



***“Capitalism versus Communism:  
An Analysis on Economic Differences in the Cold War”***

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MLK Middle School

This curriculum unit is recommended for:  
Grades 6-8 ELA and Social Studies in Middle School

**Key Terms:** Human Rights, Economics, Capitalism, Socialism, Communism, Equality, Labor, Speech, Freedom, Values, Justice, Joseph Stalin, Cold War, Soviet Union, United States, United Nations, Taxes, NATO, Warsaw Pact, Arms Race

**Teaching Standards:** See [Appendix 1](#) for teaching standards addressed in this unit

**Synopsis:** This unit will cover the different economic systems capitalist versus communist countries providing students with a background on how these systems led to the Cold War. Students will practice skills associated with historians by researching the definitions of economic systems on their own. In this unit, students will use a variety of resources to expand their knowledge about communism, capitalism, and socialism through videos, novels, and lectures. Students will demonstrate their understanding of the material during the last two lessons when they conduct a “Model United Nations,” in which students will assume the role of a given country and their respective economic system. In the United Nations trial, they will argue why their economic system is most logical in determining what a new country’s economic system should be.

In this unit, students will use graphic organizers and handouts frequently, which will require a lot of preparation by teachers. The unit will use *Capitalism: A Love Story*, the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, *Breaking Stalin’s Nose*, and *The Butter Battle Book*. This unit will keep students involved due to high engagement lessons and keep them intrigued.

*I plan to teach this unit during this coming year to 180 students in a 7<sup>th</sup> Grade Social Studies classroom.*

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## Introduction

This topic connects with students' lives because students in middle school typically want to discuss social justice issues. I am excited to teach this topic because it is important for students to first develop an understanding of how economic systems such as communism, capitalism, and socialism work since social justice issues tend to be embedded in economic systems. Many students have misconstrued knowledge about socialism and communism often due to American historical perspectives. Many Americans do not stop to think about capitalism and how it affects their lives, positively and negatively. Providing students with non-biased information about these economic systems will hopefully allow students to reflect on their own about the differences between systems. As the unit progresses, it will be imperative for them to form opinions on the different economic systems, evaluating what the advantages and disadvantages of each are. A firm understanding of these economic systems will lead to an important conversation with students about which human rights are most important to them and which ones are sacrificed within each of these systems. Focusing specifically on the Cold War is important because it will also provide context for the current rivalry between the United States and Russia. Learning about the roots of these countries and their differing economic structures will enable students to connect Cold War history to modern day political tension and to investigate the pros and cons of different economic systems through the lens of human rights.

It is essential for students to connect these economic systems with their ensuing human rights, such as the right to work, right to healthcare, and the right to education. This unit will help make visible the links between economic systems and the realization of human rights in different countries. Knowledge about what rights each economic system tends to uphold will lead to development of opinions about America and other countries. Many of our students come from low socioeconomic backgrounds, which leads to a dependence on government programs and initiatives that help them. What I have found is that students will agree with many communist ideals and human rights emphases such as the right to work and right to eat, but they do not make the connection between larger nationwide economic systems and the realization of these rights. This topic will help students critically think about what human rights they and others should have in America and other countries and how those rights are supported or hindered by economic structures.

## Rationale

I grew up in an affluent area in northern New Jersey in a household where education was a primary focus. Receiving a strong education was always assumed for me since my father was a principal of a well-regarded private school. His position at the school enabled me to be a part of a positive school environment in which I was afforded all the resources I could ask for. My teachers always supported our pursuits and empowered us to question things in society. My classes in middle school were essential in my formation as a person who learned to have a critical eye when looking at the world around me. It is really important for my students to have a similar experience in the classroom where they can develop critical thinking skills. I want my students to apply these critical thinking skills to our conversations. I felt compelled to become a teacher to provide students with an opportunity to get the same quality education I received from my teachers.

The reason I was struck by the topic of human rights in creating this curriculum unit is due to my experience with studying human rights in college. I took multiple classes in upper-level education on international relations and human rights, which intrigued me greatly. I was particularly struck by a class in which we discussed what rights were most important to us. I remember in that class, my professor changed my mind on communism in a political and economic sense. Taking history classes prior to college, I had always viewed communism in a negative way. My teachers' lessons on communism were about the Red Scare and McCarthyism. This professor challenged my views on communism and actually portrayed it in a favorable light. For example, the professor acknowledged that in communism, they believed in the right to work, which technically is not a value in American culture. It made me question if American society is truly just if not everyone is guaranteed a job and the right to work is not realized. How can Americans improve their economic status if they do not have job opportunities?

Now going into my third year of teaching at MLK Middle School, I want to create that kind of learning experience for my students. I want my students to think about human rights and evaluate which ones are important to them. Unfortunately at our school, it is necessary to have a lot of structure so students have some restricted freedoms. For example, students are not allowed to have recess due to a history of fights outside. In order for students to use the bathroom, students are required to line up as a class and the teacher then walks the students down the hallway together. These restrictions create a structured environment, in which there is zero tolerance for bad behavior. However, students often become frustrated due to the fact that they cannot go outside, have incentives, and go to the bathroom when they want. I, therefore, want my students to know that they are still important and do have freedoms even in a time where they feel restricted. For my students, it will be important for them to understand what rights they possess that they might not know they have. In addition, it's important to understand what other rights are emphasized in other countries.

Students in middle school continue to learn that their actions lead to consequences and repercussions that have an impact on not just them individually, but rather on the students, teachers, and community of the school. If one student continues to bully other students in the classroom, it will lead to discomfort that could escalate into a fight. If that fight occurs, teachers then feel responsible to curtail freedoms of students, such as their ability to converse with their peers, which creates a negative classroom environment. Teaching students not only about their individual rights, but the responsibilities they possess to others in order to create a rights-respecting culture is important. Having students think critically about how to handle situations in which their rights are affected by those around them will prepare them for real world applications. Moreover, students that reflect about how their actions impact the rights of others will lead to an improved awareness about human rights in relations to a community.

## Demographics

MLK Middle School is title 1 school in Northeast Charlotte, which is a continually low rated school by CMS standards. Our student population of 1,050 students consists of 42.5% African American, 51% Hispanic, and 6% other ethnicities in the grades 4-6. In addition, our student population includes 18% percent of students that receive ESL services (English as a Second Language) and 8% of students that receive EC services (Exceptional Children). MLK has

multiple school-wide programs due to its Title 1 status with a 75% poverty level, based on the number of students designated as economically disadvantaged.

I teach 7th grade social studies, which covers World History from the Renaissance in the 1400s to present day. The social studies class incorporates North Carolina standards in order to prepare students for a North Carolina Final Exam (NCFE) at the end of the year. At MLK Middle School, social studies classes run on an A/B Day schedule, meaning I see my students every other day for 90 minute blocks. Classes typically contain 28-30 students with a variety of learning abilities.

Our PLC and school emphasize differentiation frequently, which will mean the unit will have to be broken down into diverse levels of rigor. Students desire to discuss relevant topics and subjects that pertain to them, therefore, they will be excited to engage in meaningful conversations about what rights they believe they currently have or more importantly, should have. They will be taught the material in 7th grade social studies during the Cold War curriculum unit, therefore, the time will be most likely during late March or early April. Social Studies teachers may also try to collaborate with ELA teachers, especially in regards to the reading selections.

### Unit Goals

This unit will be designed for 7th grade social studies, which involves world history from 1400 to present day. This unit will be most effective when placed during lessons with the Cold War, Holocaust, and global organizations such as the United Nations and the European Union. This unit can also be adapted for high school world history courses.

The overarching goals for this unit are to help students better grasp the differences in global economic systems and to understand what their human rights are then be able to form links between the realization (or lack thereof) of human rights based on differences in economic systems. I want students to analyze the economic systems in different countries and then assess which countries have the best and worst human rights records. The standards (see [appendix 1](#)) selected in this unit come from the Social Studies North Carolina Essential Standards.<sup>1</sup>

### Student Outcomes

By the end of this unit,

- Students will understand the advantages and disadvantages of each economic system (capitalism, communism, and socialism) through the observation and analysis of different countries.
- Students will identify their values and beliefs about human rights in determining what economic system they believe is most effective for a country.
- Students will defend their case and support of an economic system through a mock United Nations activity in the classroom.
- Students will improve upon their writing, research, and discourse skills.

## Content Research

The definition of human rights can be seen as malleable since it is defined differently based on people's background and culture. Based on the United Nations definition, however, human rights are universal, based on the equality for all.<sup>ii</sup> The most agreed upon definition of what human rights are can be found in the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, spearheaded by Eleanor Roosevelt after World War II. There are thirty articles in this document, which highlight the United Nations' definition of what human rights are. Some of those rights include, "all humans are born free and equal," "they have a freedom of movement and residence", and "they have a right to work." Although these human rights are written down, there are many questions surrounding them. For example, it is difficult to determine who should enforce the rights and if they should be universally applied. Moreover, it is difficult to realize human rights based on diverse political and economic ideologies.

### Defining the Economic Systems

In order to use this unit, it will be important to understand the relationship between certain economic systems and their corresponding human rights. When preparing for this unit, the teacher will need to familiarize themselves with the following economic systems: Capitalism, Communism, and Socialism. It is argued that the acknowledgement of all of these economic systems began after the creation of *The Communist Manifesto* by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, during a time in which countries like Russia and later China viewed communism and socialism more favorably than capitalism.<sup>iii</sup>

Scholars acknowledge that early 19th-century England offers the best example of a capitalist country and system with their use of textile factories that hired women and children just following the Industrial Revolution.<sup>iv</sup> With industrialism, In general, capitalism is seen as "economic individualism," in which the public have liberty to spend money on what they want with little to no regulations imposed by governments. Individuals are free to buy and sell in a free market economy. In order to be successful in a capitalist society, the only goal for businesses is to attain as much capital (financial wealth). Citizens within a capitalist country are encouraged to gain and maintain private property, which is seen as legitimate and morally right by the state. It then becomes the state's job to protect these rights.<sup>v</sup> In a capitalist system, individuals tend to believe in a few inalienable rights such as the right to private property and the right to economic freedom, such as choosing a job of an individual's choice. Many argue, however, that capitalist systems create "poverty and maltreatment of many of its people and much of its natural environment."<sup>vi</sup> With so much focus on gaining capital, the commodification of people oftentimes occurs where people are seen just as mere tools.

While capitalism emphasizes private property, communism focuses on public property, collectivism (focus on the group opposed to individuals within that group) and sharing wealth and resources. The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines communism as "A theory or system of social organization in which all property is owned by the community and each person contributes and receives according to their ability and needs."<sup>vii</sup> The most notable examples of communist societies are the Soviet Union following the Bolshevik Revolution in 1917 and the Republic of China in the twentieth century. Communism is an economic and political system outlined in *The*

*Communist Manifesto* by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engel in the late 19th century. This ideology was constructed as a contrast to capitalism in an attempt to end the exploitation of workers. According to “The Communist Manifesto,” the proletariat (working class) would rise up against the bourgeoisie (upper class) and take control of society. In a communist society, property and resources would belong to the state and be distributed evenly among the general public in order to emphasize equality.<sup>viii</sup> In terms of human rights, communism emphasizes the right to food and the right to work. The underlying idea is that when everyone shares, everyone’s basic needs are met. It must be noted, however, that communism as described by Marx and Engels has never been fully implemented anywhere. In most communist countries, the government becomes a dictatorship in which human rights are suppressed to maintain control.

Serving almost as an intermediary between capitalism and communism, Engels and Marx viewed socialism as a fleeting phase when society would transition from capitalism to communism. “Socialism is the collective ownership by all the people of the factories, mills, mines, railroads, land and all other instruments of production.” There is direct control of industries by the people and also through a democratic government. A socialist society has not successfully been implemented in history.<sup>ix</sup> The implementation of a true socialist society would depend on the realization of true democracy, in which each and every person has an equal say in how the economic resources of a society are expended.

The contrast between these economic systems were best seen during the Cold War in the mid to late twentieth century between the United States and Soviet Union. After World War II, the United States (capitalist society) and Soviet Union (communist society) became the top global superpowers. Both countries were concerned about the other’s economic system and the country’s potential to spread associated ideologies. While the Soviet Union clamped down on Eastern Europe, the United States continued to support countries in Western Europe, beginning the rivalry called the “Cold War.” However, the spread of communism to other countries still frightened the United States, resulting in their policy of “Containment” in which the United States aimed to halt the expansion of communism from the Soviet Union to other countries. The “Domino Effect” theory, supported by Dwight D. Eisenhower, shaped US foreign policy. This foreign policy strategy led to conflicts in Korea and Vietnam, but the Cold War came to a head when communist leader, Fidel Castro allowed the USSR to place missiles pointed at the US in Cuba, just 90 miles off the coast of Florida.<sup>x</sup> This incident is known as the Bay of Pigs. Through these tense times, both the Soviet Union and the United States competed through a race to the moon and through a buildup of nuclear weapons. Eventually after leaders such as Joseph Stalin and Leonid Brezhnev passed from leadership of the Soviet Union, tensions de-escalated between the two countries in the late 1980s, under the leadership of Mikhail Gorbachev, and George H. W. Bush. which led to more diplomatic relations between the two differing countries.<sup>xi</sup> Through the Cold War, however, both capitalism and communism were depicted negatively by the opposing country through propaganda in order to perpetuate nationalism and anti-communist or anti-capitalist ideologies among its citizens.

## Human Rights

The United Nations’ outline of human rights led to the creation of simple standards of respect and justice for all.<sup>xii</sup> These basic standards do not just apply to what humans have the

right to do, but also discusses how societies cannot restrict certain rights and liberties.<sup>xiii</sup> When all of these rights are acknowledged and practiced, there is hope for the formation of an egalitarian society. In addition, if countries and societies violate these 30 rights set out by the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, the United Nations promotes the notion that people should leave their area, when they are in deadly danger if they don't, in order to find asylum.<sup>xiv</sup> The UDHR also calls for the availability of state-run services, regardless of the political or economic system of the country.<sup>xv</sup> However, this right is controversial in capitalist societies due to the associated costs; for example, the expensive payment of hospital bills in the United States is a deterrent to government-sponsored healthcare. According to the UDHR, "each individual has a right to seek work, receive fair pay for their work, and be given time off to rest and relax."<sup>xvi</sup> While a capitalist society such as the United States follows these beliefs in theory, in practice it becomes a different story. For example, there are clear difficulties for impoverished adults to find jobs based on requirements for employment such as stable housing. Discrimination hiring is also a large problem in the United States which is not addressed, causing poor adults to not have the same opportunities of other equally qualified adults.<sup>xvii</sup> In addition, there are clear divides in fair pay for people's work due to gender differences. "In 2017, female full-time, year-round workers made only 80.5 cents for every dollar earned by men, a gender wage gap of 20 percent."<sup>xviii</sup> Clearly, the United States places little value on equity, and instead valuing monetary attainment. So while capitalist countries like the United States claim to value human rights, there is still much work to do.

One of the major issues associated with human rights is how to hold countries that violate human rights accountable. The UDHR is an ideal start, but the United Nations rarely acts upon violations around the world. For example, the crisis in Syria in which an armed conflict has led to the death of 220,000 citizens has had limited assistance from the United Nations due to the differing views of Security Council members, primarily the United States and Russia.<sup>xix</sup> What the United Nations does well is generate reports that seek to identify human rights violations around the world.<sup>xx</sup> In order to improve the legitimacy, they created committees such as the United Nations Human Rights Council and United Nations Children's Fund, which are responsible for promoting human rights around the world. Again, these councils and groups have little power to enforce these rights violations.<sup>xxi</sup> The enforcement of human rights most often comes about when there is economic pressure placed on countries that are violating those human rights. An additional problem with addressing human rights violations is that many countries have not agreed to sign the treaties of the UN, which means they are not legally obligated to follow them.<sup>xxii</sup> Since the world lacks the forces to implement change in addressing these global violations, it becomes that much more important for students to recognize the local violations in order to feel empowered to make meaningful changes.

Capitalism has had a unique relationship and history with communism. Strict Communist regimes are typically known for restricted political rights, such as freedom of speech.<sup>xxiii</sup> Many Eastern European countries during the Cold War were inspired by human rights, calling for a break from the communist grasp, which did eventually led to the overthrow of these regimes.<sup>xxiv</sup> While some communist societies do have beliefs that are contradictory to the rights written down in the UDHR, communism in theory does align with the human rights ideas about the equality and justice for all.

It is important to know where countries rank in terms of their economic opportunities and freedoms. Looking at the The Global Youth Wellbeing Index, one can compare countries to see how they rank. For example, the United States was given a 2 in terms of economic opportunity with the website reporting, “It ranks 2nd in economic opportunity, but has lower ranks in the citizen participation, health, and safety and security domains.” The website continues to explain the success of the United States in terms of economic freedoms and opportunity when it continues,

Steady GDP per capita growth since the global recession in 2009 (from US\$47,576 to \$51,638 in 2015) drives the United States’ performance in the economic opportunity domain. This economic resilience has driven down the youth unemployment rate to 14 percent, which is below the Index average of 17 percent.

However, for Charlotte, North Carolina, social mobility and economic opportunity are way lower. According to the Equality of Opportunity Project, “Charlotte ranked dead last in an analysis of economic mobility in America’s 50 largest cities.”<sup>xxv</sup> While Americans have been told about the “American Dream” in which citizens believe that anybody is capable of improving their economic status to riches if they work hard enough. This fascination has proved untrue, especially for the students that I teach since, “children born into the bottom 20 percent of the income distribution in Charlotte had just a 4.4 percent chance of making it to the top 20 percent of the income distribution.”<sup>xxvi</sup> In order to address this issue, Charlotte has vaguely looked to Charlotte Mecklenburg Schools to improve in order to improve economic mobility probability.<sup>xxvii</sup> The fact that Charlotte city officials recognize the poor educational quality is further evidence that capitalist countries do not properly address the right to equal quality education.

While the United States seems to thrive in terms of economic opportunity for its citizens, one area where it needs improvement is healthcare due to their high rate of self-inflicted harm and infant fatalities.<sup>xxviii</sup> While other developed countries have government-sponsored healthcare, the lobbyists for health insurance companies and providers in America benefit from costly health insurance. For example, in 2009, the conversation about the Affordable Care Act generated \$1.2 billion in lobbying.<sup>xxix</sup> The creates a scenario where the politicians will not support fully government-sponsored healthcare even though the US government still spends more on healthcare than most other developed nations.

On the other hand, China is a prime example of how communism has affected the economic opportunities for its citizens. Interestingly, China does have a high economic opportunity, ranking ninth best compared to other countries. The Global Youth Wellbeing Index explains why it ranks high on its website when it says,

Increasing global competitiveness, coupled with lower youth unemployment (11 percent) and NEET rates (12 percent of youth are neither employed nor enrolled in education nor training), influence China’s relatively high economic opportunity rank of 9th. Youth unemployment and NEET rates in the country trend consistently lower than the Index average, despite a steady rise since the global recession of 2009 in both China and globally.



Similar to the United States, China has struggles in other categories on the index such as citizen participation and safety.<sup>xxx</sup> It will be important for students in these lessons to explore this website and to conduct their own research on their own chosen countries. First, they will need to identify what economic system each country has and then connect that to see how that impacts the citizens' economic opportunity.

## **Instructional Implementation: Teaching Strategies**

### Independent Research

Students will work with Chromebooks and practice their skills in conducting research on capitalism, communism, and socialism. Teacher will have modeled how to successfully research topics and which websites to avoid such as Wikipedia. With their researched definitions and overview on each economic system, students will have to determine necessary key details that will be recorded in graphic organizers. Students will then be asked to share out their research with the whole class.

### Journaling

Students will be asked to write power paragraphs after every class, in which they will be asked to summarize, analyze, and compare/contrast with the newly learned economic systems. As an initiative for this school year, administration is asking teachers to have students write every class. It will be important to check for students' understanding on the material through these writings.

### Reading/Annotating

While students are reading primary and secondary sources such as *Breaking Stalin's Nose*, students will be asked to annotate the text using literacy strategies used by the school. Teacher will scaffold the text and provide reading comprehension questions to check for the students' understanding.

### Film Studies

While students are watching *Capitalism: A Love Story* and *The Butter Battle Book* students will be asked to answer questions as they watch. It will be important for me to stop the video while they are watching to make sure all students understand. Videos will be useful in providing visual aids in understanding capitalism but also in learning about the Cold War in a different fashion.

### Graphic Organizers

In order for students to understand the material, students will fill in graphic organizers throughout the unit that will provide characteristics to each economic system and a venn diagram to compare/contrast them. Graphic organizers are an excellent way for students to recollect lessons, especially during Do Nows and Exit Tickets.

## Chromebooks

Students in my classroom use Chromebooks frequently. For this unit, it is important for students to use their Chromebooks for their own research, an important skill for social studies. With the chromebook, students will complete graphic organizers, follow the Google Slides presentations, complete exit tickets, and take surveys.

## Model United Nations

During lesson 6, students will participate in a whole class “Model United Nations,” which will demonstrate their comprehensions about each economic system. Students will each be given a real country to represent and argue why socialism, communism, or capitalism is most effective in terms of Economic Freedom, Equality, Government Help/Welfare, and Human Rights/Happiness of the People. Students will need to know the advantages and disadvantages for each economic system during this academic discourse, trying to convince an imaginary new country to adopt a certain economic system. This strategy is an excellent way to have students practice how to converse with others properly and how to articulate their ideas.

## **Instructional Implementation: Lesson Outlines**

### Lesson 1: Introduction to Unit

Lesson 1 will focus on triggering students interest in the economic systems while providing them time to conduct their own research. The lesson mostly aligns with the North Carolina Social Studies Essential Standard *7.E.1.3 Summarize the main characteristics of various economic systems.*<sup>xxx</sup>

First, the teacher will start with the students taking pre-survey on Google Forms about their opinions and thoughts on human rights, economic systems, and political/social freedoms. In order to conduct this survey, the teacher should have students use Chromebooks.

Question 1: What are human rights?

Question 2: List some of the rights/freedoms that you have

Question 3: Do you have the freedom to say what you want?

Question 4: Do you have an equal chance to gain wealth compared to your peers in your community?

Question 5: Out of the governments we have covered so far, which one works best?

Teacher will then share the data with the class and conduct a discussion with the group, having students raise their hand to answer the question.

Question 1: Is there anything that surprises you from the data?

Question 2: Why did you specifically pick the answers that you did?

Question 3: What do you think we will be discussing in this unit?

Teacher will then lead the class into the “Jolly Rancher Activity & Reflection.” This game is designed to illustrate to students the differences between communism, socialism and capitalism. The students will play rocks, paper, scissors with one another in order to attain more jolly ranchers. If a student runs out of jolly ranchers, they are required to sit down and watch.

### *Capitalism*

In order to introduce capitalism, the teacher will explain that having one piece of candy is the minimum for survival and anything more than that provides more resources to do as they wish. As the teacher passes out jolly ranchers, make sure you give students unequal amounts (some should receive one and some can receive up to four). The teacher can also provide two students with no jolly ranchers in order to demonstrate that some people are born without having the bare minimum for survival. If the teacher chooses to do this, tell those students that they are not allowed to play. The group will play rock/paper/scissors for a couple of minutes for those pieces of candy. Each time a player wins in a r/p/s game they get a piece of candy from their opponent. Students will then play r/p/s/ for a couple of minutes. After a couple of minutes the teacher will tell the students to stop and count their candy. In most situations the student who had the most candy before the game still will have the most candy at the end. Some people who started with a very little amount of candy will end up with none after the game. And only a few players with the lesser amount of candy will end up with more at the end of the game. The teacher should allow students to voice their frustrations about the game because it is supposed to demonstrate the inequality of capitalism!<sup>xxxii</sup>

Once the students have returned to their seats, the teacher should lead a group discussion and reflections about the game. The teacher can also have students record their answers individually on a handout before sharing out whole group.

Question 1: Was this round of the game fair?

Question 2: Did you have a lot of freedom in this round of the game?

Question 3: What was the teacher’s role in this round of the game?

Question 4: What should the teacher do to make the activity fairer?

### *Socialism*

Based on the answers to Question 4, students should have called for the same amount of jolly ranchers. For the second round of this activity, the teacher, assuming the role of the government, will therefore give all the students an equal amount of candy (three jolly ranchers each). The teacher will then tell the students that they are allowed to play rocks, paper, scissors again, but if someone runs out of their jolly ranchers, everyone else has to decide who will give them at least one jolly rancher to stay in the game. At the end of the round, everyone should still be playing, but some people will have more jolly ranchers than others. The teacher should make note of the students that are conservative with their jolly ranchers, not wanting to risk their chance of survival. This part of the game will demonstrate socialism. Again, the teacher should have students reflect about the game either individually or with the large group.<sup>xxxiii</sup>

Question 1: Was this round of the game fair?

Question 2: Did you have a lot of freedom in this round of the game?

Question 3: What was the teacher's role in this round of the game?

Question 4: What should the teacher do to make the activity fairer and allow everyone to be the same?

### *Communism*

Again, students' answer to Question 4 should have resulted in students just wanting to get a jolly rancher and not play rocks, paper, scissors. The teacher, again acting as the government, will take all the candy away from the students, which will lead some of them to react angrily. The teacher should then give them just as much as they needed to survive, one. The teacher will explain that they are not allowed to play the game though. This part of the activity demonstrates communism. For the final time have students reflect about this round of the activity individually and then whole group.<sup>xxxiv</sup>

Question 1: Was this round of the game fair?

Question 2: Did you have a lot of freedom in this round of the game?

Question 3: What was the teacher's role in this round of the game?

Question 4: Which round did you think was the fairest version of the activity? Why?

Teacher will then present a Powerpoint/Google Slides titled "Capitalism, Communism, and Socialism." The Powerpoint will provide very broad background information about each economic system, connecting each economic system to each round of the activity.

Round one of the activity demonstrated capitalism due to the economic freedom students possessed in playing the game. The teacher (government) simply watched students participate, not helping those who needed it. However, the round also demonstrated the financial inequalities of capitalism, with some students having the bare minimum for survival while others were affluent in resources, able to play the game multiple times. Capitalism is where citizens have complete economic freedom in which the government does not interfere in how people conduct business.<sup>xxxv</sup>

Round two showed socialism due to increased teacher/government involvement in providing everyone the same amount of resources. However, socialism still contains aspects of economic freedom, which was exhibited when students were allowed to participate in rocks, paper, scissors. Socialism is considered a transitional stage from capitalism to communism where the people collectively control industries and businesses, not just individuals.<sup>xxxvi</sup> Students demonstrated this notion when they called for equal amounts of jolly ranchers for all.

Round three exhibited communism when the teacher took the biggest role and disregarded what the students wanted. If students wanted to continue to play the game with their minimal resources, they were not allowed to because that would increase inequality, which contradicts the ideals of communism. The limited economic freedom and heavy government involvement are key characteristics of communism.<sup>xxxvii</sup>

After this Powerpoint introduction on the economic systems, students will move to a research activity on the newly learned systems. The research activity will have students attain information about one of the economic systems and disprove stereotypes associated with them (teacher should randomly and equally assign each student one to research). Students will attain the information with the use of Chromebooks and record their information on the graphic organizers. Teacher can use the website, “<http://www.culture-war.info/Socialism.html>,<sup>xxxviii</sup> or have them find the information on their own.

Question 1: Definition of the economic system

Question 2: One advantage and disadvantage of the economic system

Question 3: Countries that practice the economic system

After all students have completed their graphic organizer, the teacher will then have students enter groups of three, in which each student has a different economic system. The students should share their findings with their group, having students record what the student found. Students should not simply be copying what students wrote, but rather listening to the answers as the student shares out their findings.

Once the teacher has brought the students back to whole group conversation, explain that in the unit students will become experts on these economic systems and fully understand the flaws with all of these systems in real world applications.

As an exit ticket, the teachers should have students complete a journal entry, in which students should write 5 sentences.

Question: “You are a guest on 60 minutes and are asked as an expert to explain to the world your economic system. Be sure to include, definitions, advantages/disadvantages, examples of countries that practice it.”

## Lesson 2: Communism in History

Lesson 2 will focus enhancing the students understanding of communism, looking at characteristics of the system and also at examples with the Soviet Union. The lesson mostly alligns with the North Carolina Social Studies Essential Standard *7.E.1.3 Summarize the main characteristics of various economic systems*, *7.C&G.1.1 Summarize the ideas that have shaped political thought in various societies and regions*, and *7.H.1.3 Use primary and secondary sources to interpret various historical perspectives*.<sup>xxxix</sup>

The lesson will begin with students completing a writing assignment for a Do Now.

Question 1: What is the definition of communism?

Question 2: Do you think it is a fair system?

After students complete the Do Now and review the answers, the teacher will then have the students complete the a Google Forms survey called “You Are a Communist!” This activity

will have students record their opinions about money, which will lead them to see how closely aligned their beliefs are to communist ideals.

Question 1: You do not think money is important

Question 2: You believe that everyone should be equal

Question 3: You support taxes (all of your money going to the government)

Question 4: You would not mind earning minimum wage if everyone else did

After students have completed the survey, the teacher should explain to students that if they picked yes to any of the questions, they are have the similar values of communists. Teacher will then conduct a powerpoint about the history of the Soviet Union, China, and Cuba and how communism looked within each of these countries. While teacher is presenting the Powerpoint, students will complete one side of a venn diagram on communism, identifying characteristics of the system as they go through the lesson.

The Soviet Union was the first country to label itself as a “Marxist-Communist” state after the Russian Revolution in 1917 disposed the long standing czar.<sup>xi</sup> Vladimir Lenin first took control of the government and conducted massive campaigns that executed all upper class members.<sup>xii</sup> After Lenin, Joseph Stalin attempted to bring the Soviet Union to its peak due to his brutal policies such as the Great Purge, in which he eliminated all opponents.<sup>xiii</sup> His Five Year Plans attempted to provide peasants with large state-run collective farms to increase agricultural output, but instead it led to mass famine for the Soviet people.<sup>xiiii</sup> After World War II, Stalin consolidated Soviet power with his creation of the Warsaw Pact in response to the United States led alliance, NATO.<sup>xliv</sup> Once Nikita Khrushchev took control, the tensions escalated between the USSR and the United States through an arms race and space race, in what would become known as the Cold War.<sup>xlv</sup>

China’s acceptance of a communist economy commenced after Mao Zedong’s revolutionary victory in 1949.<sup>xlvi</sup> Mao followed the Soviet model by providing peasants with job opportunities in heavy industries, but eventually created his own version of communism called, “Maosim.”<sup>xlvii</sup> Mao’s Great Leap Forward was a failed attempt in creating these industrialized economies while the Cultural Revolution eliminated all opponents of Maoism.<sup>xlviii</sup>

In Cuba, communism had it start after Fidel Castro overthrew the Cuban dictator, Fulgencio Batista, in a revolution (which was initially celebrated by the United States due to an unfriendly relationship with Batista.)<sup>xlix</sup> Similar to Stalin, Castro sent opponents to his regime to jail, failed to hold free elections, and foreign-owned property was taken away without compensation.<sup>1</sup>

Teacher will then have students read segments of *Breaking Stalin’s Nose* to understand the lives of those in communism. *Breaking Stalin’s Nose* is a children’s book that tells the story of a boy who loses his father after he was accused of not being a comrade. The boy who dreams

of being an elite comrade progressively realizes the cruel reality of Soviet politics and society, eventually recognizing its flaws<sup>li</sup>

Students should read the following segments and answer the questions that correspond with them.

(Pgs. 2-4) Question: What is Sasha's understanding of capitalism? Where do you think his beliefs came from? Why is capitalism portrayed as the enemy?

(Pg. 5) Question: How does Sasha's living situation demonstrate communist values?

(Pg. 8) Question: What does Stalin mean when he says "think as Communist 'WE' instead of capitalist 'I'"?

(Pg. 10) Question: How does Sasha justify food shortages?

After reading the segments, the teacher should lead a discussion or have students work in groups where they will answer questions about communism and the Soviet Union.

Question 1: What does Sasha Zaichik think of democratic/capitalist countries?

Question 2: In the Soviet Union, do they have enough food?

Question 3: Is there a lot of trust for the Soviet people?

Question 4: How have Sasha's opinions about communism and the Soviet Union change throughout the book?

Question 5: According to the book, do you think everyone is treated the same?

The teacher should explain to students that a flaw of communism is that even though everyone should be equal, there are unfortunately still food shortages and people treated better than others, which is evidenced in the novel. In addition, even though the government is supposed to have the people's best interest in mind, the government's control is restrictive of people's rights. The teacher should split students up into groups and have students create and draw a poster on a scene from "Breaking Stalin's Nose" that exemplifies the problem with communism. Students should also write a blurb about their poster. The students should share out their posters with the whole class, explaining what they drew and why.

For the conclusion of the lesson, students will complete a journal entry.

Question: Using the lecture and segments from *Breaking Stalin's Nose*, is communism a right-respecting economy for a country?

### Lesson 3: Introduction to Capitalism

Lesson 3 will focus enhancing the students understanding of capitalism, looking at characteristics of the system through a video analysis. In addition, this lesson will enable students to find the similarities and differences between the systems due to their Venn Diagram. The lesson will also have students look at the "Universal Declaration of Human Rights," seeing how the flaws of capitalism and communism contradict with the outlined human rights. The lesson mostly aligns with the North Carolina Social Studies Essential Standard 7.E.1.3 *Summarize the main characteristics of various economic systems, 7.C&G.1.1 Summarize the*

*ideas that have shaped political thought in various societies and regions, and 7.H.1.3 Use primary and secondary sources to interpret various historical perspectives.*<sup>lii</sup>

The lesson will begin with students completing a writing assignment for a Do Now.

Question 1: What is the definition of capitalism?

Question 2: What are the flaws of communism?

The teacher will present a Powerpoint for the students to start that reviews the class's definition of capitalism since it was covered during the Industrial Revolution. In order to keep students engaged, the teacher will call it "Minute to Win It" in which students will listen to the teacher and then answer a multiple choice question in one minute on their white boards at their desks or within groups.

Question 1: What is capitalism?

Question 2: Why did the Industrial Revolution require capitalism?

Question 3: What was the harm of capitalism?

Since students should already have a firm understanding of capitalism, watching segments from "Capitalism: A Love Story" will expose students to the flaws of capitalism within the United States. "Capitalism: A Love Story" is a Michael Moore film in which he conducts interviews and research on the damage capitalism provides to low income families in the United States.<sup>liii</sup> The film effectively discusses the morality of the economic system, which will have students think about the American economy differently. As students watch the film, students should continue to complete their venn diagram from lesson 2, this time filling in information for the capitalism side. While the students watch the video, pause the video periodically to have the students answer questions as a whole group. After the video and class discussion, students should have the venn diagram completed.

Question 1: What do you think of the line "Capitalism trumps Democracy?"

Question 2: Do capitalism and religion get along?

Question 3: According to the video, "Capitalism allows freedom, but does not guarantee happiness." Do you agree?

Students will then read segments of the "Universal Declaration of Human Rights", having students annotate and think critically about each excerpt. "The Universal Declaration of Human Rights" is the outline of human rights as created by the United Nations, which is accepted by many countries (excluding the United States).<sup>liv</sup> With each excerpt, students in groups will talk about how the rights conflict with the economic systems.

- *Article 23: Everyone has the right to work, to free choice of employment, to just and favourable conditions of work and to protection against unemployment*
- *Everyone, without any discrimination, has the right to equal pay for equal work.*

Question: Why does capitalism conflict with this human right?



- *Article 17: Everyone has the right to own property alone as well as in association with others.*

Question: Why does communism conflict with this human right?

- *Article 19: Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression.*

Question: Why does communism conflict with this human right?

- *Article 22: Everyone, as a member of society, has the right to social security.*

Question: Why does capitalism conflict with this human right?

For the remainder and conclusion of the lesson, have students explore the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* and have them reflect on which ones they feel like are not practiced not only in the United States, but within our community and school. As students share out their answers, the teacher should record the answers on the board.

To continue the conversation, the teacher should have students complete a journal entry.

Question: What human rights are violated in our community/school? What actions should we take to respect these rights?

#### Lesson 4: Cold War: Historical Look

Lesson 4 will focus on the historical look at the Cold War, an essential topic for 7<sup>th</sup> grade social studies. This lesson will involve a look at the “Butter Battle Book” as well as article reading about the current rivalry between the United States and Soviet Union. The lesson mostly aligns with the North Carolina Social Studies Essential Standard 7.C&G.1.1 *Summarize the ideas that have shaped political thought in various societies and regions*, 7.H.2.2 *Evaluate the effectiveness of cooperative efforts and consensus building among nations, regions, and groups* and 7.H.1.3 *Use primary and secondary sources to interpret various historical perspectives.*<sup>lv</sup>

The lesson will begin with students completing a writing assignment for a Do Now.

Question 1: Do human rights conflict or cooperate with capitalism/communism? Why?

The teacher will provide students with an article from *NewsELA* that explains the complicated relationship between the United States and Russia in the current political climate. This article, “Opinion: The U.S., Russia and China - ego, mistrust and nationalism,” discusses tension between the U.S. and Russia due to accusations about the 2016 election interferences, war in Syria, and North Korea.<sup>lvi</sup> This article will provide students with a real world connection before diving into the historical rivalry between the nations.

Question: Why do the U.S. and Russia have a “rivalry” today?

After the article, the teacher will present Powerpoint on the Cold War, providing historical content for the students as they record in their graphic organizer with some of the vocabulary words for the unit (Arms Race, Sputnik, Iron Curtain, etc.). After World War II, the

United States and Soviet Union were the major global superpowers.<sup>lvii</sup> Both countries believed that their political and economic beliefs should be practiced by all, leading to international involvement in areas such as Vietnam, Korea, and Iran.<sup>lviii</sup> Tension between the two countries escalated as both nations competed in terms of building up nuclear weapons as well as improving technology, which led to a “Space Race,” a race to see who could discover most about space.<sup>lix</sup> Eventually by 1991, the Soviet Union had become substantially weaker, leading to their downfall and collapse, leaving the United States to seemingly assume a role as the major global power.<sup>lx</sup>

Students will then watch a YouTube video on the “Butter Battle Book” in order to draw similarities between the Soviet Union and United States rivalry.<sup>lxi</sup> <sup>lxii</sup> While watching the video, students will questions in order to draw comparisons to the Cold War lecture.

Question 1: What do you think the difference between butter side up and butter side down stands for? Use context clues from the video and what you know about the Cold War to help you.

Question 2: What do you think the stonewall stands for? Use context clues from the video and what you know about the Cold War to help you

Question 3: Are the people proud of what side they butter their bread on? How do you know? What is this called?

Question 4: What does the policeman do to keep the other side away from him? How does the other side respond?

Question 5: What does the policeman end up doing before he returns back to the stonewall?

Question 6: Predict: How do you think the other side will react to this? What is this called?

Question 7: Do you think it is worth so much effort because of all of their differences?

For the conclusion of the lesson, students will complete a journal entry.

Question: How did the rivalry between the United States and Soviet Union lead to the Cold War?

## Lesson 5: Country Research

Lesson 5 will be a lesson solely dedicated to students researching their given country in preparation for the “Model United Nations,,” that will occur in the next lesson. The lesson mostly aligns with the North Carolina Social Studies Essential Standard *7.E.1.3 Summarize the main characteristics of various economic systems*, *7.C&G.1.1 Summarize the ideas that have shaped political thought in various societies and regions*, and *7.H.1.3 Use primary and secondary sources to interpret various historical perspectives*.<sup>lxiii</sup>

The lesson will begin with students completing a writing assignment for a Do Now.

Question : What was the Cold War and why was it significant?”

Teacher will divide students into pairs and give them a country in preparation for the “Model United Nations” lesson. Students will have to complete the graphic organizer on their country using resources that the teacher can either find beforehand or that they can use on their own. Students need to research how their country ranks in terms of (1) Economic Freedom, (2) Equality, (3) Government Help/Welfare, and (4) Human Rights/Happiness of the People. Because students will be supporting their country in the “Model United Nations,” it will be important for the students to focus on the positives of their respective economic system. Students will be given one of the following countries:

- China, North Korea, Cuba, Vietnam (Communist)
- Sweden, Denmark, Finland (Socialist)
- United States, United Kingdom, Japan, India (Capitalist)

Students will conduct research during the class on their respective country, answering all the questions on the handout.

#### Lesson 6: Mock United Nations

Lesson 6 will be the “Model United Nations,,” in which students will try to explain why a new imaginary country should join their economic system. The lesson mostly aligns with the North Carolina Social Studies Essential Standard *7.E.1.3 Summarize the main characteristics of various economic systems*, *7.C&G.1.1 Summarize the ideas that have shaped political thought in various societies and regions*, and *7.H.1.3 Use primary and secondary sources to interpret various historical perspectives.*<sup>lxiv</sup>

Students will be seated in a circle format with their partners next to them. Teacher will provide a synopsis about how a new country will adopt one of the economic systems and how it is up to each country to provide evidence as to why they should join their type of economic system. The topics that will be discussed will be, Economic Freedom, Equality, Government Help/Welfare, and Human Rights/Happiness of the People.

Each country will have an opening statement (1 minute), open forum for each topic (10 minutes), and a closing statement (1 minute). Halfway through the lesson, have students work with countries with the same economic system to strategize about their approach. Teacher will facilitate and have a rubric based on how well each country presents their ideas and provides evidence to support their answer. Afterwards, have students individually reflect and argue what economics system they believe is most effective in the world and why.

At the end of the unit, students should take the survey they took during lesson one.

Question 1: What are human rights?

Question 2: List some of the rights/freedoms that you have

Question 3: Do you have the freedom to say what you want?

Question 4: Do you have an equal chance to gain wealth compared to your peers in your community?

## **APPENDIX 1: Implementing Teaching Standards**

This social studies unit aligns itself to multiple standards from the North Carolina Social Studies Essential Standards. In addition, the unit focuses on the content from Unit 4, 5, and 6, which are suggested for 7<sup>th</sup> grade social studies classrooms. These units cover post World War II, Cold War, and global organizations.

### **North Carolina Social Studies Essential Standards**

*\* 7.H.2.2 Evaluate the effectiveness of cooperative efforts and consensus building among nations, regions, and groups*

In lesson 4, students will learn about NATO and the Warsaw Pact during the Cold War, reviewing the use of alliances in a post World War II world.

In lesson 6, students will participate in a “Model United Nations,” experiencing how countries would interact with each other in order to come with a consensus.

*\* 7.E.1.3 Summarize the main characteristics of various economic systems*

In all lessons, students will need to know the definitions of communism, capitalism, and socialism. Moreover, the unit looks at different resources to provide clearer understanding about the advantages and disadvantages associated with each system. Students will become experts on their respective economic system when conducting the “Model United Nations lesson.

*\* 7.C&G.1.1 Summarize the ideas that have shaped political thought in various societies and regions*

Although this lesson is focused primarily on the economic systems, students will also understand some of the political and social implications associated with communism and democracy. For example, students will recognize the societal repercussions of communism through “Breaking Stalin’s Nose.”

*\* 7.H.1.3 Use primary and secondary sources to interpret various historical perspectives*

In looking at the “Universal Declaration of Human Rights” in lesson 3, students will practice looking at primary sources and critically thinking about their meaning and significance. The texts and videos from class will lead to further practice with secondary sources and how to analyze them.

**APPENDIX 2: Comparing Economic Systems**

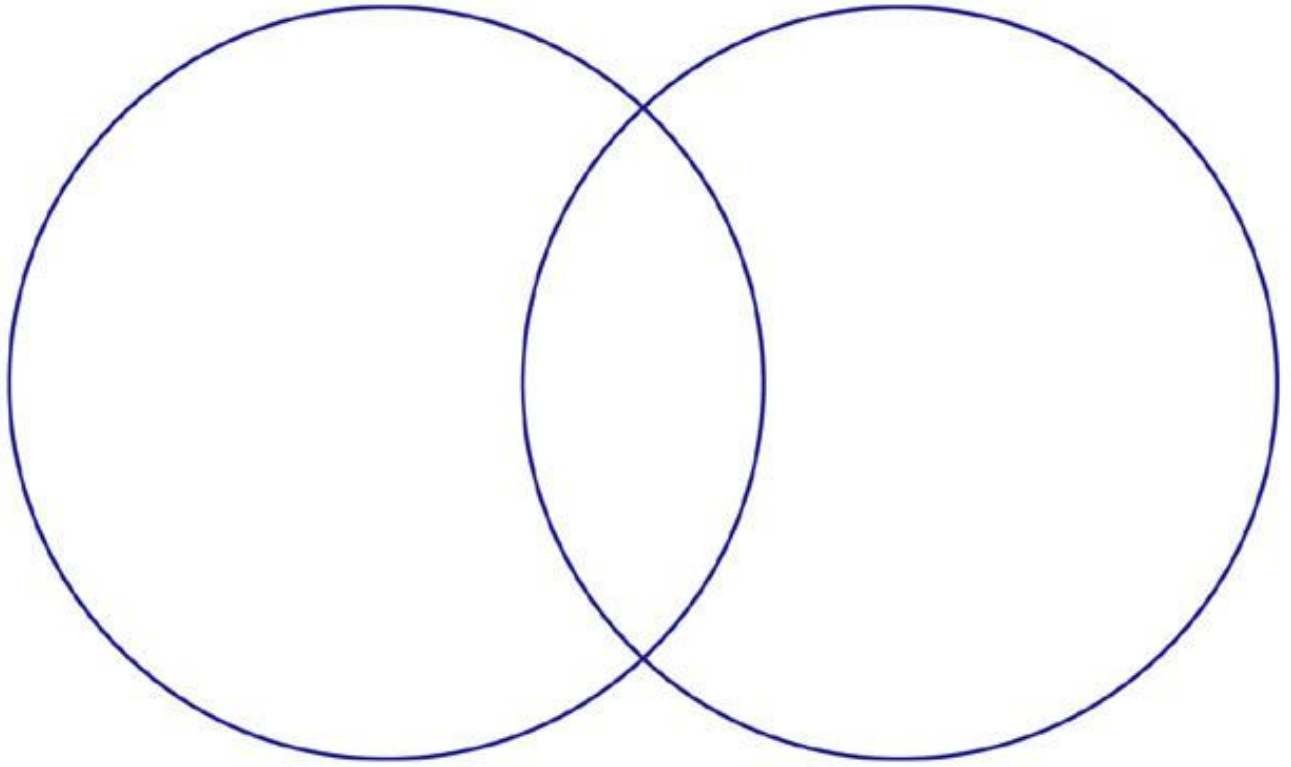
Name:

**Comparing Economic Systems**

|                       | Capitalism | Communism | Socialism |
|-----------------------|------------|-----------|-----------|
| Definition            |            |           |           |
| Advantages            |            |           |           |
| Disadvantages         |            |           |           |
| Examples of Countries |            |           |           |

Communism

Capitalism



### APPENDIX 3: Cold War Vocabulary

Name:

#### Vocab Page

| <i>Vocab Word</i>      | <i>Definition</i> | <i>Why is it important to Cold War?</i> | <i>Picture</i> |
|------------------------|-------------------|---|----------------|
| <b>Communism</b>       |                   |   |                |
| <b>Space Race</b>      |                   |   |                |
| <b>Arms Race</b>       |                   |   |                |
| <b>Marshall Plan</b>   |                   |   |                |
| <b>NATO</b>            |                   |   |                |
| <b>Warsaw Pact</b>     |                   |   |                |
| <b>Truman Doctrine</b> |                   |   |                |
| <b>Berlin Airlift</b>  |                   |   |                |
| <b>Containment</b>     |                   |   |                |
| <b>Domino Theory</b>   |                   |   |                |

**APPENDIX 4: Model United Nations**

|                                      | Country: |
|--------------------------------------|----------|
| Economic Freedom                     |          |
| Equality                             |          |
| Government Help/Welfare              |          |
| Human Rights/Happiness of the People |          |



## Notes

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