

## “Police Action”: The Korean War, 1950-1954

Student Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

### Activity #1: The Decision to Intervene in Korea

#### Timeline of Events Related to the Origins of the Korean War

Date	Event
August 10, 1945	The United States and the Soviet Union agree to a temporary division of Korea—formerly a Japanese colony—along the 38 <sup>th</sup> Parallel. U.S. forces were to occupy and administer the southern half, while Soviet troops would occupy and administer the North.
March 1946	During World War II the two combatants in the Chinese Civil War—the Nationalists under Chiang Kai-shek and the Communists under Mao Tse-tung—had agreed to a temporary truce while both fought the Japanese. However, less than a year after the defeat of Japan the truce fell apart, and large-scale fighting resumed between the two sides.
May 1948	The United States sponsors elections in South Korea. The Soviets protest the decision, and instruct left-wing parties there to boycott the election. The result is that Syngman Rhee, a dedicated anti-communist who was educated in the United States, becomes head of the government. Soon afterward the Soviets establish a communist regime in North Korea under the leadership of Kim Il-sung.
August 12, 1948	Eager to rid itself of commitments in East Asia, the United States formally recognizes the independence of South Korea, and arrangements begin for the withdrawal of U.S. forces from the region. The Soviets make a similar announcement regarding North Korea.
December 26, 1948	The last Soviet troops leave North Korea.
January 1949	Chinese communist forces under Mao Tse-tung enter city of Peiping. They change the name to Beijing and declare that it is the new capital of China.

February 3, 1949	U.S. Secretary of State Dean Acheson, citing the unpopularity and corruption of Chiang Kai-shek's Nationalists, recommends that the U.S. government stop sending aid. Truman and Congress reject this advice, and approve a further \$60 million in economic and military assistance.
June 1949	The last U.S. troops leave South Korea.
July 14, 1949	The Soviet Union successfully tests its first atomic bomb; however, a formal announcement of this fact is not made until September 23.
October 1, 1949	With most of the Chinese countryside, as well as its major cities, in communist hands, Mao Tse-tung declares victory in the civil war. He announces that henceforth the country will be referred to as the "People's Republic of China."
December 1, 1949	Chiang Kai-shek and his supporters abandon the mainland and flee to the island of Taiwan, where they form a government called the "Republic of China."
January 12, 1950	Secretary of State Acheson gives famous "perimeter" speech to the National Press Club in Washington. Discussing U.S. strategy in Asia, he lists Japan, Okinawa, the Philippines, and the Aleutian Islands as vital interests that will be defended with force. The list includes neither Taiwan nor South Korea.
February 9, 1950	U.S. Senator Joseph McCarthy (Rep.-Wisconsin) gives speech in Wheeling, West Virginia, blaming recent foreign policy failures—particularly Mao Tse-Tung's victory in China—on the presence of communists in the State Department.
February 14, 1950	After a two-month visit by Mao Tse-tung to Moscow, the Soviet Union and the People's Republic of China announce a 30-year alliance treaty. According to the terms of this treaty, each side promised to come to the aid of the other in the event of a war against a third party.
March 10, 1950	The Central Intelligence Agency warns of a massive buildup of North Korean troops along the South Korean border, predicts that an invasion is imminent.

April 1950	Soviet leader Josef Stalin gives Kim Il-sung permission to launch an invasion of South Korea; however, he warns Kim that "If you should get kicked in the teeth, I shall not lift a finger. You have to ask Mao [Tse-tung] for all the help."
June 25, 1950	At approximately 4:00 am, 90,000 North Korean troops, equipped with Soviet weapons, invade South Korea. South Korean forces are quickly forced to retreat. Truman orders U.S. naval and air forces—but not ground forces—to assist in the defense of South Korea.
June 27, 1950	The United Nations calls upon its members to come to the aid of South Korea. The proposal only wins the approval of the Security Council because the Soviet delegation is boycotting its proceedings to protest the U.N.'s failure to recognize Mao Tse-tung's regime as the legitimate government of China.
June 28, 1950	North Korean forces capture Seoul, the capital of South Korea.

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Telegram, dated June 24, 1950, from U.S. State Department to President Harry S. Truman informing the President about the North Korean attack on South Korea:

[http://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/study\\_collections/korea/large/week1/kw\\_1\\_1.htm](http://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/study_collections/korea/large/week1/kw_1_1.htm)

ACCORDING KOREAN ARMY REPORTS...NORTH KOREAN FORCES INVADED ROK [Republic of Korea—in other words, South Korea] AT SEVERAL POINTS THIS MORNING. ACTION WAS INITIATED ABOUT FOUR ONGJIN BLASTED BY NORTH KOREAN ARTILLERY FIRE. ABOUT SIX NORTH KOREAN INFANTRY COMMENCE CROSSING [38<sup>th</sup>] PARALLEL IN ONGJIN AREA, KAESONG AREA, CHUNCHON AREA AND AMPHIBIOUS LANDING WAS REPORTEDLY MADE SOUTH OF KANGNUMG ON EAST COAST. KAESONG WAS REPORTEDLY CAPTURED AT NINE...WITH SOME 10 NORTH KOREAN TANKS PARTICIPATING IN OPERATION. NORTH KOREAN FORCES, SPEARHEADED BY TANKS, REPORTEDLY CLOSING IN ON CHUNCHON. DETAILS OF FIGHTING IN KANGNUMG AREA UNCLEAR, ALTHOUGH IT SEEMS NORTH KOREAN FORCES HAVE CUT HIGHWAY.... IT WOULD APPEAR FROM NATURE OF ATTACK AND MANNER IN WHICH IT WAS LAUNCHED IT CONSTITUTES ALL OUT OFFENSIVE AGAINST ROK.

These developments are portrayed graphically on the following map:

South Korea: UN Delay, Withdrawal, and Defense:

<http://www.dean.usma.edu/history/web03/atlas/korean%20war/korean%20pages/korean%20war%20map%2010.htm>

## “Police Action”: The Korean War, 1950-1954

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### Activity #1: The Decision to Intervene in Korea

**Directions:** Using what you’ve already learned about the origins of the war in Korea, plus the material in the following documents, write a three-paragraph letter to the editor defending President Truman’s decision to commit U.S. forces to the defense of South Korea. Each paragraph should consist of a general statement as well as at least two facts, drawn from the documents, to back up that statement.

A) Resolution dated June 27, 1950, from United Nations Security Council recommending that the members of the United Nations furnish assistance to the Republic of Korea in order to repel the attack and restore peace and security in Korea:

[http://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/study\\_collections/korea/large/week1/ayer\\_1\\_1.htm](http://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/study_collections/korea/large/week1/ayer_1_1.htm)

B) Statement, dated June 27, 1950, by President Harry S. Truman, announcing his order to send U.S. air and naval forces to help defend South Korea and explaining the rationale for his decision:

[http://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/study\\_collections/korea/large/week1/kw\\_27\\_1.htm](http://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/study_collections/korea/large/week1/kw_27_1.htm)

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 Security Council of the United Nations called upon the invading troops to cease hostilities and to withdraw to the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel [that is, the border between North and South Korea]. This they have not done, but on the contrary have pressed the attack. The Security Council called upon all members of the United Nations to render every assistance to the United Nations in the execution of this resolution. In these circumstances I have ordered United States air and sea forces to give the Korean Government troops cover and support.

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. It has defied the orders of the Security Council of the United Nations to preserve international peace and security....

I know that all members of the United Nations will consider carefully the consequences of this latest aggression in Korea in defiance of the Charter of the United Nations. A return to the rule of force in international affairs would have far reaching effects. The United States will continue to uphold the rule of law....

C) Excerpts from President Truman’s Radio and Television Address to the American people on the Situation in Korea, July 19, 1950:

<http://www.teachingamericanhistory.org/library/index.asp?document=582>

At noon today, I sent a message to the Congress about the situation in Korea. I want to talk to you tonight about that situation, and about what it means to the security of the United States, and to our hopes for world peace.

Korea is a small country, thousands of miles away, but what is happening there is important to every American.

On Sunday, June 25<sup>th</sup>, communist forces attacked the Republic of Korea.

This attack has made it clear, beyond all doubt, that the international communist movement is willing to use armed invasion to conquer independent nations. An act of aggression such as this creates a very real danger to the security of all free nations.

The attack upon Korea was an outright breach of the peace and a violation of the Charter of the United Nations. By their actions in Korea, communist leaders have demonstrated their contempt for the basic moral principles on which the United Nations is founded. This is a direct challenge to the efforts of the free nations to build a kind of world in which men can live in freedom and peace.

This challenge has been presented squarely. We must meet it squarely....

The communist invasion was launched in great force, with planes, tanks, and artillery. The size of the attack, and the speed with which it was followed up, make it perfectly plain that it had been plotted long in advance.

As soon as word of the attack was received, Secretary of State Acheson...informed me that, with my approval, he would ask for an immediate meeting of the United Nations National Security Council. The Security Council met just twenty-four hours after the communist invasion began.

One of the main reasons the Security Council was set up was to act in cases such as this—to stop outbreaks of aggression in a hurry before they develop into general conflicts. In this case, the Council passed a resolution which called for the invaders of Korea to stop fighting, and to withdraw. The Council called on all members to help carry out this resolution. The communist invaders ignored the action of the Security Council and kept right on with their attack.

The Security Council then met again. It recommended that members of the United Nations help the Republic of Korea repel the attack, and help restore peace and security in the area....

These actions by the United Nations and its members are of great importance. The free nations have now made it clear that lawless aggression will be met with force. The free nations have learned the fateful lesson of the 1930's. That lesson is that aggression must be met firmly. Appeasement leads only to further aggression and ultimately to war.

The principal effort to help the Koreans preserve their independence, and to help the United States restore peace, has been made by the United States. We have sent land, naval, and air forces to assist in those operations. We have done this because we know that what is at stake here is nothing less than our own national security and the peace of the world....

Under the flag of the United Nations, a unified command has been established for all forces of the members of the United Nations fighting in Korea. General MacArthur is the commander of this combined force.

The prompt action of the United Nations to put down lawless aggression, and the prompt response to this action by free peoples all over the world, will stand as a landmark in mankind's long search for a rule of law among nations....

We know that it will be a hard, tough fight to halt the invasion, and to drive the communists back. The invaders have been provided with enough equipment and supplies for a long campaign. They overwhelmed the lightly armed defense forces of the Korean Republic in the first few days and drove southward.

Now, however, the Korean defenders have reorganized, and an increasing number of American troops have joined them. Our forces have fought a skillful, rear-guard delaying action, pending the arrival of reinforcements. Some of these reinforcements are now arriving; others are on the way from the United States....

We have the resources to meet our needs. Far more important, the American people are united in their belief in democratic freedom. We are united in detesting communist slavery.

We know that the cost of freedom is high. But we are determined to preserve our freedom—no matter what the cost....

## “Police Action”: The Korean War, 1950-1954

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### Activity #2: The Decision to Cross the 38<sup>th</sup> Parallel

#### Timeline of Events Related to the Korean War, June 29-October 10, 1950

Date	Event
June 29, 1950	General Douglas MacArthur, commander of U.S. forces in East Asia, visits the front lines, where he witnesses firsthand the desperate situation of the South Korean army.
July 7, 1950	General MacArthur proposes to use U.S. troops to launch a massive counterattack against the North Koreans that would not only drive them from South Korea, but would overthrow Kim Il-sung’s regime in the North and unite all of Korea under a single government. Most of the Joint Chiefs of Staff oppose this, as does George Kennan, who insists that U.S. forces should only drive the North Koreans back across the 38 <sup>th</sup> Parallel.
July 10, 1950	The United Nations authorizes the formation of a force comprised of U.S. troops and those of fourteen other nations, under the overall command of General MacArthur.
July 19, 1950	Truman appears before Congress asking for \$10 billion to support the “police action” in Korea. He follows this up with a radio address to the American public, but he makes it clear that there will be no full-scale mobilization as there had been in World War II.
July 23, 1950	MacArthur proposes an amphibious landing of U.S. forces at Inchon, behind the North Korean lines. The Joint Chiefs of Staff approve the plan on August 28.
August 7, 1950	U.N. forces halt North Koreans outside the city of Pusan.



September 15, 1950	U.S. forces under MacArthur land at three separate locations on the Korean coast near Inchon. The North Koreans, taken completely by surprise, are driven from Inchon with minimal U.S. casualties.
September 19, 1950	U.N. troops reach Seoul and recapture it ten days later.
September 27, 1950	Truman approves MacArthur's plan to cross the 38 <sup>th</sup> Parallel, invading North Korea.
October 7, 1950	U.N. forces under MacArthur cross the 38 <sup>th</sup> parallel; later that same day, the United Nations General Assembly passes a resolution recommending "the establishment of a unified, independent and democratic Government in the sovereign State of Korea."
October 10, 1950	The official radio station of the People's Republic of China warns that the "Chinese people cannot stand idly by" and allow U.N. forces to overrun North Korea.

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### Activity #2: The Decision to Cross the 38<sup>th</sup> Parallel

**Directions:** Read the following documents related to Truman’s decision to allow U.S. forces to pursue the retreating North Korean army north of the 38<sup>th</sup> Parallel—that is, across the border back into North Korea. As you read, list on the worksheet below the reasons *for* doing so, and the reasons for *not* doing so.

Memorandum from George Kennan to Secretary of State Dean Acheson, August 23, 1950:

[http://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/study\\_collections/korea/large/sec3/kw149\\_1.htm](http://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/study_collections/korea/large/sec3/kw149_1.htm)

The course upon which we are today moving is one, as I see it, so little promising and so fraught with danger that I could not honestly urge you to continue to take responsibility for it. These are the main reasons why I feel this way:

- A. We have not achieved a clear and realistic and generally accepted view of our objectives in Korea and sectors of our public opinion and of our official establishment are indulging themselves in emotional, moralistic attitudes toward Korea which, unless corrected, can easily carry us toward real conflict with the Russians and inhibit us from making a realistic agreement about that area.
- B. By permitting General MacArthur to retain the wide and relatively uncontrolled latitude he has enjoyed in determining our policy in the North Asian and western Pacific areas, we are tolerating a state of affairs in which we do not really have full control over the statements that are being made—an the actions taken—in our name....

So far as Korea is concerned...I think we will be on very dangerous terrain if we fail to recognize the following subtle but wholly valid and vital distinction:

It was not tolerable to us that communist control should be extended to South Korea in the way in which this was attempted on June 24, since the psychological radiations from an acquiescence in this development on our part would have been wholly disruptive of our prestige in Asia;

Nevertheless, it is not essential to us to see an anti-Soviet Korean regime extended to all of Korea for all time; we could even eventually tolerate for a certain period of time a Korea nominally independent but actually amenable to Soviet influence, provided this state of affairs were to be brought about gradually and not too conspicuously....

Excerpts from a Report to the President by the National Security Council on United States Courses of Action with Respect to Korea (NSC 81/1), September 9, 1950:

[http://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/study\\_collections/korea/large/sec4/nsc81-4.htm](http://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/study_collections/korea/large/sec4/nsc81-4.htm)

4. The political objective of the United Nations in Korea is to bring about the complete independence and unity of Korea....
5. The United States has strongly supported this political objective. If the present United Nations action in Korea can accomplish this political objective without substantially increasing the risk of general war with the Soviet Union or Communist China, it would be in our interest to advocate the pressing of the United Nations action to this conclusion. It would not be in our national interest, however...to take action in Korea which would involve a substantial risk of general war....
6. As U.N. forces succeed in stabilizing the front, driving back the North Korean forces, and approaching the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel, the decisions and actions taken by the United States and other U.N. members which are supporting the Security Council resolutions, and those taken by the Kremlin, will determine whether hostilities are confined to operations against the North Koreans or spread so that the danger of a third world war is greatly increased.
7. It is unlikely that the Soviet Union will passively accept the emergence of a situation in which all or most of Korea would pass from its control, unless it believes that it can take action which would prevent this and which would not involve a substantial risk of general war or unless it is now prepared to accept such risk.... Alternatively, the Soviet Union might initiate some move toward a negotiated settlement while hostilities are still in progress south of the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel. In view of the importance of avoiding general war, we should be prepared to negotiate a settlement favorable to us. Such a settlement should not leave the aggressor in an advantageous position that would invite a repetition of the aggression that would undermine the authority and strength of the United Nations.
8. [...] It is possible that the Soviet Union, although this would increase the chance of general war, may endeavor to persuade the Chinese Communists to enter the Korean campaign with the purpose of avoiding the defeat of the North Korean forces and also of fomenting war between the United States and the Chinese Communists should we react strongly.
9. [...] It is difficult to appraise the risk at this time, and our action in moving major forces north of the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel would create a situation to which the Soviet Union would be almost certain to react in some manner. If only the Republic of Korea forces operate in or occupy Korea north of the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel, the risk of general hostilities would be reduced, although the possibility of Soviet or Chinese Communist intervention would not be precluded....
10. It will be desirable to bear in mind...both the importance of securing support of the majority of U.N. members for any action that might be taken north of the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel and the advantage of establishing a record that will clearly show that every reasonable effort has been made to avoid carrying the military struggle into a new phase by a land offensive beyond the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel. Therefore, at some point after the U.N. forces begin to take the initiative to drive back and destroy the North Korean forces, terms of surrender should be offered....
12. [...] It would have to be recognized that a stalemate freezing the U.N. forces indefinitely in Korea or returning to the status quo ante [the situation that existed before] June 25, would be undesirable....

Excerpts from CIA Report on the Likelihood of Soviet or Chinese intervention in the event of an invasion of North Korea, September 27, 1950:

<http://teachingamericanhistory.org/library/index.asp?document=911>

Despite statements by Chou En Lai and troop movements in Manchuria...there are no convincing indications of an actual Chinese Communist intention to resort to full-scale intervention in Korea.... From a military standpoint the most favorable time for intervention in Korea has passed....

While full-scale Chinese Communist intervention in Korea must be regarded as continuing possibility, a consideration of all known factors leads to the conclusion that barring a Soviet decision for global war, such action is not probable in 1950. During this period, intervention will probably be confined to continued covert assistance to the North Koreans. The consensus of the US top military is that the Russians are not ready for global war while China is not militarily capable of unilateral intervention - namely, there will be no Soviet or Chinese communist intervention in Korea.

Resolution Adopted by the United Nations General Assembly, October 7, 1950:

[http://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/study\\_collections/korea/large/sec4/unresolu1-1.htm](http://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/study_collections/korea/large/sec4/unresolu1-1.htm)

The General Assembly...mindful of the fact that...the unification of Korea has not yet been achieved, and that an attempt has been made by an armed attack from North Korea to extinguish by force the Government of the Republic of Korea,

Having in mind that United Nations armed forces are at present operating in Korea in accordance with the recommendations of the Security Council of 27 June 1950...that Members of the United Nations furnish such assistance to the Republic of Korea as may be necessary to repel the armed attack and to restore international peace and security in the area,

Recalling that the essential objective...was the establishment of a unified, independent, and democratic Government of Korea,

Recommends that...all constituent acts be taken, including the holding of elections, under the auspices of the United Nations, for the establishment of a unified, independent and democratic Government in the sovereign State of Korea.

Excerpt from Broadcast on Radio Peking [the official radio station of the People's Republic of China], October 10, 1950: <http://teachingamericanhistory.org/library/index.asp?document=912>

The American War of intervention in Korea has been a serious menace to the security of China from the very start...The Chinese people cannot stand idly by with regard to such a serious situation - created by the invasion of Korea by the United States and its accomplice countries and to the dangerous trend toward extending the war. The Chinese people firmly advocate a peaceful resolution to the Korean problem and are firmly opposed to the extension of the Korean War by America.

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### Activity #2: The Decision to Cross the 38<sup>th</sup> Parallel

**Directions:** Based on your reading, list as many reasons as you can think of both for and against allowing General MacArthur to send his troops north of the 38<sup>th</sup> Parallel.

Reasons <i>for</i> Crossing the 38 <sup>th</sup> Parallel	Reasons for <i>Not</i> Crossing the 38 <sup>th</sup> Parallel

## “Police Action”: The Korean War, 1950-1954

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### Activity #3: Truman vs. MacArthur

#### Timeline of Events Related to the Truman-MacArthur Controversy

Date	Event
August 24, 1950	MacArthur sends a public statement to a national meeting of the Veterans of Foreign Wars in which he argues that Taiwan is vital to U.S. national defense, and must be defended at all costs against Communist China.
August 26, 1950	Fearing that MacArthur's statement to the Veterans of Foreign Wars might be interpreted by China as a provocation, Truman orders that it be withdrawn, stating that the general's position on Taiwan was "in conflict with the policy of the United States and its position in the United Nations."
October 14, 1950	Truman and MacArthur meet on Wake Island to discuss the war in Korea. MacArthur assures Truman that the Chinese will not intervene, and apologizes for any embarrassment caused by his remarks on Taiwan. Truman later expresses his anger with MacArthur for not wearing his dress uniform for a meeting with the President of the United States.
October 19, 1950	Pyongyang, the capital of North Korea, falls to United Nations forces.
October 25, 1950	A Chinese force of 250,000 men, supported by Soviet jets, cross the Yalu River into North Korean territory, but withdraw back into China two weeks later.
November 24, 1950	MacArthur launches his final offensive toward the Yalu River, the border between North Korea and China.

November 25, 1950	Chinese troops cross the Yalu River again, this time attacking MacArthur's forces, forcing them to retreat back toward South Korea.
December 20, 1950	Angered by repeated statements by MacArthur in favor of all-out war against Communist China, Truman issues an order forbidding the release of any "speech, press release, or other public statement concerning military policy" without approval from the Department of Defense
December 25, 1950	The United Nations calls for an armistice in Korea; MacArthur calls for all-out war against Communist China with assistance from Chiang Kai-shek's Nationalist Chinese forces in Taiwan.
January 4, 1951	Chinese troops capture Seoul, capital of South Korea.
March 7, 1951	U.N. forces launch "Operation Ripper" along the Han River, pushing Chinese troops back.
March 18, 1951	Seoul is taken once again by United Nations troops.
March 20, 1951	In a letter to House Republican leader Rep. Joseph R. Martin, MacArthur criticizes Truman's refusal to wage a full-scale war against China.
April 5, 1951	Rep. Martin, having received MacArthur's letter, reads it aloud on the floor of the House of Representatives.
April 11, 1951	Truman dismisses MacArthur from command. He is replaced by General Matthew Ridgeway.

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### Activity #3: Truman vs. MacArthur

#### To be given to the students portraying President Truman and General MacArthur:

**Directions:** Your job is to represent either President Truman or General MacArthur at a congressional hearing to determine whether Truman was right to dismiss MacArthur from command. Read the following documents and use them to prepare a brief presentation explaining your side of the story. Afterward the class will ask you a series of questions about your decision.

Harry S. Truman, Speech Explaining the Firing of MacArthur, April 13, 1951:

<http://www.teachingamericanhistory.org/library/index.asp?document=860>

The question we have had to face is whether the Communist plan of conquest can be stopped without general war. Our Government and other countries associated with us in the United Nations believe that the best chance of stopping it without general war is to meet the attack in Korea and defeat it there. That is what we have been doing. It is a difficult and bitter task. But so far it has been successful...

So far, by fighting a limited war in Korea, we have prevented aggression from succeeding, and bringing on a general war. And the ability of the whole free world to resist Communist aggression has been greatly improved.

We have taught the enemy a lesson. He has found out that aggression is not cheap or easy. Moreover, men all over the world who want to remain free have been given new courage and new hope. They know now that the champions of freedom can stand up and fight and that they will stand up and fight...

We do not want to see the conflict in Korea extended. We are trying to prevent a world war—not to start one. The best way to do that is to make it plain that we and the other free countries will continue to resist the attack.

But you may ask, why can't we take other steps to punish the aggressor? Why don't we bomb...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 that were to happen, we would have brought about the exact situation we are trying to prevent.

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.



What would suit the ambitions of the Kremlin [in other words, the Soviet Union] better than for our military forces to be committed to a full-scale war with Red China? [...]

I believe that we must try to limit the war in 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 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.

It was with the deepest personal regret that I found myself compelled to take this action. General MacArthur is one of our greatest military commanders. But the cause of world peace is more important than any individual.

The change in commands in the Far East means no change whatever in the policy of the United States. We will carry on the fight in Korea with vigor and determination in an effort to bring the war to a speedy and successful conclusion.

General Douglas MacArthur Defends His Conduct in the War in Korea, April 19, 1951:

<http://www.teachingamericanhistory.org/library/index.asp?document=715>

If a potential enemy can divide his strength on two fronts, it is for us to counter his efforts. The Communist threat is a global one. Its successful advance in one sector threatens the destruction of every other sector. You cannot appease or otherwise surrender to communism in Asia without simultaneously undermining our efforts to halt its advance in Europe....

While I was not consulted prior to the President's decision to intervene in support of the Republic of Korea, that decision, from a military standpoint, proved a sound one. As I say, it proved a sound one, as we hurled back the invader and decimated his forces. Our victory was complete, and our objectives within reach, when Red China intervened with numerically superior ground forces.

This created a new war and an entirely new situation, a situation not contemplated when our forces were committed against the North Korean invaders; a situation which called for new decisions in the diplomatic sphere to permit the realistic adjustment of military strategy. Such decisions have not been forthcoming.

While no man in his right mind would advocate sending our ground forces into continental China, and such was never given a thought, the new situation did urgently demand a drastic revision of strategic planning if our political aim was to defeat this new enemy as we had defeated the old.

Apart from the military need, as I saw it, to neutralize the sanctuary protection given the enemy north of the Yalu, I felt that military necessity in the conduct of the war made necessary —

- (1) The intensification of our economic blockade against China.
- (2) The imposition of a naval blockade against the China coast.

(3) Removal of restrictions on air reconnaissance of China's coastal area and of Manchuria.

(4) Removal of restrictions on the forces of the republic of China on Formosa, with logistical support to contribute to their effective operations against the Chinese mainland.

For entertaining these views, all professionally designed to support our forces committed to Korea and to bring hostilities to an end with the least possible delay and at a saving of countless American and Allied lives, I have been severely criticized in lay circles, principally abroad, despite my understanding that from a military standpoint the above views have been fully shared in the past by practically every military leader concerned with the Korean campaign, including our own Joint Chiefs of Staff....

There are some who for varying reasons would appease Red China. They are blind to history's clear lesson, for history teaches with unmistakable emphasis that appeasement but begets new and bloodier war. It points to no single instance where this end has justified that means, where appeasement had led to more than a sham peace.

Like blackmail, it lays the basis for new and successively greater demands until, as in blackmail, violence becomes the only alternative. Why, my soldiers asked of me, surrender military advantages to an enemy in the field? I could not answer.

Some may say to avoid spread of the conflict into an all-out war with China. Others, to avoid Soviet intervention. Neither explanation seems valid, for China is already engaging with the maximum power it can commit, and the Soviet will not necessarily mesh its actions with our moves. Like a cobra, any new enemy will more likely strike whenever it feels that the relativity in military or other potential is in its favor on a worldwide basis.

The tragedy of Korea is further heightened by the fact that its military action is confined to its territorial limits. It condemns that nation, which it is our purpose to save, to suffer the devastating impact of full naval and air bombardment while the enemy's sanctuaries are fully protected from such attack and devastation....

## “Police Action”: The Korean War, 1950-1954

Student Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

### Activity #3: Truman vs. MacArthur

#### To be given to the rest of the class:

**Directions:** Your job is to portray a member of a congressional committee investigating President Truman’s dismissal of General MacArthur. Your teacher has assigned you a role—you are either a Democrat (defending the president’s decision) or a Republican (criticizing that decision). No matter which side you are on, read the following documents. After President Truman and General MacArthur have given their statements, you will have an opportunity to ask questions. Remember, if you’re on the Democratic side your job is to make the president look good and the general look bad; if you’re on the Republican side your goal is the opposite!

A) Order from President Truman, December 20, 1950:

[http://www.trumanlibrary.org/exhibit\\_documents/index.php?pagenumber=5&titleid=186&tldate=1951-04-07&collectionid=firem&PageID=1&groupid=3414](http://www.trumanlibrary.org/exhibit_documents/index.php?pagenumber=5&titleid=186&tldate=1951-04-07&collectionid=firem&PageID=1&groupid=3414)

In the light of the present critical international situation, and until further written notice from me, I wish that each one of you would take immediate steps to reduce the number of public speeches pertaining to foreign or military policy made by officials of the departments and agencies of the executive branch. This applies to officials in the field as well as those in Washington....

No speech, press release, or other public statement concerning military policy should be released until it has received clearance from the Department of Defense....

The purpose of this memorandum is not to curtail the flow of information to the American people, but rather to insure that the information made public is accurate and fully in accord with the policies of the United States Government.

Officials overseas, including military commanders and diplomatic representatives, should be ordered to exercise extreme caution in public statements, to clear all but routine statements with their departments, and to refrain from direct communication on military or foreign policy with newspapers, magazines, or other publicity media in the United States.

B) Letter, MacArthur to Rep. Joseph Martin (R-MA), March 20, 1951:

<http://www.dwightd Eisenhower.com/koreanwar/Letter,%20MacArthur%20to%20Rep.%20Martin.gif>

[On April 5 Congressman Martin, the leader of the Republican Party in the House of Representatives, read this letter aloud on the floor of the House, thus causing considerable embarrassment to the administration.]

My views and recommendations with respect to the situation created by Red China's entry into war against us in Korea have been submitted to Washington in most complete detail. Generally these views are well known and clearly understood, as they follow the conventional pattern of meeting force with maximum counter-force as we have never failed to do in the past. Your view with respect to the utilization of the Chinese forces on Formosa [Taiwan] is in conflict with neither logic nor this tradition [in other words, MacArthur believes that the Nationalist Chinese forces from Taiwan should be encouraged to attack the People's Republic of China in retaliation for China's intervention in the Korean War.]

It seems strangely difficult for some [by this MacArthur clearly meant Truman] to realize that here in Asia is where the Communist conspirators have elected to make their play for global conquest...; 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. As you point out, we must win. There is no substitute for victory.

## “Police Action: The Korean War, 1950-1954

Student Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

### Activity #4: Public Opinion and the Korean War

**Directions:** Using the following documents, in addition to what they have already learned about the Korean War, write a brief essay in response to the following question: “What did the American public think about the war by late 1952 – early 1953? What factors do you think influenced their opinions?”

Your essay should consist of at least three paragraphs, each of which should include a general statement and at least two sentences citing facts from the documents to back up their generalizations.

A) Campaign speech by Republican presidential candidate Dwight D. Eisenhower, October 24, 1952:  
<http://www.eisenhower.utexas.edu/Korea/documents/ishallgotokorea1.html>

[T]he biggest fact about the Korean War is this: it was never inevitable, it was never inescapable....There is a Korean War—and we are fighting it—for the simplest of reasons: because free leadership failed to check and to turn back Communist ambition before it savagely attacked us. The Korean War—more perhaps than any other war in history—simply and swiftly followed the collapse of our political defenses. There is no other reason than this—we failed to read and outwit the totalitarian mind [that is, the minds of the Communist leaders].

World War II should have taught us all one lesson. The lesson is this: to vacillate, to hesitate—to appease even by merely betraying unsteady purpose—is to feed a dictator’s appetite for conquest and to invite war itself.

That lesson—which should have firmly guided every great decision of our leadership through these later years—was ignored in the development of the administration’s policies for Asia since the end of World War II. Because it was ignored, the record of those policies is a record of appalling failure.

That record of failure dates back—with red-letter folly—at least to September of 1947. It was then that General Albert Wedemeyer—returned from a Presidential mission to the Far East—submitted to the President this warning: “The withdrawal of American military forces from Korea would...result in the occupation of South Korea by either Soviet troops or, as seems more likely, by the Korean military units trained under Soviet auspices in North Korea.”

That warning and his entire report were disregarded and suppressed by the administration....

[F]ive Republican members of the House Foreign Affairs Committee on July 26, 1949 submitted this solemn warning....

“It is reliably supposed that Soviet troops, attached to the North Korean puppet armies, are in position to command as well as acting as advisors.... This development may well presage the launching of a full-scale military drive across the 38<sup>th</sup> Parallel. Our forces...have been withdrawn from South Korea at the very instant when logic and common sense both demanded no retreat from the realities of the situation.”

Then, [in January 1950] the Secretary of State [Dean Acheson] announced his famous “defense perimeter”—publicly advising our enemies that, so far as nations outside this perimeter were concerned, “no person can guarantee these areas against military attack.” Under these circumstances, it was cold comfort to the nations outside this perimeter to be reminded that they could appeal to the United Nations.

These nations, of course, included Korea. The armies of Communism, thus informed, began their big build-up. Six months later they were ready to strike across the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel. They struck on June 25, 1950. On that day, the record of political and diplomatic failure of this administration was completed and sealed....

...The first task of a new administration will be to review and re-examine every course of action open to us with one goal in view: to bring the Korean war to an early and honorable end. This is my pledge to the American people...

B) Public opinion on the Korean War, 1953: Expectations on Truce:

<http://www.eisenhower.utexas.edu/Korea/documents/publidcopiniononthekoreanwar.html>

Do you think we will be able to reach a satisfactory agreement with the Communists in the next month or so, to stop the fighting in Korea?

	<u>April</u>	<u>May</u>
Yes, satisfactory agreement soon	34%	17%
No	54%	74%
No opinion	<u>12%</u>	<u>9%</u>
	100%	100%

C) Public opinion on the Korean War, 1953: Korea Worthwhile? (October '52-April '53)

<http://www.eisenhower.utexas.edu/Korea/documents/publidcopiniononthekoreanwar.html>

As things stand now, do you feel that the war in Korea has been worth fighting, or not?

	<u>Oct.</u> <u>1952</u>	<u>Nov.</u> <u>1952</u>	<u>Jan.</u> <u>1953</u>	<u>Apr.</u> <u>1953</u>
Worth Fighting	32%	34%	39%	36%
Not Worth Fighting	56%	58%	52%	55%
No opinion	<u>12%</u>	<u>8%</u>	<u>9%</u>	<u>9%</u>
	100%	100%	100%	100%

D) Public opinion on the Korean War, 1953: Confidence in the President

<http://www.eisenhower.utexas.edu/Korea/documents/publidcopiniononthekoreanwar.html>

All polls have testified to the great majority (70% to 80%) which places great confidence in President Eisenhower's handling of foreign affairs.

This has been particularly true of his handling of the Korean problem.

E) Public opinion on the Korean War, 1953: Truce along present lines:

<http://www.eisenhower.utexas.edu/Korea/documents/publidcopiniononthekoreanwar.html>

US Success or Failure (mid-May 1953)

If we do get a truce in Korea along the present battle line, would it seem to you that we had generally succeeded or generally failed in our main purpose in going into Korea?

Generally succeeded	45%
Generally failed	38%
No opinion	<u>17%</u>
	100%

Approve Signing? (early April 1953)

Would you approve or disapprove of our government signing an armistice to end the fighting in Korea along the present battle line?

Approve	69%
Disapprove	20%
No Opinion	<u>11%</u>
	100%

F) Public opinion on the Korean War, 1953: Should US Take Strong Steps? (Feb. 1953)

<http://www.eisenhower.utexas.edu/Korea/documents/publidcopiniononthekoreanwar.html>

Do you think the United States should take strong steps to try to end the war in Korea, even though our allies in the United Nations refuse to go along with us?

Yes, strong steps	62%
No	31%
No opinion	<u>7%</u>
	100%

For more than two years, popular majorities—but not the press—have supported such steps as:

Bombing across the Yalu [the river that forms the boundary between North Korea and China]

Using Chinese Nationalist troops [from Taiwan] in Korea

Giving Chiang [Kai-shek, leader of the Chinese Nationalists on Taiwan] “all the help he needs” to invade the Chinese mainland

G) Map Showing Stalemate in Korea, November 1951 – July 1953:

<http://www.dean.usma.edu/history/web03/atlasses/korean%20war/korean%20pages/korean%20war%20map%2022.htm>