Whose War?

Local struggles and global rivalry in Cold War Asia

MWH.C.7.4.A "Explain how civil conflicts in Korea and French Indochina became proxy wars between superpowers during the Cold War."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline one local goal in each conflict, circle the foreign help each side received, and write P beside a sentence that explains how a local struggle became a proxy war.

Two Wars, Many Stakes

1. After Japan's surrender in 1945, Korea was divided at the 38th parallel. Soviet forces occupied the north, and U.S. forces occupied the south. Separate governments formed, each claiming authority over the whole peninsula. In June 1950, North Korean troops invaded South Korea, turning the struggle over Korea's future into open war. The United States led a United Nations force defending the South. China sent troops to fight alongside the North after UN forces approached its border, while the Soviet Union supplied the North with weapons and aircraft. Korean leaders pursued reunification, but foreign involvement made their civil conflict part of a wider Cold War contest.

2. In French Indochina, the struggle began under colonial rule, not with a divided state like Korea. After World War II, the Viet Minh, led by Ho Chi Minh, fought to end French rule and establish an independent Vietnam. French forces tried to restore colonial control, and some Vietnamese fought on France's side. By 1950, communist China and the Soviet Union supported the Viet Minh, while the United States sent France money and military supplies. U.S. leaders feared that a communist victory could strengthen Soviet influence in Asia. For the Viet Minh, independence remained central, even as foreign support linked their war to competition between superpowers.

3. These wars became proxy wars because the United States and the Soviet Union backed opposing sides rather than declaring war on each other. Their support added money, arms, and international stakes to conflicts that also had local causes. In Korea, U.S. forces fought directly under a UN command, and Chinese troops entered on the North's side. An armistice in 1953 stopped major fighting but left Korea divided. In Indochina, U.S. assistance helped France continue its war, while communist aid strengthened the Viet Minh. After France's defeat in 1954, the Geneva agreements temporarily divided Vietnam, setting the stage for further conflict.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How did the struggle over Korea's future become a Cold War proxy war?

2. How did the war against French rule in Indochina become part of the superpowers' rivalry?

3. How did U.S. involvement differ between Korea and French Indochina?

4. Why does the term proxy war not fully explain what the Korean and Viet Minh leaders wanted?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write a 90 to 110 word museum label titled "Whose War?" Explain how outside backing made both conflicts proxy wars, identify a local goal in each, and judge whether "proxy war" tells the whole story. Include one specific difference in how foreign powers took part.

Whose War?

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline one local goal in each conflict, circle the foreign help each side received, and write P beside a sentence that explains how a local struggle became a proxy war. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How did the struggle over Korea's future become a Cold War proxy war?	**The two Korean governments each claimed the peninsula. The United States led a UN force defending the South, while the Soviet Union supplied the North and China sent troops to help it.**
2	How did the war against French rule in Indochina become part of the superpowers' rivalry?	**The United States sent money and supplies to France, while the Soviet Union and communist China supported the Viet Minh. Their backing linked the fight over Vietnam's future to Cold War competition.**
3	How did U.S. involvement differ between Korea and French Indochina?	**U.S. forces fought in Korea under a UN command. In Indochina, the United States sent France money and military supplies.**
4	Why does the term proxy war not fully explain what the Korean and Viet Minh leaders wanted?	**Korean leaders sought reunification, while Viet Minh leaders sought independence from French rule. Those local goals mattered alongside superpower rivalry.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Whose War? Calling the Korean and Indochinese wars proxy wars explains why outside powers invested in them, but it does not tell the whole story. In Korea, rival governments each claimed the entire peninsula. U.S. forces fought for the South under a UN command, while the Soviet Union armed the North. In Indochina, the Viet Minh sought independence from French rule. The United States sent France supplies, while China and the Soviet Union supported the Viet Minh. Unlike in Korea, U.S. forces did not fight directly in this war. The label "proxy war" captures Cold War rivalry, but it leaves out goals that mattered deeply to local people.

Accept responses that explain outside backing and identify reunification in Korea and independence in Indochina as local goals. For the label, look for an accurate difference in foreign involvement and a judgment supported by both conflicts.