

Commemorate Canada - Canada and the Korean War

Overview

Students will learn about the Korean War and Canada's role in this conflict through a timeline activity.

Note 1: This lesson plan deals with a sensitive topic; please use discretion and ensure that this resource is appropriate for your students.

Note 2: Prior to beginning this lesson, cut out and mix up the provided items on the **Korean War topics sheet**.

Time required

90 minutes (can be divided)

Grades

6-12

Subjects

History, geography, art (drama)

Learning goals

By the end of the lesson, students will:

- Learn about significant events and Canadian soldiers in the Korean War.
- Appreciate Canada's contributions in the Korean War.
- Collaborate with classmates to create a timeline of the Korean War.

Materials

- Chart paper and markers
- Korean War topics sheet
- Electronic devices with internet access
- "Renewed Remembrance: Marking 70 years since the Korean War Armistice" by *Canadian Geographic* (for research)
- Writing utensils
- Paper
- White/blackboard
- Projector/SMARTboard
- String
- Tape

Lesson implementation

Minds on

Note: It would be beneficial to have a discussion before this lesson about the end of the Second World War and the start of the Cold War to help students understand the rise of communism and important nations involved in conflicts at this time, such as the Soviet Union.

Play for student's the [Heroes Remember video](#) from Veteran Affairs Canada of the interview with Noel Knockwood (2 minutes) and the [Canadian Geographic GeoMinute "Canada in the Korean War"](#). These videos will help set the stage for students to learn about the important role Canada played in the Korean War and Canada's role in this conflict.

With a pencil and paper, give students a few minutes to write down everything they know about the Korean War. This could include dates, battles, countries involved, etc. On chart paper, draw a two-column table, one with the title "Know" and one with the title "Want to know." Ask what students noted and write their answers on the board under the "Know" column, making sure to clear up any inaccuracies. Next, ask students what information is still missing in order to get a better understanding of this war (i.e., what they want to know). Write their answers in the next column.

Explain to students that the end of the Second World War saw the rise of communism in eastern Europe and Asia. Show students a map of alliances and alignments of the time ([such as this one](#)) to help students understand why this tiny peninsula became a key battleground over ideology (i.e., communism) and political influence (i.e., Western countries like the United States versus the Soviet Union exerting economic and political influence over South and North Korea, respectively, for their own purposes).

Next, bring up a map of North and South Korea on [Google Earth](#) to help students situate the conflict. Tell students that the Korean War began on June 25, 1950, when, after many years of tension, and with the approval of Joseph Stalin, the leader of the Soviet Union (U.S.S.R.) at the time, North Korea invaded South Korea. It was an armed conflict between the communist regime in North Korea and the democratically elected state of South Korea in the Cold War era, with the United States and other United Nations countries (including Canada) supporting South Korea, and China and the Soviet Union supporting North Korea. If necessary, show the video [Land of the Morning Calm](#) (just over two minutes long) to help students understand the beginning of the war.

Action

In this lesson, students will have the opportunity to learn about and tell the history of the Korean War through a timeline, with each group researching and summarizing an important event or Canadian soldier in the conflict.

Divide students into small groups. Give each group a topic of research from the **Korean War topics sheet**, ensuring all topics are handed out. The group's task will be to research this topic and create a summary of it. Some suggested resources are provided below to help with research. As war can be a disturbing topic, please

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Connection to the Canadian Geography Learning Framework

Concepts of Geographic Thinking

- Patterns and trends
- Interrelationships
- Geographic perspective
- Spatial significance

Inquiry Process

- Formulate questions
- Gather and organize
- Interpret and analyze
- Communicate

Geospatial Skills

- Foundational elements

review these sites to ensure they are appropriate for your students. Ensure students answer the who, what, where, when, why, and how of their topic and that their information is reliably sourced.

Give students time to complete their research and create their summary. Help define terms that students might come across frequently (e.g., front line, supply line, retreat, mortar, shelling, communism, democracy, UN).

Once the groups are done preparing their summaries, hang a piece of string across the board. This will represent the timeline. Have student groups present their summary to the class one at a time. Once each group has finished presenting, have them hang their topic on the timeline where they think it should appear and write a date on the board above where their topic is hanging. Have students defend their reasoning.

Tell students not to get too caught up in where their topic should be placed on the timeline; it can be difficult to situate an event when there is no start/end date yet or other events to act as a reference point. The placement of these topics may get shifted left or right as new groups present. If students are unsure where their topic should appear (e.g., a historical figure or the Korean War Medals), lead a class discussion about where they believe it is most relevant for that topic to appear. Some topics may appear multiple times on the timeline (such as battles fought on Hill 355). In this case, students can write their topic multiple times on the board above the string to indicate where the topic would exist on the timeline.

After all groups have presented and placed their topics on the timeline, walk students through the timeline and ask them if there is anything they would like to change. Now ask students what start date and end date should appear on their timeline.

Conclusion and consolidation

As a class, revisit the “Want to know” column from the Minds On activity. Did students learn everything they wanted to learn or does more research need to be done? Ask students to share something they learned that was surprising or which they found interesting. Did they learn anything that changed their perspective on what they already knew about Canadian or world history (e.g., about Canadian military involvement abroad, about communism)?

Extend your geographical thinking

- Have students participate in the [Postcards for Peace](#) activity to help them honour and connect with veterans of the Korean War.

Modifications

- Teachers can simplify this activity by selecting certain topics for students to research.
- Teachers can extend this activity by having students connect with Canadian veterans of the Korean War to conduct interviews.

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Assessment opportunities

- Teachers can assess students' summaries and discussions.
- Students can self-assess their work ensuring they have answered who, what, where, when, why, and how.
- Teachers can use students' answers in the Minds On activity about what they already know about the Korean War to decide if a brief overview of the war should be explained before beginning the activity. Teachers can also use the closing activity to decide if more instruction needs to occur.

Additional resources

Websites for student research:

- Veterans Affairs Canada: [Korean War](#)
- Veterans Affairs Canada: [Land of the morning calm](#) (short video on the beginning of the Korean War)
- Veterans Affairs Canada: [10 quick facts on the Korean War](#)
- Canadian Encyclopedia: [Korean War](#)
- Canadian War Museum: [The Korean War](#)
- National Defense: [Korean War \(1950-1953\)](#)
- [Korean War Legacy Foundation](#)
- *Canadian Geographic's* "[Renewed Remembrance: Marking 70 years since the Korean War Armistice](#)"

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Korean War topics sheet

Battle of Kapyong

**The beginning of
the Korean War**

**Hill 355 and battles
fought there**

Ted Zuber

**The end of the
Korean War**

**Korean War
Medals**

**Chief Warrant Officer (Ret'd)
Edwin "Ted" Adye**

**Korean peninsula after
the Second World War**

**Monument to
the Canadian Fallen**