A War Contained

Trace why the United States entered Korea and what limited war meant.

SS24.US2.9c "Identify and explain the origins of the United States' involvement in the Korean War and the consequences of Harry Truman's limited war plan for Korea."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline two reasons the United States entered the Korean War, circle two choices that kept the war limited, and number two consequences of those choices. Use your marks to connect causes, decisions, and results.

Korea and the Limits of War

1. In 1945, after Japan's defeat, Soviet troops occupied Korea north of the 38th parallel while U.S. troops occupied the south. What was intended as a temporary division hardened as the Cold War grew. By 1948, rival governments claimed authority over all Korea. On June 25, 1950, North Korean forces crossed the dividing line and invaded South Korea. The attack threatened a government the United States supported and challenged Washington's policy of containment, which aimed to stop the spread of communism. Korea had become a test of whether the United States would resist armed expansion.

2. The United Nations Security Council called for North Korean forces to withdraw and recommended that member nations aid South Korea. The Soviet Union, which could have vetoed the resolutions, was boycotting the council at the time. President Harry Truman sent U.S. forces as part of a UN-led defense without asking Congress for a declaration of war. After UN forces pushed the invaders back, they crossed the 38th parallel in an effort to reunify Korea. China then entered the war in late 1950 and drove UN forces south. A fight that had begun to defend South Korea now risked a wider war.

3. Truman chose to keep the conflict limited rather than attack China directly or use nuclear weapons. He feared that widening the war could bring a much larger conflict with China or the Soviet Union. When General Douglas MacArthur publicly pressed for a broader war, Truman dismissed him in 1951. Fighting continued after Truman left office, and a 1953 armistice ended major combat without a peace treaty. South Korea remained independent, but Korea stayed divided near the 38th parallel, separated by a demilitarized zone. Millions of Koreans died or were displaced, showing that avoiding a wider war did not mean avoiding terrible costs.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How did events between 1945 and 1950 set the stage for war in Korea?

2. Why did the United States enter the war, and how did the United Nations shape its involvement?

3. After China entered the war, why did Truman limit the fighting? How did his response to MacArthur show that choice?

4. What did the limited war preserve for South Korea, and what costly problems remained after the fighting ended?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write one 1954 newspaper editorial paragraph arguing whether Truman's choice to keep the war limited was justified. In 80 to 110 words, explain one reason the United States entered the war and weigh one benefit of limiting it against one cost, using evidence from the passage.

ANSWER KEY

A War Contained

GRADE 11 · SS24.US2.9c

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline two reasons the United States entered the Korean War, circle two choices that kept the war limited, and number two consequences of those choices. Use your marks to connect causes, decisions, and results. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How did events between 1945 and 1950 set the stage for war in Korea?	**The temporary division became a Cold War divide, and rival governments each claimed all Korea. In 1950, North Korea invaded the south.**
2	Why did the United States enter the war, and how did the United Nations shape its involvement?	**The invasion threatened U.S.-supported South Korea and challenged containment. Security Council resolutions called for withdrawal and aid, and Truman sent U.S. forces as part of a UN-led defense.**
3	After China entered the war, why did Truman limit the fighting? How did his response to MacArthur show that choice?	**Truman feared a wider war with China or the Soviet Union. He rejected attacks on China and nuclear use, and dismissed MacArthur after the general publicly pressed for a broader war.**
4	What did the limited war preserve for South Korea, and what costly problems remained after the fighting ended?	**South Korea remained independent, but Korea stayed divided after an armistice without a peace treaty. Millions of Koreans had died or been displaced.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Truman's limited war was justified, although its outcome was painful. North Korea's invasion threatened South Korea and challenged U.S. containment, giving the United States a reason to join the UN-led defense. Once China entered, attacks on China might have widened the conflict and risked confrontation with the Soviet Union. Keeping the war limited helped South Korea remain independent without that escalation. Yet the 1953 armistice left Korea divided rather than reunited, and millions of Koreans died or were displaced. Avoiding a wider war was worth pursuing, but it did not bring peace to Korea.

Accept either position in the editorial if it explains an origin of U.S. involvement and weighs a supported benefit against a supported cost of limited war. Do not accept a claim that the armistice reunited Korea or established a peace treaty.