Power and Its Costs

Stalin's rule, mass terror, and famine in Ukraine

MWH.C.6.3.C "Describe Stalin's rise to power and establishment of a totalitarian regime, the use of mass terror during the Great Purge, the suppression of political opposition, and the state policies that led to the Holodomor famine in Ukraine."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline steps Stalin used to gain or hold power; circle actions used during the Great Purge; and number two state policies that worsened the famine in Ukraine.

How Stalin Built and Used Power

1 After the Russian Revolution, Joseph Stalin became general secretary of the Communist Party in 1922. The job let him influence who received party posts, building a network of loyal officials. When Vladimir Lenin died in 1924, Stalin did not inherit power automatically. He made shifting alliances, then pushed aside rivals, including Leon Trotsky, who was expelled from the Soviet Union in 1929. By the late 1920s, Stalin dominated the party. The state controlled newspapers, schools, and public speech, while officials promoted Stalin as an unquestionable leader. Independent political opposition could not operate openly, making it harder to challenge his rule.

2 The Great Purge of 1936 to 1938 showed what happened when Stalin treated even longtime supporters as threats. Secret police arrested party members, military officers, and ordinary citizens on accusations of disloyalty. In public show trials, defendants often confessed under pressure, and sentences were often decided in advance. Many were executed; others were sent to forced-labor camps known as the Gulag. Fear spread far beyond the people arrested: a neighbor's accusation could bring an investigation. By removing actual and imagined opponents, the purge strengthened Stalin's control, but it destroyed lives and discouraged people from speaking freely.

3 At the same time, Stalin forced peasants to join collective farms, where the state directed production. Many Ukrainian farmers resisted giving up their land and grain. In 1932 and 1933, Soviet officials imposed high grain quotas on Ukraine and seized food even when villages had little left. Authorities also restricted travel, preventing many hungry people from leaving to seek food elsewhere. These policies worsened a famine known as the Holodomor; millions died in Soviet Ukraine. Unlike the purge's arrests and trials, this catastrophe grew from farming and food policies backed by state force. Both reveal how centralized power could harm people on a vast scale.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How did Stalin use his party position and alliances to rise to power after Lenin's death?

2. How did state control of information help suppress opposition to Stalin?

3. How did the Great Purge use terror to strengthen Stalin's control?

4. How did Soviet policies worsen the famine in Ukraine?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write a five- or six-sentence museum caption explaining how Stalin gained power. Compare one method and one human cost of the Great Purge with one method and one human cost of the policies behind the Holodomor, then end with a claim about what the two events reveal about his rule.

ANSWER KEY

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HIGH SCHOOL · MWH.C.6.3.C

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline steps Stalin used to gain or hold power; circle actions used during the Great Purge; and number two state policies that worsened the famine in Ukraine. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How did Stalin use his party position and alliances to rise to power after Lenin's death?	**As general secretary, Stalin placed loyal officials in party posts. He made shifting alliances and pushed aside rivals until he dominated the party.**
2	How did state control of information help suppress opposition to Stalin?	**The state controlled newspapers, schools, and public speech while promoting Stalin as an unquestionable leader, making it harder to challenge him.**
3	How did the Great Purge use terror to strengthen Stalin's control?	**Secret police arrested people accused of disloyalty. Show trials, executions, and forced-labor camps removed actual and imagined opponents and frightened others into silence.**
4	How did Soviet policies worsen the famine in Ukraine?	**Forced collective farming disrupted farmers' control of production. High grain quotas, food seizures, and travel restrictions left people with little food and few ways to seek it elsewhere.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Stalin built power by placing loyal people in party jobs and pushing aside rivals. During the Great Purge, secret police arrested people accused of disloyalty. Executions and forced-labor camps destroyed lives, while fear silenced others. In Ukraine, grain seizures and travel restrictions left hungry families with little chance to find food. Millions died during the Holodomor. Together, these events show that Stalin's state used different policies to enforce its decisions at an enormous human cost.

Accept answers that connect specific actions to Stalin's control or to the famine's severity. Students should distinguish the purge's arrests and punishments from the farming and food policies that worsened the Holodomor.