

## Global Voices Information Sheet

### Mikhail Gorbachev



Mikhail Gorbachev (left) and Ronald Reagan sign a disarmament treaty in 1987. (Photo: AFP/Getty Images)

#### Background Info

- The first nuclear weapon, the atomic bomb, was invented by the United States during World War Two.
- Only two nuclear weapons have ever been used in war, both by the U.S. against Japan in World War Two. One bomb was dropped on the city of Hiroshima on August 6, 1945, killing approximately 150,000 people and another was dropped on Nagasaki on August 9, 1945, killing approximately 75,000 people.
- In 1949, the Soviet Union (Russia) became the second country to have nuclear weapons.
- After World War Two, the two most powerful countries were the U.S. and the Soviet Union. Because of their different ideologies, capitalism and communism, they considered each other to be a threat.
- The U.S. and Soviet Union both had nuclear weapons, so they were afraid to attack each other directly. Instead, they spied on each other and supported smaller wars between allies, like in Vietnam and Afghanistan. This was called the Cold War. It lasted from the end of World War Two until 1991.
- During the Cold War, the Soviet Union and the U.S. each tried to build more nuclear weapons than the other. This was called the nuclear arms race.
- Canada never developed nuclear weapons. However, there were U.S. nuclear missiles based in Canada from 1963 to 1984.
- Mikhail Gorbachev was the last leader of the Soviet Union, from 1985 to 1991. He brought in democratic and economic reforms that led to the end of Communist government in Russia.

#### Key terms

- **Megaton** — a unit for measuring the power of a nuclear weapon. One megaton is equal to one million metric tons of TNT (an explosive).
- **Radioactive fallout** — a nuclear explosion creates tiny radioactive particles that can be carried long distances by wind, causing illnesses like cancer in people thousands of kilometers from the explosion.
- **ICBM** — Inter-Continental Ballistic Missile. A large rocket that can carry a nuclear warhead to hit cities on the other side of the world.
- **Nuclear non-proliferation** — preventing the spread of nuclear weapons to countries that do not have them yet.
- **MAD** — Mutually Assured Destruction. The theory that, if each side has enough nuclear weapons to completely destroy the other, nuclear war could never happen because no one could ever win.
- **Soviet Union** — short for the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. The official name for Russia from 1922 to 1991. The Soviet Union had a non-democratic Communist system of government.

## Global Voices Elementary Educator Resources

### Note to Educators:

The following activities are designed to stimulate a current events discussion. Generative in nature, these questions can be a launching point for additional assignments or research projects. Teachers are encouraged to adapt these activities to meet the contextual needs of their classroom.

In some cases, reading the article with students may be appropriate, coupled with reviewing the information sheet to further explore the concepts and contexts being discussed. From here, teachers can select from the questions provided below. Activities are structured to introduce students to the issues, then allow them to explore and apply their learnings. Extension and conclusion activities are included to challenge students and finally, encourage them to reflect on the issues at hand.

Since these activities are designed as discussions rather than formal lessons, assessment strategies are not included.

### Themes and Course Connections

- Themes: leadership, nuclear warfare, the Soviet Union, Mikhail Gorbachev, democracy, politics.
- Course Connections: The Arts, Language, Social Studies.

### Materials

- Chart paper or blackboard
- Magazines and newspapers
- Glue, scissors and blank paper
- Global Voices column

### Specific Expectations and Learning Goals

Students will:

- Develop and express responses to issues and problems.
- Reassess their responses to issues on the basis of new information.
- Participate in active group work and class discussions.
- Communicate effectively in written and spoken language or other forms of expression.
- Demonstrate the ability to think critically.
- Develop, express, and defend a position on an issue and explain how to put the ideas into action.

### Reading Comprehension

1. Guided Reading: The Global Voices Column (estimated time: 20 minutes)
  - a. Have students sit in a circle and distribute one copy of the Global Voices column to each student.
  - b. Pre-reading steps:
    - i. Make predictions: ask students to read the title of the column and view the pictures. After doing so, ask them to make predictions as to what the column is going to be about.
    - ii. Introduce vocabulary from the column.
    - iii. Assess prior knowledge: ask students to discuss what they already know about these topics.

- c. Reading steps:
  - i. Go around the circle and have each student read a section of the column to the class, so that everyone gets a turn to read.
  - ii. As students are reading, offer guidance and coaching by providing prompts, asking questions, and encouraging attempts at reading strategy application.
- d. Post reading steps:
  - i. Encourage students to provide a summary of the column in order to ensure they have understood the series of events.
  - ii. Ask questions about the text to judge comprehension.

### Knowledge and Understanding

1. Discussing the Global Voices Column (estimated time: 10 minutes)
  - a. Ask students the following suggested questions about the column, encourage them to use evidence from the Global Voices column to support their answers:
    - i. What is the message in this column?
    - ii. What perspectives are presented in this column? Which ones are left out?
    - iii. What problem is presented in this column?
    - iv. What is a nuclear weapon?
    - v. When in history has a nuclear weapon been used?
    - vi. Who is Mikhail Gorbachev?
    - vii. What is the Soviet Union? What is it called now?

### Thinking

1. Inspirational Figures (estimated time: 20 minutes)
  - a. In this Global Voices column, students are introduced to Mikhail Gorbachev, former leader of the Soviet Union. Ask students to list off all the things they have learned about Gorbachev.
  - b. Explain to students, when asked what his legacy would be, Gorbachev stated, “freedom, and the elimination of nuclear weapons in our future.” Discuss the significance of this legacy.
  - c. Ask students to write a reflection around what they would like their legacy to be.
  - d. Students will hand in their reflections for grading.

### Communication

1. Democracy Jigsaw (estimated time: 45 minutes)
  - a. Write the word democracy on the board and discuss what it means as a class. Write students’ ideas in point form on the board.
  - b. Divide the class into small, equal groups.
  - c. In their groups, ask students to talk about democracy, discussing majority rule and what it means for people to have a say.
  - d. Following this discussion provide students with the following scenario: You are throwing a holiday party for the class and must choose a theme, decorations, music, food and activities. Decide on all of these elements as a group in a democratic manner.
  - e. When groups have finished their discussions and made their decisions, ask groups members to number themselves off.
  - f. Create new groups by joining the matching numbers together.
  - g. In their new groups, ask students to share what was talked about in their initial groups and explain how they reached their decisions. Encourage students to discuss the topic of democracy further, and how it played a role in their decision-making.
  - h. When groups have completed their discussions hold a class discussion and compile students’ thoughts on the board.

## Application

1. Issues Today (estimated time: 30 minutes)
  - a. Ask students to think about the biggest problems facing our world today. As students volunteer these problems list them on the board and ask them to explain why and how it is a problem.
  - b. Ask students to select one problem from the list they feel most passionate about.
  - c. Distribute newspapers and magazines around the classroom.
  - d. Encourage students to search through these items and cut out pictures words and items surrounding their chosen issue. Ask students to use these items to create an awareness collage.
  - e. Completed collages will be displayed around the classroom.

## Additional Resources

In addition to the above lesson plans, you may want to share some additional resources with your students. Listed below are some links to useful online resources:

Free The Children – [www.freethechildren.com](http://www.freethechildren.com)

We Day Teach - <http://www.weday.com/teach>

The Soviet Union - [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Soviet\\_Union](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Soviet_Union)

Mikhail Gorbachev - <http://www.historyguide.org/europe/gorbachev.html>