

Karl Marx (1818 -83)

Sociology skills

- Analysis and Interpretation
- Evaluation

Key skills

- Communication

Stimulus materials

Karl Marx and social class

Marx thought that the social world could be divided into two groups in every society.

One of these groups would own everything and another would own and control nothing. In our own society, the people who own and control things are the **bourgeoisie**. The bourgeoisie own and control the **means of production** which are the factories and money. These people are also called **capitalists** because they have capital, which is wealth that they can invest in business to make more money for themselves.

The people who own and control nothing are called the **proletariat**. People who are members of the proletariat class are called **proletarians**. Proletarians are members of the working class. Under Marxist thinking, almost everybody is a proletarian, including people who would be middle class under the Registrar General's Index. Almost everyone is proletarian.

The bourgeoisie are able to control other people and maintain all of their wealth and power by **controlling the ideas that people have about society**.

Understanding the stimulus

1. What does the term 'bourgeoisie' mean?
2. Who are the 'proletariat'?
3. When was Karl Marx born?
4. What is capital?
5. How do capitalists become rich and powerful?
6. How do capitalists maintain power and wealth?

Development and Revision

1. What criticisms can you discover about the Marxist view of society?
2. What can you discover about the life of Karl Marx from textbooks, CD Rom and the Internet?
3. How have the ideas of Karl Marx influenced the politics of this century?