

**Exploring Mao-Era Campaigns through Print, Visuals, and Oral Histories**  
**Developed for NCTA**  
**at the Program for Teaching East Asia, University of Colorado Boulder**

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**Most recent TEA NCTA program you completed and/or the program that motivated this lesson:** The program that I took was on the Mao Era in the Peoples Republic of China (Fall 2022).

**Lesson recommended grade level:** High School World History

**Lesson estimated number of days or class periods:** Four 90-minute class periods

**Lesson overview/introduction:**

The Mao era course was the first program I've ever taken through NCTA and it was exciting to see a bit of modern history about China. I still don't know much about this area of the world. However, I intend on taking more classes as I progress through my professional development.

I decided to develop this lesson because I believe in a multi-modal approach and in having students do most of the work. My philosophy on teaching is that students learn more from each other and from their own research than they do from me. This lesson allows students to investigate the Mao era through pictures, reading and writing, and interviews with real people.

The focus of this multi-day lesson is to raise student awareness of policies and their repercussions during periods in the Mao era. Students will analyze propaganda posters from three different time periods--Land Reform and Collectivization (1950-53), the Great Leap Forward (1958-1962), and the Cultural Revolution (1966-76). They will then participate in a jigsaw comparing the propaganda posters with Newsela articles. (Note: Newsela is a literacy-focused edtech company that is free with an account.) To culminate the activity, students will create a poster noting the impacts the three campaigns had on ordinary people using the "[Chinese History Memory Project](#)" and the other materials they have learned about.

This lesson engages students with multiple online resources. Students first analyze visual resources—public information and propaganda posters from different periods of the Mao era; articles available on the website Newsela; and the Memory Project, an oral history film project focusing on the famine that resulted from the Great Leap Forward.

**Lesson objectives/outcomes:** Students will be better able to:

- Identify three distinctive campaigns during the Mao era—Land reform and Collectivization, the Great Leap Forward, and the Cultural Revolution--by reading and analyzing the progression of public information posters. Students will be able to make a comparison and contrast between a propaganda poster and a Newsela reading.
- Develop visual literacy skills.
- Engage with a variety of online research resources.
- Share with other students what they learned from a variety of sources including propaganda posters and Newsela readings.
- Synthesize and articulate their research and new knowledge through a poster project.

**Ties to standards:** [Colorado Academic Standards](#), H.S. Social Studies 1.3.a, b & d

- a. Evaluate continuity and change over the course of world history.
- b. Investigate causes and effects of significant events throughout world history.
- d. Examine and evaluate issues of unity and diversity throughout world history

### **Materials and handouts:**

Access to the Internet

Library of Congress Tool for evaluating primary sources and images

- [https://www.loc.gov/static/programs/teachers/getting-started-with-primary-sources/documents/Primary\\_Source\\_Analysis\\_Tool\\_LOC.pdf](https://www.loc.gov/static/programs/teachers/getting-started-with-primary-sources/documents/Primary_Source_Analysis_Tool_LOC.pdf)

Propaganda Posters on Mao's policies

- <https://chineseposters.net/themes/land-reform>
- <https://chineseposters.net/themes/great-leap-forward>
- <https://chineseposters.net/themes/cultural-revolution-campaigns>

Articles for student work, from Newsela and other sources. Note:

Newsela requires teachers to join.

- Land Reform Movement (China) – Wikipedia  
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Land\\_Reform\\_Movement\\_\(China\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Land_Reform_Movement_(China))
- The Cultural Revolution: All you need to know about China's political convulsion – Tom Phillips, The Guardian, 2019 <https://newsela.com/read/lib-china-cultural-revolution/id/57745/>
- China's Great Famine: A mission to expose the truth – Allison Griner, Al Jazeera 2019  
<https://newsela.com/read/lib-china-great-famine/id/55161/>
- The Chinese Revolution of 1949 – U.S. Department of State, Office of the Historian, 2019 - <https://newsela.com/read/lib-chinese-revolution-1949/id/57753/>

Access to Chinese Memory Project

- <http://chinesememoryproject.org/>

Handouts and Lecture materials

- General information on Mao for Day 1, Step 3: Asia for Educators website:  
[http://afe.easia.columbia.edu/special/china\\_1900\\_mao\\_early.htm](http://afe.easia.columbia.edu/special/china_1900_mao_early.htm).
- Student handout: Mao Era Jigsaw (included with this lesson)

- Mao teacher lecture notes.  
<https://www.colorado.edu/ptea/MaoTeacherLectureNotesNovinger>
- School Supplies: one folder per table, one dry erase marker per table, page protectors for each poster.
- Annotation expectations for students (close reading)
- Canva ([www.canva.com](http://www.canva.com)) or other poster making program (google docs works pretty well)
- A grading rubric (individual teacher's design)
- Timer - <https://classroomscreen.com/>

## **Procedure:**

### ***Day 1 & 2: Exploring Posters of 3 Mao Era Campaigns***

1. In advance, download posters from the Internet sites noted above, collecting enough posters for each table (I have eight groups of four, so I would use eight posters). Place posters in page protectors (seal with clear tape if you would like) and place them in folders for each table. In class, give each table a dry erase marker and a tissue or eraser. This allows students to annotate the picture without actually writing on the picture.
2. Begin the class with an Anticipatory Set by asking for a journal entry of a few sentences: What do you already know about the Mao Era in Chinese history? What would you like to know?
3. Present a 10- to 15-minute lecture about the Mao era as an introduction to the activity. General information on Mao is available at the Asia for Educators website:  
[http://afe.easia.columbia.edu/special/china\\_1900\\_mao\\_early.htm](http://afe.easia.columbia.edu/special/china_1900_mao_early.htm).
4. Set up the student activity with the following overview/instructions.
  - a. Give each group of students a folder with a poster from the Mao Era and a brief explanation of the poster. For explanations: I would advise telling the students which campaign their posters came from, with a date and a translation. Most of this information is available on the [chineseposters.net](http://chineseposters.net) website.) Allow the groups time for the activity and then ask them to pass posters on until each table of students has seen and analyzed all posters.
  - b. Give each student enough primary source tools to analyze every poster. (I made 8 for my students.)
  - c. Tell students they can draw on the posters with the dry erase marker as long as they erase it before they pass it to the next table. This may help with understanding of the poster.

- d. Working within their groups, students will discuss how to fill out the Library of Congress primary source tool for every poster.  
[https://www.loc.gov/static/programs/teachers/getting-started-with-primary-sources/documents/Primary\\_Source\\_Analysis\\_Tool\\_LOC.pdf](https://www.loc.gov/static/programs/teachers/getting-started-with-primary-sources/documents/Primary_Source_Analysis_Tool_LOC.pdf)
- e. Give students approximately 10 minutes for each poster, and then ask them to pass their posters to the next table. (Timing is dependent on the level of the class. AP students may take less time, GE students may take more time.)
- f. After they have developed an understanding of each poster, students will put their Library of Congress primary source tools in timeline order and write a paragraph about the progression of posters, responding to the following prompt: How did the Mao Era posters progress from posters created during the Land Reform and Collectivization campaign (early 1950s), through the Great Leap Forward (approximately 1958-62) through the Cultural Revolution (1966-76)?  
I assign a 10-sentence paragraph, which must include an Intro, thesis, piece of evidence #1, reasoning #1, piece of evidence #2, reasoning #2, piece of evidence #3, reasoning #3, restate thesis, conclusion.

### Day 3: Mao Era Campaigns Jigsaw

1. Advance prep for the jigsaw. Use the same folders from the day before with the posters in them. Add Newsela articles to them that might closest match the poster and make sure there are enough copies of the Newsela articles for each member of the group. Add worksheets to the folders and make sure there are enough worksheets for each member of the group. The math for the jigsaws is dependent on the number of students you have in class.
2. Anticipatory Set: Journal Entry: At least two sentences. Describe one of the three campaigns that we have discussed in our groups.
3. First rotation
  - a. Pass out the Jigsaw activity sheet (located at the end of this lesson) and folders to each group.
  - b. Have students assign tasks for each member of the group. For example: for groups of four, two readers to read out loud to the group, one member to annotate the article, and one to take notes.
  - c. Have students read and annotate the article and get the Jigsaw worksheet filled out. They will have to compare and contrast between the articles and the posters provided in the folder.
4. Second rotation
  - a. Rotate students so that they are at a different table with different group members.
  - b. Make sure each student has a different article and different poster. If you have an odd number of students it's ok to have two of the same posters or two of the same articles.
  - c. Each student will "teach" the other students about their article and poster. The group will work together to answer the questions on the worksheet. Each

- student will have up to four responses for each question. (one for each article).
- d. Within their groups they will compare and contrast each article and poster on ordinary people and write a 10-sentence paragraph. For my class, a 10-sentence paragraph is: Intro, Thesis, piece of evidence #1, reasoning #1, piece of evidence #2, reasoning #2, piece of evidence #3, reasoning #3, restate thesis, conclusion.

#### **Day 4: Culminating poster project (The Great Leap Forward)**

1. Advance prep. Make sure posters, articles, and access to the “Chinese Memory Project” <http://chinesememoryproject.org/> are available for students. (Sometimes this requires a phone call to the tech department). I usually put posters and articles in Google Classroom so that every student has access to all of the parts.
2. Anticipatory Set: Assign a journal entry of at least two sentences with the prompt: Which of the three campaigns that we have studied do you believe had the most impact on ordinary citizens?
3. Have students investigate the “Memory Project” Website. Have them become familiar with the timeline, the interviews and other aspects of the website. I usually guide them through the website with on screen technology.
4. Culminating project. As a culminating project, students will create a poster in CANVA (or other poster making technology) discussing the Great Leap Forward and the impacts that it had on ordinary people. Students should be required to draw upon evidence they have gathered from poster analysis, articles, and the Memory Project as a way to articulate impacts of the Great Leap Forward on different groups in China during the period.

Provide students with the following parameters for the project. Each poster must have:

- A minimum of five sentences discussing the impacts the Great Leap Forward had on individuals.
- Description of one real person that was impacted by The Great Leap Forward.
- Inclusion or reference to one Chinese poster from that campaign.
- Ten pictures or photographs that articulate what was happening during that campaign.

Note: At this time, the “Memory Project” is mostly about the Great Leap Forward and the Great Famine, however, the homepage of this site talks about having interviews available soon from the three campaigns that are discussed in this lesson plan. The goal is to give students real-world people with real-world memories about these campaigns and what they were like.

#### **Assessments:**

Formative Assessments:

- Library of Congress Primary Source Tools

- Ten-sentence paragraph about posters
- Worksheet from Jigsaw
- Ten-sentence paragraph about articles and posters

Summative Assessment: Poster synthesizing research and learning, drawing on Mao Era posters, articles and The Memory Project

## Student Handout: Mao Era Jigsaw

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Class: \_\_\_\_\_

### PART 1: Group 1

#### Step 1:

Read and annotate the article that you are given with your group. Assign a task to each member of your group. Tasks are as follows:

**2 Readers:** Read the article aloud to the group alternating between sections

**Annotator:** Annotates the article (Only 1 article needs to be annotated)

**Note Taker:** Fills out the Worksheet

Everyone must have a worksheet filled out!

Name of your

article: \_\_\_\_\_

Group Members and Task

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Task: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name \_\_\_\_\_ Task: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name \_\_\_\_\_ Task: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name \_\_\_\_\_ Task: \_\_\_\_\_

#### Step 2:

Answer the following questions in complete sentences.

1. What is your article about?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

2. What Mao Era campaign is prominent in your article (Land Reform, The Great Leap Forward or the Cultural Revolution?)

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

3. What impact did these campaigns have on Chinese people?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

4. Look at the poster provided with your reading: Compare your article and what the poster looks like?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

5. Look at the poster provided with your reading: Contrast your article and what the poster looks like?

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**PART 2: Group 2**

In your second group discuss your articles. Make sure you write about your own as well:

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Article:

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Article:

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Article:

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Article:

1. What Mao Era campaign was prominent in each article?

- a. \_\_\_\_\_
- b. \_\_\_\_\_
- c. \_\_\_\_\_
- d. \_\_\_\_\_

2. How did each campaign impact the Chinese People?

- a. \_\_\_\_\_
- b. \_\_\_\_\_
- c. \_\_\_\_\_
- d. \_\_\_\_\_

3. What campaign does each poster represent?

- a. \_\_\_\_\_
- b. \_\_\_\_\_
- c. \_\_\_\_\_
- d. \_\_\_\_\_

4. Within your groups Compare and Contrast posters and articles and their impacts on ordinary people. Write a 10 sentence (minimum) paragraph.