

# Tiananmen Square Protest

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Theme

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## PURPOSE

To study in-depth the Tiananmen Square protest as well as the complexity of the two major groups and their subsequent factions involved in the protest.

## THEME STATEMENT

Institutions, Power & Government (IPG): Institutions and leaders control and influence individuals and culture.

## SUGGESTED TIME

Four or five days. The actual simulation may take ten minutes or fifty minutes, depending on the amount of preparation and video exposure the students receive before the simulation begins.

## KEY VOCABULARY & CONCEPTS

Dissidents, asylum, massacre, symbolism, martial law, turmoil, stalemate, civilians, censored.

## MATERIALS NEEDED

- poster board
- paint
- drawing paper
- background reading on Tiananmen Square (Student Handout #1)
- visual timeline for Tiananmen Square (Student Handout #2)
- role-playing cards (Student Handout #3)
- banner and big character poster slogans (Student Handout #4)
- photograph of Tiananmen Square (Student Handout #5)
- one of various videos pertaining to Tiananmen Square demonstration (see Recommended Resources)

## BACKGROUND INFORMATION

[Wong, Jan. *Red China Blues*. New York: Anchor Books, 1996.]

“Tiananmen is gargantuan – the biggest square in the world. It is a hundred sprawling acres in all, flatter and bigger than the biggest parking lot I have ever seen. I used to get tired just walking from one end to the other. Moscow's Red Square was intimate in comparison.

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## SUMMARY

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Adaptable Levels  
Grades 7-12

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Related Themes  
PPE

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Values  
Empathy, understanding

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Skills  
Clarifying information,  
decision-making,  
sequencing information

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Integration  
Language, reading, geography

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Tiananmen could simultaneously accommodate the entire twenty-eight teams of the National Football League plus 192 other teams, each playing separate games. It could stage an entire Summer Olympics with all events taking place at the same time. Or if you put a mountain in the middle, you could hold a Winter Olympics there instead.”

“Tiananmen, which means ‘Gate of Heavenly Peace,’ is also one of the least hospitable squares in the world. There is no bench or place to rest, nowhere to get a drink, no leafy tree to offer respite from the sun. . . Tiananmen is also one of the most heavily monitored squares in the world. Its huge lampposts are equipped with giant speakers for crowd control and swiveling video cameras.”

NOTE: One of the protesters that tossed a bag of ink at the portrait of Mao hanging in Tiananmen Square was given a life sentence. [See photograph of Tiananmen Square (Student Handout #5)]

#### INITIATION (Inquiry, Preview, Involvement)

1. Divide the class into four groups.
2. Within each group, identify various factions needed for role playing:
  - government “hard liners”/military
  - government moderates/military
  - radical students and workers protesting the government
  - moderate students and workers
3. Have students read the background information pertaining to Tiananmen Square (Student Handout #1) and locate Beijing in an atlas.

#### DEVELOPMENT (Instruction, Data Collection, Organization)

1. View video pertaining to Tiananmen Square demonstrations (see Recommended Resources).
2. Have students identify different group members/factions in the video.
3. Choose four people within each group to orally read the background reading (Student Handout #1).
4. Have students construct a visual timeline (Student Handout #2) from the background readings.
5. Distribute the role-playing cards (Student Handout #3) to each student and have them determine to which of the four groups they belong. Students can seek assistance from fellow students or the teacher as to group assignment.
6. Have students practice their roles within their group.
7. Perform the simulation, having students follow instructions on their role-playing card.
8. Engage the group in exploring “Key Questions.”

#### EXTENSION/ENRICHMENT (Idea Articulation, Ownership, Experimentation)

- Create protest posters with big characters displayed in Tiananmen Square (Student Handout #4) to use in class simulation.
- Rewrite the section within your own textbook depicting Tiananmen Square protest.
- Using the media center, locate and read articles both from the U.S. and China written about the protest movement in Tiananmen Square.
- Create a “goddess of liberty” out of paper mache (refer to Student Handout #5).

## ASSESSMENT OF ACHIEVEMENT

Students can be assessed by their participation in the simulation as well as the class discussion reflecting on various decisions made during simulation. Students could also discuss Tiananmen Square with their parent/s, confirming this with written documentation from the parent/s.

## KEY QUESTIONS

- Why did the students in China protest? What did they want?
- Why did many of the students and workers leave the square before their demands were met?
- Why do you think the majority of China's population (the people living in the countryside) were not interested in the Tiananmen Square protests in Beijing?
- What happened to the government officials that were moderates during the Tiananmen demonstrations?
- What happened to the intellectuals and protesters after the Tiananmen Square demonstrations?
- What were the two main factions of the government/military group?
- Were there factions amongst the students and protesters at Tiananmen Square?
- Was the government justified in bringing in the military to stop the demonstrations?

## ALTERNATIVES

Read the description of Tiananmen Square to the class (see "Background Information" above). Discuss the enormity of the square and the number of people who were there demonstrating. Locate pictures of Tiananmen Square from your local media center.

Ask students for suggestions to make the classroom into Tiananmen Square for the simulation. Some suggestions might be:

- Move all of the desks and tables out into the hallway or around the edges of the room.
- Hang the slogan posters with big characters on the walls or make them into banners that pro-democracy protesters can wave.
- Hang a picture of Mao Zedong in the front of the room. You can enlarge this on a xerox machine and make a "wooden" frame out of brown construction paper.
- Stand the "goddess of liberty" near Mao's portrait. If you have more than 23 students in your class, assign more than one student as hunger strikers, soldiers/police, medics, student or factory workers. You might want to assign higher ability students as the Communist political leaders as well as the outspoken students. Students with lower ability could be assigned as medics, soldiers and hunger strikers.

## REFERENCES & RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

- Miles, James. *The Legacy of Tiananmen*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1996.
- Wong, Jan. *Red China Blues*. New York: Doubleday/Anchor Books, 1996.
- *China: Born Under the Red Flag*. Ambrica Productions. [PBS, July 1997.] This is an excellent video, but you can use any video relating to the 1989 Tiananmen Square incident.
- <http://www.nmis.org/gate/tour>  
A Web site by the Long Bow Group, which gives an interactive "tour" of Tiananmen Square with links to additional readings and Web sites.

## STUDENT HANDOUT #1:

*Tiananmen Square: Background Reading*

## GOVERNMENT ACTORS:

*[Chinese names are written in traditional form with the last name first.]*

Mao Zedong – first Communist leader of China; died in 1976.

Deng Xiaoping – leader of China during the Tiananmen Square protests.

Hu Yaobang – moderate Communist official; students mourning his death spark protests.

Zhao Ziyang – moderate Communist official who tries to negotiate with protesters.

Mikhail Gorbachev – leader of the Soviet Union at the time of Tiananmen Square protest.

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## HISTORY:

January 1, 1987: Students march to Tiananmen Square to demonstrate. The police are ready, and they club students. Students are beaten and dragged away. Confrontation between students and police was very rare at this time.

Hu Yaobang prevents students from being jailed. He arranges for buses to take students back to campus. The government “hard liners” are not happy with Hu. He is ousted from his government position by conservatives. They said that he was a weak leader (*i.e.*, he listened to the students too much). The hard liners go after intellectuals who had questioned the government. Students who were involved in the protests were assigned to jobs in terrible locations after they graduated from college. Zhao takes over after Hu is ousted from power.

1988: The economy is improving and people are encouraged to sell surplus crops in open markets popping up in cities and villages. People are “jumping into the sea” (*i.e.*, going into business on their own). Government officials are using their positions/influence and getting rich. The people are beginning to resent this.

April 1989: Hu Yaobang has a heart attack and dies. Big posters appear on walls throughout campuses in Beijing, mourning Hu (which was actually a way to criticize Deng and the current government). The students make three demands:

1. more democratic political representation
2. authority to organize student unions
3. end to government corruption

April 21, 1989: Thousands of students gather in Tiananmen Square in anticipation of Hu's funeral. Big posters appear in the square with slogans such as “Down with dictatorship.”

April 22, 1989: Hu's funeral in Tiananmen Square. Government wants to close the square, but the students have out-smarted them by gathering the night before and camping overnight on the square. While the funeral is in process, a few students are let through the police line with their petition of demands. They kneel for over an hour, and no government official receives them

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or their demands. The square continues to fill with students and workers.

April 26, 1989: The People's Daily runs an editorial in which Deng warns students to stop the demonstrations. The streets are full of protesters from all walks of life. A line of students four miles long marches to Tiananmen Square. The protesters break through the police lines. Civilians and workers support the students. It seemed as though there was the support of the whole city. Some people were very supportive of the demonstrators and others thought that the whole experience was just "fun."

May 13, 1989: Mikhail Gorbachev, who is head of the Soviet Union, arrives for the Sino-Soviet Summit. This is an important meeting because relations between the Soviet Union and China have not been good for many years, and they are now trying to work through their differences. The students see this as a good opportunity to gain international exposure, because there are over 1000 foreign journalists in Beijing to cover the summit. The students put white headbands around their heads and declare that they are going on a hunger strike until their demands have been met. The Western media shows coverage of Chinese students fainting and being taken away on stretchers by medics. This is a humiliation for Deng. Students and workers all over the country are now marching and protesting. Many students from the provinces flock to Beijing to join the demonstrations in Tiananmen Square. The students are not well organized. There is a party atmosphere with music and drinking. Doctors, housewives and even journalists join the protesters.

Mid May, 1989: There is a stalemate between the government and the students, and within these two groups, there are also factions that cannot agree on what to do. Deng and the government hard liners want to squash the protest using the military if necessary. Zhao wants to negotiate with the students. He was used to listening to the students and thought that the two sides could come to an agreement.

More workers have arrived in the square and are now demanding the establishment of workers unions. It's important to keep in mind that the majority of the population in the countryside were not involved and did not support the demonstrations. (China has a very large population, so it is quite deceiving when you see the news footage of the Tiananmen Square demonstrations and see so many people. In actuality, the protesters are a minute percentage of the population.)

May 18, 1989: The hunger strike is now five days old. The government invites demonstration leaders to a meeting to discuss demands. This turns into a confrontation between the government and the protesters, with neither side willing to back down. Zhao goes to the Tiananmen Square. With tears in his eyes, he says that he cannot resolve the situation. The hard liners strip him of his government post and ban him from public life.

May 19, 1989: Martial Law is declared. The students call off the hunger strike.

Early June, 1989: Chinese students bring a large "goddess of liberty" statue into Tiananmen

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Square. This figure was modeled on the Statue of Liberty and became a symbol of the demands for greater democratic freedom in China.

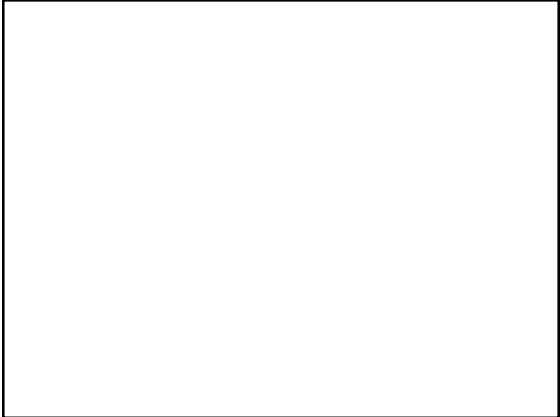
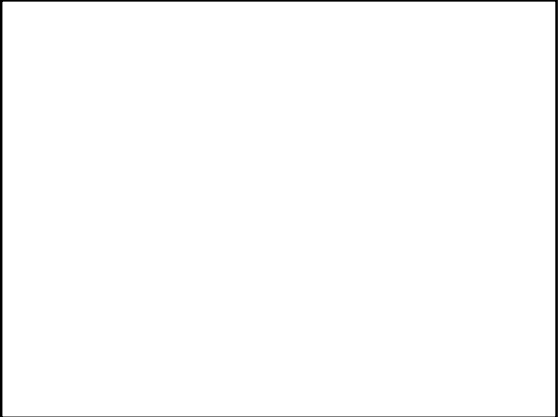
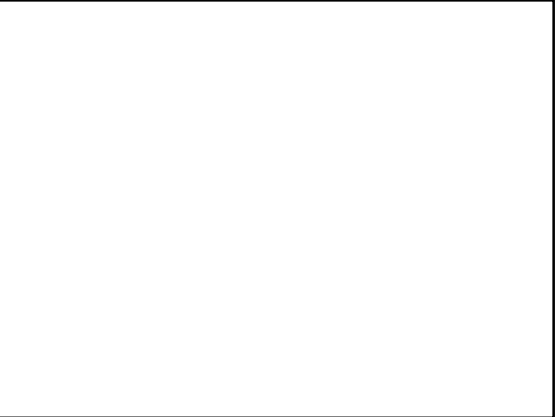



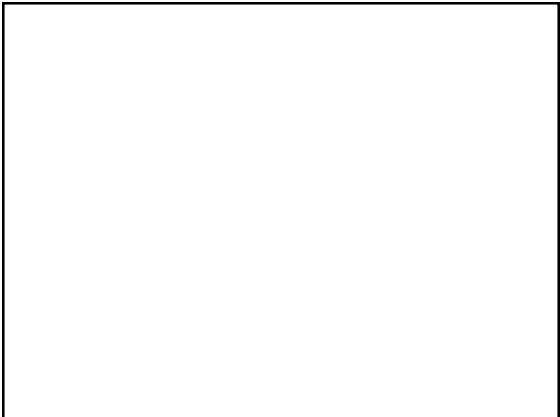
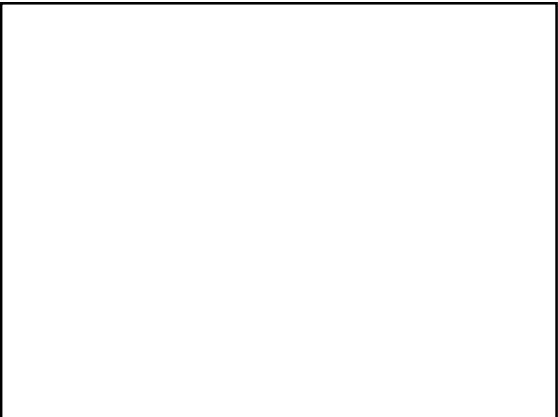
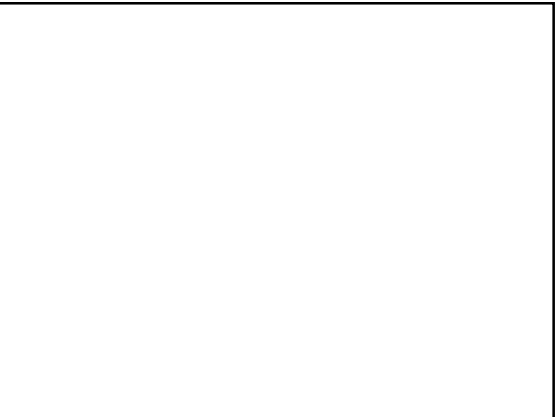



June 3, 1989: The protesters block the way of the military from the square for two weeks. The troops force their way through the crowd into the square. Protesters are beaten and arrested. Real bullets are used (whereas rubber bullets had previously been used). The streets were in disorder with shooting, fires, and pitted battles. The military opens fire on the people. Many of the demonstrators leave Tiananmen Square. The ones that remain gather towards the center of the square. The military troops surround them early the next morning. The students link arms early and try to leave the square. Bullets whiz by them. Tanks crush the people in the back and kill them.

June 4, 1989: According to a Chinese Red Cross report issued a day after the Tiananmen Square massacre, nearly 2600 people are reported dead. Under extreme pressure from the government, the Chinese Red Cross is retracted. Many of the young leaders of the protest are arrested, go into hiding or leave the country. Many students and workers are arrested, tried and sent to prison. The Tiananmen Square protests were covered widely in the Western press, and human rights violations in China then became an issue of international interest.

STUDENT HANDOUT #2:

### Tiananmen Square: Visual Timeline

*(In rectangular box, insert visual depiction (photo, drawing, etc.) of event; in oval bubbles, write corresponding description of visual image)*

## STUDENT HANDOUT #3:

*Tiananmen Square: Role-Playing Cards***Deng Xiaoping**

Chairman of the Central Military Commission and the leader with the most power in China. He gives the order to shoot at the demonstrators to end the protest. Deng did allow some criticism of the government, but felt that the student protesters went too far in Tiananmen Square. "We are not afraid to shed a little blood since this will not seriously harm China's image in the world."

**Government Hard Liner**

You are a government official who does not want to negotiate with the student protesters. You want to use military force to stop the demonstrations and clear Tiananmen Square. You strip government members who are moderates (those who want to have open discussions with the protesters) of their positions. You believe that the Communist Party should show its strength and suppress the protest.



### Zhao Ziyang

You are supposedly next in line behind Deng to govern China. You like to play golf and wear Western suits. You think that being too rigid politically would slow economic development. You believe the Communist Party can remain in power if it can keep ahead of the people's demands for material goods (e.g., TVs, refrigerators). You want to use the student protests to push through reforms and maybe even force Deng to retire so that you can take over. You try to negotiate with the students but are stripped of your government position and banned from public life by the "hard liners."

### Office Worker "X"

You shut down the office, get a truck to transport your fellow office workers, and go to Tiananmen Square to demonstrate with the students. You mill about the square, listening to speeches and chanting: "Dialogue! Dialogue! Dialogue!" and "Down with Deng!"

### Hu Yaobang

You were once a high ranking government official. You have just had a heart attack and died. During the protests held three years earlier in Tiananmen Square, you prevented the students from being arrested by arranging for buses to take them back to their campuses. You were ousted from power by the conservatives ("hard liners"). By mourning your death, the students are actually criticizing Deng and the current government.

### Office Worker "Y"

You leave the office for a few hours, cheer on the protesters in the streets and around Tiananmen Square. You do not actually step foot onto the square because you are afraid of the consequences of protesting. You are sympathetic with the protesters but do not want to take the risk. You wander around for a while and then head back to your office, avoiding major streets crowded with demonstrators and police.

### Office Worker "Z"

You are too afraid to leave the office. You occasionally look out the window but do not ever leave your office. You do read the newspaper and listen to the news on the radio to keep updated on the protest movement in Tiananmen Square.

### Student (history major)

You are very idealistic and think that the government needs reform. There is too much corruption at the top (political leaders), and there is not enough freedom of speech in the press. You are very vocal and do not think about the consequences of speaking your mind. You speak in front of large groups of people and do not worry if your photograph is taken for it is worth the risk of beatings, jail or death to advocate more democratic expression for Chinese citizens.

### Taxi Driver

The buses have been shut down due to martial law so you are making a lot of money driving people around Beijing. You have a good idea what is going on in Tiananmen Square because you have contact with many different people on a daily basis. You are sympathetic to the students' protest movement, but you feel that the government will ultimately stop the demonstration.

### Student (political science major)

You are very articulate. You speak knowledgeably and clearly about political issues. You encourage others to stand up and give speeches promoting more democratic freedom but you, yourself, do not want to be noticed by the government/military forces. You are intelligent and advise the more vocal students on what to say to the masses.



### Student (business major)

You stand on the edge of the square but do not actively participate. Your parents have told you stories about the Cultural Revolution in which people were sent to do hard labor and “re-education” in the countryside for criticizing the government. You support the demonstrators but are afraid of being beaten or arrested.

### Student (education major)

You go to Tiananmen Square with some of the students from your university. You agree with the protest movement, but you are afraid to get involved. You witness one of your fellow students being kicked by a group of policemen. Will you shrink back into the crowds or will you help your friend?

### Student (electrical engineering major)

You are happy that classes have been suspended. While you are interested in the speeches that are being given by the protesters in Tiananmen Square, you are more attracted by the party-like atmosphere in some sections of the square. You wander around listening to the music and visit with friends.

### Local Beijing Military and Police

You are sympathetic to the protesters. You are aware of a lot of corruption in the government, but you do not want the communist government to be overthrown – just reformed. At first you do not harm any of the protesters, but as the demonstration continues, you become more confrontational with the demonstrators.

### Military Soldier from Neighboring Province

You are well-trained and loyal to the wishes of Deng. You have come to Tiananmen Square to do a job and that is to suppress the demonstration movement. You see the students and civilians as disrupters of order and use physical force as well as live ammunition to end the protest at Tiananmen Square. You beat, arrest, and kill protesters.

### Student "A" on Hunger Strike

Gorbachev is in town for the Sino-Soviet Summit (official talks between the leader of the Soviet Union and China). There are 1000 foreign journalists in town (including Dan Rather) and you know that the student protest will get a lot of coverage in the western media (e.g., TV news). You stage a hunger strike to attract attention to your cause. It is very hot out, and you faint often. You wear a white headband so that people know that you are one of the hunger strikers. You are very serious about the hunger strike and do not eat anything. A medic may take you to replenish your body with liquids at a clinic or give you a shot of glucose.

### Student "B" on Hunger Strike

Gorbachev is in town for the Sino-Soviet Summit (official talks between the leader of the Soviet Union and China). There are 1000 foreign journalists (including Dan Rather) in town, and you know that the student protest will get a lot of coverage in the western media (e.g., TV news). You stage a hunger strike to bring attention to your cause. You are not very serious about the hunger strike and occasionally slip out of the square for a bowl of noodles and bottle of juice at a friend's apartment.

### Professor "X" from Beijing

You are a sociology professor from a university in Beijing. You remember the horrors of the Cultural Revolution but decide to protest for democratic reform anyway. You go to Tiananmen Square with a few other professors from your department. You are amazed at the number of people in the square but surprised by the lack of organization. You listen to speeches for a while and then engage in political discussions with workers and students in the square.



### Professor "Y" from Beijing

You are a professor of mathematics. You come from a family of educators. Your father was killed during the Cultural Revolution, and you are afraid to show your support for the protest movement in Tiananmen Square. You try to avoid any conflicts between police and protesters on the main streets leading to Tiananmen Square. You do not go to the square itself.

### Factory Worker "Y"

You leave the factory for a few hours, cheering on the protesters in the streets and around Tiananmen Square. You do not actually step foot onto the square because you are afraid of the consequences of protesting. You are sympathetic to the protesters but do not want to take the risk. You wander around for a while and then head back to your factory, avoiding major streets crowded with demonstrators and police.

### Factory Worker "X"

You shut down the factory, get a truck to transport your fellow steel workers, and go to Tiananmen Square to demonstrate with the students. You mill about the square, listening to speeches and chanting: "Dialogue! Dialogue! Dialogue!" and "Down with Deng."

### Factory Worker "Z"

You are too afraid to leave the factory. You occasionally look out the window but do not ever leave the factory. You read the newspaper and listen to the news on the radio to keep updated on the protest movement in Tiananmen Square.

### Medic or Doctor

You are stationed in Tiananmen Square. Many of the students are fainting due to the heat and the hunger strike. You and other medics or doctors must carry people who need medical assistance out of the square to the medical clinic (located in the hallway). After receiving medical attention, the patients may go back to Tiananmen Square. You also need to check on the protesters in the streets leading into Tiananmen Square. They may need bandages due to altercations with the police.

### Foreign Journalist

You run around the square interviewing the demonstrators. You ask people who they are, where they are from, and why they are protesting against the government. You need to make sure that your notes are not taken from you by the military. It's important that you keep moving from one place to another. You need to be careful because the government hard-liners resent that your news releases are being broadcast throughout the rest of the world.

### Chinese Journalist

You run around Tiananmen Square interviewing the demonstrators. You ask people who they are, where they are from, and why they are protesting against the government. You need to make sure that your notes are not taken from you by the military. It's important that you keep moving from one place to another. You are not worried about your news articles being censored like you have been in the past.



STUDENT HANDOUT #4:

*Tiananmen Square: Posters/Banners with Characters*

Dialogue!  
Dialogue!  
Dialogue!

*Dui hua!*  
*Dui hua!*  
*Dui hua!*

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Down with Deng Xiaoping

*Da dao Deng Xiaoping*

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—H

—p

—W

Democratic reform

*Minzhu gaige*

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—D

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STUDENT HANDOUT #5:

*Photo of “Goddess of Liberty” in Tiananmen Square*

