

Mohandas Gandhi

Mohandas Gandhi was one of India's most popular leaders. A Lawyer by trade, he left the law to fight personally for his people's rights against their British rulers. Deeply committed to nonviolence Gandhi was determined to win India's freedom by avoiding confrontation.

Over the years he developed a code of action known today as civil disobedience. Gandhi's code called for nonviolent noncooperation to achieve independence. Whenever armed British soldiers came to enforce the occupation government's laws, Gandhi urged his people not to fight. Instead, they stood still, refusing to move back or forward and refusing to give into the soldiers. Unwilling to shoot the un-armed crowd, the British usually re-treated. However in the massacre of Amritsar, British soldiers killed almost four hundred of Gandhi's followers.

Gandhi and his followers knew that nonviolent protests could lead to imprisonment and even death, but they remained loyal to the independence movement until Great Britain granted the independence of India and Pakistan in 1947.

Guy de Maupassant

High school students are probably most familiar with author Guy de Maupassant as a short story writer. De Maupassant was a good friend of the novelist Gustave Flaubert; in fact, his writing style is like Flaubert's.

As a child, De Maupassant often observed the worst side of society and later he used that in his stories. His short stories are memorable for their ironic endings in which the main characters' beliefs are turned upside down. In "The Necklace," for example, he describes a minor official and his wife who reduce themselves to poverty by repaying a debt. After years of hardship, they learn that the debt was all together unnecessary.

De Maupassant's novels, like his stories, are simple realistic, and pessimistic. In one novel, for instance, the central character is an unethical journalist who succeeds despite his dishonesty. De Maupassant allows himself to feel compassion for only the poor and powerless. The vain, foolish or selfish he portrays with merciless clarity.