

Teacher Overview Objectives:

Joseph Stalin's Totalitarian Rule

NYS Social Studies Framework Alignment:

Key Idea	Conceptual Understanding	Content Specification	Objectives
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)	10.5d Nationalism and ideology played a significant role in shaping the period between the world wars.	Students will examine the Russian Revolution and the development of Soviet ideology and nationalism under Lenin and Stalin.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Explain who Joseph Stalin was and what totalitarianism is. 2. Describe how Joseph Stalin gained, consolidated, and maintained power in Soviet Russia.

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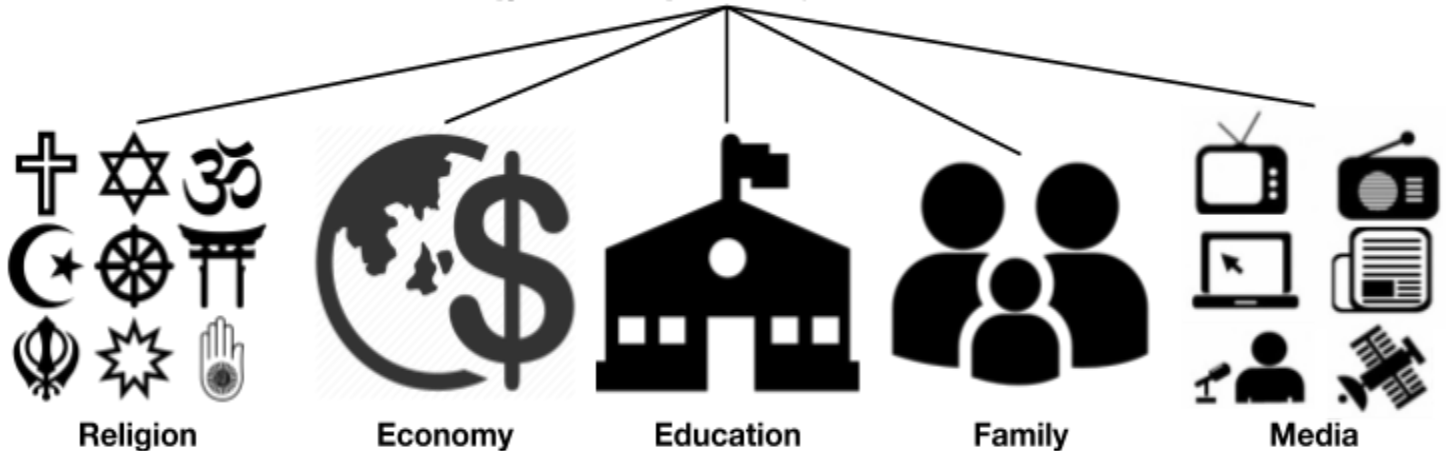
Who was Joseph Stalin? How did he rule?

Objectives: Explain who Joseph Stalin was and what totalitarianism is.

Introduction:

Totalitarianism

State [government] has complete control over



Totalitarianism- a system of government in which one party tries to rule with complete control over every aspect of the lives of its citizen

Based on the definition above, if a **totalitarian dictator** [a ruler with total control over a country] ruled the United States of America, what would be different?

Totalitarian Rules in History: Complete Control, Different Ideologies

There have been a number of **totalitarian** rulers in history. While they all try to run their **totalitarian states** with complete control over the people that live in them, they often have different **ideologies** [beliefs] that guide their decisions. For example, the first totalitarian ruler you will learn about, **Joseph Stalin**, was a **Communist**. He used totalitarianism to make Russia into the first state inspired by Karl Marx's ideas. **Adolf Hitler** was another totalitarian ruler. His ideology was called **fascism**. Fascists also wanted complete control over their countries, but they were opposed to Communism.

Who was Joseph Stalin?



Watch [Biography.com's Mini-Biography of Joseph Stalin](#) and answer the questions below.



Joseph Stalin, 1942

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

1. What was Stalin's early life like?


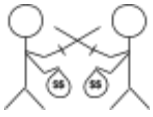

2. What effects did Stalin's rule have on the Soviet Union?

3. Why was Stalin feared in the Soviet Union?

How did Stalin gain, consolidate, and maintain power in the Soviet Union?

Objectives: Describe how Joseph Stalin gained, consolidated, and maintained power in Soviet Russia.

Directions: As you read the information below, annotate it by placing a “G” next to examples of methods that Stalin used to gain power in Russia, a “C” next to examples of methods he used to consolidate his 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>
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Method of Control	Gain, Consolidate, and/or Maintain Power? Circle all that apply.	Explanation Explain why the method of control described made is possible for Stalin to gain, consolidate, and/or maintain power in Russia.
Shifting Political Alliances	GAIN	
	CONSOLIDATE	
	MAINTAIN	
Propaganda	GAIN	
	CONSOLIDATE	
	MAINTAIN	
Command Economy: Five Year Plans	GAIN	
	CONSOLIDATE	
	MAINTAIN	
Command Economy: Collectivization	GAIN	
	CONSOLIDATE	
	MAINTAIN	
Secret Police and Great Purges	GAIN	
	CONSOLIDATE	
	MAINTAIN	
Cultural and Ideological Control	GAIN	
	CONSOLIDATE	
	MAINTAIN	

Shifting Political Alliances To Gain Power

When Vladimir Lenin died in 1924, there were two members of the Bolshevik party popular enough to replace him: Leon Trotsky and Joseph Stalin. Trotsky was a well known and respected leader who was in charge of the Red Army during the Russian Civil War. Stalin was a lesser known figure who had a reputation for getting whatever job he was assigned done thoroughly no matter what steps he had to take. Lenin had his doubts about both men, but was most concerned about the Stalin. In a statement before his death, he called for Stalin's removal and referred to him as "rude," "disloyal," and "capricious [unpredictable]."

After Lenin's death, Stalin allied himself with two other members of the party who were opposed to Trotsky. He tried to make Trotsky look disloyal to Lenin by misleading him about the date of the funeral, which Stalin organized, and Trotsky missed. Stalin, also publicized disagreements that Trotsky and Lenin had before Lenin's death. Eventually, Stalin and his allies expelled Trotsky from the Communist Party and exiled him.

After dealing with Trotsky, Stalin changed sides again, allying himself with party members against the two who helped him eliminate Trotsky. They were also expelled from the party. Stalin's ability to maneuver in the Soviet government gave him a great deal of control and prevented others from challenging him.

Source: "Josef Stalin," New World Encyclopedia,
http://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Josef_Stalin



Stalin and Lenin, 1919.

Source: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Vladimir_Lenin_and_Joseph_Stalin_1919.jpg



Trotsky and Lenin, 1919.

Source: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Vladimir_Lenin_and_Joseph_Stalin_1919.jpg

1. Who were the leading candidates for replacing Lenin as the head of the Soviet government?

2. How did Stalin eliminate the competition and gain power after Lenin's Death?

Propaganda

Propaganda is the spreading of ideas to promote a cause or damage an opposing cause. It is a specific type of message aimed at trying to influence people's opinions or behaviors actively.



Watch [this excerpt from a History Channel documentary on Stalin's use of propaganda](#) (12:55-end) and analyze the text and images below then answer the questions that follow.

Like Lenin, Joseph Stalin used propaganda to influence the beliefs and actions of the Russian people. In addition to putting forth their own ideas through propaganda, the Soviets censored ideas that they did not agree with, especially those that they viewed as anti-Marxists or anti-Communist. The government used radio, posters, movies, lectures, art, education, newspapers, books, and theatre to influence the opinions of Soviet citizens and to put a positive spin on the government's actions.

Soviet Propaganda Posters



3. What is propaganda? What is the purpose of propaganda?

4. What forms of propaganda did Stalin's government use?

5. Each of the posters to the left show Stalin in different contexts. Taken together, how do these poster depict Stalin?

6. What were the effects of the propaganda used during Stalin's reign?

Command Economy: Five Year Plans

The Russian Civil War and wartime communism had a devastating effect on the country's economy. Industrial output in 1922 was 13 percent of the output in 1914. A recovery followed under Lenin's **New Economic Policy**, which allowed a degree of market flexibility within the context of socialism, but Stalin stopped the NEP after Lenin's death.

Under Stalin's direction, the NEP was replaced by a system called a **Command Economy**. In a command economy, all of the economic decisions are made by the central government. This is another example of Stalin taking total control of the Soviet Union.

Stalin thought that the Soviet Union needed to catch up with the rest of the world's industrial output and transportation technology. To do so, he created a series of "**Five-Year Plans**"

starting in the late 1920s. These plans set high production goals for industries like mining, railroads, electric plants and manufacturers.

The Five Year plans were successful in increasing the industrial output of the Soviet Union. The country became a world leader in industrial goods (see chart above).

Production Levels in the Soviet Union (1932–1937)

Industry	1932	1937
Electricity (billion kw)	13.5	36.2
Coal (million tons)	64.4	128.0
Crude Oil (million tons)	21.4	28.5
Rolled Steel (million tons)	4.4	13.0

Source: R.W. Davies, ed., et al., *The Economic Transformation of the Soviet Union, 1913–1945*, Cambridge University Press, 1994 (adapted)

Source: "Josef Stalin," New World Encyclopedia, http://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Josef_Stalin

7. What was the difference between Lenin's NEP and Stalin's Command economy?

8. What were the goals of the Stalin's Five Year Plans?

9. Were the Five Year Plans successful?

Command Economy: Collectivization

Stalin's government also controlled the agricultural economy. The Five Year Plans used a policy called **forced collectivization** which was intended to increase agricultural output from large government-owned farms created through the integration of smaller private farms. Farm owners and peasants did not have a choice. They had to give up their land and work on the new collectivized farms. Peasants were required to give up their farming equipment, livestock, produce, and even their homes to the government. It was meant to bring the peasantry under more direct political control, to facilitate the collection of taxes and provide more food for people living in Soviet cities, but collectivization also led to a drastic drop in living standards for many peasants, and caused violent reactions by the peasantry that was heavily suppressed by the Red Army.

In the first years of collectivization, it was estimated that agricultural production would rise 50 percent, however, agricultural production actually dropped. Stalin blamed this unanticipated failure on kulaks (rich peasants) who resisted collectivization. (However, kulaks only made up 4 percent of the peasant population). Therefore those defined as "kulaks," "kulak helpers," and later "ex-kulaks" were ordered by Stalin to be shot, placed into Gulag labor camps, or deported to remote areas of the country, depending on the charge.



Children digging up frozen potatoes on a collective farm, 1933.

Source: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Children_are_digging_up_frozen_potatoes_in_the_field_of_a_collective_farm_Ukhtyne_village_Donec%E2%8D%99%AB oblast_1933.jpg

Source: "Josef Stalin," New World Encyclopedia, http://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Josef_Stalin

10. What was collectivization?

11. How did collectivization effect peasants?

12. Was collectivization successful?



Government workers seizing grain from peasants who hid it in a graveyard to prevent it from being taken in Ukraine, 1930.

Source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:RANL_archive_75113_Seizing_grain_from_graves.jpg



Starved peasants on a street in Kharkiv, Ukraine during the Holodome, 1933.

Source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:RANL_archive_75113_Seizing_grain_from_graves.jpg

Holodomor: Forced Famine in Ukraine, 1932-1933

Many historians assert that the disruption caused by collectivization was largely responsible for major famines. One such famine occurred during 1932–1933 in Ukraine and the Kuban region. It is now known as the **Holodomor** (meaning, “hunger-extermination” in Ukrainian). Stephane Courtois' *Black Book of Communism* and other sources document that during the Holodomor all grain was taken from areas that did not meet production targets set by Stalin's Five Year Plans. This even included the next year's seed grain, leaving the peasants with nothing to eat. They were forced to remain in these starving areas. Sales of train tickets were halted and the Soviet government created barriers and obstacles to prevent people from fleeing the starving areas.

According to a BBC article in 2013, entire villages were wiped out as a result of Stalin's punishment of Ukraine and in some regions the death rate reached one-third. Yale University historian Timothy Snyder estimates that 3.3 million people died as a result of the Holodomor.

Sources: “Josef Stalin,” New World Encyclopedia, http://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Josef_Stalin; <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-25058256>

13. What was the Holodomor?

14. Why did so many people die during the Holodomor?

Secret Police and Great Purges



Watch [this excerpt from a History Channel documentary on Stalin's Purges and Use of Terror](#) (start- 12:54) and read the text below and answer the questions that follow.

No reference to Joseph Stalin can be made without referring to his unmatched ability to use his intelligence services and the secret police. Though the Soviet secret police, the *NKVD* had already evolved into an arm of state-sanctioned murder under Lenin, Stalin took the use of such forces to a new level in order to solidify his hold on power and eliminate all enemies, real or perceived.

Stalin also vastly increased the foreign espionage [the practice of spying] activities of Soviet secret police and foreign intelligence. Under his guiding hand, Soviet intelligence forces began to set up intelligence networks in most of the major nations of the world, including Germany, Great Britain, France, Japan, and the United States. One of the best early examples of Stalin's ability to integrate secret police and foreign espionage came in 1940, when he gave approval to the secret police to have Leon Trotsky assassinated in Mexico.

Stalin consolidated near-absolute power in the 1930s with a **Great Purge** of the party, justified as an attempt to expel 'opportunists' and 'counter-revolutionary infiltrators.' Those targeted by the purge were often expelled from the party, however more severe measures ranged from banishment to the Gulag labor camps to execution after trials.

No segment of society was left untouched during the purges. Article 58 of the legal code, listing prohibited "anti-Soviet activities," was interpreted and applied in the broadest manner. People would inform on others arbitrarily [randomly and without reason], to attempt to redeem themselves, out of envy and plain dislike, or to gain some revenge or benefits. A worker would report on his boss, son on his father, and a young man on his brother. The flimsiest reasons were often enough to brand someone an "Enemy of the People," starting the cycle of public persecution and abuse, often proceeding to interrogation, torture and deportation, if not death.

In parallel with the purges, efforts were made to rewrite the history in Soviet textbooks and other propaganda materials. Notable people that were executed were removed from the texts and photographs as though they never existed. Gradually, the history of revolution was transformed to a story about just two key characters: Lenin and Stalin.



The top image includes, Nikolai Yezhov, once head of the NVKD, who was executed by Stalin's secret police. The bottom image was censored after Yezhov fell out of favor with Stalin. This was common practice in Soviet Russia.

Sources: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Vasishkov_Molotov_Stalin_with_Nikolai_Yezhov.jpg
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:The_Commissar_Disappears_2.jpg

Source: "Josef Stalin," New World Encyclopedia, http://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Josef_Stalin

15. What is espionage? How did Stalin use it?

16. What was the purpose of Stalin's Great Purges?

17. What effects did Stalin's purges have on Soviet society?

18. What was a gulag? What was the purpose of gulags?

19. If you were accused of being "anti-Soviet" what could happen?

Cultural and Ideological Control

In Stalin's Soviet Union, the government attempted to control the ideas and culture that its citizens were exposed to.

Science

In science, only ideas that did not contradict Marxism, Leninism, or Stalin's beliefs were explored. The study of evolution, for example, was prohibited because it did not support Marx's ideas of human development. Other sciences that could benefit the state were well funded and flourished. For instance, the Soviets made great leaps in computer, weapons, and rocket technology. They were the first country in space, launching a rocket called Sputnik in 1957.

Art and Literature

Art and literature that glorified Stalin and the state was encouraged, but those writers and artists whose creations were critical of the government were punished, often arrested, fined, sent to a gulag, or executed. During Stalin's reign the official and lasting style of Socialist Realism was established for painting, sculpture, music, drama and literature.

Stalin took a personal interest in shaping Soviet culture, sometimes in surprising ways. For example, Mikhail Bulgakov was driven to poverty and despair; yet, after a personal appeal to Stalin, he was allowed to continue working. His play, *The Days of the Turbins*, with its sympathetic treatment of an anti-Bolshevik family caught up in the Civil War, was finally staged, apparently also on Stalin's intervention, and began a decades-long uninterrupted run at the Moscow Arts Theater.

Religion

Stalin's role in the fortunes of the Russian Orthodox Church is complex. Continuous persecution in the 1930s resulted in its near-extinction: by 1939, active parishes numbered in the low hundreds (down from 54,000 in 1917), many churches had been leveled or used as clubs, offices, storage space, or as museums. Ceremonial artifacts and vessels were confiscated. Religious icons were burned. Tens of thousands of priests and other religious leaders were persecuted. Many nuns were said to have been raped. During World War II, however, the Church was allowed a revival (winter 1941-1942) as a patriotic organization. Thousands of parishes were reactivated, until a further round of suppression took place during Khrushchev's rule.

Many religions popular in the ethnic regions of the Soviet Union including the Roman Catholic Church, Uniats, Baptists, Islam, Buddhism, Judaism, etc. underwent ordeals similar to the Orthodox churches. Thousands of clergy were persecuted, and hundreds of churches, synagogues, mosques, temples, sacred monuments, monasteries and other religious buildings were razed.



Example of a Socialist Realism statue depicting the strength of the worker and peasant.

Source: <https://www.gettyimages.com/detail/stock-photo/worker-and-peasant-statue/12001130000-00>



Soviet anti-religious poster, reading "Ban Religious Holidays!" from 1924.

Source: <https://www.gettyimages.com/detail/stock-photo/anti-religious-poster/12001130000-00>

Source: "Josef Stalin," New World Encyclopedia, http://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Josef_Stalin

20. What impact did Stalin and the Soviet government have on science and the arts?

21. Why might the Soviet government have persecuted the Russian Orthodox Church?



Regents Multiple Choice Check for Understanding

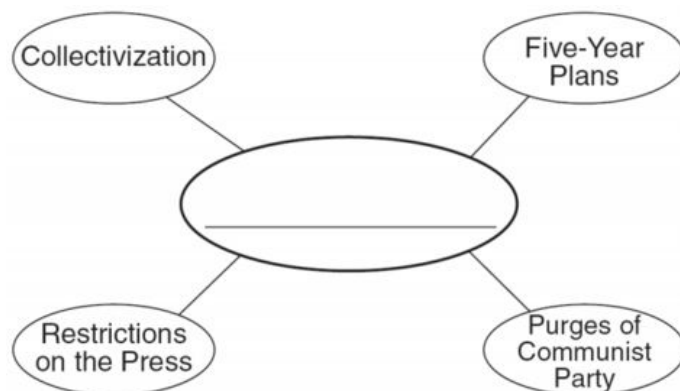
1. Which statement best describes the political situation in the Soviet Union immediately after Lenin's death in 1924?

- (1) The nation adopted a constitutional monarchy.
- (2) Trotsky and his followers assumed full control of the Communist Party.
- (3) Popular elections were held to choose a new General Secretary.
- (4) A power struggle developed among Communist Party leaders.

2. A major goal of Joseph Stalin's five-year plans was to

- (1) encourage communist revolutions in the colonies of the European powers
- (2) transform the Soviet Union into an industrial power
- (3) expand the Soviet Union's borders to include warm-water ports
- (4) reduce the amount of foreign aid coming from the Western Hemisphere

3. Base your answer to the following question on the graphic organizer below and on your knowledge of social studies.



Which title best completes this graphic organizer?

- (1) Saddam Hussein and the Persian Gulf War
- (2) Sun Yixian (Sun Yat-sen) and the Defeat of the Manchu Dynasty
- (3) Joseph Stalin and the Rise of a Totalitarian State
- (4) Jawaharlal Nehru and the Modern Industrial State of India

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

4. Which leader is being described by these statements?

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

5. Totalitarian countries are characterized by

- (1) free and open discussions of ideas
- (2) a multiparty system with several candidates for each office
- (3) government control of newspapers, radio and television
- (4) government protection of people's civil liberties

6. Which condition was a result of Joseph Stalin's command economy?

- (1) Peasants were encouraged to sell surplus grain for personal profit.
- (2) The production of consumer goods increased.
- (3) National revenue increased allowing for greater individual spending.
- (4) The government controlled agriculture through collective farms.

7. The main purpose of the many purges and public trials that took place in the Soviet Union in the 1930s was to

- (1) force the Jewish people to leave the Soviet Union
- (2) eliminate opposition to Joseph Stalin and his government
- (3) establish a free and independent court system in the Soviet Union
- (4) reform the outdated and inadequate agricultural system

8. In the Soviet Union, Joseph Stalin governed by means of secret police, censorship, and purges. This type of government is called

- (1) democracy
- (2) totalitarian
- (3) limited monarchy
- (4) theocracy

Base your answers to questions 9 and 10 on the following question on the table below and on your knowledge of social studies.

Collective Farms of the USSR (Soviet Union) 1929–1940

Year	No. of collective farms in 1,000s
1929	57.0
1930	85.9
1931	211.1
1932	211.1
1933	224.6
1934	233.3
1935	245.4
1936	242.2
1937	243.7
1938	242.4
1939	241.1
1940	236.3

— Paul Halsall, *Internet Modern History Sourcebook*,
(adapted)

9. Which Soviet policy is most closely associated with the information in this table?

- (1) Lenin's New Economic Policy
- (2) Stalin's five-year plans
- (3) Brezhnev's policy of détente
- (4) Gorbachev's policy of glasnost

10. Between which two years did the number of collective farms increase the most?

- (1) 1929 and 1930
- (2) 1930 and 1931
- (3) 1934 and 1935
- (4) 1939 and 1940

Base your answers to questions 11 and 12 on the chart below.

**Production Levels in the Soviet Union
(1932–1937)**

Industry	1932	1937
Electricity (billion kw)	13.5	36.2
Coal (million tons)	64.4	128.0
Crude Oil (million tons)	21.4	28.5
Rolled Steel (million tons)	4.4	13.0

Source: R.W. Davies, ed., et al., *The Economic Transformation of the Soviet Union, 1913–1945*, Cambridge University Press, 1994 (adapted)

11. The data in this chart illustrates the
- (1) benefits of foreign trade
 - (2) successful development of heavy industry
 - (3) availability of consumer goods
 - (4) effects of inflation on the economy

12. Which policy is illustrated in this chart?
- (1) pogroms
 - (2) five-year plans
 - (3) Russification
 - (4) nuclear arms