A TEACHER’S GUIDE TO

ESCAPE FROM CAMP 14
BY BLAINE HARDEN

BY MICHAEL BROCK
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ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

Blaine Harden is a contributor to PBS Frontline and The Economist, and has served as The Washington Post’s bureau chief in East Asia, Eastern Europe, and Africa. He has also been a local and national correspondent for The New York Times, and a writer for the Times Magazine. In addition to Escape from Camp 14, Harden is also the author of Africa: Dispatches from a Fragile Continent and A River Lost: The Life and Death of the Columbia. He has been a recipient of the Ernie Pyle Award for his coverage of the siege of Sarajevo during the Bosnian War; the American Society of Newspaper Editors Award for Nondeadline Writing and the Livingston Award for International Reporting for his stories on Africa; and France’s Le Grand Prix de la biographie politique for Escape from Camp 14.

You can visit Blaine Harden at http://www.blaineharden.com.

ABOUT THE BOOK

North Korea is isolated and hungry, bankrupt and belligerent. It is also armed with nuclear weapons. Between 150,000 and 200,000 people are being held in its political prison camps, which have existed twice as long as Stalin’s Soviet gulags and twelve times as long as the Nazi concentration camps. Very few born and raised in these camps have escaped. But Shin Dong-hyuk did.

In Escape from Camp 14, acclaimed journalist Blaine Harden tells the story of Shin Dong-hyuk and through the lens of Shin’s life unlocks the secrets of the world’s most repressive totalitarian state. Shin knew nothing of civilized existence—he saw his mother as a competitor for food, guards raised him to be a snitch, and he witnessed the execution of his own family. Through Harden’s harrowing narrative of Shin’s life and remarkable escape, he offers an unequalled inside account of one of the world’s darkest nations and a riveting tale of endurance, courage, and survival.

Escape from Camp 14 is recommended for High School / Adult readers by School Library Journal.

Q & A WITH BLAINE HARDEN

1) First and foremost, what has telling this story meant to you, particularly since it is so unique and was so difficult for Shin to tell?

A: Telling this story has been the most satisfying experience of my life. I wanted readers to understand, in an unforgettable way, the terrible things that continue to go on inside North Korea. Shin’s story does exactly that. As a writer, I did not have to tap dance and entertain; I only needed to be clear and provide context. The drama of Shin’s suffering, his betrayal of his own mother, and his improbable escape do the rest, enticing readers to step inside a secret prison and witness a human rights catastrophe.

2) It seems clear that while you wanted the world to know the extent of the atrocities that the North Korean state is perpetrating on its own citizens, your priority was to make sure Shin’s story was foremost in the reader’s mind. What challenges did you face during the writing process in this regard?

A: Yes, Shin’s story is the key. It unlocks North Korea. The biggest challenge in getting the story was Shin. He didn’t trust me. He didn’t want to talk about the darkest corners of his past. He had lied for years to hide his betrayal of his family, and I did not know that he lied. My tools were patience and persistence. When he didn’t want to talk, I accepted it. When he
was willing to talk, I kept pressing him to go deeper. Over time, he came to realize that this book might be able to help him put international pressure on North Korea to close the camps. Closing the camps is what he wants most. So he decided to tell the truth about betraying his family. He wants readers to understand that in the labor camps North Korea continues to breed, brainwash and enslave “mean” children like him.

3) Verification is, of course, the great challenge for any journalist, and this story presents particular problems in that regard. What advice do you have for students who are often challenged to determine if their evidence is valid?

A: If a story seems too crazy to be true, it very often is. That’s my experience and my advice to students. Shin’s story certainly strains credulity, and I worried about trusting him. But there are now 60 other camp survivors who have told stories that are quite similar to Shin’s. There are high resolution satellite images of Camp 14 to study and they show a place that is geographically consistent with the story Shin tells. Shin’s body is covered with ghastly scars that support his story. Unlike most journalism, Shin’s story is physically uncheckable, in as much as I cannot go to Camp 14 and check it out. North Korea keeps outsiders away and officially denies that the camp exists, although it appears on my smart phone.

4) What would you advise aspiring young journalists to take away from their reading of *Escape from Camp 14*—how does it embody what it means to make a career in that profession?

A: If you find a powerful human story that explains an important social issue, drop everything and learn all you can about that human being. People say they are interested in issues, but most aren’t; they are interested in stories about other people. Use that rule—and tell great stories that are amazing to read.

5) As the book is increasingly being incorporated into curriculums in high schools around the country, what message would you pass along to educators who are using the book in their classes?

A: I would urge teachers to ask students, as they read the book, to put themselves in Shin’s shoes: What choices would you make? Given a life of chronic hunger and a history of being beaten by your own mother, would you betray her and your brother to save your life? To escape a stinking camp that is working you to death, would you have the courage to risk death on an electric fence? Once free, would you work for the rest of your life to try to free friends still in Camp 14?

6) While world leaders wrestle with the problem of how best to deal with North Korea’s human rights violations, what, in your view, is the course of action that you would like individuals (and young people in particular) to take on behalf of North Koreans like Shin?

A: This is the hardest question to answer. North Korea does not respond to good intentions or moral outrage. Military intervention is not an option because of the likelihood that many thousands of South Koreans would be killed in a North Korean counter-attack. So the best we can do is become aware of the human rights abuses there and raise our collective voices so that our government puts constant economic and political pressure on North Korea—and its patron, China—to close the camps. This is not a satisfactory answer, but it’s all I’ve got.

7) What are your hopes for Shin Dong-hyuk in the future?

A: I have seen that Shin, with each passing year, is doing better than ever. The world’s response to his story has validated his suffering and made him feel that his life has meaning. When we were working on this book, he told me that guards in Camp 14 had always told him that he was human garbage—and he had always believed them. Now, he knows that the guards lied. There is a lightness in his step that was not there before. He says he is still learning how to be a human being. In my view, he has come a very long way.
CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS: READING, WRITING, AND RESEARCHING

PRE-READING ACTIVITY

As a pre-reading activity, have students complete an anticipation guide structured in the following manner:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Before Reading</th>
<th>After Reading</th>
<th>Statements</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>It is impossible for an individual to overcome brutalization if it is all they have ever known.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>When deprived of even the essentials life, issues of morality should be put aside for the sake of survival.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Losing some individual freedom is acceptable if it benefits the community or society as a whole.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>The policies a state places upon its citizens are an internal affair, and should be of little concern to the international community.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>If members of an oppressed society could have the opportunity to live in freedom and affluence, their troubles would largely be over.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>A civilized society would ensure that its functions never allow a child to be harmed intentionally.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Instruct students to complete the guide by placing a “+” sign in the box next to the statements for which they agree, and a “0” next to those for which they disagree. They must commit to agreement or disagreement. There are no conditional responses. Students should be assured that there are no correct or incorrect positions.

- Once students have had the opportunity to complete the guide, the teacher reads each statement aloud and has students who agree show it by standing or raising their hands. Each student should be permitted to provide their rationale for agreeing or not agreeing.

- The process is repeated after reading the text(s), with students being given the opportunity to provide their rationales for keeping or changing their positions.

- This activity can be effectively coupled with a KWHL chart for the authoritarian regime in North Korea.

EXPLORING ESCAPE FROM CAMP 14 THROUGH WRITING AND RESEARCH

The following questions may be utilized throughout the book study as reflective writing prompts or alternatively, they can be used as targeted questions for class discussion and reflection.

- Review the book’s subtitle, *One Man’s Remarkable Odyssey from North Korea to Freedom in the West*, and consider the wording carefully. To what extent does this phrasing serve as an accurate summation of the book?

- Review the quote on the insheet from the Korean Central News Agency in Pyongyang in 2009. What are your impressions of it now that you have read the book, and what do you think was Harden’s purpose in including it there?

- Reflect for a bit on the book’s opening chapters, which recount many of Shin’s earliest memories. How do you perceive those experiences having played a part not only in the man Shin has become, but also in how he came through life in Camp 14, his escape to China, and his flight to the west?

- Based on what you read in *Escape from Camp 14*, how would you characterize the concept of “family” for North Koreans in the state gulag system? For North Koreans in general? Bear in mind that historically the family unit is the building block of stable societies in East Asia, so how do you assess the ruling Kim family regime’s policies in this regard?

- “In the North Korean political prison camps, the guards are jailed as much as the prisoners themselves.” To what extent do you agree with this statement? Cite evidence from the book to support your assessment.

- What is your point of view on the role that education plays in a society? What, then, do you derive as the consequences for North Korea of its approach to educating its citizens? What do you surmise is the future role of North Koreans like Shin, who were born into political imprisonment?

- Shin eventually learns that his status as a political prisoner stems from the defection of an uncle from the North Korean Army in the chaos of the Korean War of 1950-53. We may infer that many of North Korea’s other political prisoners are incarcerated due to similar kinds of circumstantial evidence. Analyze how the successive regimes of Kim Il Sung, Kim Jong II, and Kim Jong Un were able to establish this type of system and then maintain it without greater civil unrest.

- Shin is finally able to build a somewhat meaningful relationship in the camp during his interrogation and torture in the underground prison, where he shares a tiny cell with “Uncle”. Why do you think their relationship is more productive than those he held outside the underground prison with classmates, or teachers, or even his parents and his brother?

- Quite understandably, food is perpetually at the center of Shin’s thinking while in Camp 14, and while working his way to and through China. It is notable that it remains at the heart of his activities even once he reaches the plentiful food supplies of South Korea and the United States. Compare and contrast the role that food plays in the two halves of Shin’s life: the first while he is imprisoned, and the second once he becomes free.

- “So began a monthlong one-on-one seminar that would forever change Shin’s life.” (p. 100) In your own words, explain how Park Yong Chul made Shin’s physical, mental, and emotional escape from Camp 14 possible, and how it in some ways fell short in doing so.

- Consider the first part of Shin’s journey to freedom, from breaking out of Camp 14 to reaching the border with China. It would seem that the state did not initiate much of a manhunt, and that locals in the areas he passed through weren’t particularly wary of an escaped prisoner. What are we to make of that?
Using textual examples, what are some of the specific ways that prisoners in Camp 14 fought back against the North Korean state? How about North Koreans not in the political prisoner camps? To what extent are these acts of resistance effective?

From his first steps beyond the electrified fence beyond Camp 14 through his work as a human rights activist in the United States and South Korea, what evidence from the text might you use to support an argument that Shin doesn’t completely escape being a political prisoner? Why would you, or would you not, support such an argument?

Do you think that Shin’s escape into China would have successfully avoided a deportation back to North Korea without the presence of ethnic Koreans in Jilin Province? Explain your response.

While the text leaves no questions regarding what is done to Shin in Camp 14, we might consider that it isn’t clear what growing up in Camp 14 has done to Shin until he reaches China. Discuss for a bit how his time moving through China illuminates how life out of the Camp—a life of freedom—is going to be difficult for Shin moving forward.

What do you make of the transition programs that the government in South Korea has established for North Korean defectors, such as the Hanawon resettlement center and the stipends and training provided to those who have escaped? Based on your reading of Shin’s experiences, what praise or critiques would you offer for them? Answer the same questions for non-profit groups who work with North Korean defectors, such as U.S.-based Liberty in North Korea (LiNK).

In consideration of the last two questions, note that Lee Yong-koo, a team leader at the Database Center for North Korean Human Rights in Seoul, noted that “compared to other defectors, [Shin] was a fast learner and highly adaptable to culture shock.” Does this impression fit your positions or comments in the previous two discussion questions? If Yong’s assessment is accurate, what do you think this means for more typical North Korean escapees?

Why does Shin struggle so mightily with taking on what he considers his calling for the future, as an advocate in the fight for human rights in North Korea?

The event that more than any other defines the book is the execution of Shin’s mother and brother, and his role in it. The moral crisis it creates for Shin is elaborated well by Harden. Discuss for a bit the moral crisis that it creates for international leaders, human rights activists, and for us, the readers.

Using the phrase, “This is a story about…” supply five words to describe Escape from Camp 14. Explain your choices.

If you could make one statement to the following people after reading Escape from Camp 14, what would it be?

- Shin Dong-hyuk
- Blaine Harden
- North Korean Supreme Leader Kim Jong Un
- World leaders such as President Barack Obama and U.N. Secretary General Ban Ki Moon
- President Xi Jinping of China, North Korea’s primary ally
- Human rights activists in groups like Liberty in North Korea

EXTENDED WRITING PROMPTS

- In 1905, Mark Twain wrote a pamphlet entitled “King Leopold’s Soliloquy,” a satirical piece in which Twain wrote in the voice of Belgium’s King Leopold II futilely attempting to defend the indefensible, the horrific, genocidal abuses in the Congo Free State. The pamphlet was very effective in the U.S., where readers had little sympathy for a European monarch and thus came to look upon the issue in a new light. Assuming the mantle of Kim Jong Un, have students compose a similar piece in an effort to explain to readers the situation in North Korea from the perspective of a brutal authoritarian dictator. It may be helpful to review passages from “King Leopold’s Soliloquy” to get a sense of the tone, and links to the pamphlet online are provided in the “Teacher Resources” section.


- Shin Dong-hyuk’s story is one of powerful resiliency of the human spirit in the face of utter hopelessness and misery. Encourage students to explore some of the characteristics of that spirit as they were exhibited by Shin in *Escape from Camp 14*: strength, survival, endurance, compassion, perseverance, will, and so forth. Use free online multimedia expression tools such as Glogster (www.glogster.com), Storify (http://storify.com/), or Urturn (http://www.urturn.com/) to create digital promotions of these characteristics. Each product should include the following (choose one trait):
  - The trait being promoted, and the dictionary definition of the word
  - Events in Shin’s life or actions that he undertook that are indicative of the trait
  - Imagery that connects the trait to Shin’s actions (i.e., a visual, audio, or animated “clue” that viewers would immediately connect to the trait and to an event in the book)
  - Similar imagery and descriptions related to how these traits could play a role in overcoming challenges faced by others in the world now. Encourage students to think personally, locally, nationally, and globally in coming up with these items.
  - A summative statement or slogan of a sentence or two that is worded to inspire viewers to strive to embody the attributes of the trait.


- Shin Dong-hyuk’s story paradoxically is one in which guidance and mentorship were sorely lacking, and yet at very key moments a voice of direction or guiding hand was available to him. Instruct students to develop a chart or write an essay in which they analyze and critique the roles that guiding or mentor figures play in Shin’s life in Camp 14, during his escape, and through his journey to freedom in the West. People you might consider are:
  - Shin’s mother and father
  - Teachers in Camp 14
  - “Uncle”
  - Park Yong Chul
  - Pig farmer in Jinlin Province, China
  - Relief & aid agencies in South Korea & the United States
  - Kyung Soon Chung
  - Harim Lee
  - Lowell & Linda Dye
  - Blaine Harden

In the Introduction to *Escape from Camp 14*, Harden references Holocaust survivor and Nobel Laureate Elie Wiesel, the author of *Night*. He then sets up a juxta-position between two experiences in the bondage of the state over a half-century apart and half a world away. Consider these writing opportunities in which students can utilize this reference:

- As many students who will read *Escape from Camp 14* possibly have already read *Night*, assign a comparative essay or project in which individual students or student groups compare the camp experiences for victims of the Nazi German and North Korean states, their effects on the innocence of children, and the role they played in shaping the future for the survivors. Impress upon students that the objective is not to determine whose experience was “worse,” or “harder,” or “more damaging”. Instead it is to focus on similarities and distinctions between being arrested and thrown into a camp as a child, and being born into one (refer to the second paragraph on page 4 to allow the text to make the point).

- Provide students this quote from Hannah Arendt’s 1948 essay “The Concentration Camps”. Assign students to write a critical analysis of the quote using *Escape from Camp 14* as the basis for their arguments.

> “[All forms of concentration camps] have one thing in common: the human masses sealed off in them are treated as if they no longer existed, as if what happened to them were no longer of any interest to anybody, as if they were already dead and some evil spirit gone mad were amusing himself by stopping them for awhile between life and death before admitting them to eternal peace.”


- One of the most diabolical elements of the North Korean political prison system is the value it encourages both prisoners and guards to place on seeing out and reporting transgressions committed by others in the camp. The text indicates that things went easier on those that informed, and Shin was no exception. Of course, Shin’s story also reveals the corruption of values and the guilt that this practice yields. Write a persuasive essay in which you argue for or against the practice of informing in the camp dynamic. Consider the experiences of those who both participated in the practice and did not, and use textual evidence to provide specific examples to support your case.


- Much of what we know of the situation on the ground in North Korea comes from the intrepid work of journalists like Blaine Harden, who take great risks to bring stories from oppressive states like North Korea. The objective of the journalist in writing a story is quite different from that of a novelist, a poet, or an historian, and as
such his writing approach also must be different. Consider these activities that encourage students to consider the journalistic writing process:

- Have students choose sections of the book that are particularly narrative, and attempt to rewrite them in a more creative fashion. Encourage them to first think about the objective of their revision, whether it be to evoke a particular emotion in the reader, or to develop a character, and so forth. Have them share their work with classmates in pairs, trios, or quads, and discuss the challenges involved with writing more creatively, and what was lost or gained in the text by doing so.

- In addition to Escape from Camp 14, Shin Dong-hyuk's story has also been prominently highlighted in stories broadcast on 60 Minutes and on CNN (see links in “Teacher Resources” section). Have students compare how a story prepared for broadcast journalism must be prepared and reported differently than a piece done for a newspaper, magazine, or book. Additionally, encourage them to discuss what is gained or lost in a story done for TV rather than text. Was there anything they learned from the broadcasts that they did not come away with after reading Escape from Camp 14? Was there anything that they felt they understood better in the television pieces thanks to having read Escape from Camp 14? Why aren't both approaches able to tell the story in the same fashion?


Consider the challenge that Shin Dong-hyuk has now made his life's commitment: to advocate for human rights in North Korea to the international community by speaking publicly about unspeakable atrocities that filled his young life. Have students take on the challenge of speaking to classmates, school officials, or community members about what they have learned from Escape from Camp 14 through one of the activities below. Consider differentiating these opportunities to give less experienced, more reticent students the tasks that require a more erudite approach, while assigning more outgoing students the longer speaking tasks:

- **Introductory Speeches:** individual students or student pairs are required to write and present two to four minute speeches that introduce the book, Shin, and/or why the book is important to their world. The emphasis should be on familiarizing the audience with the text and piquing their interest.

- **Elevator Speeches:** individual students have thirty seconds to two minutes to briefly tell an audience the essentials about North Korea, the dynastic dictatorship of the Kim family, the regime of Kim Jong Un, the political prison system, North Korea's role as a pariah state in the world, and so on. Again, these speeches should focus on providing the most critical information possible in a short period of time, and on inspiring questions from the audience.

- **Panel Discussion:** a group of students is assigned to answer questions about Escape from Camp 14, Shin Dong-hyuk, and North Korea from the audience for an extended period of time (fifteen min. to as much as an hour, depending on the audience's questions). While these students cannot be required to have prepared their presentations in advance, they must be familiar with all facets of the topic and be able to interact well...
with both the audience and each other. Their goal is to quickly develop reasoned responses, and be able to support or defend those responses based on the evidence available prior to the discussion.

- **Moving-Forward Speeches:** pairs or trios of students are assigned to develop short speeches of five to seven minutes in which they inform the audience of avenues of activism for human rights in North Korea, and how the school or the community can get involved. Their presentations should be informative, but also persuasive.

While these activities could be modified to be conducted within a class or in clusters of classes, strongly consider working with school officials to do this with a larger portion of the school, with parents, and with community members over part or half of the school day.


**INTERDISCIPLINARY INVESTIGATIONS**

- In Social Studies classes, consider the great challenge that North Korea poses from a historiographical or econometric standpoint. Harden makes clear that we ought to put little stock in the information coming from the regime in Pyongyang. Conversely, North Korea states adamantly to its own people and to the world that much of what is reported about the country is vindictive and false Western or South Korean propaganda. Research how similar stories, such as the famine in the early-to-mid 1990s, or North Korea’s economic production or nuclear program, or reports of the political prison camps, are reported on both sides. Focus on their sources of evidence and their reactions or rebuttals of criticism from the other side. Discuss both how this affects the perception of North Korea that the world has today, as well as how it may affect how historians may perceive it in the future. As an added challenge, students may consider carrying out the same process for the former Soviet Union or the People’s Republic of China: countries that, like North Korea, tightly controlled information, but whose status as world powers made their public image more of an issue.

- In Social Studies classes, investigate some of the historical context of the totalitarian North Korean state described in the text. Present these to the class. Topics would include:
  - Division of Korea after World War II
  - Korea’s Civil War, 1950-53
  - North/South Relations in Korea since 1953
  - North/South Relations with the Superpowers since 1953
  - Militarization in North Korea
  - The Nuclear Program in North Korea
  - Comparing Pyongyang & Seoul
  - The Famine of the 1990s

- In social studies classes, assign students to research the roles of international organizations, activist groups, and faith-based organizations who focus their efforts on human rights issues, monitoring or ending state oppression, disaster relief, and the like, in North Korea. Assign students to represent the interests of these organizations and advocate to a mock UN General Assembly or UN Security Council comprised of other teachers for their particular cause. To add to the challenge, assign some groups to advocate for the governments of states of interest, such as North Korea itself, South Korea, the US, China, Japan, and Russia.
In social studies classes, carefully consider Harden’s assessment of South Korean attitudes toward reunification of the Korean Peninsula in Chapter 22. Assign students to research the challenges faced by Germany when west and east were reunified in 1990, including how the country went about overcoming these challenges and the extent to which they were successful or not. Compare and contrast this to a potential reunification of the two Koreas. To extend the comparative process, consider relating Germany and Korea to the unification of Italy in the 19th Century, or the process of Reconstruction for the United States after the Civil War. Also, consider comparing to the reverse process: the break-up of the former Yugoslavia, or the Soviet Union, or the Austro-Hungarian Empire after World War I.

In social studies classes, refer to Harden’s brief discussion of instances of kidnapping perpetrated by North Korean agents on Japanese citizens in particular. The North Korean government has admitted to thirteen of the kidnappings, and monitoring agencies are reporting increases in the kidnapping of civilians from northeastern China, particularly of ethnic Koreans. The practice reached a greater profile in the United States when college student David Sneddon disappeared in China, and Japanese government officials publicly stated that based on their evidence, he had likely been kidnapped and taken to North Korea. Have student groups research this issue, and in particular why there hasn’t been more of an international response to North Korea’s actions.

In mathematics classes, consider that due to the state’s resistance to revealing accurate information regarding the situation, much of what we “know” about North Korea is based on projections and probability models. Investigate how some of these approaches are utilized, such as how climate & geographical data, historical experience, government reports, international organization reports, and word of mouth from North Korean defectors or informants can be utilized to come to a relatively reliable understanding of the country. Encourage students to work through some of this problem-solving utilizing the knowledge and skills they have learned in your class. As much as possible, encourage students to relate these applications to events in the text.

In biology or physiology classes, research the issue of malnutrition in North Korea and both its short-term and long-term effects. Harden discusses how North Koreans are substantially shorter and underweight compared to South Koreans or Japanese, and he briefly mentions the effect this may have on factors such as cognitive performance. Have student groups develop presentations on the relationship between malnutrition and development, and on the distinction between North Korea and its more affluent neighbors in East Asia.

In physical science classes, have students apply their learning in nuclear chemistry and physics to North Korea’s development of a nuclear program. This could involve an investigation of the resources needed to develop nuclear assets and how North Korea procures them, the effect that the program has on other aspects of North Korean applied science (such as health care, engineering, or agriculture), and some of the ethical questions that scientists are confronted with when their work is driven by the objectives of a guiding entity (such as the state, or corporate interests, or external crises and disasters).

In geography and environmental science classes, research the challenges involved with food production on the Korean Peninsula, and investigate the causes and potential solutions that could be implemented to avert future famines. Similar approaches could be used for topics such as energy production, human migration, or urbanization patterns.

In art classes, research modes of expression by artists in circumstances of imprisonment
or exile. There are substantial resources involving art from the concentration camps of the Holocaust and from the Soviet gulag system, but consider also looking at works by prisoners of war in any number of conflicts, refugees, art from civil resistance movements, and the like. Are there common styles, methods of expression, or thematic principles for artists in these circumstances?

** Correlates to Common Core Standard Writing: Research to Build and Present Knowledge W. 9-11-4, 11-12.4.

**MAKING THEMATIC CONNECTIONS**

Underlying virtually every aspect of Shin Dong-hyuk’s story is the theme of food. Pursue these activities to encourage students to understand the role that food can play in the life of someone in a situation as Shin’s was, and in the lives of those who are able to rise above it:

- At varying points in the book, food is metaphorical for Shin’s physical, mental, emotional, and even spiritual state. Have students consider some of the things food symbolizes at different points in the story: survival, satiation, privilege, opportunity, guilt, pleasure, hope, contentment, fantasy, indulgence, affluence, labor, socializing, and so on. Assign student groups to develop presentations that focus on one of these themes in *Escape from Camp 14*, utilizing food as a metaphor for events in the text. If resources allow it, encourage students to utilize multimedia resources to develop short videos or web-based presentations. Emphasize that they are to explore the way that food does more than just provide nutrition and sustenance. As an added challenge, assign students to incorporate both parallels and juxtapositions to the way that food embodies their theme in other circumstances or other parts of the world.

- For much of the narrative in *Escape from Camp 14*, food is also an embodiment of crisis. The hardships and the struggle to simply survive faced by prisoners such as Shin were felt daily by millions of North Koreans during the famine of the 1990s, and continue to press upon many to the present. For Shin, grilled meat was at one point the stuff of dreams, and later was the height of luxury—alternatively, many around the world would consider this a part of everyday eating, while others would refuse to eat it at all. Assign student groups to investigate and develop responses to the following questions. These could easily serve as prompts for a free-response essay, but consider utilizing them for the development of presentations, in-class panel discussions or debates:

  - How do severe food shortages or famines alter the normal function of societies enduring them?
  - What is the role of the authority structure in a food crisis? What are the consequences if that structure fails to fulfill that role, and how does North Korea serve as either an embodiment or an exception to your assessment?
  - How is the role that food plays in daily life and social activity different in societies that suffer food shortages compared to those that enjoy an abundance?
  - Assess the use of food supplies as a diplomatic tool, particularly in regard to North Korea. Assess the ethical and moral consequences of this for both states lacking adequate food supplies and those who can provide relief?
  - Food regulation is a topic that is widely debated around the world today, with concerns ranging from sustainability and environmental protection, to nutritional and health/lifestyle issues, to economic considerations. What are the challenges this process presents locally, nationally, and internationally?
To what extent does the abundance and availability of food drive lifestyle choices in societies around the world? Consider patterns such as faith or culturally-based restrictions on food consumption, food taboos, vegetarian/vegan lifestyles, cooking methods, trends in food science, fad diets, food promotion and marketing, food choices driven by disease or allergy issues, and the like.

Harden mentions at one point that as a prisoner in Camp 14, Shin had never eaten rice, and that during the famine of the 1990s millions of North Koreans had been forced to go without the staple of their diet. While our multicultural, food-affluent society in the United States means that we don’t often consider a particular food a staple, most societies around the world have developed a “food culture” in which one or a few very essential items are at the center of virtually every meal that is eaten.

Assign student groups to research the role of rice as a staple food in Korean culture specifically, and in Asian cultures in general. Their focus should be on how rice has become the staple food, and how it comes to define social & cultural activities in these societies.

Next, have groups compare the role of rice as a dietary staple to others around the world (breads in the Mediterranean world, meat and dairy on the African savannas and Eurasian steppes, corn in North & Central America, etc.). Are they able to discern patterns in what makes a particular food a staple for a society? To what extent is this driven by necessity or crisis?

Finally, have groups investigate the effects on societies when a staple crop is threatened or is unavailable altogether. Circumstances of widespread famine will obviously be the place to start, but encourage students to try to find instances of short-term shortages of the most vital crops for a society (such as after wars or natural disasters). How are social and cultural processes disrupted in these instances? Does the same process affect societies who don’t rely so heavily on a dietary staple?

**Correlates to Common Core Standard Writing: Research to Build and Present Knowledge W. 9-1-.4, 11-12.4.

Consider the following themes in *Escape from Camp 14*: survival, courage, individualism, family, friendship, strength, anxiety, guilt, will, injustice, hope, dignity, and perseverance. Select one of the themes (or another in the text) and find examples from the book that help support this theme. Create a sample Life Lesson Chart using the model at: http://www.readwritethink.org/lesson_images/lesson826/chart.pdf.

**Correlates to Common Core Standard Reading Literature: Key Ideas and Details R.L. 9-10.2, 11-12.2

**MAKING MEANING BY EXPLORING SETTING**

**Korea between Two Giants:** Korea has historically had to strike an uneasy balance with its neighbors, China and Japan, at times when one or both have been among the region’s great powers. Though this interaction has resulted in distinct examples of cultural adaptation and diffusion, Koreans are traditionally perceived as being fiercely protective of their own culture. Investigate some aspects of Korea’s culture and its historical interactions, paying particular attention to causes and effects when the peninsula has either fully controlled its own affairs, or was dominated by greater powers nearby.

**One People, Two Countries:** have the northern and southern halves of the Korean Peninsula always been as different as they are portrayed in *Escape from Camp 14*? Have students examine maps of various themes of Korea over time, focusing on physical geography and climate, population distribution, agricultural production,
urbanization, transportation networks, and resource allocation. Next, assign them to investigate the factors that led to the partition of Korea in 1945, and how these things have been altered since the partition.

**Microsettings:** From Camp 14, across North Korea and into China, and then to South Korea and America, Harden traces Shin’s journey from the underdeveloped, to the developing, and finally to the affluent. More personal settings strike these distinctions even more clearly—the concrete housing bloc where Shin lived with his mother; the tiny cell he shared with Uncle in the underground prison; his school and the crowded barracks he shared on his work details; his space in the pig farmer’s house in Jinlin Province; and freedom of movement in bustling urban areas like Seoul, Torrance, and Seattle. Assign student groups to construct their representations of these spaces (either in physical or digital models) and describe how these settings provide direction/turning points in the story.

**Korea's Diasporic Communities:** Koreans are one of the world’s many diasporic communities, expatriated from the Korean Peninsula either by force or by choice. Many ethnic Koreans, such as those in Jinlin Province, simply found themselves inside a different border due to the processes of political history, while millions more left the Korean Peninsula as a result of war, in search of economic opportunity, or, like Shin, in search of basic human rights. Investigate the experiences of communities of Koreans abroad, and develop presentations for the class identifying how their new settings have affected them, as well as how they have shaped those communities. Some distinctions to consider in assigning this task:

- How are these processes different for ethnic Koreans whose families have lived in neighboring countries like China for many generations compared to those who emigrated relatively recently?

- How are experiences and effects different for expatriated North Koreans, who most often go to China, and expatriated South Koreans, who may set new lives in the US, Canada, Australia, Singapore, Japan, Southeast Asia, or even Europe?

- Though their numbers are very small, it might be worth considering how the experiences of North Koreans like Shin who make their way to South Korea represent an “immigrant experience”. Their new life is forged in Korea itself, among their own cultural dynamics and into another part of a peninsula that has only been divided for half a century. How much are they “strangers in a strange land”?

**Migration and the Korean War:** The Korean War of 1950-53 was characterized by rapid advances of armies first to the southern and then to the northern borders of the peninsula, and then settled into a very bloody conflict that raged for over two years around the 38th Parallel that divided the two countries. Civilian populations were displaced in hordes, and both North and South Korea fiercely debate how many of their people fell victim to the opposing armies or were not allowed to return to their homes. This, in part, was apparently at the root of Shin’s incarceration: his uncle’s defection to the South led to the imprisonment of his family still in the North. Investigate the experiences of Korean civilians during the civil war, and the effects of the waves of migration that it caused.

**CREATE ORIGINAL ESCAPE FROM CAMP 14 INSPIRED ART**

Allow students to create one of the following as an additional means of exploring the book.

- Music is often used to connect people to each other and the world at large. Select a character, scene, or thematic element from Escape from Camp 14 and create a CD
with an original playlist which is representative of its role in Shin’s story. Create original art for the jewel case and on the interior, and after including appropriate artist information, offer an explanation for the selection of each song.

Harden does a brilliant job on one hand of describing the bleak hopelessness of the victims of the North Korean political prison system, and on the other hand showing how Shin’s spirit and hope for something better carries him above it all. In small groups, have students select a favorite scene from Escape from Camp 14 and create either a digitally or manually illustrated graphic novel for that scene. Using a digital comic strip creator (http://www.makebeliefscomix.com/Comix/ or http://infinitecomic.com/ for example), have students begin by using the strips to create story boards for their scene. Have students select original art, images, and graphics. Alternatively, students could assume the roles of two of the characters with each one’s personality and voice and have them interact with one another by creating an extension of a scene from one of the novels. As part of the evaluation component, consider panel size and number of panels, transitions and layouts, artwork, writing, and lettering.

Using a variety of mediums, assign students to create an original piece of art which is symbolic of one of the major themes of Escape from Camp 14 (these may include but are not limited to the following: strength, courage, perseverance, desperation, dignity, survival, injustice, hope, and activism).

Much as the movie industry uses short videos known as trailers to promote their films, book trailers have become an increasingly common way to raise interest among readers (an example of the official trailer for Escape from Camp 14 can be found at http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HND8kt-aTZw). Student groups may design an original book trailer for Escape from Camp 14. They should begin by creating a story board, detailing which scenes they intend to incorporate in the trailer. Use a moviemaker program of choice such as iMovie or www.animoto.com. Post finished trailers to www.youtube.com.

**Correlates to Common Core Standard Writing: Research to Build and Present Knowledge W. 9-1-.4, 11-12.4.

**TEACHER RESOURCES**

“King Leopold’s Soliloquy” may be found online courtesy of the American Museum of Natural History (http://diglib1.amnh.org/articles/kls/), or here at Google Books (http://books.google.com/books/about/King_Leopold_s_Soliloquy.html?id=pEclAAAAIAAJ).

The quote by Hannah Arendt can be found on the “Holocaust Reflections” page on the Modern American Poetry: About the Holocaust website created by Prof. Cary Nelson of the University of Illinois. A number of excellent quotes related to Arendt’s are available there for teachers to utilize for the writing activity. (http://www.english.illinois.edu/maps/holocaust/reflections.htm)

The following links connect you to human rights groups and activist organizations working specifically to raise awareness about and combat abuses in North Korea. Note that links are subject to change, and that the organization’s involvement may extend beyond North Korean issues:

- Liberty in North Korea (LiNK): http://libertyinnorthkorea.org/
- Amnesty International: https://www.amnesty.org/en
- International Coalition to Stop Crimes...
Against Humanity in North Korean (ICNK): http://www.stopnkcrimes.org/
• U.S. Committee for Human Rights in North Korea: http://www.hrnk.org/
• North Korean Freedom Coalition: http://www.nkfreedom.org/
• International Center for Transitional Justice: http://ictj.org/
• No Fence: http://nofence.netlive.ne.jp/english/
• International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH): http://www.fidh.org/-english-
• Human Rights Without Frontiers International: http://www.hrwf.net/
• Christian Solidarity Worldwide: http://www.csw.org.uk/home.htm
• Aegis Trust (Students Website): http://www.aegisstudents.org/
• Freedom House (results for North Korea): http://www.freedomhouse.org/search/North%20Korea
• Association for the Rescue of North Korean Abductees (ARNKA): http://www.arnka.com/
• Helping Hands Korea: http://www.helpinghandskorea.org/
• Network for North Korean Democracy and Human Rights: http://en.nknet.org/

The following links connect to video interviews and resources regarding Shin Dong-hyuk, including the 60 Minutes and CNN interviews referenced for the activity in the “Extended Writing Prompts” Section:
• 60 Minutes: “North Korean Prisoner Escaped after 23 Brutal Years” (http://www.cbsnews.com/8301-18560_162-57584912/north-korean-prisoner-escaped-after-23-brutal-years/): includes Shin’s complete interview with Anderson Cooper, and several supplemental videos and resources.
• Channel4 News: “Interview With the First Man to Escape a North Korean Prison” (http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nFaaCdWL6e0): Shin’s interview with Lindsay Hilsum of the UK’s Channel4 News.
• Foreign Policy Initiative: “Interview with Shin Dong-hyuk” (http://www.foreignpolicyi.org/content/fpi-podcast-interview-shin-dong-hyuk): podcast of FPI intern Elizabeth Fleming’s interview with Shin.
• The Economist: “North Korea’s Prison Camps” (http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nFaaCdWL6e0): Economist China editor Rob Gifford interviews Blaine Harden.

The National Consortium for Teaching about Asia (http://www.nctasia.org/) provides a number of resources and valuable professional development opportunities for K-12 teachers.

Statistical data for mathematics lessons can be gathered from the following sources:
To assist students with investigations on the theme of food, or provide supplemental readings, useful resources might include:

- **Gastronomica: The Journal of Food and Culture** (http://www.gastronomica.org/) is a digital publication produced by the University of California Press that includes articles on food and food culture from around the world.

- **Fork, Pen, and Plow** is an e-journal produced by the New York University Steinhardt School of Culture, Education, and Human Development that holds a number of articles on food culture, food science, and sustainability (http://steinhardt.nyu.edu/site/forkpenplow/category/food-culture/).


- This National Geographic Education page provides an overview on the concept of staple foods for students (http://education.nationalgeographic.com/education/encyclopedia/food-staple/?ar_a=1).

- Stanford University’s Stanford Program on International and Cross-Cultural Education (SPICE) includes this article on the importance of rice in Japanese culture, and the concepts could readily be adapted to other rice cultures in Asia (http://spice.stanford.edu/docs/145#rice). SPICE also provides resources for teaching about Korea (http://spice.stanford.edu/docs/145#rice).

- The PBS documentary *Hidden Korea* includes a good discussion of the place of food in Korean society and culture. The companion website can be found at http://www.pbs.org/hiddenkorea/index.htm.

- This translation of Etchu Tetsuya’s article “European Influence on the ‘Culture of Food’ in Nagasaki” is an interesting study on cuisine as a measure of cultural blending, including efforts to adapt to it and resist it (http://www.uwosh.edu/faculty_staff/earns/etchu.html).

- This lesson plan by teacher Ann Benjamin Matney for the Ohio State University Freeman Foundation’s National Consortium for Teaching about Asia explores Chinese culture through a study of cuisine. It is targeted and standardized for Grades 9-12. (http://ncta.osu.edu/lessons/china/culture/Matney-China.pdf)

- Excerpts from Michael Pollan’s popular works on food culture and our perspectives on food and eating. In particular consider selections from:
  - *The Omnivore’s Dilemma: A Natural History of Four Meals*
  - *In Defense of Food: An Eater’s Manifesto*
  - *Cooked: A Natural History of Transformation*

Perspectives on Korean Reunification can be investigated using the following resources:

- “National Reunification” from the official
website of the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (http://www.korea-dpr.com/reunification.html)

- “The Dangers of Korean Reunification” from The Diplomat’s blog (http://thediplomat.com/2011/02/10/the-dangers-of-korean-unification/)

- “Young South Koreans Fear Unification with the North Would Create Economic Burdens” from the Washington Times (http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2013/apr/10/young-south-koreans-fear-unification-with-north-wo/?page=all)

- “Reunification of the Two Koreas,” an academic study done by Prof. Chung H. Lee from the University of Hawaii (http://www2.hawaii.edu/~lchung/Korea%20Reunification.pdf)

- “Challenges for Korean Unification Planning,” a study published by the Center for Strategic and International Studies (http://csis.org/files/publication/120110_Cha_ChallengesKorea_WEB.pdf)

- “Conflicting Visions for Korean Reunification,” a study report compiled by Harvard University Weatherhead Center for International Affairs fellow Young-sun Ji

- “China Could Try to Block Eventual Korean Unification, Report Says,” an article on a Senate committee study by Chico Harlan of the Washington Post

For information on the experiences and effects of the Korean War on Koreans and on Koreans as a diasporic community, consider these resources:

- “Why the Korean War Still Matters,” a CNN.com article by Madison Park, provides a brief but solid overview of the conflict from the perspective of the Korean Peninsula (http://www.cnn.com/2013/03/07/world/asia/korean-war-explainer)

- “The Korean War: A Still Present Past,” from the website Still Present Past: Korean Americans and the Forgotten War (http://stillpresentpasts.org/history-english). This online multimedia exhibit offers resources in both English and Korean, is produced by Boston College, and offers the opportunity to bring the exhibit to your local community (http://stillpresentpasts.org/contact).

- “50 Years and Counting: The Impact of the Korean War on the People of the Peninsula,” an article by Phil de Haan of Calvin College (http://www.calvin.edu/news/2001-02/korea.htm)


- “Koreans’ Immigration to the US: History and Contemporary Trends,” an article by Pyong Gap Min of the Research Center for the Korean Community, Queens College of CUNY (http://www.qc.cuny.edu/Academics/Centers/RCKC/Documents/Koreans%20Immigration%20to%20the%20US.pdf)


- “North Korea: Understanding Migration to and from a Closed Country,” a page from the Migration Policy Institute’s Migration Information Source (http://www.migrationinformation.org/feature/display.cfm?ID=668)

- “North Korea: Migration Patterns and Prospects” is a transcript of a special report presented for the Nautilus Institute for Security and Sustainability (http://nautilus.org/napsnet/napsnet-special-reports/north-korea-migration-patterns-and-prospects/#axzz2ZoFxHA5r)

• “Who Is Korean? Migration, Immigration, and the Challenge of Multiculturalism in Homogenous Societies” is an article by Timothy Lim published for JapanFocus.com (http://www.japanfocus.org/-Timothy-Lim/3192)

• “Migration Profile of the Republic of Korea” is an extensive report on migration from South Korea produced by the International Organization for Migration (http://publications.iom.int/bookstore/free/MP_Korea.pdf)

ABOUT THE AUTHOR OF THIS GUIDE

This guide was created by Michael Brock, International Baccalaureate Campus Coordinator and History of the Americas HL teacher at Coppell High School in Coppell, TX.
A full list of Teacher’s Guides and Teacher’s Guides for the Signet Classic Shakespeare Series is available on Penguin’s website at: us.penguingroup.com/tguides

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