



Lost Empires of Asia and Russia

The focus of this lesson plan is to compare life of the upper class and the peasants in early 20th-century Russia to illustrate the conditions that lead to revolution and political change.

Subject

World History

Grade level

6-8

Duration

One or two class periods

Objectives

Students will

- research the events leading up to the Russian Revolution of 1917;
- consider the results from the perspective of the aristocracy or the peasants;
- present one perspective; and
- determine which group has the strongest case.

Materials

- Paper and pencils
- Newsprint and markers
- Computer with Internet access
- Encyclopedias and other reference materials
- *Lost Empires of Asia and Russia* video and VCR (or DVD and DVD player)

Procedures

1. Begin the lesson by asking students what they know about the Russian Revolution of 1917. Write their ideas on a sheet of newsprint. Students may suggest the following:
 - The beginning of Communism
 - The downfall of the czar
 - The beginning of a new way of life in Russia
2. To complement students' knowledge of this period of history, show the program *Lost Empires of Asia and Russia*, particularly the segments "Crisis in Russia" and "Russian Revolution."

3. Divide students into two groups. One group will represent the czar and the aristocracy and the second group will represent Russian peasants. Tell students that their assignment is to present a case promoting the cause of their side. Following the presentations, students will determine which side has the strongest case.
4. Suggest that students do additional research to support their case. They may use reference books or visit the following Web sites:

<http://www.emayzine.com/lectures/russianrev.html>

<http://www.marx2mao.org/Lenin/RRTP06.html>

<http://www.fortunecity.com/boozers/ferret/451/profiles/roview.htm>

<http://www.only4ukids.com/knowledge/leaders/lenin.shtml>

<http://www.kat.gr/kat/history/Txt/GI/CzarNicholas.htm>

<http://mclane.fresno.k12.ca.us/wilson98/MWHI/1998/samantha.html>

<http://virtual.finland.fi/finfo/english/impossib.html>

5. Allow enough class time to work on their presentations. Encourage students to consider the following questions as they prepare:
 - What role did economics play in the events of the early 1900s?
 - What role did strong leaders play?
 - What role did propaganda play?
 - What could the czar have done to prevent the revolution?
6. During the next class period, have students present their sides. After each group has presented, give the groups a chance to refute the arguments of the other side.
7. Conclude the lesson by having students discuss which side had the strongest case. Make sure students support their ideas with specific evidence.

Extensions

1. Have students continue their research by investigating what happened after the czar was overthrown. What did the Russian people think about the outcome of their revolution?
2. Have students investigate the reasons many governments collapse. They might consider the Roman empire, the Shang dynasty (view the segment "The Lost City of Shang"), or the end of Napoleon's rule in France.

Evaluation

Use the following three-point rubric to evaluate students' work during this lesson.

3 points: Students participated actively in class discussions; worked effectively with their group in planning their presentation; and made a compelling and interesting presentation to the class.

2 points: Students participated in class discussions; worked somewhat effectively with their group in planning their presentation; and made a competent presentation to the class.

1 point: Students did not participate in class discussions; did not complete their essays; and did not complete their presentation to the class.

Vocabulary

Bolsheviks

Definition: The revolutionaries in Russia who succeeded in overthrowing Czar Nicholas II and taking control of Russia

Context: Later known as the Communists, the Bolsheviks believed that membership in their political party should be limited to full-time revolutionaries.

Czar Nicholas II

Definition: Russia's last aristocratic ruler, in power from 1894 to 1917

Context: During the rule of Czar Nicholas II, industry increased greatly, which led to unrest and dissatisfaction in the growing middle class.

duma

Definition: A temporary parliament set up by Nicholas II in 1905; citizens were granted permission to elect representatives and received basic rights, such as the right to vote and freedom of speech.

Context: Although Nicholas II allowed citizens to elect officials to the duma, the gesture was short-lived; after one year, the duma was disbanded

V.L. Lenin

Definition: A leader of the Bolshevik Revolution who became head of the Russian state in 1917

Context: Lenin was instrumental in liberating Russia from Czarist rule, but he became a ruthless dictator.

propaganda

Definition: Ideas and facts spread to further a particular political cause or ideology

Context: The Pravda, the Bolshevik revolutionary newspaper, included propaganda about their beliefs.

Academic Standards

The National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS) has developed national standards to provide guidelines for teaching social studies. To become a member of the NCSS, or to view the standards online, go to <http://www.socialstudies.org>.

This lesson plan addresses the following thematic standards:

- Individual Development and Identity
- Power, Authority, and Governance
- Civic Ideals and Practices

Credit

Marilyn Fenichel, education writer and editor