on the Korean War.

**STUDENT RESOURCES**

[www.koreanwar.org/](http://www.koreanwar.org/). The Korean War Project.

[www.theforgottenvictory.org/](http://www.theforgottenvictory.org/) Korean War Veterans National Museum and Library.

<http://encarta.msn.com/index/conciseindex/1f/>. Korean War, an Encarta Encyclopedia article.

<http://www.rt66.com/~korteng/SmallArms/arms.h>. Korean WAR: Weapons, history, combat photos.

**DISCUSSION NOTES**

During World War II, Korea was occupied by Japan. When the war was over, Korea was divided along the 38th parallel. The Soviet Union controlled the northern zone, and the United States controlled the Southern zone.

The southern zone was called the Republic of Korea. In 1948 they elected an anticommunist government. The northern zone was called the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and was ruled by a communist government.

Fighting began after North Korea invaded South Korea in 1950. President Truman decided to commit United States troops to South Korea to stop the conflict.

U.S. troops and other troops fighting under the United Nations flag were soon engaged in military conflict. General Douglas MacArthur was named commander of UN troops in Korea. Casualties mounted as Chinese forces (supporting North Korea) crossed the Yalu River.

By the middle of 1951 the war had reached a stalemate, although fighting continued. General MacArthur and President Truman clashed over the strategies and objectives of the war.

President Truman fired MacArthur as the military commander.

Truce talks began in 1951, but the cease-fire was not signed until July 27, 1953.

The war in Korea lasted about three years. Approximately 59,000 South Koreans died in the war. More than 500,000 North Koreans and Chinese died, and approximately 34,000 Americans (Source: *Air Force Magazine*, June 2000).

**THE KOREAN WAR****A Magazine Project**

**Instructions:** You are to create a "Korean War Magazine" which includes the following items and information related to the conflict as well as recent events:

- A **cover page** with an appropriate title, picture, and date. Make certain you include your name and time period on the cover.
- A **table of contents**.
- A **news story** that summarizes the events that led to the Korean conflict.
- A **news story** about the war itself (i.e., an overview of the events of the war).
- **Two obituaries** of Korean military or political leaders, one North Korean, one South Korean. (Example: Kim Il Sung, Mu Chong).
- **Two obituaries** of American military or political leaders involved in the Korean War. (Example: Douglas MacArthur, Harry Truman, Dean Acheson).
- A **cartoon** with an accompanying editorial about the same wartime event. You may draw the cartoon yourself, or use a book or the Internet to find an actual political cartoon from the era.
- A **map of Korea**, showing the 38th parallel, with an explanation of its significance.

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- A **chart showing the strengths and weaknesses** of both North and South Korea during the war. You can find statistics on the Internet. You may include population, industry, weapons, transportation, supplies, troops, communications, wealth, natural resources, foreign aid, etc.
- Write **twenty headlines** that might have appeared in newspapers, including those that reflect the views of North Korea, South Korea, and the United States. You may also want to include headlines reflecting China's viewpoint.
- Create a **propaganda poster** supporting the U.S. position/viewpoint on one of the following: NSC-68, containment, or the "domino theory."
- Include a **poem or song**, written by a Korean, about the war.
- **Write an editorial** either supporting or opposing President Harry S. Truman's decision to remove General Douglas MacArthur as the U.S. military commander.
- **Write an advice column.** You will need to write the letter from the person seeking advice as well as your answer. Consider the situations that someone living in Korea might need help with. Some examples are listed below:

A teenager living in Korea during the war who must choose between finishing school and volunteering to serve in the Chinese communist army.

A Korean woman who has fallen in love with an American soldier in spite of strong cultural objections from her family. An American soldier confused about why he has been drafted to fight in a foreign conflict.

A Korean farmer who must contend with soldiers stomping through his fields and destroying his crops.

A Korean child who fears stepping on a land mine while playing outside.

- A **postscript page.** On this page, you, as the magazine editor, should talk about the two Koreas *today*. Summarize the current situation.
- **Extra Credit: Interview** one of the following about their memories of the war, their views on it at the time, and their views now.
  - A Korean War veteran
  - An immigrant from Korea

Write at least ten questions before your interview and go to the interview prepared. You are playing the role of a reporter, so behave in a professional manner. **Write a feature story based upon the interview.**

**Collect these pages and bind them in a magazine/book format. For example, you may staple the pages or use yarn to tie them together. ■**

### RUBRIC FOR GRADING THE KOREAN WAR MAGAZINE

#### Content Points:

Cover design	10 points
Table of contents	10 points
News story—causes of the war	20 points
News story—events of the war	20 points
Obituaries (4 total)	40 points
Cartoon	10 points
Editorial to accompany cartoon	15 points
Map	10 points
Paragraph explaining battle map	15 points
Chart	15 points
Interview (extra credit)	25 points
20 headlines	20 points
Poem or song	20 points
Editorial on Truman/MacArthur	20 points
Advice column	25 points
Postscript page	20 points

#### Total Points

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