

#9012

1949: GREAT LEAP

PBS VIDEO

1999

Grade Levels: 10-13+

57 minutes



DESCRIPTION

Archival footage and personal reflections help document this retrospective look at Mao Zedong's long leadership of China. Follows his broad, sweeping reforms, including communes, the Cultural Revolution, and the Red Guard.

ACADEMIC STANDARDS

Subject Area: World History (1900-1945)

- Standard: Understands the search for peace and stability throughout the world in the 1920s and 1930s
 - Benchmark: Understands elements of social and political change in China in the early 20th century (e.g., which populations supported the Kuomintang and the Chinese Communist Party, and how the Japanese invasion of China in the 1930s changed viewpoints regarding these two parties; how Mao Zedong adapted Marxism to Chinese needs and how he viewed the peasantry as a revolutionary force; the goals and outcomes of the three major revolutions in China in the first half of the century)
- Standard: Understands how post-World War II reconstruction occurred, new international power relations took shape, and colonial empires broke up
 - Benchmark: Understands factors that influenced political conditions in China after World War II (e.g., how much of the Communist success in the Chinese civil war was the result of Mao Zedong's leadership or Jiang Jieshi's lack of leadership, why rifts developed in the relationships between the U.S.S.R. and China in spite of the common bond of Communist-led government)
- Standard: Understands the search for community, stability, and peace in an interdependent world
 - Benchmark: Understands how specific countries have implemented social and cultural changes (e.g., the different manifestations of China's contingency quest for a "new culture" throughout the 20th century, and what the Cultural Revolution meant for Chinese people in the late 1960s; model for family life, the economy, and social and political institutions suggested by modern Muslim intellectuals)

INSTRUCTIONAL GOALS

1. To study Chairman Mao's introduction of communism to China.
2. To define the difference between *reform* and *revolution*.
3. To research how the Chinese revolution changed people's lives.
4. To compare life before and after communism.

BEFORE SHOWING

1. Define the difference between *reform* and *revolution*. How do revolutions encompass social, economic, and political reforms? Ask students to share what they know about past revolutions.
2. Have students write down specific ways the Chinese revolution changed ordinary people's lives.
3. Give examples of peer pressure in your life. Why do you think many teenagers conform to certain behavior? How do teenagers use pressure to coerce peers to conform? How do television and radio commercials use slogans to encourage certain behavior? How does conformity among adults compare to conformity among teenagers? Do you think it is human nature to conform? Explain.
4. Have students write down the Chinese government's strategies to promote conformity among young people during the Cultural Revolution.

AFTER SHOWING

Discussion Items and Questions

1. What conditions contributed to the communists' victory? How did the Chinese government try to change the lives of ordinary people and why?
2. Before communism, Chinese peasant Hu Benxu recalls, "There was justice for the rich but none for the poor...You can't believe how badly the poor were treated." Did the communists bring justice for the poor? Based on Qi Youyi's quotation, do you think he believes the actions he describes were just? Why or why not? Do you think that they were just? Why or why not?
3. Why did Mao launch the Cultural Revolution? Why do you think he chose young people to be the revolution's vanguard? What qualities associated with youth might have made students eager to follow his precepts? Why do you think students were willing to denounce, torture, and kill people they knew well?
4. Beijing opera singer Tong Xiangling says, "As artists, we were engineers of human souls." Why was cultural change an instrumental part of political and economic change in the Cultural Revolution? When, if ever, should a government use culture to reinforce ideology or reforms? What is lost materially and psychologically when a government destroys parts of a country's cultural heritage?

Applications and Activities

1. Have students research the May 1989 crackdown in Tiananmen Square. First, divide the class into four groups: supporters of the Chinese democracy movement, communist leaders, American reporters, and Chinese reporters. After the groups research their assigned roles, have the first two groups present their philosophies and goals to their followers or constituents. Then have the second two groups report their versions of the speeches for their newspapers. Compare and discuss the results.
2. Have students explore different perspectives on China today by examining the debate over granting China "most favored nation" trading status. Ask students to research different points of view on the United States' economic and political relationship with China. Remind students to consider China's rapid economic growth in the twentieth century, reacquisition of Hong Kong, and record on human rights. Then have them imagine they are a cabinet member or advisor and write a memo to the president recommending a course of action.

3. Have students read the introduction and first chapter of *Son of the Revolution*, a memoir by Heng Liang and Judith Shapiro (Knopf, 1983). Then ask students to write their reactions to the experiences Liang describes and to share their reactions with the class. Discuss how the revolution shaped Liang's family life, how personal and political aspects of life became intertwined, how the events and conditions described in the chapter laid the groundwork for the revolution, and how the experiences of Liang's generation might have prepared them for their role in it. To follow up, have students read the rest of the book, or read and write reports on other memoirs about this time period.

RELATED RESOURCES



Captioned Media Program

- 1945-1989: The Cold War #3203
- Assignment: China #3105
- China: Turning to the 21st Century #3448



World Wide Web

The following Web sites complement the contents of this guide; they were selected by professionals who have experience in teaching deaf and hard of hearing students. Every effort was made to select accurate, educationally relevant, and "kid safe" sites. However, teachers should preview them before use. The U.S. Department of Education, the National Association of the Deaf, and the Captioned Media Program do not endorse the sites and are not responsible for their content.

- **DISCOVERING CHINA**

<http://library.thinkquest.org/26469/cultural-revolution/aftermath.html>

A ThinkQuest site, examine the aftermath of China's Cultural Revolution. History, background, impact, aftermath, victims, trial, what's happening today, and interview with a worker who experienced the revolution.

- **HISTORY OF CHINA**

<http://www-chaos.umd.edu/history/toc.html>

Presents a table of contents for selection of a particular period in Chinese history. Includes Post-Mao period, 1976-78.

- **INTERNET EAST ASIAN HISTORY SOURCEBOOK**

<http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/eastasia/eastasiasbook.html>

Comprehensive site of subset of texts derived from three major online references, as well as added texts and links, about the history of China, as well as Japan, Korea, and other Asian countries.

- **CONDENSED CHINA: CHINESE HISTORY FOR BEGINNERS**

<http://asterius.com/china/>

Beginning at 2200 B.C., this is a quick-paced history of the country up to the present Hong Kong countdown. From the bronze-making Shang era to the Great Wall-building Ming Dynasty, the site covers the main events and people throughout Chinese history. Most of the major figures are described, including of Qin Shihuangdi, the first Emperor of China; Confucius; and Mao Zedong.