

WHY-LIGHTING: CHINA'S PEASANTS

- Read the excerpt.
- As you read, highlight issues peasants faced.
- Write next to your highlighted text why you highlighted that part.

[. . .] *The peasant was China's "forgotten man." Probably the most serious problem that faced the Kuomintang (Nationalists) was the extreme poverty that China's people had suffered for centuries. In the 1900's, they continued to be desperately poor. In one year, the average Chinese peasant earned perhaps as much as an American worker made in a week. If drought or floods destroyed his crops, the Chinese peasant went hungry or starved. The payment of even the smallest taxes was a heavy burden for millions of Chinese farmers. Yet most of the government's income came from taxes on the land. Thus, painful sacrifices were demanded from people who already had suffered too much. From the record of Chinese history, it could have been predicted that the Nanking government was headed for trouble unless it could provide relief for the peasants. [. . .]*

The Nationalists' failure to solve the farm problem had unfortunate results. China urgently needed foodstuffs to feed its growing population. The inability of the peasants to increase crop production meant hunger throughout the land. Lack of farm surpluses to use in trade limited China's ability to purchase machinery abroad. Furthermore, the suffering of the peasants

furnished the Communists with a powerful weapon to use against the Nanking government (under Chiang Kai-shek). The Kuomintang was blamed for all of China's troubles. [. . .]

Source: Kublin, H. [Ed.] (1968). *China: Selected readings (World regional studies)*. Houghton Mifflin.