



## The Tank Man of Tiananmen Square

Set 15 (333 words)

Text written by Angela Weeks and illustrated by Dick Weigall

### Special words

many, would, could, two, one, engines, vehicle

The world looked on in amazement when this photograph was beamed across the world. It was June 5<sup>th</sup> 1989, the morning after the Chinese military had suppressed the Tiananmen Square protests by force, killing and injuring many civilians. Would they kill the young man standing in the middle of the road?

The man wore a white shirt and black pants, and held two shopping bags, one in each hand. As the tanks came to a stop in front of him, he waved his bags at them, seemingly signalling them to go back. Instead, the lead tank tried to drive around him. But each time the tank changed direction, the man got in its way.

When the lead tank stopped, the young man stood in front of it. Then, to the amazement of onlookers, he clambered onto the front of the tank, briefly spoke to the driver, and climbed up to the turret to talk to the gunners. Then he climbed down and stood to one side.

The tanks restarted their engines ready to continue but when the young man saw they were not turning round, he leapt in front of the

lead vehicle again. Each time the tank tried to get round him, he stepped into its path. He seemed to know no fear.

How long could this go on? Would the order come from the column of tanks to drive on? Would the young man be shot or crushed by the mighty weight of a tank?

We held our breath as we waited to see what would happen next.

The stand-off between man and tank continued until a cyclist slowly crossed in front of the tank and spoke to the young man. At the same time, two men rushed onto the road, grabbed the young man and dragged him out of the path of the tanks and into the crowd. He was never seen again.

The tanks rolled on. The Tank Man disappeared and to this day, we know neither his name nor his fate.

## Questions/Activities

After reading the text ask students one or more of the following questions. If students are working in pairs, alternate Partner 1, then Partner 2.

- What do you think the man was trying to do? Was he successful?
- What do you think happened to the young man?
- In what country did this event happen?
- What do these words mean: suppressed, protests, amazement, and turret?
- Have you heard of the Tiananmen Square Massacre? Find out what happened and why.