



## GCSE History. Russia in Revolution 1905-1924.

### Classroom Resource 1

### Russia under the Tsar: observations of a Welsh governess on the nature of Russian society

In order to understand the Russian revolutions, we need to know what life was like under the Tsar. This worksheet looks at some aspects of life in Russia at the end of the nineteenth century, as seen through the eyes of a young Welsh graduate who went to Hughesovka, in Russia, as governess to a Welsh family.

This is a view of Hughesovka, as it was about 1912.

Hughesovka was in the Ukraine, then part of the Russian Empire, but it was founded by a Welshman. In the 1870s, John Hughes, an engineer from Merthyr Tydfil, had gone to the empty steppe to set up a iron works and industrial complex.



The works grew to become the largest in the Russian Empire, and a thriving town developed around the works. A number of skilled workers from Wales and the rest of the UK went to work there.



John Hughes himself took his family to Russia with him, and they settled there, marrying and bringing up their own families. One of his sons, Arthur, employed a young Welsh graduate, Annie Gwen Jones, as tutor to his daughters.

She can be seen in this photograph, standing on the right, with Arthur Hughes and his daughters.

Annie spent three years in Hughesovka with the family, from 1889 to 1892, leaving when riots caused by an outbreak of cholera made it unsafe to stay. Many years later, in 1944, she wrote about her experiences. Below are some extracts from what she wrote.

"We lived in a large one-storeyed house in the midst of a large garden surrounded by high walls for the sake of security and we had night watchmen guarding the place.

Life in Hughesovka was full of interest and variety. Letters and newspapers which linked us with home and the outer world took 11 days to reach us at that period and they were frequently censored & particularly so when any incompatible allusion was made to the Imperial family. Certain books were not allowed to enter Russia."

"When I lived in Russia there were but two classes of society and we were in a position to see the vast gap between the two. The standard of life among the Mujiks (peasants) was low and famine was not an infrequent occurrence in some areas. The Mujiks lived in small wooden houses or huts with mud floors. There were no amenities for health and comfort except for one big stove which almost filled the room. On it some members of the family slept at night. Of course, the workmen's houses in Hughesovka were greatly superior.....I liked the Mujiks, they were kind, happy-go-lucky, really religious with their simple, credulous faith. They faced every misfortune without complaint.....

In contrast to the Mujik class, the other class was exceptionally cultured. They lived in large mansions on their estates with a large number of men and maid servants. I well recall paying a visit to the mansion of a Marshal of the Nobles, Piotr Valerovich Kamensky.....These Kamenskys were highly educated and gifted and so were most of their class. Almost all could speak several languages and they were widely read."

"Though we had to leave Russia in haste...I felt quite sad in bidding farewell to many friends there"

Answer these questions:

1. What does the need for security around the Hughes house suggest about society in Russia at this time?
2. Why was censorship in place in Russia?
3. Using your own knowledge and this source, describe the living conditions of the peasants. Contrast these with the conditions of the noble class.
4. How useful is this source to an historian studying the underlying causes of the Russian revolution?