THE U.S. AND NORTH KOREA

Objective: Students will understand the repression of North Koreans by their government and how some people are trying to change that.

Grade Level: 9-12 U.S. and World History

Periods needed: One 90 minute period or two 45 minute periods.

Ohio American History Standards Met:
3 - Historians develop theses and use evidence to support or refute positions.
Historians analyze cause, effect, sequence and correlation in historical events, including multiple causation and long- and short-term causal relations.
26 - The Cold War and conflicts in Korea and Vietnam influenced domestic and international politics.

Ohio World History Standards Met:
3 - Historians develop theses and use evidence to support or refute positions.
18 - The United States and the Soviet Union became superpowers and competed for global influence.

Background: In 1945, after the Allies defeated Nazi Germany, they planned an invasion of Japan. The United States and Great Britain would invade the islands of Japan while the Soviet Union would engage the Japanese on the Asian mainland. Although Japan surrendered before the invasion was scheduled the Soviets had moved into the northern part of Korea. By 1948, to separate Korean states were established on the peninsula divided by the 38th parallel. North Korea was established as a communist state, led by Kim Il-sung, while South Korea was an anti-communist republic with Syngman Rhee as president. The Korean War, which lasted from 1950 to 1953 ended with an armistice, no peace treaty, which left the border between the two countries essentially the same as before the war, along the 38th parallel. Since then North Korea has become the most secretive and isolated country in the world. In 2011, Kim Jong-un became Supreme Leader after the death of his father, Kim Jong-il.

Plan of instruction:
1. If students are not familiar with the conflict between the United States and North Korea cover the essential facts in a mini-lecture or discussion. See Korea’s Twentieth-Century Odyssey, by Michael E. Robinson.
2. Show Frontline documentary "Secret State of North Korea.” – available on many different websites including youtube.com
3. Pass out the video worksheet
4. Have each group or pair answer the questions on the worksheet.
5. When all students are finished have the students share their answers

References:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WOzY3U9xIoM
1. What happens if a person is caught filming in North Korea?  
(Jailed, executed)

2. Why did the Chinese put up a fence at their border with North Korea?  
(to keep the defectors from North Korea out)

3. What was shown in the videos that Kim Jong-un would not want the rest of the world to see?  
(People eating garbage, trash everywhere, people sleeping on streets, people begging)

4. According to the UN how much of the population does not have enough food to eat?  
(3/4)

5. What does North Korean state controlled TV try to show?  
(Land of plenty, luxury goods, happy people, stores full of goods)

6. What is unusual about many of the products displayed at Pyongyang’s Department Store #1?  
(They are not for sale, but only for display)

7. What was shown happening to the US in propaganda videos?  
(NYC destroyed by a missile attack)

8. If a person is suspected of disloyalty who else is often arrested because of guilt by association?  
(The person’s family, even extended family)

9. What smuggled videos do North Korean men like?  
(Action films, ex – Skyfall)

10. What smuggled videos do North Korean women like?  
(soap operas, drama0

11. What small items could play a major role in changing North Korea?  
(thumb drives or flash drives)

12. Besides videos what is another source of information going into North Korea?  
(TV and radio)

13. What story spread by defectors upset Kim Jong-un?  
(His wife had made a pornographic video)
14. What is sent to North Korea in balloons to help the people?
   (US dollars)

15. What are some criticisms North Koreans secretly have about Kim Jong-un and his policies?
   (He is too young to rule, he is inexperienced, there is no freedom)

16. What is one of the biggest economic changes in North Korea?
   (private markets)

17. What part of the dress code is being called into question?
   (pants for women)

18. What is different about cell phones in North Korea than cell phones in other countries?
   (cannot call outside North Korea unless illegally modified)

19. What was missing from the streets of North Korea that can be seen in the streets of any other major city in the world?
   (cars)

WHAT ABOUT YOU?

1. What do you think would be the worst aspect of living in North Korea? Why?

2. What should the government of the United States do to help the people of North Korea?

3. What should the people of the United States do to help the people of North Korea?