

North Korea Prepares for Critical Transfer of Power

10/05/2010

http://www.pbs.org/newshour/extra/features/world/july-dec10/korea_10-05.html

Estimated Time: One 45-minute class period with possible extension

Student Worksheet (reading comprehension and discussion questions without answers)

PROCEDURE

1. WARM UP

Use initiating questions to introduce the topic and find out how much your students know.

2. MAIN ACTIVITY

Have students read NewsHour Extra's feature story and answer the reading comprehension and discussion questions on the student handout.

3. DISCUSSION

Use discussion questions to encourage students to think about how the issues outlined in the story affect their lives and express and debate different opinions.]

INITIATING QUESTIONS

1. Where is North Korea?

2. What is a dictator?

3. What are some different ways that leaders of countries transfer power? (Think election, coup or other ways...)

READING COMPREHENSION

1. How long has the Kim family ruled over North Korea?

ANSWER

The Kim family has ruled North Korea for more than 50 years, ever since the current ruler's father, Kim Il-Sung, took power in 1948.

2. How has the Kim family created a "cult of personality" in North Korea?

ANSWER

The Kim family has created a "cult of personality" in North Korea by using the media and propaganda to create heroic and idealized images of themselves.

3. What is the Worker's Party?

ANSWER

The Worker's Party is the ruling political party in North Korea.

4. Why does Kim Jong-Un have to be promoted by the military before he can take over as leader?

ANSWER

The Worker's Party has to promote Kim Jong-Un in the military ranks before he can assume his new leadership position because North Korea has a policy called "songun" - military first.

5. Why can power transfers make governments vulnerable?

ANSWER

Transferring power within a government can make the people in charge vulnerable because others might take advantage of the leadership shift to take power for themselves or create instability.

6. How many troops does the North Korean military have?

ANSWER
1.2 million

7. What other communist country recently experienced a power transfer that kept power within the same family?

ANSWER
Cuba

8. What is communism?

ANSWER
Communism is a form of government originally designed to spread power and wealth among all people.

9. What are the five communist countries in the world today?

ANSWER
North Korea, Cuba, China, Laos and Vietnam

10. Why is China especially interested in what happens in North Korea?

ANSWER
China in particular has a vested interest in what happens in North Korea because it would bear the brunt of a North Korean refugee crisis. China is also the biggest supplier of food, arms, and fuel to North Korea.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How do you think so many North Koreans came to be sheltered from the truth and convinced of the cult of personality surrounding the Kim family? What do you think the government has to do to keep them from learning about the outside world?

2. Why do you think the original concept of communism didn't work in any of today's communist countries? Do you think it would ever be possible to share all goods and power equally among everyone? Why or why not?

3. Why are some people in North Korea becoming fed up with life under the Kim family? What kinds of things do you think a government has to supply to its people to keep them pleased with the way things are being run?

4. How does the way power is transferred from one leader to another compare to how it's done in the U.S.? What is the ceremony called when a new president is sworn in in the U.S.?