Set a Purpose

Before you begin reading, answer the Section Focus Question and write it on the board.

Focus: Explain why tsars followed a cycle of absolutism, reform, and reaction.

Objectives

- Describe major obstacles to progress in Russia.
- Explain why tsars followed a cycle of absolutism, reform, and reaction.
- Understand why the problems of industrialization contributed to the outbreak of revolution.

Prepare to Read

Build Background Knowledge

Ask students to recall the development of the absolute monarchy in Russia. Based on their previous reading, ask them to predict how Russian rulers would react to forces for progress and reform that existed in the late 1800s.

Set a Purpose

Witness History: Read the selection aloud or play the audio.

Note Taking

Read the selection aloud or play the audio. What would you describe the life of a Russian serf like? How were they treated? (They were virtually slaves and could be moved or sold against their wills.)

Focus: Point out the Section Focus Question and write it on the board. Tell students to refer to this question as they read. (Answer appears with Section 5 Assessment answers.)

Preview: Have students preview the Section Objectives and the list of Terms, People, and Places.

Note Taking: Have students read the selection using the Guided Questioning strategy (TE, p. T20). As they read, have students fill in the timeline sequencing events that led to Russia’s 1905 revolution.

Vocabulary Builder

Use the information below and the following resources to teach the high-use word from this section.

Radical: a person who favors great changes or reforms

Martin Luther was a radical who wanted to change many things about the established church.

Russia: Reform and Reaction

Objectives:

- Describe major obstacles to progress in Russia.
- Explain why tsars followed a cycle of absolutism, reform, and reaction.
- Understand why the problems of industrialization contributed to the outbreak of revolution.

Terms, People, and Places:

- Alexander II
- emancipation
- Peter Stolypin
- terms

Note Taking:

Reading Skill: Recognize Sequence: Create a timeline of Russian events like the one below to keep track of the sequence of events that led to the revolution of 1905. Look for dates and other clues to sequence in the text.

1855
1861
1870
1890
1900
1910

Reformers hoped to free Russians from autocratic rule, economic backwardness, and social injustice. But efforts to modernize Russia had little success, as tsars imprisoned critics or sent them into exile.

Conditions in Russia

By 1812, Russia was not only the largest, most populous nation in Europe but also a great world power. Since the 1800s, explorers, soldiers, and traders seeking furs had expanded Russia’s empire eastward across Siberia to the Pacific. Seeking ports, Peter the Great and Catherine the Great had added lands on the Baltic and Black seas. Seeking to contain the Ottoman and British empires, tsars in the 1800s expanded into the Caucasus and Central Asia. Russia thus acquired a huge multinational empire, part European and part Asian.

Other European nations looked on the Russian colossus with envy. Although their autocratic government and feared its expansion. At the same time, Russia remained economically underdeveloped. By the 1800s, tsars saw the need to modernize but resisted reforms that would undermine their absolute rule.

Russia’s Social Structure:

A great obstacle to progress was the rigid social structure. Landowning nobles dominated society and rejected any change that would threaten their power. The middle class was small and weak. Most Russians were serfs, or laborers bound to the land and to the landowners who controlled them.
Most serfs were peasants. Others were servants, artisans, or soldiers forced into the tsar's army. As industry expanded, some masters sent serfs to work in factories but too much of their pay was a small middle class, a group of nobles who didn't have faith in the tsar. Many enlightened Russians knew that serfdom was inefficient. As long as most people had to serve the whim of their masters, Russia's economy would remain backward. However, landowning nobles had no reason to improve agriculture and take little interest in industry. Many felt that dramatic changes were needed. Many peasants moved to the cities, taking jobs in factories but too poor to do so. Also, the lands allotted to peasants were often too small to farm efficiently or to support a family. Peasants remained poor, and discontent festered.

Introducing Other Reforms

Alexander II came to the throne in 1855 during the Crimean War. His reign represents the pattern of reform and repression used by his father, Alexander I and Nicholas I. The Crimean War had broken out after Russia tried to seize Ottoman lands along the Danube River. Britain and France stepped in to help the Ottoman Turks, invading the Crimean peninsula that juts into the Black Sea. The war, which ended in a Russian defeat, revealed the country's backwardness. Russia had only a few miles of railroads, and the military bureaucracy was hopelessly inefficient. Many felt that dramatic changes were needed.

Freeing the Serfs

A widespread popular reaction followed. Liberals demanded changes, and students demonstrated, seeking reform. Pressed from all sides, Alexander II finally agreed to reforms. In 1861, he issued a royal decree that required emancipation, or freeing of the serfs. Freedom brought problems. Former serfs had to buy the land they had worked, but many were too poor to do so. Also, the lands allotted to peasants were often too small to farm efficiently or to support a family. Peasants remained poor, and discontent featured.

Still, emancipation was a turning point. Many peasants moved to the cities, taking jobs in factories and building Russian industry. Equally important, freeing the serfs boosted the drive for further reform.

Introducing Other Reforms

Along with emancipation, Alexander II set up a system of local government. Elected assemblies, called zemstvos, were made responsible for matters such as road repair, schools, and agriculture. Through this system, Russians gained some experience of self-government at the local level.

The Decembrist Revolt

In 1825, army officers led an uprising known as the Decembrist Revolt (below). They had picked up liberal ideas while fighting in Western Europe and demanded reforms and a constitution. Tsar Nicholas I represented the revolt. This stamp (inset) commemorates the 150th anniversary of the revolt. How did the revolt symbolize Russia in the 1800s?

Monitor Progress

As students complete their timelines, circulate to make sure they understand the events that led to the 1905 Revolution.

Answers

Serfs The daily life of Russian serfs was scarcely better than that of workhorses or other animals. They lived in dirt-floored huts. Windows were covered with pigs' bladders, which allowed no light to enter. Pigs and calves slept in the huts along with the people. Fires that burned for warmth and cooking filled the homes with thick smoke. The labor requirements imposed on serfs had changed little over the centuries. They still had to work several days a week on their masters' estates, usually doing farm work. They also spent part of the year building roads, canals, and railways for the state. When Russia began to industrialize, serfs were compelled to live and work in factory towns under quasi-military discipline.

History Background

Servants The daily life of Russian servants was scarcely better than that of workhorses or other animals. They lived in dirt-floored huts. Windows were covered with pigs' bladders, which allowed no light to enter. Pigs and calves slept in the huts along with the people. Fires that burned for warmth and cooking filled the homes with thick smoke. The labor requirements imposed on servants had changed little over the centuries. They still had to work several days a week on their masters' estates, usually doing farm work. They also spent part of the year building roads, canals, and railways for the state. When Russia began to industrialize, servants were compelled to live and work in factory towns under quasi-military discipline.

Conditions in Russia

Teach

Instruct

Introduce: Key Terms

Ask students to find the key term colossalus (in blue) in the text and define it. Point out that as a noun, Russia was an enormous country. Other European nations viewed it as mysterious, but also backward. As they read, ask students to consider what made this colossalus different from other European countries.

Teach

Using the Think-Write-Pair-Share strategy (TPS, p. T23), discuss how Russia's social structure, with an absolute ruler at the top, prevented reforms and progress. Ask: How did serfdom keep the Russian economy from advancing? (It encouraged the preservation of an agricultural base, rather than the development of industry, and so Russia did not develop a modern economy.)

Quick Activity

Display Color Transparency 136: Gambling with the Lives of Serfs. Use the lesson suggested in the transparency book to analyze a political cartoon on the vast differences between serfs and nobles.

Independent Practice

Primary Source

To help students better understand how the tsars reacted to liberal ideas, have them read the selection from Pasternak's Dr. Zhivago's The Execution in Semyonovskaya Square and complete the worksheet.

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Caption

The Decembrist Revolt

In 1825, army officers led an uprising known as the Decembrist Revolt (below). They had picked up liberal ideas while fighting in Western Europe and demanded reforms and a constitution. Tsar Nicholas I represented the revolt. This stamp (inset) commemorates the 150th anniversary of the revolt. How did the revolt symbolize Russia in the 1800s?
Emancipation and Stirrings of Revolution

Instruct

- Introduce: Vocabulary Builder
  Have students read the Vocabulary Builder term and definition. Ask them to predict what the relationship would be between revolution and radicals in nineteenth-century Russia.

- Teach
  Discuss the beginnings of the revolutionary movement in Russia. Ask: How did the Crimean War lead to demands for change? (The war exposed Russia’s backwardness, as compared with more advanced nations, and Russia’s defeat prompted calls for reform.) Have students list the reforms put in place in an effort to modernize the country. Then: Ask: Why did these reforms not go far enough to satisfy many Russians? (Though serfs had their freedom, they could not support themselves with the given land and remained discontented. Though the zemstvos provided a say in local issues, they had no influence on national policy.)

- Quick Activity
  Refer students to the Infographic at the bottom of this page. Ask: Why did the reforms result in repression? (The tsar wanted to preserve his rule and the nobles’ support.)

Independent Practice

- Primary Source
  To have students learn more about the Alexander II, have them read the selection from Declaration of Alexander II Russification of the Serfs.

- Link to Literature
  To help students better understand the experiences of Russian Jews during the pogroms of Alexander III, have them read the selection from Anna Veinikina’s ‘How I Found America’ and complete the worksheet.

Monitor Progress

Refer students to the image of a tsar pulling on the rope. To review this section so far, ask them to explain Russia’s tug of war between reform and repression.

The Tsars Resist:

- Insisting on the absolute power of the state
- Exiling liberals
- Secret police, arrests, executions
- Censorship, and exiled critics to Siberia

Repression and Crackdown

- The Tsars Resist: Repression and Crackdown
- Secret police, arrests, executions
- Censorship of liberal ideas
- Exiling Bolsheviks
- Resurgent Russian Orthodox Church
- Insisting on the absolute power of the state
- Punishing non-Russian groups within empire

Tug of War: Reform and Repression by the Russian Tsars

The five tsars that ruled Russia from 1801 to 1917 all followed a similar pattern of autocratic rule: at times they appeared open to liberal ideas and enacted reforms to satisfy the groups demanding change. In every case, however, the tsar pulled back on these reforms and launched a battery of repressive measures designed to preserve their absolute power and the support of the nobility.

Concessions and Reforms

- Crackdown

Alexander I, Nicholas I, Alexander II, Nicholas II

The Failure of Emancipation

- Russian Jews during the pogroms

In 1881, terrorists assassinated Alexander II. Crackdown Alexander III responded to his father’s assassination by increasing the power of the secret police, restored strict censorship, and exiled critics to Siberia. The tsar also launched a program of Russification aimed at suppressing the cultures of non-Russian peoples within the empire. Alexander insisted on one language, Russian.

Instruct

- Vocabulary Builder
  Refer students to the image of a tsar pulling on the rope. To review this section so far, ask them to explain Russia’s tug of war between reform and repression.

Revolutionary Currents

- Alexander’s reforms failed to satisfy many Russians. Peasants had freedom but not land. Liberals wanted a constitution and an elected legislature. Radicals, who had adopted revolutionary ideas from the West, demanded even more revolutionary changes. The tsar, meantime, moved away from reform and toward repression.

- In the 1870s, some socialists went to live and work among peasants, preaching reform and rebellion. They had little success. The peasants scarcely understood them and sometimes turned them over to the police.

- The failure of this movement, combined with renewed government repression, sparked anger among radicals. Some turned to terrorism. On March 13, 1881, terrorists assassinated Alexander II.

Russian Ballet

- Although it originated in France and Italy, ballet took on a bold, unique form in Russia. Ballet had been introduced to Russia as a form of court entertainment in the early 1700s. By the late 1800s, Russian choreographers and dancers had developed an expressive, muscular style that was to both rejuvenate and dominate ballet in the twentieth century.

In 1909, Russian arts promoter Sergey Diaghilev founded the Ballets Russes in Paris. His company reinvigorated ballet with its combination of music, painting, drama, and dance. The most acclaimed dancers of the day toured the world with the Ballets Russes, sparking excitement and influencing dance for years to come.
The Drive to Industrialize

**Instruct**

- **Introduce** Ask students to recall the effects of industrialization on Germany and Italy. Based on their readings, ask them to predict what problems industrialization will cause in Russia.

- **Teach** Ask How did industrialization contribute to unrest? (It created social problems. Peasants left the land to work in the cities and now worked long hours for little pay. Slums developed and were centers of poverty and disease. Discontented workers became the focus of radicals’ efforts.)

**Independent Practice**

To help students identify central issues faced by the Russian tsars, have them create a two-column chart, labeled Tsar and Issues During the Reign. Have them fill in the chart for Alexander II, Alexander III, and Nicholas II. After they’ve finished, ask them to use their charts to summarize the issues faced by all three tsars. (discontent, pressure to modernize)

**Monitor Progress**

To review this section, ask students to list what groups supported the economic growth and what groups opposed it. (supported: government officials, business leaders; opposed: nobles, peasants)

**Answers**

- He began harsh and repressive measures to wipe out liberals and revolutionaries.

**Thinking Critically**

1. Identify Main Ideas What factors brought about such opposition to the tsars?

2. Draw Conclusions Why do you think the tsars swung back and forth between repression and reform?

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**Persecution and pogroms** Russia had acquired a large Jewish population when it carved up Poland and expanded into Ukraine. Under Alexander III, persecution of Jewish people in Russia increased. The tsar limited the number of Jewish people who were allowed to study in universities and practice certain professions. He also forced them to live in restricted areas.

- Official persecution encouraged pogroms, or violent mob attacks on Jewish people. Gangs beat and killed Jewish people and looted and burned their homes and stores. Faced with severe persecution, many left Russia. They became refugees, or people who flee their homeland to seek safety elsewhere. Large numbers of Russian Jews went to the United States.

**Checkpoint** How did Alexander III respond to the murder of his father?

**The Drive to Industrialize** Russia finally entered the industrial age under Alexander III and his son Nicholas II. In the 1890s, Nicholas’ government

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**Opposing the Tsars** Liberals, socialists, nationalists, army officers, workers

**Thinking Critically**

1. Identify Main Ideas What factors brought about such opposition to the tsars?

2. Draw Conclusions Why do you think the tsars swung back and forth between repression and reform?

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**Answers**

- He began harsh and repressive measures to wipe out liberals and revolutionaries.

**Thinking Critically**

1. The tsar’s reform did not correct the lack of constitutional freedom or economic stability for peasants.

2. Sample: The tsars wanted to prevent unrest, but feared reforms would lead to a loss of power, so they cracked down to prevent this.
Turning Point: Crisis and Revolution

Teach

- **Introduce** Refer students to the two images on this page and ask them to describe the scene. Based on their previous reading, ask them to predict how discontented Russians will react to this slaughter.

- **Teach** Ask: What were the causes of the revolution of 1905? (worker discontent, desire for a liberal constitution, Russo-Japanese War (Bloody Sundays))

- **Quick Activity** Show students Crisis and Revolution in Russia from the Witness History Discovery School™ video program. Ask them to explain the long-term causes of discontent in tsarist Russia. (Answers should include the cycles of reform and repression that failed to solve Russia’s problems and caused revolutionary feeling and discontent to grow.)

Independent Practice

Have students write a paragraph explaining whether the Russian government could have avoided “Bloody Sunday,” and if so, how this might have been accomplished.

Monitor Progress

- As students work on their responses, circulate to ensure that they are expressing a distinct point of view in their writing.
- Check Reading and Note-Taking Study Guide entries for student understanding.

Answers

**Caption** Similarities: Both images are about the same topics. Differences: The bottom image shows a dramatic scene of unarmed people being shot by a faceless row of soldiers. The image at the top left is a satiric image of the tsar covered in blood.

Russia borrowed money to invest in and build industries and transportation systems, such as the Trans-Siberian Railroad.

**Questions**

- How did Nicholas II respond? (Answers should include Nicholas issued the October Manifesto, which linked European Russia to the Pacific Ocean.)
- How did Russia industrialize? (Russia borrowed money to invest in and build industries and transportation systems, such as the Trans-Siberian Railroad.)

Focus on economic development. It encouraged the building of railroads to connect iron and coal mines with factories and to transport goods across Russia. It also secured foreign capital to invest in industry and transportation systems, such as the Trans-Siberian Railroad, which linked European Russia to the Pacific Ocean.

- Political and social problems increased as a result of industrialization. Government officials and business leaders applauded economic growth. Nobles and peasants opposed it, fearing the changes it brought. Industrialization also created new social ills as peasants flocked to cities to work in factories. Instead of a better life, they found long hours and low pay in dangerous conditions. In the slums around the factories, poverty, disease, and discontent multiplied. Radicals sought support among the new industrial workers. At factory gates, Socialists often handed out pamphlets that preached the revolutionary ideas of Karl Marx.

Checkpoint How did Russia industrialize?

**Turning Point: Crisis and Revolution**

When war broke out between Russia and Japan in 1904, Nicholas II called on his people to fight for “the Faith, the Tsar, and the Fatherland.” Despite all of their efforts, the Russians suffered one humiliating defeat after another.

**Bloody Sunday** News of the military disasters unleashed pent-up discontent created by years of oppression. Protesters poured into the streets. Workers went on strike, demanding shorter hours and better wages. Liberals called for a constitution and reforms to overhaul the government.

As the crisis deepened, a young Orthodox priest organized a peaceful march for Sunday, January 22, 1905. Marchers flowed through the streets of St. Petersburg toward the tsar’s Winter Palace. Chanting prayers and singing hymns, workers carried holy icons and pictures of the tsar. They also brought a petition for justice and freedom.

**WITNESS HISTORY VIDEO**

Watch: Crisis and Revolution in Russia from the Witness History Discovery School™ video program to examine the discontent in tsarist Russia.

**WITNESS HISTORY VIDEO**

Watch: Crisis and Revolution in Russia from the Witness History Discovery School™ video program to examine the discontent in tsarist Russia.

**Link to Geography**

The Trans-Siberian Railroad Beginning in the 1890s, Russian workers laid more than 5,000 miles of track to build the Trans-Siberian Railroad, the longest railroad in the world at the time. Siberia’s harsh landscape and climate challenged planners and the workers themselves. Iron, stone, hardwood, and food all had to be shipped thousands of miles to supply the crews. In some areas, the permanently frozen soil had to be dynamited to permit workers to lay track. The dangerous work killed many workers, either in explosions or when they plunged to their death in freezing rivers. The bitter Siberian winters and miserable working conditions also took their toll. Many workers died from hypothermia; others perished from diseases like plague and cholera.
Results of the Revolution

The Revolution of 1905

In the months that followed Bloody Sunday, discontent exploded across Russia. Strikes multiplied. In some cities, workers took over local government. In the countryside, peasants revolted and demanded land. Minority nationalities called for autonomy.

Minister, leaders criticized the government. Nicholas then appointed a new prime minister, Peter Stolypin (stuh LIP yin). Arrests, pogroms, and executions followed as the conservative Stolypin sought to restore order.

He agreed to summon a Duma, or elected national legislature. No law, he declared, would go into effect without approval by the Duma.

Stolypin soon realized that Russia needed reform, not just repression. Some ministries, however, did not support his proposals. The Duma rejected some of his reforms. In 1907, Nicholas dissolved the Duma. In 1906, the first Duma met, but the tsar quickly dissolved it when some leaders criticized the government. Nicholas then appointed a new prime minister, Peter Stolypin (stuh LIP yin). Arrests, pogroms, and executions followed as the conservative Stolypin sought to restore order.

To regain peasant support, he introduced moderate land reforms. He strengthened the zemstvos and improved education. Unfortunately, these reforms were too limited to meet the broad needs of most Russians, and dissatisfaction still simmered. Stolypin was assassinated in 1911.

Several more Dumas met during this period, but new voting laws made them read the section summary.

The manifesto won over moderates, leaving a small group of revolutionaries. Some of these revolutionaries formed a secret society called the Black Hundreds.

Bloody Sunday's impact was enormous. It was a turning point because it marked the end of the people’s trust and faith in the tsar. It was a turning point because it marked the end of the people’s trust and faith in the tsar.