

Amnesty International

CLOSING MINDS

A human rights education resource
focusing on human rights in China.
For use with young people aged
11–16 exploring Citizenship/PSE
through Literacy and English.

**HUMAN RIGHTS
EDUCATION RESOURCE
CHINA**

www.amnesty.org.uk/education



ABOUT THIS RESOURCE

These activities are designed as a lesson of 1 hour, suitable for students aged 11-16. They could be used as part of a theme day on China, or a cross-curricular Citizenship/PSE project or as a stand-alone lesson. The content links to Citizenship/PSE and ICT.

Students learn about patterns of electronic censorship and internet repression in China and present their findings using ICT.

Resources

For each group of four or five:

- Flipchart sheets
- Felt tip pens
- One of the cartoons on pages 8–10:
 - A tongue tied in a knot (Tom Jansen)
 - Sewing machine sewing up mouth (Stefan Verwey)
 - Lawnmower cutting words like grass from an open book (Ivan Steiger)
 - Microphones and gun pointing at a broadcaster (Jos Collingman)
 - Gagged broadcaster (Kostas Mitropoulos)
- For half of the class, a copy of *Tiananmen* with notes
- For the other half of the class, a copy of *The Snow-White Wall* with notes
- For each student, a copy of *the Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (simplified version)

ACTIVITY 1: Censorship (20 minutes)

Divide the class into four or five small groups

Give each group one of the cartoons and ask them to discuss, agree, write on their flipchart paper and report back on the following questions:

What does their cartoon mean?

What does the word **censorship** mean?

Can they think of examples of censorship in the UK and in China?

Groups report back on their findings and discuss which censorship activities they think can be justified. Use the Teacher Notes on page 4 to help facilitate the discussion.

ACTIVITY 2: Free expression? (5 minutes)

Hand out copies of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Ask which Article/s (if any) support the right to freedom of belief, freedom of opinion and freedom of expression. Do any Articles deal with the right to information?



ACTIVITY 3: Poetry and censorship in China (25 minutes)

Introduce the topic in the context of China, a country that has been much in the news recently, particularly because of the Olympic Games being held in Beijing this summer, and issues of the Chinese authorities' human rights performance.

Hand out copies of James Fenton's poem Tiananmen to half of the groups and Liang Xiaobin's ironical poem The Snow-White Wall to the other groups.

Ask groups to read their poem and the notes underneath it and discuss what it means, and then produce a strip cartoon with 5 or 6 pictures to illustrate what the poem means, with each member of the group doing one of the pictures.

ACTIVITY 4: Plenary discussion (10 minutes)

Each group sticks their cartoon strip up on the wall for others to see.

Discuss:

What methods of censorship are illustrated by the poems and the cartoons they have created?

Why were they used?

Is this form of censorship justified?

CENSORSHIP



DEFINITION

Censorship is the supervision and control of information and ideas circulated among the people within a society. It is now understood to refer to the official examination of books, periodicals, plays, films, television and radio programs, news reports, and other communication media to alter or suppress material thought objectionable or offensive on grounds of national security, obscenity, immorality, violence, blasphemy, slander, libel, insulting to ethnic, religious or other minorities, official secrecy and political danger

Examples of censorship in the UK that students may suggest include:

PUBLICATIONS

The publication of books considered:

obscene including James Joyce's *Ulysses*, (banned 1914–1934) DH Lawrence's *Lady Chatterly's Lover* (banned 1922–1966)

in breach of the Official Secrets Act Peter Wight's *Spycatcher* (banned 1985–8)

MUSIC

The BBC has banned **music** by various artists eg:

George Formby (1940 *When I'm cleaning windows*, considered obscene)

Billy Holiday (1956 *Love for sale*, considered obscene)

The Sex Pistols (1977 *God Save the Queen*)

Ian Dury (1981 *Spasticus autistichus* (thought offensive to the disabled)

Frankie goes to Hollywood 1984 *Relax* (considered obscene)

Artists including Eminem, Ozzie Osborne, Judge Dread, So Solid Crew

TELEVISION

The 9 o'clock deadline on broadcasting material of an 'adult' nature

The '**bleeping**' of swear words on radio or TV, or covering with sounds of birdsong (Big Brother)

The BBC ban (1966–1985) on Peter Watkins's film *War Games* about the effects of nuclear war

The ban on the voices of Irish Loyalist and Republican spokesmen (They were dubbed by actors 1988–1994)

FILM

The British Board of Film Censors certifies which films and videos may be shown to different age groups by its certification of films into U, PG, 12A, 12, 15, 18 and R18

INTERNET

Moves to prevent the 'grooming' of children by paedophiles via the internet

OTHER

The Official Secrets Act and D notices These are used to ban the publication of material considered a threat to national security

The glorification of terrorism (2006 Terrorism Act) and **incitement to racial and religious hatred** have been banned in the UK

POEM: TIANANMEN



Tiananmen

Tiananmen
Is broad and clean
And you can't tell
Where the dead have been
And you can't tell
What happened then
And you can't speak
Of Tiananmen.

You must not speak
You must not think.
You must not dip
Your brush in ink.
You must not say
What happened then,
What happened there
In Tiananmen.

The cruel men
Are old and deaf
Ready to kill
But short of breath
And they will die
Like other men
And they'll lie in state
In Tiananmen.

They lie in state.
They lie in style.
Another lie's
Thrown on the pile,
Thrown on the pile
By the cruel men

To cleanse the blood
From Tiananmen.

Truth is a secret.
Keep it dark.
Keep it dark
In your heart of hearts.
Keep it dark
Till you know when
Truth may return
To Tiananmen.

Tiananmen
Is broad and clean
And you can't tell
Where the dead have been
And you can't tell
When they'll come again
They'll come again
To Tiananmen

James Fenton 1989



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JAMES FENTON, HONG KONG, 15 JUNE 1989

James Fenton, journalist, poet and university professor, wrote this poem in China 10 days after the 4 June massacre in Beijing's main square. Tiananmen literally means 'Heaven's Gate'. Key civic buildings surround the huge square - the tomb of China's leader, Mao Tse Tung, the National Parliament, a heroes' monument, the National Museum, the Forbidden City and the old Palace of the Emperor.

On 4 June 1989, heavily-armed soldiers of the Chinese People's Liberation Army moved in with tanks and guns to crush a peaceful mass rally for democracy that had been running in the square for months. The exact number of those killed is unknown - estimates vary from hundreds to over a thousand. In China the government has heavily suppressed all information about 'The Tiananmen Square incident'.



POEM: THE SNOW WHITE WALL

The snow-white wall

Mother,
I saw a snow-white wall.

This morning I went up the street
to buy crayons
And I saw a workman
Striving with all his might
To whitewash a long enclosure wall.

He looked and smiled over his
shoulder at me
And he asked me to tell all the children:
Don't scribble a mess on the wall any
more.

Mother,
I saw a snow-white wall

That wall used to be filthy,
Scrawled with many violent, brutal
words.

Mother, you once wept
Over those very curses

Daddy is gone,
Gone forever.

The wall that's so white,
Whiter than the milk I drink,
Has been flashing through my dreams.
It stands on the horizon

Shimmering with enchanting light in the
daytime,
I love pure white.

I'll never draw a mess on the wall,
Never will.

Blue sky, gentle as my mother
Do you hear me?

Mother,
I saw a snow-white wall

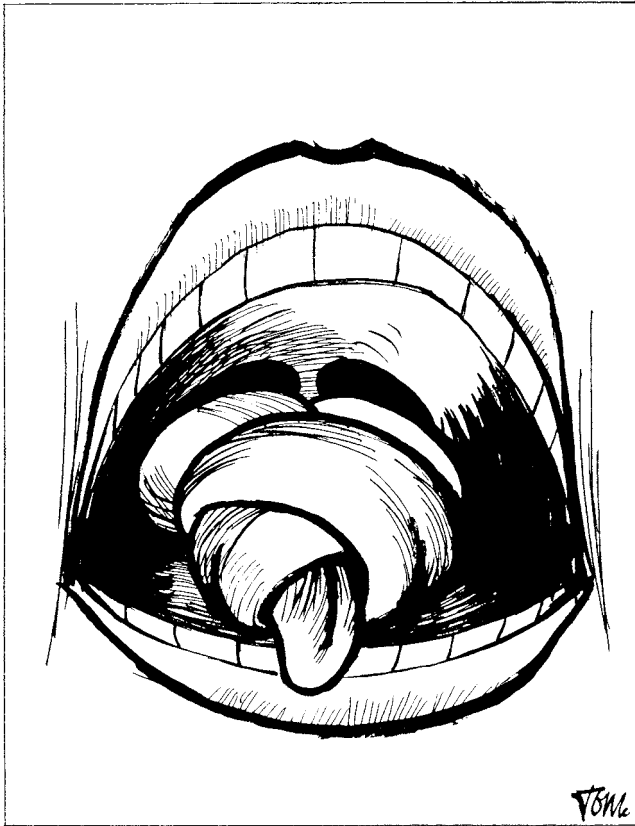
Liang Xiaobin 1980



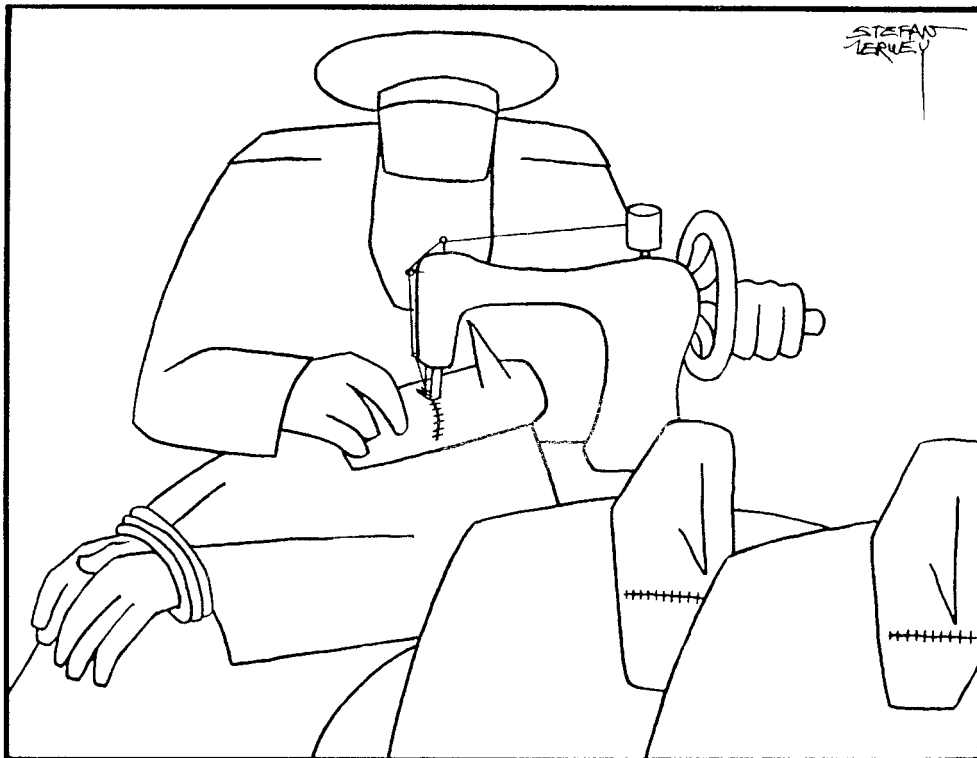
LIANG XIAOBIN, 1980

Liang Xiaobin's ironical poem, *The Snow-White Wall*, was written in 1980 two years after China's 'Democracy Wall Movement'. In the autumn of 1978, many people made and pasted up large hand-made posters on a large wall on Xidan Street near Tiananmen Square, Beijing that became known as the Democracy Wall. In their posters people openly discussed issues in the news, some criticising the Cultural Revolution and the Chinese Communist Party and calling for liberty, political and social changes and democracy. In December 1979, the Chinese authorities tore down all the posters, whitewashed and later destroyed the Democracy Wall and jailed leading poster-writers like Wei Jingsheng and Xu Wenli.

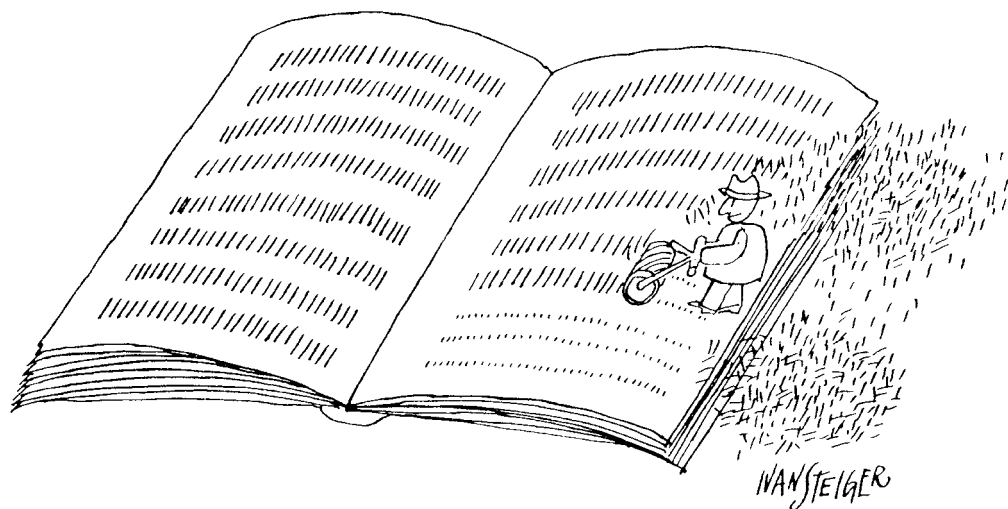
After you have read the poem, think about the following questions:
Do you think the poet *really* agrees with the whitewashing of the wall?
This poem is described here as *ironic* – what does that mean?
What point do you think the poet is trying to make and why?



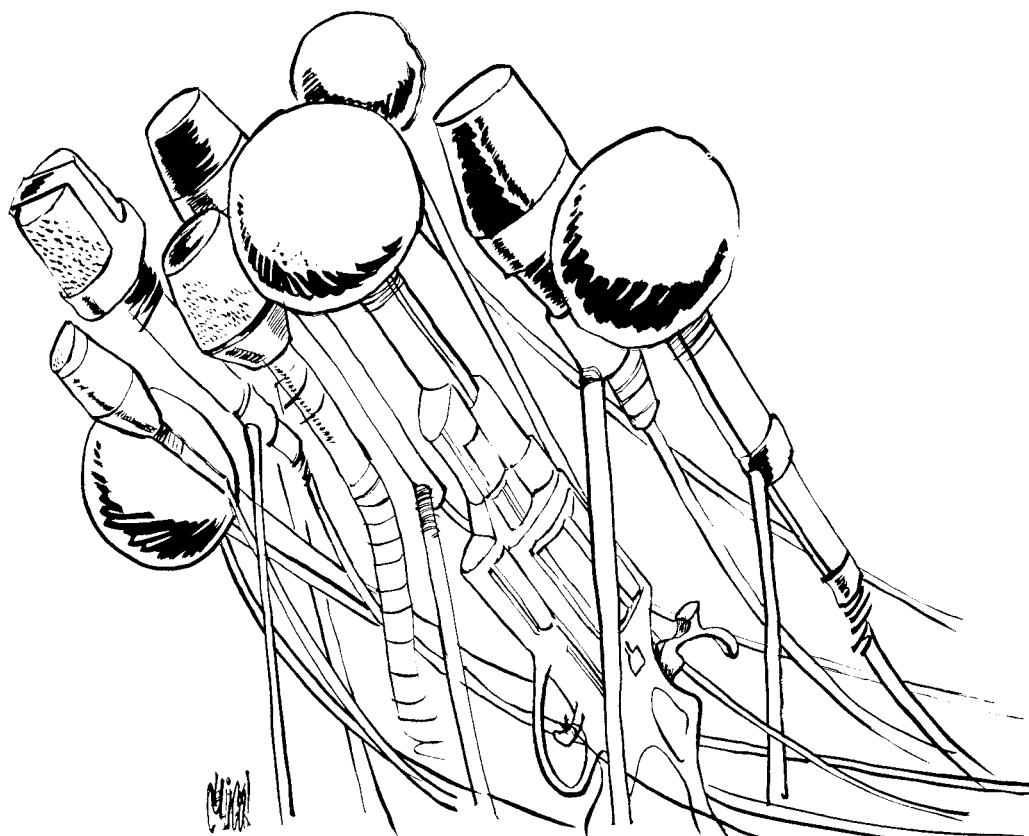
Cartoon by Tom Janssen



Cartoon by Stefan Verwey



Cartoon by Ivan Steiger



Cartoon by Jos Collingnon



Cartoon by Kostas Mitropoulos

THE UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS 1948

(Young people's version)



1 We are all born free. We all have our own thoughts and ideas. We should all be treated in the same way.

2 These rights belong to everybody; whether we are rich or poor, whatever country we live in, whatever sex or whatever colour we are, whatever language we speak, whatever we think or whatever we believe.

3 We all have the right to life, and to live in freedom and safety.

4 Nobody has any right to make us a slave. We cannot make anyone else our slave.

5 Nobody has any right to hurt us or to torture us.

6 We all have the same right to use the law.

7 The law is the same for everyone. It must treat us all fairly.

8 We can all ask for the law to help us when we are not treated fairly.

9 Nobody has the right to put us in prison without a good reason, to keep us there or to send us away from our country.

10 If we are put on trial, this should be in public. The people who try us should not let anyone tell them what to do.

11 Nobody should be blamed for doing something until it has been proved that they did it. If people say we did something bad, we have the right to show this was not true. Nobody should punish us for something that we did not do, or for doing something which was not against the law when we did it.

12 Nobody should try to

harm our good name. Nobody has the right to come into our home, open our letters, or bother us or our family without a very good reason.

13 We all have the right to go where we want to in our own country and to travel abroad as we wish.

14 If we are frightened of being badly treated in our own country, we all have the right to run away to another country to be safe.

15 We all have the right to belong to a country.

16 Every grown up has the right to marry and have a family if they want to. Men and women have the same rights when they are married, and when they are separated.

17 Everyone has the right to own things or share them. Nobody should take our things from us without a good reason.

18 We all have the right to believe in what we want to believe, to have a religion, or to change it if we want.

19 We all have the right to make up our own minds, to think what we like, to say what we think, and to share our ideas with other people wherever they live, through books, radio, television and in other ways.

20 We all have the right to meet our friends and to work together in peace to defend our rights. Nobody can make us join a group if we don't want to.

21 We all have the right to take part in the government of our country. Every grown up should be allowed to choose their own leaders from time to time

and should have a vote which should be made in secret.

22 We all have the right to a home, to have enough money to live on and medical help if we are ill. We should all be allowed to enjoy music, art, craft, sport and to make use of our skills.

23 Every grown up has the right to a job, to get a fair wage for their work, and to join a trade union.

24 We all have the right to rest from work and relax.

25 We all have the right to a good life, with enough food, clothing, housing, and healthcare. Mothers and children, people without work, old and disabled people all have the right to help.

26 We all have the right to education, and to finish primary school which should be free. We should be able to learn a career, or to make use of all our skills. We should learn about the United Nations and about how to get on with other people and respect their rights. Our parents have the right to choose how and what we will learn.

27 We all have the right to our own way of life, and to enjoy the good things that science and learning bring.

28 We have a right to peace and order so we can all enjoy rights and freedoms in our own country and all over the world.

29 We have a duty to other people, and we should protect their rights and freedoms.

30 Nobody can take away these rights and freedoms from us.