

Vocabulary words have been underlined; the definitions are at the end of this lesson.

Students' Material

Lesson 5: Korea and the Korean War

Before the War

For hundreds of years, Korea was known as one country on the continent of Asia. After World War Two, Korea was divided along the 38th Parallel into two countries. The northern part of Korea became the country of North Korea with a communist government supported by Russia. The southern part became South Korea with a democratic government supported by the United States.



The War

North Korea and South Korea had many problems after Korea was divided. The Korean War started in 1950 when North Korea attacked South Korea. The United States was very concerned about communism spreading to South Korea and other countries in the area, so the US sent troops to South Korea to help keep communism from spreading.





General Douglas MacArthur

General Douglas MacArthur led the United States troops into South Korea and forced the North Korean troops out of South Korea. The Chinese joined North Korea and there were many battles back and forth over the border between the two Korean countries. Four million Koreans, one million Chinese, and 36,914 Americans were killed in the Korean War.

After three years, the war ended when an armistice was signed. This armistice created a buffer zone 2.5 miles wide and over 150 miles long that separates North Korea and South Korea. Neither country is supposed to have any military troops in this zone. No one is allowed to enter this zone. Since no one is to be in this zone, there are many, many soldiers guarding each country's border to this zone. If anyone crosses into this zone, he or she will be killed. This zone is called the DMZ, which stands for Demilitarized Zone.



There are barbed wire fences on the South Korean side of the DMZ which are lighted at night. These fences stretch for many miles. Hundreds of soldiers keep watch along this border.

Picture Courtesy of National Geographic



The South Korean barbed wire fences that stretch along the Southern border of the DMZ. North Korea also has fences on their side of the DMZ.

Picture Courtesy of National Geographic

Because nothing has been built in the DMZ and because almost no one has entered this land in over 60 years, it is now filled with trees, natural plants, and animals. Some of the species “that have dwindled or disappeared in some parts of Asia have found refuge in the DMZ. Sightings of rare birds, such as red-crowned cranes and white-naped cranes, are not unusual. Black bears, musk deer, and Amur gorals—a goat relative that lives in the mountains—also inhabit this heavily fortified area. The fact that it's been left virtually untouched for 60 years means that it's become a kind of nature sanctuary.”

Information courtesy of National Geographic.



Amur Gorals (relatives of the goat)



Four tunnels are marked on this map. These tunnels were built by North Korea under the DMZ. South Korea found the tunnels when an explosion occurred underground. They have blocked the tunnels. One tunnel was apparently designed for a surprise attack on Seoul, South Korea from North Korea, and could accommodate 30,000 men per hour along with light weaponry.



One of the tunnels the North Koreans built and was blocked by South Korea.

Alabamians connected to the Korean War

One famous pilot was Lieutenant Daniel "Chappie" James.



Lieutenant Daniel "Chappie" James poses with his F-51 Mustang fighter plane during the Korean War. The plane is the same type flown by the Tuskegee Airmen during World War II, although it was known at that time as the P-51 for "pursuit."
United States Air Force

Picture Courtesy of Encyclopedia of Alabama

More information on Chappie James:

<http://www.encyclopediaofalabama.org/article/h-3580>

Many people learned about the Korean War from the TV show MASH. One Alabamian, Wayne Rogers, starred in the show. Unlike World War II and Vietnam, the Korean War did not get much media attention in the United States. The most famous representation of the war in popular culture is the television series "M*A*S*H," which was set in a field hospital in South Korea. The series ran from 1972 until 1983, and its final episode was the most-watched in television history.



Birmingham native Wayne Rogers (back-row center) poses with his fellow castmates from *M*A*S*H*. The show, set in a medical facility in Korea, centered on the lives of the doctors and other staff as they dealt with the Korean War and each other. Rogers starred on it from 1972-1975. *Picture Courtesy of Encyclopedia of Alabama*

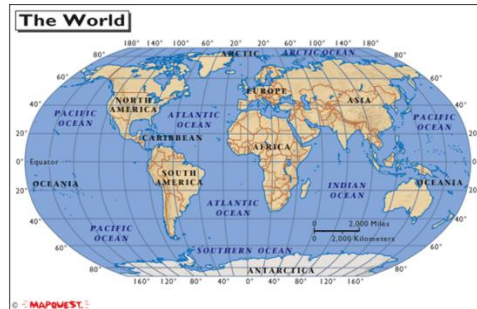
Actors and Actresses went to Korea to entertain the troops



Famous movie star Marilyn Monroe with soldiers in Korea

Vocabulary Words

38th Parallel: The Equator is an imaginary circle in the middle of the earth, equal distance from the poles of the Earth. Circles **parallel** to the Equator (lines running east and west) are **parallels** of latitude. They are used to measure degrees of latitude north or south of the Equator. The 38th Parallel is where Korea is divided into North Korea and South Korea.



Map of the Parallels running east to west

Communist Government: a way of organizing a society in which the goods are owned in common and are available to all as needed. Russia had a communist government for most of the twentieth century.

Democratic Government: a way of organizing a society in which the power is held by the people and used by them directly or indirectly through representation <under our *democracy* the people have some control over their lives by being able to decide who their political leaders will be>

Armistice: an agreement made by opposing sides in a war to stop fighting for a certain time; a truce, ceasefire.

Buffer Zone: a space that protects an area; something that serves as a protective barrier.