

Explain pick-up

Life in Lenin's Russia, 1918-24

This revision activity works best if you do it with a friend, and talk about it as you do it.

The 36 cards below all describe some aspect of life in Russia under the Bolsheviks, 1918-21.

Cut up the cards and place them face down. In turn, pick up a card, explain whose life it might affect, how, and how much, then place it face up in one of two piles: 'made life better', and 'made life worse'.

When you have finished 'weigh up' the two piles – did life get better, or worse, under the Bolsheviks?

Repeat the game from the point of view of specific groups – e.g. the Bolshevik proletariat, Whites, peasants, women etc. Is the answer the same for EVERYONE, or did different groups fare differently?

Divide the cards into three piles – 1918-24; before 1921; after 1921. Again, split the piles into two piles: 'made life better', and 'made life worse'. Did life get better under the NEP?

A Constitutional Law set up the USSR (1923)	Lenin declared the 'dictatorship of the proletariat'	The <i>Zhenotdel</i> was established in 1919 to mobilize women and achieve their emancipation
Lenin launched the 'Red Terror'	Lenin ruled by decree	Red generals' families were kidnapped to keep them loyal
Religion was banned; churches were destroyed and many priests killed	Science was encouraged and useless subjects like Latin and History banned	All anti-Bolshevik publications were banned
The Bolshevik soldiers were motivated and fighting for a Communist state	The Bolsheviks allowed free love, divorce and abortion	The Bolsheviks introduced old-age pensions

The CHEKA (secret police) pursued all opponents	<i>Agit</i> trains took mobile cinemas, speakers and leaflets round the country	The Land Decree (1917) took land from the landlords and gave it to the peasants
The Red Terror murdered three-quarters of a million Whites	The royal family was executed in July 1918	The <i>Sovnarkom</i> was controlled by the Politburo
There was a campaign to get everybody able to read	There was inflation during the Civil War – money became worthless; people reverted to barter	There was a totalitarian dictatorship
The Ukrainians and Georgians wanted independence	Under the NEP, ‘Nepmen’ set up private enterprises	Under the NEP, farmers were allowed to sell their surplus produce for profit
Under the NEP, freedom of religion was allowed	Under the NEP, grain production doubled, coal tripled, electricity increased five-fold – and reached the 1914 levels	Under the NEP, kulak farmers prospered
Under the NEP, many old Bolsheviks resigned, saying it was a return to capitalism	Under the NEP, the nationalities were allowed their own language and customs	Under the <i>Prodrazvyorstka</i> , CHEKA units seized grain and killed any peasants trying to hide food
Under the <i>Prodrazvyorstka</i> , peasants had to give all surplus food to the government	Under so-called ‘War Communism’, large factories were taken over by the government	Under so-called ‘War Communism’, the Council of National Economy told each factory what and how much to produce
Under so-called ‘War Communism’, there was military discipline in factories and strikers were shot	Women were given equal rights – they could be journalists, doctors, teachers and soldiers	Workers were given an 8-hour day, paid holiday and sick leave