Mao and Gandhi
Alternate Paths to
National Independence and Social Change

A Unit of Study for Grades 9–12

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I. UNIT OVERVIEW

Among the giants of the twentieth century, Mao Zedong (1893–1978) and Mohandas Gandhi (1869–1948), stand out as exemplars of contrasting philosophies of nationalism, economic development and especially the place of violence in modern political life. Mao’s famous dictum that “political power grows out of the barrel of a gun” places him squarely in the tradition of military might and physical force as the best methods to achieve social change, while Gandhi clung, all the while he engaged in his “Experiments With Truth,” to the value of Ahisma, or non-violence to any living thing. Ironically Mao, the man of might, died a natural death at age 85; while Gandhi, the man of personal and political peace, died by an assassin’s bullet at age 79.

Both Gandhi and Mao were born into comfortable circumstances: Gandhi, the son of a minor government bureaucrat and Mao to a well-to-do educated family. Yet both chose to identify with the poor villagers and farmers who made up a vast majority of both India and China during the first half of this century. Both men mobilized mass movements of common people, each faced a form of western imperial and colonial rule, both espoused not only political independence but insisted on changing the hearts and minds of people, not only in their own nations but around the world. Each man left lasting legacies in India and China as well as large ideological followings around the globe. Mao helped shape the French student movement of 1968, the Vietnamese and Cuban nationalist movements, and continues to influence a strong group of American students and professors to this day. Gandhi, whose political legacy probably has not been as significant as Mao’s, nonetheless greatly influenced the Martin Luther King wing of the Civil Rights movement, the Nelson Mandela faction of the African National Congress, and peace movements around the world.

Gandhi and Mao worked out their methods of social reconstruction during the waning days of European colonialism and the nascent development of nationalism among the colonized people in Asia and Africa. Both leaders were challenged to expand their nationalist movements beyond the small middle class educated elite to the broad stream of mass support and participation. Each man sought in his own way to infuse his respective nationalist consciousness with a revolutionary element of personal transformation drawn from the rich traditions of China and India, culminating in large scale social reform. In that sense both hoped to resocialize their people to become a new “Maoist man,” and “Gandhian man.”

The idealism that shaped the Maoist and Gandhian movements in the first half of this century has largely eroded in contemporary China and India. In the aftermath of the Cultural Revolution the Deng Shao Ping inspired move to a market economy has taken China a considerable distance from Mao’s idea of the “socialist man.” At the same time India, after Nehru’s efforts prior
to 1963 to combine socialist and Gandhian principles of peace and non-violence, has also come
to accept both market economic principles and factional interest politics as normative. In the
wake of the increasing irrelevancy of Mao and Gandhi, their own nations have drifted into a
moral vacuum where self-interest and materialism largely shape cultural values.

II. UNIT CONTEXT

This unit focuses on the historic period from 1920 to 1966 when Mao Zedong and Mohandas
Gandhi constructed and applied their social and moral visions to their respective nationalist
movements. These leaders developed contrasting methods to achieve social change and to es-
\\-tablish the goals set for achieving the ideal society. Each had differing ideas about the place of
industry and agriculture, the values and symbols needed to mobilize people, the place of vio-
lence and force in effecting social change, and the role of personal morality in the larger arena
of public morality.

This unit may be taught as part of a twentieth-century world history course or as a section in an
elective course on nationalism or comparative politics. Both Gandhi and Mao have been sub-
jects of a large number of biographies and analyses of nearly every aspect of their lives and
thought. There is, of course, no definitive interpretation of either leader. This unit seeks to place
before the student selected primary sources taken from each man’s writings to encourage the
student to make analytical comparisons.

III. CORRELATION TO THE NATIONAL HISTORY STANDARDS

Mao and Gandhi: Alternate Paths to National Independence and Social Change provides
\\-teaching materials that address the National Standards for History, Basic Edition (Na-
tional Center for History in the Schools, UCLA, 1996) World History Era 7 and 8. Lessons
specifically address Standards 5C in Era 7, ‘An Age of Revolutions,’ 1750–1914, and Stan-
dards 1B and 5B on Era 8, ‘The Twentieth Century.’

IV. UNIT OBJECTIVES

♦ To examine the lives of Mao Zedong and Mohandas Gandhi.

♦ To contrast the views of Mao and Gandhi on the use of violence as a personal and
political method.

♦ To contrast the place of ends and means in the philosophies of Mao and Gandhi.

♦ To contrast Mao’s and Gandhi’s views on colonialism and the “oppressor.”

♦ To compare and contrast Gandhi’s and Mao’s approaches to mobilizing mass support.

♦ To compare and contrast Gandhi’s and Mao’s views on industrialization and modernization.
V. LESSON PLANS

1. Mao’s and Gandhi’s Attitudes toward Violence
2. Applying Mao’s and Gandhi’s Attitudes toward Violence as a Means of Effecting Social Change.
3. The Long March and the Salt March
4. A Comparison of Mao’s and Gandhi’s Approach to Development
5. Mao’s and Gandhi’s Views on the Distribution of Wealth and their Attitudes toward the Rich
6. Application of Gandhi’s and Mao’s Approaches to Reform
7. Speaking with Images
VI. TIMELINE

1869  
♦ Mohandas Gandhi born in Porbandar, Gujerat

1885  
♦ Founding of the Indian National Congress

1893  
♦ Gandhi begins work in South Africa
  ♦ Mao Zedong is born

1895  
♦ Sino-Japanese War

1898  
♦ Boxer Uprising in China

1896  
♦ Gandhi first tests Satyagraha methods

1905  
♦ Partition of Bengal

1906  
♦ Gandhi opens Phoenix Ashram, takes vows of Brahmacharaya

1911  
♦ Chinese Revolution led by Sun Yat Sen

1914  
♦ World War I begins
  ♦ Gandhi returns to India

1919  
♦ Amritsar Massacre
  ♦ Gandhi moves to forefront of Nationalist Movement
  ♦ May 4th Movement in China

1920  
♦ Gandhi leads Non-Cooperation Campaign against British

1922  
♦ Gandhi sentenced to six years for civil disobedience

1924  
♦ United front between Guomindang and Communist Party

1925  
♦ Sun Yat Sen dies
  ♦ Gandhi stresses reforms of untouchability

1926  
♦ Chiang Kai-shek heads Guomindang and begins Northern Expedition
  ♦ Mao Zedong begins work with rural peasants in Hunan Province

1927  
♦ Kiangsi (Jiangxi) Peasant revolts
  ♦ Failed workers' uprisings in Shanghai and Canton

1930  
♦ Dandi Salt March; beginning of Gandhi's Civil Disobedience Campaign
  ♦ Chaing Kai-shek launches military action to wipe out Communist forces in Kaingsi (Jiangxi)

1931  
♦ Gandhi goes to England for negotiations

1932  
♦ Gandhi fasts against untouchability and is arrested
  ♦ Congress Party declared illegal
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event(s)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1933</td>
<td>Chaing Kai-shek launches last all-out attack on Communists in Kiangsi</td>
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<tr>
<td>1934</td>
<td>Long March begins</td>
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<tr>
<td>1935</td>
<td>Remnants of Communist forces arrive in Yenen</td>
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<tr>
<td>1937</td>
<td>Japanese seize Peking [Beijing], Tientsin, Shanghai, Nanking and Hangchow; Mao leads Communist forces in war against Japan</td>
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<td>1939</td>
<td>World War II begins</td>
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<tr>
<td>1941</td>
<td>Japanese bomb Pearl Harbor; U.S. enters war</td>
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<td>1942</td>
<td>Quit India Movement begins</td>
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<tr>
<td>1945</td>
<td>Germany surrenders; Japan surrenders</td>
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<td>1946</td>
<td>Civil War begins between Guomindang and Communists; Marshall Mission to China</td>
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<tr>
<td>1947</td>
<td>Indian independence</td>
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<tr>
<td>1948</td>
<td>Gandhi assassinated; Chiang Kai-Shek elected President of China</td>
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<td>1949</td>
<td>Chiang Kai-shek resigns as president of China; takes forces to Taiwan; Mao Zedong proclaims Peoples Republic of China; India adopts Constitution; Jawaharlal Nehru becomes first prime minister</td>
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<tr>
<td>1950</td>
<td>North Korea invades South Korea; China comes to the aid of North Korea</td>
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<td>1953</td>
<td>Korean War ends</td>
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<tr>
<td>1958</td>
<td>Great Leap Forward begins</td>
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<tr>
<td>1967</td>
<td>Cultural Revolution begins; Indira Gandhi elected Prime Minister of India</td>
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<tr>
<td>1972</td>
<td>President Nixon visits China; U.S. recognizes China</td>
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<tr>
<td>1976</td>
<td>Cultural Revolution ends; Zhou Enlai dies</td>
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<tr>
<td>1978</td>
<td>Mao Zedong dies</td>
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