

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Class: \_\_\_\_\_

## Korean War

**DIRECTIONS:** Read the following passage and then answer the corresponding questions completely.

In the early 1900s, Japan had begun to expand their control in a quest to become a global imperial power; and by 1910, they had successfully colonized Korea. Korea remained a Japanese colony until the end of World War II in 1945. As part of peace agreements between the Soviet Union and the United States, Japan lost its control of Korea and it was divided into two occupied zones: North Korea (USSR) and South Korea (USA) divided at 38<sup>th</sup> parallel of latitude.

Shortly after the conclusion of World War II, a new conflict emerged between the United States and Soviet Union. Both countries looked to expand and protect their post-war goals and ideologies. The United States wanted to support democratic countries around the world, and on the other hand, the USSR looked to expand communism. In June 1950, North Koreans, supported by the USSR, invaded South Korea with the intent to unify the country under a communist regime. Lacking anticipation and preparation, the capital of South Korea, Seoul, was quickly occupied by North Koreans.

Prior to the invasion, the United States had adopted a foreign policy of containment, which sought to stop the spread of communism throughout the world. Therefore, United States President, Harry Truman, quickly looked to the United Nations for guidance as to how to handle the North Korean act of aggression and support the US efforts of containment. Truman was convinced that the aggression of North Korea was similar to the aggression previously displayed by Hitler and Japan prior to World War II. The UN agreed to support South Korea and send in a military force in opposition of North Korea under the leadership of American General, Douglas MacArthur, who had also led American troops in the Pacific against Japan. Although the Soviet Union was a member of the UN, they were absent during negotiations due to conflicting opinions regarding China, and therefore were not able to veto UN intervention in Korea.

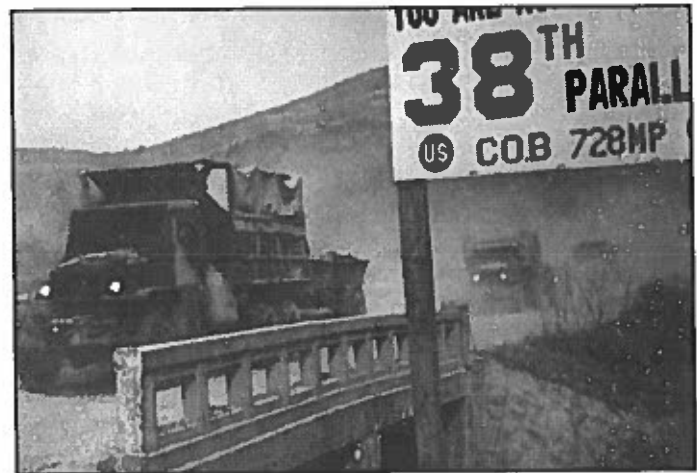
During the initial stages of the Korean War, the UN was badly outnumbered and ill-equipped in comparison to the North Koreans, who were heavily equipped by the Soviet Union. This enabled



North Korea to push south and occupy most of South Korea. However, MacArthur was eventually able to lead successful counterattacks that pushed back North Korea past the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel line (original border). Despite the UN's success with reestablishing the Korean border, Truman wanted to take the opportunity to occupy North Korea and unite Korea under a non-communist government.

While pushing north into North Korea, UN forces were warned and then eventually attacked by neighboring communist China. China's fresh forces were able to push back UN forces south of the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel line, where a bloody deadlock was ultimately established by 1951. MacArthur believed that the only way that UN forces would successfully control all of Korea was to invade China from the north. Truman, however, adamantly disagreed with going to war with China and eventually fired MacArthur as general of the Korean War. The firing of MacArthur angered many Americans who viewed MacArthur as a well-respected military general and war hero.

For more than a year after MacArthur's firing, the deadly fighting in Korea continued in a deadlock. Vicious fighting brought both sides' short lived gains, until they were pushed back. Although peace talks began in 1951, no agreements were able to be made. By 1952, the United States elected a new president, Dwight Eisenhower, an American war hero and leader during World War II (D-Day). Eisenhower promised Americans that he would personally go to Korea and end the war if he was elected, which was what he did. By July 1953, peace was established with the signing of an armistice and the border between North Korea and South Korea was redrawn at 38<sup>th</sup> parallel. Along with the border, a demilitarized zone (DMZ) was set up on both sides of the border. This two and a half mile area would have no military presence from either side, although on either side of the DMZ, both sides stationed heavily armed troops.



All in all, the Korean War took the lives of over five million soldiers and civilians, which included over 50,000 American soldiers. For many soldiers and Americans, news of the Korean War was devastating, as families had started to rebuild from World War II. The US government brought back the military draft, and thousands of Americans were sent back to war. Korean War soldiers endured treacherous conditions in the hot Korean climate, which was a breeding ground for infections and diseases. In addition, the war did not result in a gain for either side, and instead, the previous border and governments were maintained. The division in Korea at 38<sup>th</sup> parallel still remains today. The Korean War ultimately proved that the United States was willing to support its foreign policy of containment, even if that meant utilizing military force.

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1. Why was Korea occupied by the US and USSR after World War II?

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2. What caused the conflict in Korea?

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3. How could the actions of North Korea be compared to the actions of Nazi Germany and Imperial Japan?

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4. Why did the US want to support South Korea?

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5. How did the US become involved in the Korean conflict?

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6. Why did China involve itself in the Korean War?

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7. Who was elected as President of the United States during the Korean War?

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8. What was the outcome of the Korean War?

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9. What was/is the DMZ?

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10. What did the Korean War prove about the US?

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