Communism vs. Capitalism

**Instructors:** Rebecca Lewis

**Context:**
1. Subject: US History
   Grade Level: 8th Grade
   Type of school: Public High School Trumansburg, NY
   Number of Students: 20-25 students
   Time allotted for lesson: 42 Minutes
   Students: There are anywhere from 20-25 students in each class. Students are from Trumansburg, NY, which is a rural area, but it is very connected to Ithaca, NY, a college town. Some students have learning disabilities.

2. Lesson/Topic: This lesson will allow students to visualize and practice the differences between capitalism and communism.

3. The majority of students in these classes are from Trumansburg, NY. The majority of the students are white. Their socioeconomic status varies.

**Central Focus:**
The central focus of this lesson is for students to learn about the systems of capitalism and communism through a simulation. Students will learn and understand the difference between these two ideologies and the importance these differences played in the Cold War.

**State/National/Common Core Standards Addressed:**

State Standards
Unit II. United States as a Leader of the Free World
   B. United States and Soviet Union Emerge as World Powers
      1. The Cold War
         a. Communism
         b. Capitalism

National Standards
Standard 5: Individuals, Groups, and Institutions: Institutions are the formal and informal political, economic, and social organizations that help us carry out, organize, and manage our daily affairs.
   This standard is met by students engaging in a simulation about communism and capitalism to understand the effects of institutions on groups and individuals.

**Learning Objectives:**
1. SWBAT explain the differences between capitalism, socialism, and communism.
2. SWBAT reflect and express their ideas about the problems with capitalism and socialism based on the activity.
3. SWBAT assimilate the simulation to the U.S. and Soviet Union in the Cold War.
**Assessment:** (Informal and Formal, Formative and Summative)

Formative Feedback:
- Class notes
- Class discussion
- Reflection questions
- Rock, Paper, Scissors Activity

Informal feedback: Rock, Paper, Scissors Activity and class discussion

Formal feedback: Class note and reflection questions

**Academic Language:**
- Content-specific vocabulary:

  *Communism*-A political theory derived from Karl Marx, advocating class war and leading to a society in which all property is publicly owned and each person works and is paid according to their abilities and needs.

  *Capitalism*-An economic and political system in which a country’s trade and industry are controlled by private owners for profit, rather than by the state.

**Prior Knowledge/Prerequisite Skills:**
Students will be familiar with the two world powers of the Soviet Union and the U.S. based on discussions in class during the WWII unit.
Students know the game Rock, Paper, Scissors.

**Lesson Procedures: Instructional Strategies and Learning Tasks:**

**Launch/Motivation:**
Hand out Hershey kisses to students

**Step-by-Step Procedures:**
1. Students will enter the room and take a seat.
2. As students sit down they will receive 3 Hershey kisses except for 3-4 students in the class who will receive 10 Hershey kisses.
3. As the students complain about how this is unfair, I will write it down on the board.
4. Teacher will instruct the students to play Rock, Paper, Scissors following these directions. Students will play for Hershey kisses. They can make a round worth 1 or more Hershey kisses. When someone has lost all of his/her kisses he/she must sit down and begin answering the reflection questions in the ‘Intro to Cold War’ packet. Students will be instructed to not eat their Hershey Kisses until the end of the period. I will tell them when they can eat the chocolate.
5. After about 5 minutes, depending on how the game is going, tell all students to sit down with the number of kisses they have. Allow time for these students to work on the reflection questions.
6. Begin the class discussion about the activity by asking if the students thought the game was fair. Write down the students’ responses on the board.
7. Ask students if the teacher should have stepped in to make it fairer. If so, how?
8. As the discussion moves toward socialism redistribute the chocolate so everyone has the same amount.
9. Ask students if this is fair and write down their complaints.
10. Ask students if they want to play again and why or why not.
11. Explain that the initial game was capitalism and the redistribution was socialism.
12. Have students pull out their packet and turn to the Marxist page.
13. With an overhead walk through the Marxist ideas and the equivalency for the Rock, Paper, Scissors game.
14. Discuss the issues with socialism and communism with everyone getting the same amount, people lose initiative. Ask the class the questions of what some issues in practice could be compared to Marx’s theory.
15. Conclude with connecting the activity to the Cold War by discussing Soviet Union as socialist run by the communist party and the U.S. capitalist, two conflicting ideologies.

**Differentiation:**
Material will be given and understood through visual, oral, written, and discussion modes.

**Instructional Resources and Materials:**
- Hershey Kisses
- Intro to Cold War Packet
- Whiteboards and markers

**Theoretical Principles and/or Research-Based Best Practices:**
This lesson incorporates pedagogical best practice by using experiential learning through the rock, paper, scissors activity to simulate capitalism and socialism. According to John Dewey, experiential learning allows students to learn by doing, which encourages more meaningful learning and engagement from students.