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# TikTok Socialism: Trend or Truth?

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Video Length: 6:34

## **Lesson Description:**

Why are so many young influencers praising socialism? Can it really deliver what they promise: freedom, dignity, and prosperity? This video challenges the viral claims and examines what socialism has actually produced in practice versus theory. It's a provocative look at ideology, evidence, and incentives.

## **Objectives:**

Students will be able to:

- identify key arguments made by socialist influencers featured in the video.
- explain how historical examples are used to refute modern socialist claims.
- analyze the role of incentives in shaping human behavior and societal outcomes.
- evaluate competing economic systems through the lens of real-world results.

## **Concepts & Key Terms:**

**Capitalism:** An economic system where private individuals or businesses own capital goods and operate for profit.

**Collective Ownership:** A system where assets (property) or means of production are owned jointly by a group or the state.

**Incentives:** Motivators or rewards that influence people's behavior and decision-making.

**Socialism:** An economic and political system where the means of production are owned or regulated by the state or the community as a whole.

## **Preview Activity:**

Use Think, Pair, Share to have students answer and discuss these preview questions: What comes to mind when you hear the word "socialism"? Where do you think most young people get their information about economic systems? Do you think incentives matter in how people work, save, and innovate?

**OR**

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 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. 40 (forty)

2. longer

3. steal

4. party

5. capitalism

6. failed

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## Viewing Guide

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

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

Teacher \_\_\_\_\_

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

1. She got it from this study published in the Journal of Health Services  
\_\_\_\_\_ years ago.
2. Yet we still live \_\_\_\_\_ than people in China.
3. The commies want to \_\_\_\_\_ your house from your landlord  
and give it straight to you.
4. Democratization? Like in China? Here there's just one \_\_\_\_\_  
and its leader made himself president for life.
5. Before Vietnam embraced \_\_\_\_\_, people went hungry. The  
country depended on handouts.
6. The socialists say ownership should be collective. But every attempt, anywhere,  
at collective ownership has \_\_\_\_\_.

**Take a few moments to reflect on the video and answer these questions.**

Why is it important to question and research what social media influencers say?

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One influencer in the video cheerfully said they would "steal" homes from landlords and give them to tenants. Do you think that's right/fair? Why or why not?

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## **Discussion and Analysis**

1. What reasons do the influencers in the video give for supporting socialism?
2. What claims did some influencers make about socialism in the video?
3. What data did the video give to contradict those claims?
4. Why might young people be attracted to the idea of socialism?
5. How do historical outcomes challenge the idealized version of socialism?
6. What is the difference between socialism in theory and socialism in practice?
7. How did incentives—or the lack of them—affect life in socialist economies?
8. What happened in China and Vietnam when they shifted toward capitalism?
9. Why is it important to look at data and historical evidence, not just social media opinions?
10. How does the video illustrate the importance of individual freedom and property rights?
11. Should someone be allowed to take a home from a landlord and give it to a tenant? Why or why not?
12. In what ways do peaceful cooperation and voluntary exchange lead to better outcomes?
13. What does the phrase “nobody washes a rental car” suggest about human nature?
14. Why does collective ownership often lead to poor results, according to the video?
15. How can we evaluate whether a system promotes happiness, harmony, and prosperity? Why do those things matter?
16. What role does misinformation play in shaping economic beliefs?
17. Should economic systems be judged by intentions or outcomes?
18. Why is it important to question sources of information, especially on social media?
19. Should influencers who promote economic systems have a responsibility to back their claims with evidence?

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

Socialism is working better than capitalism 93% of the time.

What do I like about communism? Mostly the increased life expectancy.

The commies want to steal your house from your landlord and give it straight to you!

Capitalism is a political economy that prioritizes profits over people.

The central idea that unites all socialists is maximizing freedom.

Ownership should be collective.

Every socialist economy has failed.

Capitalism, not socialism, is the way to get those things.

Nobody washes a rental car because most people don't care a lot about what belongs to everyone.

### **Quotes for Discussion:**

Incentives matter, intentions don't. – Thomas Sowell

The inherent vice of capitalism is the unequal sharing of blessings; the inherent virtue of socialism is the equal sharing of miseries. – Winston Churchill

Under capitalism man exploits man; under socialism the reverse is true. – Attribution Unclear

The problem with socialism is that you eventually run out of other people's money. – Margaret Thatcher

What is right is not always popular and what is popular is not always right. – Albert Einstein

Incentives matter. Pay and working conditions matter. This is another reason why economic freedom matters. – Barry Asmus

The goal of socialism is communism. – Vladimir Lenin

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

## **Activities:**

1. Have students complete the K-W-L chart in class or for homework. (Recall that the K and W sections are to be completed before watching the video and the L section after watching the video.)
2. Have students complete the political cartoon activity in class or for homework.
3. Have students complete the PMI chart in class or for homework.
4. Have students complete and submit the Exit Ticket as they leave class.
5. Have students complete the comparison worksheet in class or for homework.
6. Students choose one line from the video that they find bold, surprising, or controversial. They then write a paragraph explaining whether they agree or disagree and why.
7. Divide students into two groups. One side researches outcomes in capitalist-leaning nations (e.g., U.S., Japan), and the other researches socialist-leaning ones (e.g., Cuba, Venezuela). Present evidence on prosperity, freedom, innovation, and well-being.
8. Students will review one claim made by an influencer in the video. Research the original data or study behind it. Was it used fairly? Write a short report evaluating the accuracy and context.
9. Use the “nobody washes a rental car” analogy to discuss how ownership affects behavior. Then, have students individually create their own analogy that reflects how incentives shape decisions.
10. In groups, students compare government housing under socialism (China, Venezuela) to private ownership in capitalist systems. Each group can create a presentation (slide deck, poster, video, written report, etc.) that explains their findings and share it with the class.
11. Brainstorm ways to solve common social problems (health care, housing, education) using voluntary cooperation rather than force. (Educator: Explain how “taking your house from your landlord and giving it to you” is force.) Propose at least one solution and share with the class.
12. As a class, watch 2–3 short clips from real socialist influencers (or use transcripts if restricted). In groups, verify their claims using primary sources. Present a “myth vs. fact” summary.
13. Create posters showing life in one socialist and one capitalist country at a given point in history (e.g., Venezuela today vs. South Korea today). Include stats, images, and captions.
14. Create a timeline of China or Vietnam before and after market reforms. Highlight turning points, changes in prosperity, and the role of economic incentives.

15. Students will design an infographic comparing economic freedoms and outcomes in socialist vs. capitalist countries. They will use research from independent, reliable sources to support their visuals.
16. Students individually write a short opinion piece: Should we judge economic systems based on what they promise or what they deliver? Use examples from the video.
17. Hold a classroom debate on the question "Is socialism the solution to inequality?"
18. Pretend your city's mayor is considering a shift toward more socialist policies. Write a speech or letter persuading the mayor to support freedom, voluntary exchange, and market innovation.

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

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

**TikTok Socialism: Trend or Truth?**  
**PMI Chart**

**P = Plus:** What positive features do some people associate with socialism?  
**M = Minus:** What challenges have emerged in real-world socialist systems?  
**I = Interesting:** What new or surprising ideas did you encounter?

+ Plusses +	- Minuses -	I

Did anything about socialism surprise you, either in a positive or negative way? Explain. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

How can we evaluate whether an economic system leads to greater freedom, prosperity, or happiness? \_\_\_\_\_

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Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

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

Teacher \_\_\_\_\_

## TikTok Socialism: Trend or Truth?

### 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 socialism...	What I want to know about socialism...	What I've learned about socialism...

What role did incentives and ownership play in the real-world outcomes discussed? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

How should we evaluate whether an economic system works well or not? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Teacher \_\_\_\_\_

## Comparison Activity

**Directions:** This worksheet will help you compare claims made by socialist influencers on platforms like TikTok and YouTube with counterclaims made by the video host and John Stossel. You'll then investigate further to evaluate these claims.

## Claims vs. Counterclaims

Use the table below to summarize at least 4 claims made by the influencers and the counterclaims from the Stossel team.

Influencer Claims	Stossel Counterclaims

## Investigate Further

Choose one influencer claim from Part 1. Use independent sources to investigate the truth of the claim. Answer the questions below.

1. Which specific claim did you choose to investigate? \_\_\_\_\_

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2. What source(s) did you use to investigate this claim? (Be specific.) \_\_\_\_\_

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3. What did you learn? Is the claim accurate, misleading, or false? Explain.

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4. What evidence supports your conclusion? \_\_\_\_\_

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5. How does this investigation change or reinforce your understanding of socialism or capitalism? \_\_\_\_\_

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## Reflection

Why do you think certain economic ideas become popular on social media? How can we separate hype from reality when it comes to big ideas, like economic systems?

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Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

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Teacher \_\_\_\_\_

## TikTok Socialism: Trend or Truth?

### Political Cartoon Activity

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



What message does the cartoon send about ownership? How does it connect to the video? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Can you think of a real-world example—from the video or your own experience—where shared ownership led to neglect or personal ownership led to greater care?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

How do you treat things you own compared to things you borrow or use at school?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Would you rather own something important to you (like your phone) or share ownership of it with everyone in your class? Why? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

# **TikTok Socialism – Trend or Truth? - Transcript**

TikTok/DantetheHater: Socialism.

TokTok/HeyCappello: Socialism.

YouTube/SecondThought: Socialism is the way forward.

John Stossel: Socialism is popular! In recent years, more than a third of American adults said they view socialism positively. Why? Maybe because social media is filled with economically illiterate people saying things like:

TikTok/Madeline\_Pendleton: Socialism is working better than capitalism 93% of the time.

John Stossel: 93% of the time? Where does she get that? I asked Stossel TV producer Kristin Tokarev to investigate.

Kristin Tokarev: She got it from this study published in the Journal of Health Services 40 years ago. But its Marxist authors excluded high-income countries like the U.S., Japan, and Canada. In fact, all the biggest capitalist countries. They compared socialist countries to allegedly capitalist ones, like these (Bruma, India, Somalia, Syria, Congo, Pakistan, Rwanda, Uganda), some of which were at war. Based on that, she says:

TikTok/Madeline\_Pendleton: We have all the data showing that socialism does work.

Kristin Tokarev: Madalene Pendleton is a TikTok star with more than a million subscribers.

TikTok/Madeline\_Pendleton: What do I like about communism?

Kristin Tokarev: She celebrates communism, too!

TikTok/Madeline\_Pendleton: Mostly the increased life expectancy.

Kristin Tokarev: But there's no increased life expectancy. People live longest in capitalist places like Japan and South Korea. Even in the United States—where more people die young because we drive more, and so we have more car accidents. We eat more and get fat.

Man vs. Food: Is that mac and cheese on your hamburger?

Man vs. Food 2: Yeah, it is mac and cheese.

Kristin Tokarev: We shoot each other more often, and we take more dangerous drugs. Yet we still live longer than people in China. But socialism is also better, says Pendleton, because of:

TikTok/Madeline\_Pendleton: the 90 to 100% home-ownership rates.

Kristin Tokarev: 100%? That's just silly. China, if you believe their statistics, does have almost 90% homeownership. But that only happened after China terminated socialist housing. Under socialism, just 20% of people owned homes. In socialist Venezuela, homeowners don't even own their homes.

Aljazeera Clip: Dozens of people, squatting in this abandoned office tower in central Caracas.

Kristin Tokarev: Yet Pendleton claims:

Pendleton: The commies want to steal your house from your landlord and give it straight to you!

Kristin Tokarev: Pendleton has plenty of company praising socialism on social media. This YouTuber with almost 2 million subscribers tells people, "Why you should be a socialist."

YouTube/SecondThought: The guaranteed right to healthcare, food, and shelter.

Kristin Tokarev: It's true, socialism promises free healthcare, food, and shelter. But that doesn't mean what people get is any good. Look at Cuba.

Cuban Doctor/ReasonTV: The Cuban healthcare system is destroyed. The hospitals are in bad shape. People are dying in the hallway.

Kristin Tokarev: This socialist TikToker, with Karl Marx-like hair, has 100,000 subscribers.

TikTok/RathBoneBackup: Capitalism is a political economy which prioritizes profits over people. The antidote to that political economy would be socialism, a political economy that prioritizes people over profits.

Kristin Tokarev: Socialist theory does, but again and again, what people get is misery.

YouTube/Weird History: You would be subjected to back-breaking labor, brutality, starvation...

YouTube/History: Countless millions of deaths and the worst manmade famine in human history.

Kristin Tokarev: Yet a man calling himself “Spooky Scary Socialist” gets almost 2 million views, saying:

YouTube/Spooky Scary Socialist: Communism did work. It provided essential services like full employment, rough income equality...

Kristin Tokarev: How can these people be so deluded? I’m eager to hear what they’ll say when John interviews them... They tell millions of people:

YouTube/SecondThought: The central idea that unites all socialists is maximizing freedom. A more dignified life and the democratization of power.

Kristin Tokarev: Democratization? Like in China? Here, there’s just one party, and its leader made himself president for life.

Kristin Tokarev: Every socialist economy has failed.

CNN/Globovision: The new cycle of government begins today.

Kristin Tokarev: Venezuela was once the richest country in South America. Now, there are food shortages.

Aljazeera Clip: More and more people reduced to eating from the rubbish.

Kristin Tokarev: Socialism just doesn’t work.

TikTok/DantetheHater: Seems to work in Vietnam really great, actually. They never had a famine. (On screen: Oh, except for the one that killed 2 million people.)

Kristin Tokarev: So says this TikTok socialist. But what finally worked in Vietnam was free markets. Before Vietnam embraced capitalism, people went hungry. The country depended on handouts. Then Vietnam legalized capitalism and freed the private sector. The TikTokers make the same mistake about China.

TikTok/DantetheHater: Socialism worked in China.

TikTok/Madeline\_Pendleton: China eradicated extreme poverty.

Kristin Tokarev: Wrong again. When China banned capitalism, millions died.

Mao’s Great Famine Clip: Those who didn’t get on with the leader of the production team or those who disobeyed his orders were starved to death.

Kristin Tokarev: It was only after:

South China Morning Post Clip: Campaigns like the Great Leap Forward and the Cultural Revolution had killed tens of millions of people

Kristin Tokarev: ...that China's leaders reversed course.

ABC News (Australia) Clip: Embracing capitalism and encouraging private business.

Kristin Tokarev: Only then did average incomes in China rise. But socialism's promoters still say you don't need capitalism or profit.

YouTube/SecondThought: Innovation can flourish even when people are not motivated by profit. The USSR gave the world the anthrax vaccine, artificial satellites, and one of the earliest mobile phones.

Kristin Tokarev: That's true. But do any of you have a socialist-made phone today? The West has created so much more. The socialists say:

YouTube/SecondThought: Ownership should be collective.

Kristin Tokarev: But every attempt, anywhere, at collective ownership has failed. In America, people tried that 200 years ago. In New Harmony, Indiana, private property was abolished. The result, as with similar attempts, was famine. No matter how many views these propagandists get, the fact is, socialism fails.

John Stossel: So, what do these popular socialists say in response to these inconvenient facts? Sadly, I can't show you. We invited them to come here and make their points to you. Not one would.

TikTok/Madeline\_Pendleton: Socialism stays winning.

John Stossel: The bottom line is that incentives matter. Nobody washes a rental car because most people don't care a lot about what belongs to everyone. It's just human nature.

John Stossel (Narrator): Capitalism isn't perfect. But if we want a better future and freedom, capitalism, not socialism, is the way to get those things.



**Name**

Admit One

What type of economic system promotes the most human flourishing? Why?

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Admit One

**EXIT TICKET**

**Name**

Admit One

What type of economic system promotes the most human flourishing? Why?

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Admit One

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Admit One

**EXIT TICKET**