

Option 2B Russia 1917–39

All key topics must be taught

Key Topic 1 The collapse of the Tsarist regime 1917

- The nature of Tsarist rule.
- The impact of the First World War.
- The fall of the Tsar and the establishment of the Provisional Government

Amplification of content

Russia in 1917, the weaknesses of Nicholas II, discontent among peasants and town workers and the growth of opposition. Military defeat, food shortages, inflation, transport problems and political upheaval. The events in Petrograd in February 1917, the mutiny in the army and the Tsar's absence and abdication. The weaknesses and failures of the Provisional Government, the Petrograd Soviet, Lenin's return and activities and the growth in support for the Bolshevik Party and the significance of the Kornilov Revolt.

Key Topic 2 Bolshevik takeover and consolidation 1917–24

- The October revolution
- Imposing Bolshevik control, 1917–21.
- Creating a new society, 1918–24.

Amplification of content

The Bolshevik seizure of power, reasons for their success and the roles of Trotsky and Lenin. Imposing Bolshevik control involves the early Bolshevik decrees, the Constituent Assembly and the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk, the reasons for, events and effects of the Civil War, 1918–22, and reasons for Bolshevik victory. Creating a new society includes War Communism and its unpopularity, the Kronstadt Mutiny and the New Economic Policy.

Key Topic 3 The nature of Stalin's dictatorship 1924–39

- The struggle for power 1924–28.
- The purges of the 1930s.
- Propaganda and censorship.

Amplification of content

The struggle for power 1924–28 includes Stalin's strengths and the weaknesses and mistakes of his rivals, especially Trotsky, and how Stalin gradually removed these rivals. The purges of the 1930s relate to the use of terror, especially the reasons for, nature of, and consequences of the purges, the importance of the show trials and the work of the secret police. Propaganda and censorship includes the cult of Stalin, official culture and control of education and the 1936 Constitution.

Key Topic 4 Economic and social changes 1928–39

- Collectivisation.
- Industrialisation.
- Life in the Soviet Union.

Amplification of content

Collectivisation refers to Stalin's reasons for change in agriculture, the organisation of collectives, mechanisation, widespread opposition and the attack on the kulaks, and its successes and failures. Industrialisation includes Stalin's motives for rapid industrialisation, Gosplan, Five-Year Plans, the Stakhanovites and the achievements of industrialisation. Life in the Soviet Union involves living and working conditions, the differing experiences of social groups, ethnic minorities and the changing role of women.