

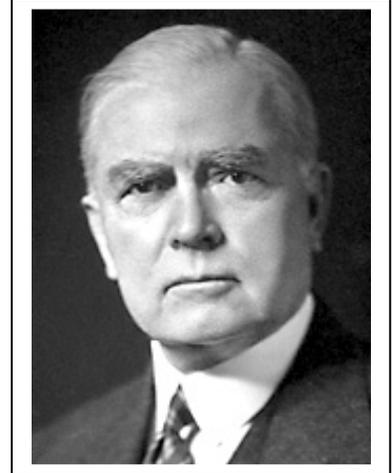
John Raleigh Mott

1946

“He has gone out into the whole world and opened hearts to the idea of peace, to understanding, love and tolerance.”

John Raleigh Mott was a co-recipient of the 1946 Nobel Peace Prize, an honor he shared with fellow American, Emily Balch. Though he was not a politician or international statesman, the Nobel Committee recognized his life-long dedication to peace issues and to improving the lot of humanity. In his presentation speech, Herman Smitt Ingebretsen, Nobel Committee member, described Mott’s work as follows:

“Mott’s work has been devoted to the most fundamental issue of all. He has gone out into the whole world and opened hearts to the idea of peace, to understanding, love, and tolerance. He has done it in answer to a call from God and, guided by that call, he has prepared the soil in which the hope of the world will grow.”



John Mott was born on May 25, 1865 in Livingston Manor, New York at a time when the nation was still reeling from the assassination of President Abraham Lincoln. Later that year, his family moved to Postville, Iowa, a town he called home. At the age of sixteen, he enrolled at Upper Iowa University at Fayette, Iowa where he showed great interest in literature, history, law, debate, and oratory. In 1886, he transferred to Cornell University in upstate New York and his experiences there changed the course of his life.

While at Cornell, considering a future in law or as a lumber merchant like his father, John Mott became active in the Student Christian Association. His cathartic moment came during a lecture by J. Kynaston Studd in early 1886 when he heard the words, “Seest thou great things for thyself? Seek them not. Seek ye first the Kingdom of God.” It was then that he decided to dedicate his life to Christian service. Mott was elected president of the Cornell Y.M.C.A (Young Men’s Christian Association) and his tenure oversaw an increase in membership as well as the building of new facilities on campus. In 1888, he was graduated Phi Beta Kappa with a degree in history and philosophy.

Following graduation, John Mott began his life-long professional attachment to the Y.M.C.A. by accepting a position as a traveling secretary for the Intercollegiate Y.M.C.A. of the United States and Canada, which he held from 1888 to 1915. From 1915 to 1928, he was the general secretary of the International Committee of the Y.M.C.A. and from 1926 to 1937, he served as president of the Y.M.C.A.’s World Committee. In every capacity he was energized by the call to service he answered as a young man and inspired by the hope he found in the people with whom he worked.

John Mott's devotion to spreading a message of peace and good will among young people found expression in other organizations as well. In 1895, he founded the World's Student Christian Federation, necessitating an extended period of travel about the world, during which time he visited twenty-four nations and established seventy new associations. The World's Student Christian Federation believed in the brotherhood and sisterhood of all people and, in light of the Christian gospel message, strove to unite all races, nationalities, and creeds to stand against injustice, inequality, and violence as a method of solving individual and national problems.

1865 – 1955

- Christian evangelist, missionary, visionary, author, speaker, “world citizen”
- Longtime leader in the Young Men's Christian Association (Y.M.C.A.)
- Member of special diplomatic teams to Russia and Mexico during the Wilson administration
- Founder of the World's Student Christian Federation in 1895
- “He who would be greatest among you must be the servant of all.”

Extensive travel was a hallmark characteristic of his career and it is estimated that he traveled over two million miles as a dedicated servant of his mission. It was in 1910 that he traveled to Scotland to chair the Edinburgh Missionary Conference, a task that earned him recognition as perhaps the world's foremost Protestant missionary leader. In 1912 and 1913, he traveled the world again on behalf of missionary unity and cooperation. Several times he organized and presided over international missionary conferences which sought to unify and give direction to the efforts of Christian evangelization occurring on every continent.

John Mott's innate goodness and the positive results of his labors did not escape the attention of presidents, kings, diplomats, educators, and churchmen. President Woodrow Wilson named him to American diplomatic delegations to Russia and Mexico but was unable to convince him to accept the ambassadorship to China, a

nation where Mott had traveled extensively and had considerable influence. During President Wilson's second term, when the United States entered World War I, Mott used his leadership, organizational abilities, and the resources of the three groups he headed to work for improving conditions in prisoner of war camps, providing humanitarian aid to those in need, and preparing people for a return to a normal life after the war. During the war he continued to travel in Europe and elsewhere to enlist help with these important endeavors. His tireless efforts were not only inspirational to many, they also resulted in approximately 250 million dollars in donations to support war relief programs. When World War II broke out, Mott went to work again, traveling the globe in spite of his advanced age, trying to duplicate the war relief programs he executed so successfully earlier in the century.

John R. Mott received the Nobel Peace Prize in 1946 based on his life of service to a higher cause. He firmly believed that human unity, an idealized goal for so long, was not possible in the absence of religion. His unflappable Christian faith led him to build bridges rather than barriers among people and nations and this same faith held him up in the face of numerous obstacles to his work. In his Nobel presentation speech, Herman Smitt Ingebretsen said that Mott believed, “God is our Father....if God is our Father then we are all brothers (and sisters), and no frontiers or racial divisions can separate us from each other.”

In his Nobel lecture which he delivered on December 13, 1946, John Mott emphasized that essential value of leadership in creating a new world order:

“The leadership so imperatively needed just now must be truly creative. The demand is for thinkers and not mechanical workers.....The leadership must be statesmanlike. And here let us remind ourselves of the traits of the true statesman – the genuinely Christian statesman. He simply must be a man of vision. He sees what the crowd does not see. He takes in a wider sweep, and he sees before others see. How true it is that where there is no vision, the people perish.”

In his acceptance speech, which was delivered three days earlier, John Mott echoed his profound sense of optimism for the future and a deep- rooted hope in the goodness of human beings:

“...my life has been a life of travel...In this world-wide effort I have concentrated on successive generations of youth. If I were to add a word, it would be a word of abounding hope. The present new generation across the breadth of the world ...I can testify are responsive to the Nobel Peace ideal, and are planning, as no previous generation, for a great united advance in the furtherance of peace and good-will throughout the world.”

John Mott received many additional honors for the work he performed over his eighty-nine years. He was granted seven honorary degrees, was given the United States’ Distinguished Service Medal following World War I, and was named an Honorary Chairman of the World Council of Churches, an association inspired by his dream of Christian and international unity.

He died at his home in Orlando, Florida on January 31, 1955.

Suggested Classroom Activities

Introduction/Warm-Up:

The teacher will provide background information about the contrast between international tensions in the late 1800’s and the first half of the 1900’s and the missionary fervor that inspired men like John R. Mott.

(N.B. The film, “The African Queen” starring Humphrey Bogart and Katherine Hepburn provides interesting character profiles.)

Discussion Questions:

1. Make a list of the many wars, major and minor, that occurred during the long lifetime of John Mott. (Level 1)
2. What motivated John Mott’s work? In what ways did his education and life experience help make achievements that would merit the Nobel Peace Prize in 1946? (Level 1)
3. Why did he believe that religion must be a factor in creating a peaceful world? (Level 2)
4. Did the fact that he was not a politician aid or hinder his work? (Level 2)
5. What is “visionary leadership”? Why does the modern world require leaders who have “vision”? (Level 3)
6. Why did John Mott remain hopeful for the future? (Level 3)

Vocabulary:

1. cathartic
2. Young Men’s Christian association (Y.M.C.A.)
3. hallmark
4. evangelization
5. humanitarian aid
6. profound
7. World Council of Churches

Activity:

Overview – John Mott has been called a “World Citizen” and his work to improve human living conditions and human relations was recognized by the Nobel Committee in 1946. His work involved association with the Young Men’s Christian Association (Y.M.C.A.), the World’s Student Christian Federation, and the World Missionary Council. In the goals of each of these organizations he envisioned building blocks for a world at peace, on an interpersonal level as well as an international level. This activity will explore John Mott’s achievements in more depth and allow students to look to the future through his eyes.

Objectives –

By participating in this activity, students will:

research the life and accomplishments of John Mott, Nobel Peace Laureate in 1946

analyze biographical information, categorize it, and present it in the form of an imagined interview with Mr. Mott

predict John Mott's view of the present state of international relations and support their predictions with appropriate information

Procedure –

It will be assumed that the students have received some background about the time period, have read the biography of John Mott, reviewed the vocabulary, and discussed the questions with the teacher.

As part of a reading assignment in class or for homework, students will read the Nobel Peace Prize Presentation Speech for John Mott, given by Herman Smitt Ingebretsen and John Mott's Nobel Lecture. Both can be found at www.nobelprize.org or the teacher may choose to provide hard copies.

Students will be asked to simulate an interview of Mr. Mott, using the information they have learned about him and his work.

Students will write their questions and answers in interview format and submit this writing assignment to the teacher for evaluation.

The interview will consist of seven questions as follows:

One question about the Y.M.C.A.

One question about the World Student Christian Federation

One question about the World Missionary Council

Three questions of their own choosing

Question #7 will make the assumption that Mr. Mott is aware of the status of our world in the present day and the final question will be:

“You have always expressed great hope for the future, especially in your work with young people. What specific signs of hope do you see in the youth of today for improved international relations?”

Follow-up may take the form of sharing parts of the interview in class or teacher highlighting common features and discussing with the students.

Technology Option:

Find out more about the Y.M.C.A. by going to www.ymca.net.

What are the programs and goals of the Y.M.C.A. today?

Compare and contrast these with the work and objectives of John. R Mott.

Resources:

<http://iagenweb.org/boards/allamakee/biographies/index.cgi?rev=47283>

www.abcog.org/mott1.htm

www.bookrags.com/biography-john-r-mott

www.nobelprize.org

www.ymca.net