

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 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 a 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.”

John Mott was born on May 25, 1865 in Livingston Manor, New York at a time when the nation was still recovering 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, Mott became active in the Student Christian Association. From 1926 to 1937, he served as president of the Y.M.C.A.'s World Committee. In every job he was worked hard and inspired by the people with whom he worked.

• **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.”**

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. He traveled around the world, and visited twenty-four

nations. He created seventy new associations. Travel was an important part of his career and it is estimated that he traveled over two million miles.

In 1910 he traveled to Scotland to chair the Edinburgh Missionary Conference. In 1912 and 1913, he traveled the world again.

President Woodrow Wilson named him to be a delegate to Russia and Mexico but was unable to convince him to accept the ambassadorship to China, a nation where Mott had traveled extensively.

During President Wilson's second term, when the United States entered World War I, Mott worked 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 efforts. 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.

In his Nobel lecture which he delivered on December 13, 1946, John Mott emphasized that essential value of leadership. He said "leadership so **imperatively** needed just now that it must be truly creative."

In his acceptance speech for the Nobel Prize, which was delivered three days earlier, John Mott echoed his sense of optimism for the future:

"...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

John Mott

Introduction/Warm-Up:

In order to have students grasp the importance of Mott's contributions they must first understand "Christian" action in the sense of describing Good Samaritan, selfless activities. It is not restricted to only "Christians," as many people of other faiths also have engaged and continue to engage works like these. This takes nothing away from Mott or his faith; rather, it adds greater meaning to it.

Discussion Questions:

1. Make a list of characteristics that John Mott had that helped make him a strong leader. (Level 1)
2. What caused John Mott to live the life that he did, when he could have made several other choices? (Level 1)
3. How did Mott's religion make him more effective in dealing with other people? (Level 2)
4. In what ways was Mott a "visionary leader"? (Level 2)
5. In your opinion, what is the greatest cause for hope for the future? (Level 3) ‘

Vocabulary Terms:

1. **Fundamental**
2. **Cathartic**
3. **Hallmark characteristic**
4. **Evangelization**
5. **Innate**
6. **Humanitarian**
7. **Executed**
8. **Unflappably**
9. **Statesman**
10. **Successive**

Activity:

Volunteerism and commitment to action are hallmarks of John R. Mott's career. Students should find an organization, such as the YMCA, church group, homeless shelter, community kitchen, etc, for which they can volunteer at least one hour of their own time toward the goal of making the world a better place, even if only in a limited context.

Technology Option:

Background: A key to John R. Mott's winning the Nobel Peace Prize was his commitment to Christian beliefs. Students will discover that other religions have also contributed to the lives of other important peacemakers. They will also develop an understanding of the makeup of past winners of the Prize.

Students will use the internet to contribute data for the creation of a chart of all past Nobel Peace Prize winners that will indicate the distribution of nations and religions among Nobel Peace Prize recipients.

- 1a. Teacher will create a chart indicating the year of the award,. The chart will include spaces for the name of the laureate, their gender, their country, the continent that country represents, and their religious affiliation, if any.
- 2a. Students will be randomly assigned to specific years, until all the years in which the Nobel peace Prize was awarded are assigned.
- 3a. Each student will be responsible for compiling the information about Peace Laureates for their assigned years.
- 4a. Upon completion of the task, students will enter their data on the chart for the entire class to see.
- 5a. When all data is gathered, classroom discussion will focus on the distribution of laureates by category.
- 6a. Students can develop a profile of a "typical" Nobel Peace Prize winner. (Optional)
- 6b. Students will find a list of current Peace Prize nominees; based on the profile they have developed they will attempt to predict the next winner of the Prize. (Optional)

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

<http://www.volunteermatch.org/>