This text is about the communist political system, communist, socialist and capitalist political theories and George Orwell’s book Animal Farm. There are some words in this text that you won’t see very often when you are reading but are important for this text. These words are in bold in the text. Look at the questions below about these vocabulary items and try to answer them. You should use a dictionary if you are unsure of the answers.

A: Pre-reading Vocabulary

1. Ideology (n)

‘Before 1991 the Communist ideology and the Soviet Union were a major threat to the Western Democracies.’

Is ideology (a) a system of beliefs or (b) a collection of countries?

2. Repressive (adj)

‘Communism has been associated with repressive regimes, which did not achieve a high standard of living.’

Does repressive mean that (a) the rights of people are restricted or that (b) the rights of people are increased?

3. Potent (adj)

‘Communism became a potent world force in 1917 when the Bolsheviks took power in Russia.’

In this example, does potent mean (a) strong or (b) weak?
4. To impose something on somebody/something (v)

‘Most countries in the World have modified capitalism by imposing government rules and regulations on methods of production.’

If you impose something on someone, do you (a) force them to do it or do you (b) let them decide if they want to do it?

5. An aspect (n)

‘Some aspects of the socialist system have been adopted in Europe and the United States to balance the excesses of capitalism.’

In this sentence, does aspect have a similar meaning to (a) effect or to (b) part?

6. A consensus (n)

‘The consensus in most of the Western World is that the most efficient form of economic organization is a modified capitalism.’

Is a consensus (a) a system of counting people or (b) a general agreement of opinion?

B: Scanning for information

_How are you going to answer these questions?_

These are scanning questions – to answer these questions in the time available, you will have to look at the text very quickly! Remember; you are looking for names, dates or numbers.

• Allow yourself only sixty (60) seconds to answer these questions.

1. In which year did Bolsheviks take power in Russia? ___________________

2. In which centuries were inequalities of wealth suffered by capitalist Europe? ___________________
Communism, Political Allegory & George Orwell’s Animal Farm

Introduction

Before 1991 Communist ideology and the Soviet Union were a major threat to the Western Democracies. In Animal Farm George Orwell demonstrated the moral bankruptcy\(^1\) of the Russian Communist system.

Literal Meaning Vs Symbolic Meaning

An allegory is an artistic method in which the characters and events of the story represent something else. The literal content of an allegorical work is less important than its symbolic meaning. Allegory is used in literature, visual arts, drama and ballet. Animal Farm is one of the premier\(^2\) works of modern fiction that uses allegory.

Communism

Communism is an economic/political system in which all of the factories, farms and other methods of economic production are owned and controlled by the community for the benefit of all the people. Each person is supposed to work according to his ability and to receive benefits from society according to his needs. Theoretically, in the ultimate stages of the development of society, when all the attributes of capitalism have been abolished\(^3\), government would become unnecessary. In reality communism has been associated with repressive regimes, which did not achieve a high standard of living.

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\(^1\) Moral bankruptcy means that the people running the Soviet Union did not look after the Soviet people very well, they did the opposite of what communism was supposed to achieve.

\(^2\) In this sentence, premier has a similar meaning to most important/most famous.

\(^3\) If something is abolished, it is stopped and removed.
Socialism & Socialist philosophers

Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels developed communist social philosophy in the 19th Century. It became a potent world force in 1917 when followers of its theories, the Bolsheviks, took power in Russia and created the Soviet Union. Since the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, Communism has been abandoned by most governments and is no longer considered a threat to the Western democracies.

Capitalism

The two other major theories of how economies should be managed are capitalism and socialism. Capitalism is a system in which the methods of production and distribution are privately owned and are managed for profit. The exchange of goods and services takes place through a free market system governed by supply and demand. The United States and most countries in the World have modified capitalism by imposing government rules and regulations on the production of goods and services and on the markets when necessary to ensure the public welfare. Examples of these regulations are 1) the wage and hour laws, and 2) health and safety codes.

Socialism

Socialism is an economic system in which the most important means of production, as well as the means of distribution of goods and services, are owned by the state and managed for the welfare of society as a whole. In a socialist state, for example, the natural resources, factories, large farms, the banking system, and the markets would be owned and operated by the state.

Aspects of Socialism

Socialism, like communism, was a reaction to the vast inequalities of wealth suffered by capitalist Europe in the 18th and 19th centuries. There have been many governments in Europe and the Third World with socialist goals that they were not able to fully achieve. Some aspects of the socialist system have been, to varying degrees, adopted in Europe and

4 The Bolsheviks were a political party that introduced communism to Russia.
5 Vast = very large.
the United States to balance the excesses of capitalism. These include, welfare (*income assistance for the poor*), national retirement plans (*Social Security*), medical care and unemployment insurance.

**Comfort through Humor**

One of the things that have often saved humanity is the ability to find *humor*\(^6\) in terrible circumstances: The citizens of the Soviet Union created a large number of jokes about their repressive government. Two examples are given below:

**Question**: What is the difference between American capitalism and Soviet socialism?

**Answer**: Capitalism is based on the exploitation of man by man. In Soviet socialism it is the opposite.

A new prisoner arrives at a prison camp and is asked by another prisoner about the length of his prison sentence. "Seven years," he replies, "but there was no crime. I didn't do anything." The other prisoner responds, "You must be lying, the sentence for doing nothing is only five years."

**The Western Consensus**

The consensus in the United States and most of the Western World is that the most efficient form of economic organization is a modified capitalism in which the methods of production and distribution are privately owned but also have government regulation to keep markets free, prevent abuses and ensure public safety. A safety net is provided to redistribute wealth to those unable to provide for themselves, such as the poor and the *elderly*\(^7\).

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\(^6\) *Humor* is related to comedy and laughter.

\(^7\) *Elderly* is a formal word that means old.
C: Comprehension Questions

How are you going to answer these questions?

These questions ask you to fill in the gaps with suitable words from the text. You are going to find the answers in specific paragraphs in the text. Look at the question first and decide which word(s) in the question will help you to locate the correct part of the text. Important: To help you practice this skill, the key words in the questions are in bold!

- Fill in the gaps using words and/or phrases from the text.
- The questions are in the same order as the text.
- Use the bold words in these questions to help you find the relevant part of the text.

1. The ______________________ of the Communist system in Russia was shown by George Orwell in his book Animal Farm.

2. In an allegorical work the symbolic meaning is more important than the _______________________.

3. In ________________, the political system is run so that all methods of economic production are owned and controlled by the community for the benefit of the whole society.

4. ____________________________ don’t think of Communism as a threat since the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991. In fact Communism has been ________________ by a lot of governments.

5. A _______________________ governed by supply and demand allows the exchange of goods and services to take place. This is the basis for the economic theory known as _________________.

- There are no bold words in the following questions.
- Read the questions carefully and decide which words will help you to locate the correct part of the text.
- You should make a note of the keywords – question six is given as an example.
6. In the economic system known as ___________, the most important methods of production and distribution are owned by the state and managed for the ________________ in its entirety.

   Key words that helped me: economic system / owned by the state

7. Huge __________________ were suffered by the capitalist countries of Europe in the 18th and 19th centuries, and socialism was a ____________ to this.

   Key words that helped me:

8. The people of the Soviet Union found humor in their awful situation, and made a lot of jokes about their __________________________.

   Key words that helped me:

9. Modified capitalism is defined as the system in which the methods of production and distribution are not only privately owned but are also subject to _________________.

   Key words that helped me:
A: Pre-reading vocabulary

1. a  2. a  3. a  4. a  5. b  6. b

B: Scanning questions

1. 1917
2. 18th and 19th centuries

C: Comprehension questions

1. The **moral bankruptcy** of the **Communist system** in Russia was shown by George Orwell in his book Animal Farm.

2. In an **allegorical work** the **symbolic meaning** is more important than the **literal content**.

3. In **communism**, the **political system** is run so that all methods of economic production are **owned and controlled by the community** for the benefit of the whole society.

4. **Western democracies** don’t think of Communism as a threat since the **collapse of the Soviet Union** in 1991. In fact Communism has been **abandoned** by a lot of **governments**.

5. A **free market system** governed by **supply and demand** allows the **exchange of goods and services** to take place. This is the basis for the economic theory known as **capitalism**.

*For the following questions, the key words are shown in **bold**.*

6. In the **economic system** known as **socialism**, the most important methods of production and distribution are **owned by the state** and managed for the **welfare of society** in its entirety.

7. Huge **inequalities of wealth** were suffered by the **capitalist countries of Europe** in the 18th and 19th centuries, and **socialism** was a **reaction** to this.

8. The people of the Soviet Union found **humor** in their awful situation, and made a lot of **jokes** about their **repressive government**.

9. **Modified capitalism** is defined as the system in which the methods of production and distribution are not only **privately owned** but are also subject to **government regulation**.