

Documentary Lens Lesson Plan for *When Asia Speaks*

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Curriculum Connections

This 1944 propaganda film was made by the National Film Board of Canada near the end of World War II. The documentary examines the rise of nationalist movements in Asia during the war. India, under Gandhi's leadership, demands an end to Western rule, while China fights against the Japanese conquest. An example of Japanese film propaganda is also presented.

This lesson can be used in Grade 11 and 12 Social Studies and History courses on the contemporary world, human perspectives in geography, world issues, 20th-century Canadian or world history and global issues. Cross-curricular opportunities include integrated study with media and information literacy, English language arts and computer studies.

The estimated time allotment is 60-90 minutes for discussion questions and viewing of the film; 30-45 minutes for the developing and understanding skills activities; and up to three weeks for the application activities.

Lesson Objectives

This chief objective of this lesson is to highlight the techniques and language of propaganda that do not necessarily seek to manipulate public opinion through deceit and trickery.

Students will be encouraged to use critical and creative thinking as they study *When Asia Speaks* and wrestle with the concept of propaganda. The discussion questions should prompt students to think through their positions carefully and analytically. Students will work in pairs or groups for most of the activities to ensure participation. Historical thinking skills will be encouraged, particularly in the activity about the timeline and analysis of events after home rule was achieved.

Canadian Social Studies Themes in *When Asia Speaks*

Theme/Strand/ Key Concept	Connections to <i>When Asia Speaks</i> –Discussion Points/Guided Questions
Citizenship	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What does it mean to be a global citizen? • Can global citizenship be promoted through propaganda? • Does citizenship in one country or territory preclude the rights of citizens in other countries? • Where in the world today do we continue to witness struggles between colonial powers and the desire for “home rule”?
Global Connections/ Interdepend- ence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • After 60 years, are we beginning to see the potential of India and China as suggested in the documentary? • What actions can we take in our own lives that can connect us to our Asian neighbours?

Theme/Strand/ Key Concept	Connections to <i>When Asia Speaks</i> –Discussion Points/Guided Questions
Power and Governance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What negative consequences did home rule bring to India and China? • Can a balance ever be struck between colonial “rule of the law” and home rule? • Are there examples of countries that have been able to strike this balance? • In our own personal struggles for empowerment, how can we strike that balance?

Assessment Strategies

A rubric for Activity 4 is appended to this lesson.

Materials and Resources

The following are helpful links in preparing your lesson:

- “What Is Propaganda?” at www.historians.org/projects/GIRoundtable/Propaganda/Propaganda8.htm
- “Sun Yat-sen” at www.answers.com/topic/sun-yat-sen
- “Modern China: the 1911 Revolution” at www.wsu.edu:8080/~dee/MODCHINA/REV.HTM
- “Comparative Connections: India-East Asia Relations: India's Latest Asian Incarnation” at www.csis.org/pacfor/cc/003Qoa.html
- “Anxiety Culture: The Propaganda System” at www.anxietyculture.com/propagan.htm

Activities for *When Asia Speaks*

Introductory Activities

ACTIVITY 1: Think/Pair/Share the Meaning of Propaganda

Before introducing *When Asia Speaks*, ask students to participate in a think/pair/share activity.

- 1) Working individually, students write a short definition of *propaganda* and give one specific example.
- 2) After a few minutes, divide the class into pairs to discuss their ideas with their partners.
- 3) Ask them to share with the rest of the class what they discussed. Write down on the board the various definitions suggested by the students.
- 4) Use the following questions for class discussion:
 - Does propaganda always have to be viewed as negative?
 - Is it possible for a government to use propaganda responsibly for the benefit of its citizens?
 - Can propaganda ever be used as a positive force to shape political views?
 - During times of war or threat of war, could propaganda be used by a government to encourage citizens to act in a responsible, thoughtful manner?
 - This author believes that propaganda may also be used for good and the well-being of citizens. Can you think of any potential good uses for propaganda?

* Optional: If Internet access is available, show the Web page “What is Propaganda?” from the first item in the list of Materials and Resources.

ACTIVITY 2: Tracking and Discussing Bias

Before viewing *When Asia Speaks*, ask students to pay careful attention to the narrative and to note at least two statements that indicate a bias. Suggest that they also note examples of how the Japanese were using propaganda on their own citizens at this point of the war.

After showing the film, give students a copy of the worksheet for *When Asia Speaks*. Divide the class into groups of three or four to discuss the questions in this handout.

Developing Concepts and Skills

ACTIVITY 3: The Language of Propaganda

Duration of activity: 30-60 minutes

This activity would work well in small groups if your class is large. Put the following phrases on the board for discussion. All of these phrases were used by the narrator of *When Asia Speaks*.

Asia for the Asiatics	Wrap her propaganda pills in a liberal coat of sugar
Sons of heaven's children living on the fat of eastern lands	Human interest romance designed to prove that Asia for the Asiatics is a drama with a happy ending
Full stomachs make receptive minds	

Then discuss the following:

- The above statements were all used by the narrator in reference to the Japanese. What is being suggested about the then Japanese enemy to the audience?
- The language used in *When Asia Speaks* is deliberate, biased and provocative. Can you think of any media today that manipulates language in order to influence political views or persuade consumers?
- What strategies or techniques might you use to detect media bias?
- Usually such propaganda is one-sided in its presentation. How would you research alternate points of view? What questions could guide you? Sources differ greatly in reliability. What criteria would you use to judge reliability for hard-copy sources, news media and electronic sources?

Applications

ACTIVITY 4: Propaganda and Media Awareness Project

Duration: two to three weeks. Note that this project is a potential cross-curricular one with connections to social studies, information and media literacy and computer studies.

Materials

- computers with video-editing or slide show software such as iMovie, Windows Movie Maker, or PowerPoint
- digital video cameras or digital cameras
- computer microphones
- scanners
- audio taping software such as Audacity (available for free download) or Windows Sound Recorder
- Internet access ICT labs

Introduction

The term “propaganda” is difficult to define precisely. *When Asia Speaks* was admittedly a propaganda film fundamentally intended to educate North Americans about their Asian allies. Perhaps it was also created out of a sense of promoting global citizenship. Recently, documentary films such as *Bowling for Columbine*, *Fahrenheit 911* and *Supersize Me* also represent a form of propaganda with seemingly similar altruistic intentions.

For this project, students will work in small groups to create their own persuasive propaganda-style piece on a contemporary topic to produce a video or slide show.

The project consists of:

- a proposal
- a well-researched written narrative that will later be audio taped
- appropriate sound effects and music
- at least 3 minutes of material
- at least 50% original photography or videography
- a complete bibliography that includes credits for all copyrighted images. Students can use The Citation Machine to format their entries, found at [//citationmachine.net/](http://citationmachine.net/).

Some possible topics:

- student leadership in your school
- environmental issues (for example, global warming, the one-tonne challenge)
- vegetarianism
- anti-drugs, anti-tobacco, anti-steroids
- a political party
- fashion
- body piercing

After writing a proposal and the narrative, students should develop a storyboard or plan for the shooting of their video and images. If students have video footage, they can capture their digital footage onto the computer in reasonable chunks. Once broken into different clips, the clips may be dropped into the timeline of the video editing software in the order of preference. Transitions can be added later.

Students could audio tape their production using a computer microphone and audio capture software such as Windows Sound Recorder (found under Accessories in the Start program) or Audacity, which is a free software available for downloading on the Internet. Once recorded, the file should be saved or exported as .wav or MP3 file. The file can then be dropped into the audio timeline of the video editing software. The students may then wish to match the timing of the video to the audio file.

If a PowerPoint slide show is used, the audio file can be inserted in the Slide Transition tab area so that it runs while the slides are being presented.

Note: A suggested rubric for evaluation of this activity is at the end of this lesson.

ACTIVITY 5: Multimedia Project, *That was Then . . . This is Now*

Suggested duration to completion: 2-3 weeks

Materials

- computers with video editing or slide show software such as iMovie, Windows Movie Maker, or PowerPoint
- digital video cameras or digital cameras
- scanners
- audio taping software such as Audacity (available for free download) or Windows Sound Recorder
- Internet-access ICT labs

Introduction

The documentary *When Asia Speaks* highlights the great development gains and potential of India and China. However, in the film, the narrator stated that “some hold that centuries of progressive government would be required to raise the low standards of life and health which are China’s grim inheritance.” Just a few years after the documentary was made, China was plunged into another revolution, which resulted in the firm communist rule of the Peoples’ Republic of China. While this brought political stability to China, its isolationist position from the West did not permit the friendship and cooperation that the movie so optimistically predicted. India, too, would not progress as rapidly as predicted. The film also referred to Gandhi and Sun Yat-sen as influential leaders in the national movements of their times.

Using video or slide show software, students work in small groups of 2 to 4 to create a presentation of a timeline for one of the following:

- Examine the major historical events of India or China that led to self-rule and the post-colonial period.
- Highlight later events that prevented India or China from achieving its development potential.

Or, students might choose to create a timeline of Gandhi or Sun Yat-sen as they led their people with their ideas and political perspectives.

The research component for students’ presentations should include:

- A minimum of 3 hard copy sources (books, magazines, encyclopedias and the like).
- A minimum of 3 reliable electronic sources.
- A bibliography that includes electronic sources.
- Relevant images, electronic or scanned, which should be fully credited in the bibliography.

Students may find these Web pages useful:

- The Official Mahatma Gandhi eArchive & Reference Library at [//web.mahatma.org.in/index.jsp](http://web.mahatma.org.in/index.jsp)
- The Mahatma Gandhi Web site at [//www.mkgandhi.org/](http://www.mkgandhi.org/)
- Selected Works of Mao Tse-tung at [//www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/selected-works/volume-2/mswv2_23.htm](http://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/selected-works/volume-2/mswv2_23.htm)
- Encarta entry: “The Chinese Revolution” at [//uk.encarta.msn.com/encyclopedia_761580341/Chinese_Revolution.html](http://uk.encarta.msn.com/encyclopedia_761580341/Chinese_Revolution.html)
- “Modern China: the 1911 Revolution” at www.wsu.edu:8080/~dee/MODCHINA/REV.HTM

- “Sun Yat-sen” at www.answers.com/topic/sun-yat-sen
- BBC History Mohandas Gandhi at www.bbc.co.uk/history/historic_figures/gandhi_mohandas.shtml
- “India-East Asia Relations: India's Latest Asian Incarnation” at www.csis.org/pacfor/cc/003Qoa.html

Worksheet for *When Asia Speaks*

Discussion Questions

- 1) Who is the intended audience for this film?
- 2) What do you think is the purpose of this documentary?
- 3) This film was created before the end of World War II. What attitude about the war can be seen in the film?
- 4) What is colonialism? Is this a pro-colonialist film, or is it something else?
- 5) What role do Europeans seem to have in the documentary?
- 6) Gandhi was quoted as saying, "If our rulers will not retrace their steps, we have a weapon to compel them: civil disobedience." What seems to be the attitude of the narrator about Gandhi and his political approach?
- 7) Regarding the national movements that were taking place in Asia, the narrator stated, "There can be no progress without a rule of law." What could that mean? What bias does this reveal about the documentary?
- 8) Share with your group members the statements of bias that you noted while you were watching the film. For each statement decide whether it is fact, opinion or propaganda. What does the choice of words tell you about the film's intentions or bias?
- 9) Share with your group members the statements you noted about the example of Japanese propaganda that was presented to the audience. Was it subtle or overt? What reaction was it meant to evoke from the audience?
- 10) The title of the film is *When Asia Speaks*. What can you say about the voices of Asians in the documentary?
- 11) How do you think that the average Indian or Chinese citizen from 1944 might have reacted to this film? How might they react today?
- 12) How were the images of Europeans used in the documentary? Note the choice of the images that were used. How did those images reinforce the message? Was music used effectively?

Rubric for Activity 4: Propaganda and Media Awareness Project

	Excellent	Good	Fair	Needs Improvement
Overall Participation				
Effort	Invested additional time to perfect work	Consistently put in the time required for quality work	Put in enough effort to complete assignment adequately	Did not invest any significant effort to produce a quality assignment
Collaboration	Communicated well with partner and took on additional load to support group project. Provided help to other groups	Communicated well with partner and shared workload evenly	Overall, contributed a fair amount to the groups' project, though slightly less than partner	Allowed partner to essentially do the bulk of the work
Pre-Production				
Written Proposal	Well researched Original ideas Clear target audience Conceptually solid	Some research Creative ideas Good concept General allusion to audience	Ideas from personal view only Good presentation though topic lacks originality	Little evidence of research Concepts vague or extremely cliché Lacks information
Written Narrative	Objective narrative/commentary (3-4 paragraphs) Topic well researched (3-4 scholarly references) Broken down into logical chapters/concepts (3-4) that allow story to build up Original perspective	Objective narrative/commentary (1-2 paragraphs) Good research (2-3 scholarly references) Broken down into chapters/concepts (1-2) Compelling story with some originality	Narrative/commentary prepared Story shows some development (needs refinement) More research required (references not scholarly) Story is somewhat cliché as is manner in which topic is presented	Narrative and commentary need key improvements Story lacks depth and/or refinement Research subjective or not referenced
Organization	Met all deadlines All assignments are consistent Content is exceptionally detailed and neat	Met all deadlines All assignments are consistent Content is clear and neat	Met deadlines reasonably well All work is submitted Assignments show some consistency Content fairly clear, lacks detail	Did not meet all deadlines Some work missing Presentations look rushed with little thought or effort

Rubric for Activity 4: Propaganda and Media Awareness Project

	Excellent	Good	Fair	Needs Improvement
Post-Production				
Video editing	Thorough knowledge of advanced editing techniques Professional look	Strong use of fundamental techniques Presentation consistent and professional	Well edited video, though slightly amateurish Cutting of clips could be more succinct	Poorly edited Timing and transitions inconsistent Looks rushed
Audio editing	Thorough knowledge of advanced audio editing techniques (including fades, effects, etc.) Professional sound	Strong use of fundamental techniques Audio is consistent, clear and professional	Audio well edited, slightly amateurish flow of sound Cutting of audio clips could be clearer	Poorly edited Timing inconsistent Sounds rushed
Software fluency	Refined techniques; produced with expert use of various software tools	Excellent use of essential editing components	Application of fundamental editing skills reveals broad understanding, though depth may be improved	Inconsistent editing exhibited by limited use of corrective measures (audio varies as does flow of video)
Organization	Set realistic target dates for completion of numerous clips and finished ahead of schedule	Set realistic target dates for the completion of numerous clips and met deadlines on time	Set target dates for the completion of limited number of clips and met most deadlines	Setting of target dates somewhat arbitrary, very few clips to edit (i.e., little content available). Was late.
Aesthetics	The final production is presented in a compelling and unique manner. Creativity is professional and well suited to the desired audience.	The final production is presented in a professional manner and occasionally demonstrates unique perspective.	The final production is presented in a semi-professional manner, but is somewhat bland.	The final production looks and feels amateurish.
Content	From pre-production to post-production, the story line is compelling and demonstrates advanced critical thinking and task commitment	From pre-production to post-production, the story line is compelling and demonstrates good critical thinking and hard work in pursuit of the final story	From pre-production to post-production, the story line is interesting, though it may be a topic that is common. The depth of the story could have been improved.	From pre-production to post-production, story lacked originality and conviction. Little information and the flow lacked consistency and depth.