

## 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 Secondary 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: Canadian and World Studies, English, Social Sciences and Humanities.

### Materials

- Chart paper or blackboard
- Computers and internet
- Newspapers and magazines
- 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. Reading Comprehension: Global Voices Column (estimated time: 15 minutes)
  - a. Pre reading steps:
    - i. Introduce the topic and encourage students to discuss what they already know about the topic, making prediction around what the column is about.
  - b. Reading steps:
    - i. Read: students must read the text independently, highlighting important points throughout the column.

- ii. Ask: students must ask themselves what the story is about, recording five questions they are unsure of after reading the column.
- iii. Paraphrase: encourage students to write point form notes in their own words around what the column is about.
- c. Post reading discussion:
  - i. What are the main points of the column?
  - ii. What emotions did this column evoke in you?
  - iii. What problem is identified in the column?
  - iv. What questions do you have about the column?

## 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 events are discussed in this column?
    - v. Who is Mikhail Gorbachev?
    - vi. What is the Soviet Union? How was it formed, and what happened to it? What is it called now?

## Thinking

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. Once they have selected their problem, tell students to search through recent newspapers and magazines for current information on the issue.
  - d. Once they have found three items, ask students to write a reflection around their chosen issue addressing the information learned from their media sources.
  - e. Final reflections will be handed in for grading.

## Communication

1. Democracy Jigsaw (estimated time: 20 minutes)
  - a. Write the word democracy on the board and discuss what it means as a class. Write students ideas in point form notes on the board.
  - b. Divide the class into small, equal groups.
  - c. In the Global Voices column it is stated that Gorbachev claims democracy was the key to moving forward on nuclear disarmament. In their groups, ask students to discuss democracy and how this political system contributed to the reduction of weapons in the Soviet Union.
  - d. When groups have finished their discussions, ask groups members to number themselves off.
  - e. Create new groups by joining the matching numbers together.
  - f. In their new groups, ask students to share what was talked about in their initial groups. Encourage students to discuss the topic of democracy further, by examining the changes that democracy brought about within the Soviet Union.
  - g. When groups have completed their discussions hold a class discussion and compile students' thoughts on the board.

## Application

1. The Soviet Union (estimated time; take home assignment)

- a. Explain to students that the Soviet Union was a state that existed between 1922 and 1991. Ask students to research the Soviet Union, learning about the following areas:
  - i. History
  - ii. Politics
  - iii. Economy
- b. Using their research ask students to write a research paper on the history of the Soviet Union.
- c. Completed research papers will be handed in for grading.

### 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>