

Korean War Lesson Plan

Central Historical Question:
Who started the Korean War?

Materials:

- Copies of Textbook Excerpts A and B
- Copies of Korean War Guiding Questions
- Korean War PowerPoint Slides
- Optional: Classroom Textbook Excerpt on the Korean War

Plan of Instruction:

1. Do Now: Why might textbooks from different countries offer different versions of the same historical events? When textbooks offer conflicting accounts, how do you decide which textbook to believe?
 - *Establish that textbooks, like other historical documents we have looked at, have a bias and often offer only one perspective on the past.*
 - *History textbooks are often influenced by a country's national perspective and geographic and geo-political relationship to other countries.*
2. Transition: *Today we are going to look at two different textbook accounts of the start of the Korean War and try to figure out where they come from, and which one offers the most trustworthy account. Before we do this, we need some background information.*
3. Mini-lecture to establish context for the Korean War. Project map of Korean War while lecturing (PPT slide):
 - *Korean War was the first hot war of the Cold War: 1950-1953.*
 - *During Second World War, the Allies decided to divide Korea at the 38th parallel. The North was under the trusteeship of the Soviet Union, the South under the trusteeship of the Americans. Two different countries developed: the North became a communist country, the South a non-communist, democratic country.*
 - *Both sides wanted to re-unify the country under their own rule.*

- *In 1950, after a number of small skirmishes at the border, war broke out between North and South Korea. The US backed and fought with the South, and China fought with a backed the North.*
 - *Initially, American and United Nations forces pushed deep into North Korea; however, China entered the war and pushed the Americans backed into the South.*
 - *After three years, the two sides fought to a stalemate and kept the country divided at the 38th parallel.*
 - *Our job today is think about the question: Who started the Korean War?*
4. Explain to students that they are going to read two textbook accounts of the Korean War, one from North Korea and the other from South Korea. Pass out Textbook Excerpts A and B and Guiding Questions.
5. In pairs, students read textbook excerpts and answer questions.
6. Discussion: Students share out answers to questions:
- *According to each textbook, how did the Korean War start?*
 - *Which of these textbooks do you find more trustworthy? Why?*
 - *Where else would you look in order to figure out how the Korean War started?*
 - *Which textbook comes from North Korea? Which comes from South Korea?*
7. If time remains, have students compare these accounts to the account of the start of the Korean War in their classroom textbooks.

Citations

History of the Revolution of our Great Leader Kim Il-sun: High School. (Pongyang, North Korea: Textbook Publishing Co., 1999), 125-127.

Doojin Kim, Korean History: Senior High. (Seoul, South Korea: Dae Han Textbook Co., 2001), 199.