Mohandas K. Gandhi was one of the greatest leaders of the 1900's. He helped free India from British colonial rule without using violence. Gandhi's courage and morals\(^1\) won respect the world over. So did the methods of non-violent 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 big 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 non-violence. 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 not only unjust; they also kept people from earning enough to live on. 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 non-violence 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.”

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\(^1\) Morals – beliefs about what’s right and wrong
\(^2\) Rebellious – defying authority
\(^3\) Boycott – to refuse to buy something as part of a protest
1. Gandhi was also called “Mahatma” which means
   a. poor soul
   b. great soul
   c. funny soul
   d. kind soul

2. All of the following have to do with Gandhi, except
   a. non-violent protest
   b. fasting
   c. boycotts
   d. fighting back with fists and weapons

3. What caused Gandhi to be arrested?
   a. That he studied law
   b. His methods of non-violent protest
   c. The fact he was living in South Africa
   d. Queen Victoria

4. Based on the passage, fast means
   a. to give up eating for a time
   b. to move in a hurry
   c. to move very slowly
   d. to give up sleeping for a time

5. What did Mohandas Gandhi’s father do when Mohandas told him he had stolen from his brother?
   a. He hit Mohandas
   b. He cried
   c. He moved to another city
   d. He made him pay his brother back
6. What is one way in which Mohandas Gandhi influenced U.S. history?

________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________

7. What happened to Mohandas Gandhi when he refused to give up his seat on a train in South Africa?

________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________

8. The question below is an incomplete sentence. Choose the word that best completes the sentence.

Partly as a result of Gandhi’s hard work, the British ______ gave India its independence.

a. ultimately
b. somewhat
c. originally
d. never

9. Answer the following questions based on the sentence below.

Nonviolence and courage were important to Gandhi.

What? nonviolence and courage
(were) What? _____________________________________________________
(to) Whom? ______________________________________________________


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: Mohandas Gandhi was one of the greatest leaders of the 1900’s. He helped free India from British colonial rule without using violence. His courage and morals won him respect all over the world and inspired others.

1. Gandhi was also called “Mahatma” which means
   a. poor soul
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6. What is one way in which Mohandas Gandhi influenced U.S. history?
   **Suggested answer:** Gandhi describes the impact his father’s tears had on him by saying that, “Those pearl drops of love cleansed my heart.”

7. What happened to Mohandas Gandhi when he refused to give up his seat on a train in South Africa?
   **Suggested answer:** Martin Luther King, Jr. would use Gandhi’s nonviolent ways to protest injustice in America.

8. The question below is an incomplete sentence. Choose the word that best completes the sentence.

Partly as a result of Gandhi’s hard work, the British ______ gave India its independence.

   a. ultimately  
b. somewhat  
c. originally  
d. never

9. Answer the following questions based on the sentence below.

Nonviolence and courage were important to Gandhi.

What? nonviolence and courage

(were) What? **important**

(to) Whom? **Gandhi**

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

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