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Presentation on Chang-rae Lee's The Surrendered Day 1

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Chang-rae Lee, *The Surrendered*

Day 1
Today

- Overview of critical issues in *The Surrendered*
- Historical background for novel
- Key terms used to describe war
- Voices critical of war in novel.
Issues in *The Surrendered*

- How to make sense of a violent past
  - What are the essential experiences of war?
- How literature depicts atrocity
  - Lee—like Bausch, often use stripped-down, minimal style (from Hemingway) to convey violence
- Immigrant recreation of self in another country
- Process of investigation (Cline) as like process of writing literature
- How critical voices emerge in the midst of war
  - Blind man (5-6)
  - Hector father (63-65)
Korean War

- Korea occupied by Japan 1910-end WWII
- Korea divided between US (south) and Soviet Union (north)
- By 1948, two separate governments set up—this becomes part of the Cold War
- North Korean forces invade South Korea on 25 June 1950
- US enters conflict late 1950
- Opening—June = from North traveling South
Korean War

• By all accounts, soldiers on both North and South sides = commit a wide range of war crimes, esp. executions
  – Wide suspicion “spying”
  – Control of territory shifted several times throughout 1950-1953
  • “But as it happened the ROK forces wreaked as much misery as the northern soldiers, and perhaps more” (15)
What key terms would you use to describe account of war here?

For your page, please pick a key term (such as “hunger,” “movement,” “uncertainty”).

1. How does the novel convey the experience of this key term?

2. How would you describe the style in which Lee depicts any violent or uncomfortable material?
“But when the last car of the train passed her she rose to her feet and steadied herself. And then she ran for her life” (31)

Why do you think Lee chooses to have June experience everything she does in the first chapter?

Look at June 47-48. What words would you use to describe her life? Why do we hear nothing of the material in the first chapter?
Critical voices

• How do critical voices emerge in the midst of war?
  – Blind man (5-6)
  – Hector father (63-65)