



History Revolutions

Subject Guide

Revolutions represent great ruptures in time and are a major turning point that brings about the collapse and destruction of an existing political order. Revolution is a dramatically accelerated process whereby the new order attempts to create political and social change based on a new ideology. Post-revolutionary regimes are often threatened internally by civil war and externally by foreign threats. These challenges can result in a compromise of revolutionary ideals and extreme measures of violence, oppression and terror (VCE History Study Design).

Humanities Department

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Unit focus areas

Units 3 and 4

The American Revolution (1754–1789)

"Give me liberty or give me death!" – Patrick Henry.

In the new world in the mid-18th century, revolution was borne out of an idealism that would spark later revolutions half a world away. Enlightenment ideology promoting the natural rights of man, prompted revolutionary action to resist the tyrannical monarchy of Britain and pursue the right to representation: 'life, liberty and property'. Revolutionary idealism soon spilt into revolutionary war, seeing the unlikely patriots triumph over the most powerful empire in the world. The crisis and compromise the founding fathers faced in building the new nation challenged even the most ardent patriots to consider who, in fact, would benefit from the right to 'life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness' in the new United States – challenges that continue to plague the nation today ...

The Chinese Revolution (1912–1971)

"Communism is not love. Communism is a hammer which we use to crush the enemy"–Mao Zedong

Events in 1912 brought an end to 2,000 years of Qing rule in China. The Nationalist government that emerged not only failed to make life better for the Chinese people, but also began a vicious civil war against the Communist Party in 1927. The Communists were victorious by 1949 and Mao Zedong proclaimed the establishment of the People's Republic of China. Over the next two decades, however, violence and reform would lead to the deaths of millions of people as Mao established his ruthless hold over Chinese society.

The French Revolution (1774–1795)

"It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, ... it was the season of Light, it was the season of Darkness, it was the spring of hope, it was the winter of despair"–Charles Dickens

Born out of the frustrations of the Ancien Régime, the French Revolution swept away the old order. The kingdom had endured years of war that had left it deeply in debt, and that burden was to fall on the poorest in the land while the nobility carried on with their lavish lifestyle. Ignoring the struggle of his newly politicised subjects, King Louis XVI was in turn consumed by the raging fire of the revolution and as the new order opened with the greatest expectations, war and counter revolution paved the way for a new age of terror. Once the revolution had devoured its own children, the new but fragile republic eventually succumbed to the assaults of the ambitious revolutionary general, Napoléon Bonaparte.

The Russian Revolution (1896–1927)

"Surely you do not imagine that we shall be victorious without applying the most cruel revolutionary terror?"–Vladimir Ilyich Lenin

At the beginning of the 20th century, Imperial Russia was a ticking time-bomb ready to explode. The Russian Tsar, an incompetent leader, and his neurotic wife, the Tsarina, were dogged by rumours and innuendo about her extra-marital relationship with the mad monk, Rasputin. Discontent with the Tsar's handling of the war exploded into outright revolution in 1917 and Lenin's Bolsheviks took power. The Bolsheviks' promise of prosperity and equality quickly turned into a bloody nightmare. Terror, civil war, famine and idealism, had replaced the utopian promises of peace, equality and prosperity. Never to return ...



Pre-requisites

Students undertaking Units 3 and 4 History Revolutions should have completed Units 1 and 2 Modern History or Year 10 Humanities equivalent.



Assessment

For Units 3 and 4, students complete School-Assessed Coursework (50%) subject to external moderation, and a written examination (50%).

