

Cultural Revolution Lesson Plan

Central Historical Question:
Why did Chinese youth get swept up in the Cultural Revolution?

Materials:

- Cultural Revolution PowerPoint
- Cultural Revolution Timeline
- Cultural Revolution Documents A-D

Plan of Instruction:

1. Introduction: *Today we are going to study the Cultural Revolution in China, which occurred between 1966 and 1976. In particular, we're going to look at a group of youth called the Red Guards who were responsible for much of the violence and abuse of the Cultural Revolution.*
2. Project PPT slide 1.
Tell students this photograph was taken in February 1967. It shows Red Guards displaying leaders of "Anti-Revolutionary Groups."

Ask students what they see in the image.

- What are the Red Guards doing? (Answer: Harassing or punishing people.)
- What are the punishments? (Answer: Wearing dunce caps; handled with force.)
- Where are they being punished? (Answer: In public, in front of a large crowd.)

Explain to students that many of the people targeted by Red Guards during the Cultural Revolution were teachers and professors.

Project PPT slide 2.

Explain that this is a propaganda poster from the Cultural Revolution and ask students what they see in the image:

- What objects are in the foreground? (Answer: Religious icons, literature, film reels. If you look very closely you see "USA" on one of the books.)
- What might these symbolize? (Answer: Old traditions -- religion, literature, capitalism, and imperialism.)
- What is happening to these objects or symbols? (Answer: The Red Guards are destroying them.)
- Whose picture is on the flag? (Answer: Mao Zedong.)
- How are the Red Guards depicted? (Answer: They are depicted as valiant. They are shown as leading a multitude of people for their cause.)

Explain: *Today we're going to look at a number of documents and ask, "Why did Chinese youth get swept up in the Cultural Revolution?"*

Elicit students' hypotheses to the central historical question. Most will say that the teenagers were probably intoxicated with power. Others might say that they were brainwashed. If these two hypotheses emerge, highlight them and use them to frame the discussion as it continues throughout the lesson.

3. Pass out the timeline and read through it with the class. Highlight the following points in the timeline:
 - What were Mao's goals for the Cultural Revolution?
 - What were some of the outcomes of the Cultural Revolution?
 - Based on the timeline, why might teenagers have supported the Cultural Revolution?
4. Hand out Documents A and B and Guiding Questions. Have students read documents and answer questions in pairs.
5. Review student answers.
6. Hand out Documents C and D.

Discuss: Both documents are excerpts from memoirs written long after the Cultural Revolution. How might the fact that these are memoirs produced long after the event shape how we read them?

7. Have students answer Guiding Questions for Documents C and D. Review student answers.
8. Individual work either in class or for homework: Have students write a paragraph that answers the central historical question using evidence from the documents.

Citations:

Tse-Tung, M. (1964). *Quotations from Chairman Mao Tse-Tung*. Beijing: Government of the People's Republic of China.

People's Liberation Army Songs Editorial Department. (1967?). *We are Chairman Mao's red guards*. Beijing: Government of the People's Republic of China.

Yang, R. (1998). *Spider eaters*. Berkeley, CA: UC Press.

Cao, F. (2005). Under the red sun. In Stanford Program on International and Cross-Cultural Education (SPICE), *China's cultural revolution*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.