Stalin's Path to Power

Trace how party authority and changing alliances shaped a leadership struggle.

TOT.C.8.1.B "rise of Josef Stalin"

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline details showing how Stalin used his party office, circle each change in his allies, and number three steps in his rise to power.

How Stalin Rose

1. In 1922, Josef Stalin became general secretary of the Soviet Communist Party. The job sounded administrative, but it gave him influence over who received party posts and who attended important meetings. Officials who owed their positions to Stalin could support him when leaders argued about the country's future. After Vladimir Lenin died in 1924, no single successor took power at once. Lenin had warned party leaders that Stalin was too rude and might misuse the authority of his office. The warning was read to selected party delegates, but party leaders did not remove Stalin. The struggle over leadership continued.

2. Stalin did not face his rivals alone. At first, he joined Grigory Zinoviev and Lev Kamenev in opposing Leon Trotsky, a prominent revolutionary and commander in the civil war. They criticized Trotsky's leadership ambitions, and Trotsky lost influence. Stalin then turned against Zinoviev and Kamenev. He worked with Nikolai Bukharin while arguing that the Soviet Union could build socialism without waiting for revolutions abroad, an idea called "socialism in one country." Trotsky's opponents had not all agreed with Stalin's program. By changing partners as disputes changed, Stalin helped prevent his rivals from forming a lasting united front.

3. By the late 1920s, Stalin had also broken with Bukharin. He pushed rapid industrialization and the forced collectivization of farms, rejecting Bukharin's support for a slower economic path. Party officials removed Trotsky from the Communist Party in 1927; Soviet authorities expelled him from the country in 1929. Stalin used party discipline and his network of supporters to isolate opponents, while presenting his policies as the correct course for the revolution. His rise was not a single election or sudden takeover. It grew from an office that shaped appointments, alliances that shifted, and rivals who lost their positions one by one.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. Why did Lenin's warning about Stalin not end the struggle over leadership?

2. How could Stalin's position as general secretary help him gain support in leadership disputes?

3. How did Stalin's changing alliances make it harder for his rivals to oppose him together?

4. How did a disagreement over economic policy contribute to Stalin's break with Bukharin?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write a 75 to 100 word museum label that ranks Stalin's control of party appointments and his shifting alliances as causes of his rise. Defend your ranking with two distinct details from the passage, and note one limit to your conclusion.

ANSWER KEY

Stalin's Path to Power

HIGH SCHOOL · TOT.C.8.1.B

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline details showing how Stalin used his party office, circle each change in his allies, and number three steps in his rise to power. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	Why did Lenin's warning about Stalin not end the struggle over leadership?	**The warning was read to selected party delegates, but party leaders did not remove Stalin. No single successor took power after Lenin died.**
2	How could Stalin's position as general secretary help him gain support in leadership disputes?	**He could influence party appointments and meeting attendance. Officials who owed him their posts could support him.**
3	How did Stalin's changing alliances make it harder for his rivals to oppose him together?	**He first worked with Zinoviev and Kamenev against Trotsky, then worked with Bukharin against those former allies. These shifts helped keep his rivals from forming a lasting united front.**
4	How did a disagreement over economic policy contribute to Stalin's break with Bukharin?	**Stalin pushed rapid industrialization and forced farm collectivization, while Bukharin supported a slower economic path.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

I rank Stalin's control over party appointments above his changing alliances. As general secretary, he could influence who received posts and attended important meetings, giving him supporters inside the party. His alliances mattered too: he worked with Zinoviev and Kamenev against Trotsky, then with Bukharin against those former partners. Still, these partnerships might have been less effective without officials already willing to back him. The passage cannot prove which factor mattered most, but the appointments helped Stalin build a base he could use through several different disputes.

Accept either ranking if the student supports it with two distinct, accurate passage details and acknowledges a reasonable limit to the conclusion. For the marking job, accept any three passage-supported steps in Stalin's rise.