

Dictator Deep Dive: Stalin vs. Hitler

Get ready to explore two of the most infamous figures of the 20th century! While often grouped together as 'dictators,' understanding their specific paths, beliefs, and actions reveals crucial differences and chilling similarities.

Introduction: What Makes a Dictator? (15 mins)

Start by thinking: What words come to mind when you hear 'dictator'? What does it mean for someone to have total power? Briefly discuss or jot down initial thoughts. Consider if all dictators are the same. We'll investigate this by comparing Stalin and Hitler.

Part 1: Gathering Intel - Research Phase (60-90 mins)

Your mission is to gather information on both Joseph Stalin and Adolf Hitler. Use the provided online resources or other reliable sources. Focus on gathering details for the following categories for BOTH leaders. Use your graphic organizer (Venn Diagram or Comparison Chart) to record your findings:

- **Background:** Early life, key experiences before taking power.
- **Rise to Power:** How did they achieve leadership? What events or conditions helped them?
- **Ideology:** What were their core beliefs? (Communism for Stalin, Nazism for Hitler). What were their main goals for their country?
- **Methods of Control:** How did they maintain power? (e.g., secret police, propaganda, purges, censorship, use of fear, youth groups).
- **Economic Policies:** How did they manage their country's economy? (e.g., Five-Year Plans, collectivization vs. state control with private industry).
- **Use of Violence/Terror:** What specific actions did they take against perceived enemies or specific groups? (e.g., The Great Purge, Holodomor vs. Holocaust, Night of the Long Knives).
- **Foreign Policy Goals:** What were their ambitions regarding other countries?

Resource Tip: Look for specific examples and details, not just general statements.

Part 2: Analyzing the Data - Comparison (30 mins)

Now, look closely at your completed graphic organizer.

- **Identify Similarities:** What common methods, characteristics, or outcomes do you see? (Think about personality cults, use of propaganda, elimination of opposition, expansionist ideas, etc.)
- **Identify Differences:** What were the most significant differences in their ideologies, targets of persecution, economic approaches, or ultimate goals?
- **Discuss/Reflect:** Why do you think these similarities and differences existed? How did the specific historical context of Russia vs. Germany shape each leader? Which leader do you think ultimately had a more devastating long-term impact, and why? (There's no single right answer here, focus on supporting your reasoning).

Part 3: Synthesizing Your Findings - Choose Your Output (45-60 mins)

Demonstrate your understanding by choosing ONE of the following:

1. **Comparative Essay:** Write a short essay (2-3 paragraphs) comparing and contrasting Stalin and Hitler, using specific evidence from your research. Focus on the most significant similarities and differences.
2. **'Meet the Dictators' Interview Script:** Imagine you're a journalist. Write an interview script where you ask both Stalin and Hitler the same set of probing questions based on your research categories. Include their likely (contrasting or similar) answers based on their known beliefs and actions.
3. **Mini-Presentation Outline:** Create a bullet-point outline for a short presentation comparing the two leaders. Include key points for each category and a concluding thought on their legacies.

Conclusion: Lessons from History (10 mins)

Wrap up by reflecting on the dangers of unchecked power and totalitarianism. What warning signs can we learn to recognize from studying figures like Stalin and Hitler? How does understanding these historical figures help us understand world events today?

Assessment:

Your understanding will be assessed based on:

- The thoroughness and accuracy of your research notes/graphic organizer.
- The clarity and insight shown in your chosen synthesis output (Essay, Script, or Outline).
- Your ability to articulate similarities and differences using specific historical details during discussion or in your written work.