

Reading guide for *Capital* (vol. 1) Chapters 10-14

The following reading guide is from Liberation School's online course. It is meant to help guide you through the text rather than tell you what to read for or what is or isn't important.

Chapter 10: The working-day

- 1) What are the two limits to the working day?
- 2) What does Marx mean when he says: "Between equal rights, force decides"? What equal rights are at play?
- 3) Given this, what determines the length of the working day?
- 4) What are some examples of how workers try to determine this length?
- 5) What are some examples of how capitalists try to determine this length?
- 6) What is Marx's argument about slavery throughout the chapter? How does it relate to surplus-value?
- 7) What are two factors that produced the English Factory Acts? What does this tell us about the role of the state under capitalism?
- 8) How did capitalists respond to the Acts? Why did they do so?
- 9) What conditions do the factory inspectors describe? What issues are they raising? What arguments are they making?
- 10) What is the reason for the creation of the multiple shifts and the relay system?
- 11) Why would it "seem" "that the interest of capital itself points in the direction of a normal working-day"?
- 12) Why does the capitalist need an excess of available labor-power?
- 13) Why is it dangerous for capitalists to pay workers for 5 days of labor what they need to live for 7 days? (this is in the quote from Postlethwayt)
- 14) What two lessons does Marx draw from the historical study of the English Factory Acts?
- 15) What is Marx saying about the state in this chapter?

Chapter 11: Rate and mass of surplus-value

- 1) What is the mass of surplus-value?
- 2) What are the limits to the mass of surplus-value?
- 3) What is *relative* surplus value?
- 4) Why doesn't the "simple extension of the working-day" itself explain capitalism?

Chapter 12: The concept of relative surplus-value

- 1) How can surplus-value be increased without making the working-day longer?
- 2) What effect does this have on the value of labor-power?
- 3) How can the increase in productivity in one industry decrease the value of labor-power?
- 4) What's the difference between the *real* value of a commodity and its *individual* value? What's the result of this difference?
- 5) How does this explain crises of overproduction?

Chapter 13: Co-operation

- 1) What does cooperation have to do with capitalism in general?
- 2) What three ways does cooperation increase productivity?
- 3) Why does cooperation under capitalism bring about an increased need for surveillance and discipline in the workplace?
- 4) What does this say about the contradictions of cooperation under capitalism?

Chapter 14: Division of labor and manufacture

- 1) What two ways does manufacture develop out of handicraft production?
- 2) What impact does manufacture have on the division of labor and the overall life of the worker?
- 3) What are the two kinds of manufacture?
- 4) How does manufacture both separate and unite the working class?
- 5) Why does the capitalist praise organizing, regulating, and planning production within the workplace?
- 6) Marx writes that “the narrow technical basis on which manufacture rested, came into conflict with requirements of production that were created by manufacture itself”?
- 7) What does manufacture produce that will eventually get rid of handicraft work?