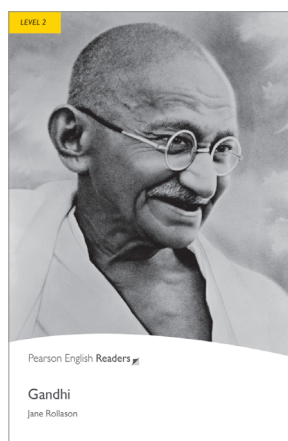


Gandhi

Jane Rollason



Summary

Mahatma Gandhi is one of the most important and popular leaders in the history of the modern world. He fought for equality in South Africa and India. But he lived a quiet, simple life, and was totally opposed to violence. His work led to independence for India, and his nonviolent methods have been used by many great leaders since.

Chapter 1: In 1869, Gandhi is born into a Hindu family in Porbandar. They are not poor so he goes to school and has an ordinary childhood and makes the usual mistakes children make. India is part of the British Empire. They establish the East India Company, which grows powerful and takes control of India for the British. There are occasional fights and a major rebellion in 1857, which leads to the first British ruler on Indian land.

Chapter 2: Gandhi marries Kasturbai, a Hindu girl chosen by his parents, as is the custom. Both are thirteen. Soon Gandhi leaves for London to study law. He tries to adopt English ways but later decides against it. He returns to India as a lawyer and is offered a job in South Africa. His wife and child join him there but they are discriminated by the white rulers. Gandhi begins his non-violent protests and is sent to prison twice but finally some unjust laws are changed.

Chapter 3: Gandhi and his family move back to India in 1915. He travels around India. He visits famous writer Tagore at his school. He gives him the title "Mahatma". He tells the leaders to help the people in India. He starts an ashram to make life fair for the lowest classes in India's clearly marked social system.

Chapter 4: When England makes harsher rules for India, Gandhi calls for a "no-work" day. People agree and everything stops: shops, trains, schools. However, there is some violence in the Punjab region after the murder of a British soldier, over 300 people are shot in a square. His next non-violent protest of not wearing British clothes stops because of new violence. Gandhi is sent to prison for two years.

Chapter 5: Over the next few years Gandhi travels all over the country and speaks to thousands of people. He wants Indian Muslims and Hindus to unite against British rule. After some periods of imprisonment and fasting, Gandhi's nonviolent protests begin to move the country forward to independence.

Chapter 6: At last, the Muslim leader, Jinnah, and the Hindu leader, Nehru, agree to talk and work together. It is only the British who are still unwilling to talk. Salt is taxed by the British government in India. But Gandhi organizes a march to the ocean to take salt without paying. Thousands of Indians follow his example. Britain at last understands the scale and importance of Indian resistance to British rule and agrees to talk. Gandhi goes to London to talk to the country's leaders, but independence is not won.

Chapter 7: Gandhi is also fighting for equal rights for the "Untouchables" at this time and for several years afterwards. It is not until World War II (1939–1945) that the question of Indian independence re-emerges. After the war, the British work with Gandhi, Nehru, and Jinnah, and in 1947 India wins its independence. But Gandhi has not won his fight because his country is now split in two: Muslim Pakistan in the east and west, and Hindu India in the middle. Violence between the two groups becomes worse and worse.

Chapter 8: Gandhi's message of peace and understanding between the two religions becomes less and less popular. This feeling leads to Gandhi's assassination in 1948 by Nathuram Godse, a Hindu.

Background and themes

Historical background

Gandhi's life cannot be separated from its historical background. Although he was a quiet man, he was always at the center of politics and was a catalyst for social and political change during his lifetime. The most significant historical feature of his life in South Africa, England and

Gandhi

India was the power and supremacy of the British Empire. India was the most important country in the British Empire, but British colonies also stretched across Asia, Australasia, Africa, the Caribbean and Canada. By 1905 more than 345 million people across the world were ruled by Britain. It was the British Navy, the strongest in the world, which gave Britain this position of power. But it was industry and commerce that held the Empire together. Britain used its colonies to get cheap labor, cheap resources, and as a market for British goods. Although the British claimed that they were exporting positive values (including Christianity) the truth was more dreadful: They killed thousands of innocent indigenous people around the world in order to gain power in these lands. This history helps us to understand why India's people were eager to support Gandhi in his fight for independence. As well as discrimination against indigenous people by the British, Gandhi's story also reflects racial hatred between other groups. In South Africa there were tensions between "coloreds" and black South Africans. And in India it was the mistrust between Hindus and Muslims, which became the most difficult problem during the fight for independence. Gandhi was opposed to inequality of all sorts. He fought for equality of all men and women regardless of color, nationality, class, religion, or sex.

Gandhi's philosophy: Gandhi's philosophy of "nonviolent protest" runs throughout the book. He never stopped promoting nonviolent means to change history and policy. His ideas were formulated by reading texts of all religions and such philosophical writers as Plato, Tolstoy and Ruskin. In turn, great leaders of the twentieth century have been influenced by Gandhi's life and his books. The most famous examples are Martin Luther King, Nelson Mandela and the Dalai Lama. Gandhi's story is one of the most important of the twentieth century. His inspirational story will be talked about and written about for many years to come.

Gandhi: The film: It opened in 1982 and is Richard Attenborough's tribute to Gandhi. It won eight Academy Awards, including Best Director, Best Actor and Best Picture. It was filmed in India and the Indian music was by the great Ravi Shankar.

Mahatma Gandhi's message of nonviolent resistance is delivered in an interesting body of art. This film has made and will make millions of people aware of the little brown

man that took on the British Empire and won. *Gandhi* serves both as entertainment and an important historical record. Ben Kingsley played Gandhi. He was perfect for the role. He resembled the real Gandhi. He was young enough to portray Gandhi as a young man. He is a British actor that adopted perfectly the British influenced Indian accent. He became Gandhi.

Discussion activities

Before reading

- Write and discuss:** Read the blurb on the back of the book. These five simple sentences summarize the life of one of the world's most famous leaders. Ask students to choose a famous person and write a book blurb for that person but not to mention the person's name in their book blurb. Then students can take it in turns to read their blurbs to the class, and the class must guess who the famous person is.
- Discuss:** Write GANDHI on the board. Ask the students: *What do you know about this person?*

Chapters 1–2

While reading

- Discuss:** (p. 2) As a class discussion, talk about Gandhi's years in London. He lived there for three years (from 1887) but he had some problems there. Encourage students to imagine problems that do not appear in the book, as well as the ones that do.
- Write:** (p. 3) Ask students to write a page from Gandhi's diary in 1887. The diary entry should include a couple of Gandhi's plans for his future in England as well as his present difficulties.

After reading

- Pair work:** Ask students to talk about what they know about Gandhi: *What did Gandhi like and hate when he was a young boy? How many times did Gandhi go to prison in South Africa? Why did he have to go?*

Chapters 3–4

Before reading

- Discuss:** Ask students to read the title on page 7. Ask them what it means. *Gandhi knows where India is, so why does it say "find?"*

While reading (after Chapter 3)

- Check:** Get the students to close the book and ask: *What five things did Gandhi want for India? How many can you remember? Ask them to open their books and check.*

After reading

- Pair work:** Ask students to think about Gandhi's style as a leader. *Why was he different?* In groups, students write a list of ways in which Gandhi was different from other world leaders. Then ask them to compare lists and have a class discussion.

Gandhi

Chapters 5–6

Before reading

- 9 Discuss:** Get students to discuss the following:
The British in India and in London were unhappy and thought Gandhi would use violence in his protests in the future. Do you think he will use violence? If so, what kind of violence? If not, what kind of protest do you think he will use?

While reading (After the first section on p. 12)

- 10 Pair work:** Give students five minutes to write the differences between living in the country and living in India's cities. Check the differences by having each of the pairs read them out. Write the differences on the board.
- 11 Write:** (p. 13) In 1926, Gandhi writes to a friend of his. He tells his friend why he stays on the Sabarmati ashram.
- 12 Discuss:** (p. 14) Ask students to answer these questions in groups of three or four.
(a) *What did Gandhi do at the ashram every day? (5 things)* **(b)** *What did he never do at the ashram? (3 things)* Check the answers by having each of the groups provide one thing Gandhi always did and one he never did.
- 13 Discuss:** Look at the picture and newspaper article on page 17. *Do you think it is in an English newspaper or an Indian newspaper? Why?*

After reading

- 14 Write and guess:** Write *I cannot get away from people when I am taking my bath!* on the board. Ask students to guess who says or thinks this and why. Now, have students choose a person from Chapters 5–6 and write a sentence to say what they are thinking at a particular moment. Students read out the sentences and the others guess who it is.
- 15 Role play:** Put students into groups of four. In each group, each person takes one of these roles: Gandhi, Nehru, Jinnah, or a television presenter. Give time to each group to prepare a television news program using these characters. The television presenter asks questions about Indian independence to each of the others, and they must respond. Finally, each group presents their program to the rest of the class.

- 16 Debate:** The British are for charging for the salt the Hindus use and the Hindus are against this law. Ask students to get into two groups, one representing the British viewpoint and the other the Hindu. Have them debate the topic.

Chapters 7–8

While reading (After the first section on p. 18)

- 17 Role play:** Put students in pairs to act out the conversation between Gandhi and Nehru.
Student A: You are Gandhi. You want to fast for the rights of the Untouchables. Explain what right you want them to have
Student B: You are Nehru. You don't think fasting will help. Try to convince Gandhi he must fight for the independence and not for the rights of the Untouchables.
- 18 Write and ask:** (p. 18) Write *Why did Gandhi leave the fight for independence for a time?* on the board. Elicit answers (Because he wanted to fight for other things, etc.). Ask students to write another question. Have students walk around, asking and answering each others' questions.
- 19 Discuss:** (p. 20) India became an independent country, but Gandhi lost the "most important fight" of his life. Get the students to explain why.

After reading

- 20 Write:** Put students in pairs to write a list of all the things Gandhi did for which people loved him and for which people hated him. Check the answers with the whole class and have a vote about whether he is mostly good or bad.

Extra activities

- 21 Discuss:** Get students to discuss the following in pairs: *Who followed Gandhi's ideas after his death? Do you know people other than the ones in the book?*