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# **FINDING FREEDOM: ESCAPE FROM NORTH KOREA**

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**Segment Length: 6:46 minutes**

## **Lesson Description:**

What is freedom? How important is freedom to you? People use the word freedom differently, but when we look at North Korea, there is little disagreement that the citizens are not free. This segment looks at one person's escape from North Korea.

## **Objectives:**

Students will be able to:

- discuss basic social, economic, and political conditions in North Korea.
- compare and contrast life in a totalitarian regime with life in a freer, more democratic country.
- evaluate the results of a government that has unlimited power.

## **Preview Activity and Questions:**

People often say about the United States that it's a free country. What does "freedom" mean to you? How important is being free?

Use Think, Pair, Share to have students answer the preview question. Ask them to look for similarities and differences in their answers. After a few minutes, poll the students and ask them to explain their answers.

## **OR**

Have students answer the following question in their notebooks: How would you feel if the government told you what haircut you could get, what music you could listen to, and what you could watch on TV?

## **Viewing Guide:**

It is recommended that teachers show the video segment twice: once to allow students to view the video and focus on the issues presented, and once to allow them time to complete the viewing guide. After they complete the viewing guide, allow students a few minutes to work in pairs sharing and verifying answers.

## **Answers to Viewing Guide:**

1. North Korea
2. jeans
3. Animal Farm
4. freedom

## Answers to Cloze Activity:

Yeonmi Park was born in 1993 in Hyesan, North Korea, under one of the world's most repressive regimes and in the height of a nationwide famine.

State-controlled media was their only form of information, so she knew nothing of the outside world and was taught to hate the regime's enemies, especially the United States. North Korea was dark—electricity was rarely reliable—and cold. The distraction of hunger permeated almost every scene of her childhood. While Yeonmi's mother was away trying to secure the release of her husband, Yeonmi and her sister learned to survive on bugs and plants, nearly starving to death before their mother returned.

Yeonmi wrote that when she was seven or eight, she saw a pirated copy of the movie *The Titanic*. "It amazed me that it was a story that took place a hundred years ago. Those people living in 1912 had better technology than most North Koreans!"

Life changed for Yeonmi when she finally arrived in South Korea. She devoured books with great appetite, starting with translations of children's books, then biographies, and when she read George Orwell's *1984*, she connected with it because it was as if Orwell knew where she was from and what she had been through. "I read to fill my mind and to block out the bad memories," Yeonmi wrote. "But I found that as I read more, my thoughts were getting deeper, my vision wider, and my emotions less shallow. The vocabulary in South Korea was so much richer than the one I had known, and when you have more words to describe the world, you increase your ability to think. In North Korea, the regime doesn't want you to think."

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Class \_\_\_\_\_ Period \_\_\_\_\_ Teacher \_\_\_\_\_

## Finding Freedom: Escape from North Korea Viewing Guide

**Directions: As you watch the video, fill in the blanks with the correct words.**

1. There are real victims in the world. Twenty-five million of them lived in a place that's called the worst place on Earth, talking about \_\_\_\_\_. No one but the dictator has any freedom. Thousands of people are tortured. People eat rodents to survive.
2. If you wear \_\_\_\_\_, you would get arrested for that.
3. And one day I picked up a book called \_\_\_\_\_ and that changed my life. In that book I saw myself, I saw my grandmother, I saw my mother. And I could understand what had happened to me and what had happened to North Korea.
4. I went the very first day; I think it was Christmas Eve and I was amazed with the \_\_\_\_\_. I can watch a movie making fun of Kim Jong-Un. Think about it. If I was in North Korea I would be executed.

**Now, take a few moments to reflect on the video and answer the questions below:**

Why is North Korea often called "the worst place on Earth"? \_\_\_\_\_

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At the end of the video, John Stossel asked Yeonmi Park if she would go through starving and being sold into sex slavery again. Yeonmi replied, "Yes, I would do that again to be free." Why do you think freedom is that important to her? \_\_\_\_\_

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Why don't the citizens of North Korea overthrow their ruler? \_\_\_\_\_

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## Discussion and Analysis:

1. What surprised you the most about this video?
2. What is life like in North Korea?
3. Why do the people in the video clips of North Korea seem happy?
4. What is freedom?
5. What type of government does North Korea have?
6. What is the role of government? If government is supposed to control the people, why do people complain about the North Korean rulers?
7. Why don't we ever hear of people defecting from our country?
8. In the beginning of the video, John Stossel said that twenty-five million people living in North Korea are victims. Victims of what?
9. If the people in North Korea are truly victims, why don't they rise up and overthrow their rulers?
10. Does changing technology make it easier or harder for dictators to control their people? Explain your answer.
11. Some people say that North Korea has little pollution compared to South Korea and other countries that have market economies. What might be some reasons for that?
12. Yeonmi Park wrote that citizens of North Korea have no access to the internet. But aren't there a lot of bad or inappropriate websites on the internet? In a way, isn't the government protecting its people?
13. Do you think there are people who are happy or at least content living in North Korea? Why?
14. Yeonmi Park said that the government tells people how their hair should look, what they can wear, watch, and listen to. Why is conformity so important? Why can't people make these decisions for themselves?
15. Some arguments found on the internet in favor of North Korea's government include: orderly society, little crime, no graffiti, no traffic jams, no selfies, people still talk to each other at the dinner table, star-lit skies with little light pollution, and no AIDS. Those all seem to be good features. Aren't they? Or are these features indicative of something wrong? Explain.
16. The North Korea that Yeonmi Park describes is a country in which most people are completely equal. Is anything wrong with that? Isn't the goal of government to make people equal?

## Discuss These Lines from the Video:

1. No one but the dictator has any freedom. Thousands of people are tortured. People eat rodents to survive. Some starve anyway. In winter, people freeze to death and nobody is allowed to leave.
2. What strikes me watching this is that you would think people really do love Kim Jong-un. The announcer's voice is so exuberant. The audience [reaction] suggest[s] that they do worship him.
3. I thought freedom meant to wear jeans or watching movies without getting arrested or executed, but freedom meant in South Korea you gotta think for yourself.

4. One day I picked up a book called *Animal Farm* and that changed my life. In that book I saw myself, I saw my grandmother.... And I could understand what had happened to me and what had happened to North Korea.

## Quotes for Discussion

*North Korea is the only country in the world that executes people for making unauthorized international phone calls. North Koreans are being terrorized today. When I was 9 years old, I saw my friend's mother publicly executed. Her crime? Watching a Hollywood movie.*

– Yeonmi Park

*There's only one channel on TV. There's no Internet. We aren't free to move, sing, read, wear or think what we want.*

– Yeonmi Park

*Dictators cause the world's worst problems: all the collapsed states, and all the devastated economies. All the vapid cases of corruption, grand theft, and naked plunder of the treasury are caused by dictators, leaving in their wake trails of wanton destruction, horrendous carnage and human debris.*

– George Ayittey

*There is no easy walk to freedom anywhere, and many of us will have to pass through the valley of the shadow of death again and again before we reach the mountaintop of our desires.*

– Nelson Mandela

*Power tends to corrupt, and absolute power corrupts absolutely.*

– Lord Acton

*Unlimited power is apt to corrupt the minds of those who possess it.*

– William Pitt

*Capitalism has worked very well. Anyone who wants to move to North Korea is welcome.*

– Bill Gates

*The greatest threat to the security of the people of North Korea comes from the government of North Korea.*

– Ari Fleischer

*One of the ways the North Korea regime has kept power is by keeping its people ignorant of the living standards in the outside world. That's the underlying lie that supports the regime – not that their country is 'normal' but that they are better off.*

– Barbara Demick

*If the freedom of speech is taken away then dumb and silent we may be led, like sheep to the slaughter.*

– George Washington

*All of North Korea is a jail.*

– Kim Young-sam

*We hold these truths to be self-evident: that all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.*

– Thomas Jefferson

*Between stimulus and response there is a space. In that space is our power to choose our response. In our response lies our growth and our freedom.*

– Viktor E. Frankl

*It is difficult to free fools from the chains they revere.*

– Voltaire

*I know not what others may choose but, as for me, give me liberty or give me death.*

– Patrick Henry

*North Korea is not an undeveloped country; it is a country that has fallen out of the developed world.*

– Barbara Demick

*Is freedom anything else than the right to live as we wish? Nothing else.*

– Epictetus

*The inherent vice of capitalism is the unequal sharing of the blessings. The inherent blessing of socialism is the equal sharing of misery.*

– Winston Churchill

## Activities:

1. Have students complete the Cloze activity on page 50 in class or for homework.
2. View the video “The Importance of Institutions” (5:00 minutes) as a follow-up.  
<http://www.mruniversity.com/courses/development-economics/importance-institutions-brief>
3. Distribute individual quotes from the Quotes for Discussion section to pairs of students. Have the students discuss the meaning of the quote and write the meaning on the back of the quote. Collect the quotes and the students’ explanations as an exit ticket.
4. Some people say that history is best told in stories of the people who live through it. Research a North Korean defector and write about his or her experiences.
5. Have the class conduct a Flash Drives for Freedom drive in your school or community. After flash drives are donated to the organization, the drives are reformatted and then loaded with films and e-books from the outside world. The flash drives are then smuggled into North Korea.  
<http://flashdrivesforfreedom.org/>
6. Research and prepare a slideshow comparing North and South Korea. (See link in the Resources section for help in preparing a slideshow.)
7. Research and write a biography of Kim Jong-un, his father Kim Jong-il, or his grandfather Kim Il-sung. (See links in the Resources section for help in writing a biography.)
8. Write an essay that compares and contrasts North and South Korea. (See links in the Resources section for help in writing comparative essays.)
9. Research North Korea and write a persuasive essay in favor of or opposed to the government in North Korea. (See links in the Resources section for help in writing persuasive essays.)
10. Read the Human Rights Watch World Report 2016 on North Korea and summarize each subsection.  
<https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2016/country-chapters/north-korea>
11. Look at the Human Rights Foundation website. What are the goals of the organization? What does it do? What has it done on behalf of North Koreans? Report your findings to the class.  
<https://humanrightsfoundation.org>

12. Create a travel brochure for North Korea. (See links in the Resources section for help in producing a travel brochure.)
13. Read one of the articles in the Resources section and either write a summary of it or take Cornell Notes as you read the article. (See links in the Resources section for help in taking Cornell Notes.)
14. Watch one of the videos in the Resources section and write a summary of it.
15. Read one of the books in the Resources section and write a book report. (See link in the Resources section for help in writing a book report.)
16. Write a tweet, poem, or song about North Korea or about a North Korean defector.

## Resources:

### Guides

#### Think, Pair, Share

A brief explanation of the Think, Pair, Share instructional strategy, with examples:

<http://www.readingquest.org/strat/tps.html>

A video explanation of Think, Pair, Share:

<https://www.teachingchannel.org/videos/think-pair-share-lesson-idea>

#### How to write a biography:

<http://www.infoplease.com/homework/wsbiography.html>

<http://homeworktips.about.com/od/biography/a/bio.htm>

#### How to write a book report:

<http://www.infoplease.com/homework/wsbookreporths.html>

#### How to write a compare/contrast essay:

<https://www.sbcc.edu/clrc/files/wl/downloads/WritingaCompareContrastEssay.pdf>

#### How to write a persuasive essay:

[https://www.scribendi.com/advice/how\\_to\\_write\\_a\\_persuasive\\_essay.en.html](https://www.scribendi.com/advice/how_to_write_a_persuasive_essay.en.html)

<http://www.infoplease.com/homework/writingskills7.html>

#### How to produce a travel brochure:

[http://www.ehow.com/how\\_5886217\\_make-travel-brochure-school-project.html](http://www.ehow.com/how_5886217_make-travel-brochure-school-project.html)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9x5xFqLPrKQ>

#### For a clear, simple explanation of the Cornell note-taking system:

<http://coe.jmu.edu/learningtoolbox/cornellnotes.html>

<http://www.bucks.edu/~specpop/Cornl-ex.htm>

#### Preparing effective slideshow presentations:

[http://www.slideshare.net/satyajeet\\_02/how-to-make-effective-presentation](http://www.slideshare.net/satyajeet_02/how-to-make-effective-presentation)

<https://support.office.com/en-us/article/Tips-for-creating-and-delivering-an-effective-presentation-f43156b0-20d2-4c51-8345-0c337cefb88b>

<http://smallbiztrends.com/2016/07/effective-powerpoint-presentations.html>



## Articles

- Connection Denied: Restrictions on Mobile Phones and Outside Information in North Korea  
<http://www.amnestyusa.org/research/reports/connection-denied-restrictions-on-mobile-phones-and-outside-information-in-north-korea>
- “Escape From North Korea” by Tom O’Neill  
<http://ngm.nationalgeographic.com/2009/02/north-korea/oneill-text>
- “Flashdrives for freedom? 20,000 USBs to be smuggled into North Korea” by Jack Hands  
[http://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/mar/22/flashdrives-for-freedom-north-korea-20000-usb-sticks?CMP=tw\\_t\\_gu](http://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/mar/22/flashdrives-for-freedom-north-korea-20000-usb-sticks?CMP=tw_t_gu)
- “North Korea Human Rights”  
<http://www.amnestyusa.org/our-work/countries/asia-and-the-pacific/north-korea>
- “The Plot to Free North Korea With Smuggled Episodes of ‘Friends’” by Andy Greenberg  
<https://www.wired.com/2015/03/north-korea/>
- “U.S. Soldiers Defy North Korean Propaganda by Teaching Defectors English”  
by Choe Sang-Hun  
[http://www.nytimes.com/2016/04/28/world/asia/north-korea-defectors-learn-english.html?rref=collection%2Ftimestopic%2FNorth%20Korea&action=click&contentCollection=world&region=stream&module=stream\\_unit&version=latest&contentPlacement=4&pgtype=collection&\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2016/04/28/world/asia/north-korea-defectors-learn-english.html?rref=collection%2Ftimestopic%2FNorth%20Korea&action=click&contentCollection=world&region=stream&module=stream_unit&version=latest&contentPlacement=4&pgtype=collection&_r=0)

## Books

- Animal Farm* by George Orwell
- Anthem* by Ayn Rand
- The Aquariums of Pyongyang: Ten Years in the North Korean Gulag* by Kang Chol-hwan and Pierre Rigoulot
- Dear Leader: My Escape from North Korea* by Jang Jin-sung
- Dear Reader: The Unauthorized Autobiography of Kim Jong* by Michael Malice
- Escape from Camp 14: One Man’s Remarkable Odyssey from North Korea to Freedom in the West*  
by Blaine Harden
- The Girl with Seven Names* by Hyeonseo Lee
- In Order to Live: A North Korean Girl’s Journey to Freedom* by Yeonmi Park
- Nothing to Envy: Ordinary Lives in North Korea* by Barbara Demick
- The Real North Korea: Life and Politics in the Failed Stalinist Utopia* by Andrei Lankov
- A Thousand Miles to Freedom: My Escape from North Korea* by Eunsun Kim
- Under the Same Sky: From Starvation in North Korea to Salvation in America* by Joseph Kim

## Websites

- Amnesty International  
<https://www.amnesty.org/en/>
- Democratic People’s Republic of Korea  
<http://www.korea-dpr.com/>
- Flash Drives for Freedom  
<http://flashdrivesforfreedom.org>



Human Rights Foundation

<https://humanrightsfoundation.org>

Human Rights Watch: North Korea

<https://www.hrw.org/asia/north-korea>

Human Rights Watch World Report 2016

<https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2016/country-chapters/north-korea>

Liberty in North Korea

<http://www.libertyinnorthkorea.org/>

## Videos

10 Days in North Korea

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5xs--To414I>

The Courageous Speech of Yeonmi Park · One Young World Summit Dublin 2014

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Fr19P0JemKg>

The Importance of Institutions

<http://www.mruniversity.com/courses/development-economics/importance-institutions-brief>

## Related Lesson Plans

I'm Watching You 24/7

<http://www.thirteen.org/edonline/wideangle/lessonplans/imwatching/>

A Tale of Two Heavens: Escaping North Korea – PBS Learning Media Lesson Plan

<http://www.pbslearningmedia.org/resource/wa10.socst.global.conn.lpcrosheav/a-tale-of-two-heavens-escaping-north-korea/>

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Class \_\_\_\_\_ Period \_\_\_\_\_ Teacher \_\_\_\_\_

## Finding Freedom: Escape from North Korea Cloze Activity

**Directions:** Read the entire passage first. Then fill in the blanks with words from the box.

think	rarely	words	information
technology	connected	repressive	years
permeated	vocabulary	memories	returned

Yeonmi Park was born in 1993 in Hyesan, North Korea, under one of the world's most \_\_\_\_\_ regimes and in the height of a nationwide famine.

State-controlled media was their only form of \_\_\_\_\_, so she knew nothing of the outside world and was taught to hate the regime's enemies, especially the United States.

North Korea was dark—electricity was \_\_\_\_\_ reliable—and cold. The distraction of hunger \_\_\_\_\_ almost every scene of her childhood. While Yeonmi's mother was away trying to secure the release of her husband, Yeonmi and her sister learned to survive on bugs and plants, nearly starving to death before their mother \_\_\_\_\_.

Yeonmi wrote that when she was seven or eight, she saw a pirated copy of the movie *The Titanic*. "It amazed me that it was a story that took place a hundred \_\_\_\_\_ ago. Those people living in 1912 had better \_\_\_\_\_ than most North Koreans!"

Life changed for Yeonmi when she finally arrived in South Korea. She devoured books with great appetite, starting with translations of children's books, then biographies, and when she read George Orwell's *1984*, she \_\_\_\_\_ with it because it was as if Orwell knew where she was from and what she had been through. "I read to fill my mind and to block out the bad \_\_\_\_\_," Yeonmi wrote. "But I found that as I read more, my thoughts were getting deeper, my vision wider, and my emotions less shallow. The \_\_\_\_\_ in South Korea was so much richer than the one I had known, and when you have more \_\_\_\_\_ to describe the world, you increase your ability to think. In North Korea, the regime doesn't want you to \_\_\_\_\_."

This Cloze Activity is adapted from "Five surprising facts about North Korean defector Yeonmi Park" by Alli Maloney

<http://nytlive.nytimes.com/womenintheworld/2015/10/01/five-facts-about-north-korean-defector-yeonmi-park/>