



## ENQUIRY 2

# A FORGOTTEN WAR? UNEARTHING THE VOICES OF BRITISH VETERANS OF THE KOREAN WAR

A two-lesson enquiry by Rachel Steels

### ENQUIRY OUTLINE

#### SUMMARY

These two lessons are designed to introduce students to the fact that the Korean War has become a forgotten war in Britain and to reflect on the reasons for this.

A key element is students hearing the voices of the veterans, but students will also get the chance to use other source material to place these voices into context.

In addition, students will see how learning about the veterans' experiences can make the Korean War a remembered war, and they will engage with the concept of memorialisation.

#### KEY AREAS OF FOCUS

- Why the Korean War is a forgotten war in Britain, using the voices of the veterans and recent scholarship as evidence on this issue.
- Why Korea should not be forgotten.
- How the Korean war has been memorialised in Britain.
- How oral testimony (what veterans choose to share) reflects the concerns of the society at the time they speak and how history is constructed by people living after the events.

#### TARGET AGE RANGE

The lessons are designed for use with Key Stage 3 and fit well within a scheme of work on Conflict in the Twentieth Century, alongside studies of the First or Second World War.

The resources can be used with or without the support and scaffolding that we have provided, depending on the ability level of your students.

#### SCHOLARLY RATIONALE

In recent years, academics have taken more interest in the British experience of the Korean War. For example, Grace Huxford has written books and articles including *The Korean War in Britain: Citizenship, Selfhood and Forgetting* (2018) and appeared on radio programmes about the Cold War: <https://coldwarconversations.com/episode31/>.

Unearthing forgotten voices is of interest to all historians. As Huxford (2016) comments:

*'E. P. Thompson's famous introduction to The Making of the English Working Class (1963), highlighting those previously excluded from the historical narrative, was not just a call to re-orientate the subjects a historian should study, but to actively "rescue" historical subjects – through recording, archiving and cataloguing' (p. 201)*

Rachel Steels is Subject Leader for History in a school in Cumbria. She has a particular interest in the Korean War, especially in the value of the testimony of veterans as a teaching resource.

Huxford argues that the Korean War came at a time when World War II dominated the historical narrative of Britain in 'its finest hour', fighting a morally justified war, alone at times, against an evil enemy that sought to take over its way of life. This war overshadowed Korea, particularly as Britain (with its own Empire-led dominance in decline in the 1950s) was not leading the military campaign but was a junior partner in a UN force.

Moreover, Korea was in a faraway place that few had heard of and was not in a position to threaten invasion of Britain.

The veterans did not feel that they could talk about their experiences, as they felt that their war could not match up to that of their fathers in World War II. The silence of the veterans contributed to the war becoming a forgotten war.

However, from the 1980s, this attitude began to change. According to psychologist Nigel Hunt, veterans' attitudes began to shift when they saw how the veterans of the Falklands War were celebrated. (NB This was a war with a high media profile but far fewer British casualties than Korea – 255 British servicemen were killed.) The Korean veterans wanted to share their own experiences. This change was boosted by the fact that the Falklands War coincided with the retirement (from employment) of many veterans, who now had more time to reflect on their military service and trauma (cited in Huxford, 2016, p. 214).

So, in view of the fact that Korean veterans have become increasingly eager to talk about their experiences, combined with the fact that those still alive are in their late 80s and that next year is the 70th anniversary of the outbreak of the war, now seems a fitting time for students to learn more about this 'forgotten war'.

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## CURRICULAR RATIONALE

These lessons seek to introduce students to how and why certain events and people's experiences are remembered in society. Some events that fit with dominant historical narratives or with national identity are remembered while other events or experiences can remain obscured.

By understanding something of the veterans' military experiences in Korea, students can develop an understanding of this phenomenon and also take part in making Korea not a 'forgotten war' but one that is remembered today.

Through these lessons, students can gain an awareness of concepts such as 'national identity' and some understanding of historiography, particularly:

- how history is constructed
- why some events are selected while others are not
- how selection of what events to study and how to study them changes over time

The new Ofsted framework from September 2019 focuses on curriculum design that provides opportunities for students' moral and cultural development. This topic helps students to consider how Britain has portrayed itself through history and how history reflects cultural attitudes at the time when it is written.

The lessons also allow students to use oral testimonies. They will see how oral histories change.

To start with, veterans did not want to speak about Korea, but more recently they have done so and now want their war to be remembered. What people say about events that they have experienced changes according to the changed context.

Through studying the experience of British soldiers in Korea, students can also understand the substantive concept of 'National Service' and what that meant for people in the 1950s. They can also make links with and compare and contrast soldiers' experiences and the types of fighting in the Korean War with experiences in previous wars, particularly the First and Second World Wars.

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## REFERENCES

- Huxford, G. (2016) 'The Korean War never happened' in *Twentieth Century British History*, 27, no. 2, pp. 195–219.
- Huxford, G. (2017) "'Men of the world" or "uniformed boys"? Hegemonic masculinity in the British Army in the era of the Korean War' in P. Muehlenbeck (ed), *Gender, Sexuality and the Cold War: a global perspective*, Nashville, TN: Vanderbilt University Press, pp. 251–269.
- Huxford, G. (2018) *The Korean War in Britain: citizenship, selfhood and forgetting*, Manchester: Manchester University Press.

## SCHEME OF WORK

### OVERVIEW

The enquiry comprises two lessons. It is envisaged that it would be taught in Year 8 or 9, building on students' study of other wars in the twentieth century.

Lesson	Key content
<b>Lesson 1:</b> Why has the Korean war been called a forgotten war in Britain?	Students consider what veterans say are the reasons why Korea became a forgotten war.  They then look at the work of academic Grace Huxford, and consider her explanations of wider reasons why Korea became a forgotten war.  They then summarise these reasons under different headings and write about which reasons are the most important and why.
<b>Lesson 2:</b> Helping people to remember the Korean War	Students develop an overview of the British soldiers' experience in Korea through veterans' accounts.  (Optionally, they then find out about the nature of warfare, e.g. trench warfare, guerrilla warfare and civilian suffering, and compare this with previous wars.)  Students finally reflect on why Korea should be remembered. Students write a message to appear on or with a Korean War medal. By doing this, they can become active participants in helping to ensure that Korea is not forgotten.  (Optionally, a classroom Korean War memorial can be created – but note that this is a major focus of Enquiry 3, so you won't want to do both.)

### LESSON 2.1 BREAKDOWN: WHY HAS THE KOREAN WAR BEEN CALLED A FORGOTTEN WAR IN BRITAIN?

#### STARTER (SLIDES 1–8)

Show students **Slides 4** and **5**, which lists casualties of some of the conflicts of the twentieth century.

Ask them:

- which wars they know about
- which wars Britain was involved with
- why they know about some wars but not others

If you have not already covered this, then use **Slides 6–8** to give them a brief overview of the Korean War, and explain that they will be learning about this war and will be reflecting on its role in British history.

#### ACTIVITY 1: LISTENING TO THE VOICES OF THE VETERANS (SLIDES 9–10)

**Slide 9** presents a short clip describing what happened when the veterans came home after their war service and what some veterans feel about the war being forgotten.

#### BEFORE YOU START

You will need:

- Lesson PowerPoint 2.1
- Resource sheet 2.1A (Veteran testimony)
- Resource sheet 2.1B (Video recording grid)
- Resource sheet 2.1C (Huxford extracts)

Students then discuss what the clip tells them. Some students might need prompts for what to look for, such as:

- scale of British contribution
- memorial (or lack of it)
- destruction
- experience of veterans
- what it was like to return
- contrasting attitudes of UK and South Korean governments

**Slide 10:** They then read the veterans' testimonies (on Resource sheet 2.1A) about what happened when they returned from Korea, and use the table on page 2 of that sheet to record what the veterans say about why Korea became a forgotten war.

An alternative approach (for stretch and challenge) would be to ask students to use the extracts to test the views expressed in the video clip – how representative are they? Or could the video be simply the views of two particularly unhappy veterans?

Whole-class discussion about what we have learnt so far about why Korea became a forgotten war.

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### ACTIVITY 2: WHO DOES REMEMBER THE KOREAN WAR AND HOW? (SLIDE 11)

**Slide 11** hyperlinks to a clip about Scottish veterans of the Korean War. We recommend using the first 6'30" (up to the point when the presenter asks what Danny would have made of it). However, please watch the whole 12-minute clip yourself to make your own judgement. The video was made by BBC Scotland, tracing the story of one young soldier killed in Korea.

As described on the slide, watch the clip, then discuss what this film tells us about the Korean War. In particular, note that it was not seen as being as important as World War II.

As they watch, students can record what they learn on Resource sheet 2.1B.

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### ACTIVITY 3: THE LONDON KOREAN WAR MEMORIAL (SLIDES 12–13)

Students then consider the memorial set up in London in 2014 to the Korean War. **Slide 12** has just the image. Discuss what they think of it. Then give them more information on **Slide 13** and discuss the memorial, using the prompts on **Slide 13**.

These discussions should lay a helpful foundation for the later tasks on memorialisation.

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### ACTIVITY 4: HISTORIAN GRACE HUXFORD ON KOREA AS A FORGOTTEN WAR (SLIDES 14–15)

Students read the speech bubbles on **Slide 14**. These are extracts from historian Grace Huxford's article in *Twentieth Century British History*, Vol. 27, 'The Korean War never happened: forgetting a conflict in British culture and society'.

Using **Slide 15**, draw out in class discussion what she says about why Korea became a forgotten war.

Then provide students with Resource sheet 2.1C (page 1 includes the same four extracts plus six more). Page 2 provides a recording sheet to analyse these explanations as to why Korea became a forgotten war. Some students could do this without the help of the headings on the Resource sheet.

Students then consider which reasons are linked and decide which is the most important and why. The Resource sheet provides scaffolding if needed.

Whole-class feedback to test their understanding of the main reasons why Korea became a forgotten war.

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### PLENARY (SLIDES 16–17)

Use the quotes on **Slide 16** and the linked clip to explain that veterans today want their voices to be heard. Compare this with their attitude when they came back from Korea. Perhaps refer back to veteran Bill Hall, who said, ‘We waited too long to talk about it and by that time the Korean war was forgotten about.’

Use **Slide 17** to reflect on the fact that, in history, some people only get a voice if others choose to tell their story. For example, in the past, the voices of enslaved Africans were not heard. By learning about the Korean War, students can help to make Korea a remembered rather than a forgotten war.

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## LESSON 2.2 BREAKDOWN: HELPING PEOPLE TO REMEMBER THE KOREAN WAR

### STARTER (SLIDES 1–3)

Students listen to the sound file – the voice of Sir Michael Caine, who fought in Korea while on National Service. Use the first 3’15”.

This clip recaps the last lesson and links to this one. Michael Caine reiterates the ‘forgotten war’ theme but then also vividly describes his experiences.

If you listen through the rest, he then begins his description of the fighting conditions.

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### ACTIVITY 1: BRITISH ARMY EXPERIENCES IN KOREA (SLIDES 4–9)

In groups, students study the pack of ten photographs presented on **Slides 5–9** and on Resource sheet 2.2A. These are photographs (mostly from the collections of the Imperial War Museum), predominantly showing British troops.

You might wish to differentiate this work by selecting particular photographs for particular students to look at.

Students should use these photographs to make some initial judgements about the British experience.

**Slide 4** provides hints on what to look for.

You will need to consider how long you want students to spend on this task, as it could easily fill a lesson in its own right. You may, for example, want to scale back Activity 2 below in order to allow more time to really explore the photographs and even to use them in a presentation.

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### [OPTIONAL] ACTIVITY 2: COMBAT EXPERIENCE IN THE KOREAN WAR (SLIDE 10)

You could now move straight to Activity 3 (that is what we recommend), but if you want to spend more time on the combat experience and on understanding the course of the war and comparing the types of warfare with other twentieth-century wars, then lengthen your scheme of work to allow this activity. It uses two video clips and a timeline. Which pathway you choose will depend on your students’ prior knowledge of the Korean War, the available time and your priorities for your teaching.

**Slide 10:** Students watch a short clip giving an overview of the Korean War and then use a detailed timeline (Resource sheet 2.2B) to reach judgements about the main development and the types of warfare. Hopefully, students will be able to see similarities with World Wars I and II.

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### BEFORE YOU START

You will need:

- Lesson PowerPoint 2.2
- Resource sheet 2.2A (Photo pack)
- Resource sheet 2.2B (Timeline)
- Resource sheet 2.2C (Veteran testimony)
- Resource sheet 2.2D (Plenary)

### ACTIVITY 3: VETERANS' VOICES: WARTIME EXPERIENCES IN KOREA (SLIDE 11)

Students read the veterans' testimonies on Resource sheet 2.2C and use page 2 of the sheet to analyse what the veterans say.

To extend this activity, you can find interesting additional testimonies here:

[www.bbc.co.uk/news/av/uk-48064775/british-korea-war-veteran-remembers-injured-child](http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/av/uk-48064775/british-korea-war-veteran-remembers-injured-child)  
(use 4'30"–8'40")

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=5KMmuTVeLEI&feature=youtu.be](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5KMmuTVeLEI&feature=youtu.be) (use 31'52" – 36'42")

### PLENARY (SLIDE 12)

Use **Slide 12** to prime students to reflect on what they have learnt. They need to choose some aspect of the Korean War that they want people to remember: something they found particularly surprising, moving or shocking, and/or something that might mean this is no longer a 'forgotten war'.

They record their memory on Resource sheet 2.2D on a photo of a UN Korean War medal.

Use these medals to create a classroom Korean War memorial, so that the war is no longer a forgotten war in your class or school at least.

Students then reflect on how their learning about the Korean War has helped them to take an active role in history-making.


## SELECTED LESSON POWERPOINTS

### LESSON 2.1

## Enquiry 2


### A forgotten war?

## Unearthing the voices of British veterans of the Korean War



Exploring and Teaching the Korean War | Lesson 2.1

1



## Lesson 2.1 Overview

Lesson 2.1


Why has the Korean war been called a forgotten war in Britain?

**Content covered in the lesson:**

- Wars in the twentieth century
- How did the Korean War start?
- What happened in Korea 1950–53?
- Britain's involvement in Korea
- How has the war been remembered?
- What do historians say about why the war has been forgotten?

Exploring and Teaching the Korean War | Lesson 2.1


3



## Wars in the twentieth century


The twentieth century was a time of huge conflict and major wars.

- Which twentieth-century wars do you know about?
- Which twentieth-century wars did Britain take part in?



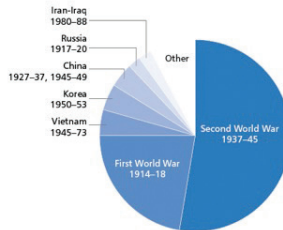
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4



## Wars in the twentieth century


War	Dates	Approximate military deaths
Second World War	1939–1945	20,000,000
First World War	1914–1918	8,500,000
Korean War	1950–1953	1,200,000
Chinese Civil War	1945–1949	1,200,000
Vietnam War	1963–1973	1,200,000
Iran–Iraq War	1980–1988	850,000
Russian Civil War	1918–1921	800,000
Chinese Civil War	1927–1937	400,000



1. Which of these wars do you know about?
2. Which of these wars was Britain involved in?

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5



**LESSON 2.1 (continued)**

### How has the Korean War been remembered in Britain?



Exploring and Teaching the Korean War | Lesson 2.1 9

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### What do British veterans say about the Korean War?

Read what the veterans say on Resource sheet 2.1A.  
Fill in the table about your findings.



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### Who does remember the Korean War and how?

This is a clip about Scottish veterans of the Korean War: It was made in 2010 to mark the sixtieth anniversary of the Korean War. The main focus is on the story and the relatives of a veteran, Danny McCafferty, who was killed in Korea.

As you watch the clip, on Resource sheet 2.1B record what you learn about:

- Danny McCafferty
- The experiences of the veterans
- Attitudes to the veterans in South Korea
- Whether the war is forgotten in South Korea
- Any other aspects of the war



Exploring and Teaching the Korean War | Lesson 2.1 11

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### The Korean War Memorial in London



Exploring and Teaching the Korean War | Lesson 2.1 12


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### How should we view the Korean War Memorial?

In 2014, a £1 million memorial was built to the soldiers who died in the Korean War. It is between the Thames and the Ministry of Defence in London, which is already the site of other military tributes. It was paid for by the South Korean government, and by Korean companies and Koreans living in Britain.

How should we view this monument? As:

- a fitting tribute that should make all veterans happy?
- a reasonable start?
- too little, too late?
- something that should make the British government feel ashamed?



Exploring and Teaching the Korean War | Lesson 2.1 13

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### What do historians say about why the Korean War has become forgotten?

The Korean War was largely viewed as a distant war on a little-known peninsula

The Second World War continued to exert a powerful grasp over national memory for the remainder of the century.

The Korean War could not be used to support [a] notion of national identity. Rather than an 'underdog triumphing over unquestionable 'evil', Britain had been a junior partner in a conflict whose aims, methods and outcomes had been at best unclear

In the early 1950s the image of the Second World War was solidifying as a morally unimpeachable conflict, where Britain had 'stood alone' in 1940 and eventually conquered tyranny



Dr Grace Huxford

Exploring and Teaching the Korean War | Lesson 2.1 14

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### Reasons why Korea has become a 'forgotten war'

Read Huxford's comments on Resource sheet 2.1C.

1. In what ways do they back up what we already know about why Korea became a forgotten war?
2. What new reasons does she suggest?
3. Sort the cards into different headings.
4. Write an explanation in your own words under different headings.
5. Which reason(s) are linked ?
6. Which reason(s) are more important than others?

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### Veterans now want the war to be remembered

Hopefully somewhere down the line somebody will listen to this

The government may have locked their records away but mine are staring me in the face. I can't forget the madness which savaged more people in three years than Vietnam did in ten

Kevin Conwell, Durham Light Infantry in 2010

Raymond Bennett, Royal Leicester Regiment in 2010

It's nice to know it's down on record for future generations... It shows somebody cares...

David Halley, veteran, speaking in 1998

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## LESSON 2.1 (continued)

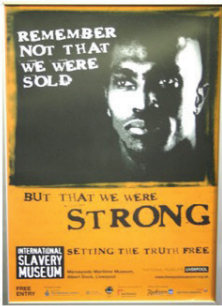
### Unearthing hidden voices

**Plenary**

History is about listening to people from the past. But sometimes people can only have a voice if we give them a voice.

Whose forgotten voices have we learnt about today?

*A poster for the International Slavery Museum, National Museums, Liverpool*



Exploring and Teaching the Korean War | Lesson 2.1 17

## LESSON 2.2

### Enquiry overview: A forgotten war? Unearthing the voices of British veterans of the Korean War

Lesson 2.1

Why has the Korean war been called a forgotten war in Britain?


Lesson 2.2

Helping people to remember the Korean War


Exploring and Teaching the Korean War | Lesson 2.2 1

### Recap

Listen to what Sir Michael Caine says:



MICHAEL CAINE



How does he back up what we already know about Korea?  
What does he say about his experiences as a soldier?

Exploring and Teaching the Korean War | Lesson 2.2 3

### Initial impressions of the British soldiers' experience in Korea

Use the photographs in your Source bank (Slides 5–9 or Resource sheet 2.2A) to gather impressions of the war in Korea. Consider:

- Terrain
- Climate
- Types of warfare
- The Chinese Army
- How the war affected Korean civilians, including children




*1st Battalion The Black Watch pose for the camera before going out on patrol.*


Exploring and Teaching the Korean War | Lesson 2.2 4

### SOURCE BANK

**Source A**  
*Private Frank Holden of the 1st Battalion, The King's (Liverpool) Regiment, cleaning his Browning machine gun in Korea.*




**Source B**  
*Men of the 1st Battalion, The Royal Ulster Rifles in 'Happy Valley', north of Seoul, just before the Chinese attack of 2 January 1951.*




Exploring and Teaching the Korean War | Lesson 2.2 5

### SOURCE BANK

**Source C**  
*A British soldier talks with Korean children.*




**Source D**  
*The King's Own Scottish Borderers during an intensive bombardment of Chinese-held hills. Left to right: Lance Corporal Bill Hunter; Private Jim Beveridge; and Private Tony Donaldson.*



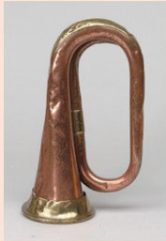
Exploring and Teaching the Korean War | Lesson 2.2 6

### SOURCE BANK

**Source E**  
*The King's Own Scottish Borderers: Lance Corporal John Private John Dunbar, Private John Devine (with rifle) and Lance Corporal Ted Atbutnott watch for enemy movement across the valley.*



**Source F**  
*A means of communication used by the Chinese fighters.*




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LESSON 2.1 (continued)

**SOURCE BANK**




**Source G**  
Korean families made homeless and fleeing the fighting.



**Source H**  
American bombers in action.




Exploring and Teaching the Korean War | Lesson 2.2 8






**SOURCE BANK**




**Source I**  
American bombs falling on Wonsan in North Korea.



**Source J**  
Member of the Royal Ulster Rifles digging a trench in Korea.



Exploring and Teaching the Korean War | Lesson 2.2 9

### Timeline of the Korean War 1950–53

- This brutal three-year war left millions of North and South Koreans dead, and over 100,000 casualties for the United Nations forces involved.
- British casualties were high: 1,078 killed in action, 2,674 wounded and 1,060 missing or taken prisoner.
- Estimates suggest that at least two million North and South Korean civilians died and at least 50,000 children became orphans.



Watch this clip and then complete the timeline activity on Resource sheet 2.2B.

Exploring and Teaching the Korean War | Lesson 2.2 10






### What the veterans say about the fighting




Gather evidence from the veterans' testimonies on Resource sheet 2.2C about:

- What it was like fighting in Korea
- Trench warfare
- What the soldiers say about the effects of the war on the Korean people and the cities in Korea
- The Chinese Army

Then use all the evidence to complete your overview of the British soldiers' experience in Korea.




Exploring and Teaching the Korean War | Lesson 2.2 11

### Korea does not have to be a 'forgotten war' and you can help

On your own copy of the United Nations Korea medal (Resource sheet 2.2D), write something that you remember about the Korean War – for example, something that has surprised you, shocked you or moved you.



Exploring and Teaching the Korean War | Lesson 2.2 12

