

## Section 1

# The Geography of the Koreas



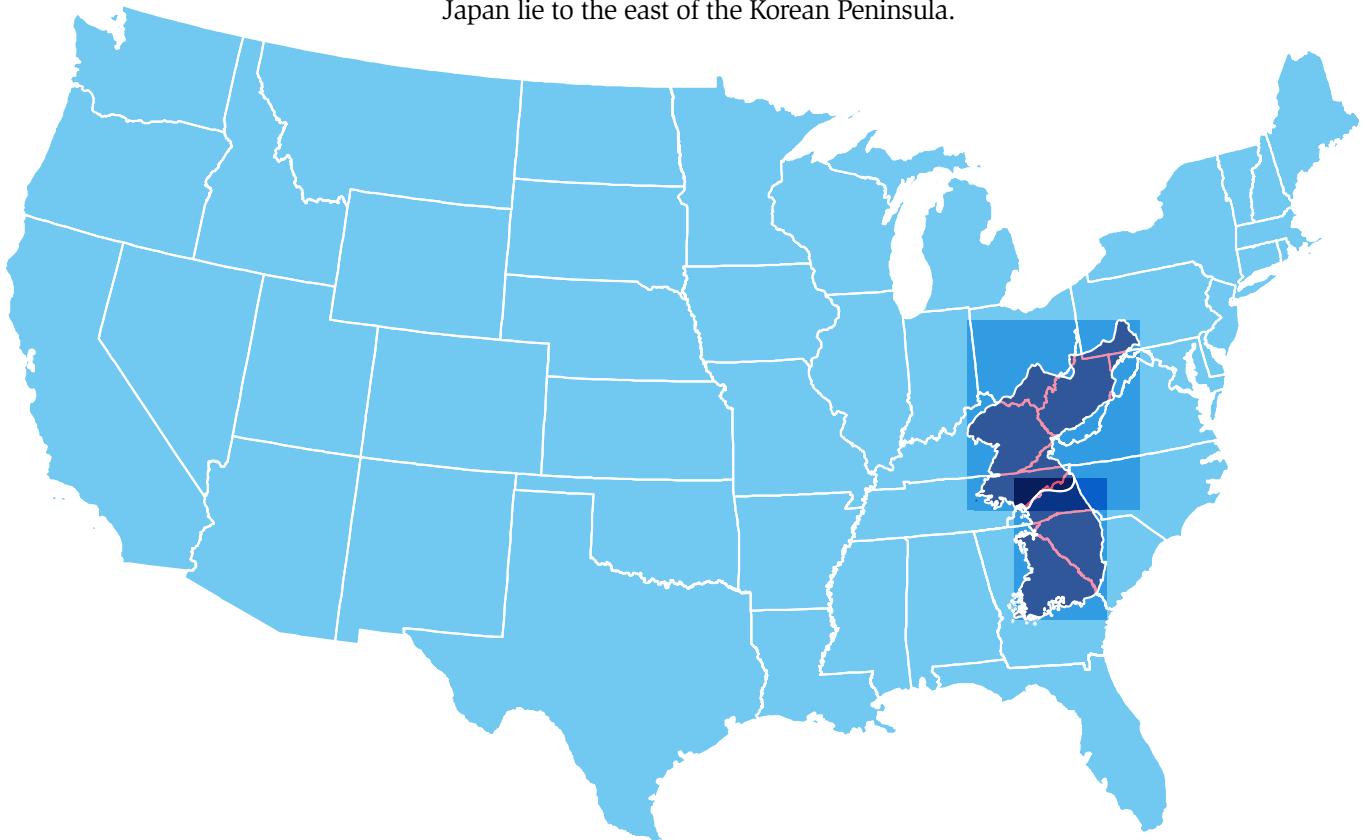
Setting a Purpose

### As you read, look for

- ▶ the impact the mountains had on North Korea's development;
- ▶ where on the Korean Peninsula most people live;
- ▶ the many natural resources on the peninsula;
- ▶ why North Korea must rely on foreign aid to feed its people;
- ▶ term: **homogenous**.

### Location and Size of the Koreas

North and South Korea are located on the Korean Peninsula in eastern Asia. The peninsula is in the eastern and northern hemispheres. North Korea is bordered by the Korea Bay of the Yellow Sea on the west and the Sea of Japan on the east. To the north are China and Russia and to the south is South Korea. South Korea borders the Sea of Japan to the east, the Yellow Sea to the west, and North Korea to the north. The islands of Japan lie to the east of the Korean Peninsula.



At 46,540 square miles of territory, North Korea is smaller than the state of Georgia. The land is mountainous and not as densely populated as South Korea. With an area of 38,502 square miles, South Korea is smaller than Georgia, but a bit larger than South Carolina. South Korea is less mountainous than North Korea, and a large part of the country has excellent farmland.

The Korean Peninsula is in the temperate climate zone between the Arctic Circle and the Tropic of Cancer. The southern part of the peninsula reaches south into a subtropical zone.

## Physical Features of the Koreas

While both North and South Korea are located on the Korean Peninsula, their geography is very different. The mountains of North Korea have made it more difficult for its people to be successful with agriculture, unlike people in South Korea and in other parts of Asia. Despite the limited amount of arable land, the people of North Korea rely on this land to produce most of the food for the country. There are fast-flowing rivers in the mountains where North Koreans have developed hydroelectric power plants. North Korea earns a profit from mining coal and other minerals like iron and copper.

In comparison, South Korea has fewer mountains than North Korea. While there are mountainous areas in South Korea, there is also a hilly countryside that is home to ancient temples and flowering fruit trees. The large coastal plains in the western and southern parts of the country provide farming opportunities, and the coasts are rich in seafood. Subtropical islands can be found at the southern tip of South Korea. Like North Korea, South Korea is able to take advantage of fast-moving rivers in the mountains to produce hydroelectric power.

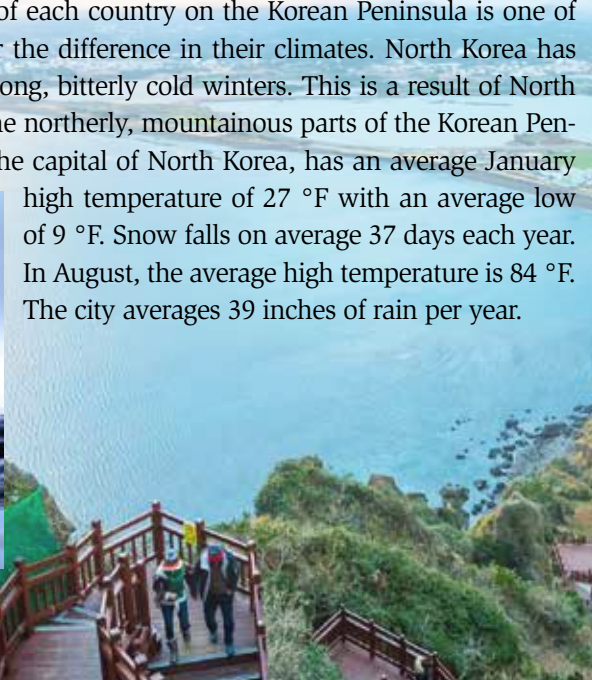
## Climate

Like their geography, the climates in North and South Korea are different. The location of each country on the Korean Peninsula is one of the main reasons for the difference in their climates. North Korea has short summers and long, bitterly cold winters. This is a result of North Korea's location in the northerly, mountainous parts of the Korean Peninsula. Pyongyang, the capital of North Korea, has an average January high temperature of 27 °F with an average low of 9 °F. Snow falls on average 37 days each year. In August, the average high temperature is 84 °F. The city averages 39 inches of rain per year.



**DID YOU KNOW?**

Over 70 percent of the Korean Peninsula is covered with mountains.



**Top:** Some of Korea's beautiful mountains can be seen in Bukhansan National Park. **Left:** The northerly latitudes of the Korean Peninsula allow for snows such as this one at Deokyu Mountain in Muju City. **Bottom:** Jeju Island is the largest island off the Korean peninsula. Its temperate climate and beaches attract many tourists.

South Korea's climate is milder than North Korea's. Summers are hot and humid, and winters are cold but warmer than North Korea. This is mainly because of warm winds from the ocean, which North Korea does not get. One of the most important effects of the ocean winds is the monsoon season. In the summers, the ocean currents bring monsoon rains to South Korea. This rain helps farmers be successful. The capital, Seoul, has an average high January temperature of 35 °F, and an average low of 21 °F. In August, the average high temperature is 84 °F. The city averages about 57 inches of rain per year.

### Natural Resources in the Koreas

Varied natural resources are found on the Korean Peninsula in both North and South Korea including coal, lead, tungsten, graphite, and hydro-power. While arable land is not a common resource, it is very important to the Korean people, especially in North Korea where they have to grow all of their food to survive. In addition to these resources, North Korea has zinc, iron ore, magnesite, copper, gold, pyrites, salt, and fluorspar. Compared to many of the countries in the world, South Korea has very few natural resources.

### Environmental Issues of the Koreas

Like countries around the world, both North and South Korea have different environmental issues that their governments must work to solve. Water is one of the biggest environmental issues in North Korea. While there are rivers in parts of North Korea, in many areas there is not enough clean water for people to drink. Sometimes the water is contaminated with waterborne diseases (diseases that live in the water). The water is sometimes also polluted from mining operations. Additionally, poor agricultural practices are causing problems. For example, soil erosion is a major issue. If the soil erodes away, farmers will not be able to grow enough food to survive. In a country like North Korea, where there is already limited arable land, the impact of soil erosion can be severe.

South Korea is more industrialized than North Korea. As a result, air pollution is a major problem in cities across South Korea. Both car emissions and factories are contributing to this problem. As a result of the air pollution, acid rain is another major environmental issue. As in North Korea, water pollution is a problem in parts of South Korea. However, the causes of water pollution are different. In South Korea, water pollution is caused from industrial waste, as well as sewage that is dumped into the waterways.

**Right:** Dust mixed with auto and factory emissions can cause polluted air to settle on the city of Seoul.

**Background:** This Korean farm is growing green barley and has yellow-flowering canola along with wind turbines to generate electricity.



## Impact of Geography

The geography of the Korean Peninsula greatly affects where people live in North and South Korea. North Korea is very mountainous. Most of the people in North Korea live along the western half of the country where the mountains slope down to the sea and farming is more successful. About 60 percent of North Korea's population lives in urban areas. The largest city in North Korea is the capital, Pyongyang. It has a population of about 3 million people.

About 83 percent of the people in South Korea live in urban areas. About 20 percent of South Koreans live in the capital city of Seoul, a city of almost 10 million people. South Koreans live near Seoul and other urban centers because there are better opportunities for jobs and education that are not available in rural areas.



## People of Korea

Even though the Korean Peninsula has been divided since the end of World War II, the populations of both countries still share many similar qualities. For example, both populations are **homogenous**, which means they are similar and are not diverse. Korean is the language of the people in both countries. In South Korea, however, many people also learn to speak English. One of the biggest differences between the two countries is the total population. South Korea has over twice the population of North Korea. South Korea's population is over 50 million, while North Korea's population is only a little over 25 million. There is a big difference in religious practices between the countries. In South Korea, Christianity is the largest practiced religion, followed by Buddhism. However, over 40 percent of the population does not practice any religion. In North Korea religion is not a part of life. The North Korean government creates some religious groups so it appears there is religious freedom in North Korea, but in reality, there is no religious freedom.



## Reviewing the Section

1. What impact have the mountains had on North Korea's development?
2. Where do most people live in South Korea? Why?
3. North Korea has many natural resources. Why do you think they have to rely on foreign aid to feed their people?
4. Compare and Contrast: Based on the passage, how is the geography different between North and South Korea? What adaptations have Koreans made to be successful with their geography?

**Top:** Colorful houses cling to the hillside along narrow roads and alleys at Gemcheon Village near Busan.

**Above:** The Yoido Full Gospel Church (Assemblies of God) claims about 780,000 members. Christianity is the largest practiced faith in South Korea. Religious practices are discouraged in North Korea.

## Section 2

# A Brief History of the Koreans



Setting a Purpose

### As you read, look for

- ▶ who controlled Korea before the 1900s;
- ▶ which country controlled Korea during World War II;
- ▶ why Korea was divided after World War II;
- ▶ the Cold War;
- ▶ how the histories of the two Koreas are similar and different;
- ▶ the status of reunification of the Koreas;
- ▶ terms: **Kingdom of Joseon (or Chosŏn), annex, Yalta Agreement, Cold War, coalition, stalemate, Demilitarized Zone (DMZ), self-reliance, provocation, armistice, civilian.**

## DID YOU KNOW?

The efficient Korean alphabet called Hangeul was invented in 1443.

## An Ancient and Distinct Culture

The Korean culture is thousands of years old. At times, the peninsula has been ruled by Korean kingdoms. At other times, the Chinese ruled Korea. The Koreans, however, have maintained their own spoken and written language and culture. Ancient temples and palaces from these ancient times still dot the landscape.

Around the year 668, Korean rulers united most of the peninsula into a single kingdom. Buddhism grew in importance in the unified kingdom. In 1392, a new ruling family came to power. The **Kingdom of Joseon (or Chosŏn)** adopted the teachings of Confucius as the official philosophy of the country. Koreans refined their alphabet and made advances in mathematics, science, and art. The Joseon dynasty ruled Korea until the Japanese invasion in 1910.



**Above:** Buddhism is important to the history of Korea. The Naksansa Buddhist Temple on the eastern side of the Korean Peninsula was founded in the year 671. **Right:** Gyeongbokgung Palace, built in 1395, was the home of the Joseon dynasty.



Europeans knew little of Korea until the mid-1600s. Once its existence was known in the West, Roman Catholic missionaries were sent to spread Christianity. The religion spread across the peninsula. However, Christian beliefs were not aligned to Confucianism. Officials had missionaries and their converts harassed, jailed, or even executed, but the religion continued to spread into the 1800s. Meanwhile the government was becoming unstable due to a series of young and inexperienced rulers. Encounters with American and French ships were usually met with resistance, and the Koreans worked to keep outsiders from their shores.

At the end of the Russo-Japanese War in 1905, Japan occupied Korea. Five years later, Japan took full control of the Korean Peninsula by **annexing** (taking over another country's land) it. Korea would not become independent again until Japan surrendered to the United States in 1945, ending World War II. While the Japanese surrender meant that the Japanese no longer controlled Korea, it did not mean the end of problems for Korea's people. In fact, many problems were just beginning.

## World War II and Korea

As World War II was coming to an end in 1945, the leaders from the United States, the Soviet Union, and Great Britain got together at Yalta, a small resort on the Black Sea. During this meeting, the leaders drew up an agreement about how they would cooperate and work together to help repair the damage caused by Germany and Japan during the war. This plan would become known as the **Yalta Agreement**. It called for each country to temporarily occupy the areas where they had troops when the war ended. Each of these three countries would work to restore peace in the areas they controlled and would hold free elections so the people of each country could decide what type of government they wanted. They also discussed how the newly created United Nations (UN) would be organized and what its purpose would be. All three countries agreed they would join the United Nations and work together to restore and create peace in the world.

The terms of surrender for Japan called for Japanese forces north of latitude 38° North to surrender to Soviet troops. South of this line, the Japanese were to surrender to American troops. What was to be a temporary line became a border dividing the peninsula.



**Above:** This image depicts the signing of the Japan-Korea Treaty of Amity (1876) between the Empire of Japan and the Joseon Kingdom of Korea. The treaty gave Japan access to Korea in new ways and eventually resulted in Japan annexing Korea in 1910. **Left:** Korean volunteers fought with the Imperial Japanese Army during World War II.

## The Cold War and Korea

While it seemed the United States and Soviet Union were in agreement about how things would be handled at the end of the war, each country had very different goals. After suffering through World War II and having millions of citizens killed and farms and factories closed, the Soviet Union wanted to make sure they would never be invaded by Western Europe again. At the end of the war, the Soviet Union occupied most of the countries in Eastern Europe and did not want to remove its troops after peace was declared. The Soviet Union also wanted to make sure these new countries would be their allies, so they wanted to make sure the new countries would be communist.

These actions made the United States believe the Soviet Union had broken the Yalta Agreement, which made the United States angry. As a result, the **Cold War** (the period of distrust and misunderstanding between the Soviet Union and its former wartime allies in the West) began. The competition to get as many governments in place around the world that followed their choice of government type was set in motion. Korea was one of the countries where the superpowers competed for control during the Cold War.

On June 25, 1950, North Korean forces invaded South Korea. Led by the United States, a United Nations **coalition** (temporary alliance between countries) of sixteen countries came to help defend South Korea. China entered the war as an ally of North Korea, which led to a **stalemate** (a “deadlock” where no action can be taken or progress made) that lasted for two years and ended with an armistice on July 27, 1953. There were an estimated 4,000,000 casualties from the war, both civilian and military. A peace treaty has never been signed.

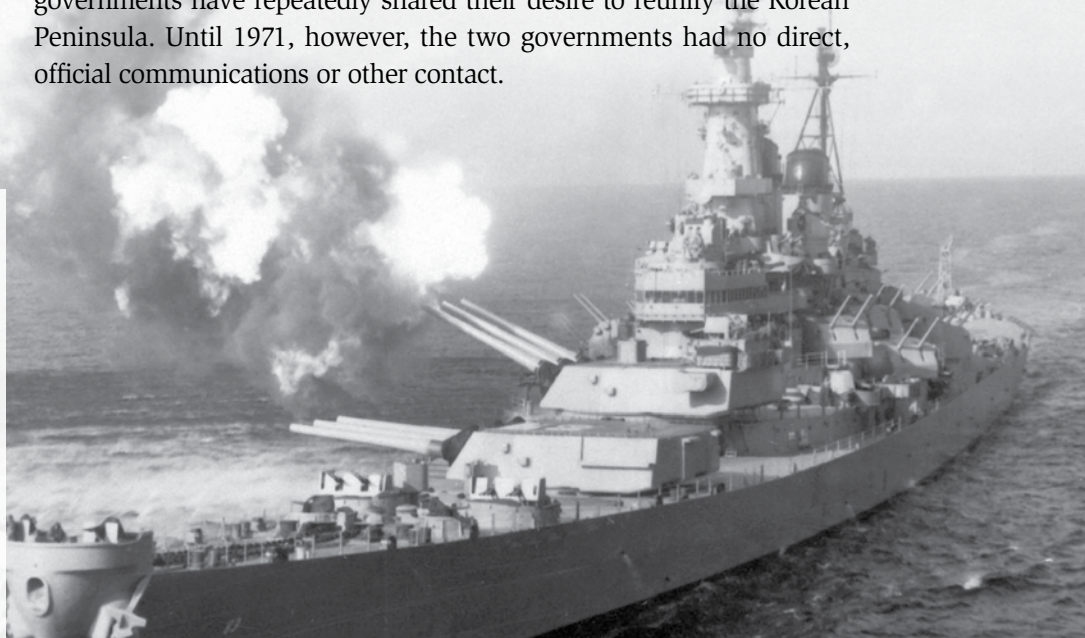
North and South Korea have had a difficult and sometimes bitter relationship since the Korean War. The two countries are separated by a **Demilitarized Zone (DMZ)**, an area where it is forbidden to have any kind of military presence. During the postwar period, both Korean governments have repeatedly shared their desire to reunify the Korean Peninsula. Until 1971, however, the two governments had no direct, official communications or other contact.



### DID YOU KNOW?

About 50,000 prisoners of war held by UN forces during the Korean War did not want to return to their home communist countries.

**Top:** Helicopters were used extensively in the Korean War to move people and goods throughout the Korean Peninsula. **Above:** The Arch of Reunification in Pyongyang celebrates the idea of a reunified Korea. **Bottom:** In 1950, the USS *Missouri* fired into North Korea in an attempt to cut the country's communication lines.



## Brief History of North Korea

At the end of World War II, Korea was divided into north and south. The northern half was under Soviet-sponsored communist control, while the southern half was supported by the United States. In 1950, North Korea, formally called the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, launched an unsuccessful attack to conquer South Korea.

The first leader of North Korea, President Kim Il-sung, began a policy of **self-reliance** to limit the amount of outside influence on the country. Using propaganda tactics, the North Korean government portrayed the United States as evil and a threat to North Korea. That policy continues to this day. The goal of North Korea was to one day reunify North and South Korea. This goal is the focus of all political, economic, and military policies in North Korea.

Kim Il-sung's son, Kim Jong-il, was named as his father's successor in 1980, and he became the leader of North Korea following his father's death in 1994. The current leader of North Korea, Kim Jong-un, the son of Kim Jong-il, became the leader in 2011 after his father's death.

Despite a policy of self-reliance, North Korea has had to rely heavily on international aid to feed its people since the mid-1990s. In 2002, the government showed signs of allowing more economic freedom by allowing semiprivate markets, but those reforms were removed in 2005 and 2009.

Today, North Korea is a cause of concern for the international community. There is a long history of military **provocations** (things that anger others) that include long-range missile development, weapons of mass destruction programs that include testing nuclear devices in 2006, 2009, 2013, and 2015, and a massive buildup of armed forces. In 2013, the regime announced a new policy calling for the development of nuclear weapons. By early 2016, North Korea was claiming to have tested a hydrogen bomb, and it continued to launch satellites, which many people fear are tests for rockets.



**Top:** Statues of Kim Il-sung (left) and Kim Jong-il (right) stand about 165 feet high overlooking Pyongyang, North Korea. **Left:** North Korea spends a great deal of its budget on the military. This parade in 2013 showcased weapons and soldiers.



# special Feature

## The DMZ

When the DMZ was created in 1953, it was never seen as a permanent solution to the Korean War; however, it still exists over sixty years later. When the armistice agreement was signed on July 27, 1953, the Korean Peninsula was divided, just like it had been before the Korean War. Each side withdrew 1.2 miles from the official Military Demarcation Line (MDL) that separates North and South Korea, creating the Demilitarized Zone, or DMZ. Running for 148 miles from the mouth of the Han River in the west to south of the North Korean town of Kosong in the east, the DMZ is the most heavily fortified border in the world. The 2.5-mile-wide DMZ is a buffer zone that is off limits to large numbers of troops and heavy weaponry, like tanks and artillery. Land mines, barbed-wire fences, and guard posts dot the border of the DMZ on each side. Within the DMZ, however, land that was once farmland has returned to nature. Some of the best-protected ecosystems in Asia are found in the DMZ, along with endangered species like the white-naped and red-crowned cranes.

In the center of the DMZ is the “truce village” of Panmunjom, which contains the Joint Security Area (JSA). The bright blue buildings at the JSA are where meetings between North and South Korean leaders have taken place. Inside the JSA, each country is limited to having thirty-five soldiers at one time, although often fewer are present.



**Above:** The Joint Security Area at the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) on the border between North and South Korea provides a neutral site for meetings of military leaders in the two countries.

**Background:** The DMZ is the strip of land separating North and South Korea.



If you ever travel to South Korea, you can take a tour of the DMZ. When visiting the DMZ, there are some general rules to follow. Trying to communicate with North Korean soldiers is a bad idea, as is bringing anything that looks like a weapon (including umbrellas and pens). Ripped jeans are not allowed. North Korean officials have taken photos of Westerners in ripped jeans and used them as propaganda posters showing that Westerners cannot afford to buy new pants. On a guided tour, you will be given the chance to enter one of the United Nations meeting rooms, step around the table in the center of the room, and cross into North Korea. Just be sure not to go through the door on that side of the room. If you do, the North Korean army will arrest you. There are also two observation towers along the DMZ in the south that allow you to see into North Korea. One tower offers a view of a propaganda town that North Korea built to demonstrate how great communism is; no one lives there, however. Another point of interest would be the four infiltration tunnels North Korea dug underneath the DMZ. When South Korea discovered the tunnels in the 1980s, North Korea claimed they were coal mines. What do you think would be the most interesting place to visit in the DMZ?



**Top:** A sign in English and Korean marks the DMZ. **Above:** DMZ Tunnel 3 was discovered by South Koreans in 1978. The North Korean government claimed it was a coal mine; the South Korean government viewed the tunnel as a path for invaders to enter the country.

## Brief History of South Korea

South Korea, formally called the Republic of Korea, was created at the end of World War II with a democratic-based government. During the Korean War, US and UN soldiers fought alongside South Korean soldiers, while North Korea was supported by China and the Soviet Union. The 1953 **armistice** (cease-fire) divided the Korean Peninsula and created the 160-mile long Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) between the two countries.

Unfortunately, the first democracy in South Korea did not last long. In 1961, Park Chung-hee took control of the country. Despite Park's authoritarian rule, South Korea had rapid economic growth during his regime in which the per capita (per person) income rose to about 17 times the level of North Korea. Park Chung-hee was assassinated in 1979, but democracy was not restored in South Korea until 1987.

In 1987, former army general Roh Tae-woo won South Korea's first free presidential election under a revised democratic constitution. In 1993, Kim Young-sam became the first **civilian** (nonmilitary) president of South Korea, which began a new democratic era for South Korea. President Kim Dae-jung, elected in 1998, won the Nobel Peace Prize in 2000 for his contributions to South Korean democracy and his "sunshine" policy of engagement with North Korea.

President Park Geun-hye, daughter of former President Park Chung-hee, was elected in February 2013 as South Korea's first female leader. Park was removed from office in 2017, however, on charges of corruption.

Provocations by North Korea have stopped most inter-Korea relations for much of the last decade. Examples of the provocations include the North's attacks on a South Korean ship and island in 2010, multiple nuclear and missile tests, and the exchange of artillery fire across the demilitarized zone.

## Reviewing the Section

1. Who controlled Korea before the 1900s?
2. Which country controlled Korea during World War II?
3. Why was Korea divided after World War II? How was this related to the Cold War?
4. Compare and contrast the history of North and South Korea. How are their histories similar? How are they different?
5. What do you think the future holds for North and South Korea? Do you think they will ever reunify into one country again? Why or why not?

**Top:** This monument in Seoul honors the war veterans in North and South Korea. **Above:** South Korea's busy streets, like this Namdaemun market area in Seoul, reflect the country's prosperity. **Bottom:** Protesters rallied against President Park Geun-hye's corruption in 2016. The first female president was removed from office in 2017.

# special Feature

## Reunions between Korean Relatives Separated since the Korean War

When the Korean War armistice was signed in 1953, the Korean Peninsula was split into two parts along a Demilitarized Zone. The border between the two countries was quickly fortified, effectively ending all transportation between the zones. When the border closed, many Koreans were separated from their families and loved ones with no chance of seeing or even communicating with each other again. Parents and children, brothers and sisters, even husbands and wives were separated. In 1988, an estimated 127,000 South Koreans believed they had family members in North Korea.

In 2000, after a meeting between leaders of North and South Korea, a series of reunions between relatives from the north and south was proposed. Since 2000, an estimated 19,000 Koreans have been reunited in face-to-face meetings, and 3,750 others have been reunited through video links. To have the opportunity to meet with long-lost loved ones, South Koreans must enter a lottery system. That system takes into account the age and family background of the applicants. Most South Koreans who are interested in the reunions are in their eighties and nineties, so the reunions are the last chance most of them have of seeing their loved ones again.

The most recent reunions occurred in October 2015. They occur over three days at the Mount Kumgang Resort in North Korea. The Red Cross organizes the reunions and provides rules for the relatives about what to discuss with each other (never politics!). South Koreans are encouraged to bring their North Korean relatives gifts like cash, watches, winter clothes, toothpaste, sugar, and vitamins. Relatives are allowed to see each other for six two-hour meetings over the three-day weekend, for a total of twelve hours. During the meetings, North Korean officials carefully monitor and listen to all conversations. For many people, this is the first time they have had any communication with their relatives in over sixty years. Imagine that you were being reunited with a sibling or parent after sixty years. What would you say to them?



**Above:** Joyful reunions are a rare but exciting event in Korea. **Background:** As the North invaded South Korea in the 1950s, many families became separated.