

Section 1

The Geography of the Koreas

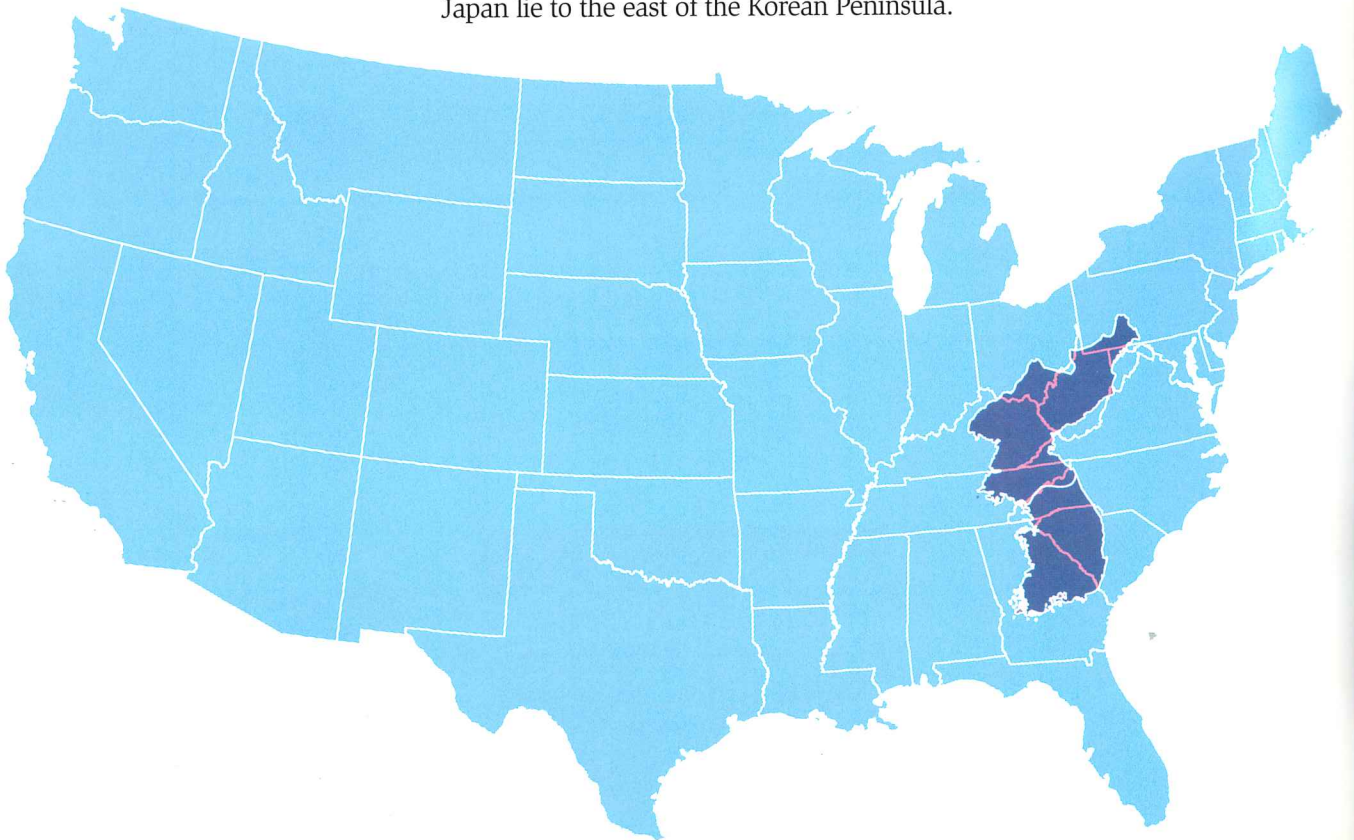

 Setting a Purpose

As you read, look for

- ▶ the impact the mountains had on North Korea's development;
- ▶ where on the Korean Peninsula most people live;
- ▶ the many natural resources on the peninsula;
- ▶ why North Korea must rely on foreign aid to feed its people;
- ▶ term: **homogenous**.

Location and Size of the Koreas

North and South Korea are located on the Korean Peninsula in eastern Asia. The peninsula is in the eastern and northern hemispheres. North Korea is bordered by the Korea Bay of the Yellow Sea on the west and the Sea of Japan on the east. To the north are China and Russia and to the south is South Korea. South Korea borders the Sea of Japan to the east, the Yellow Sea to the west, and North Korea to the north. The islands of Japan lie to the east of the Korean Peninsula.



At 46,540 square miles of territory, North Korea is smaller than the state of Georgia. The land is mountainous and not as densely populated as South Korea. With an area of 38,502 square miles, South Korea is smaller than Georgia, but a bit larger than South Carolina. South Korea is less mountainous than North Korea, and a large part of the country has excellent farmland.

The Korean Peninsula is in the temperate climate zone between the Arctic Circle and the Tropic of Cancer. The southern part of the peninsula reaches south into a subtropical zone.

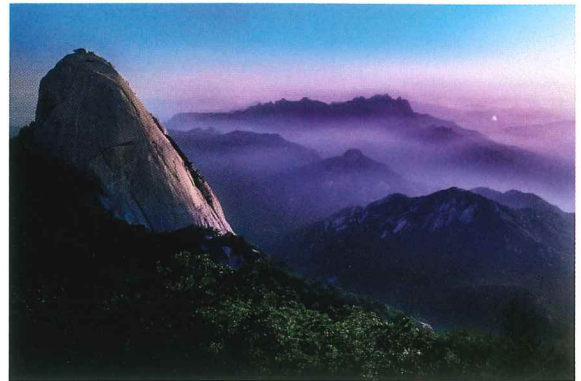
Physical Features of the Koreas

While both North and South Korea are located on the Korean Peninsula, their geography is very different. The mountains of North Korea have made it more difficult for its people to be successful with agriculture, unlike people in South Korea and in other parts of Asia. Despite the limited amount of arable land, the people of North Korea rely on this land to produce most of the food for the country. There are fast-flowing rivers in the mountains where North Koreans have developed hydroelectric power plants. North Korea earns a profit from mining coal and other minerals like iron and copper.

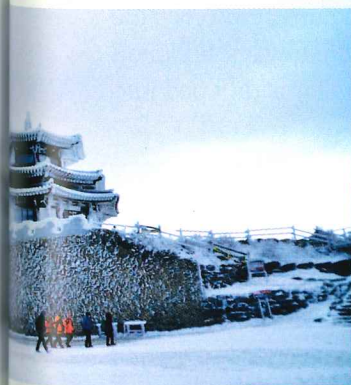
In comparison, South Korea has fewer mountains than North Korea. While there are mountainous areas in South Korea, there is also a hilly countryside that is home to ancient temples and flowering fruit trees. The large coastal plains in the western and southern parts of the country provide farming opportunities, and the coasts are rich in seafood. Subtropical islands can be found at the southern tip of South Korea. Like North Korea, South Korea is able to take advantage of fast-moving rivers in the mountains to produce hydroelectric power.

Climate

Like their geography, the climates in North and South Korea are different. The location of each country on the Korean Peninsula is one of the main reasons for the difference in their climates. North Korea has short summers and long, bitterly cold winters. This is a result of North Korea's location in the northerly, mountainous parts of the Korean Peninsula. Pyongyang, the capital of North Korea, has an average January high temperature of 27 °F with an average low of 9 °F. Snow falls on average 37 days each year. In August, the average high temperature is 84 °F. The city averages 39 inches of rain per year.



Over 70 percent of the Korean Peninsula is covered with mountains.



Top: Some of Korea's beautiful mountains can be seen in Bukhansan National Park. **Left:** The northerly latitudes of the Korean Peninsula allow for snows such as this one at Deokyu Mountain in Muju City. **Bottom:** Jeju Island is the largest island off the Korean peninsula. Its temperate climate and beaches attract many tourists.

South Korea's climate is milder than North Korea's. Summers are hot and humid, and winters are cold but warmer than North Korea. This is mainly because of warm winds from the ocean, which North Korea does not get. One of the most important effects of the ocean winds is the monsoon season. In the summers, the ocean currents bring monsoon rains to South Korea. This rain helps farmers be successful. The capital, Seoul, has an average high January temperature of 35 °F, and an average low of 21 °F. In August, the average high temperature is 84 °F. The city averages about 57 inches of rain per year.

Natural Resources in the Koreas

Varied natural resources are found on the Korean Peninsula in both North and South Korea including coal, lead, tungsten, graphite, and hydro-power. While arable land is not a common resource, it is very important to the Korean people, especially in North Korea where they have to grow all of their food to survive. In addition to these resources, North Korea has zinc, iron ore, magnesite, copper, gold, pyrites, salt, and fluorspar. Compared to many of the countries in the world, South Korea has very few natural resources.

Environmental Issues of the Koreas

Like countries around the world, both North and South Korea have different environmental issues that their governments must work to solve. Water is one of the biggest environmental issues in North Korea. While there are rivers in parts of North Korea, in many areas there is not enough clean water for people to drink. Sometimes the water is contaminated with waterborne diseases (diseases that live in the water). The water is sometimes also polluted from mining operations. Additionally, poor agricultural practices are causing problems. For example, soil erosion is a major issue. If the soil erodes away, farmers will not be able to grow enough food to survive. In a country like North Korea, where there is already limited arable land, the impact of soil erosion can be severe.

South Korea is more industrialized than North Korea. As a result, air pollution is a major problem in cities across South Korea. Both car emissions and factories are contributing to this problem. As a result of the air pollution, acid rain is another major environmental issue. As in North Korea, water pollution is a problem in parts of South Korea. However, the causes of water pollution are different. In South Korea, water pollution is caused from industrial waste, as well as sewage that is dumped into the waterways.

Right: Dust mixed with auto and factory emissions can cause polluted air to settle on the city of Seoul.

Background: This Korean farm is growing green barley and has yellow-flowering canola along with wind turbines to generate electricity.

