

Japan and the Koreas

Section 4



MAIN IDEAS

1. The people of South Korea today have freedom and economic opportunities.
2. The people of North Korea today have little freedom or economic opportunity.
3. Some people in both South and North Korea support the idea of Korean reunification.

Key Terms and Places

Seoul the capital of South Korea

demilitarized zone an empty buffer zone created to keep two countries from fighting

Pyongyang the capital of North Korea

Section Summary

SOUTH KOREA TODAY

The official name of South Korea is the Republic of Korea. It is headed by a president and assembly elected by the people. The United States helped create South Korea's government after World War II, and has helped to make its economy strong.

Like Japan, South Korea is densely populated. Its capital, **Seoul**, has some 40,000 people per square mile. Many people live near the western coastal plain, preferring it to the mountainous interior. In the cities, people live in small apartments and must cope with pollution. In the country, many South Koreans live on small farms, grow rice, beans, and cabbage, and follow traditional ways of life.

Although South Korea has a strong economy, some people are unhappy that industry has been controlled for years by only four families, and some members of these families use their power only to make themselves more wealthy. The government hopes to reform this corrupt system. South Korea is also challenged by its relationship with North Korea. Since the end of the Korean War in the 1950s, the countries have been separated by a **demilitarized zone**, an empty buffer zone patrolled by soldiers on both sides.

Underline the sentence that explains how South Korea is corrupt.

Underline the sentence that explains what a demilitarized zone is.

Section 4, continued

NORTH KOREA TODAY

North Korea's official name, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, is misleading. The country is a totalitarian state controlled by the Communist Party. From 1948 until 1994 it was led by the dictator Kim Il Sung. Since then his son Kim Jong Il has ruled. North Korea has a command economy in which the government makes all economic decisions. North Korea uses much of its rich mineral resources to make machinery and military supplies in out-of-date factories. Farms are run as cooperatives, but there is little good farmland and some food must be imported.

Although most North Koreans live in cities, such as the capital **Pyongyang**, their life is different from that of their neighbors to the south. Most people are poor and they are denied the rights of freedom of the press, speech, and religion.

Communist North Korea has been very isolated since the fall of the Soviet Union. Its economy has caused shortages and poverty. Also, many countries worry about North Korea's ability to make and use nuclear weapons. Negotiations are underway to resolve this issue.

What years did Kim Il Sung rule North Korea?

Circle the rights that are denied to North Koreans.

KOREAN REUNIFICATION

Both North and South Korean governments have expressed support for reunification. In 2000, leaders met for the first time since the Korean War. They agreed to build a road connecting the two Koreas. However, they don't agree on the type of government the reunified country would have. South Korea prefers democracy, and North Korea prefers communism.

Underline the sentence that explains the greatest obstacle to the reunification of Korea.

CHALLENGE ACTIVITY

Critical Thinking: Solving Problems Write a short paragraph describing a type of government that you think would be acceptable to people in both North and South Korea.