



Communism Comes to China

In October of 1949, after years of civil war, Mao Zedong and the Communists gained control of China. They set up a totalitarian state called the People's Republic of China. Mao promised to build a new, strong China and to end foreign control of Chinese industries.

Mao believed in a communist economic system called Marxism. Under this system, all lands, mines, factories, and businesses would be owned by all the people. There would be no private property, and all goods and services would be shared equally. People who believed in this type of system thought that if the government controlled industry, poverty would end and everyone would be equal.

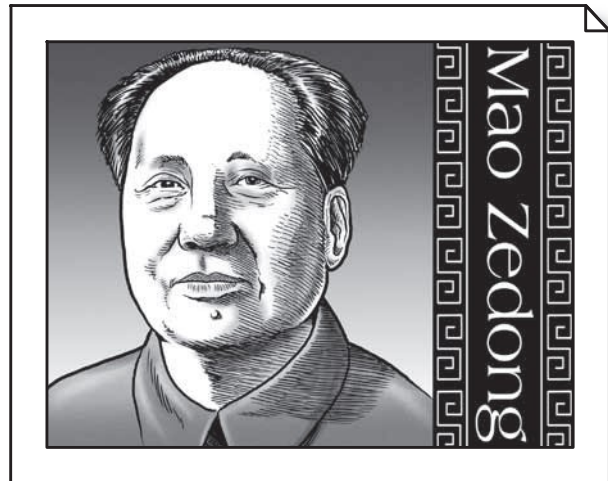
Chinese society always had been made up mostly of peasants who worked on farms. However, before Mao's rule, Chinese farmers owned no land. Instead, landlords owned the land. Mao's forces took the land from the landlords and split it up among the peasants. Any landlords who argued with this policy were killed.

The Communists wanted to turn China into a modern, industrial nation. The government brought all private companies under government ownership. It made a five-year plan to improve industry. By 1957, China's businesses, including the coal, electric, and steel businesses, had improved drastically.

After this success, Mao planned another program called the Great Leap Forward. Under this plan, farmers would work together on large farms called communes. Each commune was made up of thousands of acres of land and had about 25,000 people working on it. The people worked the land together. They ate together in large communal dining rooms and slept in dormitories.

However, peasants had no reason to work hard when they could not profit from their work. The commune system slowed down farming, and bad weather added to the problems. Soon, there was not enough food to feed all the people. A great famine took place, and between 1959 and 1961, millions of Chinese people starved to death. The Great Leap Forward had failed, and the government got rid of the program.

Mistakes like the Great Leap Forward left many Chinese unhappy with communism. Mao made several major errors during the time he led China. However, many saw him as the revolutionary leader who saved their country. Today, although it is still a communist nation, China has more moderate leadership and has taken on more capitalistic ideas.





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Multiple Choice

Circle the best answer, and write the letter in the box.

1. Mao Zedong believed in a communist economic system called _____.

- A. Marxism
- B. capitalism
- C. socialism
- D. fascism

2. The Communists wanted to turn China into a/an _____ nation.

- A. agricultural, peasant
- B. modern, industrial
- C. old-fashioned, traditional
- D. modern, capitalistic

3. Under Mao's plan, called the Great Leap Forward, _____.

- A. farmers worked together in communes
- B. peasants had no reason to work hard
- C. millions of Chinese people starved to death
- D. all of the above

4. In a Marxist economic system, there is no _____.

- A. land
- B. industry
- C. private property
- D. all of the above

5. Each commune had about _____ people working on it.

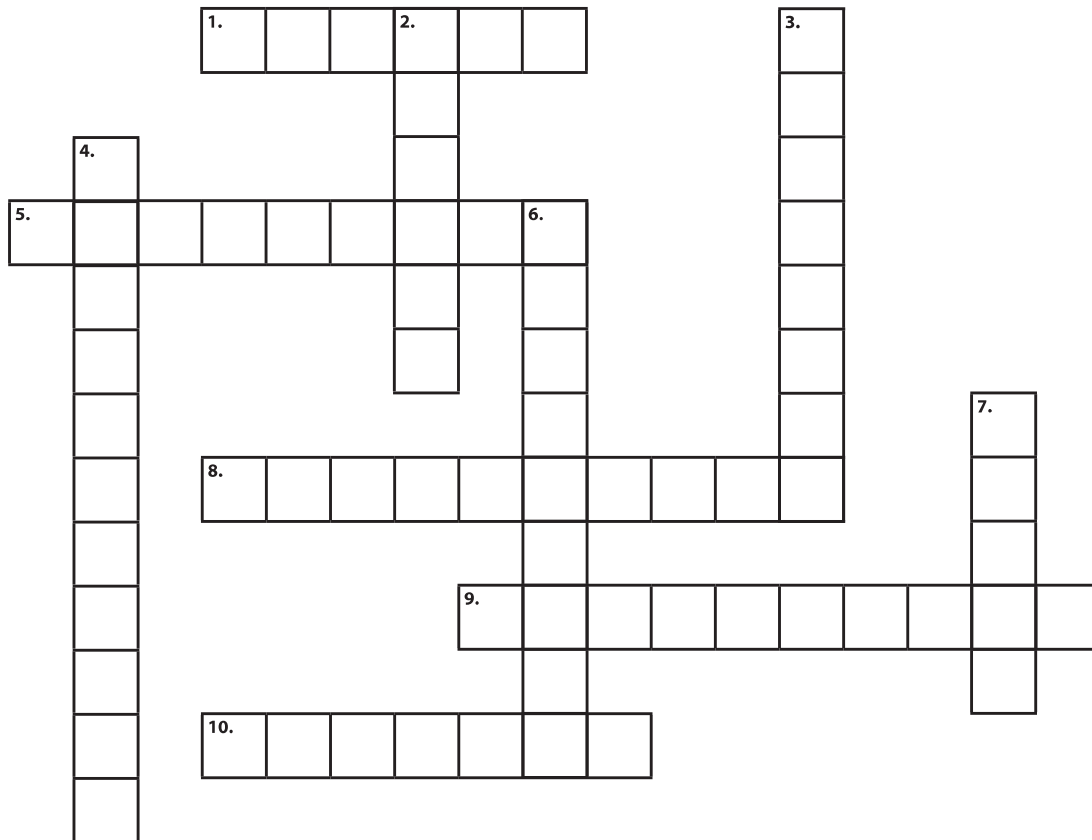
- A. 2
- B. 25
- C. 250
- D. 25,000



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Crossword Puzzle

Write the best answer in each blank, and complete the crossword puzzle.



ACROSS

1. Peasants had no reason to work hard when they could not _____ from their work.
5. Mistakes like the Great Leap Forward left many Chinese unhappy with _____.
8. China's coal, electric, and steel _____ improved drastically.
9. People who believed in Marxism thought that if the _____ controlled industry, poverty would end and everyone would be equal.
10. Mao promised to end _____ control of Chinese industries.

DOWN

2. In the great _____, millions of Chinese people starved to death.
3. Mao's forces took land from the landlords and split it among the _____.
4. In communes, people ate together in large dining rooms and slept in _____.
6. After years of civil war, _____ and the Communists gained control of China.
7. Mao Zedong set up a totalitarian state called the People's Republic of _____.



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Time Line – China Under Mao Zedong

Use the time line to answer the following questions. Write the answers in complete sentences.

1949	• Mao Zedong announces the birth of the People's Republic of China and pledges that China will be "independent ... prosperous, and strong."
1958	• Mao launches the Great Leap Forward, a communal farming system.
1959–1961	• A great famine hits China, and 30 million people starve to death.
1966	• Mao starts the Cultural Revolution, which is supposed to renew the revolutionary spirit in China. Mao thinks young Chinese should experience revolution as his generation did. Thousands of people are killed, and China's economy is hurt.
1976	• Mao Zedong dies. China is ruled by more moderate leaders.

1. What was the Cultural Revolution?

2. How many years did Mao Zedong rule China?

3. What happened in 1949?



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Extension Activities

Choose one of the following activities to complete. Write the answer in complete sentences.

1. The story says that “peasants had no reason to work hard when they could not profit from their work.” Do you think this is a true statement? Think of something you have worked hard to accomplish. Did you profit from that work? Explain your answer.
2. What was the Long March in China? Look in your textbook, on the Internet, or at the library to find out.
3. Why do you think peasants liked the idea of communism at first? Explain your answer.



Quiz: Communism Comes to China

True/False

Decide if each statement is true or false, and write "true" or "false" in the blank.

- _____ 1. Mao Zedong set up a totalitarian state called the People's Republic of China.
- _____ 2. Mistakes like the Great Leap Forward left many Chinese unhappy with capitalism.
- _____ 3. Mao took land from the peasants and gave it to landlords.
- _____ 4. Mao believed that if the government controlled industry, poverty would end and everyone would be equal.
- _____ 5. In communes, people worked together in large factories.

Multiple Choice

Circle the best answer, and write the letter in the box.

6. Under Mao Zedong, China's _____ business improved drastically.
- A. coal
 - B. electric
 - C. steel
 - D. all of the above

7. In the great famine, _____ of Chinese people starved to death.
- A. hundreds
 - B. thousands
 - C. millions
 - D. billions

Short Answer

Answer the following question in complete sentences.

8. What was the Great Leap Forward?
