

Moving Beyond the Mao Years: Analyzing Mao and Post-Mao Policies in China
An Experiential Activity
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 most recent program I completed was the *What's Happening to China's Uyghurs and Why It Matters* in the fall of 2022. The program that motivated the lesson was the 2009 Colorado NCTA 30-hour seminar on East Asia and the Hanban NCTA Delegation trip to China in the summer of 2009.

Lesson recommended grade level: high school world history course

Lesson estimated number of days or class periods: Three 50-minute classes

Lesson overview/introduction:

Students will experience the political, economic, and social changes that occurred in China as they moved from a communist to capitalist economic system in the post-Mao era.

In this activity, students will reenact the three economic stages that China experienced in the latter half of the 20th century by assuming roles of individuals in Communist China- either a farming peasant, a government official, an iron rice bowl worker (an urban industrial worker), or an entrepreneur. In the first stage, students experience the Chinese command economy under Chairman Mao. Then, they experience the breakup of the communal system and start of the Special Economic Zones under the leader Deng Xiaoping. Finally, they experience the decline of the state-run industrials as the government closes state-owned businesses transfers production to for-profit industries.

After each stage, the teacher debriefs the experience and then provides a historical summary of what happened.

Lesson objectives:

- Identify social, political, and economic changes China experienced as it moved through three economic stages including:
 - 1) the command economy under Mao Zedong;
 - 2) the breakup of the communal system and start of the Special Economic Zones under the leader of Deng Xiaoping; and
 - 3) the decline of the state-run industrials as the government closes state-owned businesses transferred production to for-profit industries.

- Explain different points of view regarding the transition community to capitalist economic system.

Materials and handouts:

- 14 Role cards (3 government officials, 8 iron rice bowl/urban industrial workers, and 3 entrepreneurs. The remaining students should be peasants.)
- Newsflash cards
- Moving Beyond Mao PowerPoint
- Signs for each group's location
- Model car cut outs
- Job application forms
- Scratch paper
- Scissors
- Markers
- Candy
- Mao Years and Beyond PowerPoint
- Prologue of the Frontline Video "Tank Man" located for free at <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/tankman/> (Minutes 4-9 of the video)
- Mao Years and Beyond student notes fill-in

Procedure:

1. Using the "purpose" slide on the PowerPoint, explain to students that they will be participating in an experiential activity in which they will experience the transitions that many Chinese felt during the decades following Mao's death.
2. Using the PowerPoint, review the starting directions that explain the actions students will need to make in the first stage of the experiential activity.
3. Distribute the role cards to all students. Review the background information that is written on the top of each role card. Show where each group will be situated in the classroom and where the supplies are located.
4. Have students get into their groups. Make sure that they understand the background information and the tasks they will be performing.
5. Give students time to accomplish their tasks. During this time, give the government officials some candy and have them read newsflash #1 aloud to the class.
6. After students have produced a few goods, have the government officials read newsflash #2 and announce the amount that each group has produced, according to their records. Then, pass out the candy. Make sure to give very little to the peasants, more to the iron bowl workers, and a good amount to the government officials.
7. Ask students to get out their sheet of loose-leaf paper, write their responses to the questions under the title of Journal #1. Then discuss their responses. The questions for Journal #1 are written on the Moving Beyond Mao PowerPoint and below:
 - A) How did you feel about your role in the simulation? Explain.
 - B) List 5 observations you made about your role and the role of others in the activity.

8. Pass out the Leadership of Deng Xiaoping role cards and review the background information.
9. Move the entrepreneurs to their own part of the classroom.
10. Make sure that each group understands their new roles and the tasks they will be performing. When speaking with the government officials interview them about their education, age, and feelings on the new direction of the party.
11. Have the government officials read newsflash #3 aloud to the class about the one-child policy and take the coupons from the iron rice bowl workers accordingly.
12. After students have produced goods, have the government officials read newsflash #4 aloud to the class and the amount that the factories produced, according to their records. Then, pass out the candy. Make sure to give generously to the peasant, less to the iron bowl workers, a little less to the government officials than was distributed before, and lots to the entrepreneurs.
13. Ask students to write a response on their sheet of loose-leaf paper to questions on the following questions under the title of Journal #2. Then discuss their responses. The questions are written below and on the Moving Beyond Mao PowerPoint.
 - A) List 5 observations you made about your role and the role of others in the activity.
 - B) What are the advantages of your role under Deng Xiaoping? What are the disadvantages?
14. Pass out the Restructuring the Economy role cards and review the background information.
15. Make sure that each group understands their new roles and the tasks they will be performing. Give the government officials a piece of candy for each iron bowl worker they will be laying off.
16. Help to direct the laid off workers to the unemployment section where they will be filling out job applications.
17. While students are producing goods, have the government officials read newsflash #5 aloud to the rest of the class. Go around to each student and take away either candy or goods/food they are producing.
18. After the students have produced goods, filled out their applications, etc. announce that they will be paid for their efforts. Pay the entrepreneurs first- let them determine how to pay their workers. Next, pay the government officials, the rice bowl workers, and then the peasants. The peasants should earn less than before.

19. Ask students to write a response on their sheet of loose-leaf paper to questions on the following questions under the title of Journal #3. Then, discuss their responses. The questions are written below and on the Moving Beyond Mao PowerPoint.
- A) What are the advantages of your role under the economic restructuring?
What are the disadvantages?
 - B) What changes in Chinese values did you witness during the simulation?
 - C) In your opinion, was the economic transformation that occurred in the experiential activity overall helpful or harmful to Chinese citizens?
Explain.
20. Using the Mao Years and Beyond PowerPoint provide students with an overview of the historical reality of the experiential, students may follow along filling in the notes. When you arrive to the Frontline video slide, watch the Prologue of the Frontline Video “Tank Man” located for free at <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/tankman/> (Minutes 4-9 of the video)
21. Then, have students them write a paragraph using their journals and the lecture notes that explains how their experiences in the Moving Beyond Mao activity reflected the historical realities in China during the latter half of the 20th century.

Formative Assessment:

Student paragraphs comparing their experience during the Moving Beyond Mao activity to the historical reality of China in the latter half of the 20th Century.

Bibliography:

Choices Program Curricular Units, *China on the World Stage: Weighing the U.S. Response*. 13th edition. Thomas J. Watson Institute for International Studies at Brown University, 2019.

Ebrey, Patricia, Anne Walthall, and James Palais. *East Asia: A Cultural, Social, and Political History*. Third Edition. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2013.

Background of the PowerPoint provided at historyteacher.net