



VICTIMS OF COMMUNISM MEMORIAL FOUNDATION

Communism: A History of Repression, Violence, and Victims

Chapter 7 Assessments and Assignments

Create the Context

Homework and preparation:

- Assign students the chapter essay, “Famine as a Weapon,” the chapter story and the Primary Source, N. Reva’s letter to Joseph Vissarionovich.
- Assign students the videos listed below as a primer on Joseph Stalin’s use of man-made famine as a weapon.
 - *Remembering the Holodomor: The Stalin Era Famine in the Ukraine* (2 minutes), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P2Rz1T0XfOc>. *
 - *Holodomor: Stalin's Secret Genocide* (16 minutes), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Sr5WkhEiqcY>

Wrap-Up Questions

- What was the Holodomor?
- What tools of communism were used in the Holodomor?
- Who initiated the Holodomor and why?
- Which groups were affected by collectivization and the Holodomor in the USSR?
- What were the human costs of the Holodomor?
- Based on what you have learned so far, how does the Holodomor fit into the larger legacy of Stalinism?

- Why wasn't the Holodomor widely known about at the time?

Assessments

- **In-Class Assessment 1: Holodomor Victim Interviews**
Ask students to find a Holodomor victim story and write a short paragraph on the person's experience and a second paragraph of what, as that victim, they would tell *New York Times* reporter Walter Duranty about their life during the famine. Present their story to the class.
- **In-Class Assessment 2: Famine as a Tool of Communism**
Students should choose three selections from the following source: *Holodomor Reader: A Sourcebook on The Famine of 1932-1933 in Ukraine* by Bohdan Klid and Alexander J. Motyl (2012). Students should use three selections of their choice to explain in a short essay how the tools of communism were used in the Holodomor.
- **Take-Home Assessment: Contemporary Connections**
Instruct students to find a modern example of a famine and ask them to compare and contrast their example with the Holodomor. The key takeaway should be the discussion of what decisions and policies did, or did not, play a role in the two examples.

Primary Source Activity Have one-half of the class write a letter addressed to Stalin as if they are victims of the Holodomor and the other half write Stalin's response to such a letter. When the writing assignment is completed, share the letters and discuss.

Primary Sourceⁱ

1 May 1940....

Dear Joseph Vissarionovich,

You are, it would seem, our friend, teacher, and father, so the bold idea occurred to me of writing to you with the whole truth....

The dark reaction of the hungry year of 1933, when people ate tree bark, grass, and even their own children, when hundreds of thousands of people died of starvation, and all this before the eyes of the communists, who drove their cars across our bodies and impudently praised life...

...[T]he people were dying of hunger not because there was a poor harvest but because the state took their grain, and that grain lay in the Zahotzerno [Grain Procurement] warehouses in elevators and was being distilled into alcohol for intoxication, while people were dying of hunger.... [I]n 1933, when hungry people gathered grains of corn by the Zahotzerno warehouse at the Khorol station, they were shot like dogs; a detachment of mounted police was dispatched from the town of Khorol, and like lions, with sabers drawn, they pursued us hungry ones, and there was grain in the warehouses, there was flour, but people were dying of hunger, which means that all this was carried out deliberately by the state, and the state knew about this....

The village council does not issue death certificates for 1933 because mortality in that year was so great that in more than fifty years so many people did not die as in that year. Whoever was left alive, having endured such difficulties—that person is already ruined because, as I know from my own experience, we collective farmers were swollen from hunger, we fell on our feet, we lost our ability to think, we lost a certain percentage of our eyesight, there is no health, no strength, a general weakness of the bodily organism, and a great incidence of hospital visits and many sick people in those areas where the year 1933 made itself felt. All this took place before the eyes of the communists—how can they not be sorrowful and ashamed that they could not besiege the higher authorities and sound the alarm about this misfortune, so that it would not exist.... [T]he communists cared more for their own skins, for if anyone endeavored to stand up for the people with a mere word, his fate would be settled along with ours. That is how we are valued, Joseph Vissarionovich....

N. Reva

ⁱ Letter from the collective farmer Mykola Reva to Joseph Stalin about the Famine of 1933 in Ukraine. In *Rozsekrechena pam'iat'*, trans. by Bohdan Klid (2007), 573–75, 576, <https://holodomor.ca/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/5.-Holodomor-survivors-MY.pdf>.