

Ghana Beyond Subsistence
Teaching-Learning-Connecting Lessons
2019.01: MAO TSE-TUNG AND CHINA'S FOUR PEST CAMPAIGN

Area: Science, Technology, Engineering, Agriculture, Maths



“Exterminate the Four Pests” (Ding Hao, 1958, in Kreston, 2014)

Artifact: Show the poster. (See also the poster listed below by the same name “Eliminate the Four Pests” with the girl, boy and slingshot.) Ask the students to think about and discuss what they see.

Story: In 1949, Mao Tse-Tung and his Communist party came to power in China. The people were suffering from many health problems, like tuberculosis, plague, cholera, polio, malaria, smallpox, and hookworm (Kreston 2014). Mao wanted to help the people by fighting these deadly diseases. He identified "Four Pests" and instituted a campaign to enlist everyone from the children to the elderly to wipe out sparrows, rats, flies, and mosquitoes. Mao did not ask for advice from his scientists, and the “Four Pests” campaign resulted in an ecological disaster. For example, after the people killed a billion swallows, locusts swarmed the fields unchecked and ate everything in their path, leading to the starvation of tens of millions of people. What lessons can we learn from this historic time?

Assignment: Students could work in groups to apply what they learned to life in Ghana. They could create a poster, a play, a debate, or other special project.

1. To learn more about the Four Pests Campaign, read the first article in the resources. It was written by Sally Adee. Discuss: What were some of the disastrous results? How did the Chinese have to adapt moving forward to counteract the problems?
2. Search the internet for political cartoons from two or two different countries. Discuss and perhaps investigate the meaning of each. Then pick a political issue or current event and design and craft a cartoon to share with your class. You could work in small groups.
3. What news of ecological disasters and rejection of scientific reporting have you heard? For example, discuss issues related to gold mining in Ghana.

Resources for Teachers

Adee, Sally. 2013. "Is There Hope for the Bees?": Movie Review of "More Than Honey." *Life*, 9 August.

<https://www.newscientist.com/article/dn24017-is-there-hope-for-the-bees/>

Anonymous. Interconnectedness. Powerpoint.

www.cusd80.com/cms/lib6/AZ01001175/.../Interconnectedness%20edited.pptx

Kreston, Rebecca. 2014. "Paved with good intentions: Mao Tse-Tung's "Four Pests." *Discover: Science for the Curious*, 26 February.

<http://blogs.discovermagazine.com/bodyhorrors/2014/02/26/mao-four-pests-china-disease/#.XP6PSnksqm0>

Lampton, D.M. 1972. "Public Health and Politics in China's Past Two Decades." *Health Services Reports*, 87(10): 895-904.

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC1615984/>

Zielinski, Sarah. 2011. "What Happens When Predators Disappear" *Smithsonian*, 18 July.
<https://www.smithsonianmag.com/science-nature/what-happens-when-predators-disappear-32079553/>

See also: Chinese posters at <https://chinese posters.net/themes/four-pests.php>