

“Beyond Labels” Study Guide and Answer Key

A segment-by-segment guide to the film, with its working definitions, discussion questions, essay prompts and an answer key for the twelve viewing questions on H5.

18 MINUTES 36 SECONDS · GRADES 11–12 AND AP GOVERNMENT · USE WITH L3 AND H5

1 · BEFORE VIEWING

Cold definitions. Before students know the film’s topic, have them write one-sentence definitions of three words: socialism, fascism and authoritarianism (Part 1 of **H5**). They revise their own definitions after the film, and the gap between the two versions shows the lesson working.

One framing question on the board: “When you call someone a political name, what are you trying to do: describe them, or defeat them?” The film’s first two minutes answer it directly.

BEST ORDER

Run the Quiz first, on paper with **H1** or in a live session. When the film introduces the Nolan Chart, students have already plotted themselves on its two axes, and the film explains the map they are standing on.

Watch free: youtube.com/watch?v=lpASNs_7DI8. Produced by Free to Choose Network and izzitEDU, featuring historian Rainer Zitelmann, Advocates for Self-Government president Mike Sertic, and Daniel DiMartino. Quotations and timestamps come from the film’s official captions.

The historical case includes archival footage of Nazi Germany. Preview it as you would any World War II material.

2 · VIEWING GUIDE: SIX SEGMENTS

For a single class period, run the film straight through and use the starred questions (★). The numbering matches **H5**; answers are in section 6.

00:00–02:30 · Labels as weapons

A montage of political insults. Commentators explain why people compress complex systems into single words: it’s easier and faster, it sorts people into tribes, and it delivers a feeling of moral superiority.

★ **Q1.** The film gives three reasons people use one-word political labels. Name two.

Q2. What happens to a conversation, according to the film, when a label’s meaning is “vague, distorted, or just plain wrong”?

02:33–05:00 • Where left and right came from

Historian Rainer Zitelmann is introduced. The left–right line traces to seating in the French Revolution (1789): supporters of the monarchy sat on the right, supporters of the revolution on the left. In modern use, left means more government (taxes, programs, rules) and right means less. Liberal and conservative, socialism and capitalism get placed on the line, and then the film names its central claim: economic systems and political systems are different things.

★ Q3. What historical event gave us “left” and “right,” and what did the two sides originally mean?

★ Q4. State the film’s “first fundamental error” of political discussion in your own words.

05:06–10:10 • The second axis: the Nolan Chart

The deeper question is how much power government should have over individual lives. David Nolan (MIT, 1969) adds that dimension: economic freedom on one axis, personal freedom on the other. Two worked examples follow: two “left-wing” students who split on banning dangerous speech, and two “economic right” voters who split on books, protest and moral laws. Then an everyday case, restricting teens’ smartphones, shows a personal-freedom question the left–right line can’t hold. Good pause point: 08:44.

★ Q5. The two left-wing students agree on taxes and programs. What question splits them, and which axis is it on?

Q6. One commentator jokes that he is “a bit of an authoritarian” about his daughter’s smartphone. What point about the chart is he making?

10:12–13:20 • The historical case: Hitler’s Germany

The party’s own name (National Socialist German Workers’ Party) still causes confusion. Zitelmann explains the polemical origin of the word “Nazi” and distinguishes classical socialism (property abolished and nationalized) from modern socialism (property formally private, with the state deciding its use). In Hitler’s Germany businesses were “technically private,” and the state set products, prices, suppliers and customers.

★ Q7. What is the difference between “classical” and “modern” socialism as Rainer Zitelmann defines them?

★ Q8. Why does the film say a business owner in Hitler’s Germany was “more like a manager working for the state”?

Q9. According to the film, where did the word “Nazi” come from, and why did the people who used it avoid “National Socialist”?

13:22–16:30 • The living case: Venezuela

Daniel DiMartino, who grew up under Chávez and Maduro, describes the world’s largest oil reserves, the promise of redistribution, and the results: gasoline lines in an oil state, vegetable shortages in a tropical country, and a teacher dismissing class when a friend texted that chicken had arrived at the grocery store. He answers the “that wasn’t real socialism” objection by pointing to the policies themselves. The film places Venezuela low on both economic and personal freedom and cites the Fraser Institute’s economic freedom rankings.

★ **Q10.** How does Daniel DiMartino answer the claim that Venezuela’s collapse “has nothing to do with socialism”? What two policies does he cite?

Q11. What Fraser Institute statistic does the film use, and what is it offered as evidence for?

16:33–18:36 • The natural experiment, and the close

East and West Germany: the same people, culture and starting point, with different economic systems and divergent outcomes. The film closes on its thesis that patterns matter more than labels: “when people understand how power really works, labels lose their power.”

★ **Q12.** Why is divided Germany presented as an especially strong comparison? What did the two halves share, and what differed?

“If the government controls your major business decisions, private property is mostly an illusion. It exists legally, but not in reality.”

“Beyond Labels,” 12:28

3 • KEY TERMS AS THE FILM DEFINES THEM

Have students check their cold definitions against these. Other definitions exist; the exercise shows how having a definition changes the conversation.

TERM	THE FILM'S WORKING DEFINITION
Left and right	A one-line model from the seating chart of the French Revolution; today, roughly more or less government in the economy. Useful, and it “compresses multiple political and economic questions into a single line.”
Socialism	“Government ownership or control over the means of production” (DiMartino). Zitelmann splits it into classical (property abolished and nationalized) and modern (property formally private, with the state determining what may be done with it).
Capitalism	Private ownership and freer markets, on the economic-freedom side of the chart.
Libertarian (classical sense)	“About limiting concentrated political power”: systems built on rights that governments must respect.
Authoritarian	The opposite motion: power concentrates, institutions lose independence, and citizens lose reliable ways to challenge decisions.

TERM	THE FILM'S WORKING DEFINITION
The Nolan Chart	David Nolan's 1969 two-axis map, with economic freedom on one axis and personal freedom on the other. "Once you add that second dimension, you can start to see systems more clearly."

Classroom connection: these are the same two dimensions students scored on the Quiz, personal and economic, each from 0 to 100. The Quiz's Diamond Chart turns the square on its point and adds a Moderate region in the center.

4 • POST-VIEWING DISCUSSION

From comprehension to conversation

1. The film says labels sort people into tribes and deliver "a sense of moral superiority." Where have you seen that this week, and were you the one labeling or the one labeled?
2. Restate the film's core distinction, economic systems versus political systems, with one example of each from the film.
3. Where would each of the two students land on our class chart? What single question moved them apart?
4. The film argues authoritarian patterns repeat "across very different political ideologies." Which patterns did it name, and which would you notice first in real life?

Evaluating the film as evidence

5. The film says "Nazi" was a label coined by opponents who didn't want "socialist" in the name. How would you verify that independently? What sources would count?
6. DiMartino answers "that wasn't real socialism" by pointing to policies rather than intentions. Is that a fair test? What would the strongest version of the objection say back?
7. What makes the East and West Germany comparison strong, and what besides the economic system differed between them that a careful historian would account for?
8. The film was produced by organizations with a point of view: Free to Choose Network and izzitEDU, with the Advocates for Self-Government participating. What is the strongest counterargument it leaves unaddressed? Assign someone to make it well.

5 · ESSAY AND EXTENSION PROMPTS

- **The definition essay.** Revise your cold definition of socialism, fascism or authoritarianism into a defensible paragraph, then explain what your first version got wrong or left out, and why.
- **The pattern essay (AP).** The film claims private property can “exist legally, but not in reality.” Using one historical and one current case, argue whether ownership without the right to make decisions is meaningfully private property.
- **The verification lab.** The film cites the Fraser Institute’s economic freedom rankings for Venezuela (top 10 in 1970, bottom five by 2020). Find the index, check the claim, and report what you found, including anything the film’s summary left out.
- **The chart essay.** Pick a public figure the left-right line describes badly. Place them on the two-axis chart instead, defending both positions with cited statements or votes.
- **The steelman.** Write the strongest one-page case against the film’s thesis that a second axis clarifies more than it confuses. What do political scientists say gets lost when ideology is reduced to one dimension, two, or five?

Grade essays with **T3** Rubric.

6 · TEACHER ANSWER KEY

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- Q1** **Reasons for one-word labels.** Any two of: it's easier, faster or more efficient (00:48); it identifies your tribe and sets it apart from tribes you disagree with (01:11); it confers a sense of moral superiority over "the enemy" (01:28).
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- Q2** **When meanings are vague or wrong.** "People stop explaining. And start attacking." (01:47) The conversation turns into people talking past each other.
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- Q3** **The origin of left and right.** The French Revolution, 1789. Supporters of the monarchy sat on the right side of the assembly, and supporters of the revolution sat on the left (02:59).
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- Q4** **The first fundamental error.** Treating economic systems and political systems as the same thing, and compressing both onto one left-right line (04:48).
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- Q5** **What splits the two students.** Whether government should control speech, media or protests. It is a personal-freedom question, on the vertical axis of the film's chart (07:43).
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- Q6** **The smartphone aside.** Restricting phones is a personal-freedom question the left-right line can't place, and the chart's real question is who decides: government, or the individual and family (09:21). Worth drawing out: a parent restricting their own child is private governance, which differs from state power.
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- Q7** **Classical and modern socialism.** Classical: private property abolished and nationalized outright. Modern: property exists formally and legally, and the state determines what may be done with it (11:03).
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- Q8** **"A manager working for the state".** The government dictated what to produce, what prices to charge, whom to buy from and whom to sell to. The owner kept the title and lost the decisions (12:10).
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- Q9** **The origin of "Nazi".** According to Zitelmann, opponents of the party, especially on the left, coined it as a polemical term. They avoided "National Socialist" because they held the word "socialism" in high regard and didn't want it attached to the party (11:26). This makes a good verification exercise; see the discussion questions.
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- Q10** **The "not real socialism" answer.** He defines socialism as government ownership or control of the means of production and points to the regime's actual policies: nationalizations ("they took people's businesses") and price controls on goods, services and rent (15:15). The film's argument is that destroying the price system destroyed the economy.
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- Q11** **The Fraser Institute statistic.** Venezuela went from the 10th most economically free nation in 1970 to the bottom five by 2020 (16:04). The film offers it as evidence that the collapse tracked the loss of economic freedom.
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- Q12** **Why divided Germany is a strong comparison.** The same people, culture and history, and nearly the same starting point after World War II, which leaves the economic system as the main difference. West Germany's market economy prospered while East Germany fell behind (16:43). It controls for culture; the discussion questions push on what it leaves uncontrolled.
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Timestamps mark where each answer appears in the film. **The ground rules still apply:** no names on results, class totals only, and no position ever graded.

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