# Eat the Rich?
# (Lessons in Lyrics)




https://stosselintheclassroom.org/lyrics/eat-the-rich/

## Contents

Concept Overview....2
Learning Objectives....3
Vocabulary....3
Discussion Questions....4
Lyrics....5
Activities....7
- Quick Use: Bell Ringer or Filler Activity....7
- Claim or Motive?....7
- Trace It to the Source....8
- Run the Government on One Fortune....9
- Where Did They Start?....10
- The Other Side's Best Case....11
  - Entrepreneur Research Table....12
- Create Your Own Lesson in Lyrics....13

## Concept Overview

"Eat the rich." The slogan shows up on T-shirts, protest signs, and millions of social media posts. Some people use it as a joke. Others use it to express anger about the gap between the very wealthy and everyone else.

The phrase is older than it looks. It's often credited to the French philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau, but historians have not found it in his writings. A 19th-century history of the French Revolution attributes a version of the line to Rousseau and ties it to a speech given in 1793, during the Reign of Terror, fifteen years after Rousseau died. Where the slogan really came from is one of the questions students will investigate in this lesson.

This music video answers the slogan. It was produced by The Atlas Society, an organization that promotes the ideas of novelist and philosopher Ayn Rand. Rand was born Alisa Rosenbaum in St. Petersburg, Russia, in 1905. After the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917, the new government took over private businesses, including her father's pharmacy. She left for the United States in 1926 and later wrote *Atlas Shrugged* (1957), a novel about what happens when a society's most productive people go on strike. The singer in the video is Rand herself, recreated with artificial intelligence (AI).

The song argues that people who chant "eat the rich" depend every day on what entrepreneurs built, from smartphones to the platforms where the slogan gets posted. It argues that a fortune is not a pile of cash but "seed corn": money invested in businesses, research, and new ideas. It also makes strong claims about the motives of the people it addresses.

That makes this video different from most of our Lessons in Lyrics. It's an argument set to music, and this guide treats it as one. Students will separate claims they can check from claims about motives, trace the song's history and numbers to their sources, research the real lives of entrepreneurs, and build the strongest case for the other side. The goal is not to agree or disagree with the song. The goal is to think it through.

**About This Video:** *Eat the Rich* is not an SITC.org original. The Atlas Society released it on November 3, 2026, and it runs 3:41. We thank them for allowing us to share it with you and your students. The video was made with AI, including AI-generated likenesses of real people, such as Thomas Edison, Nikola Tesla, Jensen Huang, Mark Zuckerberg, and Jeff Bezos. Unlike other Lessons in Lyrics, it comes in one version only. (Have your students create their own versions in other genres and share them with us! Email us – custsvc@stosselintheclassroom.org)

## Learning Objectives

Students will be able to:

- explain the difference between wealth held as cash and wealth held as ownership in businesses, and why that difference matters.
- distinguish claims that can be checked with evidence from claims about people's motives.
- trace historical claims and current statistics to their sources and explain why sources may disagree.
- evaluate arguments on both sides of the debate over wealth, including the difference between wealth earned through voluntary exchange and wealth gained through government favors.

## Vocabulary

**Bolsheviks:** The revolutionary party, led by Vladimir Lenin, that seized power in Russia in 1917 and founded the Soviet government.

**Capital:** Money, tools, buildings, and equipment used to produce goods and services or to start and grow a business.

**Consumer:** A person who buys or uses goods and services.

**Cronyism:** Government favors, such as special tax breaks, subsidies, or protection from competition, given to businesses or people with political connections.

**Eat the Rich:** A slogan calling for taking much of the wealthiest people's money and property through heavy taxes or government seizure. Some people also use it as a dark joke about the gap between the rich and everyone else.

**Entrepreneur:** A person who starts a business and takes on the risk in hopes of earning a profit.

**Envy:** Resentment of someone else's success or possessions, often with a wish that the other person did not have them.

**Inequality:** A gap between people, such as a difference in income or wealth.

**Investment:** Using money or resources now in the hope of earning more in the future.

**Nationalize:** To take a private business or industry and put it under government ownership.

**Net Worth:** The value of everything a person owns minus everything he or she owes.

**Nihilism:** The belief that nothing has real meaning or value.

**Pitch Deck:** A short slide presentation an entrepreneur uses to explain a business idea to possible investors.

**Producer:** A person or business that makes goods or provides services that others want.

**Prototype:** An early model of a product, built to test an idea.

**Seed Corn:** Corn saved from one harvest to plant the next one. Eating it provides a meal today but no crop tomorrow. In this video, it means wealth invested in businesses and new ideas to grow the next "crop."

**Slogan:** A short, memorable phrase used to spread a message or rally support.

**Stock:** A share of ownership in a company.

**Voluntary Exchange:** A trade that both people freely agree to because each expects to benefit.

## Discussion Questions

1. What does the slogan "eat the rich" mean to you?
2. According to the song, what do critics of the rich use every day?
3. Who is the singer supposed to be? How can you tell?
4. According to the song, what happened to the singer's father's pharmacy?
5. What is seed corn? Why does the song compare a fortune to it?
6. What does the song say happens when "the last producer walks away"?
7. Is it possible to love a product and dislike the person who made it?
8. Are you a producer, a consumer, or both? Explain.
9. What is the difference between being rich and being powerful?
10. Most of a billionaire's wealth is ownership in companies, not cash. If the government took it, what exactly would it be taking?
11. How can someone become rich by selling things people choose to buy? What other ways do people become rich?
12. Should government give special favors, such as subsidies or protection from competition, to big businesses? Why or why not?
13. Can great wealth give a person too much influence over government or the news? If so, what might be done about it?
14. Does inequality matter if people with the least are better off than they were 50 years ago? Explain.
15. When the government spends money, where does that money come from?
16. What is envy? How does it influence people's behavior?
17. Is it "fair" to take something from someone who has worked for it to give it to someone else? Why or why not?

18. If you had to stop using all the things created by the best-known entrepreneurs of today, what would you be giving up? Are you willing to give up those things? Why or why not?
19. The song says the slogan comes from envy, "not hunger, not justice." How can you know someone's motive? Is it fair to judge the motives of everyone who uses a slogan?
20. The song compares taking what people build to forced labor. Is that comparison fair? Why or why not?
21. The song connects the Bolshevik Revolution to today's slogan. What is similar about the two, and what is different?
22. *Atlas Shrugged* imagines what happens when a society's most productive people go on strike. Who keeps a society running: a few great inventors and builders, or everyone who works? What would change if the people who create new products stopped?
23. This song is meant to persuade. Which of its techniques work best? Which might push away a listener who disagrees?
24. What is the strongest argument for the side you disagree with?

## Lyrics

### Eat the Rich – The Atlas Society

**[Intro]**
Eat the rich.
Charming.
Tell me, what's for dinner the day after?

**[Chorus]**
Eat the rich. Eat the rich.
You type it on a phone,
you post on a platform they built through a cloud that they own.
Eat the rich. Eat the rich.
Delivered to your door, you love the things they made.
It's the makers you abhor.

**[Verse 1]**
You order from the markets that began as one idea.
You stream your revolution through the data centers you fear.
You want the light, but not the ones who invented the wire.
You want the warmth and curse the hand that lit the fire.
So, what drives you?
Not hunger.
Not justice.
Envy. Hatred of the good for being the good.

**[Pre-Chorus]**
You don’t want to own it. You want to watch it burn.
You don’t want to earn it. You want them not to earn.
You don’t want to climb. You want the ladder up in flames.
That isn’t idealism. Call it by its name, nihilism.

**[Chorus]**
Eat the rich. Eat the rich.
That’s your rallying cry.
Yet, you never count how much you lean on those you vilify.

**[Verse 2]**
Inequality.
You imagine the yacht, the jet, the towers gleam.
You never see the pitch deck, the prototype, or the long shot dream.
A fortune’s not a pile of gold that’s sat on in the dark.
It’s seed corn, next year’s harvest, and 10,000 brand new starts.

**[Spoken]**
I have seen your slogan carried out Petrograd.
1918 armed men and a red seal on my father’s pharmacy door.
They ate the rich.
Then the hunger came for everyone else.
What happens when the last producer walks away?
I wrote a book about it. It’s long, you’ll manage.
You can order it on your phone.

**[Verse 3]**
You take what they created, you chain them to the wheel to work at your command and keep no part of what they build.
There’s a word for forcing labor and seizing what it yields.
I thought you were against it.
Apparently not.

**[Final Chorus]**
Eat the rich. Eat the rich.
You chanted and feel brave,
but you’ll never face how much you need the ones you would enslave.
And when the lights go out, don’t ask, “Who is John Galt?”
Ask who you drove away.
You posted on a platform they built through a cloud that they made.
Eat the rich. Eat the rich.
Delivered to your door, you love the things they make.
It’s the makers you abhor.

## Activities

### Quick Use: Bell Ringer or Filler Activity

**Instructions:**

Play the *Eat the Rich* video at the start of class. After viewing, ask students to respond to a single prompt in their notebooks or on a sticky note:

- What's one lyric that stood out to you? Why?
- The song says people who chant "eat the rich" rely on the people they criticize. Do you agree? Why or why not?
- Have you heard the slogan "eat the rich" before? What did you think it meant?
- List five things you used before school today. Who produced each one?

This short activity takes 5–10 minutes and can serve as a warm-up, informal assessment, or transition into deeper discussion. It also works well for previewing or reviewing a full lesson later in the week. You can replay the video with a different prompt each time.

### Claim or Motive?

**Objective tie-in:** Distinguish claims that can be checked with evidence from claims about people's motives.

**Instructions:**

Provide students with the lines below, or have them choose their own from the lyrics. In pairs or small groups, students sort each line into one of three categories:

- **Checkable Claim:** A statement that evidence could prove true or false.
- **Claim About Motives:** A statement about why people think or act the way they do.
- **Opinion or Value Judgment:** A statement about what is good, bad, fair, or right.

Lines from the song:

- "You post on a platform they built"
- "Not hunger. Not justice. Envy."
- "A fortune's not a pile of gold"
- "Armed men and a red seal on my father's pharmacy door"
- "They ate the rich. Then the hunger came for everyone else."
- "You don't want to climb. You want the ladder up in flames."

- "There's a word for forcing labor and seizing what it yields."
- "That isn't idealism."

**Debrief:** Which lines were hardest to sort, and why? For each Checkable Claim, what evidence would you need to prove it true or false? Can you ever know another person's motive? How? Would the song persuade more listeners, or fewer, without its claims about motives?

**Teacher Note:** Some lines fit more than one category. The disagreements often lead to the best discussion.

## Trace It to the Source

**Objective tie-in:** Trace historical claims and current statistics to their sources and explain why sources may disagree.

**Instructions:**

1. Divide students into small groups. Assign each group one claim from the song or its background:

- The slogan "eat the rich" comes from Jean-Jacques Rousseau.
- The Bolsheviks seized Ayn Rand's father's pharmacy in 1918.
- After the Bolsheviks took power, hunger spread across Russia.
- "Who is John Galt?" comes from *Atlas Shrugged*.

2. Groups find at least two sources for their claim. For each source, they record who published it, when, and where that source got its information.
3. Groups decide whether the claim is Supported, Not Supported, or Disputed (the sources disagree). They explain which source they trust most and why.
4. Each group shares its findings with the class.

**Debrief:** Why might two sources give different dates or details for the same event? What makes one source more reliable than another? Should a song be held to the same standard as a history book? Why or why not?

**Teacher Note:** Finding that sources disagree counts as success. Here is what we found while preparing this guide. Historians have not located the "eat the rich" line in Rousseau's writings; a 19th-century history of the French Revolution attributes it to him and ties it to a speech given in October 1793, years after his death. Quick biographies often date the seizure of Rand's father's pharmacy to 1917, the year of the revolution, but the Bolshevik government's broad takeover of private businesses came largely in 1918, the same year the family left Petrograd for Crimea. Students may find either date. A famine in 1921 and 1922 killed millions of people in Soviet Russia. "Who is John Galt?" is the opening line of *Atlas Shrugged*.

## Run the Government on One Fortune

**Objective tie-in:** Explain the difference between wealth held as cash and wealth held as ownership in businesses, and why that difference matters.

**Instructions:**

1. Students look up three numbers and write the source and date beside each one: total federal spending for the most recent fiscal year (from the Congressional Budget Office), the net worth of the richest person in the United States (from *Forbes* or Bloomberg), and the combined net worth of all U.S. billionaires (from *Forbes*).
2. Students divide the year's federal spending by 365 to find how much the federal government spends in one day.
3. Students divide the richest person's net worth by that daily amount. How many days would that fortune pay for the federal government? Then they repeat the math for all U.S. billionaires combined.
4. Students then answer: Once that money is spent, what happens the next year?

**Debrief with a discussion:**

- Most of a billionaire's net worth is stock in companies he or she started. To spend it, the government would have to sell that stock. What might happen to the price if billions of dollars' worth of stock went up for sale at once?
- Did different sources give different numbers? How much did that change your answer?
- Most proposals to tax the very wealthy call for a yearly tax on income or wealth, not taking everything at once. How does that change the math? How might it change where people invest or where they choose to live?
- The song calls a fortune "seed corn." After doing the math, do you agree? Why or why not?
- In a 1976 television interview, Margaret Thatcher, who later became Britain's prime minister, said, "Socialist governments traditionally do make a financial mess. They always run out of other people's money." How does your math connect to her point? How might someone who supports taxing the very wealthy respond?

**Teacher Note:** When this guide was written in November 2026, the Congressional Budget Office estimated federal spending for fiscal year 2026 at about $7.4 trillion, or roughly $20 billion a day. Estimates of Elon Musk's net worth ranged from about $870 billion to $1 trillion, depending on the day and the source, enough to pay for the federal government for about six or seven weeks. *Forbes* counted 989 U.S.

billionaires in March 2026, worth a combined $8.4 trillion, enough to pay for the government for nearly 14 months, one time. Students who find newer numbers are doing exactly what this activity asks.

Sources: Congressional Budget Office, *Monthly Budget Review: September 2026* (October 8, 2026); Forbes Real-Time Billionaires; Bloomberg Billionaires Index; Margaret Thatcher Foundation, TV Interview for Thames TV *This Week* (February 5, 1976).

## Where Did They Start?

**Objective tie-in:** Evaluate arguments on both sides of the debate over wealth.

**Instructions:**

The video shows inventors and business leaders from the past and present. Where did they start, and how did they get where they are?

1. Divide students into small groups. Each group researches two entrepreneurs: one who appears in the video and one from an earlier era.

- **From the video:** Thomas Edison, Nikola Tesla, Jensen Huang, Mark Zuckerberg, or Jeff Bezos.
- **From an earlier era:** Margaret Rudkin, who started Pepperidge Farm in her kitchen, or another entrepreneur from izzit's *Steve Forbes On Achievement* video series.

2. Groups complete the Entrepreneur Research Table worksheet that follows, checking every fact in at least two sources.
3. Groups create a short presentation, such as slides, a poster, or a video, to share with the class. What product or service did this person provide for the public? Did he or she "take" from society, or also give to society? Each presentation ends with a verdict: Does this person's story support the song's argument, challenge it, or both?

**Debrief with a discussion:**

- How many of the entrepreneurs your class studied started with money or connections? How many did not?
- Did a head start decide how things turned out, or did what people built with it matter more?
- Can someone build something valuable and still use his or her wealth or power in ways you disagree with? Explain.

**Teacher Note:** Encourage groups to report the full story. Some of these entrepreneurs had little to start with. Jensen Huang was sent to the United States as a child and later worked at Denny's, and Thomas Edison had very little formal schooling and sold newspapers on trains as a boy. Others had a head start. Mark

Zuckerberg grew up in a comfortable family, and Jeff Bezos's parents invested about $245,000 in Amazon in 1995. Some built world-changing inventions and still died broke, as Nikola Tesla did in 1943. A class list that mixes these stories makes for a stronger discussion than one made up only of rags-to-riches tales. In November 2026, Jensen Huang resigned as Nvidia's chief executive officer after admitting to an affair. News reports linked the affair to a businesswoman whom some U.S. officials suspected of spying for China. The U.S. attorney general said the Justice Department had not reached a conclusion about whether she was a spy, and no charges had been filed when this guide was written. Students who research him will find this story. It can lead to a useful discussion: Does a person's conduct change the value of what he or she built?

## The Other Side's Best Case

**Objective tie-in:** Evaluate arguments on both sides of the debate over wealth, including the difference between wealth earned through voluntary exchange and wealth gained through government favors.

**Instructions:**

1. In pairs, students list reasons people might use the slogan "eat the rich," such as concerns about the influence wealthy people have over government, special favors for big companies, or the rising cost of housing and college.
2. Each pair writes one paragraph making the strongest, fairest case a supporter of the slogan could make. No straw men: the case should be one a supporter would agree with.
3. Pairs trade paragraphs with another pair, which writes a response using evidence from the song, this guide's activities, or its own research.
4. As a class, sort the concerns into two groups: those about wealth earned through voluntary exchange, by selling things people choose to buy, and those about wealth or power gained through government favors, such as subsidies, bailouts, or rules that block competitors.

**Debrief:** Does it matter how someone became rich? Would the song's argument be stronger or weaker if it addressed cronyism? Is there a way to address concerns about power without taking what people have earned? The Lessons in Lyrics *Don't Hurt People, Don't Take Their Stuff* asks whether that rule should apply to governments as well as to individuals. How might that idea apply here?

Name _____ Date _____

Class _____ Period _____ Teacher _____

# Eat the Rich?

## Entrepreneur Research Table

Instructions: Research two entrepreneurs and complete the table below.

| Question | Entrepreneur 1 _____ | Entrepreneur 2 _____ | Similarities / Differences |
|---|---|---|---|
| Starting Point | | | |
| First Business or Big Break | | | |
| Setbacks and Failures | | | |
| Who Took a Chance on Him or Her? | | | |
| What His or Her Work Made Possible for Others | | | |
| Criticisms He or She Has Faced | | | |
| Supports the Song, Challenges It, or Both? | | | |

## Create Your Own Lesson in Lyrics

**Instructions:**
Challenge students to become the creators! Working individually or in small groups, students write their own song that either answers *Eat the Rich* or creates a similar song in a different genre of music. They can agree with it, push back on it, or tell the story of an entrepreneur they researched. Encourage them to include a chorus, define key vocabulary, and use real-world examples. For an added layer, students may storyboard or describe the kind of visuals they would use in a music video.

Students are welcome to use AI tools—such as ChatGPT, Suno, or music video generators—to help brainstorm, write, or even produce their project. Before they start, check your school's AI policy. Many AI tools also set a minimum age for users, so check each tool's terms.

One rule for this project: no AI likenesses of real, living people. Some image & video generators refuse to recreate actual living humans anyway. Students can show products, inventions, places, and eras instead. Ask students why that rule (called a guardrail when applied to an AI by the company that created it) might matter, even though the Atlas Society video uses real people. It makes a good discussion.

This project can be submitted as lyrics only, or students may choose to perform or record their creation if time and resources allow. (Perhaps an extra-credit opportunity?)

If your students are willing, share their videos with us! Put them in Google Drive or another shareable platform and send us the link by emailing us - custsvc@stosselintheclassroom.org! We'd love to see what they're creating.