

# Teaching Korea - The Turtle Ship and Admiral Yi Sun Sin

## Teaching Suggestions

### RETRIEVAL PRACTICE

Why not create some short multi-choice quizzes to test what students can recall about the content they have just learned about? Create a quick test of 8, 10, 12 or 20 questions. Here are three examples:

1. Turtle ships were first mentioned in which centuries?
  - a) 14th and 15th centuries
  - b) 16th and 17th centuries
  - c) 18th and 19th centuries
2. What figurehead commonly appeared at the bow of a turtle ship?
  - a) A snake
  - 2) A dragon
  - 3) A horse
3. At which port city on South Korea's East China Sea coast can a full-size turtle ship be seen?
  - a) Busan
  - b) Incheon
  - c) Yeosu

### TIMELINE / FACT FILES

The Japanese conflict with Korea lasted from 1592 to 1598. This was the great era of the turtle ships and Admiral Yi Sun Sin. Choose one of the following (or even instruct students to do both):

- Create a timeline of the conflict. You might want to ask students to begin in 1587, when Toyotomi Hideyoshi sent envoys to Korea to try and persuade King Seonjo to join him in a war against China. Make sure student focus on key dates and key events.
- Create a fact file for Admiral Yi Sun Sin. Don't just focus on his military career but have categories about his early life and his legacy. Students might want to think carefully about how he is remembered today.

## **FAMOUS SHIPS AND FAMOUS SEA BATTLES**

Get students to research other famous ships, and/or other well-known sea battles. You might want to get them to research a famous sea battle that was going on around the same time as Admiral Yi Sun Sin's use of the turtle ships in the conflict with Japan.

For example, in 1588, King Philip II of Spain sent a large fleet of 130 ships to invade England. The Spanish Armada (as the fleet was known) arrived on the English coast, but the English outwitted them. Some ships sunk, and storms damaged some while they tried to go back home. The English and the Spanish has contrasting types of ships, and contrasting styles of warfare. This would make an interesting research topic.

There are many other sea battles to research. Examples that are easier to find information on include:

The Battle of Salamis in the Greco-Persian Wars (one of the first naval confrontations in recorded history); the Battle of Trafalgar in October 1805, when Admiral Nelson led the British Royal Navy against Napoleon's forces; the Battle of Jutland (the one major clash between British and German fleets in World War One). There are also many well-known ships that could form part of a research project. You might want to get students to research types of ships, that were revolutionary when created (for example, the Dreadnought class of battleships in World War One or Zumwalt Class Destroyers of the US Navy) OR ask them to research well known individual warships.

Examples that are easier to find information on include: HMS Victory, USS Constitution, German battleship Bismark, HMS Hood, USS Midway, Japanese battleship Yamato and HMS Argus.

## **COMPARISON**

It's a good idea to get your students to compare Korean turtle ships used by Yi Sun Sin with warships used in the west.

One problem we have here though is the fact that there isn't a firm view on the exact design of turtle ships from the late 16th Century.

You could ask your pupils to read the information about turtle ships on the Story of the Object tab AND from [this Wikipedia page](#).

Get your pupils to agree what they think the main features of a turtle ship were. Establish some clear criteria for comparison for example tonnes in weight, number of canons, numbers of crew, length etc. Then you could get your class to compare

them to ships used in the Spanish Armada. You could use this Wikipedia page – [List of ships of the Spanish Armada](#).

### **WHERE ELSE IN THE WORLD?**

The Japanese conflict with Korea lasted from 1592-1598. It's a good idea for pupils to find out what else was going on in the world at this time.

Ask pupils to research important who people lived at this time, or what other important events or developments took place? This could have a Korean focus, or, it could be expanded to give a global perspective.

You might want to widen the period of study to the 1580s.

For example in 1588 the English under Elizabeth saw off the Spanish Armada.

John White returned from Roanoke after an unsuccessful search for the last colonies and it is agreed that the hand-held revolver had been invented by the 1590s.

### **WRITE A PLAQUE FOR THE WAR MEMORIAL**

Ask your pupils to write a plaque for the replica in the War Memorial Museum in Seoul.

They could work individually, in pairs or in groups.

You could support them by giving them the following headings to find out about:

- How Yi Sun Sin used Turtle Ships in the war with Japan in the 1590s?
- What was the design of the ships?
- Why were these ships effective in battle?
- What is their significance in Korean history?

After they have completed their research explain to them that they need to write a plaque for the famous replica.

Give them a word limit of 40 to 50 words. This makes the task much more difficult as they will have to choose their words carefully.



*Scan for online  
resources*



© Teaching Korea 2024 - All Rights Reserved