

A Look at North Korean Refugees (2 days)

- **Purpose**
 - Through this lesson, students will gain perspective of the current conditions in North Korea and an understanding of what people go through to try to escape.
- **Background**
 - The impoverished status of North Korea is perhaps best exemplified by examining a satellite image of the entire Korean peninsula at night (such as the one at <http://blog.usaid.gov/wp-content/uploads/2011/06/korea.jpg>). The Pyongyang regime is a textbook example of corrupt communism and its failings. The international community has sent aid to the starving citizens of North Korea, but the government generally dispenses it out to loyal party members and leaders, leaving virtually none for the people. Even though it is a crime punishable by death if caught, many North Koreans have fled the country, seeking safety in others. However, the only country that directly borders North Korea (other than the DMZ) is China, a state which refuses to accept the North Korean refugees and repatriates them to their home country. This lesson can be used in a history, government, geography, or economics class.
- **Standards**
 - Ohio's New Learning Standards: *Modern World History*: Content Statements 2, 3, 4
 - Ohio's New Learning Standards: *Contemporary World Issues*: Content Statements 7, 8, 9, 18
 - Ohio's New Learning Standards: *Economics & Financial Literacy*: Content Statements 3, 4, 8, 10
 - Ohio's New Learning Standards: *World Geography*: Content Statements 8, 9
- **Resources**
 - *Seoul Train*. Directed by Jim Butterworth, Aaron Lubarsky, and Lisa Sleeth. Incite Productions. 2004.
- **Assignments and Activities**
 - Day 1
 - View the Documentary: *Seoul Train* (54 minutes)
 - Homework Assignments:
 - Write a reflection essay on what you saw and learned from the documentary.
 - Short Answer: Summarize the position of the Chinese government regarding people who flee North Korea into China? Why do they refuse to acknowledge them as refugees?
 - Day 2
 - Have students share their reflection essays with the class.
 - Hold a class discussion about the plight of North Korean refugees. This discussion can be adapted to suit the type of class (history, economics, etc). Sample discussion questions can include.

- Do you know anyone who immigrated to the United States? What motivated them to leave their home country?
- What scenes/concepts from the film can you connect to events in the US?
 - The underground railroad, illegal immigrants from Latin America, jurisdiction of stopping an illegal immigrant ending once they reach the dry beach (“wet foot, dry foot” policy being similar to the gate at the embassy in China).
- Why does the Chinese government refuse to recognize the North Koreans as refugees?
- If you lived in North Korea, would you risk your life to escape?
- If you lived in China, would you risk your life to help North Koreans escape?
- Do you think it was right to let China host the 2008 Olympics?
- **Expanding the Lesson**
 - The *Seoul Train* website includes several interesting resources that can be shared with students to enhance their understanding of the situation. One of these is a letter from the Chinese embassy in the Ukraine asking that the documentary be prohibited - http://www.seoultrain.com/content/resources/fax_from_chinese_embassy-kyiv.pdf .
 - A good news article about the plight of the North Koreans can be found at <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/articles/A12158-2005Mar6.html> . This helps show the kind of life the refugees can expect if they stay in China, which could lead to more discussion about the motivations of the North Koreans in their flight from their homeland.