

Note-Taking Tool

In Episode 1, John and Ellen introduce two stories that people sometimes tell about capitalism:

John Biewen: People can, and do, tell simple, one-sided stories about capitalism. Here's one: It unleashed human ingenuity, leveraged the power of investment and technology and competition, and sparked unimaginable leaps in the material lives of most people on the planet.

Ellen McGirt: Here's another: Capitalism triggered a new epoch of exploitation and extraction, and produced unheard-of inequality and alienation, all while doing catastrophic damage to our natural world.

John Biewen: Is either story too simple by itself? What if both are essentially true?

Think about what John and Ellen share about each story. (It may be helpful to listen to [Episode 1, 10:19-15:03](#), or skim the [Episode 1 transcript, pp. 10-15](#), to refresh your memory. You can find these resources under “Listening Guides” at <https://sceneonradio.org/capitalism-educator-resources/>.)

Then, examine sources that present some of the evidence people point to when making different arguments about capitalism's impact.

Part 1 One Story About Capitalism

Record your observations, analysis, and connections as you engage with the first set of sources.

Source	What evidence does the source provide? How might it support the argument that capitalism has helped create greater prosperity, innovation, and higher material standards of living?	What questions does the source raise for you? What additional information would help you better evaluate the evidence?	Where, if at all, do you notice ideas from this source in your own life, your community, or the wider world?
Excerpt from "The short history of global living conditions and why it matters that we know it"			
Excerpt from "My Remarks at the 2023 Democracy Forum"			

“What did
economic growth
mean for US
households?”

Part 2 Another Story About Capitalism

Record your observations, analysis, and connections as you engage with the second set of sources.

Source	What evidence does the source provide? How might it support the argument that capitalism has also contributed to inequality, economic insecurity, and/or environmental damage?	What questions does the source raise for you? What additional information would help you better evaluate the evidence?	Where, if at all, do you notice ideas from this source in your own life, your community, or the wider world?
Excerpt from "The short history of global living conditions and why it matters that we know it"			
Excerpt from "My Remarks at the 2023 Democracy Forum"			

“CEO and Worker Compensation, 1965-2024”			
Excerpt from “The American Condition”			
Excerpt from “CO₂ and Greenhouse Gas Emissions”			

Part 3 Reflect on Both Stories

- Which pieces of evidence from the sources in Part 1 and the sources in Part 2 did you find most interesting or provocative? Explain why.
- How do the sources in Part 2 complicate, qualify, or add to the ideas presented in Part 1?
- What picture of capitalism emerges from the sources you examined? Support your thinking with evidence from multiple sources.
- John asks, "What if both stories are essentially true?" How has examining these sources affected your thinking about that question?
- What questions about capitalism are on your mind? Which of those questions do you hope the podcast's episodes will help answer?