# **World History** Activators CENTURY)

Brief, Engaging Historical Experiences



#### **About the Author**

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# Welcome to World History Activators: 20th Century!

Student groups tackle problems confronted by individuals from the 20th century in six whole-class simulations. These activators use practical concerns to illustrate larger conflicts using primary source documents as the basis for reenacting history transforming the classroom into a pivotal moment in time. For example, in a lesson on Indian independence, students decide how best to divide 1947 India, and on what basis, using a set of historical maps; and in the lesson on the Long March, students play the roles of either Nationalists or Communists to analyze and then create propaganda posters enlisting the support of the Chinese people. Students thus recognize the weight of making important decisions in world history.

Other topics include apartheid, the Berlin Wall, the Oslo Accords, and the UN First World Conference on Women. These activators provide lesson plans, background essays, handout masters, historical documents including photographs, graphic organizers, and classroom schematics (when applicable), and can be accomplished in as little as one or two class periods.



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### Introduction

In these six Activators, students experience some of the pivotal events in world history. "Experience" is the key word, since Activators are designed to recreate historical events in the classroom, and to give students roles as Key Players in many of the events. In several of the Activators the Key Players are important world leaders, while in others it is the common people themselves who take action and create history.

All Activators involve the analysis of primary source documents. In the Chinese Long March, students make propaganda posters, based on primary source examples. For the Partition of India, primary source maps are used as students decide how to divide Pakistan from India. When students debate key issues confronting women in 1975, they follow the actual agenda used at the First World Conference on Women in Mexico City. Students on the east and west sides of the Berlin Wall-in-the-classroom, must react to and make decisions based on a famous press conference—reenacted in the classroom and scripted from the press conference itself. Nelson Mandela's words become central to assessing his place in history. Finally, the Oslo Accords are "signed" in the classroom, with Key Players presenting excerpts from historic speeches, after which "members of the press" pose questions.

Each Activator has two activities; the first is designed to provide historical context for the second. However, each one can be implemented with or without the other. All Activators come with **Background Essays** and **Timelines**. These should be made available to students as hard copy handouts, or as materials posted on a class website. Each Activator also comes with images, from maps to photographs, that can be projected and analyzed in class, or that themselves provide a backdrop to the action. In the Schematic for each Activator, suggestions are made for transforming the classroom in time and place: South African protest songs play in the background as students reenact the laws of apartheid, flags are flung at the World Conference on Women, a piece of AstroTurf becomes the White House Lawn for the signing of the Oslo Accords, and so forth.

In the Activators, students have the opportunity, first of all, to take action, but also to think, analyze, role-play, sing songs, and design posters.

Certain themes emerge as students complete all six Activators. The legacy of colonialism impacts the World Conference on Women, the Partition of India, the Oslo Accords and the End of Apartheid. The rise and fall of Communism dominated the twentieth century. With its fall, alliances based on long-standing fears collapsed, making room for negotiations never thought possible, from the End of Apartheid to the Oslo Accords. The United Nations itself plays a significant role in many of these events, from hosting the World Conference on Women, to fostering the search for peace in the Middle East. Overall, the end of the century was in many ways a hopeful and uplifting time, full of the promise of increased freedom for ever more people.

# The Chinese Long March, 1934

#### **Overview**

In 1934, China was in turmoil. More than 20 years after the collapse of the incompetent rule of the Qing Dynasty, the new Chinese republic remained weak and therefore easy prey for foreign invaders. While the Japanese were occupying Manchuria and stood poised to take over more of China, the Nationalist People's Party (Guomindang), led by Chiang Kai-shek, fought a war on two fronts: one against the Japanese and another against the Chinese Communist Party. The Communists understood the necessity of uniting their country in order to oust the Japanese. In the meantime, the Nationalist Party also vied for the allegiance of the Chinese people, and in 1934 it looked as if the Nationalists had won. The Communists were forced to leave the cities and instead set up rural soviets—political organizations run on the Russian communist model—including the famed Jiangxi Soviet run by Mao Zedong and Zhou Enlai. Chiang Kai-shek and the Nationalists went on the offensive, surrounding Jiangxi and tightening their stranglehold on the Communists. However, the Communists then staged an unlikely breakout in what became known in history as the Long March—a heroic, 6000-mile trek that saved the Chinese Communist Party from extinction and shaped the future of the 20th century.

In this Activator, students experience a propaganda war in which they make posters (based on primary sources) to support either the Communists or Nationalists. Afterwards, they "live through" the Long March as reported by newscasters (played by half the class) or as experienced by Communists who either survived it or fell along the way (played by the other half of the class).

## **Set-up Directions**

1-3 class periods of instruction



The Propaganda War in Posters takes two class periods. The Long March simulation can be completed in one or more classes.

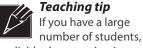
#### Roles

For the Propaganda War in Posters, students are assigned to one of three groups: Nationalist Party members, Chinese Communist Party members, or constituencies of Chinese people who must ally with one party or the other. An Assignment Chart that you can use to keep track of students' roles appears later in the lesson plan.

For the Long March, there are 16 narrators and 14 marchers. The marchers need to "think on their feet" more than the narrators.



Assign students who are better at abstract thinking to the parties.



divide the narration into more parts. For fewer students, condense the narrations.

#### **Handouts**

#### For all students

- The Background Essay, Handout 1: Propaganda Poster War, Handout 2: Political Parties and the Allegiance of the Chinese People.
- Optional for all students: The Timeline.

#### For the 16 Long March Newscasters

• Handout 3: Long March Narration.

#### For the 14 Long Marchers

• Handout 4: Long March Biographies.

#### **Images to project**

- Map A: China 1933–34.
- Map B: The Long March.
- Map C: Physical Map of China.
- Long March Documents Set 1: Propaganda Posters A, B, C.

#### **Optional for the Debriefing**

• Long March Documents Set 2: The Chinese Communist Party Propagandizes the Long March in Poetry and Art.

## **Materials and Props**

- Large sheets of paper for the posters.
- Large markers for the posters, with two to three colors per poster.
- For the students assigned to the Long March Biographies, print out a copy of their photo for them to wear around their neck, or to use as a placard at their desk so that the rest of the class can "see" who they are.
- Newscasters should have access to a "microphone" as well as a pointer and "tacks" to place on the map.

#### **Schematic**

#### For the propaganda war:

- Row in the back: Chinese People.
- Row to the left: Chinese Communist Party.
- Row to the right: Nationalist Party.
- Use posters to decorate the room.

