

The Communist Manifesto, 1848

Written by German philosophers Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, The Communist Manifesto was both a call to action and a philosophical statement of their beliefs. This pamphlet was prepared for a meeting of the Communist League, which Marx helped form in London in 1847. Marx describes his philosophy of socialism, which became the foundation for Communist strategy and doctrine. Marx believed that a social revolution was the inevitable next step in history, and that social revolution would end a class-based society and set the people free. This pamphlet inspired revolutions throughout the world in the 20th century.

The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles.

Our epoch, the epoch of the bourgeoisie, possesses this distinctive feature; it has simplified the class antagonisms. Society as a whole is more and more splitting up into two great hostile camps, into two great classes directly facing each other: Bourgeoisie and Proletariat...

In proportion as the bourgeoisie, *i.e.* capital, is developed, in the same proportion is the proletariat, the modern working class, developed; a class of laborers, who live only so long as they find work, and who find work only so long as their labor increases capital. These laborers, who must sell themselves piecemeal, are a commodity, like every other article of commerce, and are consequently exposed to all the vicissitudes of competition, to all the fluctuations of the market...

Modern industry has converted the little workshop of the patriarchal master into the great factory of the industrial capitalist. Masses of laborers, crowded into factories, are organized like soldiers. As privates of the industrial army they are placed under the command of a perfect hierarchy of officers and sergeants. Not only are they the slaves of the bourgeois class, and of the bourgeois State, they are daily and hourly enslaved by the machine... and, above all, by the individual bourgeois manufacturer himself...

But with the development of industry the proletariat not only increases in number, it becomes concentrated in greater masses, its strength grows, and it feels that strength more...

It has become evident that the bourgeoisie is unfit any longer to be the ruling class in society and to impose its conditions of existence upon society as an over-riding law. It is unfit to rule because it is incompetent to assure an existence to its slave within his slavery, because it cannot help letting him sink into such a state that it has to feed him instead of being fed by him. Society can no longer live under this bourgeoisie, in other words its existence is no longer compatible with society...

The immediate aim of the Communists is the same as that of all the other proletarian parties: formation of the proletariat into a class, overthrow of the bourgeois supremacy, conquest of political power by the proletariat...

The Communists disdain to conceal their views and aims. They openly declare that their ends can be attained only by the forcible overthrow of all existing social conditions. Let the ruling classes tremble at the Communistic revolution. The proletarians have nothing to lose but their chains. They have a world to win.

Workingmen of all countries, unite!

The Communist Manifesto, 1848 – Close Reading

BEFORE Reading:

1. Number the paragraphs. Make the small paragraph in italics number 1 – this is the historical context paragraph.
2. *Setting the Context*
 - a. Students should be familiar with the Industrial Revolution and its impact on changing class structure and the particular challenges of the working class.
 - b. Students should also be familiar with the meaning of capitalism.

Reading CLOSELY:

1. **Read through Twice:**
 - a. The teacher reads the excerpt out loud to the class.
 - b. Student volunteers then read the excerpt out loud again.
2. **Read Again:** MARK THE TEXT



Make observations:

- What strikes you in reading this document? Do certain words leap out at you? What ideas or words grab your attention? *Indicate with an exclamation mark.*

Ask questions:



- What puzzles you? What do you find out here that you didn't know, or that challenges something you thought you knew? What language confuses you? *Indicate with a question mark.*

Identify patterns:



- What patterns do you see? What concepts, images or key words repeat? Is this source similar to other sources from this time? Underline patterns.

Note connections:



- What connections do you see? Does this source remind you of a source or issue from another historical era? Draw arrows → to indicate connections.

Circle confusing vocabulary:



- Are there words in the text that you cannot figure out? What words are preventing you from understanding the meaning of the text?

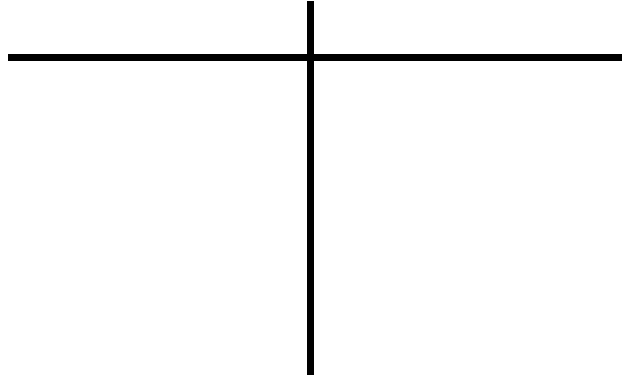
3. **Share your thoughts:**
 - a. Turn to your partner.
 - i. Compare and discuss your annotations.
 - ii. Re-read sections as needed for clarification (*stay focused on the contents of the document itself*).
 - iii. Add notes in the margin to elaborate on the cognitive markers.
 - iv. In preparation for whole class discussion, revisit initial thinking about the central ideas to confirm or revise.

AFTER reading:

Answer Text-Based Questions and be prepared to participate in whole class discussion.

The Communist Manifesto, 1848 – Text-Based Questions

1. In paragraph 3, Marx refers to two classes. Write the names of those two classes on either side of the chart below.
2. List the different names that Marx gives to each class in paragraph 4 and 5.



3. *In your own words*, write one sentence explaining the meaning of “Bourgeoisie.”
4. *In your own words*, write one sentence explaining the meaning of “Proletariat.”
5. In paragraphs 2-5, what claim is Marx making about the relationship between the Bourgeoisie and the Proletariat?
6. Does Marx’s claim seem reasonable? Why or why not? List **two** pieces of evidence he uses to try to prove his claim.
7. In paragraph 6, what makes the Proletariat strong?
8. In paragraph 7, what claim does Marx make about the Bourgeoisie?
9. What evidence does Marx provide to support his claim from paragraph 7? (List it here.)

10. In paragraph 8, Marx refers to the “Communists.” Re-read paragraph 1. Who are the Communists?

11. In paragraph 8, what is the immediate aim of the Communists?

12. In paragraph 9, what is Marx asking the Proletariat to do?

13. In paragraph 9, what does Marx mean by “The proletarians have nothing to lose but their chains. They have a world to win?”

14. In paragraph 1, it states that *The Communist Manifesto* has led to revolutions throughout the world. What parts of this document might inspire a revolution? List quotes from the text. Why might Marx’s words have inspired a revolution?

The Communist Manifesto, 1848 – Writing Assignment

Directions: Please write a paragraph responding to the following question:

Based on your reading, your responses, and your discussion, to what extent does Marx make a convincing argument?

You will need to consider:

- What is Marx' argument?
- What evidence does Marx use to support his argument?
- How convincing is his evidence?
- How did he structure his argument?

In your paragraph please include:

1. A CLAIM (thesis statement, *your* argument, main idea of your paragraph, answer to the question)
2. At least **3 direct quotes** with signal phrases.
3. Analysis for evidence you include in your paragraph. (*Explain what your quotes mean and how they support your claim.*)
4. A concluding statement wrapping up your paragraph.

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