

Russian Revolution Unit – Lesson 3 - **Was Nicholas II a good ruler of Russia?**

Aims and objectives:	To discover through an analysis of primary sources whether or not Tsar Nicholas had the characteristics to be an effective Tsar.
Historical skill/standards:	Interpretation 6.8.a Explain and analyze strengths and weaknesses of various kinds of governance systems in terms of the purposes they are designed to serve. 6.8.b Explain how different types of government acquire, use, and justify power.
Resources:	Sources on Tsar Nicholas II, PowerPoint presentation, Templates Source Sheet (Word), student scale template
Hook:	Ask students to brainstorm the attributes of a good ruler. Students in pairs can be asked to look at the source of the Tsar and the Tsarina and brainstorm the attributes that Nicholas would have to possess in order to rule the country well. Students are to be encouraged to then record their findings on the interactive white board. Students can be given a copy of the source to stick into their notes in order to record the different group's ideas.
Activity 1:	The key question is placed on the board. Slide 3 Half the class is given a source from someone who praised Nicholas II, the other half are given a source from someone who criticised him. The student's feedback to the class - what their source says. Students have to consider at which point it is clear that there are 2 interpretations of the one man!
Activity 2:	Students to be given access to the scale template and the sources word document either as a hard document or in the shared documents area. They must then make a record of the Tsar's positive attributes and negative attributes. This should empower them to make an analysis of his ability to rule Russia.
Activity 3:	Ask students to question the validity of the evidence that they have used and color code the sources on the following criteria: dependable, uncertain and unreliable.
Plenary:	Two students are chosen for "hot seating," they have to speak for 1 minute on the key question. One will be in favor, the other against. They should be encouraged to use all the evidence. The remaining students have to debate whether they consider the Tsar to have the necessary attributes to be a good ruler of Russia.

Sources on Tsar Nicholas II: Was he a good ruler for Russia? Skill: Interpretations

<p>Source 1: "The daily work of a monarch he found intolerably boring. He could not stand listening long or seriously to ministers' reports, or reading them." Written by Kerensky, the leader of the government which took over from the Tsar in 1917, in his memoirs in 1934.</p>	<p>Source 2: "His ancestors did not pass on to him one quality which would have made him capable of governing an empire." Written by Trotsky, one of the leaders of the revolutionaries who opposed the Tsar, in 1932.</p>
<p>Source 3: "Nicholas II was not fit to run a village post office." Said by an unknown cabinet minister</p>	<p>Source 4: "He never had an opinion of his own ... always agreeing with the judgement of the last person he spoke to." By Grand Duke Alexander Mikhailovich</p>
<p>Source 5: Nicholas was "kind to those around him and deeply religious. ... He believed wholeheartedly in autocracy. ... He genuinely wanted to bring happiness and prosperity to his people". From a modern GCSE school textbook.</p>	<p>Source 6: "He has a quick mind and learns easily. In this respect he is far superior to his father." By Sergei Witte, chief minister under Nicholas, in his memoirs. Even though he disliked the Tsar, he said this of Nicholas.</p>
<p>Source 7: "There is no doubt that Nicholas was a kind, well-meaning person, with a deep affection for his family. He was devoted to his wife, Alexandra, his son, Alexis, and his four daughters. Family photographs were in every room of the palace, including the lavatory." From a modern GCSE school textbook.</p>	<p>Source 8: "Nicholas would sooner spend time with his family than deal with governmental affairs. [He] could be cruel and merciless. He would not stand for opposition. His answer was always the same - violence." From a modern GCSE school textbook.</p>
<p>Source 9: "He kept saying ... that he was wholly unfit to reign ... And yet Nicky's unfitness was by no means his fault. He had intelligence, he had faith and courage and he was wholly ignorant about governmental matters. Nicky had been trained as a soldier. He should have been taught statesmanship, and he was not." From the diary of the Tsar's sister, the Grand Duchess Olga.</p>	<p>Source 10: "Nicholas believed wholeheartedly in autocracy. He thought that democracy with elections and parliaments would lead to the collapse of Russia. Nicholas knew very little about the [Russian] people. He did not visit factories or villages, or go on tours. His information about what was going on came from a small number of people, who were quite happy to protect him from the realities of life in Russia." From a modern GCSE school textbook.</p>
<p>Source 11: Nicholas was "even more poorly prepared than his father for the burdens of kingship. Nicholas had no knowledge of the world of men, of politics or government to help him make the weighty decisions that in the Russian system the Tsar alone must make." From H. Rogger, <i>Russia in the Age of Modernisation and Revolution</i>, 1983</p>	<p>Source 12: "Nicholas was not a stupid man ... The problems Russia faced were very great ... Nicholas II loved his country and served it loyally and to the best of his ability. He had not sought power ... He was very kind, sensitive, generous. ... [The situation] would probably have destroyed any man who sat on the throne." From <i>Nicholas II, Emperor of All the Russians</i>, by Dominic Lieven, 1994.</p>
<p>Source 13: "Nicholas' problem was that he could understand many points of view and wavered between them ... his personality meant that he was not very good at exercising it." From <i>Nicholas II, Emperor of All the Russians</i>, by Dominic Lieven, 1994.</p>	<p>Source 14: Nicholas' wife, "Alexandra, was clearly very much in love with Nicholas. In the evenings, she demanded that he spend time with the family. She encouraged the Tsar to withdraw from public events to a private family world." From a modern GCSE school textbook.</p>

Was Nicholas II a good ruler of Russia?

For

Against

