

PART THREE: The Storm Breaks

For Discussion

Although the majority of Russian people were disillusioned with the tsar, the advent of World War I was a galvanizing event for the country.

- Discuss why the Russian army was ill-prepared to fight the German army and why the tsar was clueless about the predicament.

- Discuss Alexandra's decision to become a trained nurse. Why would someone of her standing subject herself to such work?

- Discuss the events of the Great Retreat (p. 140) and how "For many, it was the last straw . . . 'the vital psychological moment . . . when [soldiers'] loyalty to the monarchy snapped."

- Why does a monarchy need loyalty to survive? Discuss the concept of scapegoating and how the Russian people made German-born Alexandra their scapegoat.

- How did Rasputin take advantage of Alexandra's insecurity, religious obsession, and paranoia?

- Discuss the meaning of one Duma member's remark, "Oh, how terrible an autocracy without an autocrat" (p. 150).

- Compare and contrast the dismal living conditions in Petrograd with those of the elite in the winter of 1917. How did this juxtaposition fuel the flames of revolution?

- Discuss the statement on page 158, "These exhausted mothers . . . having suffered so much in watching their half-starving and sick children are perhaps the closer to revolution than anyone else . . . and more dangerous." How can mothers be more dangerous than an army with weapons?

- How did the tsar's "submission to God" allow him to be blind and deaf to the political shifts occurring in his own country?

- How was the Cossacks' decision not to fire on the protesters a historical turning point?

- What is anarchy, and how did it manifest in the events of March 11, 1917?

- Discuss why some Russians wanted to keep in place a tsar without any actual power.

- What does it mean to be marginalized?

- Discuss the tsar's diary entry written after his decision to abdicate the throne: "All around me I see treason, cowardice and deceit" (p. 174).

- Discuss how quickly the power of "the people" became the power of the military.



Curriculum Connection

Write the lyrics to "The Peasant Song" (p. 123) on the board. Organize the class into three groups. Assign each group a verse of the song and direct them to analyze its meaning based on the information they've read in this section of the text.



Somber, hungry Petrograd citizens line up outside a bakery for bread, c. 1915.
© Central Archive of Cinematic, Photographic and Phonographic Documents, St. Petersburg

From left to right: Olga, Alexei, Anastasia (holding Jimmy in her lap), and Tatiana resting after gardening in May 1917.
Library of Congress

Perched on the platform that Nicholas built on the roof of the greenhouse in Tobolsk are (from left to right): Olga, Anastasia, Nicholas, Alexei, and Tatiana. Marie is standing.
© Corbis

Part Four: Final Days

For Discussion

How was Lenin a natural leader, and how did he begin to consolidate power upon his return from Switzerland?

- What are the pros and cons of "fanatical faith" in a movement or cause (p. 192)?

- Why, other than anger and revenge, would the Bolsheviks want to eliminate the royal family?

- On page 192, the author describes what the royal family chose to bring with them from Tsarskoe Selo. Reread this passage and discuss their choices. How do their choices reveal their collective state of mind?

- What did Lenin mean by "History will not forgive us if we do not take power [soon]"? Why in later years did the Soviet Union "mythologize" the October Revolution?

- Discuss Lenin's methods for creating a system of equality. Do you agree with his tactics and his treatment of the elite?

- Discuss the treatment of the royal family in "The House of Special Purpose." Do you feel that the family deserved this form of treatment?

- Why was the murder of the royal family bad "public relations" for the Bolshevik-led government? Discuss the murders of the royal family. Do you think they deserved this fate?

- Discuss how life under Lenin, and eventually Stalin, resembled life under the tsar.



Curriculum Connection

After reading the text, students may be able to draw parallels to major world events of the last few years, such as the Arab Spring, the ongoing war in Syria, and Russia's annexation of Crimea. Give students time to research contemporary events and describe how the lessons learned in *The Family Romanov: Murder, Rebellion, and the Fall of Imperial Russia* are still being played out today.



INTERNET RESOURCES

Nicholas and Alexandra
nicholasandalexandra.com

Alexander Palace Time Machine
alexanderpalace.org

Vladimir Lenin
bbc.co.uk/history/historic_figures/lenin_vladimir.shtml

COMMON CORE CORRELATIONS

The following Common Core standards can be correlated to many of the discussion questions and curriculum connections in this guide.

○ CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.2.

Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary of how key events or ideas develop over the course of the text.

○ CCSE.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.4.

Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including vocabulary describing political, social, or economic aspects of history/social studies.

○ CCSE.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.9.

Compare and contrast treatments of the same topic in several primary and secondary sources.

○ CCSE.ELA-Literacy.WHST.9-10.9.

Draw evidence from informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.

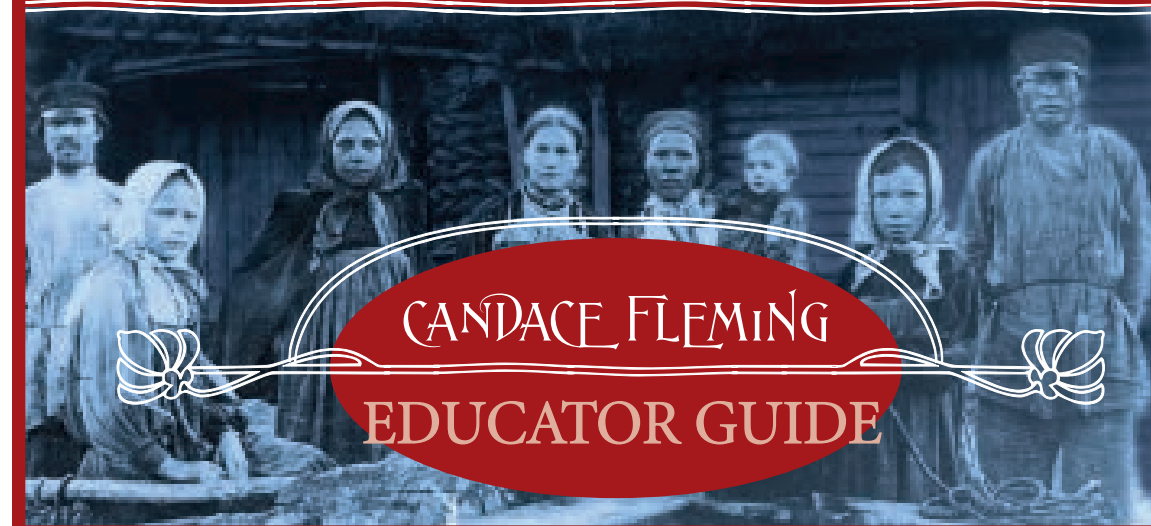
This guide was created by Colleen Carroll, children's book author, curriculum writer/developer, literacy specialist, and education consultant. Ms. Carroll teaches middle school writing at an independent school outside New York City.



Includes
Common Core
Standard
Correlations

THE FAMILY ROMANOV

MURDER, REBELLION & THE FALL OF IMPERIAL RUSSIA



CANDACE FLEMING
EDUCATOR GUIDE



Grades 7 and up
 HC: 978-0-375-86782-8
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ABOUT THE BOOK

To quote author Candace Fleming, *The Family Romanov: Murder, Rebellion, and the Fall of Imperial Russia* “is essentially three stories in one.” The first “is an intimate look at the Romanovs,” the last royal family of Russia, and how their unyielding belief in divine right would ultimately lead to their demise. The second details the “sweep of revolution” that took place between 1905 and 1917. And the third is a story of the Russian people, who under the Romanovs endured staggering hardship, and how their struggle for a better life would end three hundred years of Romanov reign.

Exhaustively researched and narrated in vivid detail, this book transports readers into the opulent world of the Romanov family: Tsar Nicholas II; his wife, Alexandra; and their five children. Juxtaposed against their excessively privileged lifestyle are the miserable lives of the Russian peasantry and factory workers, whose first-person accounts of suffering and desire for change set the stage for a revolution that would change the course of history.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Candace Fleming says, “I have always been a storyteller. Even before I could write my name, I could tell a good tale.” She is the award-winning author of many picture books and novels. In addition to *The Family Romanov: Murder, Rebellion, and the Fall of Imperial Russia*, her historical works include *The Great and Only Barnum: The Tremendous, Stupendous Life of Showman P. T. Barnum*; *The Lincolns: A Scrapbook Look at Abraham and Mary*; and *Amelia Lost: The Life and Disappearance of Amelia Earhart*. Candace Fleming lives outside Chicago. Learn more at CandaceFleming.com.

PRE-READING ACTIVITY

Make two columns on the blackboard or digital Smartboard. At the top of one column write *Haves*. At the top of the other, write *Have-Nots*. Read aloud the opening of the book, “Russia, 1903.” For each column, ask students to offer examples from the reading that pertain to these two extremes of society, such as “masses of fresh roses, lilacs, and mimosas” (*Haves*); and “primitive log huts clustered around rutted roads” (*Have-Nots*). Discuss how the rest of the book shows Imperial Russia from these vastly different points of view: the privilege of the royal family versus the poverty and substandard living conditions of the peasantry, factory workers, and the lower classes of Russian society. Encourage students to keep in mind the idea of juxtaposition as they read through the text.

PART ONE: Before the Storm

For Discussion

Tsar Nicholas II and the tsars who came before him were autocrats: rulers who exercise complete control. They believed their ruling authority was a divine right bestowed upon them by God. Discuss the notion of absolute power and divine right and why it is so dangerous.

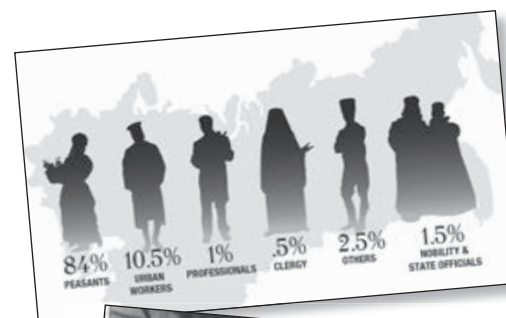
- Reread the passage on page 20 that begins, “Public safety was not the first priority,” and contrast the examples given with systems of democratic government.
- Discuss the characteristics that made Nicholas II a weak and ineffectual leader.
- Discuss the tsar’s decision to move to Tsarskoe Selo, thereby isolating himself from his ministers and advisors.
- After the precoronation panic that killed an estimated fourteen hundred people, Nicholas II went forward with social plans. How did this decision make a poor first impression on the Russian people and begin to sow the seeds of anger and resentment in the population?
- How did Alexandra’s religious obsessions, combined with the pressure of producing a male heir, leave her vulnerable to charlatans, such as “Dr.” Philippe?
- On page 48, the author describes the daily life of the four Romanov daughters, and adds, “By the time the carriage rolled away from the palace, there was a protector hiding behind every tree and bush.”

Discuss the threat that precipitated such an abundance of security

- Why did the Russian people celebrate the birth of the future tsar, Alexei, when their current tsar did nothing to improve their lives?
- What is social unrest, and how did the events and examples from Part 1 hasten its beginnings in Imperial Russia?

Curriculum Connection

Write the term *wealth disparity* on the board. Discuss its meaning and ask students to offer examples from Part I. Next, have students offer examples of wealth disparity in the world, in their home country, and in their community. Lead students in identifying a segment of the community in the greatest need. Initiate a community service project, such as a food or clothing drive, or a fund-raiser for a community organization that helps the underprivileged.



An approximate breakdown of Russia's social classes at the turn of the twentieth century.
 © Holly Pribble
 St. Petersburg factory workers—both men and boys—pose for this 1910 photograph.
 Library of Congress

PART TWO: Dark Clouds Gathering

For Discussion

How can reading books give people ideas and dreams for a better life?

- Discuss the concept of a labor strike. Compare peaceful strikes that occur in democratic societies with those that took place in Russia under Tsar Nicholas II.
- How did the belief in divine right allow the Russian people to dismiss the tsar’s responsibility for their miserable living conditions? How did this notion change after the March massacre of January 22, 1905, Bloody Sunday?
- Discuss Tolstoy’s statement on page 63: “Autocracy . . . no longer answers the needs of the Russian people.” To prevent revolution, he said, government must “give the masses the opportunity to express their desires and demands . . . [and] improve men’s lives.” What specific actions could the tsar have taken to “improve men’s lives”?
- What is meant by the term *fool’s paradise*, and how does this term describe the tsar and his choices?
- Why did the tsar ultimately agree to the October Manifesto (page 66)? How did the manifesto offer hope to the Russian people?
- Discuss the meaning of anti-Semitism and how Nicholas II sanctioned and proliferated anti-Jewish sentiment.
- Read and discuss the first-person account on pages 71 to 73, “Beyond the Palace Gates: House No. 13.” Why was the type of violence described in this passage considered acceptable under Nicholas II?
- Discuss the meaning of *revolutionary* and how Lenin’s writings from Geneva helped advance his cause.
- Discuss the meaning of Lenin’s statement “The point is not about victory, but about giving the regime a shake and attracting the masses to the movement” (p. 78).
- Discuss the tsar’s tactics for suppressing rebellion.
- Rasputin was a charismatic person. How did he use his charms to influence the empress?
- Compare and contrast the lives of the royal children with the girls whose stories are described on pages 96 and 97.



A photograph of Vladimir Lenin taken around 1918. Library of Congress
 An apprentice boy, c. 1900. © Zeno, Berlin

- How does the following statement made by Nicholas II in 1905 illustrate his ineffectiveness as a leader: “Do you mean that I am to regain the confidence of my people, or that they are to regain my confidence?” (p. 114)
- What is superstition, and how did the tsar and the empress allow their superstitions to cloud their judgment?
- Reread the “Beyond the Palace Gates” section on pages 120 to 122 and discuss the treatment of ordinary Russian children under Nicholas II.

Curriculum Connection

Throughout *The Family Romanov*, the author includes examples of the anti-Semitism endemic in Russia under Tsar Nicholas II. Review some of these examples from Part II. Assign students a research project to discover and examine contemporary examples of anti-Semitism in the United States, Russia, and other parts of the world. Give students time to present their findings to the class.