

The *Communist Manifesto* Student Worksheet

Introduction:

In 1848, Karl Marx published his *Communist Manifesto*. It was not very influential at the time, but later it would be cited as the basis for the communist movement. By the end of the nineteenth century, socialism—a political movement that sought to improve the conditions of working men and women and all of society—was splitting into two factions: a more radical “communist” one, represented by such people as Vladimir Ilyich Ulyanov (Lenin), and a so-called “reform” one which sought gradual economic reform before complete political reform. In 1899, the Russian Socialist Party, under Lenin’s influence, decided that it would not follow the reform movement and instead would call for a complete revolution.

All Web links for this lesson can be found at:

<http://www.socialstudies.com/worldlinks.html>

Directions:

Excerpts from the *Communist Manifesto*

http://www.wsu.edu:8080/~wldciv/world_civ_reader/world_civ_reader_2/marx.html

Read the document, then answer the following questions:

1. In the section titled “Prologue,” Marx and Engels claim that communism is a recognized power. On what did they base this claim? Do you agree with it?
2. In the section labeled “Part I,” Marx and Engels say, “The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles.” What examples do they use to support this statement? In your opinion, has “the history of all past societies” been based on class struggle? Why or why not?
3. According to Marx and Engels, in what ways were “class antagonisms” in “modern bourgeois society” different from those in feudal society?
4. At the end of Part I, the *Manifesto* states, “The bourgeoisie, wherever it has got the upper hand, has put an end to all feudal, patriarchal, idyllic relations.” According to Marx and Engels, what had the bourgeoisie replaced these “relations” with?
5. In the section labeled “Part II,” Marx and Engels describe a new role for religion and morality. They say that “communism abolishes eternal truths, it abolishes all religion and morality.” Why did they claim this? What was it exactly about religion that Marx and Engels found problematic?
6. In the section labeled “Part IV,” Marx and Engels promise that workers (“proletarians”) “have a world to win.” How did they say this was going to be achieved? What about this section do you think would have appealed to workers? What parts of it might they have had reservations about?

“Our Programme,” V.I. Lenin, 1899

<http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/mod/1899lenin-program.html>

Read the document, then answer the following questions:

7. In the second paragraph, what does Lenin claim is the “real task of a revolutionary socialist party”?

8. Lenin claims that his critics “will cry out that we want to turn the Socialist Party into a holy order of the ‘orthodox,’ who persecute the ‘heretics’ for their aberrations from the ‘true dogma,’ for any independent opinion.” What did he mean by this? How did he refute this charge? How did he claim to view “the theory of Marx”?

9. Lenin says that the “class struggle of the proletariat” is divided into an “economic fight” and a “political fight.” Which of these two did he regard as more important? Why?

10. Lenin claims that “the workers are not alone, however, in the political fight.” What other groups did he think would support the workers if they “raise[d] the banner” of a political fight?

11. At the end of the paragraph that opens, “We know that on account of these words we shall be drenched” Lenin proclaims that we “call upon all comrades openly to discuss the matters in dispute.” However, he also states that “to defend a theory of this kind [Marxism], of the truth of which one is completely convinced, against unfounded attacks and against attempts to debase it, does not mean being an enemy of criticism in general.” Do you think Lenin was truly open to discussing “matters in dispute”? Do you believe his claim that he didn’t plan to turn the Socialist Party into “a holy order of the ‘orthodox,’ who persecute the ‘heretics’ for their aberrations from the ‘true dogma,’ for any independent opinion”? Why or why not?