South Korea Culture Guide

This unit is published by the International Outreach Program of the David M. Kennedy Center for International Studies at Brigham Young University as part of an effort to foster open cultural exchange within the educational community and to promote increased global understanding by providing meaningful cultural education tools.

Curriculum Development

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WHY STUDY CULTURES?

For most of us, cultures are misunderstood; they are nebulous, vague, and hidden. Like the famous iceberg analogy, we know that most of what a culture is cannot be seen. But what does that mean? And why, then, should we study cultures if we do not know what we’re studying in the first place?

In the late twentieth century, Brigham Young University did not embrace a new discipline, but rather a new area of study—the study of cultures. Typically, anthropology is the social science that studies cultures. Why should they have all the fun? The study of cultures unites other academic disciplines (as needed), drawing upon literature, political science, sociology, and even the more applied areas of nursing, social work, law, and business. The study of cultures has grown into nothing short of a revolt against disciplines, “a mode of inquiry” that looks at things in new ways.

In 1982, the David M. Kennedy Center for International Studies established International Outreach as a formal program to help build bridges of intercultural understanding. Since then, more than 10,000 gratis cultural presentations have been given to local area public schools, taking students to new places using language, multimedia, and imagination. *CultureGuides* derive from the same expertise that has been honed in classrooms—with the exciting exception that these intercultural learning tools are not geographically bound. Thanks to the Internet, accessible multimedia technology, and our trusty iMAC, a limitless audience can learn about different cultures.

Globalization, the driving paradigm of the post-Cold War world, means that now, more than ever, culture matters. Culture is the invisible context that may keep us from understanding important people, places, and ideas; it exists whether or not we think about it. Intercultural education can help us, not only as an intellectual exercise, but also in very practical ways to combat racism, to expand business, and to communicate effectively.

*CultureGuides* share the same aim as Edward T. Hall, the eminent cultural scholar, to try and “make culture real.” Even though our “student guides” are not present in every classroom, we hope that *CultureGuides* will make classrooms of the mind and cultural laboratories wherever you may reside.

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TRADITIONS

CHUSOK

Chusok is an important family tradition in Korea because it brings the family together, and it helps them remember their ancestors. Chusok is comparable to Thanksgiving in the United States.

Starting Points

1. Have one child demonstrate how and when Americans bow. Then, demonstrate how Koreans bow to their ancestors during Chusok. This will heighten the students’ interest in the two separate cultures.

2. Ask children what they do for Thanksgiving. Tell them that Chusok is a holiday when all the family gets together to eat, wear their traditional clothes, and bow to their ancestors.

3. Write the following statements on the board:
   a. Memorial Day—Americans and Koreans have special days to honor and remember the dead.
   b. Bowing—Americans bow at the end of performances, but Koreans bow to show respect to their ancestors.
   c. Chopsticks—Americans only eat with chopsticks when they eat Asian food, but Koreans eat with chopsticks every day.

Information

Holidays

Chusok is Korea’s day of thanksgiving. Families come together, eat food, tell stories, and give thanks. The difference between Chusok and Thanksgiving lies in the cultural differences between South Korea and The United States. For many Americans, Thanksgiving means eating dinner, watching football, taking a long nap in the afternoon, remembering the pilgrims, and giving thanks. Chusok is also a time to remember ancestors and eat in remembrance of them.

Chusok is in mid-September and like Thanksgiving, it is at the end of the harvest. Fresh vegetables, fruit, and other healthy foods are all collected for a wonderful holiday dinner. Food preparation can begin a full week in advance. Fresh kimchi is made from cabbage, cucumbers, or radishes. Rice cakes are prepared using sesame seeds, meat, vegetables, and other spicy foods (see Traditions Visual 1).

Families celebrate the holiday with the dad’s family because Korean society is patriarchal, which means that families are headed by the father. It is an honor to go back to the husband’s father’s house for Chusok. The family will get together at the
father’s home, and the women will help prepare the dinner. One food Koreans always eat is *songmyeun*, a traditional rice roll.

**Remembering Ancestors**

A special tradition during Chusok is remembering one’s ancestors. Koreans do this in two ways. One is by going to their ancestors’ graves. Graves are not flat with a headstone, but small mounds (see Traditions Visual 2). Some of the mounds are five feet tall; some are only three feet tall. At the mounds, the family pays its respects to the ancestors by bowing. When they bow, they kneel on the ground and touch their head to the ground—that is sometimes done several times.

Also, at the grave the family sets up a small table and puts all sorts of traditional food on it for the ancestors. After bowing, the family eats the food at the grave. This all symbolizes remembrance of their ancestors.

The second way to remember ancestors is in the house. Sometimes the family displays pictures of the ancestors on a table and the family bows to the picture. This method does not require a special table to be set up with food on it because the food is on the family dinner table. Regardless of where the bowing takes place, there is always a large dinner at the home of the father.

**Food and Activities**

When the eating begins it can last for hours. Koreans talk and eat, and eat and talk. They eat until their stomachs are so full they hurt. Then, the women bring out desserts—giant pears and apples. The pears do not look like pears in America; they are rounder, and some are as big as a child’s head. The fruit is peeled and cut into slices for the whole family to enjoy.

*Yutnori* is a traditional Korean game still popular today, which is usually played from the first to the fifteenth of the first lunar month. The game is played on a board where twenty-nine circles are drawn, and four wooden sticks, called *yut*, are thrown into the air to advance one’s markers to the finish circle. Upturning four sticks is called *yut*; *kol*, three sticks; *kei*, two sticks; *to*, one stick; and *mo*, no sticks. These five moves were possibly named after livestock—pigs, dogs, sheep, cows, and horses.

The *nollduigi*, or seesaw, is a game for women. This activity is enjoyed mainly on New Year’s Day, but it is also played on *Tano* (5 May) of the lunar calendar, and Chusok, the day of thanksgiving. To make the seesaw, a long plank of wood is balanced on top of a rolled up sheaf of straw placed in the middle of the board.

Folklore has it that in olden times, when women were not allowed to go out freely, they played on seesaws to steal a peek at the view over the fence and the men on the street. A different account is that seesawing allowed women to see the faces of their imprisoned husbands over the prison fence. It is also said that a woman who does not play seesaw in her youth cannot have a baby, and that seesawing early in January prevents one from getting pricked by a thorn during the year.

**Activities**

1. Ask students to list several ways they can remember their ancestors. In small groups, have them discuss their ideas.
2. Have students practice eating peanuts or raisins with chopsticks.

3. Have students try making a recipe for Korean food. Make some simple foods, such as puffed rice mixed with corn syrup.

4. Ask students to draw a picture of their grandparents to put in a frame. Instruct them to take their pictures home and display them somewhere they can always see the pictures to remind them of their grandparents.

5. Learn more about the traditional game Yutnori. Try making your own Yutnori board and play the game as a class.

Discussion Questions

1. How do we as Americans remember and show respect for our ancestors?

2. What do you think it would be like to sit on the ground and eat a Thanksgiving dinner at an eight-inch-high table?

3. Why do Koreans wear traditional clothes at Chusok (see Traditions Visuals 3)? Does your family dress differently on Thanksgiving than on other days? Why might people dress differently on holidays than they do on regular days?

4. Why is the same food always eaten at Chusok or Thanksgiving? What is the importance of traditional food for us and Koreans?
FOLKLORE & LANGUAGE

THE BROTHER, SISTER, AND TIGER

Every culture has legends—how the sun and moon were created or how the nation got its beginning. The story of The Brother, Sister, and Tiger and the myth of Dankun Shinhwa help people understand early influences in Korea that affected their religious and cultural beliefs.

Starting Points

1. Discuss myths and traditions in America, such as Santa Claus, or a fairy tale, such as Little Red Riding Hood. Tell the story of The Brother, Sister, and Tiger and the myth of Dankun Shinhwa. This will help the students relate better to Korean folklore.

2. Show pictures of the sun and the moon. Emphasize that people all over the earth can see the sun and the moon. Show pictures of different ethnic children; let the last picture be of Korean children. This will draw the students into the story on their level. Display maps of ancient Korea and a picture of Dankun—Korea’s first ruler. Briefly explain to the class that Korea’s history began more than five thousand years ago.

3. Write these words on the board in English and Korean, and ask the students what they think they all have in common. (They are all part of the Korean story.)
   a. Tiger Horangi
   b. Sun Hae
   c. Moon Tal
   d. Trees Namu

Information

Background of the Legend The Brother, Sister, and Tiger

The Brother, Sister, and Tiger was a story passed down orally and is now a popular children’s story. How it began is not exactly known, but we assume it was in response to a child wondering how the sun and moon came to be. It is probable that a mother, a father, or a teacher taught the story to children to help them understand why the sun and moon are in the sky.

The Brother, Sister, and Tiger: A Korean Story

One day a single mother told her son and daughter she was going to the market to buy some rice (see Folklore & Language Visual 1). She told them she would be back before nightfall and to be careful while she was gone. She put on her coat and shoes and left the house. The son and daughter watched her go and then finished up their daily chores before going outside to play in the fields.
The mother walked quickly to the market and bought her rice, but on her way home she had to walk slowly because the rice was so heavy. She carried it in a bag on top of her head. Carrying the rice on her head, she could walk more easily. She was following the road to her house when suddenly, a tiger jumped out in front of her (see Folklore & Language Visual 2).

The mother dropped the rice and ran away from the tiger, but the tiger was too fast. He was starving and he thought the mother would make a nice dinner. He chased after her and as she was running, her coat and shoe came off. The tiger caught her and in one big bite he ate her up! The tiger thought the mother was so delicious that he decided he would eat her children too.

The tiger put on the mother’s coat and shoes and picked up the rice and carried it on his head the way he had seen the mother do. He was able to walk faster than the mother, and he made it back to the house several hours before nightfall.

The children were playing in the fields and saw the tiger come home, but because they were far away, they thought the tiger was their mother. They shouted for joy because she was home so early, and they raced across the field, hopping over the vegetables and rice plants. “Mom, Mom!” they shouted as they ran to the house. The tiger did not answer back, and the children thought this was strange.

The children finally made it to the house. The tiger was inside, standing by the fireplace, so the children could not see his face (see Folklore & Language Visual 3). The children said hello, and walked toward the tiger, but the brother noticed that his mom had yellow and black hair. The sister noticed that her mom had paws instead of hands, and they both yelled out, “TIGER!”

They turned and ran out the door with the tiger chasing them closely. They climbed up a tree and began to pray to heaven that they would be saved (see Folklore & Language Visual 4). The tiger was climbing the tree too but because he did not have hands to grab the tree branches, it was harder for him to do. The children got to the very top and suddenly, a rope fell from the sky. Heaven had sent down a rope for them to climb up. They began to climb as fast as they could. By the time the tiger got to the top, they were far enough out of his reach that they were safe (see Folklore & Language Visual 5).

The tiger was very hungry, so he used his giant teeth to hold onto the rope, and he too, began to climb it. But the tiger was too heavy for the rope, and it began to break. The brother and sister were very scared, and they prayed for more help. Heaven wanted to protect them, and it knew they did not have a mother. Heaven let them climb high into the sky, and when they were high enough, the clouds covered them. When the clouds disappeared, out came the sun and the moon. The brother had turned into the sun, and the sister had turned into the moon. And the tiger? Because he was so big and heavy the rope broke and he fell to the earth and died.

But every day and night, the brother and sister are protected, because they are high in the sky. They give light in the day and in the night so that little children can always see danger before it comes (see Folklore & Language Visual 6).
About the Story
Koreans show a great deal of respect to their parents. Because the little boy and girl were respectful to their mother by doing all their chores before going out to play, the heavens saved them from being eaten up by the tiger. Though respect to parents is important in America, in Korea is it a way of life. Children do not go against their parents’ wishes, even when they are grown up.

Background of the Myth of Dankun Shinhwa
Tangun, the mythological progenitor of the Korean people and the founder of Old Choseon, the first state of Korea, is mentioned in a number of sources. Therefore, it is concluded that the myth of Tangun has some historical foundation, though it has been distorted through time.

The Myth of Dankun Shinhwa
Once upon a time, Heavenly God, Hwan-in, noticed that one of his sons, Hwan-woong, always had his heart set on the world of mortals below. God looked down upon the world and found the Samwi-Taebaek Mountains the most fitting place for human beings to live. He told his son he could go live in this place.

He gave his son three Cheon Bu-In, God-given seals of a king, and let him go down to the earth to rule over the human beings. Hwan-woong, with three thousand subordinates, took leave of his father and came down to the human world and built his city under the Shindan-soo, sandalwood trees used to make an altar for God, on top of Taebaek Mountain.

He named the place Shin-Si, or Divine City, and called himself Hwan-woong Cheon-wang, or Divine King. He gave his people their first lessons in living uprightly and ruled over them, taking care of three-hundred and sixty challenges such as farming, death, disease, punishment, etc. He also used Poong-baek, wind; Woo-san, rain; and Woon-sa, clouds.

At this time, there was a bear and a tiger living together in a cave. They always prayed to Divine King Hwan-woong that they would be made human beings. Taking notice of their admirable wish, the divine king gave them a bundle of sacred mugworts and twenty cloves of garlic and said to them, “If you eat these and do not see sunlight for one hundred days you will become human beings.”

The bear and the tiger immediately began living on the mugworts and garlic in their cave. After twenty-one days the bear became a woman, but the tiger, unable to endure, violated the instruction of the divine king, and failed to become a human.

Now the woman could not find any man to marry her, so she always prayed under the sandalwood to be given a child of her own. Hwan-woong took notice of her prayer and transformed himself temporarily into a man and married her. She gave birth to a son, Dankun-Wangeum a half-mortal half-god, who grew up to be the king who unified the various tribes that migrated to the Korean peninsula from Central Asia.
Activities

1. On paper plates, have the students draw masks of the face of their favorite character in either of the stories. Choose a student to represent each character in one of the stories and have them reenact the story for the rest of the class.

2. Have the children write a poem about what they would like to be changed into if they were the boy or the girl from The Brother, Sister, and Tiger.

3. Do the word search puzzle made from words found in the stories (see Folklore & Language Visual 7).

4. Have the students play charades using characters, key words, and scenes from the stories.

5. Have the students make up myths or legends to explain mysteries we see around us or to tell the story of one of their ancestors.

Discussion Questions

1. Why do you think the boy was turned into the sun? Why do you think the girl was turned into the moon?

2. If you had been the boy or girl, how would you have reacted when you first saw the tiger? What would you have done?

3. Why do we need a sun and a moon?

4. Why do countries have their own myths? What myths do we have in America?
FOOD

DINNER MANNERISMS

Koreans eat hot and spicy food with different utensils than spoons and forks, and they sit on the floor around a short table. The most social time for Koreans is when they are eating and drinking. No matter what meal they eat, there is always rice and a variety of side dishes.

Starting Points

1. Have on display a typical Korean dinner table setting (see Food Visual 1). This visual will interest the students in the discussion.

2. Hold up scissors and ask the students what they are used for. Next, explain that in Korea, scissors are also used to cut meat at dinner or lunchtime.

3. Write the following statements on the board:
   a. Rice—Koreans eat rice every day for lunch and dinner, and sometimes even for breakfast. It is comparable to bread in America.
   b. Hot Peppers—Koreans flavor their food by adding hot red peppers. Americans usually salt and pepper their food.
   c. Head of the House—Koreans eat as a family, and the head of the house, a father, grandfather, or grandmother, takes the first bite. Nobody eats until after the first bite is taken. This shows respect to the head of the house.

Information

Growing Rice

Rice, or paup as it is called in Korean, is a staple food in Korea. Korea’s climate is well suited for the grain to grow abundantly. Today, Korea has so many people in its country that land is very precious, and it is expensive to farm. Outside of the capital city, Seoul, it is easy to spot the rice fields.

Anciently, rice fields were flooded with water to help the rice grow. Rice was planted by hand in even rows only a few inches apart. Large families were necessary to help with the work in the rice fields. The farmers worked all day in the hot sun, planting the rice one grain at a time. They wore wide-brimmed hats made from the stalks of rice. Because the farmers bent over as they worked all day, planting, weeding, or harvesting, their backs began to grow crooked, and now the people of the older generation sometimes have backs that are hunched over.

Today, there are machines to help farmers plant and harvest the rice. It does not require as much hard work as it did forty years ago. There are fewer farmers now, and many people have moved into the city to look for other jobs. Korean families are small now. Sometimes only one child is born into a family.
At the Dinner Table in Korea

Koreans eat rice at most meals, but they also eat a variety of other vegetables. Koreans have a very healthy diet. At a regular meal, a Korean usually eats a bowl of rice with three or more vegetables. These other dishes are called *panchans*, or side dishes. Panchans are cooked with a special red pepper paste to add flavor. Sometimes panchans are cooked in sesame oil, salt and pepper, garlic, onions, or soy sauce.

The panchans are cut up into small pieces so they can be eaten with chopsticks. Koreans eat with chopsticks and spoons rather than with forks and knives. When the food is being prepared, it is cut into pieces—sometimes with a knife, but usually with scissors. Every Korean house has special kitchen scissors used to cut meat, vegetables, and noodles.

Panchans include vegetables, kimchi, eggs, or small amounts of seafood. Once the panchans are prepared, they are placed on the table in small dishes. If there are many people at the table, two or three bowls will be filled with the panchan. Koreans do not pass their food, but rather pick their food, using their chopsticks, from the panchan bowls set in front of them.

**Korean Eating Mannerisms**

Koreans have only their rice bowl and sometimes a bowl of soup as their own. All the panchans are eaten a little at a time as the food is eaten. They do not take large amounts of food and put it on their plate like Americans do because they do not have plates or serving spoons. They take only what they can eat, one bite at a time. Koreans do not waste their food—every grain of rice must be eaten.

In a Korean home, the woman prepares the food. She cooks it all and places it on the table. No one eats until the head of the house takes his or her first bite. It shows respect to the elders to let the oldest person in the house eat first.

Koreans must never leave the chopsticks sticking up in the rice, this symbolizes death to the host. They must eat all the rice in the bowl and leave some of the panchan. When done eating, it is appropriate to lay the chopsticks next to the empty rice bowl.

Before Koreans eat, they say to the cook, “I will eat well” (*char mok gess sum ni da*). After the meal is over it is complimentary to say, “I ate well” (*char mok ous sum ni da*). This is the Korean way of saying thank you. Eating loudly shows the host that you are enjoying your food. Korean food is always hot and in order to eat it, you have to keep your mouth open to help cool it down. This is very different than in America, where eating with your mouth open is bad manners.

**Activities**

1. Have the children practice using chopsticks by picking up beans from a bowl.

2. Plan a menu for a week-long dinner guest with at least one staple food item the same at each meal, such as rice.

3. Play “telephone” by creating sentences with Korean food words such as paub, panchan, kimchi, *char mok gess sum ni da*, *char mok ous sum ni da*. This is done by having one student think of a sentence using a Korean food word and then whisper-
ing that sentence into another student’s ear. This student then passes the sentence onto another student. This continues until everyone has heard the sentence. The last student repeats the sentence he or she heard out loud to see if it is the same as the original sentence. This can be repeated many times.

4. Discuss a hypothetical situation: what would it be like if you could only eat rice and fish every day?

Discussion Questions

1. What do you eat for breakfast, lunch, and dinner? If you could only eat one thing for all three, what would it be? Why?

2. What it is like when you eat a meal at your house? Do you pass the food to each person at the table using serving bowls? Do you wait to eat once your father has eaten? How is your family’s eating habits different from a Korean family’s?

3. Who cooks the food in your home? Who cleans up? Do you ever help?

4. What is your favorite dessert? Koreans’ favorite dessert is fruit such as big apples or pears.
CROSS-CULTURAL CONTRIBUTIONS

YANG AND UM

Yang and um represent the idea of balance and harmony. In order to understand yang and um, students need to learn how Koreans view balance and harmony. Yang and Um is becoming more and more popular in America. As we live in better harmony, we tend to be happier because we eat well, get enough sleep, and exercise. Balance in our personal lives makes the community we live in a little better because we are happier as individuals.

Starting Points

1. Show a picture of the Korean flag (see Map of Korea), drawing attention to the center circle. Discuss what each symbol represents. Discuss the American flag and what the stars and stripes represent. This will help the students understand the symbolism in the Korean flag.

2. Show old pictures of the Korean flag and talk about the change in the flag. Also show pictures of the first American flag and talk about how it has changed.

3. Write these statements on the board:
   a. Opposites—Koreans believe there is opposition in all things.
   b. Flags—The Korean flag represents balance, but the American flag represents fifty states, thirteen colonies, and freedom.
   c. Balance—Koreans believe if there were not balance, life would be ruined.

Information

Symbolism of the Flag

The Korean flag symbolizes much of the thought and philosophy of the people who live in the Orient. The flag, specifically its red and blue swirl, is called taeguk, a perfect balance of harmony. The upper red portion represents the yang, and the lower blue portion represents the um, ancient symbols of the universe in perfect balance and harmony.

The three bars at each corner of the flag also represent the ideas of opposites and balance. Three unbroken lines represent heaven, while the three broken lines represent earth. The bars in the lower left corner symbolize fire, and the right bars represent water.

The opposites of rain and drought may be taken for consideration as a simple example of balance. Crops must have rain for normal growth, but floods will wash crops away, causing hardships during the dry season. Also, we cannot have night without day, summer without winter, or recess without school.
Confucius

The importance of balance in Korea is a result of the teachings of Confucius, a great philosopher who lived in China and whose teachings spread throughout Korea and Japan. He taught people how to live good lives. In a Chinese proverb, Confucius wrote what we know as the golden rule, “Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.” The more he learned and studied, the more he wanted to become a teacher. The youth in China were not learning good values and morals, and Confucius took it upon himself to teach them. His teachings consist of topics such as respect for oneself, respect for adults, and love for others. Within these topics Confucius taught that it is wrong to steal and not tell the truth. He also taught about the importance of learning from good books, working hard, going to bed early, and regularly exercising.

Confucius never considered himself a prophet or a preacher—only a teacher. He practiced what he taught, and he instilled his livelihood into the society he helped govern. He held many important political positions, and the people respected and lived his ideals to the point that they were so honest they did not lock their doors or windows. The people trusted one another, and they were happy.

Confucius also taught if a society was to be governed well, it needed to have a single system of leadership. When Confucius was alive, the ruler was an Emperor. If the Emperor ruled fairly and honestly, the kingdom would always be under the Emperor’s control, but if the Emperor ruled unjustly, the kingdom would be taken away from him. This system of leadership was instilled in the government as well as in the household.

Korean culture has adopted Confucian teachings, especially those of leadership in the family. Fathers have a certain role they need to fulfill, and to balance it, mothers have a different and special role they perform. This way the house functions equally and well. The Korean household culture is similar to the United States in that the man works while the woman raises the family, though this idea of women is changing in the United States. Confucius taught if a household is governed in this way, there is peace and happiness because of there is balance and harmony.

These teachings have been passed down through history in Korean families. As a result, the Korean people have been able to live through many hardships, such as Japanese imperialism and the Korean War, and stay hopeful. Throughout the hard times, Koreans have strengthened their identity as a people.

Activities

1. Have the students draw their own personal flag with symbols that represent important values such as the yang and um.

2. Make a list of opposites found in nature.

3. Play Pictionary™ using the lists the students compiled in activity three.

4. Play Bingo (see Cross-cultural Contributions Visual 1). A student has “bingo” once he or she has marked off two squares that are opposites (i.e., dark and light or flood and drought).
Discussion Questions

1. Why do we need a winter? What does it do for the land? What activities can you do in the winter that you cannot do in the summer?

2. What does it mean to have balance and harmony? Think of examples in your life of balance and harmony.

3. What would you do if there were no recess? What if there were no winter or no summer? Talk about the importance of balance in our lives.
Facts about South Korea

Official Name: Republic of Korea
Capital: Seoul
Government Type: republic
Area: Total: 98,480 sq km, Land: 98,190 sq km, Water: 290 sq km
Land Boundaries: 238 km
Climate: temperate, with rainfall mostly during the summer months, snow in the winter
Lowest Point: Sea of Japan 0 m
Highest Point: Halla-san 1,950 m
Natural Resources: coal, tungsten, graphite, molybdenum, lead, hydropower potential
Natural Hazards: typhoons
Population: 48,324,000 (July 2002)
Ethnic Groups: homogeneous, except for about 20,000 Chinese
Religions: Christian 49%, Buddhist 47%, Confucianism 3%, Shamanist Chongdogyo (Religion of the Heavenly Way), and other 1%
Languages: Korean, English widely taught in school systems
GDP: $865 billion (2001 est.)
GDP Per Capita: $18,000 (2001 est.)
GDP Composition By Sector:
industry 44%, services 51%, agriculture 5%
Labor Force: 22 million (2001)
Unemployment Rate: 3.9% (2001 est.)

Industries: electronics, automobile production, chemicals, shipbuilding, steel, textiles, clothing, footwear, food processing
Agricultural Products: rice, root crops, barley, vegetables, fruit, cattle, pigs, chickens, milk, eggs, fish
Exports: $168.3 billion (f.o.b., 2001) electronics, machinery, motor vehicles, steel, ships, textiles, clothing, footwear, fish
Imports: $152.3 billion (f.o.b., 2001) machinery, electronics, oil, steel, transport equipment, textiles, organic chemicals, grains
Trade Partners: U.S., Japan, China, Australia, Saudi Arabia
Currency: won (W)
Exchange Rate: 1,317.01 won = $1 U.S. (January 2002)
**HISTORY AND HOLIDAYS**

**TIME LINE**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2333 B.C.E.</td>
<td>Tangun, the god-king, establishes Korea</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0–100 C.E.</td>
<td>Korean peninsula is divided into the kingdoms of Shilla, Koguryo, and Paekche</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>668</td>
<td>The peninsula is united</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>935</td>
<td>The Koryo dynasty, from which the Western name “Korea” is derived, rules the peninsula</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1231</td>
<td>Korea is under Mongolian occupation for almost 200 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1392</td>
<td>Choseon dynasty overthrows Koryo dynasty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1592</td>
<td>Japanese warlord, Hideyoshi, launches several military campaigns to take the peninsula</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1800</td>
<td>Korea earns the nickname “The Hermit Kingdom” because of isolationism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1910</td>
<td>Japan formally annexes the Korean peninsula</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Mar 1919</td>
<td>Korea organizes a resistance movement against Japan but is unsuccessful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sep 1945</td>
<td>The Korean peninsula is divided as Japan surrenders to U.S. forces below the 38th parallel and Soviet forces above the parallel, at the end of World War II</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nov 1947</td>
<td>The General Assembly rules that elections supervised by the United Nations should be held</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 Aug 1948</td>
<td>Voting in South Korea, and the Republic of Korea (R.O.K.) is established</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1948–50</td>
<td>Clashes between northern and southern forces along the 38th parallel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1949</td>
<td>United States withdraws its occupation forces by June, leaving behind only a military advisory group of 500 people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1950–53</td>
<td>The Korean War</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1960</td>
<td>Political unrest led by university students forces Syngman Rhee, the first political leader, to step down</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1979</td>
<td>Chung-hee Park is assassinated, and his political party ends; his era was marked by rapid industrial modernization and extraordinary economic growth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980</td>
<td>September, Chun-doo Hwan officially becomes president.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1987</td>
<td>The constitution is revised in October to include direct presidential elections and a strengthened National Assembly consisting of 299 members</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>South Korean President Kim Dae-jong initiates talks with North Korean President Kim Il-sung; President Kim Dae-jong receives Nobel Peace Prize for the Sunshine Policy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feb 2001</td>
<td>The two Koreas send delegations of 100 members of separated families to both capitals for reunion meetings</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**HOLIDAYS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Jan</td>
<td>New Year’s Day—Many Koreans who live on the coast get up early enough to see the first sunrise of the new year.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24 Jan</td>
<td>Sollal—This is the *Lunar New Year; at each New Year all Koreans turn one year older when they eat the traditional dumpling soup.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 Feb</td>
<td>Taeborum—The first full moon of the New Year. Koreans celebrate by eating a special rice meal; the rice is combined with four other grains.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Mar</td>
<td>Independence Day Movement—Koreans remember their first attempt at independence; nobody goes to work, and everyone hangs the Korean flag on their doors.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Apr</td>
<td>Arbor Day—Traditional games are played outside on this day such as wrestling, see-saw, and swinging; it is the mark of a new spring.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30 Apr</td>
<td>Buddha’s Birthday—Buddhists go to the river or the lake and feed rice to the fish; they also will buy turtles and let them free in the water; this represents a new life.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 May</td>
<td>Children’s Day—There is no work; instead, parents plan big activities for all the children; picnics are scheduled, and children play games</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Jun</td>
<td>Tano—This is similar to Arbor Day, but it is marked by the lunar calendar; the same traditions are held as on Arbor Day.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Jun</td>
<td>Memorial Day—The Koreans remember all those who died in the Korean War; the President goes to the National Cemetery to pay respect, and many Koreans watch movies about the War.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17 Jul</td>
<td>Constitution Day—The Constitution was drafted in 1948; there is no work on this holiday.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 Aug</td>
<td>Liberation Day—This is Koreans’ Independence Day; families get together to celebrate and work is canceled.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Oct</td>
<td>Chusok (Harvest Moon Festival)—This is the traditional Thanksgiving, where all the family members get together to eat and remember their ancestors.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Oct</td>
<td>National Foundation Day—Koreans believe Tangun founded the Korean nation thousands of years ago on this day.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25 Dec</td>
<td>Christmas Day—Koreans celebrate Christmas with their friends more than with their families, usually eating in restaurants.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* All lunar holidays are subject to change according to the phases of the moon.
ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

KOREAN EMBASSY TO THE UNITED STATES
The Republic of Korea Embassy
2450 Massachusetts Avenue NW
Washington, D.C. 20008
Phone: (202) 939-5600/3

KOREAN NATIONAL TOURISM ORGANIZATION
10 Da Dong, Jung Gu
Seoul, South Korea
100-180
Phone: 82-2-7299-599
Web site: http://www.knto.or.kr

BOOKS
In-Sob, Zong. Folk Tales from Korea, Hollym International Corp., 1982.
INTERNET SITES
CIA World Factbook:
http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/
Korea Online:
http://www.sigmainstitute.com/koreanonline/
Korean Cultural Center of Los Angeles:
http://www.kccla.org/
Korean Culture:
http://www.koreanculture.org
Korean History Project:
http://www.koreanhistoryproject.org
Korean Kimchi:
http://www.kimchikorea.net
Korean National Tourism Organization:
http://www.knto.or.kr
Life in Korea:
http://lifeinkorea.com
Orient Magazine:
http://www.orientmag.com/food6.htm
Mok-A Museum:
http://www.moka.or.kr/
Web Tour:
http://www.en.cybertournet.com
Folklore & Language Visual 1: The Brother, Sister, and Tiger
Folklore & Language Visual 5: The Brother, Sister, and Tiger
KOREAN FOLKLORE WORD SEARCH

Find the words forwards, backwards, upwards, downwards, and diagonally.

HEAVEN
ROPE
MOM
TREE

SONS
CARED
DAUGHTER
CLIMB

SUN
CULTURE
MOON
KOREA

RICE
RESPECT
TIGER
HOUSE
KOREAN FOLKLORE WORD SEARCH

ANSWER KEY

Find the words forwards, backwards, upwards, downwards, and diagonally.

HEAVEN  SONS  SUN  RICE
ROPE  CARED  CULTURE  RESPECT
MOM  DAUGHTER  MOON  TIGER
TREE  CLIMB  KOREA  HOUSE

Folklore & Language Visual 7: Korean Folklore Word Search Answer Key (2 of 2)
Food Visual 1: Dinner Table
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>YANG</th>
<th>UM</th>
<th>FLAG</th>
<th>CONFUCIUS</th>
<th>TAOISM</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>RED</td>
<td>BLUE</td>
<td>KOREA</td>
<td>OPPOSITES</td>
<td>BALANCE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>HARMONY</td>
<td>TAEGULA</td>
<td>STARS</td>
<td>STRIPES</td>
<td>STATES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>TALL</td>
<td>SHORT</td>
<td>BIG</td>
<td>SMALL</td>
<td>SAD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>HAPPY</td>
<td>SUMMER</td>
<td>WINTER</td>
<td>COLD</td>
<td>HOT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>AMERICA</td>
<td>WAR</td>
<td>PEACE</td>
<td>FREEDOM</td>
<td>SLAVERY</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>CULTURE</td>
<td>HISTORY</td>
<td>EARTH</td>
<td>HEAVEN</td>
<td>FIRE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>WATER</td>
<td>DROUGHT</td>
<td>FLOOD</td>
<td>MOM</td>
<td>DAD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>DARK</td>
<td>LIGHT</td>
<td>UP</td>
<td>DOWN</td>
<td>ROUGH</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>SMOOTH</td>
<td>HEAVY</td>
<td>LIGHT</td>
<td>SUN</td>
<td>MOON</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
FLAG OF SOUTH KOREA

The flag is white with a red (top) and blue yin-yang symbol in the center; there is a different black trigram from the ancient I Ching (Book of Changes) in each corner of the white field.