

The British Empire – Mohandas K. Gandhi

Mohandas K. Gandhi was one of the greatest leaders of the 1900s. He helped free India from British colonial rule without using violence. Gandhi's courage and **morals**¹ won respect throughout the world. So did the methods of nonviolent resistance he used to gain Indian independence. Today, the people of India consider Gandhi the father of their nation.

Gandhi was born in 1869 in Western India. As a child, Gandhi was **rebellious**². Once, he stole some jewelry from his brother. But Gandhi had a strong conscience. He confessed to his father. Gandhi expected anger and punishment. Instead, his father cried. Gandhi felt even worse. From then on, he understood the power of nonviolence. He would later write about the story, "Those pearl-drops of love cleansed my heart."

Gandhi studied law in England. Soon after, he went to South Africa to do some legal work. It was there that Gandhi felt the sting of prejudice first-hand. Like India, South Africa was also a British colony. Gandhi had been asked to give up his seat on a train by a European person. When Gandhi refused, he was arrested by British police and badly beaten. He did not fight back with fists or weapons. Instead, he vowed to work peacefully to change unjust laws that didn't protect a person's rights.

In 1914, Gandhi returned to India. British laws there were unjust, placing many Indians at an economic disadvantage. For example, by law Indians could only buy goods made in British factories. To protest this system, Gandhi stopped wearing cloth made in Britain. Instead, he spun his own cloth from Indian cotton. He encouraged others to do the same. The **boycott**³ worked. It hurt British clothing sales in India. It also allowed Indians to sell more of their own cloth. With more income, they wouldn't be as poor. Gandhi also fought British injustice by fasting. He would refuse to eat for five or six days. Gandhi's fasts drew public attention to his cause. Newspapers and the public began to sympathize with Gandhi. They put pressure on the British government to change its ways.

Gandhi spent seven years in jail because of his political activities. To him, it was honorable to be jailed for a good cause. He continued his nonviolent protests and disobedience to British rule. He had faith that truth and nonviolence would win in the end. In 1947, Britain finally bowed to Gandhi's peaceful pressure. India was finally granted independence. Sadly, Gandhi was assassinated for his beliefs in 1948. Years later, Martin Luther King, Jr. would use Gandhi's nonviolent ways to protest injustice in America. Gandhi is remembered to this day as "Mahatma." The word means "great soul."

¹ **morals** – beliefs about what is right and wrong

² **rebellious** – defying authority

³ **boycott** – refusal to buy something as part of a protest

Name: _____

Date: _____

1. Gandhi helped free India from the colonial rule of which nation?

- a. America
- b. Britain
- c. France
- d. Spain

2. The passage lists different tactics Gandhi used against the British government. Which of the following tactics did Gandhi NOT use?

- a. non-violent protest
- b. fasting
- c. boycotts
- d. physical assaults

3. Read the following sentences: “In 1947, Britain finally bowed to Gandhi’s peaceful pressure. India was finally granted independence.”

Based on the passage, “peaceful pressure” refers to what?

- a. Gandhi’s legal work in South Africa
- b. Gandhi’s nonviolent protests and disobedience
- c. Gandhi’s imprisonment
- d. Gandhi’s status as one of the greatest leaders of the 1900s

4. Read the following sentences: “Gandhi’s fasts drew public attention to his cause. Newspapers and the public began to **sympathize** with Gandhi. They put pressure on the British government to change its ways.”

As used in the passage, what does the word “**sympathize**” most nearly mean?

- a. support
- b. attack
- c. ignore
- d. encourage

5. What is this passage mainly about?

- a. Gandhi’s childhood and inspirations
- b. Gandhi’s nonviolent resistance and disobedience
- c. Gandhi’s influence on political leaders
- d. British colonial rule in India

6. What actions did Gandhi take against the law which allowed Indians to only buy goods made in British factories?

7. Explain why the people of India might consider Gandhi the father of their nation. Use information from the passage to support your answer

8. Choose the answer that best completes the sentence below.

_____ the British police arrested and badly beat Gandhi, he did not fight back with fists or weapons. Instead, he vowed to work peacefully to change unjust laws.

- a. Although
- b. Because
- c. Since
- d. However

9. Read the following sentence:

Years after Gandhi’s assassination, Martin Luther King, Jr. used Gandhi’s nonviolent ways to protest injustice in America.

Answer the following questions based on the sentence. The first question has been answered for you.

Who? Martin Luther King, Jr.

What did Martin Luther King, Jr. do? _____

Why? _____

When? _____

10. **Vocabulary Word:** morals: beliefs about what's right and wrong.

Use the vocabulary word in a sentence: _____

Teacher Guide and Answers

Passage Reading Level: Lexile 680

Featured Text Structure: Descriptive – the writer explains, defines or illustrates a concept or topic

Passage Summary: The passage describes Mohandas Gandhi’s nonviolent resistance to British rule.

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- b. Gandhi's nonviolent resistance and disobedience**
- c. Gandhi's influence on political leaders
- d. British colonial rule in India

6. What actions did Gandhi take against the law which allowed Indians to only buy goods made in British factories?

Suggested answer: Gandhi stopped wearing cloth made in Britain. Instead, he spun his own cloth from Indian cotton and encouraged others to do the same.

7. Explain why the people of India might consider Gandhi the father of their nation. Use information from the passage to support your answer.

Suggested answer: Answers may vary and should be supported by the passage. Students should explain that Gandhi's nonviolent resistance and disobedience swayed public opinion against the British government. The British government ultimately succumbed to Gandhi's "peaceful pressure" and granted India independence. Thus, due to Gandhi's political activism, a new nation came to be and he was considered to be its "father."

8. Choose the answer that best completes the sentence below.

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Answer the following questions based on the sentence. The first question has been answered for you.

Who? Martin Luther King, Jr.

What did Martin Luther King, Jr. do? **used Gandhi's nonviolent ways**

Why? **to protest injustice in America**

When? **years after Gandhi's assassination**

10. **Vocabulary Word:** morals: beliefs about what's right and wrong.

Use the vocabulary word in a sentence: answers may vary.