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Date _____

The Russian Revolution

Learn more about this topic! Each section gives more detail on one of the lyrics from the song. Read each section, and then respond by answering the question or taking notes on key ideas.

1. b'

Several factors led to the Russian Revolution of 1917. Serfdom, a form of feudalism in which peasants were forced to work for landowning nobility, was not abolished in Russia until 1861. In contrast, serfdom had disappeared from most of Western Europe by the end of the Middle Ages. By the early 1900s, Russia was one of the poorest countries in Europe. It had an enormous peasant class and a smaller but quickly growing class of poor industrial workers. The ballooning population in cities like Moscow and St. Petersburg led to overcrowding, destitute living conditions, and famine across Russia. At the same time, the Romanovs, the imperial family who ruled Russia, were extremely wealthy. It's estimated that the dynasty was worth today's equivalent of \$300 billion.

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The terrible living conditions in Russian cities caused **oppressed** factory workers to begin protesting. In January 1905, protesters gathered outside the Winter Palace in St. Petersburg, where the Romanovs lived, to demand better living and working conditions. The protest was peaceful, but imperial troops and police attacked the crowds, killing or injuring hundreds. This massacre became known as Bloody Sunday. After Bloody Sunday, Tsar Nicholas II, Russia's ruling emperor, attempted to **placate** the people. Claiming his intent to improve conditions for Russians and give everyday citizens a voice in government, he signed the October **Manifesto**. This document purported to establish a representative **parliament**, or Duma. However, the Duma was mostly powerless. Whenever Nicholas disagreed with its decisions, he would disband it.

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In 1914, Russia entered World War I on the side of the British and French. The Russian army was not prepared for Germany's more advanced military forces. Russian casualties were greater than those sustained by any nation in any previous war in history. As the war went on, food and fuel shortages became worse and worse. Nicholas took command of the Russian army in 1915, essentially leaving his wife, Tsarina Alexandra, to rule Russia. Alexandra was unpopular, due to her German ancestry and her controversial relationship with religious advisor Grigori Rasputin.

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3. b'

The February Revolution began on March 8, 1917. (Because Russia used the Julian calendar until 1918, some dates do not match the Gregorian calendar used today.) Protesters gathered on the streets of Petrograd, formerly St. Petersburg, demanding bread. They were joined by striking workers across the city. Nicholas tried to put an end to the riots, but the troops ended up joining the protesters, and he had no choice but to **abdicate**. This ended 300 years of the Romanov **regime** in Russia.

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After the February Revolution, a **Provisional** Government was set up under the leadership of revolutionary Alexander Kerensky. It was intended to make a fairer society, but many of the previous problems remained. Many Russians were still poor and hungry, and the country was still at war with Germany. Soon Kerensky was challenged by the powerful and well-organized Petrograd Soviet (meaning Workers\& Council). The Soviet was led by Vladimir Lenin and the Bolsheviks, a group of far-left urban workers and soldiers. Lenin was inspired by the teachings of Karl Marx, a German philosopher and economist who advocated for a society free from capitalism and social classes. He promised Russians \& land, bread, and peace.\&

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4. b'

On November 7, 1917, the October Revolution was **ignited**. Bolshevik forces, led by Lenin\&s lieutenant Leon Trotsky, seized control of Petrograd and the Winter Palace. Lenin became the leader of the first Marxist state in the world. He signed a peace treaty with Germany, took control of factories, and distributed land to the people. His New Economic Policy placed limits of private ownership. Bolshevik rule was not accepted by all Russians, and a bitter civil war broke out. Lenin\&s Red Army was eventually victorious, and he established the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) in 1922. Under his administration, the USSR became a one-party socialist state governed by the Communist Party.

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5. b'

Soon after Lenin died in 1924, Petrograd was renamed Leningrad. A long battle for control over the Communist Party ensued. Finally, Joseph Stalin, the party's General Secretary, rose to power. Stalin's government became increasingly rigid, brutal, and oppressive.

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The USSR existed as a communist state from 1922 to 1991, inspiring many other countries to become communist, including China, North Korea, and Cuba. The division between communist and democratic countries led to the development of the Cold War after World War II. In 1991, the Communist Party ended its rule in Russia. Russia is now a republic.

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