

# Countries Of The World: South Korea

By National Geographic Kids, adapted by Newsela staff on 02.01.18

Word Count **488**

Level **390L**



Image 1: Seoul is the capital of South Korea. It is also the country's most populated city. Seoul hosted the 1988 Olympic Games. Photo from: Getty Images/Alex Barlow

Korea is a country in East Asia. It sits on a 750-mile-long stretch of land. It sticks out into the sea. Today, Korea is split into two parts: South and North Korea.

South Korea has many mountains. They are not very tall, though. Most peaks here are shorter than 3,300 feet. They were worn down by wind and rain. Mountains in other countries are taller.

South Korea is surrounded by many islands. Most were formed by volcanoes.

## Nature

South Korea is not very big. It has a lot of people, though. There is not much space for wildlife. The country's 21 national parks are small.

Tigers once roamed in Korea. Hunters killed most of them. There is a wild zone between North and South Korea. People do not live there. Some think a few tigers may live there, though. No one knows for sure.



## People And Culture

South Korea is crowded. Most people there live in cities.

Many Koreans follow Confucianism. It is a way of thinking about life. Confucianism teaches respect and good behavior.

## Government And Economy

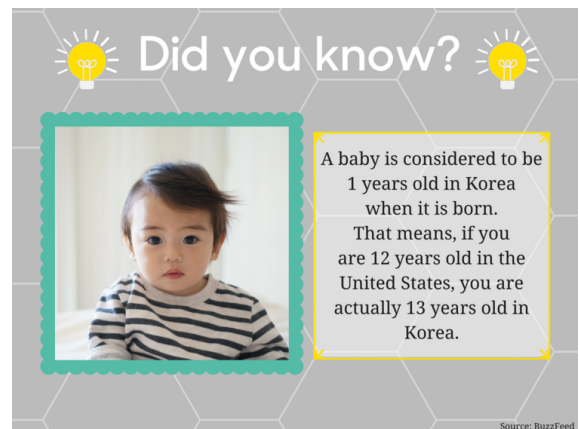
South Korea is a democracy. Its people vote for their president. He or she is elected to a five-year term.

The country has a strong economy. Most of its wealth comes from manufacturing. South Korea makes cars and computers. It makes many other products, too. It sells them around the world.

## History

People have lived in Korea for thousands of years. Its first kingdom was known as Gojoseon. This kingdom ruled parts of China for a long time. Chinese armies overthrew it more than 2,000 years ago.

About 1,100 years ago a powerful leader arose. His name was Wang Geon. He unified Korea. Then, in 1292, the Yi family took over. They started a new dynasty. The Yis ruled until 1910.



Korea has seen terrible wars in the last 130 years. Japan fought Russia for control of Korea in 1910. Then Japan was defeated in World War II. This was a big, global war. Japan and Germany fought together. They battled against the United States, the United Kingdom, and many other countries.

The war ended in 1945. Japan and Germany lost. Japan had to give up its lands. Korea was one of them. It was occupied by two countries. The United States stayed in the south. The Soviet Union controlled the north. The Soviet Union was a group of nations. It was led by Russia.

Then, in 1950, another war began. People from the northern part of Korea attacked the south. It was the beginning of the Korean War. The Soviet Union supported the northerners. The U.S. got involved, too. It supported the southerners.

The war lasted until 1953. More than 2 million people died. Yet neither side won. Today, South Korea remains divided from North Korea.



## Quiz

1 Who in the article controlled the north part of Korea after World War II?

- (A) the Soviet Union
- (B) the United States
- (C) Japan
- (D) the United Kingdom

2 What is a reason WHY the Korean War started?

- (A) The south attacked the north.
- (B) The north attacked the south.
- (C) The United States attacked the Soviet Union.
- (D) Japan lost World War II.

3 Look at Map 2 at the end of the article.

What does the map show?

- (A) the money used in South Korea
- (B) the national animal of South Korea
- (C) the small size of South Korea
- (D) the people who live in South Korea

4 Look at Map 1.

Which question is answered by Map 1?

- (A) How big do most Siberian tigers get?
- (B) How many people live in South Korea?
- (C) What do people sell in South Korea?
- (D) What does South Korea's flag look like?

## Answer Key

- 1 Who in the article controlled the north part of Korea after World War II?
- (A) **the Soviet Union**
  - (B) the United States
  - (C) Japan
  - (D) the United Kingdom
- 2 What is a reason WHY the Korean War started?
- (A) The south attacked the north.
  - (B) **The north attacked the south.**
  - (C) The United States attacked the Soviet Union.
  - (D) Japan lost World War II.
- 3 Look at Map 2 at the end of the article.  
What does the map show?
- (A) the money used in South Korea
  - (B) the national animal of South Korea
  - (C) **the small size of South Korea**
  - (D) the people who live in South Korea
- 4 Look at Map 1.  
Which question is answered by Map 1?
- (A) How big do most Siberian tigers get?
  - (B) How many people live in South Korea?
  - (C) What do people sell in South Korea?
  - (D) **What does South Korea's flag look like?**