



Worksheet 5 – Types of socialism - note taking

Read the extract below from '*Political Ideologies – key themes* (in summary)' by Andrew Heywood and use the following table to write short notes identifying different types of socialism.

Socialism

Socialism is an ideology that is defined by its opposition to capitalism and its attempt to provide a more humane and socially worthwhile alternative. The core of socialism is a vision of human beings as social creatures united by their common humanity; as the poet John Donne put it, 'No man is an Island entire of itself; every man is a piece of the Continent, a part of the main'. This highlights the degree to which individual identity is fashioned by social interaction and the membership of social groups and collective bodies. Socialists therefore prefer cooperation to competition, and favour collectivism over individualism. The central, and some would say defining, value of socialism is equality, socialism sometimes being portrayed as a form of egalitarianism. Socialists believe that a measure of social equality is the essential guarantee of social stability and cohesion, and that it promotes freedom in the sense that it satisfies material needs and provides the basis for personal development. The socialist movement has traditionally articulated the interests of the industrial working class, seen as systematically oppressed or structurally disadvantaged within the capitalist system. The goal of socialism is thus to reduce or abolish class divisions.

Socialism, however, contains a bewildering variety of divisions and rival traditions. Utopian socialism, or ethical socialism, advances an essentially moral critique of capitalism. In short, socialism is portrayed as morally superior to capitalism because human beings are ethical creatures, bound to one another by the ties of love, sympathy and compassion. Scientific socialism, undertakes a scientific analysis of historical and social development, which, in the form of Marxism, suggests not that socialism 'should' replace capitalism, but predicts that it inevitably 'would' replace capitalism. A second distinction is about the 'means' of achieving socialism, namely the difference between revolution and reform. Revolutionary socialism, most clearly reflected in the communist tradition, holds that socialism can only be introduced by the revolutionary overthrow of the existing political and social system, usually based upon the belief that the existing state structures are irredeemably linked to capitalism and the interests of the ruling class. Reformist socialism (sometimes termed evolutionary, parliamentary or democratic socialism), on the other hand, believes in 'socialism through the ballot box', and thus accepts basic liberal democratic principles such as consent, constitutionalism and party competition. Finally, there are profound divisions over the 'end' of socialism, that is, the nature of the socialist project. Fundamentalist socialism aims to abolish and replace the capitalist system, viewing socialism as qualitatively different from capitalism. Fundamentalist socialists, such as Marxists and communists, generally equate socialism with common ownership of some form. Revisionist socialism aims not to abolish capitalism but to reform it, looking to reach an accommodation between the efficiency of the market and the enduring moral vision of socialism. This is most clearly expressed in social democracy.

Article: *Political ideologies - key themes (in summary)* © [Andrew Heywood](#)

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Scientific socialism	
Revolutionary socialism	
Reformist socialism	
Fundamentalist socialism	
Revisionist socialism	