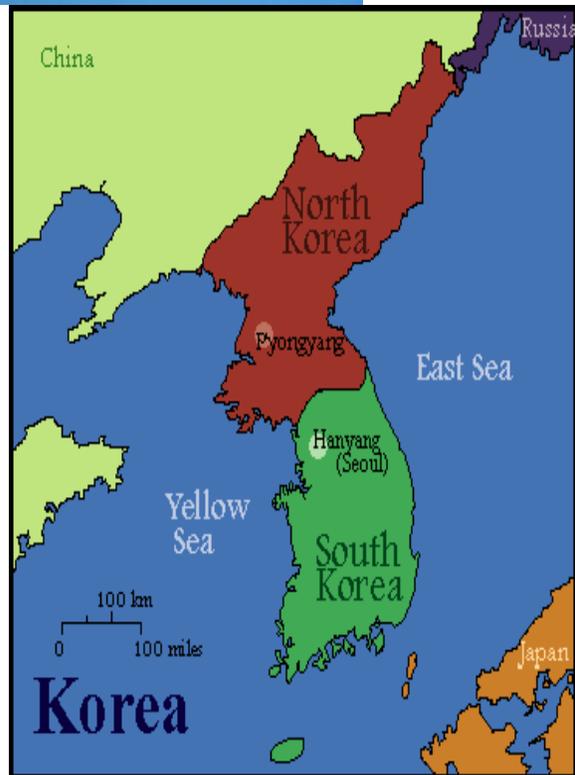


The Changing Roles of South Korean Women

A Teacher's Resource Guide



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Lesson Plan: Changing Roles of South Korean Women

Subject(s): World History, Civics, Government, Economics, Women's Studies

Grade Level: High School, 10th to 12th Grades

Content Standards: See Appendix C below

Learning Objectives:

- Students will use a variety of primary and secondary sources in order to analyze any changes and continuities in the status of South Korean women over the course of the 19th, 20th, and early 21st Centuries.
- Compare and contrast the lives of women in South Korea and the U.S.

Quick Facts

- South Korea At a Glance
 - Capital: Seoul
 - Population: 51.71 million (2020)
 - 25.89 million males, 25.82 million female
 - Languages: Korean, Korean sign language
 - Religions: Christianity, Buddhism, Islam, Confucianism
- South Korea is the 12th largest economy in the world.
- South Korea refers to the Republic of Korea (ROK), established in 1948 by Syngman Rhee.
- Both North and South Korea were Japanese colonies from 1910 to 1945.
- Before 1910, the Korean peninsula was home to several kingdoms and dynasties and cultures, dating back to 4000 B.C. Some kingdoms existed concurrently until unified under the Unified Silla dynasty and again under the Goryeo dynasty.
 - **Three Kingdoms Period [57 B.C.–668 A.D.]**: Goguryeo (37 B.C. - 668 A.D.), Baekje (18 B.C.- 660 A.D.), and Silla (57 B.C. - 668 A.D.)
 - **Unified Silla/Later Silla [668-935]**
 - **North and South States Period [698 - 926]**: Unified Silla/Later Silla (668 - 935) and Balhae (698 - 926)
 - **Goryeo [918 –1392]**
 - **Joseon (Choson) [1392–1910]**

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. Background Information.....	4-6
2. Teacher Guidance.....	7-9
a. Learning Activities	
3. Appendix	10-17
a. Appendix A: Handouts	
b. Appendix B: Resources for Teachers	
c. Appendix B: Content Standards	
d. Appendix D: Article Summaries	

Background Information

From 1910 to 1945, the Korean peninsula was under Japanese colonial rule. Once Japan was defeated by the Allied Powers in World War II, the peninsula was divided along the 38th parallel by the United States and the Soviet Union into two administrative zones. The Soviet Union took control of the northern half of the peninsula and the United States took control of the southern half. The separation was meant to be temporary, but the trusteeship of Korea could not be decided upon by the Allied Powers (the U.S., the Soviet Union, the United Kingdom, and the Republic of China). Therefore, the two administrative zones became their own countries, supported by their respective Western powers. On August 15, 1948, the southern half established itself as the Republic of Korea (ROK) led by Syngman Rhee. The north declared itself to be the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) under Kim Il Sung on September 9, 1948.



Source: Canadian Library
of Parliament

After WWII and the departure of the Japanese, South Korea was forced to deal with a multitude of issues ranging from instability in governance to shifts in established societal norms.¹ Once the Korean War broke out in June 1950, it worsened the situation and disrupted daily patterns of living including housing, work, family relationships, and care, and the traditional gender roles in those areas. As men joined the armed forces, women took up work outside of the home, doubling their numbers in the labor force. Most women worked in farming, small factories, and sold goods. Notably, for the women who were widowed by the war, their work outside of the home was viewed positively, but for married women, participation in the labor force was viewed as against social norms and a sign of their husbands' failings.² Such views created social dilemmas for women throughout the mid-twentieth century.

In the 1960s, President Park Chung-Hee focused on industrializing South Korea's economy and propping up the country's exports. Men and women were recruited from the countryside to new urban cities for new employment opportunities. Women were involved in light industries (textiles, wigs, food, clothing, and electronics) whereas men were employed in heavy industries

¹ Laura C. Nelson and Cho Haejoang, "Women, gender, and social change in South Korea since 1945," in *Routledge Handbook of Modern Korean History*, ed. Michael J. Seth (London: Routledge, 2016), 326.

² *Ibid.*, 327.

(manufacturing, construction, chemicals) and held almost all supervisory positions within factories. Wages were very low, divided by gender and married men received more recognition of their role in supporting the family. Women who worked were pressured to use their funds to support family members and overall pressured to get married and leave the workforce.³ Their continued independence was seen as salacious and employment beyond young adulthood was unexpected. During the 1970s and 80s, a greater emphasis on heavy industries forced most women out of the factories and into jobs selling products, serving food, and cleaning houses as maids. Irregular intervals of economic growth prioritized men's job security over women's, making employment for women even more untenable in urban areas. In the countryside, the mechanization of men's labor roles in farming left more manual, less modern tasks to women. This created an image of the hard-working, self-sacrificing mother in the countryside tending to the Korean home which became used as propaganda to judge urban women. Farm work subsequently became the only sector where it was understood that women were engaged in labor throughout their lives.⁴

In regard to education, after 1945, expanding the education system became a priority once South Korea became independent. Primary school education was mandatory for both boys and girls in 1950, but disparities still existed. Over the years, the expense of sending children to school outside of tuition, and the assumed futility of educating girls due to the lessened likelihood of them continuing on to higher education, decreased the average years girls attended school. Girls were also less likely to attend secondary school than boys. Into the 1980s, higher class families invested more in boys' education than girls', with farming families investing the least in girls' education.⁵ In higher education, twice as many men as women attended colleges and universities into the 1990s. Women who did attend saw their education as preparation for marriage and childrearing as the labor demand for degree-holding women was weak, compounded upon by the low demand for male graduates.⁶ Within society, women were instead encouraged to focus on the success of their children, supporting their husbands and helping to care for their parents as well as their in-laws.

As South Korea set itself on the path to democratization in the 1980s, there was a great deal of optimism for social change. After South Korea's establishment in 1948, social activism, especially activism geared toward a critique of the patriarchal systems within the country, was routinely suppressed under the militarist regimes of Rhee Syngman (1948-1960), Park Chung Hee (1961-1979), and Chun Doo Hwan (1980-1988).⁷ However, some forms of advocacy

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid., 328.

⁵ Ibid., 330.

⁶ Ibid., 331.

⁷ Ibid., 333.

surrounding family planning, education, consumer rights, and employment opportunities were allowed. In 1987, the Korean Women's Associations United (KWAU) was established to provide a structure for feminist organizations to meet and collaborate on issues. KWAU worked to reform ROK laws relating to personal and family property, inheritance, divorce, and custody of children among others. In 1988, the Equal Employment Opportunity Act was passed, addressing the issue of economic inequality in the workplace. Women could take on high-profile work and local businesses started to hire more college-educated women. However, once the Asian Financial Crisis in 1997 drove employment down, unemployed men blamed women for their economic insecurity. Demographic issues like the falling birthrate, increase in divorce rates, and increase in the number of unmarried women were also blamed on women's "selfish" or "inappropriate" choices.⁸ Even so, women's rights movements continued to push for legal reform that would achieve gender equality. There were significant victories for reform throughout the years including the Equality in Employment Act of 1999, the establishment of the Ministry of Gender Equality in 2001, and the rising number of elected women representatives to local and national offices.⁹ These changes were significant for their effects on contemporary South Korean society by giving women greater opportunities and rights as individuals.

Today, South Korea continues to work toward greater equality, but the history of women's roles in the country makes progress difficult. Women still face pressure to leave their jobs to care for their families or discrimination in the fields that they enter. South Korea has the largest pay gap among the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries, and its pervasive glass ceiling is a barrier to furthering women's advancement both in the workplace and in government. The country also continues to score poorly in the World Economic Forum's Gender Gap reports on economic participation and opportunities for women.¹⁰ Gender inequality is negatively impacting the South Korean economy and the future of South Korean society. The current administration under President Moon Jae-in has taken some steps to help prevent discrimination against women in the workforce by setting quotas for women in leadership positions. But according to South Korean activists, the focus for them is less on the labor issues and instead on addressing conservative gender roles.¹¹

⁸ Ibid., 332.

⁹ Ibid., 335.

¹⁰ Troy Stangarone, "[Gender Inequality Makes South Korea Poorer](#)," *The Diplomat*, June 14, 2019.

¹¹ "[South Korean women are fighting to be heard](#)," *The Economist*, April 11, 2020.

Teacher Guidance

It is important to build background knowledge on South Korea before diving deep into the prevailing issues in South Korea. To help your students build background knowledge here are a few quick videos and readings you could share with them. **For more information on the articles, see Appendix D: Article Summaries.**

<p>Videos</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduction to South Korea • Interesting Facts after South Korea • Why did Korea Split Into North and South? • Establishment of the Republic of Korea. • Export-led Industrialization of South Korea.
<p>Articles</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Handout 2: Background Knowledge (Pg. 11) • Women's Status in South Korea: Tradition and Change • Women and Social Change in South and North Korea: Marxist and Liberal Perspectives • The Empowerment of Women in South Korea • Women's Role in Contemporary Korea • Marriage, Independence and Adulthood among Unmarried Women in South Korea Bo-Hwa Kim, Jae Kyung Lee and Hyunjoon Park

Learning Activity

Topic	Student Activity	Teacher Guidance
<p>Gender Issues in South Korea <40 minutes></p>	<p>Home Activity: Listen to the Podcast: Season 1 Episode 2: Delving into Gender Issues in South Korea</p>	<p>Announce the homework and allocated grades according to your class needs and requirements.</p> <p>Set a due date.</p>

	<p>Written Reflection: Summarize what you learned from the podcast in your own words and compare your observations with your knowledge of the lives of women in the U.S.</p>	
<p>Changing Roles of South Korean Women <40 minutes></p>	<p>Students divide into groups of 3-4. Pick 2-3 articles from the list to compare and analyze for this activity.</p> <p>Essay Question:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Using your chosen articles, analyze the changes and continuities in the roles of South Korean women living within a predominantly Confucian society from 1900 to the present. (Specifically identify changing roles in areas such as education, economy, marriage, K-pop, etc.) Identify and explain one additional type of document and explain how it would help your analysis of women’s roles. <p>Come back as a group and present their findings.</p> <p>Students will also submit a multi-paragraph (1-2 pages) essay on the key findings and what they have learned.</p> <p>Use <i>Handout 1: Change Analysis Chart to help (pg.10)</i> to help you make notes of the changes and key points.</p>	<p>Teachers will assign readings to students prior to class so that they can familiarize themselves with the lives of South Korean women and how it has changed. <i>For brief summaries of the articles used in this lesson plan, see Appendix D (pgs. 16-17).</i></p> <p>The teacher will explain the activity and help students in picking articles if needed.</p> <p>During the discussion, the teacher will play the role of a facilitator.</p> <p>List of articles for activity [Article Summaries pgs. 16 and 17]</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Women's Status in South Korea: Tradition and Change Women and Social Change in South and North Korea: Marxist and Liberal Perspectives The Empowerment of Women in South Korea Women’s Role in Contemporary Korea Marriage, Independence and Adulthood among Unmarried Women in South Korea Bo-Hwa Kim, Jae Kyung Lee and Hyunjoon Park Chosŏn Queen Sohye’s Naehun (“Instructions for Women”, 1475) Women’s Development and Information on Women in Korea. Korean Women Flock to Government. Park Geun-hye aims to become South Korea's first female president.

		<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 10. Analysis of Changes in Female Education in Korea from an Education - Labor Market Perspectives. 11. How K-Pop Perpetuates Gender Inequality 12. Does K-pop Reinforce Gender Inequalities? Empirical Evidence from a New Data Set 13. U.S. and South Korea: How Traditional Values with Religious Roots Still Impact Gender Inequalities.
<p>Women in Korea Vs. Women in U.S.</p>	<p>Assign students to watch a documentary/backgrounder on gender inequalities in the U.S. Examples: Equal means Equal [~1.5 hours] (Available for rent/purchase on Amazon Prime) Not Done: Women Remaking America [55 minutes] (Available for rent/purchase on Amazon Prime and PBS) Why Women Are Paid Less [~18 minutes] (Available for free on Youtube) Amend: The Fight for America - Episode 4 [~1 hour] (Available for free on YouTube)</p> <p>In groups of 4, students will work together to present the gender inequalities in the U.S. versus Korea. The students can present in the format that best works for them (e.g., PowerPoint, Prezi, Google Slides, etc.)</p>	<p>The teacher will provide a brief summary of the documentary and critical issues to look out for while watching the documentary.</p> <p>The teacher will explain the activity and set a date for presentations.</p>
<p>Debrief/ Reflect <40 minutes></p>	<p>Exit Ticket What have you learned about South Korean women then vs now? Provide a few examples from the class readings and/or discussions.</p>	<p>The teacher will clarify any misconceptions and answer any questions students may have.</p>

Appendix A: Handouts
Handout 1: Change Analysis Chart

Characteristics at the beginning of the period	Characteristics at the end of the period	Key Changes/ Continuities	Changes in Different Areas	
			Education	
			Work/Life	
			Marriage	
			K-Pop	
			Economy	

NOTES:

Handout 2: Background Knowledge

From 1910 to 1945, the Korean peninsula was under Japanese colonial rule. Once Japan was defeated by the Allied Powers in World War II, the peninsula was divided along the 38th parallel by the United States and the Soviet Union into two administrative zones. The Soviet Union took control of the northern half of the peninsula and the United States took control of the southern half. The separation was meant to be temporary, but the trusteeship of Korea could not be decided upon by the Allied Powers (the U.S., the Soviet Union, the United Kingdom and the Republic of China). Therefore, the two administrative zones became their own countries, supported by their respective Western powers. On August 15, 1948 the southern half established itself as the Republic of Korea (ROK) led by Syngman Rhee. The north declared itself to be the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) under Kim Il Sung on September 9, 1948.



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(textiles, wigs, food, clothing and electronics) whereas men were employed in heavy industries (manufacturing, construction, chemicals) and held almost all supervisory positions within factories. Wages were very low, divided by gender and married men received more in recognition of their role in supporting the family. Women who worked were pressured to use their funds to support family members and overall pressured to get married and leave the workforce.¹⁴ Their continued independence was seen as salacious and employment beyond young adulthood was unexpected. During the 1970s and 80s, a greater emphasis on heavy industries forced most women out of the factories and into jobs selling products, serving food and cleaning houses as maids. Irregular intervals of economic growth prioritized men's job security over women's, making employment for women even more untenable in urban areas. In the countryside, the mechanization of men's labor roles in farming left more manual, less modern tasks to women. This created an image of the hard-working, self-sacrificing mother in the countryside tending to the Korean home which became used as propaganda to judge urban women. Farm work subsequently became the only sector where it was understood that women were engaged in labor throughout their lives.¹⁵

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¹⁵ Ibid., 328.

¹⁶ Ibid., 330.

¹⁷ Ibid., 331.

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¹⁸ Ibid., 333.

¹⁹ Ibid., 332.

²⁰ Ibid., 335.

²¹ Troy Stangarone, "[Gender Inequality Makes South Korea Poorer](#)," *The Diplomat*, June 14, 2019.

²² "[South Korean women are fighting to be heard](#)," *The Economist*, April 11, 2020.

Appendix B: Teaching Resources

1. [History of South Korea](#) by History.com
2. [Korean History and Political Geography](#) by the Asia Society
3. [PBS Online: Hidden Korea/Culture](#) by PBS
4. [Constitution of the Republic of Korea, 1948](#)
 - a. Excerpts that pertain to the rights of women can be found under “CHAPTER II. RIGHTS AND DUTIES OF CITIZENS.”
5. [About Clothing and Fashion in Korea](#) by the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism and Korean Culture and Information Service
6. [U.S. Enters the Korean War](#) by National Geographic

Books

- Dorothy Ko, JaHyun Kim Haboush and Joan R. Piggott. *Women and Confucian Cultures in Premodern China, Korea, and Japan* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003).
- Steven Hugh Lee and Chang Yun-shik. *Transformations in Twentieth-Century Korea* (London: Routledge, 2006).
- Kyong-dong Kim. *Social Change in Korea* (Jimoondang, 2008).
- Hyaewool Choi. *Gender and Mission Encounters in Korea: New Women, Old Ways* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009).
- Laura C. Nelson and Cho Haejoang. “Women, gender, and social change in South Korea since 1945,” in *Routledge Handbook of Modern Korean History*, ed. Michael J. Seth (London: Routledge, 2016).

Policy and Data:

- Korea's Ministry of Gender Equality & Family provides some [useful open-access information](#) on policy, laws, and statistics.
- [Gender Equality Policy](#) set by the Republic of Korea's Ministry of Gender Equality & Family
- KDI School of Public Policy and Management runs an [open-access database](#) on social issues in Korea. In particular, check out the following reports in K-developedia:
 - Korean gender statistics: Current status and future tasks
 - Women in South Korean politics: A long road to equality
 - Women resource development institutions and projects in Korea
 - Institutionalization of women's policies

Articles:

- [Heard in Seoul: Gender Equality in South Korea by the Wall Street Journal](#).
 - A collection of short interviews with several South Korean people about the state of gender equality in the country.

Appendix C: Content Standards

In this unit, students use their social studies literacy skills to learn the changing lives of South Korean women. Students also examine how the lives of women in South Korea compare to that of the U.S.

Grade 11*

Reading Skills

- Identify the origins of the source of a document and analyze the author's point of view. *(CCR1)*
- Determine the main ideas of the source and identify the author's claims *(CCR1, CCR2)*
- Evaluate the reasoning and evidence an author uses to support claims, including analysis of deliberate word choice and selection of evidence. *(CCR1, CCR4, CCR8)*
- Answer a historical question by critically analyzing multiple primary and secondary sources, using relevant evidence from texts to support a well-developed argument in a multi-paragraph essay or presentation. *(CCR1, CCR6, CCR7, CCR9)*

Writing Skills

- Answer a historical question by critically analyzing multiple primary and secondary sources, using relevant evidence from texts to support a well-developed argument in a multi-paragraph essay *(CCW1a-e, CCW8, CCW9)*
- Make comparisons across eras, circumstances, and overtime to draw conclusions, including evaluation of the impact of the past on today and analysis of change versus continuity. *(CCR3)*

**Note: This is the common core standard for the state of Maryland.*

Appendix D: Article Summaries

To help teachers understand the purpose of the article, each article is followed by a summary that describes the type, length, and content of the article. Teachers can use the article in full or portion as they see fit for the purpose of their students' academic levels and needs.

- [Women's Status in South Korea: Tradition and Change](#)
 - 18 pages, published journal article, 1990. This article covers the foundations of a women's role in South Korea, its changes post-WWII and the burgeoning women's movement in the late 1980s.
- [Women and Social Change in South and North Korea: Marxist and Liberal Perspectives](#)
 - 40 pages, working paper, 1992. This paper explores the differences between social systems in both North and South Korea and how those systems affect their societies' treatment of women.
- [The Empowerment of Women in South Korea](#)
 - Webpage (~5 pages), 2014. This reprinted article gives a brief overview of women's political participation in South Korea in the 2010s, and highlights the major milestones for women under President Kim Dae-jung in the late 1990s that led to the current state of affairs.
- [Women's Role in Contemporary Korea](#)
 - Webpage (~3 pages). This webpage is another overarching view of the role of women in South Korea. It covers the basic timeline of women achieving constitutional rights and entering the workforce, concluding with the hope for women's rights in the future.
- [Marriage, Independence and Adulthood among Unmarried Women in South Korea](#)
[Bo-Hwa Kim, Jae Kyung Lee and Hyunjoon Park](#)
 - 25 pages, journal article, 2016. This article is a compilation of 23 interviews with unmarried South Korean women from differing socio-economic backgrounds who express their views on marriage and independence in their country.
- [Chosŏn Queen Sohye's Naehun \("Instructions for Women", 1475\)](#)
 - Webpage (~ 5 pages). This webpage reviews the life of Korean women from the 15th through the 20th centuries. They assess this through the creative work left behind by Korean women.
- [Women's Development and Information on Women in Korea.](#)
 - Conference paper (~8-10 pages), 1998. This paper reviews women's development in Korea over the past 50 years with a focus on legal issues and the role of women's groups/organizations during this process.
- [Korean Women Flock to Government.](#)
 - The New York Times article (~ 4 pages). This article covers the increase of

female applicants for South Korea's foreign service examination from 1992 to 2010 and the changes the government had to make to accommodate more women working in the public sector.

- [Park Geun-hye aims to become South Korea's first female president.](#)
 - The Guardian News article (~3 pages). This article reports on Park Geun-Hye during her campaign to become South Korea's first female president and her efforts to tackle gender inequality and improve ties with North Korea.
- [Analysis of Changes in Female Education in Korea from an Education - Labor Market Perspectives.](#)
 - 27 pages, journal article, 2011. This article analyzes the changes in female education and how these changes have affected the labor markets from Korean Independence until the present day.
- [How K-Pop Perpetuates Gender Inequality](#)
 - Webpage (~ 10 pages). This webpage explores how various women involved in K-pop shape the gender inequality associated with the global music product. It includes helpful maps, videos, and introduces students to popular female K-pop stars and their rough careers.
- [Does K-pop Reinforce Gender Inequalities? Empirical Evidence from a New Data Set](#)
 - 28 pages, journal article, 2017. This article provides a unique perspective of K-Pop fans, from over 100 countries around the world, on the relationship between individual K-Pop consumption and gender attitudes of K-Pop fans.
- [U.S. and South Korea: How Traditional Values with Religious Roots Still Impact Gender Inequalities.](#)
 - Women's eNews article (~2 pages). This article sheds more light on the prevailing issues of South Korea's gender inequality such as traditional values that stem from the Confucian ideals that make it difficult for women to be treated as equal to men.