



Lesson Guide

Mrs. Wong's Purse - 50 years of economic change

Grade 9-12 | Subject: World History & Social Studies

Vocabulary List

Communist Party of China: The founding political party in China and ruling party of the People's Republic of China.

People's Republic of China (PRC): The official name for the country of China

Cultural Revolution: The Cultural Revolution was a sociopolitical movement that began in 1966, by leader Mao Zedong, as a way to revise the way Chinese citizens thought and acted. The Cultural Revolution ended when Mao died in 1976. Mao ultimately adopted four goals: (1) to replace his designated successors with leaders more faithful to his current thinking; (2) to rectify the Chinese Community Party; (3) to provide China's youth with revolutionary experience; and (4) to achieve some specific policy changes as to make the educational, healthcare, and cultural systems less elitist. During this time, China's schools were shut down while opposing political leaders, intellectuals, artists, and religious leaders became targets of the Community party. During these years, about 1.5 million people were killed and millions suffered imprisonment, seizure of property, torture, or general humiliation.

Red Guards: A mass student-led social movement mobilized and guided by Chairman Mao Zedong in 1966 through 1967, during the first phase of the Chinese Cultural Revolution. This militant group consisted of university and high school students. They were instructed to eliminate the "Four Olds" — old customs, old culture, old habits, and old ideas.

Mao Zedong (1893-1976): Mao Zedong (or Mao Tse-Tung) was a founding member of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) in 1921. Unlike the traditional Marxist leaders of the CCP who sought to organize the urban working class, Mao was convinced that Communist revolution could only succeed in China with the active involvement of the peasants, who made up 80% of the population. Between 1949 to his death in 1976, he served as the Chairman of the CCP and the President of China. During the Cultural Revolution, Mao's image was hung up on banners and badges while his sayings were reproduced in the "Little Red Book."

Capitalism: Capitalism is based on private ownership of resources and the means of production, and individual choices in a free market.

Communism: Communism is a form of government most closely associated with the ideas of Karl Marx, which he outlined in *The Communist Manifesto*. Communism is based on the goal of eliminating socioeconomic classes by creating a classless society in which everyone shares the benefits of labor and the state controls and distributes all property and wealth.



Socialism: Socialism is a populist economic and political system based on public ownership (also known as collective or common ownership) of the means of production. Those means include the machinery, tools, and factories used to produce goods that aim to directly satisfy human needs.

Collectivism: A collectivist's sense of self is defined more by who they are with other people or by their membership in a group. This elevates the importance of maintaining social harmony, getting along with others, and meeting social expectations.

Individualism: People are more likely to “see themselves as separate from others, define themselves based on their personal traits, and see their characteristics as relatively stable and unchanging.” They value their personal independence and authentic private self.

Private Ownership: Owned by a private individual or organization, rather than by the government or a public body.

Reforms: Changes and improvements to a law, social system, or institution.

World Trade Organization: The only global international organization dealing with the rules of trade between nations.

Suggested Discussion Topics

- What do you know about Modern Chinese history?
- Summarize Mrs. Wong's story. Who does Mrs. Wong represent?
- What are the differences between:
 - Communism vs. Capitalism
 - Collectivism vs. Individualism
 - State control vs. Private ownership
 - Self reliance vs. International trade
- Name some examples of Western influence or impacts on a country. How do outside influences change a country that has been isolated for so long?
- What is higher education and why is it important? Is it? How does the percentage of highly educated individuals impact a country?
- As a youth/young adult, what was in Mrs. Wong's purse? As an older woman, how has it changed?
 - How does this represent China's economic change?
- How has Mrs. Wong been shaped by the Cultural Revolution?
- What is socialism and how is it shaped by Chinese characteristics? How does this differ from communism?
- What are some responsibilities of a world leader?



Suggested Activities

- Have you visited another country before? How was it different from your own? What does this say about your own upbringing?
- Look in your bag. What do you have? Draw them out and describe what they represent about your generation.
- How has your own country changed in the past 50 years?
- On a sheet of paper, divide it into nine boxes (3x3). On top of the columns, write “What do you know?”, “How do you know this?”, and “What do you want to know?” Next to each row, write the terms “Communism”, “Capitalism”, and “Socialism.” Fill out each box.
- How does the American government and media currently feel about China? Does this shape your understanding of the country? Why or why not?
- What would you like to know about China?
- Read the definition of “Socialism.” In the video, China describes itself as running a socialist government with Chinese characteristics. What characteristics set them apart from other socialist governments? This may require additional research.

Suggested Additional Readings & Media

Anthony Kuhn. “[Chinese Red Guards Apologize, Reopening A Dark Chapter.](#)” *NPR*. 04 Feb 2014. Web.

“[China’s Cultural Revolution: Rewriting a Nation.](#)” *Stuff You Missed in History Class*. 2014 Sep. Podcast.

“[How China’s Economy Actually Works.](#)” *New Economic Thinking*. 2021 Apr 21. Video.

Johnny Harris. “[How China Became So Powerful.](#)” 2021 Jan 28. Video.

Karoline Kan. “[My Uncle Was a Red Guard in China’s Cultural Revolution. He Isn’t Sorry.](#)” *Foreign Policy*. 16 May 2016. Web.

Laszlo Montgomery. “[Episode 83-90 | The Cultural Revolution \(Part 1-8\).](#)” *The China History Podcast*. 2012 May. Podcast.

Meg Rithmire. “[China, US & the Future of Global Economics. \(Chapter 1-14\).](#)” *One Day University*. 2021. Podcast.

“[The World Bank in China.](#)” *The World Bank*. 2021 Oct 12. Web.

Zuliu Hu, Mohsin S. Khan. “[Why is China Growing So Fast?](#)” International Monetary Fund. 1997 June. Web.

Works Cited

“[Cultural Revolution.](#)” History. 09 Nov 2009.

“[Communism.](#)” *National Geographic Society*. 13 Aug 2020.

“[Individualism vs Collectivism.](#)” AFS.

Kenneth Lieberthal. “[Cultural Revolution.](#)” Britannica.

“[Mao Tse-Tung.](#)” PBS American Experience.

“[Socialism.](#)” *National Geographic Society*. 02 April 2021.

“[What is the WTO?](#)” *World Trade Organization*.