**Context:** After WWII, Much like Germany, Korea was divided along the 38th parallel into two countries: North Korea and South Korea. The North became a communist country while the south a democratic. Both sides had the objective of reunifying the country under their own rule. In 1950, after a series of skirmishes at the border, the first "hot" war of the Cold War broke out. The United States and United Nations backed the South while Communist China backed the North.

Initially, the American and United Nations forces fought deep into the North. However, Communist (Chinese) forces pushed the Americans and United Nations back into the South. After three years, the war was fought to a stalemate along the 38th parallel and the country remains divided today.

**Directions:** Today, we are going to read two textbook accounts of the Korean War, one from North Korea and the other from South Korea. Pair up with someone in the classroom. One of you will read Textbook Excerpt A while the other reads Textbook Excerpt B. Discuss with your partner what the textbook says about the start of the Korean War. Compare and contrast the two accounts. What is different? What is similar? Using the textbook excerpts, work with your partner to answer the guiding questions.

**Textbook Excerpt A**

Upset by the fast and astonishing growth of the power of the Korean Republic, the American invaders hastened [quickened] the preparation of an aggressive war in order to destroy it in its infancy....The American imperialists furiously carried out the war project in 1950....The American invaders who had been preparing the war for a long time, alongside their puppets, finally initiated the war on June 25th of the 39th year of the Juche calendar. That dawn, the enemies unexpectedly attacked the North half of the Republic, and the war clouds hung over the once peaceful country, accompanied by the echoing roar of cannons.

Having passed the 38th parallel, the enemies crawled deeper and deeper into the North half of the Republic...the invading forces of the enemies had to be eliminated and the threatened fate of our country and our people had to be saved.

**Textbook Excerpt B**

When the overthrow of the South Korean government through social confusion became too difficult, the North Korean communists switched to a stick-and-carrot strategy: seeming to offer peaceful negotiations, they were instead analyzing the right moment of attack and preparing themselves for it.

The North Korean communists prepared themselves for war. Kim Il-sung secretly visited the Soviet Union and was promised the alliance of the Soviets and China in case of war. Finally, at dawn on June 25th, 1950 the North began their southward aggression along the 38th parallel. Taken by surprise at these unexpected attacks, the army of the Republic of Korea (South Korea) fought courageously to defend the liberty of the country....The armed provocation of the North Korean communists brought the UN Security Council around the table. A decree denounced the North Korean military action as illegal and as a threat to peace, and a decision was made to help the South. The UN army constituted the armies of 16 countries—among them, the United States, Great Britain and France—joined the South Korean forces in the battle against the North.
Guiding Questions

1. According to each Secondary Source, how did the Korean War start?

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2. Which of these textbooks do you find more trustworthy? Why? (Use specific examples from each text to support your answer).

3. Where else would you look in order to figure out how the Korean War started?