

Name _____

Date _____

The Korean War

Reading and Discussion

During **World War II**, the Japanese military destroyed much of the Korean landscape and many of the Korean people. After the war, the Japanese surrendered to the **United States** and the **Soviet Union** forces that were located in **Korea**. After Japan surrendered, the Soviet Union controlled the northern Korean territory. The United States controlled the territory in the south of Korea. The United States and the Soviet Union were trying to rebuild Korea. They each supplied weapons and training to the people located within their territory. Eventually, the Soviet forces and the American forces left Korea, but because they split the country into two parts, Korea was a country divided and on the brink of war.

The United States withdrew their troops from Korea because they were trying to avoid another war. They thought that their continued presence in Korea might seem like an aggressive action against North Korea and other interested parties. The United States had a lot of military in **Japan** and the **Philippines**. They assumed that their presence in these neighboring countries would enable them to address any hostilities that arose in the area. The United States' Secretary of State, **Dean Acheson**, declared Korea to be outside of the United States' defensive perimeter. This left South Korea without protection from the United States.

After the American troops withdrew, South Korea was in a vulnerable position. The leader of North Korea, **Kim Il-Sung**, increased his strength through the assistance he received from the Soviets. Once his military was strengthened, he sent North Korean troops into South Korea on June 25, 1950. The North Korean military was better equipped and better trained than the South Korean soldiers. As a result, the South Korean troops were driven further south to the town of Pusan, which was near the southern coast of Korea.

Prior to the invasion of South Korea, the **National Security Council** proposed an increase in US military spending. The proposal was in a policy paper known as NSC-68 and was proposed in April of 1950. The purpose of the proposal was to ensure that the US containment policy in Korea (and other areas) was able to be enforced. At the time of the proposal, there was no immediate military crisis. Since enacting the proposal was expensive, Congress did not act on the recommendations. After North Korea entered South Korea, President Truman resurrected the proposal. He wanted a 350% increase in the military budget. He also wanted the number of troops to be increased to 3.5 million.

The US went on to condemn North Korea's invasion of South Korea. The US created a United Nations Security Council proposal that pledged UN support to restore peace in South Korea. The proposal was passed unanimously by all nine nations that attended the meeting. **President Truman** feared that North Korea's actions would start another world war. Because of the proposal that passed, Truman was able to use the military to try to end the conflict in Korea. Without consulting Congress, Truman told American Air Force and Naval units to support South Korea. The UN resolution permitted Truman to appoint a commander of the UN forces. **General Douglas MacArthur** and his troops were ordered to leave their post in Japan and support the South Korean troops. While the operation was under the control of the United Nations, 90 percent of the troops, supplies, and money were American.

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General Douglas MacArthur's troops joined the South Korean troops in Pusan. MacArthur knew that facing the North Korean troops at Pusan would be hard. On September 15, 1950, MacArthur launched an assault on the North Korean troops near Inchon. The North Koreans did not anticipate MacArthur's move and were unprepared. The North Koreans suffered heavy casualties. They were also driven back to North Korea.

MacArthur and the South Koreans wanted to pursue the North Korean troops and put an end to the war. Truman was reluctant because he feared that such actions would be seen as a potential attack on the Soviet Union or China. Truman and the United Nations decided to allow MacArthur's troops to invade North Korea on the condition that they would not fight any Soviet Union or Chinese forces. MacArthur did not think that the Soviets or the Chinese would aid North Korea, so he invaded.

MacArthur moved quickly and overextended his troops. Over 300,000 Chinese joined the fight against MacArthur's forces. There were many casualties and the South Korean troops were driven back into South Korea. MacArthur was angry about China's involvement and wanted to retaliate against China. Truman did not want the war to escalate by attacking the Chinese. Truman and the United Nations ordered MacArthur to fight a "**limited war**." They now wanted only to reestablish the border between North and South Korea.

MacArthur disagreed with the limitations and began to publicly question Truman's judgment. As a result, Truman relieved MacArthur of his command. Informal peace talks finally began in Korea in July of 1951. Talks continued sporadically for the next two years, but little was accomplished. Fighting on both sides continued.

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Activities

Activity A: Fill in the Blanks.

1. The _____ controlled the northern Korean territory after World War II.
2. The _____ controlled the territory in the south of Korea.
3. This man was president of the United States during the Korean War: _____.
4. The United States' Secretary of State, _____, declared Korea to be outside of the United States' defensive perimeter.
5. Prior to the invasion of South Korea, the _____ proposed an increase in US military spending.
6. The leader of North Korea during the Korean War was _____.
7. After World War II, this country surrendered in Korea: _____.

Activity B: True or False.

- _____ 1. On September 15, 1950, MacArthur launched an assault on the North Korean troops near Inchon.
- _____ 2. The United States pulled their troops out of Korea because they were at war in Vietnam.
- _____ 3. General Douglas MacArthur and his troops were ordered to leave their post in Japan and support the South Korean troops.
- _____ 4. The US created a United Nations Security Council proposal that pledged UN support to restore peace in South Korea.
- _____ 5. The North Korean military was better equipped and better trained than the South Korean soldiers.
- _____ 6. Truman and the United Nations ordered MacArthur to fight a "limited war."
- _____ 7. Without consulting Congress, Truman told American Air Force and Naval units to support North Korea.

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Answer Key

Activity A

1. The Soviet Union controlled the northern Korean territory after World War II.
2. The United States controlled the territory in the south of Korea.
3. This man was president of the United States during the Korean War: President Truman.
4. The United States' Secretary of State, Dean Acheson, declared Korea to be outside of the United States' defensive perimeter.
5. Prior to the invasion of South Korea, the National Security Council proposed an increase in US military spending.
6. The leader of North Korea during the Korean War was Kim Il-Sung.
7. After World War II, this country surrendered in Korea: Japan

Activity B

- T 1. On September 15, 1950, MacArthur launched an assault on the North Korean troops near Inchon.
- F 2. The United States pulled their troops out of Korea because they were at war in Vietnam.
- T 3. General Douglas MacArthur and his troops were ordered to leave their post in Japan and support the South Korean troops.
- T 4. The US created a United Nations Security Council proposal that pledged UN support to restore peace in South Korea.
- T 5. The North Korean military was better equipped and better trained than the South Korean soldiers.
- T 6. Truman and the United Nations ordered MacArthur to fight a "limited war."
- F 7. Without consulting Congress, Truman told American Air Force and Naval units to support North Korea.