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# Socialism Myths Part 2

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Segment Length: 5:14 minutes

## **Lesson Description:**

Democratic socialists claim to reject the authoritarian nature of socialism. But is democratic socialism all that different? Does democratic socialism promote equality and fairness? Are Scandinavian countries socialist? This segment looks at some claims, misconceptions, and “myths” about socialism.

## **Objectives:**

Students will be able to:

- Define socialism and democratic socialism
- Identify examples of failed democratic socialist governments
- Explain why countries often considered socialist are not actually socialist
- Compare and contrast socialism and fascism

## **Concepts & Key Terms:**

**Capitalism:** An economic system in which the means of production and distribution are privately directed and owned. Companies and individuals seek profit by meeting the needs of their consumers and are free to choose what (and how) they buy and sell.

**Democratic Socialism:** A political philosophy that promotes a democratically run and decentralized form of socialist economy. They prioritize democracy as an end rather than as a means to secure individual rights and freedoms.

**Dictatorship:** A form of government in which a single person or a small group holds absolute and unchecked power.

**Fascism:** Rule by a dictator who exercises power over individuals and businesses, subordinating their interests to the perceived good of the nation.

**Socialism:** An economic and political system in which the means of production, distribution, and exchange are owned or controlled collectively by the community or state, aiming for a more equitable distribution of wealth and resources.

## **Preview Activity and Questions:**

Distribute copies of the K-W-L worksheet to the class. Have students fill in the K and W sections. After showing the video, have students complete the L section and answer the questions at the bottom of the worksheet.

## **Viewing Guide:**

We recommend that teachers show the video segment twice: first to allow students to view the video and focus on the issues presented, and second to allow them time to complete the viewing guide. After they complete the viewing guide, allow students a few minutes to work in pairs to share and verify answers.

## **Answers to Viewing Guide**

1. ballot
2. livelihood
3. Markets
4. Denmark
5. autonomy
6. poverty

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## Viewing Guide

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Class \_\_\_\_\_ Teacher \_\_\_\_\_

**Directions:** As you watch the video, fill in the blanks with the correct words.

1. They believe that both the government and the economy should be run by the people by way of the \_\_\_\_\_ box.
2. It's hard to exercise political freedom if you don't have economic freedoms. If you're dependent upon the state for your \_\_\_\_\_, you lose your ability to use your voice to oppose them because you can be punished.
3. Sweden isn't socialist. Volvo is a private company. Go to restaurants, hotels, they're privately owned. \_\_\_\_\_ organize the vast majority of Swedish economic activity.
4. In fact, \_\_\_\_\_ today is more free market than America.
5. As an average person living your life, whether under socialism or fascism, you lose your \_\_\_\_\_, your control over your own future. Only under capitalism do you have the freedom to say "no."
6. In the last 20 years, we've seen more humans escape extreme \_\_\_\_\_ than any other time in human history, and that's because of markets.

**Now, take a few moments to reflect on the video and answer the questions below:**

What are some perceived benefits of democratic socialism? \_\_\_\_\_

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What are some of the drawbacks to democratic socialism? \_\_\_\_\_

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## **Discussion and Analysis:**

1. In the video, Van Jones said that democratic socialists believe both the government and the economy should be run by the people by way of the ballot box. How can the people run the economy?
2. Supporters of free markets argue that consumers vote every day. They vote with their dollars. Is that different from what democratic socialists want?
3. Think about the use of force. Does voting at the ballot box or voting with dollars lead to the use of force? Explain.
4. How are political freedom and economic freedom connected? What are the benefits of each?
5. Ben Powell says that democracy in Venezuela is a sham. One example he gave is that the government puts food aid stations next to polling places, and citizens get rewarded with rations if they vote correctly. What does "vote correctly" mean? How does the government know how people vote?
6. If Sweden and Denmark aren't socialist, why might some politicians continue to say they are?
7. Sweden resembled socialism in the 1970s and 1980s but changed. How and why did it change?
8. When you hear the word "fascism," what country or countries come to mind? Why?
9. What is fascism? How does it differ from socialism? How is it similar?
10. Government tries to control a lot in the U.S. How is that different from socialism?
11. An attendee at the socialism conference said that resources should be allocated to those who need them. Who would decide who needs what and who gets what? What would be fair about that?
12. Ben Powell says that because of free markets, we've seen more humans escape extreme poverty. Haven't we been told that governments reduce poverty? How could markets get people out of poverty?
13. Politicians use celebrities to push socialist agendas. What's the risk/reward for both?
14. Many people say the U.S. is not demonstrating socialist tendencies because socialism is defined by the government owning/controlling the means of production. Others, however, say one need only look at the "indirect control" the U.S. government has on production, mainly via heavy regulations, to see the "new socialism." What are some examples of recent actions by the government that illustrate attempts to control the production and/or distribution of goods or services?

### **Discuss These Lines from the Video:**

1. There's no dictatorship here. I was elected three times.
2. They believe both the government and the economy should be run by the people by way of the ballot box.
3. They put food aid stations next to polling places, and you get rewarded with rations if you vote correctly. Now, democracy there is a sham.
4. It's hard to exercise political freedom if you don't have economic freedoms. If you're dependent upon the state for your livelihood, you lose your ability to use your voice to oppose them because you can be punished.
5. Myth 4: Socialism does work well...in Scandinavia. But Scandinavian countries are not socialist.
6. Sweden isn't socialist. Volvo is a private company. Go to restaurants, hotels, they're privately owned. Markets organize the vast majority of Swedish economic activity.
7. So Sweden cut taxes, and cut government spending. They privatized trains, sold state owned businesses.
8. The problems they were identifying were the product of bad government that the U.S. is giving them, not capitalism.
9. Myth 5: Socialism is completely different from fascism.
10. In the last 20 years, we've seen more humans escape extreme poverty than any other time in human history, and that's because of markets.

### **Quotes for Discussion:**

Democratic socialism means that we must create an economy that works for all, not just the very wealthy. – Bernie Sanders

We're not going to throw out capitalism. We tried that. Other countries tried that. It was called communism and it just didn't work. – Michael Bloomberg

Everybody's a socialist when they're young, until they start working and they start realizing how tough it is out there and they start realizing how much money government wastes when they take half their income and taxes. – Kevin O'Leary

You don't have to worry about whether it neatly fits into socialist theory or capitalist theory — you should just decide what works. – Barack Obama

Democracy extends the sphere of individual freedom, socialism restricts it. Democracy attaches all possible value to each man; socialism makes each man a mere agent, a mere number. Democracy and socialism have nothing in common

but one word: equality. But notice the difference: while democracy seeks equality in liberty, socialism seeks equality in restraint and servitude. – Alexis de Tocqueville

What one person receives without working for, another person must work for without receiving. The government cannot give to anybody anything that the government does not first take from somebody else. – Gerald L. K. Smith

### **Activities:**

1. Have students complete the K-W-L chart in class or for homework.
2. Have students complete one or both of the Venn Diagrams after viewing the video.
3. Have students complete the political cartoon activity after viewing the video.
4. Read the article "[What is Democratic Socialism](https://www.teenvogue.com/story/what-is-democratic-socialism)" and write a report about Democratic Socialism. Make sure to compare and contrast the difference between socialism and capitalism.  
<https://www.teenvogue.com/story/what-is-democratic-socialism>
5. The Great Grade Experiment – "Equality" Would your students support "equalizing" grades in the classroom? If there were a test, and some studied hard to get a good grade, would they be okay with giving some of their grade to those who didn't study and got a poor grade? Is that fair? Why or why not? Would the system be fairer if the students voted to implement it, i.e., if it were a democratic choice? Why or why not? Watch the video *Students Support Socialism...Until It's Applied to Their GPA* and discuss in class. What is meritocracy? Is working hard for grades the same as working hard to make money? Do your students agree or disagree with comments made by students in the video? Why? / why not?  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yCPcM8G1ptM>
6. Divide the class into groups and have each group research a different ideology and examples of governments that have been based on that ideology. What actions did people take when motivated by these ideologies? Why did these ideologies have such power to motivate? As a class, compare and contrast these different systems—and their results.
7. Conduct a classroom debate about democratic socialism. To get students to look at democratic socialism from a different perspective, consider having them argue from a view with which they disagree. Students should be given time to research their position prior to debating.
8. Create either a class presentation or write a paper exploring the differences in Denmark's economy and the U.S. economy. What are the similarities and differences? What are some of the politicians referring to when they mention Denmark's economy? Why?
9. Research and create a slideshow about what "democratic socialist" programs the U.S. seems to have in place today. What are the benefits and/or weaknesses of

these programs? If you oversaw these programs, how would you change them? Why would your changes make it better?

10. Watch the two videos in [Both Sides: Democratic Socialism](#). Answer 5 of the discussion questions in detail and present your answers to the class. Then, explain whether you think socialism and democratic socialism are different. Explain why you think increasing socialist programs is a good/bad idea for America.

<https://stosselintheclassroom.org/both-sides-democratic-socialism/>

11. Watch and write a summary of Democratic Socialism, Explained. Compare and contrast it to this video, Socialism Myths Part 2.

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bmCAP6t\\_jvg](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bmCAP6t_jvg)

12. Produce a "man-on-the-street" video in which you ask people: Do you support democratic socialism? Then, ask them to briefly explain what democratic socialism is. Keep track of their answers and their reasons for support or opposition.

13. Research the theories of socialism and fascism. Compare the similarities and differences. Write a paper or create a presentation explaining your findings and answering the questions: Should America avoid these ideologies? Why or why not?

14. Pretend you are running for president. Write a campaign speech in which you advocate for the economic system you think is best. Remember, your goal is to be persuasive so that others will vote for you.

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Class \_\_\_\_\_ Period \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_  
Teacher \_\_\_\_\_

## Socialism Myths Part 2

### K-W-L Chart

**Directions:** Complete the **K** and **W** sections prior to watching the video. After you have seen the video, complete the **L** section and answer the questions below the K-W-L chart.

<b>K</b>	<b>W</b>	<b>L</b>
What I know about democratic socialism....	What I want to know about democratic socialism...	What I learned about the democratic socialism in the U.S....
How is democratic socialism perceived differently than socialism?	Why might U.S. politicians use Scandinavian countries as examples of socialism working?	How well do our "socialist" industries (schools, post office, transit) perform?

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Class \_\_\_\_\_ Period \_\_\_\_\_

Teacher \_\_\_\_\_

## **Socialism Myths Part 2 – Socialism vs Fascism**

**Directions:** Complete the three sections below in the Venn Diagram.

**Socialism**

**Similarities**

**Fascism**

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Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Class \_\_\_\_\_ Period \_\_\_\_\_

Teacher \_\_\_\_\_

## **Socialism Myths Part 2 – U.S. Economy vs Norway Economy**

**Directions:** Complete the three sections below in the Venn Diagram.

**U.S. Economy**

**Similarities**

**Norway Economy**

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# Socialism Myths 2

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## Political Cartoon Activity

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Class \_\_\_\_\_ Period \_\_\_\_\_

Teacher \_\_\_\_\_

**Directions:** Use the political cartoon to answer the questions below.



CartoonStock.com

Briefly describe what is happening in the political cartoon. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

What does the "Victory" sign represent? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

According to the video, why is that victory illegitimate? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Provide an example where similar behavior exists in the U.S. and explain. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_