



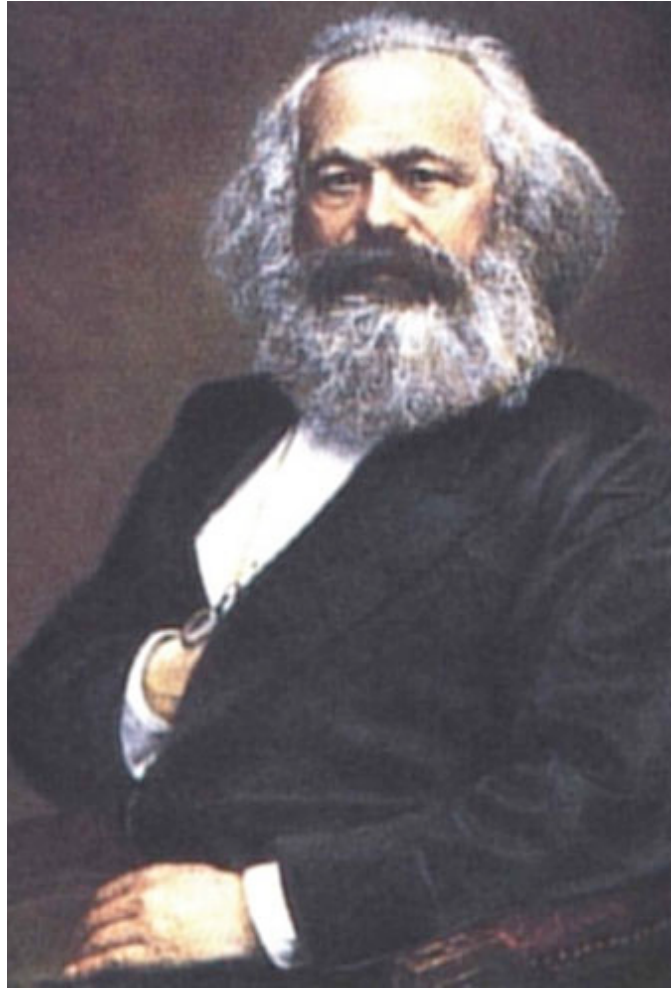
Introduction to Marxism

Workers of the world - unite!

Bad spellers of the world - untie!



Karl Marx



- Theory about power, politics and economics devised by Karl Marx in Das Kapital and expanded by Friedrich Engels.
- Marxism is a set of political beliefs.



Explaining Marxism I

- The theory helps explain how and why there is a “rich” class and a “poor” class in society and that the rich have power over the poor.
- The rich (the **bourgeoisie**) own the means of production: the factories -- and the poor (the **proletariat**) have to sell their labour in order to survive.
- Wages are kept low so the proletariat can't become as rich and powerful as the bourgeoisie. They are too focused on earning enough to survive.



Explaining Marxism 2

- Marx thought it was inevitable that the poor would develop a political consciousness and eventually rise up in revolt at the rich.
- Marx's and Engels's ideas influenced the leaders of communist revolutions in Russia, China, Cuba, Vietnam, N Korea...
- Marx's ideas have been used to explain how art, literature and the media work.



Gramsci and hegemony

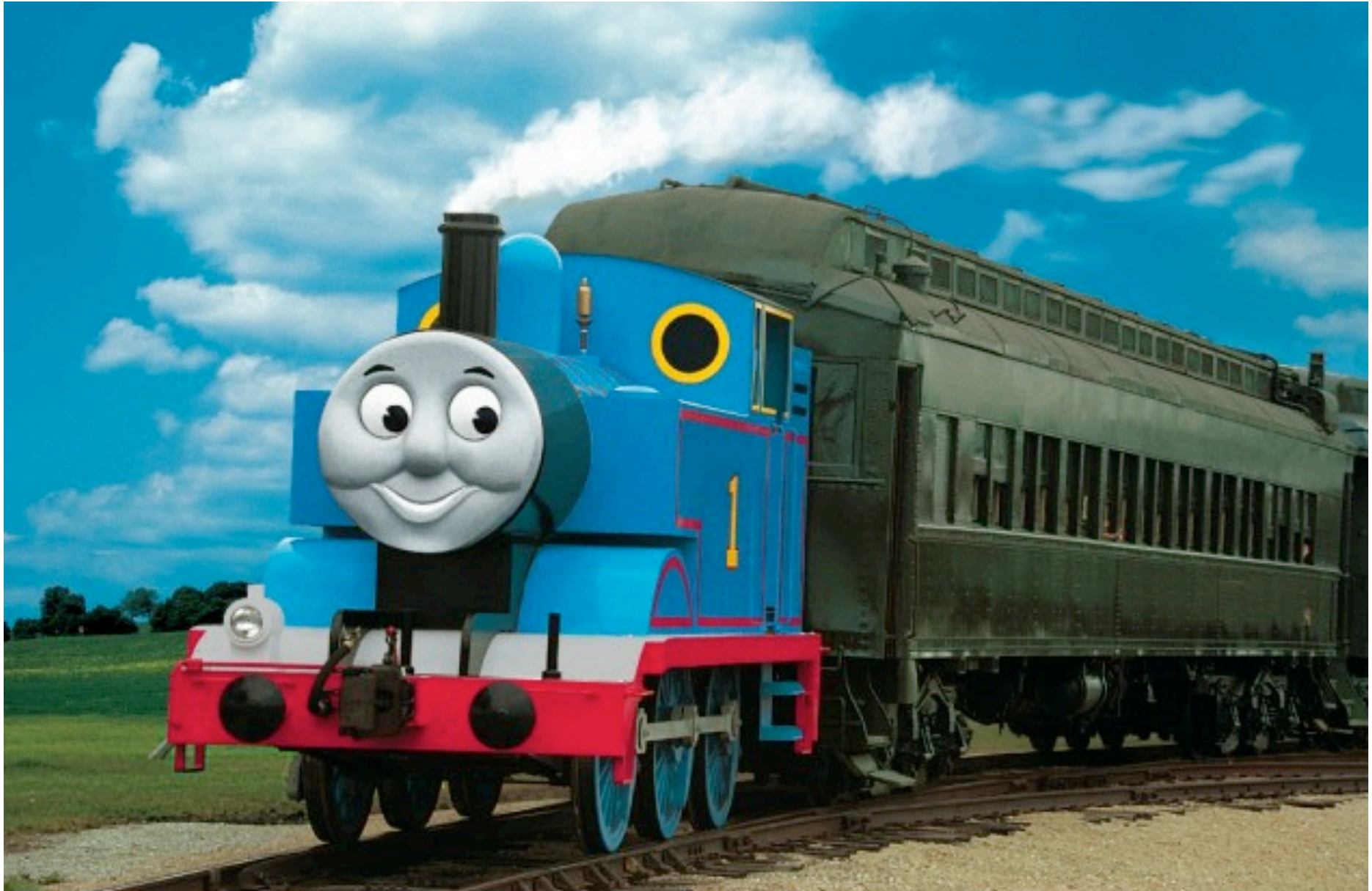
- Gramsci believed that one social class dominates another.
- The values of the dominant group are called “the dominant ideology.”
- The dominant class has the ability to project its own way of seeing the world as being normal and common sense.
- The non-dominant class accepts this way of seeing the world and so consents to having no power.
- The media’s role can include “bread and circuses” and distract the subjugated class from becoming politically aware of their own lack of power.



Stuart Hall again

- Hall believes that the media appear to reflect reality whereas they actually help to construct it.
- The media projects ideas that serve the interests of the ruling class.
- The dominant ideology is the “preferred reading” of the text.
- A text can be “read” in different ways. Often, this depends on the social situations of the “readers.”
- An audience does not necessarily accept the “preferred reading” and can develop an “oppositional reading” or accept some parts of it in a “negotiated reading.”

Let's apply these concepts



Peep-peep





A Marxist reading of Thomas

- The engines represent the proletariat, ie the working classes, who sell their labour to the owners of the means of production, ie the bourgeoisie, represented here by the Fat Controller. The mise-èn-scene is such that the Fat Controller's costume (ok, his painted-on clothes) signifies that he is a stereotypical capitalist. He exploits the engines and hoards the profits for himself. Even the word "fat" has connotations of abundance: no other character's name suggests this. Note that he is the only person on the island of Sodor to own a car!





A Marxist reading of Thomas

Some details from the story	A Marxist interpretation
"Indeed! We cannot allow that." The FC	I hope this doesn't affect my profit margins.
"Engines on my railway do as they are told." The FC	I'm in charge here and I have power over you.
"Thank you sir. That will be a nice change." Edward	Edward is clearly subservient and exploited in mundane, unfulfilling, repetitive work.
"They all hiss me," answered Edward.	...because you are a scab, Edward: a strike-breaker who has sold out to that fat capitalist who wants us to cave in and do work that is beneath us.
"You have nice blue [wheels] Edward." The FC	What's wrong with red, the colour of the glorious revolution?!
"If I choose you, will you work hard?" The FC	I'll run you into the ground for the sake of making a few more shillings.
"That's a good engine. I'll call you Percy." The FC	Oh, just like slave owners in America in the 1700s, the master decides what to call his workers. "You are Toby, not Kunte Kente." Katishch! [sound of whip cracking] (parents can explain this allusion to you)



A Marxist reading of *Underworld*

- The vampires represent the ruling class and live in luxury.
- The lycans represent the proletariat and live in squalor.
- The vampires actively prevent the lycans from raising their political consciousness.
- The film implicitly supports the hegemony inherent in real life by indoctrinating the audience into accepting the vampires as the heroes and lycans as villains.



El Lisitsky *Beat the Whites with a Red Wedge*



РАБОТАТЬ ТАК, ЧТОБЫ ТОВАРИЩ СТАЛИН СПАСИБО СКАЗАЛ!

**DO NOT
READ THE
SENTENCE
BELOW**

You disobedient rebel, you.



