

Student Study Questions and Projects for *Catchers in the Sky, Mission Korea*

I. Reading Discussion

1. The most famous quote about Korea is ‘...it is a country far away, of which little is known.’ Only a small percentage of Americans can find it on a map. What are some of the facts you learned from the book about Korea, either North or South, politically, geographically, militarily, culturally, linguistically? What was the most interesting thing you learned? How did the book change the way you viewed the region? Did you disagree with the author about any of his historical representations of the Korean War or World War II with respect to the roles of Korea, Japan, America, China, or Russia? What about his presentation of any other matter in the book?
2. Refresh your memory and define for yourself what the concepts of ‘the sacred’ and ‘the profane’ mean. Generally, we hold some things to be sacred in our lives, as well as distance ourselves, or find a way to deal with, the profane. In the ABL(X) story, what were the sacred and profane for (pick a couple of your favorites) Maj Phillips, Dr Engle, Abbey Yamamoto, MC Capt Hull, Harold Hakkermann, Dr DeFrancis, Marshal Il-Moon, Dearest Leader, Col Kang, Architect Su, Farmers’ Red Guard Militia Leader Tong-Hu, Aide Park, or the North Korean wedding couple? In your own life, what do you hold sacred and profane? As a family member? As a student? As an American?
3. The author would say, if asked, that the theme of the book revolves around ‘Temptation,’ (The urge to embrace immediate benefits despite possible consequences). This is in contrast to ‘Morality’ or ‘Service,’ (Forgoing an immediate pleasure or benefit because of future consequences). For the characters, how is the life of service reflected in this book? What is each major character’s temptation? Given you are in the service already, what made you chose the life of service? What do you think will be your temptations? In what sense is ‘Dream’ (A desired future that does not fall within reasonable expectations) the counterpoint to temptation and service?

II. Study Projects

1. Use your library’s copy of “Jane’s World Armies” (or if you don’t have it, the Internet) to identify the world’s six largest armies. Can you identify a country where all six of these armies are in contact or in just-across-a-border proximity?
2. Using Google Earth, find a few of the interesting spots in North Korea: the Pyongyang Country Club (can you tell which are the collective fields nearby, and which are the kitchen gardens?), the Koryo Hotel, ‘The Forbidden City,’ the Taedong

River Barrage, the JSA area, and trace the DMZ from across the country and look at the beaches on the East Sea. How does Korea look from space? How does it appear different from America?

3. Using Google Earth or maps, surveil Osan AB. Identify their air defenses, family housing, fuels, hangars, golf course, command center, and the main parts of the base. In 'Catchers,' where did the North Korean Special Forces land their choppers for their strike? How would they proceed to take over the airbase? How did Hakkermann get off the base during the attack to drive north to Seoul?
4. The environment of the modern American military-industrial complex has almost as many jobs in systems development, research, and acquisition as it does in combat roles. The jobs represented on the ABL(X) are a microcosm of those in the Pentagon's acquisition, test, and logistics directorates (The OUSD, AT&L). Discuss the responsibilities of the different job positions on ABL(X): Program Manager, Chief Scientist or Scientific Advisor, Test and Evaluation Officer, Intelligence Officer, MRO (maintenance, repair, overhaul), Technician, Flight Crew, Computer programmer, physicist, engineer, Finance, Security, Training, Legal, and Contracting. Which are the most attractive to you and why?
5. Based on the discussion of Directed Energy Weapons in Chapter 15, and your own understandings, what are your opinions about how lasers will fit into warfare in 5, 10, 20, 50, and 100 years? How are they used now?
6. Choose one of the following books from the jonathandamien.com site's bibliography for a book report: *Airborne Laser, Bullets of Light; The Aquariums of Pyongyang; Present at the Creation* (Dean Acheson); *The North Korean Special Forces*,(Bermudez); *The Art of Wargaming; Assignment: Pentagon; The Complete Idiots Guide to Understanding North Korea; The Korean Language; or Who was Responsible? From Marco Polo Bridge to Pearl Harbor.*