

## Deng Xiaoping's Economic Reforms

### Are Choices Worth the Costs?

#### *What was special about Deng Xiaoping's economic choices?*

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**Subject Areas:** Grades 7 World History/Contemporary Issues

#### **NCTA/TEA Seminars:**

Classic Seminar, 2006

Study Tour to China, 2007

Visualizing Japan in Modern World History, 2009

Visualizing Japan: Teaching with Popular Art, 2011

Becoming Modern: Early 20th-Century Japan through Primary Sources, 2014

*Last Train Home* Movie Analysis, 2020

The original 2006 seminar and the 2007 study tour to China were the programs that sparked the development of this lesson and the larger unit the lesson is a part of. *The Last Train Home* Movie Analysis Seminar in 2020 added to the great resources and learning provided by NCTA and TEA.

#### **Iowa State Social Studies Standards:**

IA SS.7.18. Explain and evaluate how economic decisions affect the well-being of individuals, businesses, and society.

IA SS.7.19. Explain how external benefits, costs, supply and demand, and competition influence market prices, wages, and outcomes.

IA SS.7.20. Investigate the impact of trade policies and barriers on a nation and its citizens.

**Time Required:** 3-5 class periods, depending on how many resources are used.

#### **Introduction:**

When Mao Zedong died in 1976, China began radical changes under the new leader Deng Xiaoping. Deng was a lifelong communist, but understood that China would once again be left behind unless it allowed for at least some of the Western capitalistic ways. This lesson has students explore a variety of resources about what these new policies were and how they both immediately and forever transformed China.

**Learning Objectives:** After completing this lesson students should be able to:

- Explain who Deng Xiaoping was and describe Special Economic Zones.

- Conduct independent or group research, summarize key findings and share through written and oral communication.
- Evaluate sources.
- Evaluate how economic policies under Deng impacted people in China.
- Apply decision-making skills.

### Preparation to Teach the Lesson:

Students will not need any specific prior knowledge in order to do this lesson. Some potentially helpful things to pre-teach might be basic definitions of a market economy and command economy. A basic understanding of what China was like prior to 1976 would also enhance understanding of the impact of these economic policies. This lesson could be part of a larger economics unit. This lesson was originally the last lesson in a larger unit comparing economic decisions of a) the Qing Dynasty and the Canton System, b) Mao's First Five Year Plan and the Great Leap Forward, and c) Deng Xiaoping's Special Economic Zones (SEZs).

### Lesson Materials:

To introduce China, Deng & the SEZs

- [Infographic: 70 years of Economic Development](#)
- Handout 1: Introduction to Deng Xiaoping & Special Economic Zones
- Handout 2A: Q-Notes or 2B: Alternative Skeletal Q-Notes for Introduction to Deng Xiaoping
- Blank Map of China (not provided)

For student research on the impact of the Special Economic Zones, the teacher may choose to use any or all of the following resources to explore the impact of the SEZ

- \* Matt Sciavenza, [Mapping China's Inequality](https://www.theatlantic.com/china/archive/2013/09/mapping-chinas-income-inequality/279637/) (<https://www.theatlantic.com/china/archive/2013/09/mapping-chinas-income-inequality/279637/>). The Atlantic, September 13, 2013. (map focus)
- "Emerging Air Pollution Issues in Changing Pearl River Delta of South China." September 26th, 2011. <https://www.intechopen.com/chapters/18640> (chart and map focus)
- [The Left Behind Generation](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Nvg0aF4jGgk) (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Nvg0aF4jGgk>) BBC News, 2016. (4+ minute animated video)
- [Last Train Home](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kANWSX68pyY&t=215s) (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kANWSX68pyY&t=215s>) (11-minute video clip)
- Handout 3: Excerpt from the book *Factory Girls*, by Leslie T Chang.
- Nick Routley, "Megacity" (<https://www.visualcapitalist.com/pearl-river-delta-megacity-2020/>) Visual Capitalist, 2018. (reading)

\*Note: This article from *The Atlantic* is behind a paywall. Individuals can access a free 30-day trial to access and download the article to make it available to students. Be sure to cancel after the 30-day trial.

## Procedure:

- 1. Give students:** Access to the infographic: “70 years of Economic Development.” Either print and distribute hard copies, project, or provide students the link [Infographic: 70 years of Economic Development](#) via student digital devices.
- 2. Tell students:** We are going to do a 1-2-3 Look, Write, Discuss. This exercise involves 1 minute to just look at the infographic, 2 minutes to write about the infographic with the prompt, “what do you see, notice, wonder?” and 3 minutes to discuss the infographic together.
  - If students don’t discuss the bar graph and the leadership next to the bar graph as things they saw/noticed/ or wondered about, the teacher should ask about these features and what they might mean.
  - Point out the bar graph represents GDP & tell students a generic definition that GDP partly tells us how healthy a country’s economy is.
  - Ask if they notice when the bar graph begins to increase and who is the leader that is on the infographic next to that beginning rising point.
- 3. Transition to the first main learning activity by telling students:** The man who helped transform China’s GDP was Deng Xiaoping. We are going to learn about this man and what choices he made that helped transform China. We are also going to evaluate how those choices impacted China. Were his choices worth the costs?
- 4. Assign students** to read and take notes on the Introduction to Deng Xiaoping & Special Economic Zones. You can help students find the main points and key details by providing the Q-Notes or extra help with the Skeletal Q-Notes version.
- 5. Distribute** a blank China map (paper or digital). Have students mark the locations of the SEZs. Use the map from the introduction reading. It’s not necessary to have students differentiate the earlier from the later or coastal vs. interior. Just have students identify all SEZs by putting dots, circles, or stars on their maps. *Optional:* Have students find and label the province of Guangdong and the cities of Shenzhen, Guangzhou, Hong Kong, Shanghai, and Beijing. Familiarity with these areas will help later as they learn about the impacts of these policies. They will see these names of provinces and cities come up in the resources as well as see maps they might need to compare to the maps they are currently creating.
- 6.** Before moving on, students should have a basic understanding of the Special Economic Zones-- where and what they were. Next, students will explore a variety of resources that show them the impact of these policies and will be asked to make decisions as to whether these policies were good, bad, or both for the people and nation of China.
- 7. Discuss** the fact that the Special Economic Zones had consequences that were hoped for and planned for (intended) and others that weren’t planned for (unintended).

Some unintended consequences might be in areas such as: culture and traditions, the environment, or relationships. Also clarify with students that consequences can happen right away OR take time. So, some of the consequences might take years to show up.

**8.** Based on time available or student ability, assign or let students pick which resources to look at. Recommendation: At least one of the map focus resources, one of the video resources, and one of the reading resources from the Materials list above. **Have students process** the resources in some fashion that works for your class—e.g, take notes, making graphic organizers, writing summaries. Remind students that they want to be thinking about the **IMPACT** of Deng’s choices to open up markets and create special economic zones.

**9.** Assessment: have students write a short paragraph answering the question: Were Deng’s Choices Worth the Costs? (in other words, did the positives outweigh the negatives?). Students should be able to make a decision and support their decision with evidence from the resources they explored.

