

Teacher Overview Objectives:

Close Read: Gandhi's Letter to the Viceroy

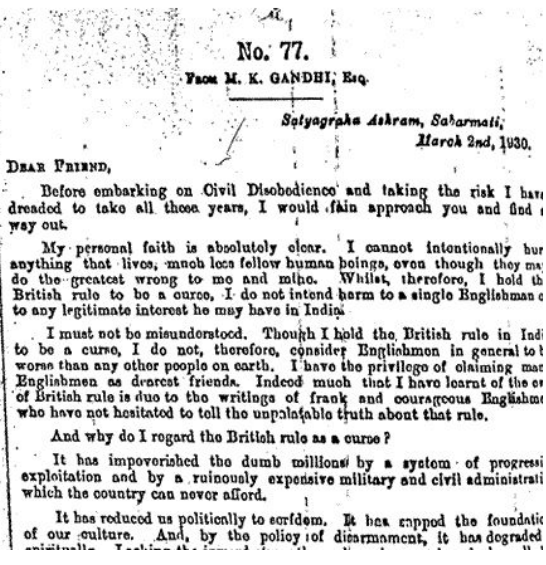
NYS Social Studies Framework Alignment:

Key Idea	Conceptual Understanding	Content Specification	Objectives
<p>10.7 DECOLONIZATION AND NATIONALISM (1900–2000): Nationalist and decolonization movements employed a variety of methods, including nonviolent resistance and armed struggle. Tensions and conflicts often continued after independence as new challenges arose. (Standards: 2, 3, 4, 5; Themes: TCC, GEO, SOC, GOV, CIV,)</p>	<p>10.7a Independence movements in India and Indochina developed in response to European control.</p>	<p>Students will explore Gandhi's nonviolent nationalist movement and nationalist efforts led by the Muslim League aimed at the masses that resulted in a British-partitioned subcontinent.</p>	<p>1. Through a close read of one of his letters, explain Gandhi's political views.</p>

Why did Gandhi view British rule of India as a “curse?” How did he plan to end it?

Objective: Through a close read of one of his letters, explain Gandhi’s political views.

Directions: Read the excerpt below and respond to the questions.

 <p style="text-align: center;">No. 77. From M. K. GANDHI, Esq. Satyagraha Ashram, Sabarmati, March 2nd, 1930.</p> <p>DEAR FRIEND,</p> <p>Before embarking on Civil Disobedience and taking the risk I have dreaded to take all these years, I would fain approach you and find my way out.</p> <p>My personal faith is absolutely clear. I cannot intentionally hurt anything that lives, much less fellow human beings, even though they may do the greatest wrong to me and mine. Whilst, therefore, I hold the British rule to be a curse, I do not intend harm to a single Englishman or to any legitimate interest he may have in India.</p> <p>I must not be misunderstood. Though I hold the British rule in India to be a curse, I do not, therefore, consider Englishmen in general to be worse than any other people on earth. I have the privilege of claiming that Englishmen are dearest friends. Indeed much that I have learnt of the evils of British rule is due to the writings of frank and courageous Englishmen who have not hesitated to tell the unpalatable truth about that rule.</p> <p>And why do I regard the British rule as a curse?</p> <p>It has impoverished the dumb millions by a system of progressive exploitation and by a ruinously expensive military and civil administration which the country can never afford.</p> <p>It has reduced us politically to serfdom. It has snuffed the foundation of our culture. And, by the policy of disarmament, it has degraded</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Print copy of the letter.</p>	<p>Introduction: Gandhi’s Letter to the Viceroy, Lord Irwin, 2 March 1930</p> <p>By 1930, when Gandhi wrote the following letter to the leader of the British Government in India, the Viceroy, Lord Irwin, he had become the leader of the Indian Independence Movement and of the Indian National Congress, a group of well-to-do, mostly Hindu, intellectuals. In response to the Congress’ demand for independence, the new Viceroy announced that the British government intended to grant “dominion status” to India. Dominion status would have meant that India would have more autonomy, but would still be a part of the British Empire. The Congress, led by Mahatma Gandhi, however, declared that dominion status was unacceptable and its aim was complete independence. In this letter to the Viceroy Lord Irwin, Gandhi explains why he regards British rule in India as a 'curse' and outlines his plans to initiate civil disobedience by breaking the salt laws. This is a public letter, sometimes referred to as an open letter, meaning that it was published in a newspaper at the time. A month after this letter was written, on April 6, 1930, Gandhi marched to Dandi in western India to demonstrate how to make salt from sea-water in protest against the government's salt monopoly. This was followed by mass strikes, the boycott of British goods, and violence.</p> <p>Source: Adapted from http://www.bl.uk/reshelp/findhelpregion/asia/india/indianindependence/indiannat/source3/ http://www.aforcemorepowerful.org/films/afmp/stories/india.php</p>
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1a. Pre-Reading Questions: Contextualization

<p>Who wrote the <i>Letter to the Viceroy</i>?</p>	
<p>When was the <i>Letter to the Viceroy</i> written?</p>	
<p>Where was the <i>Letter to the Viceroy</i> written?</p>	
<p>What type (primary source or secondary source) of document is <i>Letter to the Viceroy</i>?</p>	
<p>What genre (letter, memoir, journal, edict, etc.) of document is <i>Letter to the Viceroy</i>? What does this reveal about the intended impact of this document?</p>	
<p>Who was the audience for <i>Letter to the Viceroy</i>?</p>	
<p>What was the perspective of the author? (Hint: What is the main interest or goal of the author?)</p>	

1b. Why was the *Letter to the Viceroy* written?

1c. Why might the *Letter to the Viceroy* be an important historical document? (How might this document help historians better understand this time period?)

Gandhi's Letter to the Viceroy, Lord Irwin, 2 March 1930

<p>1 Dear Friend, 2 3 Before embarking on Civil Disobedience...I would again approach 4 you and find a way out. 5 6 My personal faith is absolutely clear. I cannot intentionally hurt 7 anything that lives, much less fellow human beings, even though 8 they may do the greatest wrong to me and mine. Whilst, therefore, 9 I hold the British rule to be a curse, I do not intend harm to a single 10 Englishman or to any legitimate interest he may have in India. 11 12 I must not be misunderstood. Though I hold the British rule in India 13 to be a curse, I do not, therefore, consider Englishmen in general 14 to be worse than any other people on earth. I have the privilege of 15 claiming many Englishmen as dearest friends. Indeed much that I 16 have learnt of the evil of British rule is due to the writings of frank 17 and courageous Englishmen who have not hesitated to tell the 18 unpalatable [unappealing] truth about that rule. 19 20 And why do I regard the British rule as a curse? 21 22 It has impoverished [made poor] the dumb [unable to speak] 23 millions by a system of progressive exploitation and by a ruinously 24 expensive military and civil administration which the country can 25 never afford. 26 27 It has reduced us politically to serfdom. It has sapped the 28 foundations of our culture. And, by the policy of disarmament 29 [taking away of weapons], it has degraded us spiritually. Lacking 30 the inward strength, we have been reduced, by all but universal 31 disarmament, to a State bordering on cowardly helplessness. 32 33 ...I have been recently telling the public what Independence should 34 really mean. 35 36 Let me put before you some of the salient points. 37 38 The terrific pressure of land revenue, which furnishes a large part 39 of the total, must undergo considerable modification in an 40 Independent India ... The ryot [Indian peasant] has remained as 41 helpless as ever... But the British system seems to be designed to 42 crush the very life out of him ... The tax [specifically a tax on the 43 making and selling of salt] shows itself still more burdensome on 44 the poor man when it is remembered that salt is the one thing he 45 must eat more than the rich man both individually and collectively.</p>	<p>2. What does civil disobedience mean in line 3?</p> <p>3. What are Gandhi's views of British rule and of Englishmen? Are they same thing?</p> <p>4. Identify one piece of evidence from lines 12-18 that demonstrates that Gandhi believed in nonviolence.</p> <p>5. In lines 20-31, Gandhi explains why he regards British rule as a "curse." In your own words, explain his reasons.</p> <p>6. In line 27, Gandhi states that British rule has reduced Indians to a state of "serfdom." What does serfdom mean? During what other time periods and which places have you studied serfdom?</p>
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<p>46 47 48 49 50 51 52 53 54 55 56 57 58 59 60 61 62 63 64 65 66 67 68 69 70 71 72 73 74 75 76 77 78 79 80 81 82 83 84 85 86 87 88 89 90 91 92 93 94 95 96</p>	<p>The drink and drug revenue, too, is derived from the poor. It saps the foundations both of their health and morals ... If the weight of taxation has crushed the poor from above, the destruction of the central supplementary industry, i.e. hand-spinning, has undermined their capacity for producing wealth.</p> <p>...This transformation is impossible without Independence...</p> <p>Not one of the great British political parties, it seems to me, is prepared to give up the Indian spoils to which Great Britain helps herself from day to day, often, in spite of the unanimous opposition of opinion.</p> <p>...if India is to live as a nation, if the slow death by starvation of her people is to stop, some remedy must be found for immediate relief... Great Britain would defend her Indian commerce and interests by all the forces at her command. India must consequently evolve force enough to free herself from that embrace of death.</p> <p>... the conviction is growing deeper and deeper in me that nothing but unadulterated non-violence can check the organised violence of the British Government. Many think that non-violence is not an active force. My experience, limited though it undoubtedly is, shows that non-violence can be an intensely active force. It is my purpose to set in motion that force as well against the organised violent force of the British rule as the unorganised violent force of the growing party of violence. To sit still would be to give rein to both the forces above mentioned. Having an unquestioning and immovable faith in the efficacy of non-violence, as I know it, it would be sinful on my part to wait any longer.</p> <p>I know that in embarking on non-violence I shall be running what might fairly be termed a mad risk. But the victories of truth have never been won without risks, often of the gravest character. Conversion of a nation that has consciously or unconsciously preyed upon another, far more numerous, far more ancient and no less cultured than itself, is worth any amount of risk.</p> <p>I have deliberately used the word conversion. For my ambition is no less than to convert the British people, through non-violence, and thus make them see the wrong they have done to India. I do not seek to harm your people. I want to serve them even as I want to serve my own...If the people [of India] join me as I expect they will, the sufferings they will undergo, unless the British nation sooner retraces its steps, will be enough to melt the stoniest hearts...</p> <p>I remain Your sincerely friend (Sd.) M.K. Gandhi</p>	<p>6. What does Gandhi mean by “land revenue” in line 38?</p> <p>7. According to Gandhi, identify three ways British rule harmed the Indian economy.</p> <p>8. According to Gandhi, how can Indians defeat the British?</p> <p>10. Why does Gandhi use the word “conversion (li. 85)” to describe the effect he hopes to have on the British people?</p>
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Source: Letter from Gandhi to the Viceroy, Lord Irwin, 2 March 1930.
<http://www.bl.uk/reshelp/findhelpregion/asia/india/indianindependence/indiannat/source3/>

Summary Task:

Gandhi's Letter to the Viceroy, Lord Irwin, 2 March 1930, helps us answer two questions about Gandhi's political beliefs. In the space below, deconstruct his argument by identify the claim that answers each question and identify the reasons he uses to support each claim.

Question 1: Why did Gandhi view British rule of India as a "curse?"			Question 2: How did he plan to end British rule of India?		
Claim:			Claim:		
Reason:	Reason:	Reason:	Reason:	Reason:	Reason: