

**Lesson China :**  
**The Great Leap Forward v S.E. Z.'s**  
**Lesson By Bobbie Mucha**

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**The Great Leap Forward**

**Purpose:**

Students will study the differences between communism and capitalism through an examination of two famous and very different attempts at economic modernization: The focus of the lesson is The Great Leap Forward with brief introduction of contemporary The Special Economic Zones. The lessons can stand alone as economic or history lessons or be used together as a comparative economic / government mini unit.

**Concepts: The Great Leap Forward**

- Mao Zedong
- agricultural cooperatives
- communal living
- famine
- ideology
- indoctrination
- “peaceful coexistence”
- “soft” v “hard-line” foreign policy
- Quemoy, Mazu, and Tibet
- Dalai Lama
- Sino-Soviet Split
- CCP
- “sky full of stars” system of planting
- “Eat it All Up Period”

**Concepts: S.E.Z.'s**

- tax incentives
- decentralization
- liberalization
- local autonomy

**Rationale:**

Lesson no.1 asks students to categorize the social, economic, and political effects of the Great Leap Forward in China. Students will use deductive reasoning skills to determine the effects of The Great Leap Forward. This lesson also ties China's domestic policy to its foreign policy during the late 1950's and early 1960's, exploring reasons for the Sino-Soviet Split. The second lesson introduces students to modern tax incentives and local government autonomy as methods to stimulate capital investment. Together, these two lessons compare centralized v open market mixed economies

**Materials:**

- The attached data handouts
- Three colored pencils or pens for each student
- Map of China

## **The Great Leap Forward v. S.E.Z.'s**

### **Lesson no.1**

#### **Procedure: One or two class 50 minute periods (depending on class level)**

1. As part of a continuing study of either communism, comparative government, or as part of a larger unit on China ask your students to explain why The Great Leap Forward is viewed by many as the pivotal event in early Communist Chinese history? In what manner did The Great Leap Forward color the future of China? Is China today a communist country?
2. Begin with an examination into what was the Great Leap Forward.
3. Have your class define the terms: political, economic, social. Have them write these simple definitions on the chalkboard or in their notes if necessary. Caution them that the easiest may not always be obvious.
4. Direct your students to bring 3 colored pencils or pens.  
Red = Political  
Blue = Economic  
Green = Social  
Any color will substitute for the above directions.
5. Have your students locate political, economic, and social facts as they interrelate to each other. Using colored pencils, have the students underline nouns or catch phrases. Depending on the academic level of your students, they may benefit from a partner. Remind students that one document may contain information from more than one category.
6. Make a transparency of the "Categories Handout" If chalkboard permits, divide it into three areas then divide the class into three responsibility groups: political, economic, and social. Send students as a group to the chalkboard. Students are asked to write nouns they have underlined which represent a major thought.
7. Class shares, discusses and justifies the categories.

#### **Assessment Options:**

1. Have International Baccalaureate students write an essay which proves why The Great Leap Forward was the pivotal event in early Communist Chinese history.
2. Assign points to key phrases in the documents and have students prioritize then justify.
3. Have students write a report to the CCP, which evaluates The Great Leap Forward in all three categories.

## **The Great Leap Forward**

## **Document Attachment #1**

### **Document 1**

At the beginning of the Great Leap Forward, Mao proclaimed that China would overtake Britain in production of steel and other products within 15 years. Other Chinese leaders, including Deng Xiaoping, supported Mao's enthusiasm, according to documents Yang studied in China. "Frequent changes in the timetable were symptomatic of the Great Leap, which, in retrospect, was fantasy incarnate. Even more exaggerated targets were subsequently presented, and then frequently revised upward, for steel, grain, cotton and other products. Any semblance of serious planning was abandoned," Yang said.

### **Document 2**

In pursuit of its goals, the government executed people who did not agree with the pace of radical change. The crackdown led to the deaths of 550,000 people by 1958.

### **Document 3**

The government also plunged the country into a deep debt by increasing spending on the development of heavy industry. Government spending on heavy industry grew in 1958 to represent 56 percent of state capital investment, an increase from 38 percent in 1956.

### **Document 4**

Local leaders competed with one another to see who could create the most activity. In the rush to recruit labor, agricultural tasks, were neglected, sometimes leaving the grain harvest to rot in the fields. Yang said, in the frenzy of competition, the leaders over reported their harvests to their superiors in Beijing, and what was thought to be surplus grain was sold abroad. Although in theory the country was awash in grain, in reality it was not. Rural communal mess halls were encouraged to supply food for free, but by the spring of 1959, the grain reserves were exhausted and the famine had begun.

### **Document 5**

No one is sure exactly how many people perished as a result of the spreading hunger. By comparing the number of deaths that could be expected under normal conditions with the number that occurred during the period of the Great Leap famine, scholars have estimated that somewhere between 16.5 million and 40 million people died before the experiment came to an end in 1961, making the Great Leap famine the largest in world history.

### **Document 6**

Yang said, the memory of the famine reinforced the important role peasants' play in China's development. That memory also has undermined the appeal of central planning in rural policy-making.

**Document 7**

Mao and his fellow radicals in particular- believed that more could be achieved in the Second Five Year Plan (1958- 62) if the people could be ideologically aroused, and if domestic resources could be utilized more efficiently for the simultaneous development of industry and agriculture. These assumptions led the party to an intensified mobilization of the peasantry and mass organizations, stepped-up ideological guidance and indoctrination of technical experts, and efforts to build a more responsive political system.

**Document 8**

The Great Leap Forward centered on a new socioeconomic and political system i.e. the people's communes created in the countryside and in a few urban areas. The Great Leap Forward was modeled after earlier events under Stalin's rule in the U.S.S.R. By the fall of 1958, some 750,000 agricultural producers' cooperative, now designated as production brigades, had been amalgamated into 23,500 communes, each averaging 5,000 households, or 22,000 people. The individual commune was placed in control of all means of production and was to operate as the sole accounting unit; it was subdivided into production brigades (generally coterminous with traditional villages) and production centers. Each commune was planned as a self-supporting community for agriculture, small-scale local industry (for example, the famous backyard pig-iron furnaces), schooling, marketing, administration, and local security (maintained by militia organizations). Organized along paramilitary and laborsaving lines, the commune had communal kitchens, mess halls, and nurseries.

**Document 9**

...the people's communes constituted a fundamental attack on the institution of the family, especially in a few model areas where radical experiments in communal living (large dormitories in place of the traditional nuclear family housing) occurred. These were quickly dropped.

**Document 10**

The system (communes) also was based on the assumption that it would release additional manpower for such major projects as irrigation works and hydroelectric dams, which were seen as integral to the plan for simultaneous development of industry and agriculture.

**Document 11**

The Great Leap Forward was an economic failure. In early 1959, amid signs of rising popular restiveness, the CCP admitted that the favorable production report for 1959 had been exaggerated. Among The Great Leap Forward's economic consequences were a shortage of food (in which natural disasters played a part); shortages of raw materials for industry; overproduction of poor-quality goods, deterioration of industrial plants through mismanagement; and exhaustion and demoralization of the peasantry and of the intellectuals, not to mention the party and government cadres at all levels.

## **The Great Leap Forward**

## **Document Attachment #1p.3**

### **Document 12**

Throughout 1959, efforts to modify the administration of the communes got under way. These were intended to restore some material incentives to the production brigades and teams, partly to decentralize control, and partly to house families that had been reunited as household units.

### **Document 13**

Political consequences followed financial disasters of The Great Leap Forward. In April 1959 Mao, who bore the chief responsibility for the Great Leap Forward fiasco, stepped down from his position as chairman of the People's Republic, though Mao remained chairman of the CCP.

### **Document 14**

Militancy on the domestic front was echoed in external policies. The "soft" foreign policy based on the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence to which China had subscribed in the mid- 1950's gave way to a "hard" line in 1958. From August through October of that year, the Chinese resumed a massive artillery bombardment of the offshore islands, Quemoy and Mazu, held by the Nationalists. This was accompanied by an aggressive propaganda assault on the United States, and a declaration of intent to "liberate" Taiwan.

### **Document 15**

The socialist revolution that took place thereafter increasingly became a process of sinicization for the Tibetans. Tension culminated in a revolt in 1958-59 and the flight of the Dalai Lama. Relations with India deteriorated as thousands of Tibetan refugees crossed the Indian border...a brief border war occurred in 1962. The Soviet Union gave India its moral support, thus contributing to the growing tension between Beijing and Moscow.

### **Document 16**

The Soviet agreement in late 1957 to help China produce its own nuclear weapons and missiles was terminated by mid-1959...The Soviets recalled all of their technicians and advisers from China, and reduced or canceled economic and technical aid to China. The two countries differed in their interpretation of the nature of "peaceful coexistence."

### **Document 17**

An additional complication was the history of suspicion each side had toward the other, especially the Chinese, who had lost a substantial part of territory to tsarist Russia in the mid-nineteenth century.

### **Document 18**

Mao did claim government responsibility for 800,000 executions between 1949-1954.

**The Great Leap Forward**

**Document Attachment #2**

**Political**

**Economic**

**Social**

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## **The Great Leap Forward v. Special Economic Zones**

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Lessons by Bobbie Mucha

### **Special Economic Zones**

#### **Lesson no. 2**

#### **Procedures:**

1. Divide the class into 5 groups. Give each group the name of a Special Economic Zone: (Internet access is advised. If not possible, the teacher can provide a map and attached handout)
  - a. Shenzhen
  - b. Zhuhai in Guangdong Providence
  - c. Shantou in Guangdon Providence
  - d. Xiamen in Fujian Province
  - e. Province of Hainan

#### **Assessment:**

1. Each group must draw (use colored pencils) the geographic locations of the S.E.Z.'s and make a list of geographic reasons for the location of their S.E.Z.
2. Ask each group to develop a thesis statement in response to the statement, "Geography helps make a communist economy an open market."

#### **State of Ohio Social Studies Content Standards**

Grade 9-10 Geography- Students use knowledge of geographic locations, patterns, and processes to show the interrelationship between the physical environment and human activity and to explain interactions that occur in an increasingly interdependent world.

Grade 11-12 Geography- Explain how the character and meaning of a place reflect a society's economics, politics, social values, ideology and culture.

Grade 9-10 Economics - Compare how different economic systems answer the fundamental economic questions of what goods and services to produce, how to produce them, and who will consume them.

Grade 11-12 – Economics- Analyze the role of fiscal and regulatory policies in a mixed economy.

Grade 9- Economics: 3. Analyze characteristics of traditional, market, command and mixed economies with regards to:

- f. Private property
- g. Freedom of enterprise
- h. Competition and consumer choice
- i. The role of government

## **The Special Economic Zones**

## **Document Attachment #3**

1. Special Economic Zones are specially designed areas of China given more decision-making powers for the purpose of promoting foreign investment and technology.
2. Special Economic Zones have acted as windows to foreign investment. Opening China to foreign investment has led to increased exchange in ideas and technology with the outside world.
3. Special Economic Zones have acted as “radiators” to accelerated inland economic development.
4. Special Economic Zones have opened China to ideas inherent with capitalism and the relaxation of government economic controls.
5. Special Economic Zones in China are given special tax incentives not available elsewhere in China.
6. Special Economic Zones attract foreign investors due to cheap land and labor use fees.
7. Tax incentives are reductions or refunds in tax owed based upon performance of an activity.
8. Prior to 1979, the economic development of China was controlled by the central government. After the introduction of the Special Economic Zones, a decentralization and liberalization of the Chinese economy began.
9. Today, as China drives to modernization, the S.E.Z.’s will expand their reforms to include the ownership structure and functions of government with regards to international business.
10. Today, a spread of economic reforms has spread across the country. A new term describing the economy of the PRC is “market Leninism.”

**International Baccalaureate Higher Level History**

Prescribed Subject 2: The emergence and development of the People's Republic of China (PRC), 1946 to 1964.

Topic 1: Causes, practices and effects of war

Topic 3: The rise and rule of single-party states

**Regional Options: East and South East Asia and Oceania**

**Grade Adaptation:**

**Grade Adaptation:**

This lesson may be modified for middle school. Students should work in teams. Each team is given a colored pencil and asked to shade one area they feel is an S.E.Z. Students could then debate why they chose the area. The teacher can show the real map of S.E.Z.'s and determine a winning team.

**Optional Activities**

1. This lesson has its focus on the Great Leap Forward. Should a teacher wish to balance the lesson, students might research the effects of the S.E.Z.'s in more detail.
2. Students may also wish to research Deng Xiaoping, under whom the S.E.Z.'s were enacted, and the decision behind the implementation of the S.E.Z.'s.
3. Students may wish to compare effects of China's S.E.Z. policy and S.E.Z. programs in the United States. Hawaii is also an S.E.Z. and could be used for comparison.