

A film by **Melissa Kyu-Jung Lee**  
and **John Janson-Moore**

# KIDNAPPED!



## STUDYGUIDE

BY MARGUERITE O'HARA

SCREEN EDUCATION

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# KIDNAPPED!

## Director's statement

*Kidnapped!* delves into the shadowy and bizarre world of the Japan–North Korean abduction cases which have entranced Japan since it recently emerged that the hard line Communist regime of North Korea had been kidnapping Japanese citizens since the 1970s.

Across the Western sphere, this story has managed to catch some disbelieving headlines but without unravelling the truly extraordinary story of the abductees and their families who battled for twenty long years to have their cases recognized. Nor have these headlines understood the role these cases have played in the fragile balance of power in the Asia Pacific region and the impact they are having on global peace and stability.

*Kidnapped!* gives poignant insight into this remarkable series of events mainly through the stories of the families of three abductees, kidnapped during the 1970s and 80s: the Chimuras, the Arimotos and the Yokotas. Their struggle to come to terms with the kidnapping of their loved ones innocently trapped in the cross-fire of a game of international brinkmanship is emblematic of how easily ordinary people can become caught up in and manipulated by the world of politics and subterfuge. *Kidnapped!* looks at an extreme case, but in doing so, touches on the fears and anxieties that many of us living an everyday existence have of one day waking up to a world gone upside-down.

This documentary is the story of ordinary families facing extraordinary circumstances. The characters are complex, contradictory and human – just like you and I. They are also courageous, passionate and determined – the characteristics that we like to see in ourselves. But they have also suffered terribly and their courage and determination seem to stem from this suffering in the hope that their perseverance might bring their loved ones back.

Melissa Kyu-Jung Lee



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: **FACTORY WORKER AND FATHER OF KIDNAPPED KEIKO ARIMOTO (PHOTO BY JOHN JANSON-MOORE); KIDNAPPED VICTIM KEIKO ARIMOTO, ABDUCTED WHILST ABROAD IN EUROPE (PHOTO COURTESY MR & MRS ARIMOTO); ARIMOTO LONDON TOWER; PARENTS OF KIDNAPPED KEIKO ARIMOTO DEMAND ACTION (PHOTO BY JOHN JANSON-MOORE).** BELOW:

**Overview:** *Kidnapped!* tells the extraordinary story of a group of Japanese citizens who were abducted by North Korean spies in the 1970s and 1980s and the subsequent struggle of their families to have their loved ones returned. It is both a moving account of personal suffering and an account of the political and diplomatic struggles to find the truth and recover the kidnapped Japanese citizens. This film was one of only two Australian documentaries selected for the *Silver Wolf Competition* at the 2005 *International Documentary Film Festival* in Amsterdam.

### Synopsis

A couple mysteriously vanishes after a romantic evening under the stars ...

A teenager disappears on her way home from school ...

A university graduate goes missing whilst holidaying in London ...

From the early 1970s to the mid-80s, scores of ordinary Japanese disappeared without a trace, many of them from beaches and remote villages along the Japan Sea coast, others

from Tokyo, London and Madrid. After decades of speculation, it was finally revealed in 2002 that these ordinary Japanese citizens had in fact been abducted by North Korean spies as part of a bizarre and sinister plot of espionage by the hard line, communist dictatorship of Kim Jong Il.

From the last front of the Cold War to the new battle against the 'Axis of Evil', *Kidnapped!* tells the extraordinary story of the Chimura, Yokota and Arimoto families – some of the unfortunate victims of a terrifying abduction campaign by North Korea, and who

are now unwittingly caught up in the eye of a political storm. The story of these families' dramatic 25-year struggle in their search for the truth unveils a tangled web of bizarre abductions, political manoeuvrings and international espionage.

*Kidnapped!* is an emotional and uncompromising journey into the most controversial issue in Japan today. It is a powerful account of the remarkable story of a group of ordinary Japanese citizens who are perhaps the last remaining casualties of the Cold War and who have become the latest



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: YOKOTA ON THE COUCH; SCHOOL GIRL MEGUMI YOKOTA, KIDNAPPED ON HER WAY HOME FROM SCHOOL (PHOTO COURTESY SHIGERU YOKOTA); PARENTS OF KIDNAPPED VICTIM MEGUMI YOKOTA LEAD THE CAMPAIGN TO HAVE THEIR DAUGHTER RETURNED (PHOTO COURTESY SHIGERU YOKOTA); PARENTS OF KIDNAPPED MEGUMI YOKOTA LEAD THE CAMPAIGN FOR THE RETURN OF THE ABDUCTEES (PHOTO BY JOHN JANSON-MOORE). INSET RIGHT: YOKOTA CAMPAIGN.

and relevance for students from the middle to senior years of secondary school and relate to the following learning outcomes:

- Understanding the core values of groups and societies
- Empathizing with the distress caused to individuals when a family member disappears without trace
- Explaining how diverse cultures and groups value loyalty to country above all else
- Considering how public protest



pawns in a dubious, diplomatic chess game of life and death.

## Curriculum Links

### Using *Kidnapped!* in the classroom

This documentary will be of specific interest and relevance to teachers and senior secondary students from years 10-12 studying:

- International Studies
- Studies of Asia
- Cultural Studies
- Political Studies
- Studies of Society and Environment (SOSE/HSIE)
- Media Studies
- English

## Learning Outcomes

The themes and activities developed in this study guide will have interest





CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: **KIDNAPPED VICTIM YASUSHI CHIMURA RETURNS TO JAPAN AFTER 24 YEARS (PHOTO BY SHIGERU YOKOTA); YASUSHI CHIMURA REUNITED WITH HIS FATHER; KIDNAPPED VICTIMS, YASUSHI AND FUKIE ARE HAILED WITH THEIR FAMILIES AT THEIR HOME-COMING AFTER 24 YEARS (PHOTO COURTESY MR CHIMURA); MAP OF JAPAN; FATHER OF KIDNAPPED YASUSHI CHIMURA WAITS FOR HIS SON'S RETURN (PHOTO BY JOHN JANSON-MOORE).**



- can effect long term social and political change
- Describing and explaining the responses of governments to issues of human rights
- Understanding how political beliefs can influence individual behaviour
- Exploring the role of the media in drawing attention to human rights issues
- Exploring the role of past hostilities in national behaviour

## About North Korea

North Korean society is closed and





secretive. North Korea is sometimes called 'the hermit kingdom', as it is walled off from the rest of the world. Media as we know it in the Western world does not exist and tourism is strictly regulated and only possible in government controlled groups. The country and its people are effectively sealed off from many outside influences. Citizens cannot travel freely between North and South Korea or to outside countries.

In 2002 US President Bush named North Korea as one of three countries comprising 'the axis of evil'; these are states that America believes sponsor terror, and develop weapons of mass destruction. North Korea's nuclear programs have long been of concern to neighboring countries, such as Japan and South Korea. Yet within, there are ordinary people who lead ordinary lives. It is believed that North Korea is unable to provide enough food for the people and that famine is not uncommon, but the truth of life inside North Korea is hard to determine, so

tight are the controls on citizens and visitors.

The country follows its own communist ideal: a strict philosophy known as the Juche Idea. It is wrapped around the worship of the Kim dynasty – Kim Il Sung, the Great Leader who died in 1994 but still remains head of state, and his son and successor, Kim Jong Il, known as the Dear Leader. North Koreans wear a lapel badge depicting either the Great Leader or the Dear Leader.

The country has no internet, email, advertising or mobile phones. It has been isolated since the end of the Korean War between North and South Korea in 1953 – a war that North Korea believes it won. The State stages large-scale mass rallies and military displays designed to demonstrate loyalty and discipline to the State and the Dear Leader and these are generally the only images of life in North Korea seen in the West.

## Glossary of key terms and places

- Pyongyang – capital of North Korea
- Tokyo – capital of Japan
- Juche – pronounced Joo-cheh, is the basic governing idea of North Korea's political system. The essence of this belief is that the people, collectively, must be the subject and masters of the revolution and work for complete self-sufficiency.
- Brainwashing – also called thought reform. Application of coercive techniques to change the beliefs or behaviour of people for political purposes. Thought to have been used on the Japanese who were kidnapped, and used in many countries to 'change thinking'.
- 'Axis of evil' – term used by US President George Bush to describe North Korea as one of a number of countries who he believes operate outside international rules by promoting the use of terror and devel-



oping illegal weapons programs.

## Student Activity 1

### Before Watching *Kidnapped!*

Read the following questions and record your answers. Sharing responses to these questions should assist you to understand and respond to some of the issues explored in this documentary.

1. How would you define the following terms – kidnapped, abducted, stolen, brainwashed, re-educated? What does each word suggest?
2. Approximately how many people ‘go missing’ in Australia each year?
3. What are the usual motives of people who engage in kidnapping?
4. Have you heard about young Japanese being kidnapped by North Koreans?
5. How far is Japan from North Korea? Check the map in this guide.
6. Write down five things you know about North Korea.
7. Does Australia have diplomatic

- relations with North Korea?
8. How easy or difficult is it to visit North Korea?
9. Can you think of recent international incidents when individual rights have been seen as secondary to diplomatic manoeuvres?

## Student Activity 2

### Pre-viewing research

Working in small groups, select one of these topics and using internet resources, (some of which are referenced at the end of this guide), prepare a report for the rest of your class.

1. Research the history of the Korean Peninsula over the past 100 years, explaining how the tensions between Japan and North Korea have developed, particularly since the end of the Second World War.
2. What happened to Japan after they were defeated in the Second World War? How has Japanese society developed and changed in the last sixty years?
3. Approximately how many people of Korean descent live in Japan

today? Can they gain Japanese citizenship and how are they regarded by the Japanese?

### Key people in the documentary

**Keiko Arimoto** – 23 year old abducted while working in London.

**Mr. and Mrs. Arimoto** – Keiko’s parents.

**Yasushi Chimura** – 23 year old abducted with his fiancée, Fukie, from Obama in Japan.

**Mr. and Mrs. Chimura** – Yashusi’s parents.

**Megumi Yokota** – 13 year old school-girl abducted from Niigata in Japan.

**Mr. and Mrs. Yokota** – Megumi’s parents.

**Katsumi Sato** – chairman of Japanese Rescue Association.

**Prime Minister Koizumi** – Japan’s Prime Minister since 2001.

**Kim Jong-Il** – Head of State in North Korea since 1994, when his father Kim IL Sung died.



### Student Activity 3

#### Running sheet for viewing the program

These questions ask you to look at three different aspects of the documentary. While they are inextricably connected, it may help your understanding to focus on each aspect separately to start with. The program is a mystery story, a family story and a political/history story at once.

#### (1) The disappearances

1. The opening sequence of the film shows a red carpet being unrolled and the meeting of the leaders of Japan and North Korea. How does this opening suggest something of the main focus of this documentary?
2. What does the statement 'Japan re-invented itself after the Second World War' mean? What implications does this have for the way the Government has responded to the kidnapping issue?
3. Locate Niigata on a map of Japan. Is the location of this city relevant to the kidnappings?
4. What does Megumi Yokota's name mean in Japanese?

5. When did Megumi disappear?
6. How old was she?
7. Where did Yasushi Chimura live?
8. When did he disappear?
9. How old was he?
10. Who disappeared with him?
11. Explain the circumstances of his disappearance.
12. How did the Chimuras respond to their son's disappearance?
13. Where was Keiko Arimoto's hometown in Japan?
14. When did she disappear?
15. From where was she taken?
16. How old was Keiko when she disappeared?

#### (2) The families in Japan

1. Explain the differing responses of the Yokota, Chimura and Arimoto families to the disappearance of their children.
2. What were some of the things they feared may have happened to them?
3. What was revealed to the three families in 2002 about what had happened to their children? Explain what the North Koreans said about the fate of each abductee.
4. Why were these explanations believed to be 'bizarre' by the Japanese families?

5. How did each family respond to the information they were given?
6. When five abductees returned home for a visit to see their Japanese families in late 2002, how long had they been in North Korea?
7. What happened to Yasushi Chimura's mother?
8. Were the children of the abductees visiting Japan able to leave North Korea with their parents?
9. Explain why you think Yasushi and Fukie are reluctant to talk about what happened to them since their kidnapping. Try to put yourself in their position, having a family and a life in a different culture and country for twenty-five years.
10. Mr Chimura, Yasushi's father, was giving up to thirty interviews a day about the return of his son to Japan. He also received abusive phone calls. Is this just part of the cost of being a part of a big media story, or might there be other explanations for these responses?
11. What did the analysis of the supposed remains of Megumi Yokota suggest?
12. Why is the explanation of Keiko Arimoto's death thought to be unlikely?
13. Describe three particularly moving responses to the disappearances by the families in this film.

#### (3) Political and Diplomatic Moves

1. The film opens with a shot of the two leaders, Koizumi and Kim Jong Il, meeting to discuss, amongst other matters, the fate of the missing Japanese, but this is in 2002, more than 20 years after the disappearances began. What does this suggest about the filmmaker's sense of what the issue is about?
2. What is the first clue that triggers public pressure on the Japanese Government to further investigate the disappearances?
3. What was the connection between the bombing of the South Korean airliner by Kim Hyun Hee in 1987 and the kidnappings?
4. Why would Kim Jong Il have sug-



Clue to the disappearances	Date
Kim Jong-Il, the North Korean leader, admits to Japanese Prime Minister Koizumi that Japanese citizens had been kidnapped in the 1970s and 80s.	September, 2002
A North Korean spy, who organized the bombing of a South Korean plane, says she received Japanese lessons from a Japanese woman who had been abducted from Japan.	1987
Phone call to the Arimotos from the mother of a boy who disappeared, claiming her son was in North Korea and married to Keiko Arimoto.	1988
Mrs. Yao, a former North Korean agent who kidnapped Keiko Arimoto, apologises to her family on national television.	2002
Japanese Foreign Office advises the Arimotos to keep quiet about the information about their daughter.	1988
North Korean spy claims he saw at least ten Japanese who had been abducted	1997
A Japanese newspaper speculates that foreign intelligence agents are seizing Japanese.	1980

TABLE 1

- gested to Prime Minister Koizumi that 'our two countries should become neighbours'?
- Keiko Arimoto is said to have died a month after her parents went public about a letter from their daughter in 1995. Does this seem like just a coincidence?
  - When did Kim Jong Il acknowledge the abductions of the Japanese?
  - What does Katsumi Satso, the Chairman of the Japanese Rescue Association, want the Japanese government to do?
  - What was the response of Japanese citizens to the visit of a North Korean ferry in 2002?
  - What did Koizumi hope to achieve on his return visit to North Korea in 2004? Was his mission a success?
  - What reasons were given to explain why the North Koreans kidnapped Japanese citizens?

### Student Activity 4

#### CLUES

When people disappear without a trace, their families and friends suffer the continuing anguish and uncertainty of fearing the worst, hoping for a miracle and not knowing whether the miss-

ing person is dead or alive. Have they run away to become one of the thousands of people who are described as 'missing persons' every year or been abducted? Unless there is a sighting, some contact or new information, the terrible uncertainty will always remain. In this film, small pieces of information slowly come to light many years after the disappearances, which lead to a concerted public demand that the truth be sought. Put the clues in into the order in which they appear in the documentary beside the correct date (See Table 1).

### Student Activity 5

#### Style and content – Deconstructing a film text

The way in which a film is put together is important in shaping viewers' responses to the themes and issues raised. In *Kidnapped!* the structure, including visual and sound editing, and cutting between archival footage and still images from the 70s and 80s to footage from 2004, when the program was made, is worth studying carefully.

- What words would you choose to

- characterize the mood of this film?
- How does the filmmaker integrate personal and political elements?
- Is there an effective balance of these elements?
- What part does music play in establishing mood in this film?
- How do the photos of the abductees create empathy for the families?
- How can we determine whether the filmmakers have a position on the issue?

Media Studies students may find this exercise especially useful, but all students will develop their appreciation of what can be achieved through careful selection and editing of the different elements that are woven together to tell this story.

### Will the complete truth ever be known?

The film ends on an unresolved note. Both the final voiceover, 'Is there a more sinister motive yet to be uncovered?' and the unsettling musical score, with its disturbing and mysterious resonance, suggest that aspects of what happened remain a mystery. It is relatively easy to suggest some kind of supernatural interventions, alien style, in this kind of issue, but the truth may be simpler. The film puts many of the pieces of this incomplete puzzle together, but questions still remain. Given the closed and highly secretive nature of North Korean society, determining the truth about the reasons for these abductions may never be clear. Some have suggested that the Japanese Government's reluctance to act more decisively over this issue is tied up with their difficult historical relationship with Korea, which was for many years occupied by the Japanese.

### Student Activity 6

#### Extension Activities

- There are many instances in history where individuals become pawns in diplomatic negotiations between nations, and individual rights are sacrificed to what



governments perceive to be the bigger issues in their dealings with neighbouring states. What are some of the more complex issues behind the ways in which Japan has dealt with the kidnapping issue with North Korea?

2. Can you think of any other recent cases where governments have been reluctant to act decisively to protect individual citizens in international relations? For instance, what influence might economic, strategic and trade relations have on the willingness of countries to demand that their foreign nationals are treated justly?
3. Can there ever be any justification for using another countries' citizens to further political ends, such as appears to be the case with these kidnappings?
4. What might be some of the reasons why Yasushi, Fukie and other abductees are refusing to talk about what happened to them when they were taken to North Korea?
5. The phrase '*the banality of evil*' was coined by Hannah Arendt in her 1963 book *Eichmann in Jerusalem: a Report on the Banality*

*of Evil*, based on the trial of Eichmann, a Nazi war criminal. Arendt's thesis was that those who carry out unspeakable crimes, like Eichmann, a top administrator in the machinery of the Nazi death camps, may not be crazy fanatics at all, but rather:

*ordinary individuals who simply accept the premises of their state and participate in any ongoing enterprise with the energy of good bureaucrats.*

Could this explanation be applied to the actions of the North Korean spies, some of whom had been originally kidnapped from Japan themselves?

## References

### Books

Most books about life in North Korea are highly critical of life there; written from a Western perspective or by people who have fled the country, including the ironically titled *This is Paradise!* Kang, H., *This is Paradise! My North Korean Childhood*, Little, Brown, 2005. (Accessible, but highly criti-

cal and often horrifying account of daily life in North Korea)

Martin, B.K., *Under the Loving Care of the Fatherly Leader – North Korea and the Kim Dynasty*, Thomas Dunne, St. Martins, 2005.

Cha, V.D. and Chang, D.C., *Nuclear North Korea*, Columbia University Press, 2005.

Cumings, B., *North Korea, Another Country*, Scribner, 2004. (A more sympathetic account of North Korea, focusing on the complex part foreign occupation and wars have played in the formation of the state)

McCormack, Gavan; *Target North Korea*, Random House Publishing, 2005 (written by Australian writer, includes chapter on abductions. Challenges clichés about North Korea, explores historical perspective and historical relationship between North Korea and Japan)

### Films

*A State of Mind*: Documentary screened on ABC television on 28 November, 2005. The film follows two young female gymnasts as they prepare to take part in

the annual lavish Mass games in North Korea. It provides a rare and fascinating insight into life in North Korea, one of the world's least known and secretive societies.

### Useful websites

<http://www.han.org/a/fukuoka96a.html>  
(Accessed 6 December 2005)

Essay explaining the history of the approximately 700,000 Koreans living in Japan.

[http://www.smartraveller.gov.au/zw-cgi/view/Advice/North\\_Korea](http://www.smartraveller.gov.au/zw-cgi/view/Advice/North_Korea)  
(Accessed 7 December 2005)

Provides Australian government advice about travelling in North Korea

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/North\\_Korea](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/North_Korea)

(Accessed 7 December 2005)

General information about North Korea, its geography, economic, political and social system

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Juche#Practical\\_application](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Juche#Practical_application)  
(Accessed 7 December 2005)

Detailed explanation of the principle governing all aspects of political and social life in North Korea

[http://www.nkhumanrights.or.kr/bbs/board2/files/246\\_3rd-nishioka\(e27\).doc](http://www.nkhumanrights.or.kr/bbs/board2/files/246_3rd-nishioka(e27).doc)

(Accessed 7 December 2005)

Account of the believed motives of

North Korea for the kidnappings

<http://www.nybooks.com/articles/17721>

(Accessed 8 December 2005)

Extended reviews of two recent books about North Korea:

1. Martin, B.K., *Under the Loving Care of the Fatherly Leader – North Korea and the Kim Dynasty*, Thomas Dunne, St. Martins, 2005.
2. Cha, V.D. and Chang, D.C., *Nuclear North Korea*, Columbia University Press, 2005.

*Marguerite O'Hara is a freelance writer from Melbourne.*



This study guide was produced by **ATOM**  
**damned@netspace.net.au**

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