

Pope John Paul II | Lesson Plan

What is communism and why did Pope John Paul II fight against it?

Students learn about Pope John Paul II, who promoted peace, justice, and compassion while fighting against communism in his homeland of Poland. Students learn about the dangers of communism, its negative effects on a country, and how systems in the United States vastly differ from those of communist nations.

Learning Objectives:

- Identify the role Pope John Paul II played in fighting against communism.
- Identify the negative effects of communism.
- Evaluate the similarities between Nazism and communism.
- Evaluate the differences between communism and the United States government and economic systems.

Key Vocabulary:

- **Communism:** A political and economic system where all property and resources are owned and controlled by the government. The result of this system is often dictatorship and government control of every aspect of people's lives.
- **Pope:** The leader of the Catholic church.
- **Nazis:** Members of the German political party known as the National Socialist German Workers' Party. The Nazi government ruled as a dictatorship, conquered much of Europe, and killed millions of people—including six million Jews in a tragic event called the Holocaust. They also killed non-Jewish religious leaders, such as priests.

Educational Standards: CCRA.L.1, CCRA.L.2, CCRA.L.4, CCRA.W.4, CCRA.R.7, CCRA.SL.1, CCRA.SL.2, CCRA.SL.4, CCRA.W.2

Academic Subject Areas: History, Judeo-Christian Values, American Values

What You'll Need

- Video: *Pope John Paul II: The Pope Who Stood Against Communism* (Watch [Here](#))
- Worksheet: *Pope John Paul II: The Pope Who Stood Against Communism* (Click [Here](#))
- Individually wrapped candy pieces or other trinkets of choice that can represent money

Lesson Plan (45 minutes)

Warm-Up: (15 minutes)

1. Begin the lesson by passing out the "Pope John Paul II Worksheet."
2. Give each student an equal number of candy pieces or trinkets, representing "money."



3. Explain the rules of *Rock, Paper, Scissors* and have students pair up to play. Each time a student wins, they take one piece of candy from the other player. Students can continue playing with new partners (or remain with the same partner) until most are out of candy.
4. Once the game has progressed, ask students to count their candy and note the varying amounts.
5. Ask the students with the most “money” how they feel about their success. Did they feel like they earned it through skill or luck?
6. Ask the students with the least “money” how they feel about losing. Was the competition fair?
7. Briefly introduce what is typical in a capitalist economy: People are allowed to own their own businesses and work hard to earn money, which means some people might have more than others based on how well they do. This system encourages competition, where effort and skill can lead to different rewards.
8. Ask students how does the outcome of the game reflect real-life situations in capitalist economies where effort and competition can lead to different outcomes?
9. Next, redistribute the candy so that every student has the same amount, regardless of how much they originally had/won.
10. Ask how they feel now that everyone has the same amount of money.
11. Briefly explain what communism is using the Key Vocabulary term listed above.
12. Discuss whether students would have tried as hard during the game if they knew they would all end up with the same amount of candy in the end. How does this reflect the idea of communism, where resources are distributed equally regardless of effort?
13. Allow students to share their thoughts aloud and complete the Warm-Up Activity on the worksheet, reflecting on how the game made them feel and how it relates to the concepts of capitalism and communism.
14. Transition to the lesson by explaining that they will now learn about Pope John Paul II, who fought against communism because of its negative effects on freedom and prosperity in his homeland of Poland. They will also learn about the consequences of communism.

Watch and Complete: (20 minutes)

1. Watch the video.
2. Encourage students to complete the worksheet as they watch the video. Depending on the age of students, pause throughout the video to allow students to answer questions, especially short answer responses..

Wrap-Up: (10-15 minutes)

1. Give students time to finish their worksheets. Collect them as a formative assessment or lead a class discussion.
2. Discuss the video's message about how communism impacts individual talent and work ethic, contrasting it with systems like that in the U.S. Invite students to share their

answers from the worksheet, particularly focusing on Making Connections #9 and revisiting their initial thoughts on question #4 from the Warm Up Activity.

3. As a closing thought, encourage students to take a stand against injustice, just like Pope John Paul did, and to find like-minded peers to support them in standing up for what's right.

Don't have time for the full lesson? Quick Activity (15-20 minutes)

Distribute the worksheet and allow students to complete it while they follow along with the video.