

TEACHING CHARACTER

THROUGH THE PRIMARY CURRICULUM

A CROSS-CURRICULA APPROACH
TO TEACHING CHARACTER

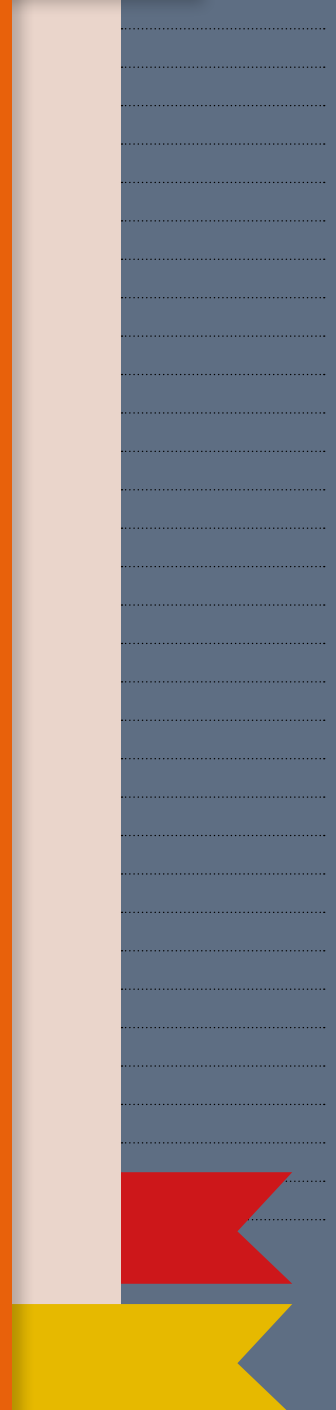
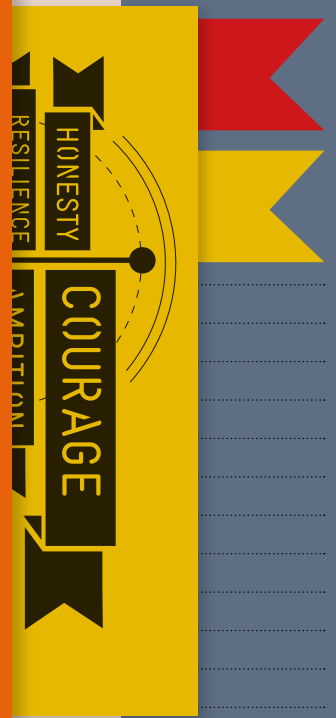
COURAGE UNDER FIRE

MAIN NARRATIVE

VIRTUE: COURAGE - SUBJECT: ENGLISH



THE
JUBILEE CENTRE
FOR CHARACTER & VIRTUES



JOHN SIMPSON

Background - China

Since 1949, China had largely shut itself off from the rest of the world. The Chinese government had banned **international** journalists and most visitors from going to the country. The Chinese **media** was controlled by the government and the people of China were told versions of events that benefitted the government. The majority of the Chinese public knew little about the outside world. Gradually, the Chinese government loosened its control of the media, and by the 1980s, international journalists were allowed into China.

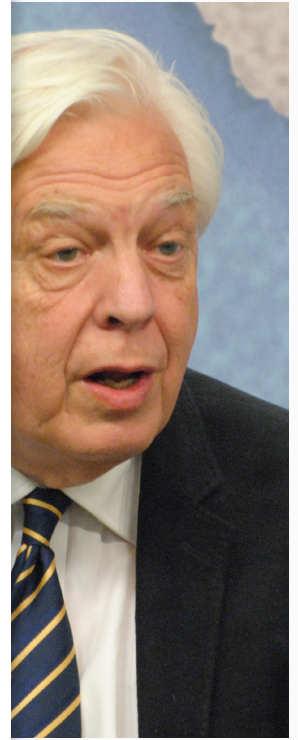
Journalists from around the world entered China. These journalists saw it as their **duty** to report on the true goings on of China. How did people live? What was the government like? Were the stories of **human right violations** true? Unfortunately, it was not that easy. Once in China, finding out the truth and being able to report the truth were not straightforward. International journalists working in China faced **harassment** and **intimidation** by the local government. They were often arrested or **detained** by security officers. Many did not speak out about this for fear of their own freedom or safety.

Tiananmen Square

During the 1980s, China experienced a period of economic growth. With this growth came a growing awareness amongst the Chinese public of world events and foreign ideas. By 1989, many Chinese citizens felt that a time had come for change. Many youths and university students felt that the government had too much power. In April, thousands of students gathered in Tiananmen Square, Beijing, protesting for change. The protests continued throughout April, and on into May. The crowds increased and protests had spread to other cities across the country. Over a million people joined the protests across China. International journalists already in China began to report on the protests. They were warned not to report them by the Chinese government, but many initially continued to do so. One such reporter was John Simpson, who was working as a foreign correspondent for the BBC from Great Britain.

Many journalists began to be threatened with violence and were told they could be arrested. This stopped several journalists reporting, and they thought it would be safer to return home. By the end of May, **martial law** was declared in Beijing and army troops were sent to the city. Protesters flooded the streets, stopping armed vehicles from entering Tiananmen Square. Beijing became a very unsafe place. John Simpson reported the rising tensions in the city. The government had stated that the troops would not use force against the protesters, but in June, everything changed.

As troops tried to force the protesters away, violence erupted, initially from angry protesters attacking soldiers and armoured vehicles. Simpson reported witnessing protestors dragging troops out of vehicles and violently attacking



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"JOURNALISM IS
PRINTING WHAT
SOMEONE ELSE
DOES NOT WANT
PRINTED."

- GEORGE ORWELL

them. His job as a journalist was to observe and report on what he saw, but he could not stand by and watch the violence **escalate**. As he saw one soldier being beaten, nearly to death, he pushed the protesters away, shielding the soldier, possibly saving his life. Simpson later **acknowledged** that this action could have resulted in his own death, but he was confident that the protesters' aggression was not targeted at him. His actions had potentially saved a life.

In response to this violence, on the night of 3rd June 1989, tanks and heavily armed troops advanced towards Tiananmen Square. Troops began squashing the protesters together and then the tanks opened fire on the crowds. Beijing had become a battle ground. Simpson knew the safest place to be was in his hotel room, but from there he could not report on what was happening. He knew if he and other journalists did not report on this **massacre**, then the Chinese government could pretend that it had never happened. He left his hotel and went towards Tiananmen Square. With bullets flying, he lay down in a gutter with his arms over his head, trying to protect himself. He tried to watch what was going on so that he could report back to the rest of the world. He was risking his life to tell the story of how others had risked their lives in pursuit of change.

A few days later, when he eventually left Beijing, Simpson was driven down backstreets to avoid roadblocks. He could see burnt out cars and buildings, and often bodies lying on the floor. Simpson had reported from China to the rest of the world. He had risked his life to report the truth about what was happening in Tiananmen Square.

After the military had stopped the protests, soldiers began detaining, torturing, imprisoning or executing the protestors. Many foreign governments condemned the Chinese government's behaviour, but the Chinese government failed to admit the massacre had even taken place. They wiped it out of Chinese history. It does not appear in books in China, nor on the Chinese internet. Even today it is a banned topic in China and people still feel that if they talk about it then they will be intimidated or arrested. The journalists who reported from Tiananmen Square are no longer allowed to enter China. If it were not for journalists, such as John Simpson, who showed courage whilst under fire, the rest of the world would not be aware of what happened. The role of a journalist can be vitally important in allowing the stories of the world to be truthfully told and never forgotten, and many journalists go to very dangerous places in order to accurately report the details of events.

GLOSSARY

ACKNOWLEDGED

To recognise something

DETAINED

To keep someone for questioning

DUTY

A moral responsibility

ESCALATE

Rapidly increase

HARASSMENT

Aggressive pressure or intimidation

HUMAN RIGHTS

A moral or legal privilege a human has to have or do something

INTERNATIONAL

From another country

INTIMIDATION

To frighten someone to make them do what you want

MARTIAL LAW

The placing of the highest ranking military official in charge of the government

MASSACRE

Deliberately and brutally kill (many people).

MEDIA

Mass communication (television, radio, and newspapers)

VIOLATIONS

To break a rule or right