Asian Middle Ages Empires: Korea

Background
- Geographically fortunate
  - Mountainous
    - Easy to defend
  - Peninsula
    - Easier to defend
  - East Sea
    - Access to resources
  - Yalu River
    - Traditional boundary between Korea and China
    - Culturally united yet divided
- Geographically unfortunate
  - Close to China, Japan, Mongolia, Russia
  - East Sea
    - Invaders
  - Mountains
    - Interior 70% Mountains
      - Push people to the coasts
- 108 B.C.E. Han Emperor Wudi establishes Korea as Chinese Military Colony
  - Led to the introduction of Chinese Culture
    - Writing, Confucian, farming
- Korea spread ideas and own culture on to Japan

Three Kingdoms Period
- 220 – 669 C.E.
- Korea split into three regions
  - Koguryo (North)
    - Culturally linked to China
  - Paekche (Southwest)
  - Silla (Southeast)
- Same language and culture
- Often fought with one another
- Still absorbed Chinese culture
  - Confucianism
  - Law/Government
  - Art
  - Buddhism

The Imperial Period
Silla
- 668 – 935 C.E.
- Unified by war
  - Baekje 660 C.E.
  - Goguryeo 668 C.E.
- Korea and Tang China maintained close ties
  - Vassals of China
  - Implementing Chinese Culture, Writing, and Government
- Many cultural Advancements
  - Development of capital of Kyongju
  - Arts flourished
- Sculptures and Textiles
  - Academics Flourished
    - Medicine, Astronomy
  - Language
    - Developed spoken and written language
- Fall of Silla
  - Conflicts between peasants and aristocrats
  - Conquered by usurper

**Koryo**
- 935 – 1218 C.E.
- Moved capital to Kaesong
- Continued importance of Confucianism and Buddhism
- Cultural Achievements
  - Printing press
    - Chinese invention Korean perfected
    - Used printing press to mass produce Buddhist texts
  - Celadon
    - Type of porcelain with blue-green glaze
- Conquered by Mongols 1218 C.E.

**Mongols**
- 1218 – 1392 C.E.
- Forced Koreans to pay heavy tribute
- Forced them into army

**Yi**
- 1392 – 1910 C.E.
- Yi Song-gye
  - Gained power by fighting off Mongolians and Japanese Pirates
  - Reunified Korea and began Yi Dynasty
  - Moved capital to Hanseong
- Longest lived of the Korean Dynasties
- Used Confucian Ideals to lead society and government
- Golden Age of Korea
- Cultural Achievements
  - Han’gul
    - Implemented by King Sejong in 1443
    - Phonetic pronunciation
      - Much easier to read than Chinese
    - Hated at first but soon embraced
      - Part of Korean identity as separate from Chinese
    - Led to high literacy rate
    - Allowed easy use of printing press
- Japanese Invasion
  - 1592-1598 C.E.
    - Japanese burned their way through Korean Peninsula
    - Defeated with help of Ming
    - Yi Song Shin
      - Used fleet of “Turtle ships” to drive off Japanese
    - Koreans never fully recover and begin “Hermit Kingdom”