Calculating the Cult of Personality During the Cultural Revolution

Solve and analyze word problems from Cultural Revolution era textbooks in this engaging interdisciplinary lesson

Brooke Feldman | Social Studies Curriculum Coordinator 6-8 | Needham Public Schools | Needham, Massachusetts

Textbooks

Math Problems

The Chinese People’s Liberation Army is the greatest army that was founded and led by Chairman Mao and directed by Vice Chairman Lin. The following table is a list of Chinese People’s Liberation Army’s achievements concerning enemy annihilation during the 4-year Chinese Civil War versus Chiang Ka-shek’s nationalist army. Find the total number in each category.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1st year (1946-7)</th>
<th>2nd year (1947-8)</th>
<th>3rd year (1948-9)</th>
<th>4th year (1949-50)</th>
<th>In Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>annihilated</td>
<td>36000</td>
<td>54000</td>
<td>57600</td>
<td>197600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>surrendered</td>
<td>2800</td>
<td>3500</td>
<td>36500</td>
<td>75200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>captured</td>
<td>67900</td>
<td>95300</td>
<td>113240</td>
<td>326480</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>incorporated</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>271000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gave up</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>243200</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In total: 390730

Figure 9. One fill-in-the-box question provided in the Chinese Textbook integrated with Chinese Civil War context (Heilongjiang Elementary School Textbook Writing Committee [translated from Chinese], 1969, p. 41).

Historical Analysis

The curriculum is never simply a neutral assemblage of knowledge, somehow appearing in the texts and classrooms of a nation. It is always part of a selective tradition, some-one’s selection, and some group’s vision of legitimate knowledge. It is produced out of the cultural, political, and economic conflicts, tensions, and compromises that organize and ‘disorganize’ people” (Apple, 1996, p. 22)

- What values did the textbook authors and illustrators communicate to students during the Cultural Revolution?
- How did schools prepare young people for their roles as citizens of the People’s Republic of China?
- Why were textbooks used for propaganda during the era?

Resources and Extensions

Read the research

Propaganda posters

Memoirs of the era