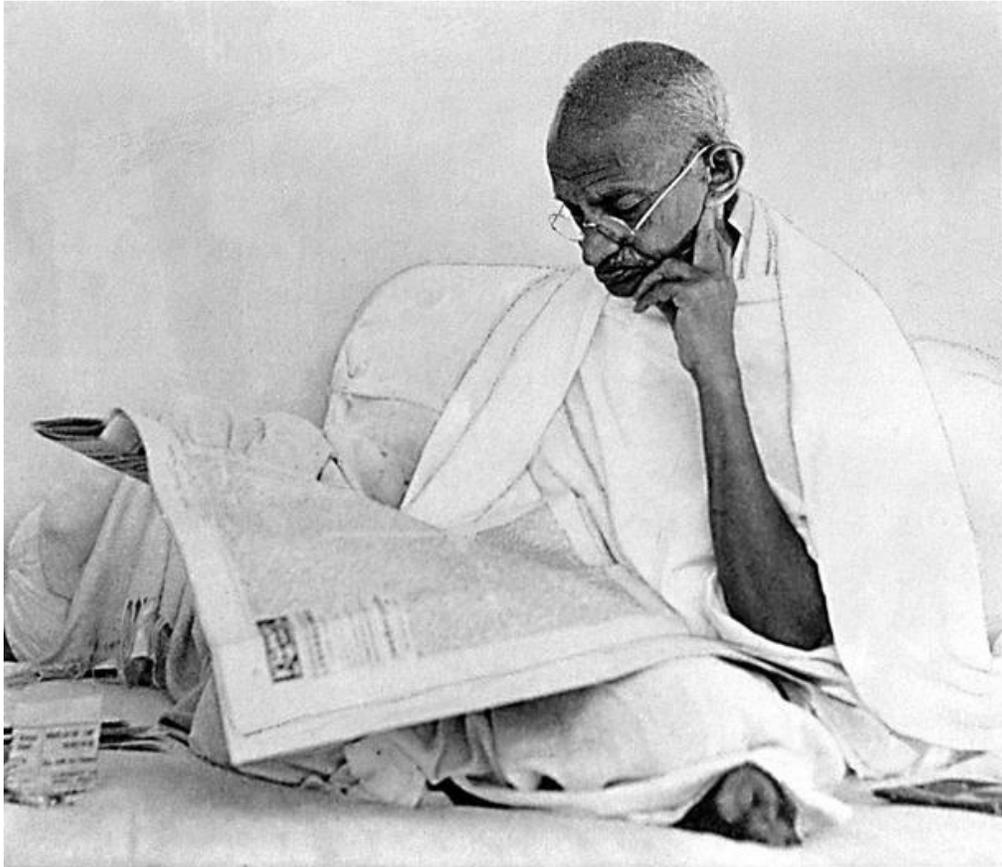


# What Made Gandhi's Nonviolent Movement Work?



**Overview:** Much of world history focuses on war; less is said about peace. The 20th century gives us several examples of how nonviolence was used to bring about dramatic change where the potential for violent conflict existed. Three of these examples were Mohandas Gandhi in India, Martin Luther King, Jr. in the United States, and, in his later years, Nelson Mandela in South Africa. Gandhi was the model for the other two men and will be the focus of this Mini-Q.

## **The Documents:**

Document A: The Salt Tax: Letter to Lord Irwin

Document B: The Dharasana Salt Raid (text and photo)

Document C: Jail Time (Vegetable Days)

Document D: Salting the Lion's Tail (cartoon)

## What Made Gandhi's Nonviolence Work?

The history of war and violence in our world is well documented. Mankind has often settled its conflicts at the point of a spear or barrel of a gun. However, there is another way.

Mohandas Gandhi was born in 1869 in the Indian coastal city of Porbandar. His father was a prominent **Hindu** who taught his son to respect all religions. Gandhi's mother was a **Jainist** who taught Mohandas that all people, in fact all living things, are holy. Following custom, Gandhi married young and at age 19 sailed for London to study law. At this time, colonial India was the crown jewel of the powerful British Empire. Gandhi knew that he was looked down upon by many of the English, but he was impressed that Englishmen followed the law. After getting his degree, he returned to India to establish a law practice.

Things did not work out well. During his first trial in India, Gandhi was so overcome by shyness he couldn't speak. So when a businessman living in South Africa invited him to try his luck there, Gandhi jumped at the offer. Life in South Africa also started badly. Three weeks after he arrived, the full force of European racism came crashing down on him when he was thrown off a train; he was a "colored" man daring to hold a first-class ticket. Despite his shyness, Gandhi found the insult too much to bear, and in the process of fighting back, was arrested and sent to jail. From this experience, he became known as a leader, first to his friends, then to his fellow prisoners, and finally to the Indian community at large.

When Gandhi returned to India in 1896 the wretched poverty he saw everywhere sickened him. Rickety tin and cardboard shanties clung to the outer walls of wealthy homes. Rickshaw

drivers, clothes tattered and feet bare, carried white colonials to their places of business. Everywhere "European Only" signs enforced privilege. In fact, to be successful in this world the English had built, Indians were expected to imitate their rulers – wear their clothes, copy their manners, accept their standards of beauty. Gandhi refused.

Gandhi wanted people to live free of all class, wealth, and educational distinctions, even those imposed by India's ancient **caste system**. But first he had to build a community that modeled this classless society. Gandhi established an ashram and invited followers to join him. He shed the clothes that made him look like a British lawyer and dressed in a poor man's traditional loincloth. He spent time each day at

a spinning wheel making homespun cloth. And he did the undignified chores of the **untouchables**, people so low they are below caste. At first these practices seemed absurd. Then little by little, because of the purity of his life, Gandhi came to be known as "**Mahatma**" or "Great Soul".

Gandhi felt that India's self-respect was tied to independence. But England was a giant whose might was feared around the globe. India

had grappled unsuccessfully with English power for 200 years. How much more difficult would it be for the gentle Gandhi to bring about change, let alone independence? And yet, in the end, Gandhi succeeded where others had failed. India won its independence in 1947 and Gandhi has been given most of the credit for this achievement.

**Examine the documents that follow and then answer the question before us: *What made Gandhi's nonviolence work?***



## Document A

**Source:** Mohandas Gandhi, "Letter to Lord Irwin," March 1930.

**Note:** Lord Irwin was the English governor in India. Gandhi wrote this letter before marching to the sea and breaking the English Salt Tax law. Gandhi's march to the sea is generally called "The Salt March." Most historians consider it the turning point of the movement to free India from British control. The Salt Tax Law made it illegal for Indians to manufacture or collect their own salt.

**Sabarmati, India, March 1930**

Dear Friend,

Before embarking on Civil Disobedience and taking the risk I have dreaded to take all these years, I would ... approach you and find a way out. I cannot intentionally hurt anything that lives, much less human beings, even though they may do the greatest wrong to me and mine. Whilst therefore I hold the British rule to be a curse, I do not intend harm to a single Englishman or to any legitimate interest he may have in India.... And why do I regard the British rule a curse? ...Even the salt [the peasant] must use to live is so taxed as to make the burden fall heaviest on him.... The tax shows itself still more burdensome on the poor man when it is remembered that salt is one thing he must eat more than the rich man....

My ambition is no less than to convert the British people through nonviolence, and thus make them see the wrong they have done to India.... But if you cannot see your way to deal with these evils and if my letter makes no appeal to your heart, on the eleventh day of this month I shall proceed with such co-workers of the Ashram [Community] as I can take, to disregard the provisions of the Salt Laws....

## Document B

**Source:** Webb Miller, "They That Turn the Cheek," *I Found No Peace: The Journal of a Foreign Correspondent*, 1936.

**Note:** Madame Sarojini Naidu was a well-known Indian poetess who was to take Gandhi's place should he be arrested. The author of this document, Webb Miller, was a foreign correspondent present at both the raid and the hospital where the wounded (320 injured and two dead) were taken afterwards. This is the report he filed.

*The Dharasana Salt Works, 150 Miles North of Bombay, India (May 21, 1930)*

Mme. Naidu called for prayer before the march started and the entire assemblage knelt. She exhorted them: "Gandhi's body is in jail but his soul is with you. India's prestige is in your hands. You must not use any violence under any circumstances. You will be beaten but you must not resist; you must not even raise a hand to ward off blows." Wild, shrill cheers terminated her speech....

In complete silence the Gandhi men drew up and halted a hundred yards from the stockade [surrounding the Dharasana Salt Works].... Suddenly, at a word of command, scores of native police rushed upon the advancing marchers and rained blows on their heads with their steel-shod [clubs]. Not one of the marchers even raised an arm to fend off the blows.... The survivors without breaking ranks silently and doggedly marched on until struck down.... The blankets used as stretchers were sodden with blood.

At times the spectacle of unresisting men being methodically bashed into a bloody pulp sickened me so much that I had to turn away. The Western mind finds it difficult to grasp the idea of nonresistance.

**Source:** Photograph by Vithalbhai Jhaveri, May 1930



Protesters preparing to march in Dharasana, photographed by Vithalbhai Jhaveri, an Indian photographer and filmmaker who chronicled the life of Gandhi.

## Document C

**Source:** M.K. Gandhi, reflections about Johannesburg, South Africa, January 1908.

I had just heard (that my fellow Indian protesters) had been sentenced to three months' imprisonment with hard labor, and had been fined a heavy amount.... If these men had committed an offense, I had committed a greater offense and I therefore asked the Magistrate to impose upon me the heaviest penalty.... I well remembered that I ... did not feel the slightest hesitation in entering the prisoner's box.

On vegetable days which were two in a week we cooked twice and on other days only once, as we were allowed to cook other things for ourselves only for the noonday meal. We were somewhat better off after we began to cook our own food. But whether or not we succeeded in obtaining these conveniences, every one of us was firm in his resolution of passing his term in jail in perfect happiness and peace.

**Note:** Gandhi spent the early part of his adult life working for the rights of Indians living in British South Africa. In this instance he was imprisoned for burning his ID passbook. Beginning in 1908 and over the next 40 years, Gandhi would spend a total of 2,338 days in jail.

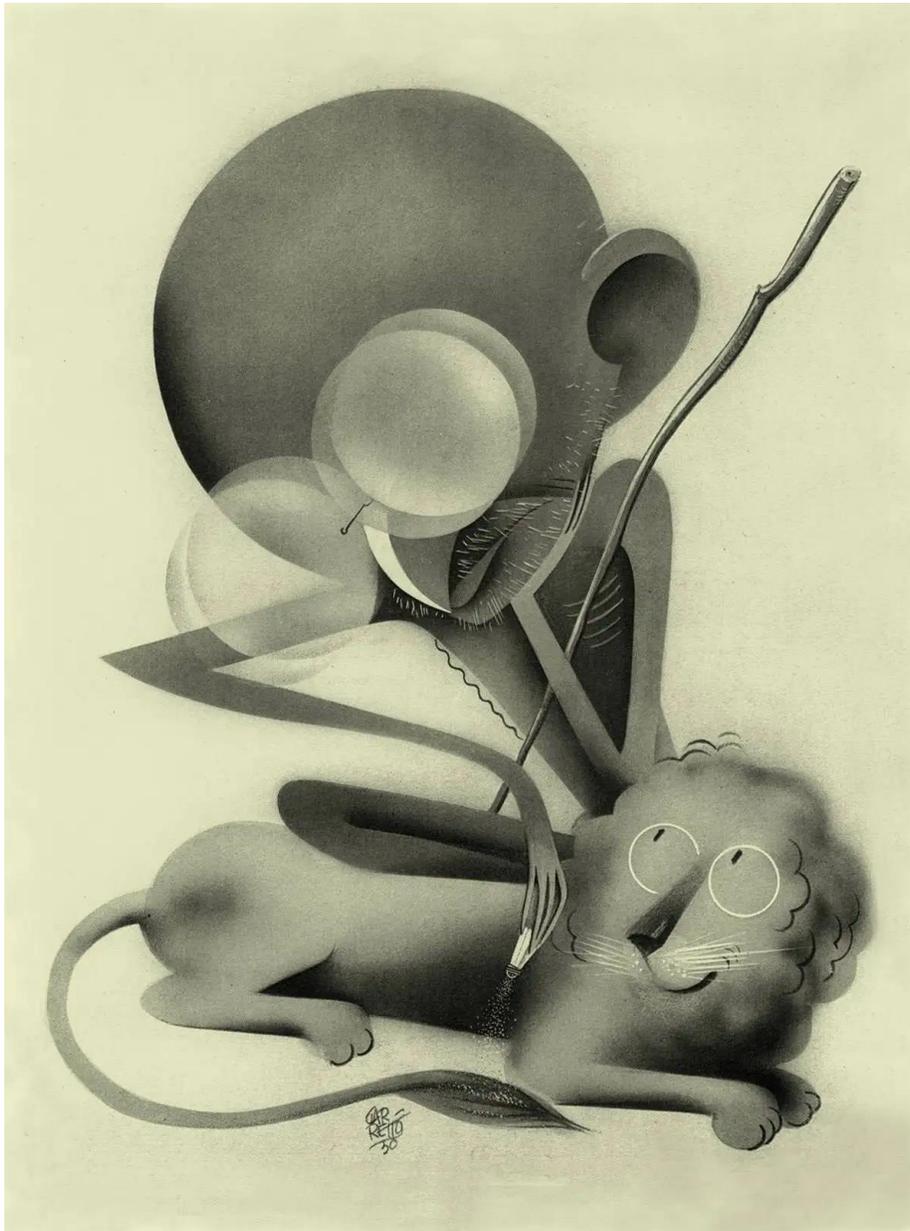
## Document D

**Source:** Illustration by Paulo Garretto: *The Graphic*, May 24, 1930.

**Note:**

This cartoon shows Gandhi salting the tail of the British lion. It is based on an old folk belief that if you put salt on a bird's tail you will then be able to catch it

### Salting the Lion's Tail



## **Essay Outline Guide**

**Paragraph #1:** Introduction (Background information, restate the question, provide a thesis/claim that answers the question: What made Gandhi’s nonviolence work?)

**Paragraph #2:** Topic sentence, supporting detail(s) from documents, connect evidence back to the main thesis.

**Paragraph #3:** Topic sentence, supporting detail(s) from documents, connect evidence back to the main thesis.

**Paragraph #4:** Topic sentence, supporting detail(s) from documents, connect evidence back to the main thesis.

**Paragraph #5:** Conclusion (“Although” statement, followed by a restatement of your main thesis/claim, and explanation of why the answer to this question is important.)

## **How this essay will be graded and submitted:**

This is an optional assignment – you are not required to complete this essay.

- The essay must be submitted to the teacher before 11:59 p.m. on Monday, May 11<sup>th</sup>. **NO LATE SUBMISSION WILL BE ACCEPTED.** Be sure to include your full name, the date, and your class period on your essay and in your email.
  - To submit to **Mrs. Tyler** or to **Mr. Williams**: email your essay to [tylerk@scsk12.org](mailto:tylerk@scsk12.org)
  - To submit to **Mr. Doyne**, email your essay to [doynej@scsk12.org](mailto:doynej@scsk12.org)
  - To submit to **Mr. McCormick**, email your essay to [mccormicks1@scsk12.org](mailto:mccormicks1@scsk12.org)
  - To submit to **Mr. Fraser**, email your essay to [fraserp@scsk12.org](mailto:fraserp@scsk12.org)
- You may submit your essay in the following formats:
  - Handwritten essays: take a photo of all pages, and send as attachments in an email to your teacher. (Mr. Williams’ students should send their essays to Mrs. Tyler.)
  - Typed essays can be emailed to your teacher (Mr. Williams’ students should send their essays to Mrs. Tyler.)
    - If you use Google Docs to write your essay be sure to click the blue “Share” button, enter the teacher’s SCS email address in the box, and change the setting to the right of the box to “Can view”. The pencil icon should change to an eye. Include the sharable link (top right corner) in your email.
- The student will earn a minimum of 3 points and a maximum of 5 points for this assignment to be added to the Q3 grade.
  - Students enrolled in World History & Geography can only earn points up to a 100 average. Students enrolled in DC World History can only earn points up to a 104 average.
- Adjusted grades will be reflected on the final report card at the end of May.
- Refer to the rubric on the next page to see the expectations for this essay.

## **Essay Rubric:**

**5 pts (Advanced):** The essay demonstrates a majority of the following qualities: the student shows an excellent understanding of the topic and expresses it clearly in writing. The essay uses all 4 documents; the student clearly understands the documents. The essay is clearly organized with an intro, supporting paragraphs, and a conclusion, and is at least 5 paragraphs in length. The student uses smooth transitions between paragraphs; the language used by the student is precise and varied. The essay is coherent and free of errors in mechanics, grammar, and spelling.

**4 pts (Proficient):** The essay demonstrates a majority of the following qualities: the student shows a good understanding of the topic and expresses it clearly in writing. The essay uses at least 2 documents; the student understands the documents. The essay is organized with an intro, supporting paragraphs, and a conclusion. The essay is at least 5 paragraphs long. The essay is reasonably coherent and may have minor errors in mechanics, grammar, and spelling.

**3 pts (Basic):** The essay demonstrates a majority of the following qualities: the student shows an emerging understanding of the topic but may be struggling to express it clearly in writing. The essay only uses 1 document, or the student does not correctly understand some of the documents. The essay may lack structure and organization. The essay consists of 3-4 paragraphs. The student's ideas are hard to understand because of poor word choice or sentence structure. The essay has multiple errors in mechanics, grammar, and spelling.

**0 pts (Unacceptable):** The essay demonstrates a majority of the following qualities: the student shows a lack of understanding of the topic. The essay does not use any documents, or the student has misinterpreted all of the documents. The essay may lack structure and organization. The student's ideas are hard to understand because of poor word choice or sentence structure. The essay has multiple errors in mechanics, grammar, and spelling. The essay is 3 or fewer paragraphs, or is one long paragraph. Essays which are clearly not the student's own work (for instance copied/pasted from an online source) will not earn credit.