



Forgotten War

Springboard:

Students should study “On the Map” and answer the questions.

(The answer to the first question is B - relative location.)

The map shows that Korea shares borders with China and Russia which were both communist countries by the 1950's. At that time the Cold War was going strong and the U.S. desperately feared of the spread of communism.)

Objective: The student will be able to explain how the Korean War was related to the Cold War and briefly describe the events surrounding the conflict.

Materials: On the Map (Springboard handout or transparency)
Interview with the Veteran (handout)
Close-up on Korea (handout)

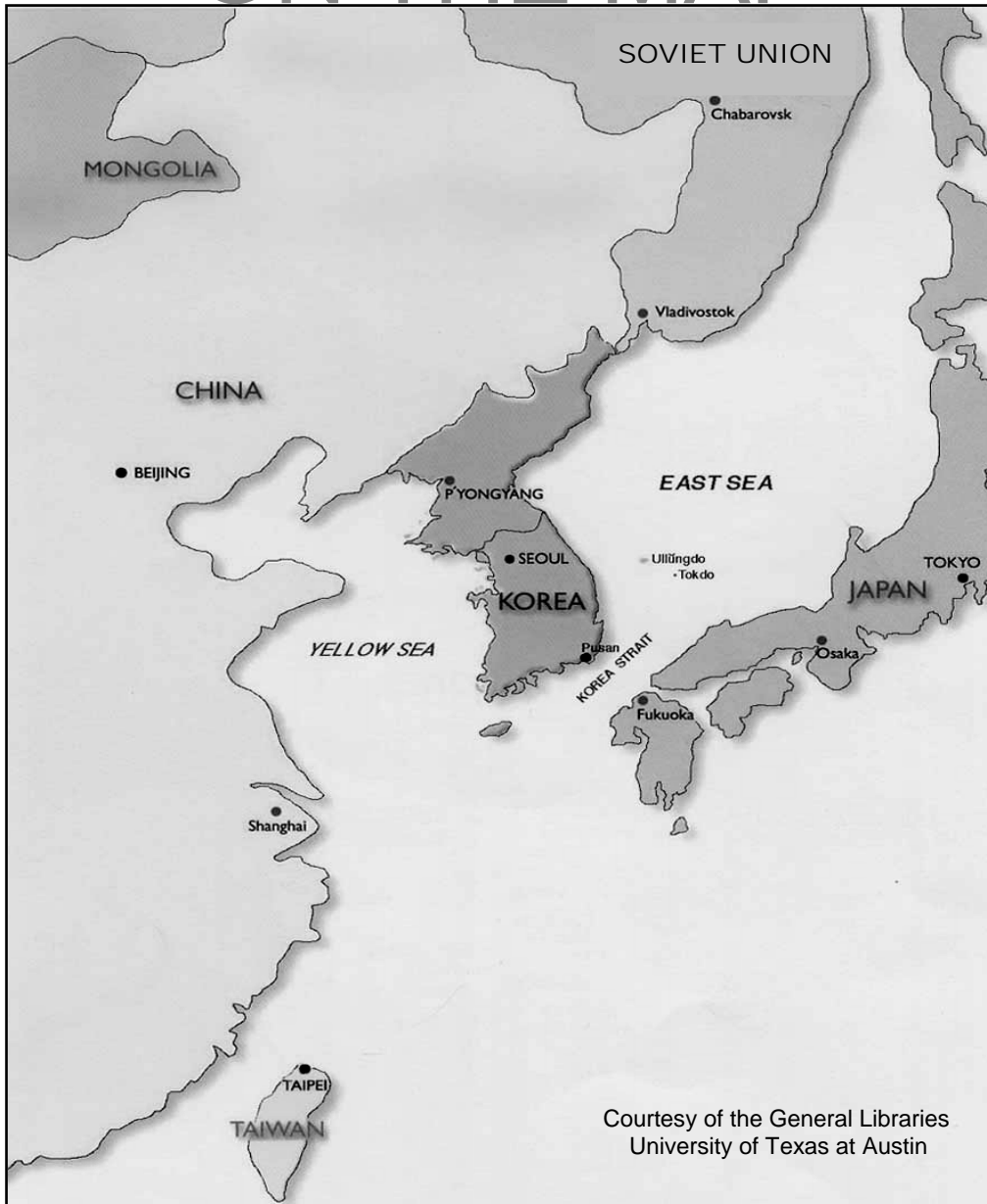
Terms to know:

- U.N. (United Nations)** - world peacekeeping organization formed after World War II
- parallel** - line of latitude
- veteran** - a former soldier
- monsoons** - heavy rainfall accompanying seasonal shifts in wind direction
- nuclear deterrence** - policy of preventing an armed attack through the fear of retaliation
- armistice** - agreement to stop fighting
- integration** - removal of barriers separating races

Procedure:

- After discussing the Springboard, explain that as the U.S.S.R. captured land fighting Germany in Eastern Europe, it had also captured part of Korea from the Japanese during W.W.II which it did not want to give up after the war. So, similarly to Eastern Europe, Korea was divided. The 38th parallel divided the East Asian nation into communist North Korea and the free Republic of South Korea. The division further explains why the United States would be concerned about the peninsula. Go on to explain that in this lesson the student(s) will learn how the division of Korea led to war.
- Hand out the “Interview with a Veteran.” **For group instruction** select students to perform the interview or have students read it together in pairs. **For individualized instruction** read the interview with your student. (**FYI:** The interview is an InspirEd creation based on the author’s research.)
- The student(s) should then complete the “Close-up on Korea” handout.
- Have them share their opinions about the war and discuss. (*Answers will vary, but their ideas should be supported with facts.*) One point to note in the discussion is that the Korean War was not actually a declared war, but was officially a “police action.”

ON THE MAP



The main purpose of this map is to show

- A. the distance from Japan to Korea.
- B. Korea's relative location in Asia.
- C. that Korea is a peninsula.
- D. where Korea is divided.

Why do you think the United States would have been concerned about Korea in the 1950's? _____



General Douglas MacArthur, one of America's few 5-star generals who had already proven his leadership ability in both World Wars, was called upon once again after North Korea attacked the Republic of Korea on June 25, 1950. Read Mark Question's 1962 interview with the general to learn about this often-overlooked war.

Question - General MacArthur, thank you for agreeing to speak with me today. There are so many fascinating things you've done in your life. I'd love to talk about all of them but, as I told you in our telephone conversation, my assignment is to find out about the Korean War.

MacArthur - No problem, Mark. Where would you like to start?

Question - Let's start at the beginning. What happened?

MacArthur - Well, as you know the United States and the other free nations of the world were very concerned about the spread of communism after World War II, and we had good reason to be. The commies already controlled Russia and Eastern Europe and in '49 took over China. It was surely no secret that they wanted to expand their influence.

Question - So did the U.S. have a large force in South Korea to defend it against attacks that might come from the north?

MacArthur - Not as big as you might expect, at least not in June when the war started. Summer is the rainy season there and, while there had been a good many border skirmishes since '45 and we knew the Russians had been training North Koreans for combat, we didn't expect an attack until the monsoons were over.

Question - So we weren't ready for it?

MacArthur - No, not at all and neither were the ROK's, the Republic of Korea's troops. All in all in June of '50 there were only about 65,000 ROK's backed up by 500 American military advisors and 45,000 policemen who were not trained soldiers. The North Koreans had more than twice as many troops.

Question - It sounds like a recipe for disaster.

MacArthur - Yeah, it was for a while, but the U.N. stepped up pretty quickly. But a lot of people died first. Before we could get any help in there, the North occupied the South Korean capital of Seoul where they rounded up and executed thousands.

Question - So how long was it before the U.N. came to the rescue?

MacArthur - There's actually a heroic story to be told there. The first troops that arrived on July 4th, 1950, have been nicknamed Task Force Smith after their commander. Most of these guys were teenagers and only about one in six had combat experience. Most had either been drafted at the end of the Big One or signed

up since to see the world. Up until July they'd been stationed in Japan and had servants to wash their clothes and shine their boots. Then all of a sudden they were south of Seoul with little more than a few old weapons and two days worth of C rations.

Question - So how did they do?

MacArthur - Well, their basic mission was just to hold off the enemy until more troops could get there. To make a long story short, they did what they were told. They held off the North Koreans for almost a day but lost 185 boys doing it. The Smith Force also taught us a lot about how ill-prepared the U.S. was to go to war.

Question - In what way?

MacArthur - In every way! We'd just fought a major war that cost dearly in terms of lives and dollars. Afterwards nobody back home had the stomach for large defense spending. Then the money Congress did give the military was spent all wrong. The thinking back then was that since we had the A-bomb, any problems could be handled with it, so the Air Force got the bulk of the money. The Navy got some too, but the Army's budget was cut to the bone.

Question - So why didn't we use the bomb?

MacArthur - We couldn't. Once the Soviets had developed theirs, the situation changed. If we used ours, they could use theirs on us in return and vice versa.

Question - Nuclear deterrence? (*MacArthur nods.*) So our Army wasn't ready to fight?

MacArthur - Definitely not. We were understaffed and poorly supplied, which is why we did so badly at first. A large percentage of the 34,000 American deaths in Korea came in that first year of fighting.

Question - But things weren't all bad. If I'm not mistaken, we had one glorious success – thanks to you.

MacArthur - Well, thank you, but it's the men who deserve the credit for Inchon. Our forces had been taking a beating and we needed a big victory badly. We knew it was a gamble, but in mid-September we landed our forces behind enemy lines at the port of Inchon on the Yellow Sea. Our mission was to cut off the North Koreans' supply lines, which we did. We really thought that victory would bring an end to the war, but that didn't happen. In fact, in a way it worked against us.

Question - How?

MacArthur - It convinced the Red Chinese to commit troops to the war. After Inchon it should have been pretty easy for the U.S. to defeat a fourth-rate nation like North Korea, but the Chinese were another story. We had hoped to be finished in Korea by winter but, of course, we weren't. We ended up fighting the Chinese in the North through the worst of it.

Question - What was it like?

MacArthur - In a word, hell. Temperatures fell to 24 below zero! Flesh stuck to metal and weapons and vehicles froze up. Our men did their best under the worst of circumstances, but the Chinese were still able to drive us back into South Korea. Even so, to our credit it was at great cost to the enemy. Our sources told us that the Chinese lost 20 men for every one of our losses. Then as the weather improved, we were able to gain ground again and moved back into the North in March.

Question - That was a tough time for you personally, though.

MacArthur - Yes. President Truman and I were not exactly seeing eye-to-eye on the war or the world situation at that point. It was his belief that the Soviet Union posed a greater threat to us and to the world than the Chinese and he wanted troops moved from Korea to Europe. I thought we needed to finish up in Korea and that a win there would help secure peace with both the Chinese and the Russians.

Question - So President Truman relieved you of your command.

MacArthur - That's right, in April of '51. I won't say it was easy, but he was my Commander-in-Chief and I respected his decision.

Question - So what happened to the war?

MacArthur - It continued, but at the same time the two sides and other interested parties began holding peace talks. It was tough and the discussion stalled over several issues including prisoner exchanges. That was a big problem since many of the North's prisoners didn't want to be sent back. In fact that one issue alone probably prolonged the war an extra fifteen months. During that period there were several offensive campaigns by both sides and a lot of bombing raids. Another big issue was what a post-war Korea should look like. A lot of people in both the North and the South wanted the two sides to be reunited. It just wasn't working.

Question - But a peace was finally worked out?

MacArthur - An armistice was signed to end the fighting but the country remained divided, and there's still tension between the two sides today.

Question - Looking back, how would you say the Korean War affected the world and the United States?

MacArthur - For one thing it pushed the U.S. to the front line in the fight against Communism. I think it also showed the world that use of force against other nations would not be tolerated. Also, one more thing I think should be mentioned is that this was the first time U.S. forces were fully integrated. Black soldiers who fought in other wars had always fought in separate divisions.

Question - So the Korean War really was quite important, yet we hear so little about it. Why do you think that is?

MacArthur - I don't know, maybe because our country never actually declared war. I suppose it remains to be seen what role the war will play in history in the long term.

Question - Well, General, I'd like to thank you for speaking with me today. I'm sure the information you provided will be helpful to my readers. (*MacArthur nods*)

CLOSE-UP ON KOR

Consider each question based on what you have learned about the Korean War and then **FULLY EXPLAIN** your answers.



Do you agree with America's actions in involving itself in the Korean War? Why or why not?



Do you agree more with President Truman's or General MacArthur's views regarding the communist threat at the time? Explain.



Explain why you think the Korean War is often referred to as "The Forgotten War"?