

# China's Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution

by Kerry Schaefer and Lisa Torre

The Chinese Communist Revolution in the twentieth century raises important questions about the ability of revolutions to transform people and society and remains an historically controversial topic. The military success of the Chinese communists in 1949 could not ensure a more responsive or democratic government and economic and social equality. In the 1950s (One Hundred Flowers) and the 1960s (Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution), Mao Zedong and his supporters in the Chinese Communist Party launched mass campaigns to revive the public's commitment to communist ideas and values and to weaken the grip of the traditional bureaucracy over the Chinese government. In recent years, as pro-capitalist leaders have cemented control over China, the Cultural Revolution has been sharply criticized for its supposed excesses and its attack on elitism and individualism.

China's Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution during 1966 and 1976 was unprecedented in any Communist country. Mao mobilized youth with no previous experience with revolutionary ideas and no personal knowledge of pre-Revolutionary conditions. Through membership in groups such as the Red Guard and participation in political struggle, they learned that they could affect change in society. They have been accused, however, of terrifying innocent people who were unfairly labeled enemies of the revolution and publicly confronted and humiliated.

The slogans of Cultural Revolution were first by Prime Minister Zhou Enlai, an ally of Mao. In a report to the National People's Congress in 1964, Zhou argued that between 1959 and 1961, "the class enemy reared his head" and promoted pro-capitalist programs in China and the abandonment of the international struggle against imperialism. Zhou called for a "radical transformation of any ideology, bourgeois, feudal, or other, which is not consistent with the economic base and the Socialist political system." He declared that "our aim is to abolish the bourgeoisie and capitalism once and for all by class struggle." Chou's position was supported by Mao Zedong in a meeting of the Communist Party Central Committee in September, 1965.

On April 18, 1966, an editorial in the *Liberation Army Daily* newspaper issued a call for a new movement to revive communism in China. Zhou Enlai echoes this position in a statement on April 30, 1966 calling for a protracted struggle to wipe out "bourgeois ideology in the academic, educational, and journalistic fields, in art, literature, and all other fields of culture." Activity by the Red Guard, the revolutionary movement of communist youth that played a major role in pressing the reform movement forward, was first reported in Beijing secondary schools in spring, 1966. On June 13, 1966, universities and schools were closed indefinitely to enable students the freedom to participate in the Cultural Revolution. At a rally on August 18, 1966, Mao announced his support for the Red Guard movement.

During this period, the thoughts, or sayings, of chairman Mao Zedong on political struggle and the nature of communism were widely distributed in China in copies of the "Little Red Book." His ideas also appeared on wall posters and were chanted at political rallies. One of Mao's better known "thoughts" was, "Without destruction there can be no construction; without blockage there can be no flow; without stoppage there can be no movement."

Constant protests and the denunciation of government and factory officials led to serious dislocations in Chinese society and by February, 1967 the political tide had turned against demonstrators. On February 7, the Communist Party ordered Red Guard members who were travelling around the country in itinerant political bands to return home. An editorial in *Red Flag* on February 23, 1967 charged that demonstrators were mistakenly attacking all those in authority without exception. Primary schools were reopened on February 13, 1967 and secondary schools March 1, 1967. Order was restored in many cities in February and March, 1967 by the military.

Eventually the excesses of the Cultural Revolution were blamed on a few misguided leaders. In October 1968, Liu Shao-chi was expelled from the Communist Party, symbolizing the end of active political turmoil. Following the death of Mao Zedong in September 9, 1976, his wife, Jiang

Qing, and three other prominent leaders, were arrested and tried. The “Gang of Four” was convicted of “anti-party” activities and imprisoned.

Today, critics of the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution contend that it was a time of chaos and injustice. However, it was also a period of mass public participation in shaping government policy and social conditions. As students examine the Timeline and Documents A – F and answer the questions on the activity sheets, they need to consider whether mass movements such as the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution in China are forces for democratic social change.

### **Timeline of the Cultural Revolution in China, 1964-1978**

**Activity:** Examine the “Timeline of the Cultural Revolution in China.”

1. In your view, when does the Cultural Revolution actually begin and end? Explain.
2. Why do Mao and the Red Guard campaign against the “Four Olds” (ideas, culture, customs and habits)?
3. Use the timeline as “notes” to write a narrative history of the Cultural Revolution in China.

December, 1964. Prime Minister Zhou Enlai first uses the phrase Cultural Revolution in a report to the National People’s Congress.

September, 1965. Communist Party chairman Mao Zedong supports idea of a “Cultural Revolution” at a party Central Committee. Lin Biao urges students to return to the basic principles of the revolutionary movement, and youth are encouraged to openly criticize revisionists within the Chinese Communist Party.

April 18, 1966. An editorial in the *Liberation Army Daily* issues call for “Cultural Revolution.”

April 30, 1966. Prime Minister Zhou Enlai officially endorses “Cultural Revolution” to wipe out “bourgeois ideology in the academic, educational, and journalistic fields, in art, literature, and all other fields of culture.”

May 16, 1966. The ruling Politburo decides that the Cultural Revolution must attack bourgeois elements in the Chinese Communist Party and the government.

June, 1966. Purges began in the Communist Party, the press and universities.

June 13, 1966. Universities and schools closed indefinitely.

August 18, 1966, Mao announces support for the Red Guard or “hong wei bing,” people in their teens and 20s who supported the shake-ups within the Communist Party and China.

August, 1966. Red Guards campaign against the “Four Olds” (ideas, culture, customs and habits). Street names were changed, books were burned and temples closed. Red Guards travel around the country attacking local authorities as “capitalist roaders” and are joined by factory workers.

September, 1966. “Quotations from Chairman Mao” is published for the general public.

Fall, 1966. Schools remain closed. Youth report their teachers, leaders and parents. Liu Shaoqi and Deng Xiaoping, major party leaders, are purged.

February, 1967. Red Guard ordered to return home from the countryside. Schools reopen. The Army takes control over Beijing.

February 23, 1967. An editorial in *Red Flag* charges Red Guard with attacking all authority without exception.

May 17-June 16, 1967. Party Central Committee places severe limits on protests.

July, 1967. Universities reopen.

July, 1968. Mao signals an end to the extreme radical phase of the Cultural Revolution.

October, 1968. Liu Shao-chi, an opponent of Mao, is expelled from the party. Cultural Revolution is officially over.

December, 1968. Mao wants to send educated urban youth to the countryside for re-education by peasants.

April, 1969. The Chinese Communist Party convened its Ninth Party Congress. Jiang Qing (Mao’s wife) becomes a member of the governing Chinese Politburo. Lin Biao is named as Mao’s successor.

September 13, 1971. Lin Biao dies in a plane crash and is denounced as a counter-revolutionary. Zhou Enlai gradually restores orthodox economic policies and rehabilitates officials purged during the Cultural Revolution.

1973. Deng Xiaoping, who was purged in 1966, resumes post as Vice-Premier.

September 9, 1976. Mao Zedong dies.

October 6, 1976. Jiang Qing and three other Cultural Revolution leaders, the “Gang of Four,” are arrested. They are blamed for the excesses of the Cultural Revolution and sentenced to prison for “anti-party” activities.

February, 1976. With the death of Zhou Enlai, Hua Guofeng is named new chair of the Communist Party.

August, 1977. Hua Guofeng declares the Cultural Revolution officially ended with the arrest of the Gang of Four.

1978. The Communist Party repudiates the Cultural Revolution.

**Historical Context:** In the late 1970s and the 1980s, leaders of the Communist Party in China and of the Chinese government sharply criticized the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution of the 1960s. Even though it was supported by the leadership of the Communist Party at the time and was a mass movement involving millions of people, they blamed it on one small group, the “Gang of Four.” They accused the “Gang of Four” of creating chaos in China in an effort to seize power and sentenced them to prison for “anti-party” activities. Some historians claim the denunciation of the “Gang of Four” was really an effort to rewrite what happened in the past.

**Task:** Examine Documents A – G and answer the questions that accompany each document. When you have finished, write an essay that answers the question: Should the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution be remembered as an effort to build a communist society in China or as a grab for power by extremists and the “Gang of Four”?

**Note:** The English spelling of some Chinese names varies from document to document.

### **A. Resolutions of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China on the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution (August 1-12, 1966)**

[http://www.etext.org/Politics/MIM/classics/mao/cpc/cc\\_res\\_11p.html](http://www.etext.org/Politics/MIM/classics/mao/cpc/cc_res_11p.html)

A. To overthrow a political power, it is always necessary . . . to create public opinion, [and] to do work in the ideological sphere. This is true for the revolutionary class as well as for the counter-revolutionary class. This thesis of Comrade Mao Zedong’s has been proved entirely correct in practice. Although the bourgeoisie has been overthrown, it is still trying to use the old ideas, culture, customs and habits of the exploiting classes to corrupt the masses, capture their minds and endeavor to stage a come-back. The proletariat must do just the opposite: it must meet head-on every challenge of the bourgeoisie in the ideological field and use the new ideas, culture, customs and habits of the proletariat to change the mental outlook of the whole of society. At present, our objective is to struggle against and crush those persons in authority who are taking the capitalist road, to criticize and repudiate the reactionary bourgeois academic ‘authorities’ and the ideology of the bourgeoisie and all other exploiting classes and to transform education, art and literature and all other parts of the superstructure that do not correspond to the socialist economic base, so as to facilitate the consolidation and development of the socialist system.

B. In the great proletarian Cultural Revolution, the only method is for the masses to liberate themselves, and any method of doing things on their behalf must not be used. Trust the masses, rely on them and respect their initiative. Cast out fear. Don’t be afraid of disorder. Chairman Mao has often told us that revolution cannot be so very refined, so gentle, so temperate, kind,

courteous, restrained and magnanimous. Let the masses educate themselves in this great revolutionary movement and learn to distinguish between right and wrong and between correct and incorrect ways of doing things. Make the fullest use of big-character posters and great debates to argue matters out, so that the masses can clarify the correct views, criticize the wrong views and expose all the ghosts and monsters. In this way the masses will be able to raise their political consciousness in the course of the struggle, enhance their abilities and talents, distinguish right from wrong and draw a clear line between the enemy and ourselves.

C. In the great proletarian Cultural Revolution a most important task is to transform the old educational system and the old principles and methods of teaching. In this great Cultural Revolution, the phenomenon of our schools being dominated by bourgeois intellectuals must be completely changed. In every kind of school we must apply thoroughly the policy advanced by Comrade Mao Zedong, of education serving proletarian politics and education being combined with productive labor, so as to enable those receiving an education to develop morally, intellectually and physically and to become laborers with socialist consciousness and culture. The period of schooling should be shortened. Courses should be fewer and better. The teaching material should be thoroughly transformed, . . . beginning with simplifying complicated material. While their main task is to study, students should also learn . . . industrial work, farming and military affairs, and take part in the struggles of the Cultural Revolution as they occur to criticize the bourgeoisie.

**Questions:**

1. According to the Communist Party of China, what is the first task of a revolutionary movement?
2. Who will liberate the masses?
3. Why must schools be transformed?

*B. Chinese Leaders Discuss the Cultural Revolution*

**Mao's Letter to the Red Guards of Tsinghua University Middle School (August 1, 1966)**

Source: *Long Live Mao Tse-tung Thought* (<http://www.marxist.org>)

I have received both the big-character posters which you sent on 28 July as well as the letter which you sent to me, asking for an answer. The two big-character posters which you wrote on 24 June and 4 July express your anger at, and denunciation of, all landlords, bourgeois, imperialists, revisionists, and their running dogs who exploit and oppress the workers, peasants, revolutionary intellectuals and revolutionary parties and groupings. You say it is right to rebel against reactionaries; I enthusiastically support you. . . . I want to say that I myself as well as my revolutionary comrades-in-arms all take the same attitude. No matter where they are, in Peking or anywhere in China, I will give enthusiastic support to all who take an attitude similar to yours in the Cultural Revolution movement. Another thing, while supporting you, at the same time we ask you to pay attention to uniting with all who can be united with. As for those who have committed serious mistakes, after their mistakes have been pointed out you should offer them a way out of their difficulties by giving them work to do, and enabling them to correct their mistakes and become new men. Marx said: the proletariat must emancipate not only itself but all mankind. If it cannot emancipate all mankind, then the proletariat itself will not be able to achieve final emancipation. Will comrades please pay attention to this truth too.

**Premier Zhou Enlai's Speech at the National Day Reception (September 30, 1966)**

Source: *Forward Along the High Road of Mao Tse-tung's Thought* (<http://www.marxists.org>)

We are most happy and overjoyed to be with you at this jubilant gathering to celebrate the 17th anniversary of the founding of the People's Republic of China amidst an upsurge of our

great proletarian cultural revolution. . . . The historical experience of the dictatorship of the proletariat teaches us that without a proletarian cultural revolution the dictatorship of the proletariat cannot be consolidated . . . . Our great proletarian cultural revolution has manifested infinitely great power. It has defeated the arrogance of the reactionary bourgeoisie and is cleaning up all the rubbish left over by the old society; it has broken old ideas, customs and habits of the exploiting classes, fostered new ideas, culture, customs and habits of the proletariat, and vigorously promoted the revolutionization of people's minds. A high tide of enthusiastic study of Comrade Mao Tse-tung's works is now rising throughout the Party and the country. Over 700 million people have taken on an entirely new mental complexion.

Our great proletarian cultural revolution and the socialist education movement in the cities and in rural areas have given a powerful impetus to our socialist construction. Our industries have witnessed tremendous developments both in output and in quality. In agriculture, bumper harvests have been reaped in succession. The level of science and technology have been vastly raised. The strength of our national defense is steadily growing. We are now in the first year of our Third Five-Year Plan. Industrial and agricultural production targets are expected to be overfulfilled. A situation of a new all-round leap forward is emerging. . . . Our great proletarian cultural revolution is acclaimed and warmly praised by all Marxists-Leninists and revolutionary people of the world and immensely fortifies their revolutionary fighting will and confidence in victory. The handful of imperialists, modern revisionists and reactionaries in various countries are hurling vicious abuse at us precisely because our great cultural revolution has dug out the roots of their subversive activities and their attempts at "peaceful evolution" in China and has thus hit them where it hurts most. Their abuse only proves that we have done the right thing and serves further to expose their reactionary features, their hostility towards the Chinese people and the cause of human progress. Our great proletarian cultural revolution is a new thing without precedent in history. We hope that our foreign friends will make use of their stay in China to take a good look, and we welcome their valuable comments which will be helpful to our great cultural revolution.

**Questions:**

1. What is happening at the Tsinghua University Middle School?
2. What is Chairman Mao's attitude toward the Cultural Revolution?
3. Why does Premier Zhou Enlai support the Cultural Revolution?

### **C. *The New York Times* Reports on the Cultural Revolution in China**

#### **“Peking Age Teen-Agers Widen Harassment,” August 12, 1966**

**“Young people in Peking’s streets publicity cut off their long hair and slashed their narrow trousers tonight. . . they were obeying orders given by hundreds of teen-agers to give up with what the youngsters called bourgeois trends. . . Organized into group of “Red guards for the cultural revolution,” the teen-agers pasted up countless slogans in the city. . . Hundreds of drumming and gong-beating “Red guards” also demonstrated today in the street leading to the Soviet embassy. . . The teen-agers invaded the streets with evident official approval. They shouted anti-Soviet slogans last night around a huge portrait of Mao Tse-Tung in the middle of the street about a mile from the Soviet embassy. . . New notices in tailor’s shops offered speedy alteration of Western-style clothes if their wearers could not afford to replace them.”**

#### **“Chou Describes Purge as a ‘Cultural Revolution,’” June 19, 1966**

“Its [cultural revolution] purpose is to prevent the restoration of capitalism and assume the victory of communism. . . The “revolution” according to Premier Chou Enlai aims at a complete eradication of China’s past and its replacement by a new Communist way of life. . . “We want to create and form in the ranks of the broad masses of the people the new ideas, the new culture, the new habits, and customs of the proletariat. . . we must resolutely insist on the dictatorship of the proletariat and must wage to its conclusion the socialist revolution on the political, economic, military, ideological, and cultural fronts”. . . Observers were astonished at the vehemence and candor with which Mr. Chou analyzed China’s troubled domestic situation in his discussions.”

#### **“University Rules Changed,” June 19, 1966**

“Communist China announced today reforms in its methods of admitting students to universities. . . It said the goal was for the universities to absorb “more revolutionary sons of workers, peasants and soldiers.” The announcement indicated that university entrance examinations would be either abolished or completely changed. . . The present entrance examination must be reformed thoroughly, the announcement said, adding that a definite period of time must be devoted to carrying out the cultural revolution in depth in universities and schools.”

#### **“Chinese Communists Close Peking’s City Newspaper and Purge Its Staff,” September 4, 1966**

“China’s “cultural revolution” claimed new victims today with an announcement that Peking’s local newspaper was being shut down and its staff purged. . . Today’s announcement by the party’s Peking city committee said the newspaper was under “temporary suspension” to “allow a complete cultural revolution.” The action came in the midst of the campaign by militant Red Guard teen-agers to wipe out Western influences in Chinese culture and way of life.”

**Question :** What view of the Cultural Revolution is presented in these articles from *The New York Times*?

### **D. Red Guard Activities in Beijing**

Source: *The Cultural Revolution in China* (1967), p. 18-19

A. Both the Red Guards and members of the general public were encouraged to issue “big character posters,” bearing slogans, news, criticism, denunciations, and caricatures. . . . The fact

that leading public figures were sometimes criticized and defended simultaneously on posters suggested that a genuine freedom of expression was being permitted. . . ; isolated posters even appeared attacking Mao himself. . . . Marshal Lin Biao described the system as one of “extensive democracy under the dictatorship of the proletariat,” and commented that “the party is fearlessly allowing the masses to express their views, stick up posters, conduct great debates publicly, . . . and criticize and supervise the leading institutions of the party and the Government and leaders at all levels.”

B. The demonstrators forbade shopkeepers and hairdresser to sell Western-style clothes or to give Western-style haircuts; forced young people to cut their long hair and to slash their narrow trousers’ and ordered women to straighten out their permanent waves. The sale of strong drinks, tobacco, perfumes, cosmetics, and antiques was also banned, and bath houses were forbidden to give their clients massage and manicures. In bookshops political literature and fiction were replaced by collections of Mao Tse-tung’s writings, and art shops either closed or sold only pictures of Mao Tse-tung. Flower shops and a stamp shop were closed, on the ground that having flowers in the house and philately were “bourgeois” customs.

C. Posters put up by the Red Guards . . . declared that all books not in conformity with Mao Tse-tung’s thought should be burnt; condemned taxis, private cars, and first-class railway travel as “bourgeois”; ordered passengers on pedicabs (tricycle rickshaws) to pedal themselves while the driver sat in the passenger’s seat; demanded that on traffic lights red should be used for “go” and green for “stop”; and denounced young couples who sat in parks “doing things which burn the eyes” or who sat up late writing love letters.

D. Red Guards broke into private houses and threw into the streets “bourgeoisie” possessions such as jewelry and Western-style clothes and shoes. Diplomatic sources reported that a number of people had been publicly beaten with ropes, had their heads shaven, or been made to carry placards denouncing themselves. Doctors and nurses were dragged out of a hospital by a gang of adolescents and made to wear tags describing them as “reactionary scholars” or “running-dogs of the bourgeoisie.”

#### **Questions:**

1. What are some of the democratic features of the Cultural Revolution and the Red Guard?
2. What are some of the undemocratic features of the Cultural Revolution and the Red Guard?
1. In your opinion, are the Red Guard primarily a force for freedom or a force that denies freedom? Explain.

#### **E. Communist Party Newspapers Question Excesses of the Red Guard**

Source: *The Cultural Revolution in China* (1967).

**Red Flag, February 27, 1967:** “A misconception has emerged among some people that all those in authority are no good and unreliable and should therefore without exception all be overthrown. This viewpoint is completely wrong . . . . Cadres who have committed mistakes should be given the opportunity to admit, criticize, and correct them. So long as they make a self-criticism, correct their mistakes, and come over to the side of the Chairman Mao’s proletarian revolutionary line, they can still be given appropriate leading posts. Many of them can even be drawn into the provisional organs of power by the proletarian revolutionaries. Even cadres who have committed very serious mistakes should be handled leniently after they are criticized” (40).

**People’s Daily, June 18, 1967:** “The contradiction between the proletariat and the handful of top party persons in authority taking the capitalist road is the principal contradiction and an antagonistic one. . . .Some comrades are actually directing the spearhead of their struggle against their own comrades-in-arms or the masses. . . . It is necessary to handle correctly the contradictions among the people, unite with all forces that can be united, and bring about a most extensive revolutionary alliance with the Left as its core” (48).

#### **Questions:**

1. According to *Red Flag*, what misconceptions have taken place?

2. Why is the *People's Daily* concerned that people are using popular unrest to promote their own interests?

**3. In your opinion, why are these newspapers pulling back from the earlier militancy of the Cultural Revolution?**

*F. A Child's Experience during the Cultural Revolution in China*

Source: Edited from "Red Azalea" by Anchee Min, *Harper's Magazine*, February, 1994  
[http://www.findarticles.com/p/articles/mi\\_m1111/is\\_n1725\\_v288/ai\\_14765872](http://www.findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m1111/is_n1725_v288/ai_14765872)

The school's party secretary, a man named Chain, was a workers' representative from the Shanghai Shipping Factory. In the first week of November 1970, he called me into his office. I was thirteen. He told me that the committee had finally rooted out a hidden class enemy, an American spy. He said, "We are going to have a meeting against her, a rally that two thousand people will attend. You will be the student representative to speak against her." I asked who it was. Wrinkling his eyebrows, the secretary said a shocking name: Autumn Leaves, my teacher.

Autumn Leaves was a thin, middle-aged woman. She loved Chinese, mathematics, and music. She never seemed to tire of teaching. When she knew that I wanted to improve my Chinese, she brought me her own books to read. She was this way with all of her students. For the next two hours, Secretary Chain worked to convince me that Autumn Leaves was a secret agent of the imperialists and was using teaching as a weapon to destroy our minds. He told me the fable of "A Wolf in Sheep's Clothing." He said Autumn Leaves was the wolf. He told me that Autumn Leaves's father was a Chinese-American who was still living in America. Secretary Chain said, "The capitalist sent his daughter back to China to educate our children." I told Secretary Chain that I would speak at the rally. He nodded and said, "Mao would be very proud of you."

Two strong men escorted Autumn Leaves onto the stage. Her arms were twisted behind her. Her hair had suddenly turned gray. Her face was colorless. A rectangular board reading "Down With The American Spy" hung from her neck. The crowd shouted, Confess! Confess! Autumn Leaves kept silent. When kicked hard, she said that she had nothing to confess. I stood up and felt dizzy. The crowd began clapping. The sunlight was dazzlingly bright and hurt my eyes. I moved to the front of the stage.

I told the crowd that Autumn Leaves was the wolf in sheep's clothing. I took out the books she loaned me and showed them to the crowd. Comrades, I said, now I understand why Autumn Leaves was so kind to me. She was trying to turn me into an enemy of our country, a running dog of the imperialists! The crowd shouted, Confess! Confess! Autumn Leaves began to speak slowly to the crowd with her hoarse voice. She said that she would never want to turn any of her students into the country's enemy. She broke into tears.

Secretary Chain took over the microphone. He ordered Autumn Leaves to shut up and accept the criticism of the revolutionary masses with a correct attitude. Autumn Leaves said that she could not accept any lies. Autumn Leaves demanded to speak to me. Secretary Chain told her to go ahead. Autumn Leaves asked if I really believed that she was an enemy of the country. My head felt like a boiling teapot. "Just be honest!" she said, her hoarse voice raised to its extreme. I turned to Secretary Chain. He was smiling scornfully. "Think about the snake," he said.

It was a story Mao told in his book. It was about a peasant who found a frozen snake lying in his path on a snowy day. The snake had the most beautiful skin the peasant had ever seen. He felt sorry for her and decided to save her life. He picked up the snake and put her into his jacket to warm her with the heat of his body. Soon the snake woke up and felt hungry. She bit her savior. The peasant died. I turned to look at the wall-size portrait of Mao. I was reminded of my duty. I must fight against anyone who dared to oppose Mao's teaching.

#### Questions

1. What charges are being made against Autumn Leaves?
2. What role was played in this assembly by Anchee Min (the author)?
3. How does this account of the assembly present the Cultural Revolution in China?

#### **Two Picture Books for Teaching Global History and Geography**

At some point in the last few years, you have probably received an email containing the information in *If the World Were a Village*. Making the idea of a world of 6.2 billion people more understandable, the email suggests that you think of the population of the world as a village of just 100 people. That's one person representing 62 million people in the real world. Surprising statistics follow. This picture book takes those statistics, organizes them by category, and adds illustrations. The result is the same as the email. You and your students will be shocked by some of the data. For example, many kids in the U. S. take computers for granted, but only seven people in the global village own one. In our global village, 22 people speak a Chinese dialect, 20 earn less than a dollar a day, 17 cannot read or write, and 39 are under 19 years old. Each double-page spread relates a few consciousness-raising facts about such topics as food, water, electricity, phones, language, and religion.

*A Life Like Mine*, edited by David Smith and published by UNICEF, is a coffee-table-style book, written as part of the mission set forth by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. It profiles 18 children from all over the globe and explores what life is like for them and other young people, spanning 180 countries. Organized into four sections - Survival, Development, Protection and Participation - the beautifully designed volume contains compelling photographs, maps, graphs and children's quotes that will make students and teachers, alike, think about the challenges of developed and developing nations.

These informative books, designed for upper elementary students, can also get your ninth graders thinking and asking questions. They are great books to use at the beginning of the year when you are introducing your study of the world. Students can update and search for other statistics, do the math to compute the real numbers, research different countries' data, read the newspaper for other children's stories and to find out what is being done to equalize conditions around the world – all so that they can discuss what they, themselves, can do as members of the global village. – Andrea S. Libresco

# The Poster Art of Revolutionary China

These posters are from the early 1970s, the era of the Cultural Revolution in China. They were used by the government to teach important lessons in a land where many people were not well educated. Students should examine each poster, describe what they see, and try to figure out the lesson the poster is designed to teach. Students can work individually, as a class, or in groups.

As an introduction to the activity, a class can discuss the uses of propaganda. These posters have been called propaganda because they are intended to convince people to support government actions. Students should discuss examples of propaganda by our government and identify other examples of propaganda in our society and in other countries. During the discussion, students should explain why they think their selections are examples of propaganda, whether propaganda and education are the same or different, and whether propaganda is necessarily a good or a bad thing.

Posters from the Chinese Cultural Revolution are available in Stewart E. Fraser, *100 Great Chinese Posters* (New York: Images Graphiques, 1977). It can be ordered from Poster Please, Inc., 601 W. 26th St., NY, NY, 10001 (212/787-4000). Posters are also available at <http://kaladarshan.arts.ohio-state.edu/exhib/poster/exhibintro.html>.



**Commune Fish Pond.** Fish is a diet staple of rural communities that use China's river system to create fish ponds. This painting shows the bountiful crop gathered by net from communal ponds.



**The Radiance of the Red Sun Warms Many Generations.** Well dressed and healthy children are attending a well kept school. A picture of Mao Tse-tung is on the wall behind the teacher.

## Summary Questions:

1. Based on these posters, what can we learn about the message the Chinese government is teaching its people during the Cultural Revolution?
2. In your opinion, are these posters examples of propaganda or education?

## Follow-up Projects:

1. Design and create a poster that teaches a lesson about life in your community or that teaches a lesson about an issue you think is important.
2. Select another society and era you have studied in history. Design and create a poster that rallies people to either support or challenge the government.

