



## Lesson Plan: The Role and Status of Women in Korea

### OVERVIEW

In this lesson, students will study the role and status of women in Korea from the early 20th century to the present and determine how gender roles may have contributed to the hardships of successive generations of women shown in a series of video clips.

The clips used in this lesson are from the film **In the Matter of Cha Jung Hee**, the story of an adopted Korean American who returns to Korea to learn more about her own history and the life of Cha Jung Hee, the girl whose identity she was given when she was adopted by an American family. For background information on adoptions from South Korea and the changing role of women in that country, see the [Resources](#) section of this lesson plan.

Note: Sections of this film are in Korean with English subtitles.

POV documentaries can be recorded off-the-air and used for educational purposes for up to one year from their initial broadcast. In addition, POV offers a lending library of DVDs and VHS tapes that you can borrow anytime during the school year — FOR FREE! Get started by joining our [Community Network](#).

### OBJECTIVES

Students will:

- Describe how the Korean War affected many Korean families.
- Interpret how the role and status of women in Korean society may have contributed to the hardships of Korean women in several generations.
- Examine how the role of women in Korea is changing.
- Explain how the life and role of a Korean-American woman might have been different had she grown up in Korea rather than the United States.

### GRADE LEVELS

9-12

### SUBJECT AREAS

World History, Global Studies, Sociology, Geography

### MATERIALS

- Internet access and equipment to show the class online video clips and an article
- Handout: [Viewing Guide](#) (PDF file)
- Map showing the location of South Korea.



## **ESTIMATED TIME NEEDED**

One 50-minute class period, plus homework time if needed

## **FILM**

Clip 1: “How I Became Cha Jung Hee” (Length 6:12)

The clip begins at 14:00 with archival war footage. It ends at 20:12 with the narrator saying, “. . . of a girl who wasn’t even there.”

Clip 2: “My Birth Mother” (length: :28)

The clip begins at 31:57 with the words “My birth mother came to visit me.” It ends at 32:25 with a photograph of Deann Borshay Liem with her birth mother.

Clip 3: “A Visit With One Cha Jung Hee” (length: 2:39)

The clip begins at 41:40 with an image of cars entering Gwanju. It ends at 44:19 with the phrase “through successive generations.”

## **ACTIVITY**

1. Distribute the Viewing Guide handout and show the class where South Korea is on a map. Explain that in the 1960s, an American family planned to adopt a young orphan girl from South Korea named Cha Jung Hee. At the last minute, Cha Jung Hee disappeared from the orphanage, so a social worker sent another girl instead and said she was Cha Jung Hee. She put the little girl’s picture on Cha Jung Hee’s passport and told the girl never to reveal her true identity. In the United States, the family that adopted her changed her name to Deann. (Note: This background is also provided on the handout.)

2. Tell the class that you are going to show them some brief video clips that explain what Deann Borshay Liem learned as an adult about her adoption. Then, play Clip 1 and have students respond to the related questions on the handout.

3. Set up Clip 2 by telling students that when Liem was an adult, she found out that though she had been told her birth mother was dead, her birth mother was still alive and living in South Korea. She also learned that she had brothers and sisters in Korea. Then, play the clip and have students respond to the questions. Repeat this process for Clip 3.

4. Divide the class into small groups and assign each a few paragraphs of the article, “Changing Role of Women” (<http://countrystudies.us/south-korea/40.htm>). Have each group develop a statement that summarizes the role of women in Korea, as outlined in its assigned paragraphs. Discuss:

- How does the information in the article compare to the experiences of women seen or described in the video clips?
- How do you think the role and status of women in Korea may have contributed to the hardships experienced by those in the video clips?



- What type of impact do you think the changing role of women will have on Korean families and society?

5. Conclude the activity by having students write one to two pages that describe what they think Liem's life would have been like if she had stayed in Korea and not been adopted by an American family. Ask students to include details about what Liem's role as a woman likely would have been based on the content of the article read by the class.

### **ASSESSMENT SUGGESTIONS**

Students can be assessed on:

- Thoughtful and complete responses on the Viewing Guide.
- Meaningful contributions to group work and class discussions.
- Clear exposition in their papers of what Liem's life would have been like and her potential role as a woman if she had grown up in Korea.

### **EXTENSIONS AND ADAPTATIONS**

- Explore the history and ethics of international adoptions from South Korea using the experience of filmmaker Deann Borshay Liem as a case study. Watch [Clip 1](#) again for this lesson and discuss what led to the orphanage's decision to change Kang Ok Jin's identity to Cha Jung Hee. What political, economic, and social factors may have influenced that decision? Who benefited from this action? Who did not? Then organize a class debate around this question: "Was it in Kang Ok Jin's best interest to be substituted for Cha Jung Hee?"
- Investigate the value of role models in navigating race issues. Begin by explaining to students that approximately 200,000 Korean children have been adopted overseas, often by white families. These children are still perceived by the world as racially different from their families and can struggle with prejudice and stereotyping that their parents have never had to face. One way that child development specialists recommend supporting children in this position is by giving them access to or information about role models who are of the same race. Have students research a notable Korean American and share details about this person with the class. A good place to begin research is Wikipedia's [List of Korean Americans](#) ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List\\_of\\_Korean\\_Americans](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_Korean_Americans)), which presents a number of notable Korean Americans from fields such as journalism, business, music and politics. Afterwards, discuss how knowledge of these individuals might influence how Korean Americans view themselves and their place in American society. Who do students consider their role models? Why?



- Analyze how decisions by the U.S. government may have influenced adoption rates from South Korea. Ask students to review the article, “[A History of Adoptions From South Korea](http://www.pbs.org/pov/firstpersonplural/history_southkorea.php)” ([http://www.pbs.org/pov/firstpersonplural/history\\_southkorea.php](http://www.pbs.org/pov/firstpersonplural/history_southkorea.php)) and other research materials and organize key information on adoptions from South Korea into a timeline. Then, have students add important events in United States-Korean relations to the timeline. Small student groups should then analyze the timeline and determine whether there are any cause/effect relationships between U.S. government actions and adoption rates from South Korea. Allow time for each group to report its findings.
- Discover POV’s other documentary stories of intercultural adoption, including, [Wo Ai Ni \(I Love You\) Mommy](#), [First Person Plural](#), [Discovering Dominga](#) and [Off and Running](#). Each film has website resources and lesson plans to facilitate its classroom use.

## RESOURCES

### **POV. “A History of Adoptions From South Korea.”**

[http://www.pbs.org/pov/firstpersonplural/history\\_southkorea.php](http://www.pbs.org/pov/firstpersonplural/history_southkorea.php)

The maker of the film featured in this lesson provides an overview of South Korean adoption history.

### ***Hidden Korea. “History.”***

<http://www.pbs.org/hiddenkorea/history.htm>

The *Hidden Korea* site details both ancient history and Korea’s relationships with China and Japan.

### ***South Korea: A Country Study. “Changing Role of Women.”***

<http://countrystudies.us/south-korea/40.htm>

This article from a U.S. Library of Congress publication describes the historical and contemporary roles of women in Korea.

## STANDARDS

These standards are drawn from “Content Knowledge,” a compilation of content standards and benchmarks for K-12 curriculum by McRel (Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning) at <http://www.mcrel.org/standards-benchmarks/>.

Behavioral Studies, Standard 1: Understands that group and cultural influences contribute to human development, identity and behavior.

Family/Consumer Sciences, Standard 1: Understand the family as the basic unit of society.



Family/Consumer Sciences, Standard 2: Understand the impact of the family on the well-being of individuals and society.

Family/Consumer Sciences, Standard 10: Understands how knowledge and skills related to child development affect the well-being of individuals, families and society.

Geography, Standard 9: Understands the nature, distribution and migration of human populations on Earth's surface.

Geography, Standard 10: Understands the nature and complexity of Earth's cultural mosaics.

Language Arts, Standard 1: Uses the general skills and strategies of the writing process.

Language Arts, Standard 5: Uses the general skills and strategies of the reading process.

Language Arts, Standard 9: Uses viewing skills and strategies to understand and interpret visual media.

Working with Others, Standard 4: Displays effective interpersonal communication skills.

World History, Standard 44: Understands the search for community, stability and peace in an interdependent world.

World History, Standard 45: Understands major global trends since World War II.

### **ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

Cari Ladd, M.Ed., is an educational writer with a background in secondary education and media development. Previously, she served as PBS Interactive's director of education, overseeing the development of curricular resources tied to PBS programs, the PBS TeacherSource website (now PBS Teachers) and online teacher professional development services. She has also taught in Maryland and Northern Virginia.