

TEACHING AMERICAN HISTORY PROJECT
Lesson Title - The Korean War from a Soldier's Point of View
From Cynthia Petrie

Grade – 11

Length of class period – 50 minutes

Inquiry

1. How did the men serving in Korea view the Korean War?
2. How were their views different as well as similar to that of President Truman and the official United States and United Nations policies and reasons given for fighting in Korea?
3. Why might the soldiers have a different view of the war and its purpose?

Objectives

Content:

1. Students will learn about the Korean War and US involvement in that war.
2. Students will learn about the relationship between the policy of containment and the Korean War.
3. Students will learn the meaning of a UN police action.

Skills:

1. Students will improve their ability to analyze primary source documents to form an opinion.
2. Students will improve their ability to analyze and interpret personal accounts to determine their historical accuracy.
3. Students will be able to understand the difference between first hand experiences of war and directing a war from a distance.
4. Students will improve their ability to support an opinion in writing.

Materials

1. *Korea, the Chosen Place* - a poem by S/SGT Irvin Worden written while stationed in Korea, December 14, 1953
2. A letter from 19 year old Private James J. Lutze written while serving in Korea that appeared in the column, *Between the Lines* in the *Racine Journal Times*

Activities

1. For homework the night before the lesson assign reading of text chapter on

the Korean War. Students will have already studied the start of the Cold War and the US policy of containment as well as the creation of the United Nations following WWII.

2. At the start of class discuss text reading and give brief notes on the Korean War, including causes, the United Nations decision to use a "Police Action," and how the United States became involved.
3. Discuss the relationship between communism and American policy/attitudes toward it and our involvement in Korea.
4. Have the class brainstorm their ideas on the difference between a police action and a declared war. Ask them to also determine if there are any similarities.
5. Hand out copies of *Korea, the Chosen Place* and *A Letter Home from Korea*. Ask for a student volunteer to read the poem out loud and then discuss the poem by having the class brainstorm lists of the following: words that show the author's emotions, words that describe how he sees the war and Korea, what he says about US government and UN policies. Do the same activity for Private Lutze's letter. Write these lists on the board as the students respond. Be sure to discuss what the soldier's have to say about the concept of a police action vs. a war.
6. Next, have the students come up with a list of words and descriptions of the way President Truman and the members of the United Nations viewed the war. Basically, what was the official policy of the US and the UN? Discuss why the soldiers had a very different view of the war.
7. Finally, for homework ask the students to write their own poem or letter about the Korean War from the point of view of President Truman. They should try to capture Truman's reasons for US involvement in the war. If they choose to write the letter they may want to do it as a response to Private Lutze's letter.

Assessment - Students will be graded on their poem or letter. They will be assessed on how well they express the President's views (both similarities and differences between the soldiers and the President). They may use additional resources (text, notes, etc.) for information in creating their poem/letter.

Connecticut Framework Performance Standards

- 1.1-3 Trace the changing role of US participation and influence in world affairs (e.g. United Nations)

- 1.3-18 Provide examples of conflict and cooperation in world affairs
- 3.1-1 Use evidence to develop an interpretation of a historical event
- 3.2-6 Portray the attitudes reflected in a historical period using a variety of writing formats

Korea, the Chosen Place, a poem

Korea, the chosen place
Ravished by war, laid to waste
All United Nations there engaged
In another history Page.

Korea, tis not a beauty site
To see by day or by night.
The eye beholds only the gloom
Of a country buried in war's tomb.

Korea, it's been torn up
and torn down;
Marched up
and marched down.

Korea, blood shed, land and mountains
Have been bathed by youthful fountains.
Brave men here have gone to their reward
Perishing 'neath the sword.

Korea, twas not a war they say;
Only a police action day by day,
A testing place
For the human race.

Korea, two ideals clashing
Communism and democracy smashing;
The U.N.'s firm stand
Against the hammer red hand.

Korea, a question of peace there,
A question of peace everywhere
Soon it may be inflamed
Again in blood and war's shame.

Korea, a prayer of the free
That in peace here we may see
The sword no more to rise
On any land or any skies. ---S/Sgt. Irvin V. Worden

The poem is by S/SGT Irvin V. Worden, on 14 December 1953, while stationed in Korea. This poem is included in the book "Korea, The Chosen Place, a view from Old Smokey", the story of my fathers experiences in Korea. --Stephen H. Worden <http://www.koreanwar.org/html/units/frontline/worden.htm>

A Letter Home From Korea "Between the Lines"

...The following article appeared in the Racine Journal Times (Racine Wisconsin).

The column was called "Between the Lines" by Tex Reynolds. The letter was written by my father when he was 19yrs old. I thought you may find it interesting. My father was in the 5th cav HQ company I&R platoon.

Tex:

If one may judge by a letter received from a Racine lad, the U.S. Army has done a miserable job of "selling" its soldiers on the reason for the war in Korea. Certainly there is a lack of fervor over the "Crusade for Democracy" as compared to the fanaticism of the enemy that is fighting for Communism.

The name of the 19 year old first class Private is James J. Lutze. He is in the 5th Cav. Regiment. His letter to this department comes via his mother, Mrs. Iva Lutze. Here are some excerpts.

"The question on the lips of the G.I. over here is, "What are we fighting for?"

This is no 'police job' as Mr. Truman says. It is a real war, but not the kind most people at home can realize. We are fighting men who can live for a week in the mountains with just a little bag of rice. Where we have to travel by road they travel over the mountains and beat us to where we are going. We attacked and took a small town the other day with no opposition at all.

Then, just before daylight, a couple days later, they hit us with everything they had, and we were forced to withdraw for about eight miles with heavy casualties. About half the members of our battalion have been killed or wounded. Among the latter is our battalion commander and six other officers including my section leader.....

"Well, we withdrew again last night for about 10 miles and again the enemy knew we were moving, because they shelled the road. It's an old saying here on the lines that if you kill one Korean, there are 10 more to take his place.....In closing all I can say is this: give us reinforcements, or pull out what is left of us---which isn't many."

At the end of the column Tex wrote:

"No it isn't surprising if GI's at the front ask themselves, "what are we fighting for?" They haven't been told, in clear, honest language. And the home front certainly isn't doing much to inspire them, with its "business and pleasure as usual"

<http://www.koreanwar.org/html/units/frontline/racine.htm>