Essential Questions:

* If you were a soldier going off to fight in the Korean War, what would you want to know about Korea?
* How did the Korean War fit into Cold War concerns of the US?
* What was the US mission in Korea? Was it accomplished?
* The Korean War is often referred to as the “Forgotten War.” After studying the war, why do you think this is so? Do you think it is an important event to understand? Why or why not?

**Origins of the Cold War: The Korean War**

Reading 1:

In Korea the Government forces, which were armed to prevent border raids and to preserve internal security, were attacked by invading forces from North Korea....The attack upon Korea makes it plain beyond all doubt that communism has passed beyond the use of subversion to conquer independent nations and will now use armed invasion and war.

President Harry Truman

Reading 2:

Once war is forced upon us, there is no other alternative than to apply every available means to bring it to a swift end. War's very object is victory--not prolonged indecision. In war, indeed, there can be no substitute for victory.

General Douglas MacArthur

Reading 3:

It seems strangely difficult for some to realize that here in Asia is where the Communist conspirators have elected to make their play for global conquest, and that we have joined the issue thus raised on the battlefield; that here we fight Europe's war with arms while the diplomats there still fight it with words; that if we lose the war to communism in Asia the fall of Europe is inevitable, win it and Europe most probably would avoid war and yet preserve freedom.

General Douglas MacArthur

Reading 4:

We do not want to see the conflict in Korea extended. We are trying to prevent a world war--not to start one....But you may ask why can't we take other steps to punish the aggressor. Why don't we bomb Manchuria and China itself? Why don't we assist Chinese Nationalist troops to land on the mainland of China? If we were to do these things we would be running a very grave risk of starting a general war....If we were to do these things, we would become entangled in a vast conflict on the continent of Asia and our task would become immeasurably more difficult all over the world.

I believe that we must try to limit the war to Korea for these vital reasons: To make sure that the precious lives of our fighting men are not wasted, to see that the security of our country and the free world is not needlessly jeopardized and to prevent a third world war. A number of events have made it evident that General MacArthur did not agree with that policy. I have, therefore, considered it essential to relieve General MacArthur so that there would be no doubt or confusion as to the real purpose and aim of our policy.

President Harry Truman

Reading 5:

General MacArthur...would have us, on our own initiative, carry the conflict beyond Korea against the mainland of Communist China, both from the sea and from the air. He would have us accept the risk of involvement not only in an extension of the war with Red China, but in an all-out war with the Soviet Union. He would have us do this even at the expense of losing our allies and wrecking the coalition of free peoples throughout the world. He would do this even though the effect of such action might expose Western Europe to attack by the millions of Soviet troops poised in Middle and Eastern Europe.

George Marshall

Questions to Think About:

1. What was America's mission in Korea?

2. How far should the United States go in accomplishing that mission?

3. Did President Truman improperly interfere in military operations in

Korea?

***Opening remarks from a workshop for the Boston Public Library***

**by Sook Nyul Choi**

When I was a young child growing up in Northern Korea, the Japanese military was occupying my country. We were forbidden to speak or write our own language, and we were forbidden to own even a single book.

Every day we were all forced to work in the Japanese labor camps.

At night, exhausted as she was, my mother would cover the windows with blankets and light a small candle and she would whisper to us about Korean history, and recite poems and stories to us in Korean. But too soon, her words would trail off as she succumbed to the sleep she needed so desperately.

As I watched the candle light flicker on her emaciated face and sunken eyes, I longed for the day when I would be free to talk, write, and to hold a book in my own hands and to read to my heart’s content.

In 1945, World War II ended and the Japanese, who had brutally occupied Korea for 36 years, were finally forced to leave the country. How elated and excited we were anticipating our life of freedom.

But all too quickly, our hopes were dashed as we learned that the Korean peninsula had been divided into two. The Soviets came marching in with their guns and tanks to the north of the 38th parallel, where I lived. Now we had to study the *Red Books* the soldiers gave us, and we were forced to sing about and praise their leaders and our life as “Little Proletariat.”

In 1947, after two years living under Communist rule, my mother, little brother, and I risked our lives to escape across the 38th parallel to freedom in South Korea where the U.N. forces were. It was a treacherous journey, but we were lucky to make it across the border.

Life was hard in Seoul as we tried to start our lives, but we were thankful that we lived in freedom and looked to the future with great hope. I treasured a few books I was able to buy and I reveled in the freedom to learn and to think and to dream.

But, in June 1950, bombs fell on the city of Seoul, and tanks rolled into the city: the Korean War had begun. Our house was bombed, my books burned, and we were forced to flee further south. For three years, my family lived in a makeshift home in the mountains of Pusan.

In 1953, the Armistice was signed, ending the fighting, and finally we were able to return to Seoul. My friends, teachers, and I all worked to rebuild our school. I was excited being back in Seoul for high school and we began to read and write poetry and published our own school newspaper.

We were so hungry to learn and express our thoughts. What a luxury it was to be free to study!

NAME \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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1. How did this story make you feel? What struck you most about it?

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2. What are three facts you learned about Korea in the reading?

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b. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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c. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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3. According to the reading, how did the Korean War affect Koreans?

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