

Pak Wansö's (1931-2011) *Mother's Hitching Post* and the Korean War

Subject: American History, 10th Grade

Lesson Goal: The goals of this lesson are to allow students to develop an understanding of the following state benchmarks:

- History: Explain how the Cold War and related conflicts influenced US Foreign policy after 1945 with emphasis on: the Marshall Plan, communist containment, including the Truman Doctrine, Berlin Blockage and Cuban Missile Crisis, and the Korean War and the Vietnam War.
- Social Studies Skills and Methods: Determine the credibility of sources by considering the following: the qualifications and reputation of the writer, agreement with other credible sources, recognition of stereotypes, and the circumstances in which the author prepared the source.
- Social Studies Skills and Methods: Critique evidence used to support a thesis.

Objective/Concept: The goal of this lesson is that students will understand the impact the Korean War had on society as a whole, not just the men who fought in it. Students will do this through reading modern Korean fiction. I have chosen the short story *Mother's Hitching Post* by Pak Wansö (Pak is the last name, Wansö the first name of the author). Students will read both the story and a short biography about the author and then decide on the credibility of the source.

Activities:

Day One

1. Bellringer: What was the Korean War? Why was it fought and what was the outcome?
2. Pass out the short biography on Pak Wansö to the class and read aloud.
 - a. Using their notes and history book if needed, students will search for events that have happened in Korea during Pak Wansö's lifetime. As they find events, they will need to write down how they think that may have influenced her writing.
3. Pass out the short story *Mother's Hitching Post*.
 - a. Students can start reading the short story in class, but need to finish for homework.

Day Two

1. Start class with a very general discussion about the *Mother's Hitching Post* to get students thinking about the text.
 - a. Did you like it? What did you think of the main characters?
2. Pass out Discussion Page
 - a. Students may work with a partner to answer the questions. The class will come together at the end of class to go over them.

- 1) What events from your list yesterday influenced Pak Wansö's writing in *Mother's Hitching Post*? Why is Pak Wansö a credible source of information?
 - 2) Describe Korean society as it is portrayed in the story.
 - 3) What was the purpose of the mountain marrow?
 - 4) What happened to the narrator's brother in the story?
 - 5) How do the two women come to terms with what happened to their brother/son?
 - 6) What impact do you think stories such as this have on the survivors of the Korean War? Think about how the United States felt about Vietnam and dealt with the aftermath.
 - 7) Why is it important for you, as a student in the United States, to read this short story?
3. As a class, come together and discuss the short story in more depth, focusing on the Discussion Page questions they worked on in groups.

Materials/Resources:

Pak Wansö biography from *Modern Korean Fiction: An Anthology*, edited and translated by Bruce Fulton and Youngmin (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005) 291-292.

Pak Wansö, *Mother's Hitching Post* from *Modern Korean Fiction: An Anthology*, edited and translated by Bruce Fulton and Youngmin (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005): 293-328.

Discussion Page