



Pre-entry Preparation, Requirements and Recommendations

Welcome to A-Level History at Comberton Sixth Form.

Please also ensure that you have the **following equipment** with you for the first lesson:

- Pens, pencils, highlighters (several different colours)
- Glue, scissors, ruler

We would also request that you **complete two tasks** (see below) to help you to prepare for the two units that you will study in Year 12.

In our experience, students prefer to **purchase a copy of the OCR unit textbooks** so that they are able to label and highlight key information and sources. If possible, we strongly advise this to support their studies throughout the year. If you wish to wait, it is often possible to bulk buy textbooks as a school so that you have a discount, however, this will mean that you will not have a copy for the first few weeks. We do keep copies in the library, for reference only, and have some copies available in the lesson if you are unable to buy one.

Unit 1: Britain 1930-1997

Textbook: Mike Wells and Nicholas Fellows, *Britain 1930-1997, OCR A-Level*, (ISBN 978-1 47188-3729-6)

Recommended Extra Reading:

- Andrew Marr, *A History of Modern Britain* (ISBN-13: 978-0330511476)
- Peter Clarke, *Hope and Glory: Britain 1900-1990* (ISBN-13: 978-0141011752)

Unit 2: Russia 1894-1941

Textbook: Andrew Holland, *Russia 1894-1941, OCR A-Level* (ISBN 9781510415904)

Recommended Extra Reading:

- Orlando Figes, *Revolutionary Russia 1891-1991*, (ISBN: 978-0-141-04367-8)
- Robert Service, *The Penguin Modern History of Russia: From Tsarism to the Twenty-first Century* (ISBN: 978-0141037974)
- S.A. Smith, *The Russian Revolution: A Very Short Introduction* (ISBN: 0-19-285395-3)

We look forward to meeting you in September!

Preparation Tasks

Unit 1: Britain 1930-1997

Part 1: Create a timeline of British Prime Ministers from 1930-1997. Make sure you include the names of the Prime Ministers, the dates they were in office, and the political party they represented.

Part 2: Research Winston Churchill, and create a summary of his life. This must be at least one A4 page. Please include the following:

- Key events/moments in his life with dates
- Key people or events which influenced him
- Political affiliations/times when he represented different political parties

Unit 2: Russia 1894-1941

Use the extract to make **DETAILED** notes on Russia in 1894. You can set these out however you (be creative if you wish!) but you must ensure that you incorporate the following key words/questions:

Key words	Key questions
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Tsar• Subsistence• Serf• <i>Mir</i>• <i>Zemstva</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Okhrana</i>• Slavophile• Westerniser <ul style="list-style-type: none">• What were the major divisions in Russia?• Why was it so difficult for Russia to industrialise?• What strengths and limitations did the Tsarist regime have in 1894?

When Tsar Nicholas II took the throne, Russia was not, perhaps, a revolutionary country, but it was a country divided. The most obvious of these divisions was that of wealth. In 1894, 80% of the population were peasants, who tended to live just above (or, in years of poor harvests, just below) subsistence. Life expectancy for this group was less than forty. They survived by a system of agriculture known as ‘strip farming’, in which each family was allocated a number of strips (perhaps 20 or 30) scattered around a village. In these narrow strips, peasants attempted to grow crops, particularly grain, but without large fields or surplus money to invest in machinery or animals, most of the ploughing and harvesting had to be done through backbreaking physical labour, and yields were always limited. As the number of Russians rose, so did the demand for land. A population increase of 50% between 1860 and 1897 resulted in a severe land shortage. In 1891, the ‘Great Famine’ swept through Russia, leaving 350,000 dead, and many more scarred by the memory of how precarious their lives were. Meanwhile, the 1.5% of Russian society who were nobles lived a very different life. It is a myth to say that all nobles were well off – many, in fact, had suffered increasing bankruptcies in the past half century, and had to resort to mortgaging their estates – but their lifestyle was very different to that of peasants. The nobility owned a quarter of the land in Russia. To quote Peter Waldron:

“The great Russian noble families lived lives of great opulence, able to maintain houses in both country and city, to entertain extravagantly and to travel abroad.”

Yet the position of the peasants was still better than it had been before 1861, when the ‘Great Emancipation’ took place. Nicholas II’s grandfather, Alexander II, became Tsar just after the Crimean War, when Russia

had been soundly beaten by Britain and France. Looking at the struggling Russian economy and military, it was easy to see why. Russia simply had not undergone any kind of industrial revolution, as many of the countries in Western Europe had done. A large part of the reason for this was the survival of an institution called 'serfdom'. This was not unlike the Feudal System (which had existed in England until the 1400s) – rather than being free peasants, the majority of the population were serfs, who were bound to a certain noble, forced to work for free and unable to leave their estate. They owned no land, could not make a profit, and thus did not have the capacity to mechanise agriculture, which was the key to freeing up labourers to work in factories and stimulate industry. Alexander II hoped that freeing the serfs would result in a stronger economy that was less depend on an uncertain harvest. His plan was not totally unsuccessful. The serfs were freed, became peasants, and were provided with strips of land. The industrial workforce began to grow – by 1890 it was 1.4 million, and by 1912 it had reached 2.9 million. Two major problems, however, persisted, which limited the industrialisation of Russia.

The first was the continuation of subsistence farming, as outlined above. Land was redistributed after the Emancipation, and peasants were provided with strips. The idea was that the most enterprising peasants could use the 'Peasant Land Bank' to purchase more strips and create a more efficient field. This rarely happened. Peasants simply did not earn enough to afford the extra strips. They were further hampered by the 'redemption payments' that they had to pay (this was a sort of compensation for the nobles who had lost their free workforce when the peasants were emancipated, and who had had to give up most of their land). The nobility hung on to the most fertile land, and peasants were forced to manage with what was left. It is important to note that many peasants did not want to change to an entirely new system of farming. The *mir* was the peasants' council in each village, responsible for running the community. These tended to have the support of the peasantry, and were also highly traditional, encouraging communal cultivation and dissuading peasants who wanted to amalgamate strips. Therefore, subsistence farming remained.

The second problem was the need for control; a paradox which Nicholas II's father and grandfather had struggled to grapple with: how to modernise and industrialise Russia while still maintaining the absolute authority of Tsarism. Russia was a total autocracy – the Tsar had complete control. He was impeded by the clunky bureaucracy (4% of the population were government officials, paperwork was endless, and getting things done quickly was a pipedream) but his authority was absolute. Alexander II had originally allowed for some relaxation of censorship and control soon after the Emancipation of the Serfs, but a rise in revolutionary activity resulted in a new wave of repression. Eventually, Alexander II would be assassinated by the radical 'People's Will' group, and consequently his son, Alexander III, was even more autocratic. Alexander II had instituted a new body in Russian local government – the elected *zemstvo* (plural *zemstva*). Alexander III did not abolish the *zemstva*, but he did create a new role which totally undermined their power – the Land Captains, who had the power to override the decisions of the *zemstva* and local judges. Similarly, under Alexander III the *Okhrana* (secret police) gained new powers, while censorship increased. One of the greatest fears of the Tsarist regime was that radical ideas would infect the new working class in cities (who seemed harder to control than the peasantry) and that this would be a breeding ground for revolution. Thus, the paradox – encouraging more people to become industrial workers was a fundamental part of the modernisation of the Russian economy, but should it be done, when it had the potential to totally destabilise the Tsarist regime?

This signals another of the major divides in late 19th century Russia – the gap between rural and urban, and Slavophiles and Westernisers. The growing urban population (4% of the total by 1894) presented its own challenges – major overcrowding for peasants flooding into cities to be industrial workers, the spread of diseases like cholera, typhus and diphtheria – but at least it meant that Russia was creating factories and might be able to compete with countries in Western Europe. This was what some of Russians – the so-called Westernisers – wanted. Often these people were middle-class professionals – perhaps the sons of nobles who had set up factories or businesses in urban areas, occasionally peasants who had done well for

themselves. They were at odds with the Slavophiles (a term which literally means 'lover of Slavs') who believed that Russians should focus on their own Slavic heritage rather than attempting to emulate the West. Slavophiles were often based in the countryside, priding Russian agricultural traditions, and opposed to modernisation. Not only did the Tsar have to attempt to industrialise under the limitations of Russia's backwards agriculture, but he also had to negotiate the divisions in the elite – and his own mind, for Nicholas II was not famous for having definitive opinions – about what was the 'right' path for Russia.

So far, this reads like a list of everything that was wrong with Russia in 1894 – and much was. Yet the Tsarist regime was still in control. Despite everything, the Tsar still had strengths. It can be argued that the most important of these was the Russian Orthodox Church, whose teachings, adhered to by almost all Russians, taught that the Tsar was the 'Little Father' – an almost divine figure who should be totally respected and obeyed. It is impossible to know whether Russians genuinely felt this, but the evidence suggests that they did, particularly the peasantry. Nicholas himself believed fervently that he was the representative of God on Earth, and that his role was to be paternal – to take care of the Russian people, not as an elected leader who could be questioned, but as a father. It was the message that he had learned from his father growing up, and it would stay with him throughout his reign. The military was another asset for Nicholas II. It was large – some 5% of the population, and appeared to be obedient to the Tsar, used to enforce his control. He had the *Okhrana* and a system of labour camps to deal with political opponents, and it was illegal to go on strike, set up a Trade Union or political party, or openly express anti-Tsarist views. When Nicholas inherited the throne in 1894, he said: "What is going to happen to me, and all of Russia?" He was not a confident man and doubted (not without reason) his ability to rule. Yet the disastrous conclusion of his reign was not inevitable. It was made so by decisions that Nicholas himself would make in the next 23 years.