

DISCUSSION GUIDE FOR “CHINA UNDER MAO”

a discussion with Professor Andrew Walder,
Shorenstein Asia-Pacific Research Center



- Objectives** During and after the viewing of this video, students will:
- learn about some key events in China from 1949 to 1976, including China’s Cultural Revolution;
 - learn about some key ideas in the book, *China Under Mao: A Revolution Derailed*;
 - discuss Mao’s cult of personality and leadership;
 - analyze quotations from Mao;
 - discuss the impact of some of Mao’s decisions; and
 - discuss leadership during the Mao era and leadership in China today.

Materials Handout 1, *Timeline of 1966–1976*, pp. 6–12, 30 copies
Handout 2, *Quotations by Mao Zedong*, p. 13, 30 copies
Projection, *Book Summary of China Under Mao: A Revolution Derailed from Harvard University Press*, p. 14
Teacher Information, *Video Transcript*, pp. 15–17
“China Under Mao” video, online at <https://spice.stanford.edu/multimedia/china-under-mao>

Equipment Computer with Internet access and speakers
Computer projector

Teacher Preparation Instructions and materials are based on a class size of 30 students. Adjust accordingly for different class sizes.

1. Make the appropriate number of copies of Handout 1, *Timeline of 1966–1976*, and Handout 2, *Quotations by Mao Zedong*.
2. Set up and test computer, projector, speakers, and video before starting the lesson. Confirm that you are able to play the video with adequate audio volume.

Procedures 1. Mention to students that they will be watching a video, “China Under Mao,” featuring Professor Andrew Walder, Shorenstein Asia-Pacific Research Center, Freeman Spogli Institute for International Studies, Stanford University. His talk is based on his book, *China Under Mao: A Revolution Derailed*, which was published in 2015.

2. Set the context for the video, “China Under Mao,” by displaying Projection, *Book Summary of China Under Mao: A Revolution Derailed from Harvard University Press*, and asking students to comment on key events, themes, and /or concepts that stand out in the summary.

Some of these definitions may be useful:

communism—a theoretical economic system characterized by the collective ownership of property and by the organization of labor for the common advantage of all members; a system of government in which the state plans and controls the economy and a single, often authoritarian party holds power, claiming to make progress toward a higher social order in which all goods are equally shared by the people

cult of personality—culture of excessive admiration for a political leader, characterized by unquestioning flattery and praise, and usually created through the use of mass media

Great Leap Forward—the disastrous attempt by the People’s Republic of China to modernize agriculture by labor-intensive methods from 1958 to 1960; resulted in massive famine

Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution or Cultural Revolution—a complex political and cultural reform movement in China from 1966 to 1976 that was intended to revolutionize political opinion and behavior and was characterized by social upheaval. It resulted in attacks on intellectuals, a large-scale purge of Chinese Communist Party leaders, and considerable economic dislocation.

guerrilla—a member of an irregular, usually indigenous military or paramilitary unit operating in small bands in occupied territory to harass and undermine the enemy, as by surprise raids

leadership—the state or position of being a leader

revolution—the (usually violent) overthrow or renunciation of one government or ruler and the substitution of another by the governed

socialism—a political theory or system in which the means of production and distribution are controlled by the people and operated according to equity and fairness rather than market principles

3. Inform students that they will now listen to Professor Andrew Walder discussing his book, *China Under Mao: A Revolution Derailed*. Play and project the video “China Under Mao.”
4. Lead a classroom discussion to review and debrief the talk. Suggested questions are provided below.
 - What are your thoughts on the following statements?
 - “Most of what Mao tried to do backfired on him.”
 - “...Mao lost his way in the end and ended up doing things that did enormous harm to China. He became so fixated on maintaining his vision that he lost sight of the damage that it was causing the country.”
 - “What is remarkable about him as a leader of a communist country is that he’s the only one who ever fomented rebellion against the state that he’d set up.”
 - What are some comments that Professor Walder makes about Mao as a leader?
 - What does Professor Walder say about the uniqueness of China’s revolution in 1949?
 - In what ways was Mao influenced by Stalinism?
 - What does Professor Walder say about Mao’s cult of personality?
 - What are some things that Mao stood against? How are these relevant to (or how do they help us better understand) China’s leadership today?
 - What are some differences between leadership during the Mao era and China’s leaders today?
5. In *China Under Mao: A Revolution Derailed* and in the video, Professor Walder mentions the Cultural Revolution, widely considered to be one of Mao’s greatest failures. Distribute Handout 1, *Timeline of 1966–1976*, which is a summary of the events of the Cultural Revolution. Ask students to review the timeline in partner pairs or in small groups, discuss Mao’s leadership and cult of personality during this time period, and answer the questions that follow the timeline. Have students share summaries of their responses to the questions as a class.
6. In the video, Professor Walder references Mao’s cult of personality. He references people reciting some of his sayings from the *Quotations from Chairman Mao Zedong* and also discusses images of Mao. To encourage students to explore Mao’s cult of personality, distribute a copy of Handout 2, *Quotations by Mao Zedong*, to each student. The directions are on the handout.
7. In addition, there are numerous websites that include posters of Mao and China’s Cultural Revolution. Ask students to analyze some of these posters by projecting them and encouraging students to further consider Mao’s cult of personality. Point out that propaganda posters during the Cultural Revolution were ubiquitous, displayed in homes, schools, workplaces, train stations, and office buildings. The carefully

crafted images were a part of everyday life for Chinese citizens; therefore, studying them can shed light on the messages that Chinese people constantly encountered during the Cultural Revolution. Have students in small groups (1) describe the symbols, colors, and people depicted in each poster; (2) discuss the values or ideals promoted in each poster (drawing upon information presented in Professor Walder’s talk); and (3) write a title or caption for each poster.

Possible sources for posters:

- <http://chinese posters.net/themes/cultural-revolution-campaigns.php>
- <http://chinese posters.net/gallery/theme-07.php>
- <http://sinohits.net/posters/index.htm>

8. Debrief this lesson by asking the following:
 - What were some key events in China from 1949 to 1976?
 - What are some key ideas in the book, *China Under Mao: A Revolution Derailed*?
 - Describe Mao’s cult of personality and his leadership qualities.
 - Discuss the impact of some of Mao’s key decisions.
 - Share some of your thoughts on leadership during the Mao era and leadership in China today.

Optional Activities

1. Assign students to write about one of the following:
 - Compare China’s revolution in 1949 with a revolution in another country.
 - Compare Mao’s cult of personality with another leader’s cult of personality.
 - Write an obituary of Mao Zedong.
 - Write a detailed analysis of one or more propaganda posters from China’s Cultural Revolution.
 - Write a letter to Mao in which you share your thoughts on his leadership.
 - Write lyrics to a song or a poem about some aspect of China during the years 1949–1976.
 - Write a script for live news broadcasts based on some of the events on Handout 1, *Timeline of 1966–1976*.
 - Obtain a copy of *China Under Mao: A Revolution Derailed*, and write a book review.
 - Write an op-ed piece or editorial about a contemporary article that focuses on leadership in China today.
2. Design one of the following:
 - A tourist brochure about important historic sites in China from the time period 1949–1976. What sites would you feature? What perspectives would you include? What images would you include?

- A one-page high school textbook entry (including images) about either the Great Leap Forward or the Cultural Revolution. Consider which resources and whose perspectives you would use. Would you incorporate quotes? What sorts of images would you include?
- A sketch of a memorial to some aspect of China during the years 1949–1976. Where would you build it? Would you include a quote from Mao? If so, which one?
- A timeline of the period 1949–1976 in Chinese history. Which events would you highlight? Include images as well.

TIMELINE OF 1966–1976

Jiang Qing (1914–1991)—Mao’s wife from 1939; Deputy Director of the Cultural Revolution and one of the most powerful figures in China during Mao’s final years; after Mao’s death, arrested and sentenced to life in prison

vitriolic—expressing violent and bitter hatred

bourgeois—according to Marxist theory, relating to the social class that owns most of the wealth and is regarded as exploiting the working class

socialist—relating to, based on, or advocating socialism, a political theory or system in which the means of production and distribution are controlled by the people and operated according to equity and fairness rather than market principles

Politburo—the executive and policymaking committee of a governing Communist Party

sphere of culture—group within a society

revisionist—a member of the Chinese Communist Party who attempts to alter Communist ideals, usually by advocating revolutionary reforms rather than a revolutionary spirit

struggle session—public denunciation of the accused in which the victim is humiliated and made to confess his or her “crimes”

Marxist—relating to, supporting, or implementing Marxism, the political and economic theories of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels in which class struggle is a central element in the analysis of social change

“black, anti-Party gangster”—label given to bourgeoisie and other enemies of the revolution

continued on next page

1965

Setting the stage for the Cultural Revolution

Mao and his wife, **Jiang Qing**, set the stage for the Cultural Revolution in 1965 when they direct a literary critic, Yao Wenyuan, to publish a **vitriolic** critique of a play by Beijing’s mayor. Jiang Qing and Yao perceive the play as a symbolic attack on Mao, and the article receives a great deal of publicity across the country.

A few months later, Jiang Qing writes a general criticism of literature and art (e.g., plays, novels, paintings, opera, ballet, poetry) since the founding of the People’s Republic of China, condemning the **bourgeois**, anti-party, and anti-**socialist** tendencies she detects in popular art and culture.

Mao also begins replacing people in key government positions with his own trusted friends and allies.

May 16, 1966

Unofficial beginning of the Cultural Revolution

The Cultural Revolution unofficially begins with the “May 16 Circular” issued by the **Politburo**. The “May 16 Circular” states the CCP’s intention to oust “representatives of the bourgeoisie who have sneaked into the CCP, the government, the army, and the various **spheres of culture**.”

Mao then calls on students, who come to be called Red Guards, to carry out an aggressive hunt for **revisionists** and a struggle against enemies of socialism. The first to organize are students (and some young teachers) at Beijing University, who begin publicly criticizing school authorities. The movement is infectious, and the fast-spreading word of student rebellions in Beijing inspires students all over the country to form their own Red Guard groups.

By the summer of 1966, the Cultural Revolution is quickly becoming a national student movement. Across China, schools cancel regular classes, while students attend political study meetings, **struggle sessions**, and other revolutionary activities.

May 25, 1966

First *dazibao*

A young teacher at Beijing University writes the first **Marxist *dazibao***, or big character poster, against some of the university’s professors and administrators, labeling them “**black, anti-Party gangsters**.” As word of unrest spreads, students begin producing and displaying masses of big character posters attacking those they label **reactionary** academics.

From 1966 to 1968, creating *dazibao* is one of the most popular revolutionary activities and becomes a mainstay of the movement,

reactionary—one opposed to the Cultural Revolution or the Chinese Communist Party

“bad elements”—refers to people who have wealth, power, knowledge, or an association with foreign countries

fervor—extreme intensity of emotion or belief

disgruntled—in a state of resentful dissatisfaction, anger, and irritation

unprecedented—having no earlier parallel or equivalent

ideology—a closely organized system of beliefs, values, and ideas forming the basis of a social, economic, or political philosophy or program

purge—to remove opponents or people considered undesirable from a state or organization

criticizing various intellectuals, party officials, and other “bad elements.” Students display hundreds of dazibao around their schools, which are quickly littered with posters in red and black writing. Soon big character poster displays spill into public and private areas, covering the walls of buildings, train and bus stations, workplaces, and homes, severely damaging the reputations of the accused.

May 29, 1966 Red Guards form at Beijing University

The first group of Red Guards organizes at Beijing University with the purpose of eliminating intellectuals and Mao’s enemies. Most revolutionary activity at this time is limited to the large urban centers, such as Beijing, Shanghai, and Nanjing. The revolution quickly becomes a national student movement and revolutionary fervor spreads like wildfire.

Students who become Red Guards do so for a number of reasons. Many are disgruntled about inequalities in the educational system and their own career potential or simply want to follow the leader they have been taught to love and admire since birth. Some students join merely to participate in the excitement and momentum of the movement and are lured by the unprecedented power it affords them. Others take the opportunity to seek revenge against teachers and classmates they dislike. Some girls and women join the Red Guards to avoid marriage or escape abusive households and embrace a level of freedom, power, and equality never before experienced by Chinese women. Not all students are allowed to join the Red Guards; those from “bad” family backgrounds—including children of landlords, capitalists, and intellectuals—are excluded and often became targets of the attacks. Some join early on to prove their revolutionary loyalty but are ousted once their backgrounds are brought to light.

Red Guards often misunderstand the ideology behind the revolution or their own actions and exhibit confusion about whom they are supposed to target. Ironically, revolutionary students eventually attack many of the same party leaders who had encouraged them to rebel in the first place.

August 5, 1966 Mao writes a dazibao

Mao writes a dazibao stating “Bombard the headquarters.” The poster is an attack on Liu Shaoqi, the Vice Chairman of the CCP. Mao’s act of writing and displaying the poster gives authority to dazibao created by students and encourages others to criticize and purge CCP leaders.

capitalist-roader—someone who supports capitalism, an economic system based on the private ownership of the means of production and distribution of goods, characterized by a free market and motivation by profit

People's Daily—the official newspaper of the Chinese Communist Party

smash the "Four Olds"—to destroy anything considered to be an old idea, part of old culture, an old custom, or an old habit

quintessential—the most perfect example of something

"Little Red Book"—another name for Mao Zedong's *Selected Works* (a.k.a., *Quotations by Chairman Mao*), which is a compilation of his quotations

revisionism—a socialist movement opposing revolutionary Marxist theory and believing in the peaceful achievement of social progress through reforms

People's Liberation Army (PLA)—the national army of the People's Republic of China

"Four Olds"—old ideas, old customs, old culture, and old habits

"Seven Kinds of Black"—refers to landlords, rich peasants, counterrevolutionaries, rightists, "bad elements," "monsters and freaks," and pro-capitalists

August 8, 1966 Sixteen Points Directive

The Eighth Central Committee of the CCP passes the "Decision of the Central Committee of the Chinese Party Concerning the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution" (a.k.a., the Sixteen Points). This document is an official statement of the Chinese government supporting Mao's economic policies and the formation of the Red Guards as Mao's primary weapon in carrying out a "great revolution that touches people to their very souls."

The Sixteen Points state that targets of the revolution are not just intellectuals but also capitalist-roaders in the Party leadership. With the publication of this decision in the *People's Daily* on August 9, the Cultural Revolution gains legitimacy and quickly expands.

This marks the official beginning of the Cultural Revolution, even though the movement has been going on for several months by this time.

August 18, 1966 First Red Guard rally in Beijing

Mao greets the Red Guards at Tiananmen Square in Beijing to give them his blessing to rebel. He also directs police and army to allow Red Guards to smash the "Four Olds." This is the first of numerous rallies held in Beijing between August and November 1966. An estimated 13 million Red Guards attend such rallies at Tiananmen Square.

The demonstrations become a quintessential image of the Cultural Revolution, with students holding their cherished "Little Red Books" in the air and chanting "Long Live Chairman Mao." At these rallies, Mao applauds the students' zeal for exposing revisionism, supports their "right to rebel," and motivates them to continue their efforts.

Initially, the People's Liberation Army (PLA) plays an instrumental role in helping to organize Red Guards by housing and feeding them, outfitting them in khaki uniforms, and providing free transportation to Beijing to attend the rallies.

January 1967 Chaos escalates

By now, Red Guards have vigorously adopted their new role as Mao's "greatest weapon," ransacking homes, destroying or confiscating anything identified with the "Four Olds" or the bourgeoisie, and humiliating and purging those belonging to the "Seven Kinds of Black." Red Guards parade through the streets searching for victims while singing revolutionary songs and shouting slogans. From August to September 1966, the escalating violence had resulted in the fatal beatings of more than 1,700 people and the invasion and ransacking of 38,000 homes.

vendetta—a prolonged bitter feud or quarrel

debilitate—to sap the strength of someone or something

Lin Biao (1907–1971)—PLA marshal, vice chairman of the CCP, vice premier, minister of defense, and vice chairman of the CCP Central Military Commission; officially designated “Chairman Mao’s successor” in the Party constitution. After 1969, Mao grew increasingly wary of Lin, who died under mysterious circumstances in a plane crash in Mongolia in September 1971.

don—to wear a garment

ubiquitous—present everywhere at the same time; widespread

extol—to praise with great enthusiasm and admiration

Mao Zedong Thought—the principles and ideas set forth by Mao Zedong, based on Marxism

propaganda—information or publicity put out by an organization or government to spread and promote a policy, idea, or cause

undermine—to weaken something by removing or wearing away material from its base or from beneath it

Factions of students also begin to struggle against each other, wreaking even greater chaos. Revolutionary zeal spreads rapidly, but the original goals of the revolution are often displaced by the rebels’ personal agendas, usually vendettas against their own personal enemies.

Nonetheless, the *People’s Daily* publishes an article in which Mao praises the revolutionary actions of the Red Guards and calls on local leaders to criticize themselves and their colleagues. As a result, local governments become completely debilitated as officials are purged one after the other.

Spring 1968

Campaign to promote Mao’s cult of personality

Lin Biao and Jiang Qing begin aggressively promoting Mao’s cult of personality with a massive campaign portraying him as a god-like figure. Pictures of Mao and items donning his image are ubiquitous, displayed in all public places as well as people’s own homes. Although the country is littered with Mao’s image, few ever see him in person. Songs, chants, and newspaper articles extol his virtues and seek to strengthen his superhuman status.

Mao’s “Little Red Book,” of which 350,000 copies are produced, is found in virtually every home and workplace. People are expected to study Mao’s quotations and learn his teachings, even though approximately one-third of the population is illiterate. Additionally, people are required to carry at least one copy of the “Little Red Book” at all times to prove their devotion to their leader. Nearly all written works now are an expression of Mao Zedong Thought, and propaganda spreads the idea that every word Mao utters is true. Consequently, most Chinese do not question the chairman’s decisions, and if they do, they typically do not voice their opposition for fear of punishment.

At this time, Mao has little control over the activities of the Red Guards or other rebels, and the turmoil has reached its peak. Mao worries that the chaos created by the Red Guards could undermine and destroy the foundation of the CCP.

July 1968

Red Guards dismantled

By mid-1968, the movement has become one of the most devastating revolutions in Chinese history: the country has suffered major losses in human life, economic production, and cultural heritage. Thousands of Chinese have been imprisoned and tortured and many others killed or driven to suicide. Industrial production has decreased by 12 percent, and the economy has been gravely disrupted. In addition, 53 of the 97 members of the CCP Central Committee have been ousted from the party.

quell—to bring to an end

To quell the chaos and avoid descent into anarchy, Mao commands the PLA to dismantle the Red Guards and restore order in the cities. Schools, which eventually reopen, as well as government offices and other bureaucratic agencies are to be controlled by the military. Rebels are disarmed, and slowly Mao and the CCP regain control over the country, thus ending the first and most chaotic phase of the Cultural Revolution.

On January 1, 1969, an editorial in the *People's Daily* declares the Cultural Revolution a success, and Mao calls on the people to continue the "cleansing of class ranks."

December 1968

"Down to the Countryside" Movement

Mao initiates the "Down to the Countryside" movement (a.k.a., the "Up to the Mountains, Down to the Countryside" movement), sending urban youth, including Red Guards, to do manual labor and be "reeducated" by rural peasants. These students are called "sent-down youth." Some Red Guards who are not sent to the countryside join the military. Of those young people who do join rural work units, many die of malnutrition, disease, or exhaustion. For those who survive, their lives and futures are forever impacted both by the experience itself as well as their lack of formal education. The campaign results in an estimated 16 million young people foregoing their schooling. Achieving the CCP's objective, the campaign also effectively eliminates the threat of Chinese youth organizing against the CCP.

April 1969

Ninth Congress of the CCP

The Ninth Congress of the CCP convenes, and party leaders who have managed to survive the struggles and maintain their positions applaud the purging of bourgeoisie, capitalists, revisionists, and counterrevolutionaries. Lin Biao is promoted to vice chairman of the CCP, and the Chinese Constitution is rewritten to name him as Mao's successor and comrade-in-arms. Although Mao declares the official end of the Cultural Revolution at this meeting, there is more to follow the damage already done.

The new phase of the movement emphasizes rebuilding the Party, stabilizing the economy, increasing grain production, and establishing foreign relations, all of which have suffered greatly during the early years of the Cultural Revolution. Rather than stress the need to attack class enemies, the party focuses more efforts on promoting the study of Mao's works. There still remains, however, a great deal of factional fighting, making reconstruction more difficult. Although the army itself is also divided on policy issues, the PLA plays an important role during this time in the rebuilding efforts. Revolutionary committees also are formed to help reestablish leadership and bring order.

convene—to come together for a formal meeting

counterrevolutionary—opposed to revolution as a means of political and social change

class enemy—refers to someone not belonging to the proletariat class

factional—conflict between groups within a larger group

reconstruction—the process of putting something back together from its component parts or remains

revolutionary committee—committee made up of Red Guards, military personnel, and Party officials

coup d'état—the sudden overthrow of a government and seizure of political power, especially in a violent way and by the military

Wang Hongwen (1932–1992)—security guard in a cotton mill who rose to fame as “rebel” labor leader during the Cultural Revolution; appointed to Central Committee in 1969 and groomed by Mao as possible successor in early 1970s; vice chairman of the CCP at the time of his arrest as one of the “Gang of Four” in 1976; sentenced to life in prison in 1981

Zhou Enlai (1898–1976)—the PRC’s premier and chief diplomat from 1949 until his death in 1976; a practical leader who tried to restrain extremists during the Cultural Revolution; remains almost universally admired in China

vie—to strive for superiority or compete with someone

Deng Xiaoping (1904–1997)—moderate Chinese leader who was denounced as a “capitalist-roader” and removed from his leadership posts during the Cultural Revolution; he later became China’s principal leader from the 1970s until his death in 1997, instituting free-market economic reforms and opening China to the outside world

Confucius (551–479 B.C.E.)—an ancient Chinese philosopher whose views greatly influenced Chinese society; the CCP attacked him for his conservative values

moderate—not extreme or radical

September 1971 “The Lin Biao Affair”

Tensions grow between many groups including the PLA and Party leaders, as well as among CCP leaders themselves, and most importantly between Mao and Lin Biao. Lin has political ambitions to become vice president of the party and has requested promotions numerous times, all of which are denied. Mao becomes suspicious of Lin’s agenda, and Lin’s power dwindles.

According to the Chinese government, Lin, along with some loyal supporters in the military, attempt a coup d'état by attempting to assassinate Mao in early September 1971. The alleged coup is a failure, and Lin’s reputation is completely destroyed. On September 13, 1971, Lin and his family are flying to the Soviet Union when their plane crashes over Mongolia. The cause of the crash is never determined. The public is not informed of Lin’s death for nearly a year. When the story finally breaks, people generally feel betrayed by the man who had been Mao’s biggest supporter and best student. They also begin to question the legitimacy of the Cultural Revolution.

1974 “Criticize Lin Biao, Criticize Confucius” Campaign

After Lin Biao’s death, the party undergoes a great deal of change. Wang Hongwen replaces Lin as vice chairman, and Jiang Qing and Zhou Enlai begin vying for power as well. In the meantime, Deng Xiaoping reenters the political arena with the help of Zhou Enlai’s influence and support and becomes vice premier in 1973.

In 1972, Jiang Qing initiates the “Criticize Lin Biao” campaign, which is an effort to blame Lin for all the mistakes of the revolution thus far, including the country’s economic problems, in which he was not even involved. In 1974, the campaign expands, becoming the “Criticize Lin Biao, Criticize Confucius” campaign. This is an indirect criticism of Zhou Enlai, who supports many ideals promoted by both Lin and Confucius. By this time, however, the Chinese people have seen many similar campaigns come and go and are not swayed by yet another. Thus, both campaigns fail.

April 5, 1976 Tiananmen Incident

Zhou Enlai becomes ill with cancer, is hospitalized in the fall of 1974, and dies on January 8, 1976. This is considered a great loss, as Zhou had served as a moderate leader and was highly respected and loved by the Chinese people. The memorial for his death in Tiananmen Square on April 5 boasts unprecedented attendance. Many attendees use the occasion to commemorate Zhou as well as criticize Jiang Qing and her allies. When Jiang Qing and her supporters attempt to remove memorials to Zhou, a riot ensues. This event becomes known as the Tiananmen Incident (of

Hua Guofeng (1921–2008)—a deputy governor of Hunan province at the beginning of the Cultural Revolution; rose quickly through the ranks; elected to the Central Committee at the Ninth Party Congress in 1969; promoted to Politburo membership in 1973; chosen to succeed Zhou Enlai as premier and Mao as Party chairman in 1976; increasingly powerless after 1978

“Gang of Four”—term used by the post-Mao leadership to denote the four leading radical figures—Jiang Qing, Zhang Chunqiao, Yao Wenyuan, and Wang Hongwen—who played a dominant political role during the Cultural Revolution until Mao’s death in September 1976 and their arrest several weeks later

1976) and is initially labeled counterrevolutionary by the government (a label that is withdrawn after the Cultural Revolution ends).

1976

Events leading to the end of the Cultural Revolution

After Zhou Enlai’s death in early 1976, Deng Xiaoping becomes the first vice premier and immediately faces criticism by Jiang Qing. Subsequently, Mao demotes Deng and in a surprising turn of events, replaces Zhou Enlai with the relatively unknown and moderate Hua Guofeng rather than with Jiang or one of Mao’s other closest allies.

In September 1975, Mao is hospitalized and dies a year later on September 9, 1976, leaving Hua Guofeng as chairman of the CCP. Hua orders the arrest of Jiang Qing and her supporters (who, by this time, have already lost favor with the Chinese people) and labels them the **“Gang of Four.”** Their arrest marks the end of the Cultural Revolution. The government then blames most of the excesses and mistakes of the movement on Lin Biao and the **“Gang of Four,”** leaving Mao nearly blameless. The decade from 1966 to 1976 would later be referred to as the **“ten lost years”** or the **“ten years of turmoil.”**

Discussion Questions

Discuss the following questions with your partner(s). Be ready to share your answers with the class.

1. How did Jiang Qing help set the stage for the Cultural Revolution?
2. Which document unofficially signaled the beginning of the Cultural Revolution?
3. List at least three revolutionary activities that were very popular among Red Guards.
4. List at least three reasons that students joined Red Guard organizations.
5. What ensured that Red Guards had a great deal of freedom and power in the early years of the Cultural Revolution?
6. List at least two ways Mao’s cult of personality was made manifest in society.
7. What long-term effects did the **“Down to the Countryside”** movement have on Chinese youth?

QUOTATIONS BY MAO ZEDONG

The following are quotations by Mao Zedong from interviews, speeches, and his *Selected Works*.

Directions

Read all of the quotations below. Select three of them and write two to three paragraphs about Mao's beliefs and teachings. Consider and incorporate aspects of Professor Walder's talk in your paragraphs.

1. "A revolution is not a dinner party, or writing an essay, or painting a picture, or doing embroidery; it cannot be so refined, so leisurely and gentle, so temperate, kind, courteous, restrained, and magnanimous. A revolution is an insurrection, an act of violence by which one class overthrows another.
2. "In the West imperialism is still oppressing the people at home. This situation must change. It is the task of the people of the whole world to put an end to the aggression and oppression perpetrated by imperialism, and chiefly by U.S. imperialism."
3. "Wherever there is struggle, there is sacrifice, and death is a common occurrence. But we have the interests of the people and the sufferings of the great majority at heart, and when we die for the people it is a worthy death. Nevertheless, we should do our best to avoid unnecessary sacrifices."
4. "Protect the interests of the youth, women, and children—provide assistance to young students who cannot afford to continue their studies, help the youth and women to organize in order to participate on an equal footing in all work useful to the war effort and to social progress, ensure freedom of marriage and equality as between men and women, and give young people and children a useful education..."
5. "In any society in which classes exist, class struggle will never end. In classless society, the struggle between the new and the old and between truth and falsehood will never end. In the fields of the struggle for production and scientific experiment, mankind makes constant progress and nature undergoes constant change; they never remain at the same level. Therefore, man has constantly to sum up experience and go on discovering, inventing, creating, and advancing."
6. "Where do correct ideas come from? Do they drop from the skies? No. Are they innate in the mind? No. They come from social practice, and from it alone; they come from three kinds of social practice: the struggle for production, the class struggle, and scientific experiment."
7. "The world is yours, as well as ours, but in the last analysis, it is yours. You young people, full of vigor and vitality, are in the bloom of life, like the sun at eight or nine in the morning. Our hope is placed upon you."

Book Summary of *China Under Mao: A Revolution Derailed* from Harvard University Press

China's Communist Party seized power in 1949 after a long period of guerrilla insurgency followed by full-scale war, but the Chinese revolution was just beginning. *China Under Mao* narrates the rise and fall of the Maoist revolutionary state from 1949 to 1976—an epoch of startling accomplishments and disastrous failures, steered by many forces but dominated above all by Mao Zedong.

Mao's China, Andrew Walder argues, was defined by two distinctive institutions established during the first decade of Communist Party rule: a Party apparatus that exercised firm (sometimes harsh) discipline over its members and cadres; and a socialist economy modeled after the Soviet Union. Although a large national bureaucracy had oversight of this authoritarian system, Mao intervened strongly at every turn. The doctrines and political organization that produced Mao's greatest achievements—victory in the civil war, the creation of China's first unified modern state, a historic transformation of urban and rural life—also generated his worst failures: the industrial depression and rural famine of the Great Leap Forward and the violent destruction and stagnation of the Cultural Revolution.

Misdiagnosing China's problems as capitalist restoration and prescribing continuing class struggle against imaginary enemies as the solution, Mao ruined much of what he had built and created no viable alternative. At the time of his death, he left China backward and deeply divided.

Source: "China Under Mao: A Revolution Derailed," Harvard University Press, <http://www.hup.harvard.edu/catalog.php?isbn=9780674058156> [19 September 2015]

VIDEO TRANSCRIPT

On-screen text:

China Under Mao

a discussion with Andrew Walder

On-screen text:

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Professor Walder: Most of what Mao tried to do backfired on him. The central organizing theme of the book, starting with chapter 7 and going through the very end, is that each time Mao tried a bold initiative, it had outcomes that must have surprised him—certainly [that] he did not welcome—and he repeatedly changed his tactics and ran into new problems. In the end—although this isn't explicitly argued—I think you could probably draw the conclusion from the story that Mao lost his way in the end and ended up doing things that did enormous harm to China. He became so fixated on maintaining his vision that he lost sight of the damage that it was causing the country.

What's remarkable about him as a leader of a communist country is that he's the only one who ever fomented rebellion against the state that he'd set up. If he had only wanted to get rid of officials who disagreed with him, he didn't need to do that. I think that's the thing that is really most remarkable about Mao as a leader.

The other thing that I think people should walk away [with] after reading the book is that the period from 1949 through 1976 was really the core of the Chinese revolution. We tend to think of revolutions as being over when a new government takes power. But in China, that was just the beginning.

China had not changed very much in 1949. The party had only controlled limited areas of the countryside. It ran no cities. It had this extremely rapid military conquest of China. The revolution in China was not one where ordinary people rose up under the leadership of guerrilla forces and took power in the cities. The Communist Party was able in the late 1940s to create a large modern army in Manchuria, and it basically rolled south and then west across China. It was a military conquest. So basically, the transformation of China that took place—the revolution—really began in 1949 and '50, after this army took power. That's another thing that I think people should walk away from the book thinking about.

One of the things that surprised me in doing research for the book—and this is some of the new histories of the late 1930s and 1940s movement in Yan'an that I drew upon, things that weren't available when I first started doing work on China in the '70s and '80s—it's very clear that for a period of two or three years, Mao felt like he really had to burnish his credentials as a Marxist and also as a leader of a major communist party. He studied Soviet textbooks and encyclopedia articles under the tutelage of people like Chen Boda, who later helped him launch the Cultural Revolution [and] who had studied in Moscow in the previous years. The Marxism and the Soviet-style communism that he studied was Stalinism. It was the early Stalin era. Mao adopted those ideas wholeheartedly. He adopted the idea—which was Stalin's idea—that class struggle did not end when you've created the foundations for a socialist economy. In other words, exploiting classes are still out there trying to undermine the revolution.

The other idea [that he adopted] is that there has to be one supreme leader that decides which ideas are correct and which ideas are traitorous, and people who disagree with that leader and who persist have to be removed. This is when you started to get portraits of Mao. He consciously set out to develop the thoughts of Mao Zedong, helped greatly by these better-educated editors and thinkers like Chen Boda. That was the beginning of it.

Over the years, as the Cultural Revolution unfolded, it reached a level that I suppose you can laugh at in retrospect, but he was treated as almost a godlike figure. At a certain period—for about a year, in 1968–69—people, when they went to work in the morning, went to little altars that had a bust of Mao or a photograph of Mao and recited some of his sayings from the “Little Red Book” of *Quotations from Chairman Mao Zedong*. They would ask for instructions and bow to his portrait. And then at the end of the day they would have another meeting, a little assembly in [their] workgroup, and do the same thing. They also had something called the “loyalty dance”—loyalty to Chairman Mao—where people would do a series of movements and sing a song about a million hearts beating in unison and loving and cherishing Chairman Mao.

There were other aspects of this, and the Mao cult really went wild in '67, '68, '69. Apparently, at one point, Mao, at a party meeting—there was kind of a dose of realism—said, “What is all this? This is ridiculous.” And then it just ended. He still was very much an icon, but the dancing and the religious worship kind of faded away.

Actually, through most of the last half of the Mao era, the end of a lot of the negative things that happened really didn't come about until Mao himself said, “We should really stop this” or “Why are we doing it this way?” And it's interesting that the party—the people under him—then immediately took the signal and toned things down.

The things that Mao stood against—a leadership that is concerned with stability, with economic development, with security, with improving the standards of living of the Chinese people... those are the ultimate values for the leadership today, and Mao denigrated those ideas throughout his life. He did not want stability. He thought that if China was left to develop under stable dictatorship of the party, the party members would set themselves apart from ordinary people, would have a better lifestyle, would grasp privileges for themselves. He saw this happening in the Soviet Union, and he called this “revisionism.” He had this strange idea that it was capitalism or reversion to capitalism; it actually was the opposite of capitalism. What he foresaw as a future of China that he disapproved of was a bureaucratic dictatorship based on total state control and the privileges that inevitably came from that.

If you understand in a clear-eyed fashion what Mao stood for and what he tried to fight for in his life, you realize that China's leaders today—whatever their reverential attitude towards him is—they are doing everything that he fought against during his life. I think people in China are very fortunate that that is the case. In many ways, the polite and semi-worshipful attitude towards Mao by the current leadership really glosses over absolutely fundamental differences between China in that period and the leaders today.

Another way in which it helps us to understand China today—and this is related to the campaign against corruption and all the similar things that people write about, things that have gone wrong in China under its market reforms—is that party officials (and I said this in the first few minutes) were under extraordinary scrutiny. They were under constant threat of being removed from power, criticized, even being put in prison for disobeying party policy. After Mao's death, the party relaxed this kind of super-aggressive, almost punitive attitude towards party officials, and gave them a great deal more space to do what they wanted. One of the results, in the context of a market economy, is that they've enriched themselves. What's

interesting is this is more like capitalism, but it's very different from what Mao said was capitalism back in the 1960s and '70s.

Another way in which it helps us to understand China today is that the relaxation of the control over party officials, the relaxation of the campaigns that were so damaging and bloody in China in that period, has led to an exacerbation of the abuse of power and the use of people's positions to enrich themselves. As much as Mao was worried about this in his life, that was almost absent. People today look back on the Mao period, I think with some justification, as one where party officials were not as corrupt as they are today. They may have abused their power somewhat, but they led very simple, even spartan lives. No one amassed fortunes. Party officials today can travel abroad; they fill up the business and first class cabins of international air flights; they come here and they buy real estate. They're part of the international jet set, the international elite. There was nothing like this when Mao was alive, and I don't think he could even have imagined that this was a possibility.