Introduction: What is the Left?

- The Left has had an uneven history
- The Socialists’ high tide was in 1981
- Differences to the Right e.g. economic policy and State intervention
- There are differences in the Left itself
- For example, there are those who are more moderate, and then the Far Left
- The Left is quite an umbrella term
- Communism vs. Socialism
- Does moderate mean pragmatic?
- Something that appeals to more people?
- Hard to define the poles of Left and Right
- As you go further Left, perhaps it is more ideological
- Left preoccupied with the working class
- Generally, the Left is more associated with change
- The (not extreme) Right prefers to preserve the status quo
- The Front National
- The extreme Left and extreme Right are becoming more important
- The more traditional/centre Left and Right can be interchangeable
- Hard to define between the two because politics happens in response to events
- When politicians say they are against ‘extremism’, what does that mean?
- In the past, neo-liberalism would have been seen as a form of extremism
- Shared ownership and the idea of the collective
- In French culture, Republicanism is associated with le people
- The notion of equality
- People on the Right would say they are sometimes in favour of equality
- It depends on what kind of equality
- The Left has a tendency to say equality is what defines them
- The Right is more associated with meritocracy
- Every man for himself
- If you come from a rich family, the Right is naturally more in your favour
- According to the Left, hierarchies need to be flattened
- ‘Bottom up, top down’
- The Left in power vs. Left in opposition
- Best example is Mitterrand, who had a radical programme in his first two years
- Then he made a complete U-turn
- Does the Left emerge from struggle or create a struggle?
- There are more extreme Rights than extreme Left parties
- Shouldn’t just associate the Left with a party
- Difference between a party and a movement