

The Cold War Era

Lesson 3 The Korean War, *Continued*

Conflict in Korea

The Korean Peninsula is in Asia. After World War II, the United States and the Soviet Union both took control of the country of Korea. They split the country into North Korea and South Korea. They divided Korea along the 38th parallel. A *parallel* is a line of latitude.

North Korea had a communist government. South Korea's government was not communist. It was supported by the United States. North Korea and South Korea did not get along well.

What Are "Lines of Latitude"?

- Lines of latitude are a way to show where something is on Earth.
- Lines of latitude show how far north or south a place is from the equator.
- Lines of latitude are measured in degrees.
- Each degree is about 69 miles (about 111 km).
- Another name for a line of latitude is a "*parallel*."
- When you read that Korea was split at the 38th parallel, that means the country was divided at a distance 38 degrees away from the equator. (It was north of the equator.)
- That is about 2,600 miles, or about 4,200 km.

North Korea wanted to unite the country again. In 1950, the North Korean army invaded and took control of most of South Korea. South Korea controlled only a small area around a port city, Pusan.

President Truman thought the Soviet Union had backed the attack. He wanted to help South Korea without declaring war. He took some steps.

1. Truman sent American forces to Korea.
2. Then he asked the U.N. to take action.
3. The U.N. told North Korea to remove its army.
4. North Korea did not.
5. The U.N. agreed to send soldiers.

Most of these U.N. soldiers were led by General Douglas MacArthur. MacArthur was an American general. Americans liked him for his bravery during World War II.



Identifying

1. Who invaded first?
Whom did they invade?



Reading Check

2. Why did President Truman and the U.N. send troops to Korea?

The Cold War Era

Lesson 3 The Korean War, *Continued*



Analyzing

3. Was MacArthur able to keep his promises to Truman? Explain.



Reading Check

4. Why did President Truman fire General MacArthur?



Analyzing

5. Do you think Truman was right to fire MacArthur? Explain.

The U.N. and U.S. forces had a good start. They pushed the North Koreans back into their own country. Then MacArthur wanted to invade North Korea. He told President Truman that neither China nor the Soviet Union would enter the war. He told the president that the war would not take long. He promised that the soldiers would be "home by Christmas." This was in September.

When U.N. forces invaded North Korea, they got very far North. They got close to the Chinese border. The Chinese saw this as a threat to their own country. They sent hundreds of thousands of Chinese soldiers to fight in North Korea. China had indeed become involved in the war.

The Chinese soldiers pushed the U.N. forces back into South Korea. The Chinese soldiers captured South Korea's capital city, Seoul.

American Leadership Splits

U.N. soldiers captured Seoul again. They then managed to push communist forces back into North Korea. There was much fighting at the 38th parallel. For a long time, neither side advanced too far. This is known as a **stalemate**. The stalemate went on for almost two years.

President Truman and General MacArthur disagreed about what to do in this war. MacArthur wanted to drop atomic bombs on China. He thought bombing supply lines and bases would bring victory. Truman did not want to drop bombs. He thought this would make the war worse.

MacArthur criticized the president. He wrote a letter to a member of Congress. He said in the letter that he was being stopped from doing his job.

The president could not allow his general to disobey an order. Truman concluded, or decided, to fire General MacArthur because of his disobedience.

The American public protested Truman's decision. They liked MacArthur. After he was fired, MacArthur did not simply leave. He was greeted as a hero in the United States. He made a speech to Congress. "Old soldiers never die," he said. "They just fade away."

In July 1951, peace talks began that would end the Korean War. The fighting finally ended in 1953. Truman's term as president had ended. Dwight Eisenhower then became president.

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The agreement to end the war set up a **Demilitarized Zone** between North Korea and South Korea. This is a place where no military forces are allowed.

There was no clear winner in the war. The borders had hardly changed. More than 36,000 Americans had been killed. The total number of wounded was 103,000. Two million Koreans and Chinese had been killed.

The United States had shown the Soviet Union that it would use force to stop communism. That is the main purpose for which the Korean war was fought.

Check for Understanding

How did dividing Korea into two countries after World War II lead to conflict? Give two reasons.

How did the United States work with the U.N. to achieve its goals in Korea?



Mark the Text

6. Underline *Demilitarized Zone* and its definition.



7. Use a two-tab Foldable and place it along the dotted line to cover Check for Understanding. Write the title *Conflict in Korea* on the anchor tab. Label the top tab *North Korea*, and the bottom tab *South Korea*. Illustrate and label the *38th Parallel* along the middle edges of the tabs. Write words and phrases to describe what you remember about the governments of each and what led to the conflict. Use the Foldable to help answer Check for Understanding.