

MODULE OVERVIEW

SKILL: COMPARISON AND SUPPORTING ARGUMENTS WITH EVIDENCE

CONTENT: POLITICAL AND CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

DAY
1

LESSON QUESTION: WHAT ARE THE SIGNS OF A TOTALITARIAN STATE?

CLASS ACTIVITY: Source Analysis

While working collaboratively, students will define "totalitarian government" and learn about its core characteristics. Students will work individually and in teams to analyze videos to identify the different ways totalitarian leaders manipulate a society to gain control through the story of a fictional state..

CHECK FOR UNDERSTANDING: Assessing a Totalitarian State

Students will use their understanding of the characteristics of a totalitarian leader to assess and rank the characteristics that pose the greatest threat to society.

DAY
2

LESSON QUESTION: TO WHAT EXTENT IS NORTH KOREA A TOTALITARIAN STATE?

CLASS ACTIVITY: Potential Totalitarianism in North Korea & its Impact on Citizens

Working individually and in teams, students will use their expanded understanding of totalitarianism to apply it to the context of North Korea, examining the extent to which the Kim family uses appeals to Extreme Nationalism, National Emergencies and Scapegoating, Government Control of Media and Technology, Propaganda and Cult of Personality, Bribery and Kickbacks, and Force and Violence to control North Korea. Through a variety of sources, students will investigate and assess North Korean totalitarianism. Students will also watch North Korean defector videos as another way to assess totalitarianism in North Korea.

CHECK FOR UNDERSTANDING: Exit Ticket

Students will use the information from primary sources and videos of defectors from North Korea to assess totalitarianism in North Korea and its impact on the individuals who live there. Hearing the voices and stories of defectors provides a unique opportunity to reflect on the state and how lives have been affected by the government.



ASSESSMENT: WHAT IS AN EFFECTIVE POLICY TO SHAPE US-NORTH KOREAN RELATIONS?

In light of their analysis of North Korea as a totalitarian state, students will craft a policy recommendation to the President of the United States that will guide US-North Korean relations.

DAY 3

BASED ON A 60-MINUTE CLASS

Lesson Question: WHAT IS AN EFFECTIVE POLICY TO SHAPE US-NORTH KOREAN RELATIONS?

CURRICULUM STANDARDS

Texas - Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills High School Government Course

13 Citizenship - The student understands the difference between personal and civic responsibilities. The student is expected to:

- (A) describe scenarios where good citizenship may require the subordination of personal desire for the sake of the public good;
- (B) explain the responsibilities, duties, and obligations of citizenship such as being well informed about civic affairs, serving in the military, voting, serving on a jury, observing the laws, paying taxes, and serving the public good.

New York: New York State Social Studies K-12 Framework

12.G4 POLITICAL AND CIVIC PARTICIPATION: There are numerous avenues for engagement in the political process, from exercising the power of the vote, to affiliating with political parties, to engaging in other forms of civic participation. Citizens leverage both electoral and non-electoral means to participate in the political process.

12.G4c In addition to voting, there are many ways in which citizens can participate in the electoral process. These include joining a political organization, donating money, and doing volunteer work on a political campaign.

12.G4e Citizens participate in civic life through volunteerism and advocacy, including efforts such as contacting elected officials, signing/organizing petitions, protesting, canvassing, and participating in/organizing boycotts.

California: History Social Science Content Standards

12.3 Students evaluate and take and defend positions on what the fundamental values and principles of civil society are (i.e., the autonomous sphere of voluntary personal, social, and economic relations that are not part of government), their interdependence, and the meaning and importance of those values and principles for a free society.

1. Explain how civil society provides opportunities for individuals to associate for social, cultural, religious, economic, and political purposes.
2. Explain how civil society makes it possible for people, individually or in association with others, to bring their influence to bear on government in ways other than voting and elections.

Civics Skills: APPLY POLITICAL CONCEPTS AND PROCESSES; SOURCE ANALYSIS

OVERVIEW

Students will analyze the impact of potential totalitarianism that are exhibited by the North Korean government, then make a case as to what policy option(s) the United States government should take—or not take—to mitigate its impact on the North Korean people and the world. The class will also be able to explore optional outreach activities that will provide them avenues to take informed action as individuals.

MATERIALS NEEDED FOR:

In Class Activity

- Student Handout: [Examining at the Testimonies of North Korean Defectors](#)
- Student Handout: [Responding to Totalitarian Governments Reference Guide](#)
- Student Handout: [Policy Briefing to the President of the United States](#)
- Teacher Handout: [Course of Action Tally Sheet](#)

SEQUENCE OF INSTRUCTION

CLASS ACTIVITY 1 of 3: WARM UP/INTRODUCTION (10 Minutes)

ACTIVITY 1 PROCEDURE: ACCESSING PRIOR KNOWLEDGE ON THE SUBJECT

- Have students arrange desks to work in teams of four for this activity.
- As a way of drawing the students' attention back to what they learned in yesterday's class, have them take out the assignment they completed at the end of the day: "[Check for Understanding: Examining the Testimonies of North Korean Defectors.](#)"
- Lead a brief discussion, asking the class the following:
 - What were your reactions to watching the videos?
 - Which of the testimonies made an impact on you personally?
 - Which of the following Warning Signs of Totalitarianism did you see?
 - Appeals to Extreme Nationalism
 - Use of National Emergencies and Scapegoating
 - Government Control of Media and Technology
 - Use of Propaganda and Cult of Personality
 - Bribery and Kickbacks
 - Use of Force and Violence

CLASS ACTIVITY 2 of 3: EXAMINING COURSES OF ACTION (15 minutes)

ACTIVITY 2 PROCEDURE: WHAT SHOULD BE THE RESPONSE OF THE UNITED STATES AND THE WORLD?

- Distribute 3 X 5 cards to the class, and ask the class to write down their thoughts about this question: “How should the United States and the world respond to the existence of totalitarianism in North Korea?” (Note: The students should be told that these responses will be collected and that their names are optional.)
- After providing a few minutes for each student to process their answer, the teacher should collect the cards, then share some of the responses briefly, occasionally eliciting responses from the class. This provides a moment for the students to process their responses and time to organically offer their thoughts without any prompting from the teacher or class. (Please note that this debrief should only take around five minutes, with the teacher using the activity as a means of engaging the class for the rest of the activity.)
- Distribute the handout entitled “[Responding to Totalitarian Governments Reference Guide.](#)” This guide provides possible courses of action to engage with North Korea. The reference guide provides some analysis of each option.
- Depending on the class and support that may be needed, consider reading or reviewing the handout with the class, or have the students read it independently.
- Have the class silently read the suggestions are from the first column entitled “Column A: Course of Action” of [the document](#). Use this question to guide their reading:
 - If the world has to deal with a hypothetical totalitarian leader, what is the best and worst course of action?
- Students circle two of the ten options that they assess as best.
 - Call upon two to three students to share their responses, staging a three to five minute discussion.

Teaching Tip: Making sure your terms are defined...



Depending on their ability level, some students may find the term “Public Policy” either obscure or undefined. It may be useful to discuss and/or define it. Public policy can be defined as a plan of action that a government uses to solve a problem such as a pandemic, unemployment, climate change—or totalitarianism in North Korea.

Teaching Tip: Feel free to stir the conversation up a bit...



Feel free to use this discussion time as a way of instigating conversation between different points of view on the signs and responses. Doing so will provide some interesting “Point/Counterpoint” style discussions that will provide necessary nuance and complication to each student’s thinking. The teacher should share that the students are welcome to change their responses at any time. It deserves to be said that most policy debates on North Korea are complicated and nuanced, with very few unambiguous world responses. Given that, it is quite likely that your students may feel there is no perfect form of action, which is a roadblock that many policy makers around the world have with North Korea as well.

CLASS ACTIVITY 3 of 3: Summary Activity

ACTIVITY 4 PROCEDURE: WRITING A POLICY BRIEFING TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES

- As a culminating activity to this module, the teacher should distribute the handout entitled “[Writing a Policy Briefing to the President of the United States.](#)”
- After having the class read the instructions, recommend that the students use their just-completed “[Course of Action Planning Guide](#)” as a basis for writing their Policy Briefing to the President.
- Please note that depending on the teacher’s and students’ goals and time, this assignment is flexible enough to be a one-paragraph briefing or a multiparagraph essay that goes into greater detail.
- Note: After the students complete this homework, the teacher can guide the discussion by keeping track of the students’ choices using the handout “[Course of Action Tally Sheet.](#)”

Teaching Tip: Making sure your terms are defined...



Depending on their ability level, some students may find the term “Policy Briefing” either obscure or undefined. Given that, it is recommended that the teacher explain that it is defined as a concise summary of an issue, the policy options to deal with it, and some recommendations on what the best option might be.

Student Handout: Responding to Totalitarian Governments Reference Guide

Name: _____

This page is a **REFERENCE GUIDE** to help you complete the
“Policy Briefing to the President of the United States.”

RESPONDING TO TOTALITARIAN GOVERNMENTS REFERENCE GUIDE

Column A: Course of Action	Column B: What this would do	Column C: Pros and Cons
<p>1. Start Worldwide Economic Sanctions against North Korea</p> <p><u>Note:</u> “Sanctions” are economic, social, or political penalties taken against a country.</p>	<p>Stop business relationships with North Korea by countries of the world.</p> <p>Put penalties or sanctions on the goods North Korea ships overseas (exports).</p> <p>Freeze the North Korean leaders’ bank accounts or assets, preventing them from gaining wealth, material goods, or vacations.</p>	<p><u>Pros:</u> These actions hit North Korean leader Kim Jong-un and his inner circle where it hurts financially, and more importantly, <i>don’t</i> involve the military.</p> <p><u>Cons:</u> Sanctions can take years to take effect, decreasing their short-term impact. Penalties like this could also possibly hurt the innocent North Koreans by preventing consumer goods, fuel, food, and medical supplies from entering the country.</p>
<p>2. Have Secret Negotiations with North Korea</p> <p><u>Note:</u> These are also sometimes called “Carrots and Sticks,” which could include COVID-19 immunizations, which North Korea desperately needs.</p>	<p>Have secret discussions with the North Korean leader Kim Jong-un that encourage (provide a “carrot” of ending sanctions) or discourage him (provide a “stick” of more sanctions) to not take any more totalitarian control.</p>	<p><u>Pros:</u> These actions provide the dictator with the ego recognition that the world is taking them seriously—without the public knowing. It also is a non-violent approach with little risk of war.</p> <p><u>Cons:</u> One could argue that history shows that no deals should ever be made to appease a dictator. Likewise, there might be fierce public backlash if these talks are discovered by the world.</p>
<p>3. Engage in Public Diplomacy</p> <p><u>Note:</u> “Diplomacy” is when a country uses negotiations, compromise, or just talking as a means of resolving their problems without violence or</p>	<p>Have open discussions in a public setting that replicate the “carrots and sticks” that are described in Section 2 above.</p>	<p><u>Pros:</u> Negotiating in public puts positive peer pressure on both sides to come up with a solution that both can live with.</p> <p><u>Cons:</u> If negotiations fail, there could be an increased chance of violence or war, especially if there is a</p>

war.)		heated disagreement.
<p>4. Conduct military exercises close to the North Korean border or near its coastal areas</p>	<p>Putting troops, aircraft, or battleships into a preparation drill would indicate that military action was imminent to attack the country.</p>	<p><u>Pros:</u> Doing so might possibly put pressure on the North Korean government to loosen its totalitarian restrictions.</p> <p><u>Cons:</u> While this sends a clear message, what happens if the dictator feels threatened and strikes first, which could possibly even become nuclear?</p>
<p>5. Have a Strategic Attack of North Korea</p>	<p>The American military would take action with drones and smart bombs that would be focused on precise targets within North Korea.</p> <p>These strategic attacks would be short and limited, hopefully preventing a larger war.</p>	<p><u>Pros:</u> Doing so would send the clear message that the world takes North Korea's totalitarianism seriously—and that it should come back to the negotiating table to curtail its totalitarian rule.</p> <p><u>Cons:</u> While this sends a clear message, what happens if the dictator feels threatened and retaliates; which could possibly start a larger war—and significant damage to South Korea and American forces? Doing so might also provide material for North Korean propaganda that rallies its population into following Kim Jong-un even further.</p>
<p>6. Create international alliances against North Korea through the United Nations</p>	<p>The United States and its allies would lead an international summit (meeting) with several countries that trade with North Korea.</p> <p>This meeting would discuss larger sanctions—as well as incentives—that would put pressure on the North Korean government.</p>	<p><u>Pros:</u> Doing so would provide a non-violent way of expanding sanctions against North Korea, which would in turn hopefully weaken the Kim government.</p> <p><u>Cons:</u> One could argue that North Korea has survived international pressure for decades—and that a call for new sanctions wouldn't change their totalitarian behavior that much, as it has shown that it would even tolerate the famine of its own citizens.</p>
<p>7. Showcasing North Korean defectors on an international stage</p>	<p>This would expose the totalitarianism of the North Korean government on an international stage, hopefully putting pressure on the regime to change.</p>	<p><u>Pros:</u> Doing so is a relatively easy way of reminding the world about the nature of the North Korean government. It is also a way to put pressure on Kim Jong-un to become more democratic.</p> <p><u>Cons:</u> It might be argued that seeing that North Korea</p>

		prevents outside information from coming into the country, this type of public shaming may not amount to much.
<p>8. Drone Drops of Technology (link to info)</p>	<p>Unidentified drones would drop memory cards and USB flash drives into specific areas of North Korea that would carry Western and South Korean films, television shows, music, news, and access to Wikipedia.</p>	<p><u>Pros:</u> These technology drops would provide much-needed information that would contradict North Korean propaganda. They would also perhaps inspire activists within the country to rebel against the North Korean regime.</p> <p><u>Cons:</u> If discovered, these drops might agitate the North Korean government, quite possibly endangering the lives of North Korean civilians, or even starting an international incident that might lead to war.</p>
<p>9. Do nothing</p> <p>This means that the United States and the world would keep sanctions going, but not engage with the North Korean government.</p>	<p>Known as “Strategic Patience,” one can make a case that given all the risks, the best course of action is to simply wait until the Kim family is thrown out of power by those inside the North Korean government, which sometimes happens.</p>	<p><u>Pros:</u> Given that almost all of the previous options have significant downsides or limitations, doing nothing minimized the chance of conflict or war.</p> <p><u>Cons:</u> It can be argued that doing nothing gives even more time for the Kim Family to develop the rocket technology that would allow an atomic weapon to reach the United States, which would in turn, give North Korea more power internationally.</p>
<p>10. Use a combination of any of the above</p>	<p>Utilize one or more of the actions described above...</p>	<p><u>Pro:</u> Combining actions provides flexibility</p> <p><u>Con.:</u> War might be necessary.</p>

Student Handout: Policy Briefing to the President of the United States

Name: _____ Period: _____

Student Directions: Write a Policy Briefing to the President of the United States that outlines the extent that North Korea is a totalitarian government and what the world should possibly do to respond. Using the handout entitled: "[Responding to Totalitarian Governments Reference Guide](#)," write a briefing to the President that discusses **two** Courses of Action (Column A), and explain why you are suggesting these solutions (use Column C and other reasoning).

Mr/Mme. President,

In response to the concerns about North Korea, I think the two best courses of action are _____ and _____. [explain to what extent North Korea is a totalitarian government using evidence]

[First body paragraph = discussing and explaining why the first course of action is wise]

[Second body paragraph = discussing and explaining why the second course of action is wise]

[Conclusion paragraph = summarize your recommendations and how/when the President should act]

Respectfully,

(sign your name and title)

Course of Action Class Tally Teacher Use

Best Course of Action	TALLY
1. Start Worldwide Economic Sanctions against North Korea	
2. Have Secret Negotiations with North Korea	
3. Engage in Public Diplomacy	
4. Conduct military exercises close to the North Korean border or near its coastal areas	
5. Have a Strategic Attack of North Korea	
6. Create international alliances against North Korea through the United Nations	
7. Showcasing North Korean defectors on an international stage	
8. Drone Drops of Technology	
9. Do nothing	
10. A combination of any of the above	