

## Comparing Communism and Fascism

We will be reviewing Communism and Fascism in the 1930's. You will start by getting some definitions of these two ideas and then you will gather some information on them. Finally, you will make a Venn Diagram and compare them.

### Part 1: Defining Communism and Fascism

Communism- Read Document 1: How Stuff Works: Communism .

With your partner, brainstorm the 5 most important things you need to know from this reading to understand what Communism is. Write these down.

Use those 5 ideas to craft a definition of Communism. Write your definition on your paper.

Fascism- Read Document 2: How Stuff Works: Fascism .

With your partner, brainstorm the 5 most important things you need to know from this reading to understand what Fascism is. Write these down.

Use those 5 ideas to craft a definition of Fascism. Write your definition on your paper.

### Part 2: Practice Corroborating and Gathering Information on Fascism and Communism

First, set up a chart like this on your paper.

Categories	Communism info in more than one place	Fascism info in more than one place

Next, look at the Charts on Documents 3 and 4.

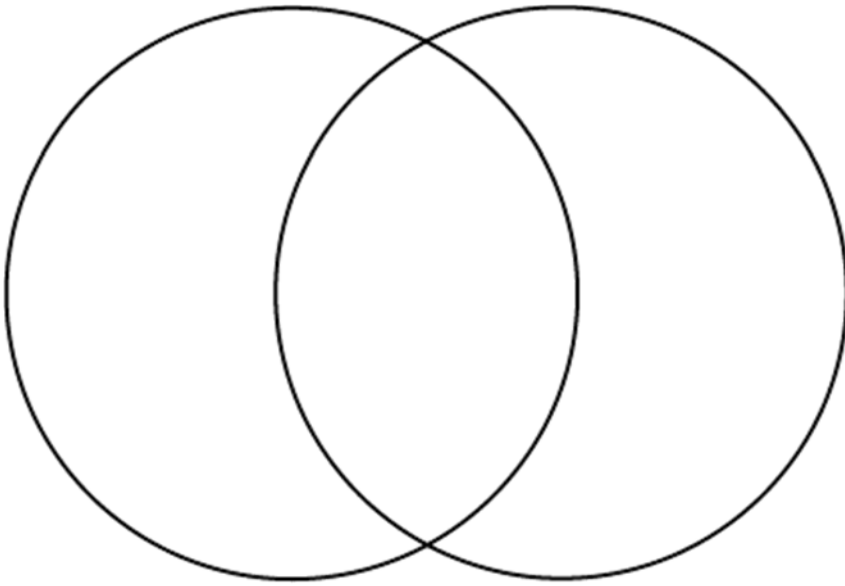
Last: Identify what information appears in MORE THAN ONE of the documents. When you are looking for the same information from more than one reliable source, you are CORROBORATING. The more reliable sources that say the same thing, the more likely the information is to be accurate and true.

NOTE: It is unlikely that these sources will say EXACTLY the same thing. You will have to use your judgment to decide if the words and phrases you see mean the same thing.

Fill out your chart with any information you can find in more than one place. Underline information you find in all three places.

### Part 3: Comparing Communism and Fascism with a Venn Diagram.

First, turn your paper over and draw a big Venn Diagram like this:



Communism

Both

Fascism

Then look at the high quality information you gathered on Communism and Fascism in your chart.

1. Decide what things Communism and Fascism have in common, and put those in the middle section of your Venn Diagram.
2. Put the things that ONLY apply to Communism on the Left side.
3. Put the things that ONLY apply to Fascism on the Right side.

### Part 4: Writing Comparison Statements

Use the information in your Venn Diagram to finish these Compare and Contrast Statements on your paper.

*Compare Statement*

\_\_\_\_\_ is similar to \_\_\_\_\_ because both  
\_\_\_\_\_.

*Contrast Statement*

I \_\_\_\_\_ is different from \_\_\_\_\_ whereas one \_\_\_\_\_ and the other  
\_\_\_\_\_.

## Document 1

### How Communism Works

In a perfect world, everyone would have food and shelter, and a true utopian society would be devoid of sexism, racism and other forms of oppression. But for most of the world's population, this perfect society just isn't possible. **Communism** is one proposed solution to these problems.

Most people know what communism is at its most basic level. Simply put, communism is the idea that everyone in a given society receives equal shares of the benefits that come from labor. Communism is designed to allow the poor to rise up and attain financial and social status equal to that of the middle-class and wealthy landowners. In order for everyone to achieve equality, wealth is **redistributed** so that the members of the upper class are brought down to the same financial and social level as the middle class. Communism also requires that all means of production be controlled by the state/government. In other words, no one can own his or her own business or produce his or her own goods because the state owns everything.

The political theory of socialism, which gave rise to communism, had been around for hundreds of years by the time a German philosopher named **Karl Marx** put his ideas on paper. Marx, also known as the father of communism, spent most of his life in exile in Great Britain and France. He wrote the **Communist Manifesto** in 1848, which later served as the inspiration for the formation of the Communist Party. *Communism is also known as "Marxism."*

Marx believed that a truly utopian (*perfect*) society must be classless and stateless. (It should be noted that Marx died well before any of his theories were put to the test.) Marx's main idea was simple: Free the lower class from poverty and give the poor a fighting chance. How he believed it should be accomplished, however, was another story. In order to liberate the lower class, Marx believed that the government would have to control all means of production so that no one could outdo anyone else by making more money. Unfortunately, that has been more difficult than he might have realized.

In the communist society that Marx described, the government has supreme authority through its total control of land and means of production. Because the government distributes land and property among the people, communism sets a standard of equality -- both economically and socially -- among its followers.

According to the philosopher **Frederick Engels'** "Principles of Communism," the plan for ultimate financial and social equality is built on the principle that the system should spread around the world until all countries are changed to a communist philosophy. This central goal of **internationalism** has caused capitalist nations to keep their guards up, fearing that communist economic practices might spread to their countries.

## Document 2

### How Fascism Works

During the George W. Bush administration, the government found a new word to characterize Islamic fundamentalists: fascists. The "War on Terror" has quietly become the "war against Islamic fascism," and the term "Islamofascism" has its own entry in Wikipedia. Then again, so does "Christian fascism." The word "fascism" is thrown around these days with abandon, often used to describe seemingly opposing philosophies. So what exactly is it?

The word "fascists" was used in the 1930s by Benito Mussolini, the leader of the first Fascist movement and the Fascist dictator of Italy before and during World War II. It most likely comes from the Italian word *fascis* and the Latin word *fasces*. *Fascis* means something along the lines of "bundle" or "unit." *Fasces* was a symbol of authority in ancient Rome, an axe surrounded by rods. These two roots offer a good glimpse into the basic beliefs of fascism: unity and power.

Part of the reason why fascism seems to apply to so many different social and political viewpoints is that it is difficult to define. Mussolini's brand of Fascism is not exactly like Hitler's brand of Fascism, which is not the same as Francisco Franco's Fascism (in Spain) nor the neofascist (post-WWII) movements characterized by groups like the Skinheads. Still, there are some basic principles that can identify a Fascist movement:

**Absolute power of the State:** The Fascist state is a glorious, living institution that is more important than any individual. All individuals are part of the State, but the State is greater than the sum of its parts. All individuals must set aside their own needs and themselves to the needs of the State. The state is supreme.

**Survival of the fittest:** A Fascist state is only as glorious and powerful as its ability to wage wars and win them. Peace is viewed as a weakness, aggression as a strength. Strength is the ultimate good and ensures the survival of the State.

**Strict social order:** Social classes are strictly maintained in order to avoid "mob rule" or any hint of chaos. Chaos is a threat to the State. The State's absolute power and greatness depends on the maintenance of a class system in which every individual has a specific place, and that place cannot be altered.

**Totalitarian leadership:** To maintain the power and greatness of the State requires a single, charismatic leader with absolute authority. This all-powerful, heroic leader maintains the unity and unquestioning submission required by the Fascist state. The authoritarian leader is often viewed as a symbol of the State.

Some people use "fascist" to describe any authoritarian person or government. However, authoritarianism is only part of the philosophy. Communism under Stalin was a Totalitarian political philosophy, too; but Fascism is directly opposed to Communism (along with democracy). In addition to the above principles, (1) a Fascist state also promotes a private economy that submits to government regulation; (2) Criticism (and often violent) attacks of any opposing views; (3) the ethnic dominance of its own people and the lower status of outsiders.

"Religious fascism," has been a subject of debate since this term was used to describe what some viewed as the relationship between the Catholic Church and the Mussolini regime. Since religion can be so closely tied to ethnicity, many scholars have found similarities between political fascism and religious fundamentalism. However, "Fascist" has become a common slur -- a term used to mean "really bad guy." Making a connection between a particular religion and fascism can be a dangerous because of the association with 1930's leaders and the difficulty in defining any singular fascist philosophy.

## Document 3

### Comparing Communism and Fascism #1

	<b>Communism</b>	<b>Fascism</b>
<b>Economic System</b>	The means of production are held in common. There is no ownership of capital goods. Production is organized to provide for human needs.. Communism is founded upon a condition of material abundance.	Focused on glorifying and strengthening the State. Both Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany attempted to pursue self-sufficiency.
<b>Political System</b>	Ideally, there is no leader, and the government is directed directly by the people. This has never been actually practiced, and nations have just used a one-party system.	One charismatic leader has absolute authority. Often the symbol of the state.
<b>Philosophy</b>	From each according to his ability, to each according to his needs. Free-access to the needs of society is made possible by advances in technology that allow for super-abundance.	No single philosophy. The state must gain glory through constant conquest, or war. Belief that the past was glorious
<b>Social Structure</b>	All class systems are eliminated.	Strict class structure believed necessary to prevent chaos. Everyone has a specific, defined role in society. While a certain race is considered superior, individuality among members of that race is discouraged.
<b>Religion</b>	Abolished - all religious is rejected.	Fascism is a civic religion - citizens worship the state through nationalism. The state only supports religious organizations that are nationally/historically tied to that state.
<b>Key Ledaers</b>	Karl Marx, Fredrich Engels, Vladimir Lenin, Josef Stalin, Fidel Castro, Kim Jon Il.	Benito Mussolini, Adolf Hitler, Francisco Franco, Emperor Hirohito
<b>Ideas</b>	Human societies have divided into conflicting classes. Existing class structures become unsustainable resulting in contradictions which can only be resolved by having the lower class overthrow the ruling class.	Union between businesses and the State, with the state telling the business what to do, with private ownership. Also Known as National-Socialism.
<b>Economic Coordination</b>	Economic planning is done by the government, including all decisions regarding investment, production and resource allocation.	People control businesses properly, but Government makes business decisions.
<b>Private Property</b>	Abolished.	Permitted
<b>Political Movements</b>	Leninism, Trotskyism, Marxism-Leninism, Maoism, Left-Communism.	Nazism, Falangism
<b>Free Choice</b>	In a communist society, where a leader does not exist, everything is chosen freely. In those that have been practiced though, all choices, including education, religion, employment and marriage, are controlled by the state.	The individual is considered meaningless; they must be dedicated to the power of the State. Traditional gender roles are upheld.
<b>Key elements</b>	An enhanced form of the principle of "Production for use".	Used to want to control the government, usually used by a harsh or demanding leader.
<b>Discrimination</b>	In theory, all members of the state are considered equal.	Belief in one superior race (Nazism). Blames society's problems on members of other races or social groups.

<b>View of the world</b>	Communism is an international movement; Communists in one country see themselves in solidarity with Communists in other countries.	Fascists are ultra-nationalists who see no reason to respect the rights of other nations.
--------------------------	--	---

Document 4

Comparing Communism and Fascism #2

<b>Communism</b>	<b>Fascism</b>
De-emphasizes nationality and promotes a sense of internationalism in its classless society of the world's workers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Emphasizes nationalistic differences as more important than class identification.</li> <li>• Promotes the nation's nationality as superior to all other nationalities.</li> </ul>
Calls for international revolution and the overthrow of all national governments to install its system.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is extremely nationalistic and militaristic in the defense of the national government.</li> <li>• Often favors the military conquest of other nations since it believes itself superior to other nations</li> </ul>
Uses Totalitarian governmental control of all aspects of life to control its system. Relies on propaganda and a secret police.	Uses Totalitarian governmental control of all aspects of life to control its system. Relies on propaganda and a secret police.
Promises a classless society with no class distinctions according to wealth; no private property.	Based on a capitalist economy protecting wealth and private property but ultimately controlling its use in the name of the nation.
Appeals most strongly to the lower and working classes, especially people without property or wealth.	Appeals most strongly to the upper and middle (the property-owning) classes who fear a leftist revolution that threatens to take away their wealth and property.
Finds individualism destructive to its means. It fears individualism as promoted by capitalism because capitalism allows the individual pursuit of wealth.	Finds individualism destructive to its means. It fears individualism as promoted by democracy because democracy allows individual rights and accomplishments.
Justifies its extreme methods of controlling individuals because capitalism seeks to destroy it.	Justifies its extreme methods of controlling individuals because communism seeks to destroy it.
Promises the eventual abolition of governmental control and of government itself. Government is not necessary because the cause of disorder (economic classes) has been removed.	Intends for governmental control to be permanent. It believes that strong governmental control is necessary to keep the order that brings the success of the state.

Is violently anti-fascist

Is violently anti-communist

EXTRA:

In many ways, **communist** and **fascist** movements had opposing ideologies but both ended up being repressive political systems based on the control of a single leader.

**Definition**

A theory or system of social organization based on the holding of all property in common, with actual ownership ascribed to the community or state.

A government system led by a dictator having complete power, forcibly oppressing opposition and criticism, regimenting all industry and emphasizing an aggressive nationalism.