

## Curriculum Materials for Teaching about Korea: The Korea Society's Grades 1-12 Curriculum Package

Reviewed by Mary E. Connor

In 2001 Yong Jin Choi, the Director of the Korea Society's Korean Studies Program received the Franklin R. Buchanan Award from the Association for Asian Studies. As Coordinating Editor, she developed outstanding curriculum materials on Korea. They consist of three separate books – elementary, middle, and high school – covering grade-appropriate topics, such as architecture, art, culture, customs, economics, history, geography, Koreans abroad, literature, women and unification. The three books reflect Choi's dream to make Korea visible in American schools. They demonstrate the combined efforts of dedicated teachers to make it a reality. Each book contains high interest units that include clear objectives, step-by-step directions, imaginative activities, reproducible materials, follow up ideas and assessment.

The elementary lesson book, *Korea: Lessons for Elementary School*, incorporates nine teaching units. The units feature activities on the geography of Korea, a trip to Korea, cultural customs, loss of important things in life, symbols as history, trade, the 1988 Seoul Summer Olympics, visual arts and storytelling. The lessons are designed to introduce young children to the rich and colorful traditions of Korea and to prepare them for life in a multicultural society.

In the lesson, "Let's Go to Korea!" children simulate procedures for traveling to another country, such as obtaining a passport, researching places that they might visit, creating an itinerary, making airline reservations, deciding what to pack, learning about currency exchange and some essential words in a foreign language. Another lesson, "Cultural Customs in Korea," allows a student to learn not only about customs in Korea, but also to understand the different customs of other classmates. It includes opportunities for individual and group research, discussions about the role of customs in a family or society, and role-playing. The lesson, "Storytelling in Korea," provides children with an opportunity to share their favorite stories and to read several famous Korean folk tales. Follow-up activities include creative writing, illustrating, and acting.

*Korean Voices: Growing Up During a Time of Crisis* is an inspired literature-based unit for students in middle schools. The unit includes two outstanding short novels, *Year of Impossible Goodbyes* (Sook Nyul Choi) and *Lost Names: Scenes from a Korean Boyhood* (Richard E. Kim). The stories chronicle the lives of two Korean families living under the Japanese occupation of Korea, which lasted from 1910 to 1945. These books exemplify the richness of contemporary Korean literature. They are two of the most touching and memorable books that I have read in recent years. Both are appropriate for middle and high school students.

*Korean Voices* includes nineteen lessons that allow students to gain knowledge of and appreciation for Korean culture and history. The unit is so carefully crafted that an uninformed teacher will feel secure in successfully teaching these novels. The unit includes important background information on Korean history, traditions and celebrations, *hangul*, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and study questions for both novels. The lessons explore concepts such as name, identity, loss, character,

freedom and liberty. Individual lessons are also designed to develop skills in literary analysis as well as critical and creative thinking skills. A guide for effective assessment is included.

The third set of curriculum materials, *Korea: Lessons for High School Social Studies Courses*, serves as an outstanding and imaginative resource for secondary teachers. The lessons can be taught in conjunction with studies of other geographical regions or subject areas and modified to suit a variety of situations. Individual units may be successfully integrated into world history, cultural studies, Asian studies, and United States history classes. The book includes a summary of Korean history, numerous charts, various maps of Korea and Asia, a world chronology table, an extensive bibliography, and a topical list of useful Internet sites. The following topics are included in the lesson book: Korean national treasures, geography, the Miracle on the Han, Japanese occupation, the Korean War, the role of South Korea in the Vietnam War, women, the issue of reunification and Koreans abroad.

Teachers of world and United States history will be able to integrate the lesson, "Remembering the Korean War," into the classroom. The lesson incorporates primary source materials from individuals (soldiers, military leaders, and ordinary citizens) involved in the Korean War that provide information and insight into the tragic conflict. It is structured in such a way that students can readily become involved in the experience of the war and its various stages, the results and its meaning for Korea, the United States, and the world. It includes reproducible handouts (maps, a brief chronology, helpful statistical information, a comparison of World War II, the Korean War, and the Vietnam Wars and the global impact of the Korean War).

Students throughout the United States want to know more about Asia and teachers feel a great need to become more informed. This curriculum package paves the way for educators and students to learn about Korea's rich and colorful heritage, its long and turbulent history and the indomitable spirit of the Korean people.