

Reading guide for *Capital* (vol. 1) Chapter 26-33

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.

Part VIII: The so-called primitive accumulation

Chapter 26: The secret of primitive accumulation

- 1) What's the origin story of capitalism?
- 2) What story does Marx present instead?
- 3) What does Marx mean when he says primitive accumulation plays the same role in capitalism as original sin in theology?
- 4) What are the *presuppositions* of capitalism?
- 5) How were these produced?
- 6) Is "primitive" or "primary" accumulation something Marx assumes happened in the past?
- 7) Does primitive accumulation have a single model or look like a set of processes?
- 8) What kinds of "so-called" primitive accumulation can you think of in contemporary capitalism?

Chapter 27: Expropriation of the agricultural population from the land

- 1) How did the expropriation of peasants take place in England?
- 2) How did the state try to halt this?
- 3) What role did the reformation of the Church play?
- 4) What role did William of Orange play?
- 5) How did the privatization of common land happen throughout the 15th-18th centuries?
- 6) How does all of this disprove the "sacred rights of property"?

Chapter 28: Bloody legislation against the expropriated

- 1) How were the expropriated peasants criminalized?
- 2) What kinds of legislation disciplined wage-laborers?
- 3) Why was this discipline necessary for capitalism?
- 4) How does capitalism (try to) erase these origins from memory?
- 5) What do these chapters say about the relationship between capital and the state?

Chapter 29: Genesis of the capitalist farmer

- 1) In England, how did the capitalist farmer originate?
- 2) What role did they play in the "agricultural revolution" described in the last two chapters?

Chapter 30: Reaction of the agricultural revolution on industry

- 1) In what ways did driving peasants off the land impact capital?

Chapter 31: Genesis of the industrial capitalist

- 1) What two forms of capital did industrial capital come from?
- 2) What does it mean that “revolutions are not made by laws”?
- 3) How does public credit (national debt) play a role in primary accumulation?
- 4) Can you think of recent or current examples of this?
- 5) What other institutions, systems, and acts produced the “eternal laws” of capitalism?

Chapter 32: Historical tendency of capitalist accumulation

- 1) In this chapter, Marx weaves together the historical and economic arguments outlined in the book. In your own words, what is the narrative?
- 2) In what ways is this narrative dialectical?
- 3) Why does Marx think the socialist revolution will be less bloody than the capitalist revolution?
- 4) Given what you’ve read in this chapter and the rest of the book, what’s the relationship between reform and revolution Marx presents?

Chapter 33: The modern theory of colonisation

- 1) What was Wakefield’s theory of colonialism?
- 2) How are the presuppositions of capitalism created in the colonies?
- 3) Why do you think Marx ends the book with this chapter?