

Name _____ Date _____

Do words matter? Read these two articles, then using evidence from the text, explain how dangerous you think this war of words between Donald Trump and Kim Jong-Un could be.

Dotard vs. Madman: The Linguistic War Between Trump And Kim

ValueWalk

Polina Tikhonava

22 September 2017

The war of words between the leaders of the U.S. and North Korea has escalated... again. North Korean leader Kim Jong-un threatened to “tame with fire” U.S. President Donald Trump, whom he referred to as “mentally deranged U.S. dotard.”

An official statement released by Kim on Thursday came as an apparent response to Trump’s newly announced economic sanctions on the rogue state. The South Korean government described Kim’s statement as the first such direct address to the world by any North Korean leader.

U.S. President Trump hasn’t let Kim’s statement go unnoticed; he took to Twitter to respond to the North Korean leader’s “dotard” insults and threats on Friday morning.

In his tweet, which was posted at about 6 a.m. Eastern time, Trump described Kim as “obviously a madman who doesn’t mind starving or killing his people,” adding that the North Korean leader “will be tested like never before.”

Trump’s tweet follows a series of threats made against the rogue state earlier this week, including the threat he made on the UN floor to “totally destroy” North Korea if the U.S. or its allies were “forced to defend itself.” In his first speech addressing the UN General Assembly, Trump also referred to Kim as “rocket man.”

The linguistic battle between Trump and Kim

In his statement, Kim also called Trump “a frightened dog” and a “gangster fond of playing with fire.” The North Korean leader accused the U.S. President of making an “unprecedented rude nonsense” remark that he “has never heard from any of his predecessors,” possibly referring to Trump’s “totally destroy” threats on the UN floor.

The statement, which prompted Trump to write the tweet calling Kim a “madman,” was approximately 500 words long when translated to the English language. In the conclusion to his statement, Kim said, “I will surely and definitely tame the mentally deranged U.S. dotard with fire.”

The word “dotard” is rarely used in the 21st century, which is why many people around the world had to Google the arcane insult. According to Google’s dictionary (the first result that the search engine giant shows), “dotard” refers to “an old person, especially one who has become weak or senile.”

Merriam-Webster defines the word “dotard” as “a person in his or her dotage.” The word “dotage,” in turn, is defined as “the period of life in which a person is old and weak.”

The word used by Trump in his tweet on Friday – “madman” – is actually the word publications most often used in coverage about the Republican candidate during the 2016 presidential campaign, according to a computer analysis of 60,000 articles about the then-presidential candidate.

Google defines the word “madman” as “a man who is mentally ill” and “an extremely foolish or reckless person.”

According to Google’s Ngram Viewer, Kim used a word that was commonly used in William Shakespeare’s work. In an analysis of the word “dotard” between 1500 and 2017, use of the noun skyrocketed in Shakespeare’s time and then surged in the mid-1750s through mid-1850s before becoming dormant again.

The word “dotard” was also commonly used to insult Martin Van Buren, the eighth President of the United States (1837–41), according to American Heritage History of the Presidents by Michael R. Beschloss.

It’s not the first time North Korea has resorted to insults when delivering statements about its enemies. The rogue state has a proven track record of using racist, sexist and deplorable insults to describe its rivals. The North Korean state-run media previously called South Korea’s first female president, Park Geun-hye, a “crafty prostitute” and famously referred to former U.S. President Barack Obama as “monkey.”

Kim has previously resorted to letting North Korea's talking heads and news anchors deliver his threats. But Thursday's statement was written in the first person by the leader himself, apparently indicating the seriousness of his threats to the U.S.

North Korea has a lengthy track record of failing to make good on its threats. One such threat was made early last month, when state-run media warned the Kim regime would strike the American territory of Guam, which is home to a key Air Force base.

North Korea threatens to drop a hydrogen bomb in the Pacific Ocean

Hours after Kim's statement, North Korea's foreign minister said Pyongyang could use a hydrogen bomb in the Pacific Ocean in its possible "highest-level" action against the U.S., according to South Korea's Yonhap News.

"It could be the most powerful detonation of an H-bomb in the Pacific," Foreign Minister Ri Yong Ho told reporters.

He added that the government had "no idea" about what "actions could be taken" next as it "will be ordered by leader Kim Jong-Un," indicating that he holds complete power over the Northeast Asian nation.

The "dotard" vs. "madman" war of words follows Trump's announcement of a new set of sanctions against North Korea on Thursday. The new executive order empowered the U.S. Treasury Department to impose economic sanctions on Pyongyang and companies and individuals doing business with the Northeast Asian country.

The escalated tensions between the two leaders come as North Korea continues to advance its nuclear and ballistic missile programs in defiance of the growing international pressure. Earlier this month, Pyongyang conducted its most powerful nuclear test to date, with experts estimating the Sept. 3 explosion to be five times bigger than the atomic bombs the U.S. dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945.

It is also believed that the rogue state is moving closer to developing a nuclear-tipped missile that could strike the U.S. mainland. In recent weeks, Pyongyang has fired two ballistic missiles over Japan in an apparent response to the mounting international pressure and economic sanctions imposed by the UN Security Council.

Earlier this month, the UN Security Council approved the latest round of economic sanctions targeting the North Korean government and individuals and companies that provide goods, services or technology to the pariah state. The sanctions were reportedly watered down by Washington in order to win the support of Russia and China, two permanent security council members which have opposed America's tough actions against the North in the past.

President Trump's U.N. Speech Is Exactly What Kim Jong Un Wanted to Hear

Time

Charlie Campbell / Beijing

Sep 19, 2017

All year every year, streams of North Korean schoolchildren make the pilgrimage to Sinchon, a farming town south of Pyongyang. There, a palatial museum teaches them a fundamental lesson: America is the enemy.

Each diorama-filled room of the Sinchon Museum of United States Atrocities is dedicated to the "jackals that infiltrated into all areas of life of the Korean people to suck blood out of the country." From brainwashing missionaries to the "Hitler-esque" U.S. troops — who, displays claim, slaughtered 35,000 civilians nearby at the start of the 1950-53 Korean War — America is portrayed as craving to exterminate the "free" people of Korea.

"The massacres committed by the U.S. imperialist aggressors in Sinchon evidently showed that they are cannibals and homicides seeking pleasure in slaughter," Supreme Leader Kim Jong Un said during a visit in 2014, according to state news agency KCNA.

Trump is playing into the hands of the Stalinist regime's victim complex by threatening its annihilation. Such rhetoric endorses the propaganda posters that pepper the isolated state, urging "death to U.S. imperialists," and for its embattled 25 million populace to remain on a war footing, sacrificing freedoms to be in a state of perpetual combat readiness.

"This is just a boon to North Korea," Prof. Stephan Haggard, a Korea expert at the UC San Diego School of Global Policy, says of Trump's speech. "Because you have a regime that has built its entire existence around the idea that the United States is out to destroy them, and the U.S. President is saying just that."