

Teaching About Command Economies Using TV, Music, and Movies

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Comrade Marx



Background

- Despite horrific historical record, command economies are increasingly viewed favorably
- 2024 YouGov survey – 25% of 18–29-year-olds had favorable opinion of communism and 48% of socialism
- One explanation for this is ignorance.
- Another is positive portrayal in pop culture

The Case for Pop Culture to Teach Command Economies

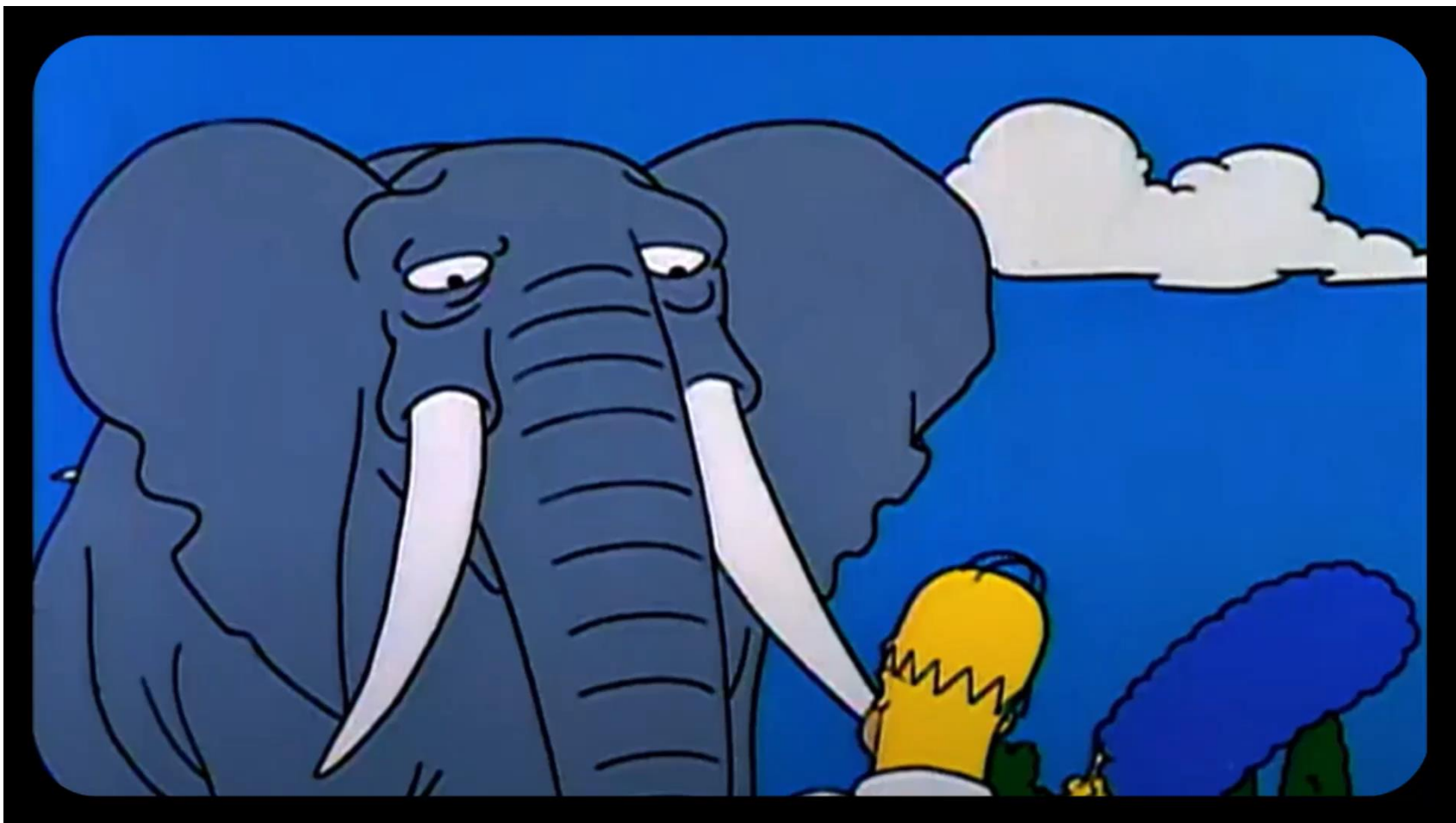
- Clips from pop culture are a great way to teach students (so many examples!)
- Students react to the visual stimulus
- Focus on the what, how and for whom...

Where do you start?

- Student perceptions are slanted by idealism.
- What they know of the realities of command economic systems is usually pretty limited.
- Start with something funny, then ask a few questions.

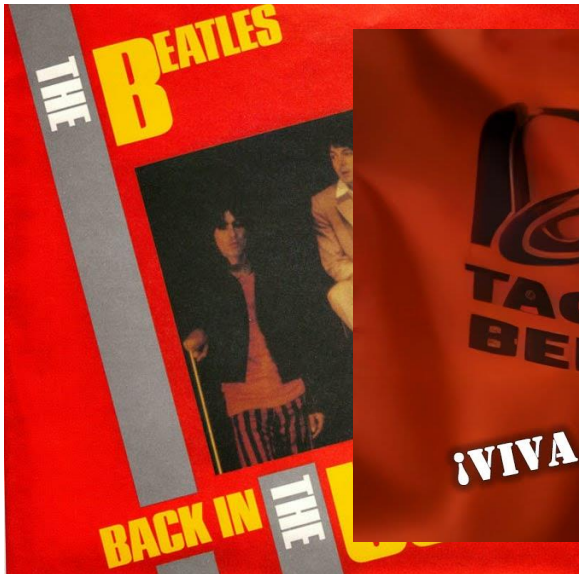


The Simpsons



Why do you think a command economy is a good thing?

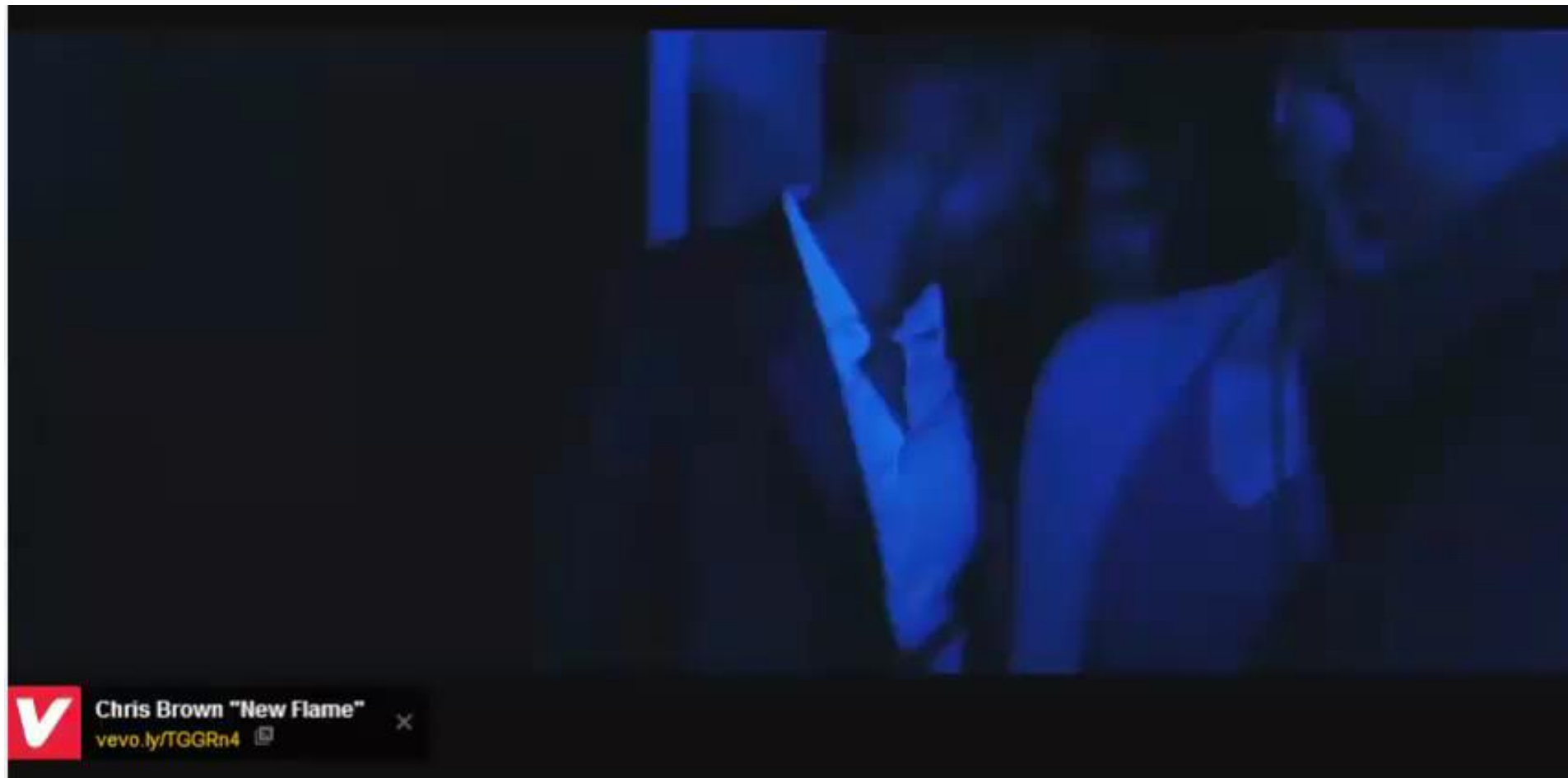
- Don't know how lucky you are boys...
- *Guerrillero Heroico*
- Yiva Gordita!



Is Lil Wayne a Communist?



Jay Sean ft. Lil Wayne: “Down”





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Lil Wayne Net Worth \$170 Million



Birdman



Gudda
Gudda



Cortez
Bryant



B.G.



Reginae
Carter

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**What does it look like when
government dictates the what,
how and for whom?**

The Hunger Games

- Popular book series turned into movie franchise
- Original movies released between 2012-2015, but prequel books and movies still being released.
- Government decides the “What, How, and For Whom
- Resorts to violence
- Forces kids into a “battle to the death” annually



The Hunger Games



The Hunger Games

- Katniss Everdeen excited by a piece of bread
- Have you or your students ever been so excited about groceries?



Do you know where this is?



Game of Thrones

**Westeros
During
House of the
Dragon**

Shanghai in 40 years



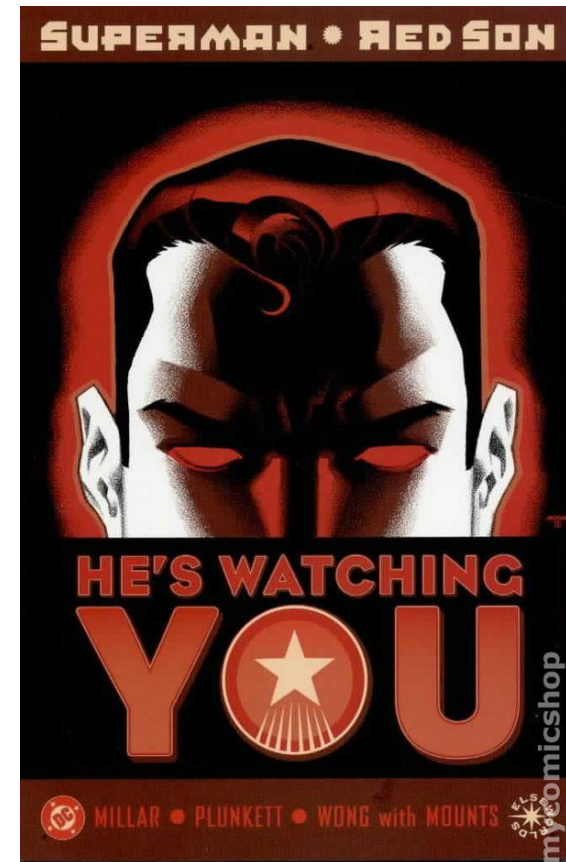
Game of Thrones

- 200 years in Westeros, no economic growth!
- Awful compared to many modern cities, but Westeros has a command economy.
- Governments in Game of Thrones determine the “what, how, and for whom?”



Superman: Red Son

- What if... Kal-El landed in Soviet Russia
- How would he "fix" the world?
- Would it be better?



Soviet Superman's economy

- *What to produce:* Superman determines that some things are no longer safe or proper for people to produce.
- *How to produce:* Superman uses technology and guidance from the alien named Brainiac to increase production. Everyone has a job. Superman's powers enable him to observe everyone at all times, so if someone is slacking on the job, he knows.
- *For whom things are produced:* Superman's initial objective is to improve the lives of the people under his control, but gradually power becomes the ultimate goal of even Superman.

SUPERMAN: RED SON

(2020)

WARNER BROS. ANIMATION

The Media: Positive View

Source	Content
“Back in the USSR” by the Beatles	Students may think the USSR is a good place to be
Che Guevera	Che Guevera is portrayed positively in <i>The Motorcycle Diaries</i>
	The stylized poster made from the <i>Guerrillero Heroico</i> photo of Che
“Down” by Jay Sean featuring Lil’ Wayne	Lil’ Wayne wears a communist shirt
<i>The Last of Us</i>	Communism is presented as idyllic
<i>The Simpsons</i>	Homer explains that “in theory, communism works”

The Media: Consequences

Source	Content
<i>The Americans</i>	Phillip comments on food and electricity in the USA vs. USSR
Boris Yeltsin	A picture of Yeltsin at the grocery store
<i>Game of Thrones</i>	No economic growth in Westeros in over 200 years
<i>The Hunger Games</i>	Squashing protests in a district
<i>The Hunger Games</i>	District 7 rebels
<i>The Hunger Games</i>	Katniss is excited by a piece of bread
<i>The Hunger Games</i>	The government dictates the what, how, and for-whom
<i>The Last of Us</i>	Traits of communist governments in Boston and elsewhere
<i>Moscow on the Hudson</i>	Many choices of coffee and no lines in the United States
<i>The Simpsons</i>	Communism fails and Fidel Castro acknowledges it is “mumbo jumbo”
<i>Superman: Red Son</i>	The Superman museum
<i>Superman: Red Son</i>	Putting the world in a bottle shows the end result of Superman’s dictatorial control
“Why We Build the Wall” from <i>Hadestown</i>	Hades directs slaves to build the wall for him

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5:02

The Anthropocene Will Eat Itself

Cormac Donnelly

2.4K views • 3 months ago



MAKING FICTION FLOW

32:50

MAKING FICTION FLOW

Catherine Grant

1.2K views • 8 months ago



MadMensBabylon.m4v

21:28

MadMensBabylon.m4v

Ariane Hudelet

999 views • 8 months ago



MY AMERICANS

INTERTEXTUAL MEANING MAKING AND TELEVISION DRAMA

10:41

My Americans: Intertextual Meaning Making and Television...

David R. Coon

3.2K views • 1 year ago

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Opus (Film Review for The Conversation)

0:44

Opus (Film Review for The Conversation)

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Longest Penalty Shot - Common Knowledge

1:05

Longest Penalty Shot - Common Knowledge

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IN THE IMPASSE

1:39

IN THE IMPASSE

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Seinfeld: The Bottle Deposit

4:30

Seinfeld: The Bottle Deposit

Linda Ghent

4K views • 9 years ago

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2:27

Will McAvoy Calls out News Organizations in News Night



Does ICE have Both Local and National Authority in The Good...

2:06

Does ICE have Both Local and National Authority in The Good...



George Washington Resigns Presidency in the Musical...

5:27

George Washington Resigns Presidency in the Musical...



Jefferson and Hamilton Debate Foreign Policy in Cabinet Battle...

2:24

Jefferson and Hamilton Debate Foreign Policy in Cabinet Battle...

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Will this
mumbo
jumbo
work?

