Name: _____

Date: _____

Mohandas Gandhi: India's Great Soul

Mohandas Gandhi had no army and never held political office. Yet he became a hero of India's struggle for independence from the British Empire. Gandhi's weapon was resistance: millions of Indians refused to cooperate with British rule, while Gandhi insisted that they resist without violence.

Early Life and Education

Gandhi came from a prominent family of government officials in western India. After the death of his father, a family adviser recommended that he study law in England and prepare for a career in government. As Gandhi studied law in London, he purchased new clothes and practiced speaking English without his Indian accent to fit into British society.

After a few months, Gandhi realized he was pretending to be someone he was not. Instead of trying to be British, he began studying his own Indian culture while living in London.

Awakening in South Africa

Gandhi took a job as a lawyer in South Africa, which, like India, was part of the British Empire. He spent the next twenty years fighting discrimination against South Africa's Indian minority, developing satyagraha, a method of resisting injustice without violence.

Return to India

After twenty years defending Indian rights in South Africa, Gandhi returned to India in 1915 to a hero's welcome. On the advice of his political mentor, he spent much of his first year traveling through India. He traveled third class and wore simple Indian clothing so he could experience the lives of ordinary people. Gandhi also began speaking out against untouchability, the centuries-old discrimination against people at the bottom of India's caste system.

Non-Violent Protest

Gandhi and his followers opposed British rule through civil disobedience and non-violent protest. In 1919, he called for a nationwide strike against a British law that allowed citizens to be imprisoned without trial. Indians closed businesses, stopped working, fasted, and prayed. When violence broke out, Gandhi halted the campaign, believing non-violence could succeed only if his followers refused to answer violence with violence.

Boycott and Self-Reliance

Gandhi became a leader of a growing movement for independence from Britain. He urged Indians to boycott British cloth. India exported raw cotton to Britain, then imported cloth manufactured in British factories. To promote self-reliance, Gandhi spun his own yarn, wore simple Indian cloth, and urged others to do the same. As Gandhi's popularity grew, many Indians began calling him Mahatma, meaning "great soul."

Independence and Partition

After World War II ended in 1945, India's independence campaign finally succeeded. Although the British were victorious, the war shattered their economy. Concluding the cost of maintaining colonial rule over an unwilling subcontinent was too high, Britain began turning over power to the Indian people.

In 1947, Britain divided its former colony into two independent nations, India and Pakistan. This split, known as Partition, forced millions of Hindus and Muslims to flee their homes amid widespread religious violence. Gandhi considered the division of his homeland the greatest disappointment of his life. He fasted to stop the bloodshed, successfully calming violence in Calcutta and Delhi.

On January 30, 1948, less than two weeks after his final fast, Gandhi was assassinated by a Hindu extremist while walking to a prayer meeting. Although he could not prevent Partition, Gandhi proved that non-violence could bring down an empire, inspiring civil rights movements around the world.

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Fill in the Blanks

Mohandas G__n__hi became a leader in India's struggle for i__d__p__n__e__ce from the B__i__i__h Empire. As a y__u__g man, Gandhi studied l__w in ★E__gla__d. He later moved to S__u__h A__r__ca, where he spent twenty years fighting d__s__r__m__n__ti__n against Indian people. There Gandhi developed *s__t__a__r__ha*, a method of resisting i__j__s__i__e without v__o__e__ce. Gandhi returned to India in 19____ and t__a__e__ed throughout the country. He spoke against u__t__u__h__b__l__ty and became a leader of the i__d__p__n__e__ce movement. Gandhi encouraged Indians to r__s__st British rule without v__o__en__e. He urged them to b__y__o__t British c__o__h and become more self-r__l__a__t. In 1919, Gandhi organized a n__t__o__w__de protest against a British l__w that allowed people to be i__p__i__o__ed without t__i__l. After World War II, Britain began giving up c__n__r__l of India. In 1947, India became i__d__p__n__e__t, but the former colony was p__r__i__n__d into I__d__a and P__k__s__an. Gandhi o__p__s__d the partition and tried to stop the religious v__o__e__ce that followed. In 1948, a H__n__u extremist a__s__s__i__a__ed Gandhi, but his ★e__a__p__e of non-violent r__s__s__a__ce later inspired c__v__l rights m__v__m__n__s around the world.

Answer in Complete Sentences

1. Why did Gandhi go to England to study law?

_____

_____

_____

★2. Why had Gandhi become well known by 1915?

_____

_____

_____

3. Manu Indian people referred to Gandhi as the *Mahatma*. What does that mean?

_____

_____

_____

★4. Why did Gandhi consider his work near the end of his life to be a failure?

_____

_____

_____

★ This is a higher order learning question. You must answer the question to the best of your ability, but any reasonable answer will be graded as correct.

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