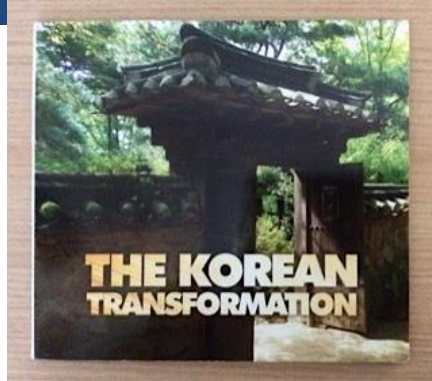


# Study Guide to accompany The Korean Transformation



Created by the  
Friends of Korea

Gerard A. Krzic, Ph.D.



With Generous Support  
from  
The Korea Foundation



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## Introduction

### Acknowledgements

This Study Guide to accompany the *Korean Transformation (KT)* DVD has been produced by Friends of Korea (FOK) with the generous support of the Korea Foundation (KF). It was created in October, 2016 and updated in June, 2019.

FOK was started by returned Peace Corps Volunteers who served in Korea from 1966 to 1981 and has expanded its membership to include anyone with an interest in sharing and expanding their knowledge of Korea. To learn more about FOK, please visit <http://www.friendsofkorea.net>.

KF's mission is to promote the "understanding of Korea within the international community and to increase friendship and goodwill between Korea and the rest of the world through various exchange programs." KF offers a variety of programming and resources to the public in Korean Studies, Education, Cultural Exchange, Public Diplomacy and Publishing and Media. See the KF website for more information: <http://en.kf.or.kr/>

### Introduction to the Study Guide

The *KT* Study Guide has been designed for use in secondary schools to enhance student understanding of Korea (while being able to make comparisons with the United States). Designed for maximum flexibility, the accompanying lesson plan and materials can be used in one class session or more depending upon student and teacher interest. The lesson should meet most state curriculum standards. For example, in the case of Virginia and California, the *KT* Study Guide could meet state curricular standards in the following ways.

#### *Virginia*

The Virginia Board of Education's Standards of Learning for Social Studies requires that students develop knowledge and skills to understand historical, geographic, political, and economic events or trends. The *KT* Study Guide delves into each of these areas. Students can learn about recent Korean history, politics and economic developments and compare these with trends in the United States. Alternatively, students can research the role that the United States played in Korea's history and economic development. The accompanying lesson can be used to have students enhance their knowledge and skills in the following standards: World Geography (WG) Standard 12 on East Asia; World History (WH) Standard II (12 & 13) on post-World War II development or WH Standard II (14), global changes of the early twenty-first century.

### *California*

The California State Board of Education's "History-Social Science Framework" includes standards that "expect students to analyze the changing political relationships within and among other countries and regions of the world, both throughout history and within the context of contemporary global interdependence." The *KT* Study Guide aligns with Standards 10.9 and 11.9, which ask students to analyze the international developments in the post-World War II era, and Standard 12.6, which asks students to analyze issues of international trade and economics.

Teachers are encouraged to craft learning objectives that will fit their specific context. At a minimum, by the end of the lesson, students will be able to:

- a) identify how Korea transformed itself from an impoverished nation into a major economic power;
- b) understand the experience that Peace Corps Volunteers (PCVs) had during Korea's transformation and the influence that their service in Korea had on their lives. (N.B.: Peace Corps is an agency of the U.S. government.)

### **Organization of the *KT* Study Guide**

The *KT* Study Guide is organized in the following manner:

- a) Lesson Plan outline
- b) Student Viewing Guide (Student Handout 1)
- c) Extension Activities (Student Handout 2)
- d) Mind map sample activity about Korea (Teacher Sample 1)
- e) Brainstorm Activity about Peace Corps (Teacher Sample 2)
- f) Supplemental reading about the Korean Transformation and select members of FOK (Appendix 1)
- g) Personal Transformations in Changing Korea (Appendix 2)
- h) Vocabulary Matching (Appendix 3)
- i) Resources on Korea (Appendix 4)

FOK hopes that teachers will find the *KT* DVD and Study Guide useful. Many members of FOK are returned Peace Corps Volunteers who served in Korea. The third goal of their Peace Corps service is to help promote a better understanding of other peoples on the part of Americans. We hope this DVD and Study Guide make a small contribution to this effort. The DVD can also be accessed online at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iuxK76UNqAc>

For any questions and/or comments about this Study Guide, please contact Friends of Korea at [contact@friendsofkorea.net](mailto:contact@friendsofkorea.net).

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Friends of Korea

## Lesson Plan Outline

Student Learning Objectives:

1. to identify how Korea transformed itself economically and politically

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2. (Yours):

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Grade Level: \_\_\_\_\_ Time: \_\_\_\_\_

Materials: KT DVD, Handouts, other: \_\_\_\_\_

Procedure:

1. Introduction: Begin lesson with mind map and brainstorming activities about Korea and the U.S. Peace Corps. To survey student knowledge of Korea, create a class mind map (See model in Teacher Sample 1). Ask the students to identify the sources of their information about Korea. That is, how do they know about Korea? From the Internet? Through music? From friends? Conduct a class brainstorming activity to determine what students know about Peace Corps. (See suggestions in Teacher Sample 2). Now that students have background knowledge of Korea and the Peace Corps, it is time to prepare them to view the *KT DVD*.
2. Viewing the *KT DVD*\*: Prior to showing the *KT DVD*, distribute Student Handout 1 "The Viewing Guide." Have students read through the guide to make sure they understand the questions and the format. Answer any questions. Tell students to answer the questions while viewing the *KT DVD*. After viewing, have students check answers in pairs and then as a whole class. Answers are included on next page.
3. Extension Activity: To help students deepen their understanding of Korea, community service, and comparison with America, have students conduct small group research projects. Student Handout 2 provides suggestions. Results can be reported in class. This provides a capstone activity to the lesson and allows students to practice research and presentation skills.
4. Optional Pre-Lesson Reading and Vocabulary Activity. In the event that students would benefit from background knowledge about Korea prior to beginning the lesson, a supplementary reading "The Korean Transformation from 1950s to Present Day" is included in Appendix One. Additionally, a pre-viewing vocabulary matching activity is included in Appendix Three.

\*Teacher note: The *KT DVD* can be divided into two sections. Part One from 0:00 to 11:55 describes the transformation of Korea; Part Two from 11:56 to 15:01 (end) describes the bonds that returned Peace Corps volunteers have maintained with their Korean colleagues, friends and families. If time is an issue, the teacher can stop the DVD after Part One.

5. Answers to Viewing Guide

These are the answers to Student Handout 1. (See pages 7 through 9)

1. a) agrarian economy    b) rapidly growing population  
c) unskilled labor force    f) rural-based population
2. a) improved health and medical systems    b) lower mortality rates  
d) higher life expectancy
3. Possible answers:  
    created a series of five-year economic plans,  
    began an export-oriented economy,  
    started the New Village Movement (Saemaul)
4. 1960: 52.4 years    1999: 75.5    2012: 81 years  
    Possible reasons: improved health care, improved diet, etc.
5. Rote memorization, speaking and conversation
6. tuberculosis (TB), leprosy
7. bathing outside, doing laundry in river, eating same Korean diet
8. Seoul
9. 1960: 28%    1970: 41%    2000: 80%  
    Possible answers: for jobs, economic benefit, excitement of city life, etc.
10. 15; Hyundai, Samsung, LG; art, sports, cinema
11. 46%, 67%; it continued to grow overall; middle class decreasing in U.S.
12. Korean International Cooperation Agency (or World Friends)
13. more than 90
14. student answers will vary
15. student answers will vary

## Student Handout 1: Viewing the Korean Transformation DVD

Korea has undergone tremendous change from the 1950's to present day. The DVD you are about to watch outlines the dramatic economic, political and cultural changes that the country has experienced. It also chronicles the role the U.S. Peace Corps had in Korea from 1966 to 1981. While watching the DVD, try to answer the following questions.

1. Circle the words that describe Korea of the 1960's:

- a) agrarian economy
- b) rapidly growing population
- c) unskilled labor force
- d) adequate transportation system
- e) GDP of \$10,000 per person
- f) rural-based population

2. Circle the three results of the international aid that Korea received in the 1960's:

- a) improved health and medical systems
- b) lower mortality rates
- c) greater political freedom
- d) higher life expectancy

3. What were three things that the Korean government did to spur economic development?

- a) \_\_\_\_\_
- b) \_\_\_\_\_
- c) \_\_\_\_\_

4. Life Expectancy: Complete chart below to compare the average life expectancy statistics for Americans in 1960, 1999 and 2012.

Year	Americans	Koreans
1960	73 (female); 67 (male)	
1999	79 (female); 74 (male)	
2012	80 (female); 71 (male)	

What are some possible reasons for the improvement in life expectancy in Korea? Why do you think it has surpassed that of Americans in 2012?

\_\_\_\_\_

5. The Peace Corps began serving in Korea in 1966. In the education sector, the Peace Corps Volunteers introduced contemporary teaching methods for learning English as a Foreign Language (EFL). What changes did they introduce? Complete the sentence:

They shifted emphasis from \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_.

6. In the health sector, the Peace Corps Volunteers provided help at rural health clinics. What were two diseases they helped to treat?

a) \_\_\_\_\_ b) \_\_\_\_\_

7. Name two ways that the Peace Corps Volunteers lived a modest lifestyle in Korea.

a) \_\_\_\_\_ b) \_\_\_\_\_

8. When Korea began to develop economically, people from the countryside began to move into the cities. What was the most popular destination?

a) Busan                      b) Seoul                      c) Daegu                      d) Taejeon

9. What percentage of the Korean population moved to urban areas from the countryside in

1960: \_\_\_\_\_%                      1970: \_\_\_\_\_%                      2000: \_\_\_\_\_%

Why do you think Koreans decided to move to the cities?

\_\_\_\_\_

10. In 40 years, Korea has progressed so dramatically that it has become a high-tech industrialized country.

What is its ranking in world economies? \_\_\_\_\_

What are some major Korean companies? \_\_\_\_\_

In what other ways has Korea become famous?

\_\_\_\_\_



11. According to Pew Research\*, the percentage of Americans who consider themselves middle class is indicated below. According to the DVD what are the percentages for Koreans during a similar time period (1990 & 2010)?

Year	Americans	Koreans
1960	NA	21%
1990	56 %	
2010	51%	

\* <http://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2015/12/09/the-american-middle-class-is-losing-ground/>

What can you infer about the American and Korean economies from 1960 to 2010?

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12. Korea now sends its citizens as volunteers to other parts of the world much like the U.S. Peace Corps. In fact, Korea is the only country in the world that accepted Peace Corps Volunteers and now sends its own volunteers to other countries. What is the name of the Korean volunteer organization?

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13. Many young Peace Corps Volunteers who served in Korea have had their careers influenced by this experience. For example, many became professors of Korean studies in American universities. How many books have they published on Korea?

- a) 50            b) 60            c) 70            d) more than 90

14. The DVD concludes by stating that the Koreans achieved success through “hard work, sacrifice and intelligent planning.” Do you agree? Why or Why not?

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15. State three new things you learned about Korea:

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## Student Handout 2: Extension Activities - Learning Beyond the Classroom

Students can research one or more of these topics individually or in groups and present their results in class.

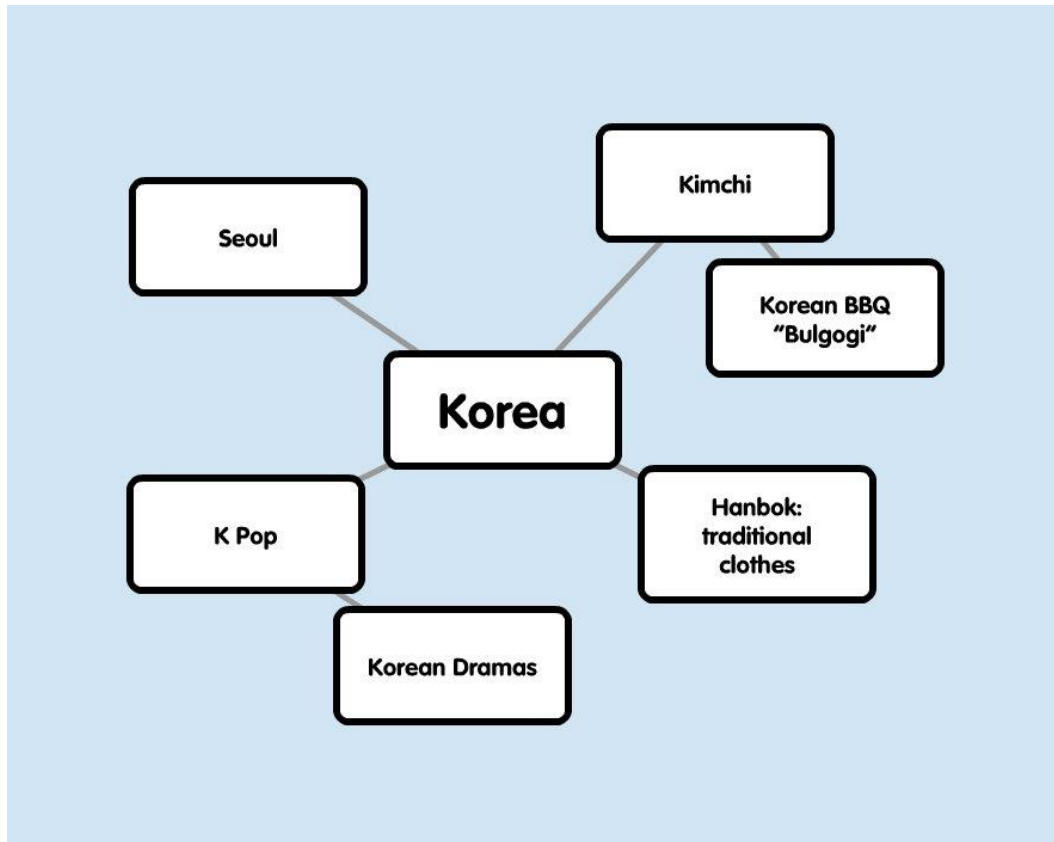
1. Korean History: Research the division of the Korean peninsula into North and South. When did it happen? How did it happen? Who was involved? What do you think will happen in the future?
2. Economics: Use the World Bank website <http://www.worldbank.org/>. Compare Korean and American development since the 1960s\*. Some points of comparison are the following economic indicators:
  - exports of goods & services
  - high-technology exports
  - gross savingsChoose other indicators for comparison such as health (e.g. life expectancy); trade; and infrastructure (e.g., mobile cellular subscriptions), etc. Can you make any generalizations/observations about the U.S. and Korea based on the comparisons you made?
3. Economics: IMF Crisis of Korea and the Asian Crisis. What happened? Which countries were affected? How was life in Korea then? How did Korea pull out of it? Could it happen again?
4. “Multicultural” Korea. How has the composition of Korean society changed? Can you find statistics (Hint: Look to see where the new immigrants are from). What are they doing in Korea? What is the effect on Korean society? What types of programs does the Korean government have for immigrants?
5. Korean Popular Culture: Research the most popular or famous Korean dramas, musical groups, movies and other art forms. Why are they popular or famous? Do they have “cross-over” appeal to people in other countries? Are there any similarities with popular culture in the United States?
6. Korean-Americans: Research Korean immigration to America. Where are the cities with the largest Korean-American population? Interview some Korean-Americans in your community about their experience leaving Korea and adjusting to the U.S.

\* To make country comparisons on the World Bank website follow this sequence. 1)Click on Data->2) Indicators (scroll down to economy & growth; choose GDP per capita)->3) click on “graph” box on right->4) in “country/region/income level,” type Korea, Rep; add the United States. 5) On left side of page choose other indicators for comparing the U.S. and Korea.

7. Service: Peace Corps Volunteers and KOICA serve people in communities overseas. What are the social issues in your community? What kind of volunteer activities exist in your community? What could students in your class do to volunteer in your community?
8. Immigrant Communities in America: Locate some immigrant communities in your area. Interview members of these communities about their experiences adjusting to life outside their homeland. What are the major issues they face? What kind of volunteer activities exist in your city to help immigrants and non-native speakers of English?
9. Transformative Learning (TL): TL has been defined as “the idea of people changing the way they interpret their experiences and their interactions with the world.” Look at the five individuals in the supplementary reading in Appendix 1 and the Personal Transformations in Changing Korea in Appendix 2. How has their experience in Korea transformed their lives? Why do you think that experience was so significant to them? Interview your teachers and ask them to tell you about any transformative learning experiences that made them want to become a teacher. Brainstorm ways your school could offer transformative learning experiences for its students. Present your ideas to the class.
10. Your Own Research Topic: \_\_\_\_\_

## Teacher Sample 1: Mind Map (Understanding Korea)

To determine what students know about Korea and to help build background knowledge, construct a mind map. Write the word “Korea” in the middle of a whiteboard and ask student to volunteer images/words that come to mind. Group the answers in categories. Here is an example:



- Seoul = capital and largest city
- Kimchi = fermented, spicy Korean cabbage
- Korean BBQ (bulgogi) = Korean beef usually cooked on a grill
- Hanbok = traditional Korean clothing
- K Pop = Korean pop music
- Dramas = popular tv dramas

## Teacher Sample 2: Brainstorming (Understanding the Peace Corps)

Since the *KT* DVD references the U.S. Peace Corps, it is important for students to have a basic understanding of this government service organization. Ask the students if they have ever heard of the “Peace Corps.” Record their responses on a whiteboard or flip chart.

If the students know very little about the Peace Corps, tell them:

President John F. Kennedy established the Peace Corps in the early 1960’s. The mission of the Peace Corps was to promote world peace and friendship. The Peace Corps website <http://www.peacecorps.gov/about/> states that:

“As the preeminent international service organization of the United States, the Peace Corps sends Americans abroad to tackle the most pressing needs of people around the world. Peace Corps Volunteers work at the grassroots level toward sustainable change that lives on long after their service—at the same time becoming global citizens and serving their country. When they return home, Volunteers bring their knowledge and experiences—and a global outlook—that enriches the lives of those around them.”

Peace Corps has three goals:

- To help the people of interested countries in meeting their need for trained men and women;
- To help promote a better understanding of Americans on the part of the peoples served;
- To help promote a better understanding of other peoples on the part of Americans.

The Peace Corps operated in Korea from 1966 to 1981. Volunteers were involved in the education and health fields.

## Appendix 1: Supplementary Reading – The Korean Transformation from the 1950's to Present Day

Before the Republic of Korea produced smart phones, quality cars and K-pop music, it was a poor country struggling to fulfill the basic needs of its citizens. Below is a brief narrative of Korea's emergence from a devastated, war-torn country of the early 1950s to a vibrant, modern country of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The story features five individuals, all members of Friends of Korea, who have witnessed the Korean transformation and the impact it had on their lives.

### The 1950's

On June, 25, 1950, Yongbok Lee, a young student, and her family were sitting down to eat dinner on a sultry, summer evening in Seoul. Suddenly, they heard a loud banging on their door: "The North Koreans are coming! The North Koreans are near Seoul! You have to leave now!" It was the voice of her father's friend, a neighborhood police officer.



(War Photo; courtesy of Dept. of Defense)

In a panic, Yongbok and her family gathered as many possessions as they could and rushed out the door, their warm dinner still on the table. For two weeks, the Lee family trekked south in the early monsoon season – sleeping in vacated buildings or under trees on mountain ridges. Each night, the children quivered from the sounds of bomb blasts. Finally, they reached their relative's home in rural Chungcheong-province.

For nearly two years, Yongbok's family stayed there trying to avoid the fighting. In spite of the upheaval in their lives, Yongbok's parents tried to safeguard their children as best they could. Yongbok recalls: "For the first two years, I could not go to school and my father taught me every night."

Finally, on July 27, 1953, the fighting was halted with the signing of an armistice between North Korea and representatives of the United Nations. For three years, the Korean peninsula had been ravaged by war with staggering numbers of civilian and military casualties.<sup>1</sup> Although thankful for the end of the fighting, Koreans never imagined the armistice would lead to a political division of the peninsula.

<sup>1</sup> U.S troops reported 36,574 dead and 103,284 wounded. South Korea (Republic of Korea) reported 217,000 troops and 1,000,000 civilians killed or missing. North Korea (Democratic People's Republic of Korea) reported 406,000 troops and 600,000 civilians killed or missing. China reported 600,000 troops killed or missing. <http://www.cnn.com/2013/06/28/world/asia/korean-war-fast-facts/>

For the rest of the 1950s, the Republic of Korea survived on aid from foreign countries, particularly the U.S. In this difficult environment, Yongbok and her family returned to Seoul to reconstruct their lives.

### **The 1960's**

The effects of the devastation of the Korean War were still evident on the Korean economy at the start of the 1960's. Korea was one of the world's poorest countries. Per capita Gross Domestic Product<sup>2</sup> (GDP per capita) was only \$80.<sup>3</sup>

Manufacturing facilities, already small in scope prior to the Korean War, were largely destroyed during the three years of fighting. Thus, with the Korean economy in tatters, the country depended upon foreign aid and agricultural productivity from an unskilled, rural-based labor force. Further hampering development efforts were inadequate transportation systems, few natural resources, and political upheaval. Not surprisingly in such a difficult environment, average life expectancy was only 52.4 years!



(Photo: courtesy of Friends of Korea)

In these difficult economic times, Koreans still never lost their passion for education.

Yongbok's parents insisted on providing her with the best education possible and sent her to Ewha Girls' Middle and High School, the leading girls' school in Korea. In addition to receiving excellent academic instruction, Ewha students were taught the value of community service. So, during school vacations, the school sent Yongbok and her classmates to tutor young children at the many orphanages that were the byproduct of the war.

However, by the end of the decade, the seeds of economic change were being planted. A new government, the result of a military takeover, created a series of five-year plans managed by an Economic Planning Board. These five-year plans largely focused on export-oriented industries in heavy and light industries. Thus, the Korean economy shifted to industries such as steel, shipbuilding, and textile production.

<sup>2</sup> GDP per capita indicates the well-being of the citizens of a country. For a technical definition, visit <http://www.econlib.org/library/Topics/HighSchool/HighSchoolTopics.html>

<sup>3</sup> For comparison purposes the GDP per capita in the U.S. at that time was about \$3,000. Visit the World Bank's website to compare the GDPs and other economic indicators between world regions and countries. For example, compare Korea and the U.S. <http://data.worldbank.org>

While Korea was laying new plans for economic development, the U.S. government was launching a new international initiative: The Peace Corps.<sup>4</sup> By the mid 1960's, the Korean and American governments were negotiating to have Peace Corps Volunteers (PCVs) work in education and health sectors in Korea. As a result, in 1966, Kevin O'Donnell, a Cleveland businessman, was chosen to be the first director of Peace Corps Korea<sup>5</sup> and the first group of PCVs arrived in autumn of 1966.

David Lassiter of Olney, Maryland and a member of the group recalls the first day:

*There were 99 of us, I believe, that landed at Kimpo airport on September 16, 1966. It was hot and we were all dressed in our Sunday best – suits and ties for the men, dresses for the women. I remember getting on old buses and being driven into Seoul and around town for a sort of orientation. We had all the bus windows open trying our best to get a little breeze as we moved through the city. It wasn't crowded then. City buses mainly used the streets. The few private cars that we saw consisted of converted military jeeps. All were painted black and chauffeur- driven. The tallest building I remember was probably 6-8 stories tall if that. The sidewalks were jammed with people going about their business. Women dressed in Hanbok (traditional Korean dresses) were not uncommon. Men pulling two-wheeled carts shared the streets with the buses, private cars and the occasional ox cart. Parking was easy and chauffeurs stood by their vehicles dusting them off as they waited for their owners to return.*

### **The 1970's**

The seeds of the economic planning in 1960 were beginning to bear fruit by the early 1970s.<sup>6</sup> Under the guidance of the government's five-year economic plans, exports from Korea were increasing a stunning 45% per year!<sup>7</sup> Young Koreans were leaving the countryside to take part in the economic development. Seoul, the capital, was the most desirable destination.

During this time the Peace Corps continued its work in health and education. David Lassiter finished his two years with Peace Corps and enrolled in Harvard University for a master's degree in Asian Studies. Influenced by his PC experience and eager to

<sup>4</sup> A volunteer organization, Peace Corps was created by U.S. President John F. Kennedy in 1961. See <http://www.peacecorps.gov/about/history/>

<sup>5</sup> O'Donnell later became the director of the entire Peace Corps.

<sup>6</sup> While the political sacrifices made in exchange for the economic progress are the subject of much academic debate in 21<sup>st</sup> century Korea, no one can deny that the country began to break away from the ranks of poor countries in the 1970's.

<sup>7</sup> From the U.S. Army Country Studies <http://countrystudies.us/south-korea/47.htm>



return to Korea, he accepted the directorship of the Pearl S. Buck Foundation, a social service organization for orphans in Seoul. Yongbok Lee, who had trekked from Seoul as a young child when the war began and who had tutored many orphans as a secondary school student, was now working in the Peace Corps office in Seoul. Part of her duties involved supporting the education efforts in the Peace Corps training center – work she characterized as the “most enjoyable” of her life.<sup>8</sup>

Throughout the 1970s, Peace Corps was heavily involved in English teaching, teacher training and textbook development. Traditionally, English instruction in public school classrooms had focused on teaching students grammar and translation skills to pass university entrance examinations. In contrast, Peace Corps materials and methodologies focused on using English for communicative purposes. In addition to assisting with classes in the schools, volunteers conducted teacher-training workshops during summer and winter vacations.



(Photo: courtesy of Friends of Korea)

In the health sector, the volunteers were assigned to local health centers. They went on house calls and organized community theatrical performances to teach villagers how to prevent tuberculosis and other communicable diseases.

The ties between the American and Korean governments, while periodically under strain from political differences, were still strong. One result of this deepening relationship was the emigration of many Koreans to the U.S. By 1975, Korea had become the country with the second largest emigrant group among all Asian countries. Many present-day Korean communities in Northern Virginia, Southern California and Greater New York/New Jersey are the result of this 1970s emigration to the U.S.

Population shift was also occurring within Korea. Many young Koreans were leaving the farms and villages to seek job opportunities in the burgeoning factories in the cities. Alarmed by this dramatic migration, the Korean government attempted to slow the exodus from rural areas by improving living standards in the countryside. Thus, a new government program called “The New Village Movement” (in Korean: Saemaul Undong 새마을운동) was initiated to raise rural living standards through projects focused on increased rice production, improved infrastructure, and renovated housing.<sup>9</sup> Peace Corps volunteers in the rural areas

<sup>8</sup> From Personal Correspondence

<sup>9</sup> For a good summary of the New Village Movement in the 1970s and present-day application in other countries, see [http://www.ari.nus.edu.sg/wps/wps13\\_197.pdf](http://www.ari.nus.edu.sg/wps/wps13_197.pdf)  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fER\\_KeyI29I](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fER_KeyI29I)

recall waking up at 6 a.m. to the sound of the “Saemaoul song” exhorting the population to transform their village through Saemaoul spirit and effort.

By the late 1970s, Korea had left the ranks of underdeveloped countries and was clearly on the road to a brighter economic future. Political progress, however, was not keeping pace with economic progress. In 1979, long-time leader President Park Chung Hee was assassinated and was followed in office by another ex-military officer, Chun Doo Hwan. College students protested against his authoritarian government. In this volatile environment, Peace Corps volunteers continued to arrive in the country. Nancy Kelly, a member of one of these groups, recalls arriving at her health center in rural Korea:



(Photo: courtesy of Friends of Korea)

*I was a maternal child health (MCH) worker. Most MCH volunteers ended up working in health centers on vaccination programs. I was assigned to work with a midwife in Gyeong Sang province in the southern part of the country. My first site was a rural delivery center -- 13 km from the county seat on a dirt road. [It was] a village of maybe 70 to 100 people. I do remember thinking that two years was going to be a long time.*

*After a few weeks, however, I learned that the delivery center was moving to the county seat in a few months to a brand new facility built by the World Bank. That first year was a huge learning curve. I helped out with prenatal exams and deliveries and spent a lot of time sitting by the stove<sup>10</sup> studying Korean. We had learned rather formal Korean in [Peace Corps] training, which was totally inappropriate when talking with the women (and their mothers-in-law).*

*I was kind of reticent that first year about speaking until one day I realized that I would never get any better at speaking Korean if I did not practice. So, I gave up being embarrassed and started talking. I found that most people were extremely appreciative that I was making such an effort and they would chime in – correcting my mistakes or telling me another way to say something. There were lots of laughs along the way and I managed to avoid insulting anyone.*

*The second year was much more productive – I went home-visiting a lot. I had the language skills by then so that I could have a good conversation with the expectant mother or new mother. I could make the case for prenatal care and for having the birth at our delivery center. Linda Vorhis (a volunteer treating tuberculosis patients in the same town) and I gave a series of talks at every*

<sup>10</sup> Coal-burning stoves were usually placed in the middle of classrooms and offices for heating during the winter months. Most people wanted to sit close to them to stay warm.

*middle and high school in our county. We talked about nutrition, sanitation, and the services available at the health center. We also spent some time speaking in English asking the students questions about their studies, etc. We would then answer questions from the students about life in America and our personal lives.*

### **The 1980s**

If the 1960s and 1970's were about economic growth, the 1980s were about the rising power of the middle class and its call for a democratic government. In 1980, Korea faced difficulty with a world oil shock that drove up oil prices and threatened



(Photo: courtesy of Friends of Korea)

to stall the export-oriented economy. However, through a series of government adjustments, the economy recovered and continued to grow. Wages for the average worker started to grow as well and with that a desire for a political system that matched the nation's economic progress. In the past, university students had been the primary force behind demonstrations but by the mid-1980s normal citizens were also frustrated with the lack of political

transparency. A major turning point for Korea occurred in 1981 when the country was selected to host the 1988 Summer Olympics. In the intervening 7 years, the country saw its final authoritarian government give way to the desire of the Korean people. In December 1987, ten months prior to the opening of the Seoul Olympics, democratic elections were held in a multi-party system. Korean politics had now caught up to its economic development.

It was also clear by the early 1980s, that Korea was no longer considered an underdeveloped "Peace Corps" country. So, in 1981, the U.S. Peace Corps left Korea. At that time, Yongbok Lee and many of the other Peace Corps staff, whose bilingual skills were in demand, found jobs in government agencies in Seoul. Nancy Kelly, finished her two-year PC assignment, returned to the U.S. and started graduate school in health care, a decision influenced by her work in Korea:

*I came back to the US in the fall of 1981. By then I had decided to forego my original plan of returning to school to study Korean history. Instead I decided that the challenge of developing public health programs that met the needs of the population was of greater interest. I applied to Johns Hopkins School of Public Health and was accepted into their Maternal Child Health Department in 1982.*

### **1990s to present day**

After the 1988 Seoul Olympics, Korea's international stature began to grow. The country began to develop official relations with many countries of the former Communist Bloc (e.g. Hungary, Bulgaria), Russia and China. Entering the early 1990s, the Korea economy still was growing but it was soon to face another major challenge before the end of the decade. In the middle of 1997, a major financial crisis had developed in Asia. Korea, along with Thailand, Indonesia and Malaysia, descended into a dark economic period with companies closing and people losing their jobs.

In order to pull itself out of this economic quagmire, the Korean government asked the International Monetary Fund (IMF) for assistance. The IMF agreed to provide loans in exchange for Korea agreeing to implement major structural reforms in banking and business. Known as the "IMF Crisis," this period shook Korea's confidence after years of economic growth. Fortunately, the Koreans responded to these changes in remarkable ways<sup>11</sup> and the Korean government was able to pay back its loan to the IMF in 2001, three years ahead of schedule. The country had survived.



(Photo: courtesy of Friends of Korea)

Now, in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, Korea has emerged to become one of the world's largest economies, ranking in the top 15. It has also become a vigorous democracy. Koreans elected their first woman president in 2012, President Park Geun-hye, the daughter of former President Park Chung Hee. Her tenure as president, however, was short-lived. Due to political scandals in the Park regime, the citizens of Korea protested against her in a series of large nighttime protests known as the "Candlelight Revolution." The result was Park being impeached and removed from office in spring, 2017. In May of the same year, a new election was held and Moon Jae-in was elected president. As promised during his campaign, President Moon has worked to improve relations with North Korea to foster peace on the Korean peninsula. Despite these political changes and some contraction in its economy, Korea continues to be a vibrant, high-tech industrialized country. Korean electronics and automobiles are of world-class quality and sold across the globe. Samsung, Hyundai, and LG are just some of these prominent global brands.

Korean pop culture has diffused across the globe in a cultural wave, known as "Hallyu," that has brought prominence to Korean dramas, music, movies, singers, athletes and actors. Korean music groups regularly tour throughout Asia and

<sup>11</sup> See the BBC news for an account of Korean citizens donating their personal gold possessions to repay the IMF loan. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/world/analysis/47496.stm>



perform in concerts in the U.S. The singer “PSY” with his hit song “Gangnam Style,” a parody of the luxurious lifestyle in Seoul’s southern suburb, reached over two billion viewers on YouTube. Yuna Kim thrilled audiences across the globe with her medal winning performances in the 2010 and 2014 winter Olympic figure skating competition. In 2019, the seven-member boys group “BTS” played to sold out crowds across the Americas, Asia and Europe.

Like its evolving popular culture and economic power, Korean society has also changed, taking on a multicultural flavor as immigrants have come to live and work in service and manufacturing sectors. Where once U.S. Peace Corps Volunteers and missionaries were the only non-Koreans visible in the countryside, now multicultural families reside throughout the nation. The population of foreign residents in Korea has increased to over 1.57 million.<sup>12</sup>

In the educational area, the desire for second language instruction, particularly English, is still strong. Government-funded programs for native speakers to teach English in the public schools continue to flourish. One example is the Fulbright English Teaching Assistant (ETA) initiative. Similar to the duties Peace Corps Volunteers performed forty years earlier in rural Korea, Fulbright ETAs are selected to teach English in Korean public schools for one or more years. Esther Kim and Kristin Krzic are two Americans who are currently teaching in the program and experiencing the Korean Transformation in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Compare David Lassiter’s descriptions in 1966 with Kristin and Ester’s experiences in 2016.



(Photo: courtesy of Friends of Korea)

**David (1966):** *My assignment was teaching English in a junior and senior girls’ high school in Euijongbu, a small town situated about 30 kilometers north between Seoul and the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ). I was the sole volunteer assigned to that town. [On the day I left my Peace Corps Pre-Service Training], the principal of the school was there at Seoul Station [to meet me] and with little fanfare we jumped into a waiting taxi and sped off to my new home.*

*Along the road we had to stop at two military checkpoints, which caught me by surprise. But we were heading north and into what I would later learn and experience was tense territory. An hour or so later we arrived in Euijongbu. It had two paved roads, one that we traveled on from Seoul and continued on to the DMZ, and another that turned off into the center of town. The school was located about a quarter of a mile up a dirt road from the center of town,*

<sup>12</sup> From “1.76 million foreigners live in South Korea; 3.4% of population.” Korea Times. [http://www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/nation/2017/11/281\\_239423.html](http://www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/nation/2017/11/281_239423.html)

*bordering a sparse residential neighborhood and rice fields. The school consisted of three one-story and one two-story buildings plus an auditorium of sorts. They were organized in a square compound with a gate around a large central open space used for assemblies and recreation. I was to live here temporarily in a room they had prepared for me.*

*My first year I was assigned to teach one hour a week to every middle and high school class. There were about 800 students in the school so this was a rigorous schedule. The English conversation class was to be in addition to the existing grammar and reading classes which were more frequent and taught by Korean teachers.*

**Kristin (2016):** *I am currently an English Teaching Assistant at a boys' high school in Iksan, a town about 1 hour south of Seoul by high speed express train. Before coming to the school, I spent six weeks with Fulbright training. On the day I finished training, my co-teacher came and drove me to my town. We jumped into his car and headed on the highway for about 1 hour before arriving to my town. My co-teacher took me to my homestay family's apartment, where I would be living for the next 12 months. My bedroom was great. I had my own flat screen television and a really fast internet connection – much faster than I had in the U.S. I also had a great view from my room, overlooking some fields and new houses with mountains in the distance. There was also a shopping center located across the street from my apartment complex. I was pretty happy.*



(Photo: courtesy of Friends of Korea)

*I had many interesting experiences adjusting to my high school. On my first day at school, I taught my first lesson to students who were much livelier than I had expected. I had never been to an all-boys high school before so that was an interesting adjustment. I had to alter lesson plan ideas to suit the interests of boys. A lot of students seemed to be interested in topics related to soccer and football.*

*I'm lucky that I have my own classroom with really good technology. I can show videos and decorate the room anyway that I please. I usually meet all the first-year and second-year students once a week for conversational English. This usually means I teach about 18 classes of 60 minutes per week. My co-teachers are great. They give me good advice and are a huge help when the students are acting up or getting overly noisy.*

Esther Kim, whose parents had emigrated from Korea in the 1980's, had visited Korea as a young child for a short period of time in 2004. Now, back in Korea for an extended period with Fulbright, she describes the changes she has seen:

**Esther (2016):** *Since my first visit to Korea, my family members and I have lived our lives in our own ways and learned to shift our lifestyles in response to the increasingly globalizing and technology-driven currents that have shaped U.S. and Korean societies. When I visited my family in Korea this past year, I taught my aunt how to sync her newly-acquired selfie stick to her Bluetooth-compatible smartphone, and then we proceeded to take selfies and watch TV shows together. If anything, that experience probably would not have happened in 2004. The watching-TV-together part probably would have still happened back then, but even the TV shows that we watch now in 2016 are different than earlier ones, as they reflect the cultural changes experienced in Korean and global societies. Conversations in my family focus on several topics, from the latest singers on the hit show "King of Mask Singer" to North Korea's recent actions as detailed on the news, to catching each other up on how family members have been doing and enjoying the nostalgia and the "good old times" that the drama "Reply 1988" centers upon.*

The story of the transformation of Korea from a poor to prosperous country is impressive to all who have witnessed the dramatic changes since the end of the Korean War. Yongbok Lee has perhaps the best vantage point:

*Everything is unimaginably changed in total even in the past fifteen or twenty years. When I was even in the university, there was nothing to compare with nowadays... in construction, living style, housing, cultural activities, revival of old intangible/tangible heritage, etc. Only the education system has remained the same as in old times.*

*Now we can see many new bridges over the Han River, nice public parks, many tall, nice buildings, luxurious apartment homes, history and cultural museums, etc. all over the country. Back then, we struggled in winter season with food shortages every year. We had to work hard to have three meals a day. Now food is enough everywhere regardless of the season. Korea was a country that received foreign aid before; however, now Korea has become a country to help other poor countries. The work of KOICA is a good example of this.*

Korea's transformation has certainly brought a higher standard of living with better products and services. However, like any developed country, progress can also bring along a new set of challenges. Nancy Kelly offers a final perspective:

*The amazing economic, social and cultural changes that have swept the country since the mid 1980s have exposed some fault lines however. These changes have come at a cost – high suicide rates among the young and a significant proportion of the elderly living in poverty are two prime examples. Korea will also have to deal with a significant demographic shift in the coming years, a combination of a declining birth rate combined with a rapidly aging population. However, I am optimistic that these challenges will be addressed in the same productive manner that Koreans took on the challenge of post-war reconstruction.*

**Post-Reading Activity. (Individual, pair or group activity)**

Based on the narrative on the preceding pages, what have you learned about events in modern Korean history? Can you list any of them on the timeline below?

Optional: Can you compare them to events in American history occurring at the same time? 1950 includes two samples answers.

<b>Decade</b>	<b>Event in Korea</b>	<b>Event in U.S. (optional)</b>
<b>1950</b>	Korean War ended in 1953.	Americans fought in the Korean War
<b>1960</b>		
<b>1970</b>		
<b>1980</b>		
<b>1990</b>		
<b>2000</b>		
<b>2010</b>		



## Appendix 2: Personal Transformations in Changing Korea

The following profiles are about five individuals who have witnessed the Korean Transformation and the effect it has had on their lives. All are members of FOK.

### David Lassiter

David Lassiter, of Maryland, was in the first group of Peace Corps volunteer to come to Korea in 1966. At the time, David had just finished his undergraduate studies in political science when he applied for Peace Corps. As a volunteer, David taught English in public schools in Euijongbu, Kyonggi province.

Part of his duties involved teaching every student in a school of 800 students at least one hour a week! He later lobbied the school administration to change this schedule in order to meet fewer students more often in order to improve the students' English language skills. After Peace Corps, he obtained a Master's degree from Harvard University in Asian Studies.



(Nancy & David during an interview)

He then worked for Peace Corps headquarters in Washington and also served as Director of the Pearl S. Buck Foundation in Korea. Throughout his career, David has maintained ties to Korea through personal and professional contacts. He has served as a member of the Board of Directors of Friends of Korea and produced the DVD, "The Korean Transformation." When asked about the effect of his Peace Corps experience on his life, David stated:

*"Korea is a thread that has woven through my life for the past 50 years. It helped determine the course of my graduate education, my career choices and even my family life." David describes the changes he has seen in Korea as "remarkable, breathtaking, astonishing. Korea has transformed itself from a poor, aid-dependent, third world country into a small nation world power."*

### Yongbok (Lee) Mayer

Yongbok (Lee) Mayer, a native of Seoul, has had a front row seat of the transformation of Korea. As a child, she experienced the outbreak of the Korean war and later saw the country rebuild itself. In 1974, Yongbok began working in the Peace Corps office. She recalls that her time working with Peace Corps staff and volunteers enabled her to learn about different cultures, people and U.S. history.



(Yongbok, far right, working at the Embassy in Seoul in the late 1980s.)

After the Peace Corps office closed in Korea in 1981, Yongbok was hired by the U.S. Embassy to serve as Protocol Assistant for the Ambassador. She was responsible for arranging the social functions for the executive staff. Later, she worked as an international conference coordinator. Yongbok eventually emigrated to the U.S. She describes the major changes:

*Now we can see many new bridges over the Han River, nice public parks, many tall, nice buildings, luxurious apartment homes, history and cultural museums, etc. all over the country. Back then, we struggled in winter season with food shortages every year. We had to work hard to have three meals a day. Now food is enough everywhere regardless of the season. Korea was the country to receive foreign aid before; however, now Korea has become a country to help other poor countries.*

Like David, Yongbok is also very active in Friends of Korea.

### **Nancy Kelly**

Nancy Kelly, from suburban Washington, D.C., joined Peace Corps Korea in 1979, after finishing her undergraduate degree in Asian History. In Korea, Nancy served as a maternal child health care worker in the southern rural area of the peninsula. Influenced by her work in Korea, Nancy decided to enter graduate school for public health. She serves as the President of Friends of Korea.



(Nancy, middle, performing in a health care skit in rural Korea in 1980.)

After graduation, she became the founding director of Health Volunteers Overseas, an NGO dedicated to improving global health through training and education. Regarding the influence of her service in Korea on her career, Nancy remarked:

*My Peace Corps experience was absolutely critical to my decision to study public health and to my subsequent career decisions. Being a PCV in Korea opened my eyes to the enormous challenges of identifying the health needs of a community and developing/implementing programs that met these needs. I also came away from my Peace Corps experience with the conviction that volunteers can make a difference in the world when they are well prepared and supported and when the project is designed to maximize their contribution.*

## Esther Kim and Kristin Krzic

Esther Kim, from Massachusetts, and Kristin Krzic, from Ohio, are witnesses to the transformation of 21<sup>st</sup> century Korea. Both arrived in Korea as English Teaching Assistants (ETAs) with the Fulbright program in 2015. Similar to Peace Corps Volunteers of 40 years ago, they teach English in schools outside of Seoul, underscoring the continued importance of English education throughout the country.



(Esther, left, and Kristin, bottom right, with their students in Korea in 2016.)

Esther and Kristin's motivation for coming to Korea was partially based on their own Korean roots that had been planted during the Korean transformation. In Esther's case her family had emigrated to the U.S.:

*...before coming to Korea and realizing how challenging teaching is, I was more concerned with some very big, existential, overarching and open-ended questions about how I would go about making meaning from this experience. As a Korean-American woman, what did it mean for me to try and create my own place of belonging in the motherland.*

For Kristin, her father was a Peace Corps Volunteer in Korea and her mother was a secondary school teacher from Korea:

*I always heard from my dad how he had such a wonderful experience in Peace Corps and I heard about how he created meaningful connections that would last a lifetime. I am hoping through my Fulbright grant in Korea, I am able to create similar connections and to experience new things that will challenge me.*

Both Esther and Kristin plan to go to graduate school after they leave Korea. Whether their experience in Korea will affect their career choices remains to be seen. However, it is likely that Esther and Kristin will never forget their time living and working in Korea.

### Appendix 3: Vocabulary Matching

Prior to watching The Korean Transformation DVD, see if you can match the vocabulary item on the left with the definition or synonym on the right. Draw lines to connect the two. Check your answers with a partner.

- |                           |  |
|---------------------------|--|
| 1. Per Capita             | A. The largest river in Seoul, Korea   |
| 2. Gross Domestic Product | B. A government program to improve life in rural Korea   |
| 3. Agrarian Economy       | C. The total amount of a country's consumer spending, government spending, investments and exports |
| 4. Rote Memorization      | D. Korean fermented cabbage; often called the national food of Korea.                              |
| 5. Tuberculosis (TB)      | E. Making money based on producing and maintaining crops and farm animals                          |
| 6. Leprosy                | F. A traditional Chinese philosophy that stresses respect for elders and harmony in behavior.      |
| 7. Kimchi                 | G. Learning information through repetition   |
| 8. Han River              | H. A bacterial disease that usually attacks the lungs  |
| 9. Saemaul Undong         | I. A phrase meaning "per person"   |
| 10. Confucianism          | J. A disease that mainly affects the skin and nerves, also known as Hansen's disease.              |

## Appendix 4: Resources on Korea

The following resources can be accessed on-line and will provide information about Korea.

### Friends of Korea

(contains a variety of information and links to other resources)

<http://www.friendsofkorea.net>

### Korean Embassy in the United States

(information from the Korean government)

<http://usa.mofa.go.kr/english/am/usa/main/>

### Korea Foundation

(contains education and funding opportunities to learn about Korea)

<http://en.kf.or.kr/>

### Korean Newspapers

(contains links to all the major Korean newspapers in English and Korean)

<http://www.w3newspapers.com/south-korea/>

### National Association of Korean Americans

(contains information about the Korean community in the U.S.A.)

<http://www.naka.org/resources/history.asp>

### The Taste of Korean Food

(contains everything about Korean food)

<http://www.hansik.org/>