World Cultures: Historical Trials

The purpose of this activity is to help you understand the positive and negative influences upon history of individuals AND to understand that what appears to be a clear-cut case of an historical “miscreant” is not always the case.

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| THE NOMINEES |

The twentieth century may be considered unique in the number of totalitarian dictators it produced. The annals of history are full of bloody tyrants, but those of the twentieth century had modern technology at their disposal, enabling them to control almost every aspect of the lives of their subjects. Certainly, these individuals have shaped modern history. Some even argue that a dictatorship may be a superior form of government - if you have a benevolent dictator. Even without taking a history course, many people know the names on this list:

* Vladimir Lenin
* Benito Mussolini
* Mao Zedong
* Josef Stalin
* Adolph Hitler
* Fidel Castro
* Saddam Hussein

Most consider these individuals destructive forces. However, wouldn’t it be interesting to bring these individuals back to life and ask them some questions?

* To find out what they were thinking and how they worked?
* How they would justify their actions?
* Did they plan out their policies years in advance, or simply react as events unfolded?
* Did they really think that they were doing the right thing?
* Were their ultimate aims (if any) purely selfish, or ideologically driven?
* More radically: was everything that they did wrong, or “evil”?
* Is it possible to find shades of gray in these dark characters?