

## Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi

### Reading and Discussion

Gandhi is known as a national leader, a statesman, a spiritual leader, and a thinker. Indians called him the “**Mahatma**,” which means the “Great Soul.” He is regarded as one of the greatest and most influential leaders of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Gandhi was born October 2, 1869, at **Porbandar**, India. At the age of 13, as was the tradition of the time in India, he got married to a girl of the same age.

At the age of 19, Gandhi went to **London** to study Law at University College, and in 1891, he passed the bar exam and returned to India to practice law in **Bombay**. In 1893, an Indian legal firm that had work in South Africa hired Gandhi. At the time, both India and South Africa were under **British rule**, which means that Britain occupied both these countries.

Gandhi moved to South Africa, but he soon realized that his rights were not respected, and that Indians were treated in a cruel and unequal way by white people in South Africa. He stayed in South Africa for 21 years, fighting for justice and working to ensure that Indians were treated fairly and had equal rights. He was imprisoned many times by the government of South Africa.

Gandhi created a new way to react to inequality and unfair treatment. He began teaching his method that was based on principles of non-violent confrontation and **civil disobedience**. The principle of civil disobedience requires a group or society to refuse to obey a law when it is seen as immoral, unfair, or unjust. This philosophy meant that Gandhi and his followers demonstrated and protested against the government when they felt that things were unfair, but they demonstrated in a **non-violent** way. Examples of non-violent confrontations include organized marches, sit-ins, and peaceful protests. Some of Gandhi’s non-violent protests also involved **boycotting** certain products that were made by Britain. This means they refused to buy certain British products. All these forms are known as non-violent confrontation and Gandhi’s philosophy was known as “**passive resistance**”, because there was no violent action taken against the government. However, even these peaceful methods often resulted in Gandhi and his followers facing trouble with the police and sometimes blood was shed.

Gandhi believed that having courage and standing up firmly for the truth was the best way to achieve social and political goals. He believed that how people behaved was most important.

In 1915, Gandhi went back to India and became known as the supporter of the weak and oppressed. In India, there was a great inequality between the different classes of people. He tried to help all the oppressed in India and to change how they were viewed and treated. By 1918, he became the leader of the **National Congress**, which represented the Indian nationalist movement. This movement worked on freeing India from British rule and control. Following his principles of passive resistance and being steadfast in truth, he championed the movement for Indian Independence, and he was arrested many times. However, he thought that to be imprisoned for a good and just cause was honorable, because it meant standing up for the truth.

Gandhi also used fasting as a way of passive resistance. He would fast to have the government change its mind on certain issues that were unfair or wrong. However, this was very serious as there was a risk that Gandhi would die from fasting for long periods of time.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

In 1947, Britain withdrew from India and the country finally received its independence. On January 30, 1948, Gandhi was assassinated by a Hindu fanatic who opposed his belief in unity and tolerance of all different religions.

Gandhi was mourned by the entire world, as he was not only a national symbol of peace for India, but he was recognized as a spiritual leader who stood for truth and non violence. Gandhi is remembered for his inspirational quotes. The following one sums up his beliefs:

“I shall not fear anyone on earth. I shall only fear God. I shall not bear ill-will towards anyone. I shall not submit to injustice from anyone. I shall conquer untruth by truth and in resisting untruth I shall put up with all suffering.”

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

## Activities

### Activity A: Multiple Choice:

1. During the time of Gandhi, Britain occupied the following:

- a. North Africa and India
- b. India and South Africa
- c. India and North Africa
- d. North Africa and South Africa

2. Gandhi is considered all of the following except:

- a. Spiritual leader
- b. Lawyer
- c. National statesman and leader
- d. Doctor

### Activity B: Matching:

\_\_\_\_\_ 1. Civil Disobedience

a. Wanted to free India from the British rule and control

\_\_\_\_\_ 2. Passive resistance

b. When a group refuses to obey a law because it is seen as immoral, unfair, and unjust

\_\_\_\_\_ 3. Indian nationalist movement

c. No violent action is taken against the government

### Activity C: List three examples of non-violent confrontation:

1. \_\_\_\_\_ 2. \_\_\_\_\_ 3. \_\_\_\_\_

### Activity D: True or False:

\_\_\_\_\_ 1. Gandhi did not think it honorable to go to jail, even to defend a just cause.

\_\_\_\_\_ 2. Gandhi was imprisoned because he shot someone during a protest.

\_\_\_\_\_ 3. Gandhi was assassinated by a Hindu fanatic who opposed his beliefs of unity and tolerance of all different religions.

\_\_\_\_\_ 12. Gandhi was called Mahatma to mean the "Great Soul."

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

## Answer Key

### Activity A

1. During the time of Gandhi, Britain occupied the following:

- a. North Africa and India
- b. **India and South Africa**
- c. India and North Africa
- d. North Africa and South Africa

2. Gandhi is considered all of the following except:

- a. Spiritual leader
- b. Lawyer
- c. National statesman and leader
- d. **Doctor**

### Activity B

  b   1. Civil Disobedience

a. Wanted to free India from the British rule and control

  c   2. Passive resistance

b. When a group refuses to obey a law because it is seen as immoral, unfair, and unjust

  a   3. Indian nationalist movement

c. No violent action is taken against the government

### Activity C

1. Organizing marches 2. Sit-ins 3. Peaceful protests 4. Boycotting 5. Fasting

### Activity D

  F   1. Gandhi did not think it honorable to go to jail, even if it was to defend a just cause.

  F   2. Gandhi was imprisoned because he shot someone during a protest.

  T   3. Gandhi was assassinated by a Hindu fanatic that opposed Gandhi's beliefs of unity and tolerance of all different religions.

  T   4. Gandhi was called Mahatma to mean the "Great Soul."