

Part 1: Leading up to The Korean War

Lesson Overview

In this lesson, students will investigate the historical developments that led to the Korean War, focusing on the impact of World War II, the Japanese occupation, and the initial stages of the Cold War. The unit emphasizes understanding both the causes and the far-reaching consequences of Korea's division. Through a combination of group activities, discussions, and personal reflection, students will build critical thinking skills and gain a deeper understanding of the significance of this conflict in world history.

Wyoming State Social Studies Standards

- SS12.1.6 Compare and contrast various world political systems (e.g., ideologies, structure, and institutions) with that of the United States.
- SS12.3.2 Analyze and evaluate how people organize for the production, distribution, and consumption of goods and services in various economic systems (e.g., capitalism, communism, and socialism).
- SS12.4.1 Describe patterns of change (cause and effect) and evaluate how past events impacted future events and the modern world.

Objectives

- Students will identify key events leading up to the Korean War.
- Students will understand the political and social impacts of the Japanese occupation of Korea.
- Students will analyze the Cold War's effects on Korea's division and the formation of opposing governments.
- Students will discuss the ideological differences between the U.S. and the Soviet Union during the Cold War in the context of the Korean War and foreign policy.

Materials

- Supplementary readings on the Korean War
- Map of Korea showing the 38th parallel
- Primary source documents
- Multimedia resources (e.g., videos, documentaries)
- Whiteboard and markers

Presentation and Discussion Activity

Introduction (15 minutes)

1. Begin with a brief lecture on Korea's history before and during Japanese occupation.
2. Show a timeline of key events from the early 20th century to the end of WWII.
 - a. Using this [Timeline of Key Events in Asia from 1900 to 1950](#), review the sections on Korea and Japan to contextualize Korea's political situation by 1945

Group Research (30 minutes)

1. Divide students into small groups and assign each group a specific event or aspect of the period leading up to the Korean War
 - a. Events and aspects may include the Truman Doctrine, Winston Churchill's Iron Curtain speech, Josef Stalin's election speech of 1946, etc.
2. Provide primary and secondary sources for each group to examine.
3. Task each group with reviewing sources to create a short presentation (e.g., a poster/infographic, expanded timeline, slideshow, etc.)
 - a. Each presentation should provide a clear explanation of the assigned event/aspect and its implications on international foreign policy and lead-up to the Korean War.

Class Discussion (20 minutes)

1. Have each group present its findings to the class.
2. Facilitate a discussion on the reasons behind the division of Korea and the influence of the Cold War on growing global tensions.
 - a. Have students relate all events/aspects of their groups' research and presentations within this discussion to further their understanding of the events/aspects' importance.
3. Conclude the discussion with final thoughts on the impact of these events on further international relations, both including and beyond the Korean War.

Conclusion (15 minutes)

1. In a brief, one-page reflection, task students with summarizing the key takeaways from their research, presentations, and class discussion, drawing from all events covered.

2. Highlight the long-term implications of the Korean War on international relations.

Compilation of Sources

- Timeline of Key Points across East Asia by Territory: 20th CENTURY 1900-1950
 - https://afe.easia.columbia.edu/main_pop/kpct/kp_1900-1950.htm#colonial-rule%E2%80%A2
- Josef Stalin 1946 Election Speech
 - <https://soviethistory.msu.edu/1947-2/cold-war/cold-war-texts/stalin-election-speech/>
- Winston Churchill's "Iron Curtain" Speech Transcript
 - <https://www.nationalchurchillmuseum.org/sinews-of-peace-iron-curtain-speech.html>
- Timeline of Korean War Origins, 1945-1950
 - <https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/topics/korean-war-origins-1945-1950>
- Summary of the Division of the Korean Peninsula and Map Showing the 38th Parallel
 - <http://www.cotf.edu/ete/modules/korea/kdivided.html>
- United Nations Security Council Resolution 83 – Intervention to Defend South Korea
 - <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/112026?ln=en&v=pdf>

Planning a Visit to the NMMV

Although the lessons in this series can be implemented in the classroom without time-consuming or difficult preparation, they are also designed to be taught along with a visit to the National Museum of Military Vehicles, specifically the Puller Gallery.

For this lesson (Leading Up to the Korean War), pay special attention to these displays and/or highlight the significance of these concepts in the museum:

1. The brief film in the Consequences Theater explains international relations during the transition out of WWII and into the Cold War
2. Entry into the Korean War exhibit:
 - a. The large wall map of Korea in this entrance may be used to place Korea in relation to Japan and China in a discussion of Japanese occupation and the Chinese Civil War (with a communist victory under Mao Zedong)
 - b. The informational panels should be used to provide a brief reminder of the major events leading up to the Korean War but should not be an introduction to the topic.