

The Korean War Student Worksheet

Historical Context

The events that led to the Korean War began with the Japanese defeat in World War II. At the **Yalta Conference**, held before the end of the war, the Soviet Union and the United States agreed to occupy the northern and southern halves of the Korean peninsula with the idea that free elections would eventually take place and the country would be unified. In the years that followed, the relationship between the Soviet Union and the United States **deteriorated**, and the two sides grew to deeply mistrust one another. The Soviet Union remained in countries it occupied after the war, establishing communist **buffer zones**. The Soviets blocked **unification** elections in North Korea, knowing that over two-thirds of Korea's population lived in the South, which was controlled by the Americans. The Koreans in the north grew frustrated with the lack of progress and began a plan of their own using military tactics to reunify their country. After three years of war, the conflict ended in a **stalemate** and a shaky **armistice** that neither unified the country nor brought it peace.

Vocabulary

Yalta Conference
deteriorated
buffer zones
unification
stalemate
armistice

Map Activity

To do this activity, you will need a blank outline map and access to the “Korean War” digital map. Begin with all layers turned off. Turn on the layers of the map as indicated in the instructions below and answer the following questions.

1. Describe, in general terms, what the Korean War was about: When did it occur? What countries were involved?
2. On your outline map, use one color to draw in the path of the invasion forces that started the war, and draw a line showing the farthest point of the invasion.
3. Next, turn on the “North Korean attack forces” layer and the “Farthest advance, Sept. 1950” layer. Check the accuracy of your map and make any necessary corrections.
4. Use a different color to draw the counterattack made by UN forces to repel the North Korean attack. Draw a line indicating how far the UN forces advanced into North Korea.
5. Next, turn on the “UN offensive” layer and the “Farthest advance, Nov. 1950” layer. Check the accuracy of your map and make any necessary corrections.

6. Observe the location of the farthest advance by U.N. forces into North Korea. Notice the two points where these forces get close to or cross the North Korean-China border. How do you think the Chinese might have reacted to this move so close to their border?
7. Look at the map on the right and turn on the “Chinese and North Korean offensive” layer and the “Line of advance, Jan. 1951” layer to show the Chinese/North Korean counteroffensive. Draw these lines on your map.
8. What action did U.S. forces take to counter the surge by the Chinese and North Korean forces? Draw this movement on your map and indicate the line of farthest advance.
9. Now, turn on the “Final U.S. offensive” layer. Check the accuracy of your map and make any necessary corrections.
10. Remember that the war ended in an armistice at the 38th parallel. Draw in the approximate path of the armistice line.
11. Next, turn on the “Armistice line” layer. Check your map for accuracy and make any necessary corrections.

Assessment

The information on the map can be displayed in different ways. To demonstrate this, create a color-coded timeline that takes the information from the map and orders it chronologically.