

Venezuela: Vivi's Life under Socialism | Lesson Plan

How do stories like Vivi's show the effects of government control in the face of systemic failure?

Students will understand that a nation's prosperity depends not only on its natural resources but also on the government's proper role in upholding justice, providing accountability, and preserving economic freedom for its people.

Learning Objectives:

- Locate and identify Venezuela and its capital, Caracas.
- Describe the cultural, political, and economic aspects of Venezuela.
- Analyze the challenges Vivi faces and how they connect to socialism and economic mismanagement.
- Reflect on how Vivi and her family use personal values, sacrifice, and responsibility to survive hardship.

Key Vocabulary:

- **Socialism:** A system where you are not allowed to own anything individually, and the government controls what everyone can buy and own.
- **Nationalize:** When things that are privately owned are taken over by the national government.
- **Corruption:** Dishonest behavior by leaders, often involving theft or bribery.
- **Shantytown:** Makeshift housing built from scrap materials.
- **Arepas:** A traditional Venezuelan food made from maize dough.
- **Natural Resource:** Something found in nature that benefits people, like oil or water.

Educational Standards: CCRA.L.1, CCRA.L.2, CCRA.L.4, CCRA.L.5, CCRA.SL.1, CCRA.SL.2, CCRA.R.4, CCRA.R.6

Academic Subject Areas: Civics, U.S. History, Western Civilization, Social Studies, Geography, Culture, Global Awareness

What You'll Need

- Video: *Around the World: Vivi's Life Under Socialism* (Watch [Here](#))
- Worksheet: *Around the World: Vivi's Life Under Socialism* (Click [Here](#))
- Optional: Purchase the book on Amazon (Click [Here](#))

Lesson Plan (Two 45-minute Class Periods)

Part 1: Reading the Book (20-25 min)

Note to Teachers:



- We recommend beginning this lesson with a sustained, uninterrupted read-aloud of *Around the World: Vivi's Life Under Socialism* while students follow along on their devices or printed copies. This will take 20-25 minutes.
- This method is intentional—it rebuilds attention spans, immerses students in meaningful narrative, and restores a lost tradition: attentive listening. If possible, resist the temptation to break up the reading into smaller sessions.
- Encourage students to follow along with a pencil in hand and mark moments they find surprising, confusing, or important. After reading, allow a few moments for quiet reflection or discussion before beginning Part 2 of the lesson plan.

Part 2: Geography Focus (10-15 min)

- Activity: Use the **Geography Focus** section of the worksheets—*Map of South America* and *Geographic Features of Venezuela*—to guide students through a hands-on mapping activity. Students will locate and label relevant places and identify important geographic features.
- Discuss the following questions:
 - How does Venezuela's geography provide many natural resources? (Point out the natural resources that mountains, valleys, rivers, and oceans would offer.)
 - How did the discovery of oil change Venezuela as a country?
 - How might geography (like mountains and rivers) affect how people live and work?

Note to teachers:

- Natural resources can be a tremendous blessing when a nation protects individual liberty, secures property rights, and limits government power. Without these foundational principles, even great natural wealth can lead to tyranny, corruption, and societal collapse. Venezuela's story reminds us that prosperity depends not just on what a nation has, but on how it governs. A government's proper role is to uphold justice, provide accountability, and preserve economic freedom for its people. This is a central theme of *Vivi's Life Under Socialism* and a key takeaway students will explore throughout this lesson.

Part 3: Vocabulary Focus and Sentence Writing (5-10 min)

- Vocabulary Focus: Introduce and define the key vocabulary terms listed in the word bank of the worksheet (e.g., *socialism*, *nationalize*, *corruption*, *shantytown*, *inflation*, *natural resource*). Discuss how these terms show up in the story and impact the characters. You may choose to pre-teach these words or explore them after reading using the worksheet section.

Part 4: Systems, Struggles, and Solutions (20-25 min)

- Activity: Use the **Cause & Effect Chart** in the worksheet to help students connect events in the story to the broader economic systems and ideologies that shape Vivi's

experience. These systems are the core focus of *Vivi's Life Under Socialism* and can be discussed beforehand or used as a helpful guide if students get stuck:

- Socialism:
 - How it shows up: The government takes control of oil, businesses, and key industries.
 - Result: Services fail, shortages increase, and the economy collapses. Vivi's dad leaves to help the family earn enough money to survive.
- Corruption:
 - How it shows up: Leaders steal public funds, ignore infrastructure, and hire unqualified friends.
 - Result: Roads, schools, and electricity break down. Vivi's school and neighborhood are unsafe because there is no budget for an adequate police force.
- Nationalization:
 - How it shows up: Foreign oil companies are kicked out, and the government tries to run the industry without expertise.
 - Result: The oil industry fails, jobs disappear, and the economy shrinks. La Esquina Café loses customers.
- Inflation:
 - How it shows up: The bolívar becomes worthless; prices rise astronomically.
 - Result: Vivi's family can't use their currency. They rely on U.S. dollars and struggle to afford food.
- Mass Migration / Urban Overcrowding:
 - How it shows up: Rapid migration to Caracas without proper housing leads to overcrowding.
 - Result: Unsafe, poor shantytowns grow. Riots like *El Caracazo* break out, and violence increases.
- Small Group or Partner Work: Students identify 2–3 problems Vivi faces and connect them to a system or policy described in the story. Then explain how that system affected Viv's circumstances.
- Whole-Class Debrief: Guide a discussion using these questions:
 - What policy system or ideology behind it caused the biggest challenge in Vivi's story?
 - What personal values or actions helped her and her family push through?

Note to Teachers:

- This discussion helps students connect the impact of flawed government policies, such as socialism, corruption, and economic mismanagement, to real-world hardships. At the same time, it emphasizes how personal virtues like resilience, hard work, and family loyalty can provide strength and stability, even in the midst of broken systems.

Part 5: Personal Reflection / Writing Activity (20-25 min)

- Activity: Have students complete the **Reading Comprehension and Personal Reflection** section of the worksheet. This portion reinforces key plot points and encourages students to think critically about government leadership, economic ideologies, and consequences.

Note to Teachers:

- Review the comprehension questions aloud or in small groups to check understanding before students begin writing.
- Encourage students to refer to specific moments from the story in their answers.
- For the reflection prompt, give students quiet time to think before writing. Emphasize honesty and thoughtfulness over length.
- Optional: Invite volunteers to share their reflections with the class to build connection and discussion.

Don't have time for the full lesson? Quick Activity (25 minutes)

Step 1: Watch the *Around the World: Vivi's Life Under Socialism* video together as a class.

Step 2: Lead a focused discussion using the following guiding questions:

- What were some of the biggest challenges Vivi and her family faced in Venezuela?
- How did government policies like socialism and corruption affect their daily lives?
- What actions did Vivi's family take to survive and create opportunities for a better future?
- What does Vivi's story teach us about resilience, hard work, and personal responsibility?

Optional Extension: Distribute the worksheet and invite students to complete one or two sections independently, such as the Vocabulary Focus & Sentence Writing or the Cause & Effect Chart, as a follow-up or homework assignment.