

A Chance for Freedom

By Laura McClure



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North and South Korea are countries in eastern Asia.

Two brothers crept carefully through the mountains in China. The boys, along with their mother, sister, and aunt, had fled their home in North Korea. They hoped to find a better life in South Korea.

Like China, North and South Korea are countries in Asia. If the Chinese police had found the family, they would have sent them back to their country to be punished or even killed.

A Long Journey

The brothers, Young Hoon and Young Jun, and their family members walked, rode in cars, and flew on an airplane to reach South Korea. Their journey took about a year.

They were lucky. There are about 200,000 to 300,000 North Koreans now hiding in China. But only about 2,000 of them are expected to make it to South Korea this year.

A New Life

Young Hoon, Young Jun, and their family members risked their lives to reach South Korea. Why? If they had stayed in North Korea, they faced starvation. Many North Korean children are hungry because their families cannot find food. In fact, over the past ten years, about 2 million people in North Korea have starved to death.

About a year after their arrival, the brothers tell me they are happy in Seoul, the busy capital city of South Korea. I visited Young Hoon and Young Jun at the Hannuri School, an after-school program for teens who have left North Korea and come to South Korea to start new lives.

Teachers at Hannuri help the North Koreans with their schoolwork. Many of the teens did not go to school regularly in North Korea, so they are behind in their lessons.

Worlds Apart

Even though North and South Korea are neighbors, the two countries are very different. North Korea is very poor. Its leader spends most of the country's money on the army, not on food for the people.

South Korea is more like the United States. The country has enough food for everyone, and most people drive cars, go to work, and eat at restaurants.

Young Hoon, 18, and Young Jun, 15, say that in North Korea they lived in a hut and ate mostly corn and potatoes. In South Korea, their lives are much different. The brothers live in an apartment and eat well. They love movies and video games.

Hope for the Future

The brothers tell me about their plans for the future. Young Hoon wants to be a pilot. Young Jun wants to help people. They also hope to do something they never could have even dreamed of while living in North Korea--they want to visit the United States.

Young Jun is already prepared to visit. An American he met on his way to South Korea gave him a U.S. dollar. Despite plenty of opportunities to spend the money in South Korea, Young Jun has kept it. After all, he tells me, he's going to need it when he gets to the United States.

A Divided Region

North and South Korea are countries in eastern Asia. Korea used to be one country. It was divided in half after World War II (1939–1945). In 1950, North Korea invaded South Korea, starting the Korean War (1950–1953). After the Korean War, the Demilitarized Zone, or DMZ, was set up to divide the two countries. I visited the South Korean side of the DMZ. Everywhere I looked there were soldiers. I wasn't allowed to talk to them because they were on duty.

Name: _____ Date: _____

1. Where are the countries of North Korea and South Korea located?

- A in the Southern Hemisphere
- B in eastern Asia
- C North of Russia
- D South of Japan

2. What is one *difference* between the brothers' old life and their new life in South Korea?

- A They can go to school regularly.
- B They do not have enough food to eat.
- C They are not allowed to watch movies.
- D They live in a hut.

3. Read the following sentences from the passage:

"North Korea is very poor. Its leader spends most of the country's money on the army, not food for the people."

"South Korea is more like the United States. The country has enough food for everyone, and most people drive cars, go to work, and eat at restaurants."

Which of the following describes the relationship between these sentences?

- A The sentences describe two steps in a process.
- B The first set of sentences explain the reason for the second set of sentences.
- C The sentences make a comparison.
- D The second sentences give the cause of the first sentences.

4. Read the following sentences and answer the question: "Despite plenty of opportunities to spend the money in South Korea, Young Jun has kept it [U.S. dollar]."

As used in the sentence, what does the word **despite** most closely mean?

- A because of
- B since
- C even with
- D notably

5. The central idea of this passage is to

- A describe the reasons that two brothers left North Korea and how their lives changed
- B illustrate the factors that make North Korea the greatest country in Asia
- C inform the reader why Young Jun wants to visit the U.S. after receiving a dollar from an American
- D compare the governments and living conditions in North and South Korea

6. According to the passage, do Young Hoon and Young Jun have hope for the future? Why or why not?

7. How does the author help the reader understand how the lives of Young Hoon and Young Jun change over the course of the passage?

8. The question below is an incomplete sentence. Choose the word that best completes the sentence.

Young Hoon and Youn Jun were behind in school _____ they attended an after-school program for extra help.

- A so
- B although
- C then
- D if

9. Answer the following questions based on the sentence below.

In South Korea, Young Jun and Young Hoon attend an afterschool program to catch up with their lessons.

Who? Young Jun and Young Hoon

What? _____

Where? _____

Why? _____

Directions: Read the vocabulary word and definition below to complete questions 10a, 10b, and 11.

Vocabulary Word: **opportunity** (op·por·tu·ni·ty): a chance.

10a. Read the sentences below and underline all forms of the word **opportunity**.

1. The coach gave the gymnast an opportunity to try again after she fell off the balance beam.
2. The music fan was so excited for the opportunity to see his favorite band.
3. Because the boy practiced for many weeks, he earned the opportunity to join the baseball team.
4. Because it was such a loud party, there was not much of an opportunity to talk to each other over the music.
5. On the last day of school, the teacher took the opportunity to thank his students for making it a great year.

10b. Describe one opportunity Young Hoon and Young Jun had available to them when they resettled in South Korea.

11. How might failing at something be an opportunity to learn?
