

Teacher Overview Objectives:

Vladimir Lenin and the Founding of the Soviet Union

NYS Social Studies Framework Alignment:

| Key Idea | Conceptual Understanding | Content Specification | Objectives |
|---|---|--|---|
| <p>10.5 UNRESOLVED GLOBAL CONFLICT (1914–1945): World War I and World War II led to geopolitical changes, human and environmental devastation, and attempts to bring stability and peace. (Standards: 2, 3, 4, 5; Themes: TCC, GEO, GOV, CIV, TECH, EXCH)</p> | <p>10.5d Nationalism and ideology played a significant role in shaping the period between the world wars.</p> | <p>Students will examine the Russian Revolution and the development of Soviet ideology and nationalism under Lenin and Stalin.</p> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Explain who Vladimir Lenin was and what his political beliefs were. 2. Describe how Lenin and the Bolsheviks gained, consolidated, and maintained power in Soviet Russia. |

1

Who was Vladimir Lenin? What did he believe?

Objectives: Explain who Vladimir Lenin was and what his political beliefs were.

Introduction: Review of Communism

Vladimir Lenin and the **Bolsheviks** were **Communists**. They followed the ideas of **Karl Marx**, who wrote *The Communist Manifesto* with Friedrich Engels in 1848. The vocabulary words below are related to Marx's writings.



Karl Marx

Source: https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/8/87/Karl_Marx.png

Directions: Review the definitions below that are related to **Communism**, then use those words to fill in the blanks in the definitions of the words *socialism* and *communism*.

| Vocabulary | Definition |
|---------------------|--|
| means of production | farms, factories, and other large businesses |
| bourgeoisie | the rich and middle class |
| proletariat | the poor and working class |

Socialism: a political and economic theory that advocates for the people as a whole rather than private individuals to own and operate the _____ .

Communism: a political theory derived from Karl Marx's ideas that advocates for [supports] a class war between the _____ and the _____, leading to a classless society where all _____ would be owned by the community.

Based on what you know about Russia in 1917, why would Russians have supported the Bolsheviks, who wanted to make Russia into a Communist state?

Who was Vladimir Lenin? What were his political beliefs?



Watch the [Vladimir Lenin Biography from CloudBiography](#) and answer the questions below.

Lenin's Political Ideology [Beliefs] vs. Karl Marx

Vladimir Lenin identified himself as a follower of the ideas of Karl Marx, a Marxist, but his political beliefs showed that he changed Marx's Communism to fit the Russian context. He made his argument for turning Russia into a Communist state stronger by citing Marx.

| Marx Believed | Lenin Believed |
|--|--|
| The working class would be the ones to start the Communist revolution and overthrow the capitalist class | Intellectuals could start the revolution of the working class against the capitalists |
| In order to get to a Communist state a civilization must first be industrialized and live under the rule of the bourgeoisie [the rich capitalists] | An agrarian country, like Russia, could skip the industrial stage that Marx described and create a Communist state |



Vladimir Lenin, 1920

Source: <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Lenin.jpg>

1. What happened early in Lenin's life that turned him against the Czar?

2. What actions did Lenin take as the leader of the Bolsheviks and the Communist government of Russia?

3. How did Lenin's ideas differ from Karl Marx's?

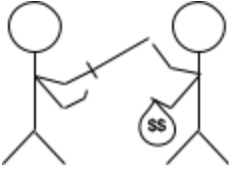
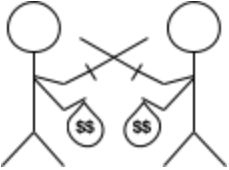

2

How did Lenin and the Bolsheviks gain, consolidate, and maintain power in Russia?

Objectives: Describe how Lenin and the Bolsheviks gained, consolidated, and maintained power in Soviet Russia.

Document Analysis Activity

Directions: As you read the information below, annotate it by placing a “G” next to examples of methods that Lenin and the Bolsheviks used to gain power in Russia, a “C” next to examples of methods they used to consolidate their power, and an “M” next to examples of methods used to maintain power. Then, complete the questions accompanying the documents. At the end of the activity, fill in the graphic organizer below.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| <p>GAIN</p>  <p>Gaining power is the process of getting it and expanding it.</p> | <p>CONSOLIDATE</p>  <p>Consolidating power is the process of taking control from other people who also have power.</p> | <p>MAINTAIN</p>  <p>Maintaining power is the process of keeping one's power.</p> |
|---|---|---|

| Method of Control | Gain, Consolidate, and/or Maintain Power? Circle all that apply. | Explanation |
|------------------------------------|---|-------------|
| Ideological Promises: Communism | GAIN | |
| | CONSOLIDATE | |
| | MAINTAIN | |
| Military Force | GAIN | |
| | CONSOLIDATE | |
| | MAINTAIN | |
| Secret Police | GAIN | |
| | CONSOLIDATE | |
| | MAINTAIN | |
| Control of the Economy | GAIN | |
| | CONSOLIDATE | |
| | MAINTAIN | |
| New Economic Policy | GAIN | |
| | CONSOLIDATE | |
| | MAINTAIN | |

Timeline of Lenin's Rise and Rule in Russia

- April-
Nov.
1917

Lenin and Bolsheviks Gain Support Amongst Peasants, Workers, and Soldiers

Lenin returned to Russia in 1917 after being in exile for his political beliefs. When he returned to lead the Bolsheviks, they were not a powerful political party, but they gained popular support from peasants, workers, and soldiers through meetings and speeches when they expounded upon their slogan, "**Peace, Land, and Bread.**" If in power, they promised peace by taking Russia out of WWI. They would take control of all of the land in Russia and re-distribute it evenly to peasants and workers, and end starvation by taking control of farms to produce more food and give it out equally to the population.

1. What was the Bolshevik party slogan?

2. Why would soldiers, workers, and peasants support the Bolsheviks?

- Nov.
1917

November Revolution: Bolsheviks Seize Power

In November, 1917, the Bolshevik party leaders and a group of factory workers who supported them called the Red Guards, joined by some soldiers that left the Russian army, attacked the provisional government in Petrograd. Lenin the Bolsheviks took control of the government in a couple of days and several other similar actions were taken by Bolsheviks in other important Russian cities.

The Bolsheviks set about transforming Russia into the world's first **Communist** nation. They renamed Russia the **Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR)**, also known as the Soviet Union.

On the eve of the take-over Lenin wrote a *Call To Power*, a piece outlining the reasons for the Bolshevik's actions and their plans for when they are in power.

Lenin: Call to Power, Oct 24, 1917

| | |
|---|---|
| 1 | The situation is critical in the extreme. In fact it is now absolutely clear that to delay the uprising would be fatal. |
| 2 | |
| 3 | |
| 4 | With all my might I urge comrades to realize that everything now hangs by a thread; that we are confronted by problems which are not to be solved by conferences or congresses (even congresses of Soviets), but exclusively by peoples, by the masses, |
| 5 | |
| 6 | |

| | |
|----|--|
| 7 | by the struggle of the armed people. |
| 8 | |
| 9 | ...We must at all costs, this very evening, this very night, arrest the government, |
| 10 | having first disarmed the officer cadets, and so on. |
| 11 | |
| 12 | We must not wait! We may lose everything! |
| 13 | |
| 14 | Who must take power? |
| 15 | That is not important at present. Let the Revolutionary Military Committee do it, or |
| 16 | " <i>some other institution</i> " which will declare that it will relinquish power only to the true |
| 17 | representatives of the interests of the people, the interests of the army, the interests |
| 18 | of the peasants, the interests of the starving. |
| 19 | |
| 20 | ...If we seize power today, we seize it not in opposition to the Soviets but on their |
| 21 | behalf. |
| 22 | The seizure of power is the business of the uprising... |
| 23 | |
| 24 | ...It would be an infinite crime on the part of the revolutionaries were they to let the |
| 25 | chance slip, knowing that the salvation of the revolution, the offer of peace, the |
| 26 | salvation of Petrograd, salvation from famine, the transfer of the land to the peasants |
| 27 | depend upon them. |
| 28 | |
| 29 | The government is tottering. It must be given the death-blow at all costs. |
| | Source: Fordham Modern History Sourcebook. http://legacy.fordham.edu/Halsall/mod/1917lenin1.asp |

3. What action did the Bolsheviks and the Red Guard take in November, 1917?

4. According to Lenin's *Call to Power*, how can Russia's problems be solved (li. 4-7)?

5. In whose interest does Lenin claim to take power for (li. 15-18)?

6. How would you have reacted to this *Call to Power* if you were a Bolshevik? How would you have reacted if you were a member of the provisional government?



- Dec.
1917

Cheka: The Soviet Secret Police Created



[Watch this video on the early Soviet government and the Cheka](#) and read the text below.

To protect the newly-established Bolshevik government from counter-revolutionaries and other political opponents, the Bolsheviks created a secret police, the *Cheka* (from the Russian for *extraordinary committee*). One of the first important actions taken by the Cheka was to execute the Czar and his whole family.

Source: Adapted from "Vladimir Lenin." New World Encyclopedia. http://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Vladimir_Lenin

7. What was the Cheka? What was its role in the Soviet government?



- March
3, 1918

Russia Leaves WWI: Treaty of Brest-Litovsk

On March 3, 1918, Lenin fulfilled one Bolshevik promise by removing Russia from World War I. They negotiated with the Germans and agreed to the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk, under which Russia lost significant territories in Europe.

Source: Adapted from "Vladimir Lenin." New World Encyclopedia.



Representatives of Germany and Russia at the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk Negotiations, 1917.

Source: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:BreLitNegotiations_1917.jpg

8. What were the effects of the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk?

- 1917
-1922

Russian Civil War Demonstrates Bolshevik Military Superiority



[Watch this video on the Russian Civil War](#) and read the text below.

Soon after the Bolsheviks took power, a civil war erupted in Russia. Supporters of a wide variety of political movements took up arms to support or overthrow the Soviet government. Although many different factions were involved in the civil war, the two main forces were the Red Army (communists) and the pro-Imperialist White Army. Foreign powers such as France, Britain, the United States, and Japan also intervened in this war (on behalf of the White Army), though they had little impact. Eventually, the more organizationally proficient Red Army, led by Leon Trotsky, won the civil war, defeating the White Army and their allies in 1920. Smaller fights, however, continued for several more years.

Both White and Red Army forces, during this tumultuous time of war and revolution, "behaved with great brutality and cruelty in areas they controlled. Towns were burned, property destroyed or stolen, peasant farmers' crops and livestock taken by force—if people objected, they faced torture and execution."

Source: Adapted from "Vladimir Lenin." New World Encyclopedia. http://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Vladimir_Lenin

9. What were the two sides of the Civil War named? Who fought on each side?

10. Who won the war? Why were they successful?

- Sept.
1918

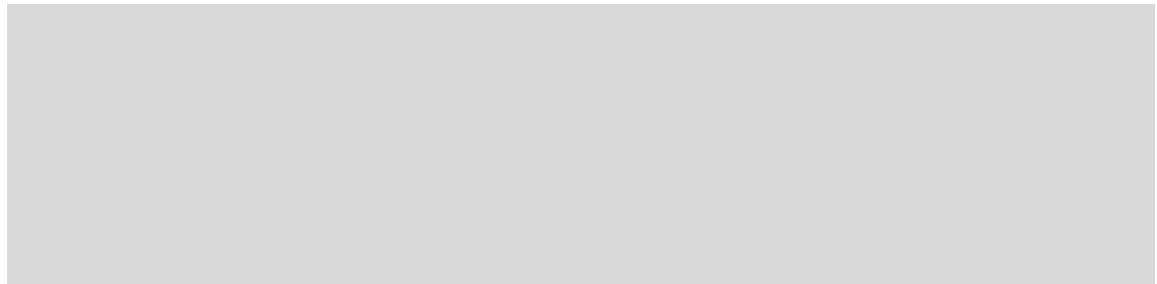
Assassination Attempts and The Red Terror

In 1918, there were two assassination attempts on Lenin's life. In the second attempt, Lenin was shot twice. The doctors who treated him decided that it was too dangerous to remove the bullets. He partially recovered, but his health never returned to full strength.

The Communist government responded to the assassination attempts with what they termed **the Red Terror**. The Red Terror was a campaign of mass killings, torture, and oppression on all who opposed the Bolsheviks that took place from 1918 to 1922. Estimates for the total number of people killed during the Red Terror range from 50,000 to 140,000 to over one and half million.

Source: Adapted from "Vladimir Lenin." New World Encyclopedia. http://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Vladimir_Lenin

11. What was the Red Terror? What was its purpose?



- June,
1918

Lenin Declares War Communism

The Red Terror coincided with the escalation of the Civil War and the implementation of a policy known as "War Communism" which lasted from June 1918 to March 1921. War Communism's chief feature was the nationalization of private businesses.

Nationalization is the processes a government taking ownership of a private business. Nationalism is sometimes called centralization. For example, if a coal mine that was run by a business owner was nationalized, the government would then own that mine, decide who worked in the mine, and decide how to run it.

Through war communism, Lenin hoped to accelerate the process of creating a Communist state where the government owns everything and divides it equally among the country's inhabitants. To do this, the Soviet government took over people's private businesses, especially industry, and forced peasant farmers to grow grain for the government and hand it over after it was harvested.

These measures negatively affected both agricultural and industrial production. With no incentives [motivations like money] to grow surplus grain (since it would just be confiscated), the peasants' production of it and other crops plummeted, with the result that starvation came to threaten many city dwellers. In the cities, a large and untrained bureaucracy was hastily created to supervise the newly centralized, state-owned economy, with the result that labor productivity and industrial output plummeted. By 1921 industrial production had dropped to one-fifth of its prewar levels (*i.e.*, in 1913), and the real wages of urban workers had declined by an estimated two-thirds in just three years.

Sources: Adapted from "Vladimir Lenin." New World Encyclopedia. http://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Vladimir_Lenin and <http://www.britannica.com/event/War-Communism>

12. What was War Communism? What was the purpose of War Communism?

13. What were the effects of War Communism on Russia?

14. Was the policy of War Communism successful? Explain.

- 1921

New Economic Plan (NEP): A Temporary Retreat from Communism



[Watch this video on the transition from War Communism to the New Economic Plan](#) and read the text below.

The long years of war, the Bolshevik policy of War Communism, the Russian Famine of 1921, and the Civil War took their toll on Russia and much of the country lay in ruins. There were many peasant uprisings, the largest being the Tambov Rebellion. After an uprising by the sailors at Kronstadt in March 1921, Lenin replaced the policy of War Communism with the New Economic Policy (NEP), in a successful attempt to rebuild industry and, especially, agriculture.

Though the goal of Lenin and the Soviet government was to create a truly communist state in Russia, he realized that their economic policies were damaging the country and threatening the Bolshevik hold on Russia. The New Economic Policy included the return of most agriculture, retail trade, and small-scale light industry to private ownership and management while the state retained control of heavy industry, transport, banking, and foreign trade. The peasantry were allowed to own and cultivate their own land, while paying taxes to the state. The New Economic Policy reintroduced a measure of stability to the economy and allowed the Soviet people to recover from years of war, civil war, and governmental mismanagement. The small businessmen and managers who flourished in this period became known as NEP men.

Though successful, the NEP was viewed by the Soviet government as merely a temporary measure to allow the economy to recover while the Communists solidified their hold on power and move the country towards a centralized communist government.

15. Why did Lenin start the New Economic Policy (NEP)?

16. How was the NEP different than War Communism?

17. Was the NEP successful? Explain.

- Jan. 21,
1924

Lenin's Death

Lenin's health had already been severely damaged by the strains of revolution and war. The assassination attempt earlier in his life also added to his health problems. The bullet was still lodged in his neck, too close to his spine for medical techniques of the time to remove. In May 1922, Lenin had his first stroke. He was left partially paralyzed on his right side, and his role in government declined. After the second stroke in December of the same year, he resigned from active politics. In March 1923, he suffered his third stroke and was left bedridden for the remainder of his life, no longer able to speak.

After his first stroke, Lenin dictated several papers regarding the government to his wife. Most famous of these is Lenin's testament, which, among other things, criticized top-ranking communists, especially Joseph Stalin. Lenin said that Stalin, who had been the Communist Party's general secretary since April 1922, had "unlimited authority concentrated in his hands" and suggested that "comrades think about a way of removing Stalin from that post."



Lenin and Stalin in 1922.

Source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Lenin_and_stalin_crop.jpg

Lenin died on January 21, 1924, at the age of 53. Most historians agree that the most likely cause of his death was a stroke induced by the bullet still lodged in his neck from the assassination attempt.

The city of Petrograd was renamed Leningrad in Lenin's honor three days after his death. This remained the name of the city until the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, when it reverted to its original name, Saint Petersburg. To memorialize him further, Lenin's body was embalmed and placed on permanent exhibition in the Lenin Mausoleum in Moscow on January 27, 1924. His body is still on display today.

Source: Adapted from "Vladimir Lenin." New World Encyclopedia. http://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Vladimir_Lenin

18. What did Lenin die from?

19. Who did Lenin warn other Communists about?



Regents Multiple Choice Check for Understanding

1. The Bolshevik Revolution of 1917 was a major turning point in history because

- (1) Russia became the first nation with a Communist economic system
- (2) it was the last revolution in the 20th century
- (3) Russia ceased to be an important force in world affairs
- (4) the royal family was exiled to Mexico

4. ". . . The replacement of the bourgeois by the proletarian state is impossible without a violent revolution. The abolition of the proletarian state, i.e., of all states, is only possible through 'withering away.' . . ."

— V. I. Lenin, *State and Revolution*, 1917

This quotation is associated with the principles of

- (1) imperialism
- (2) capitalism
- (3) communism
- (4) militarism

2. A key principle of the economic theory of Communism is

- (1) restoration of a bartering system
- (2) organization of workers' unions
- (3) government ownership of property
- (4) privatization of business

5. The Bolshevik Party in 1917 gained the support of the peasant class because they promised them

- (1) "Peace, Land, and Bread"
- (2) "Liberty, Equality, Fraternity"
- (3) abolition of the secret police
- (4) democratic reforms in all levels of government

3. A major reason many Russian people supported the Bolsheviks in the November 1917 revolution was that the Bolsheviks called for

- (1) an immediate peace settlement with Germany
- (2) a heavy investment in industry
- (3) the collectivization of agriculture
- (4) the abolition of all religion

- Led the Russians in a second revolution (1917)
- Promised "Peace, Land, and Bread"
- Established the New Economic Policy (NEP)

6. Which leader is being described by these statements?

- (1) Czar Nicholas II
- (2) Nikita Khrushchev
- (3) Vladimir I. Lenin
- (4) Mikhail Gorbachev