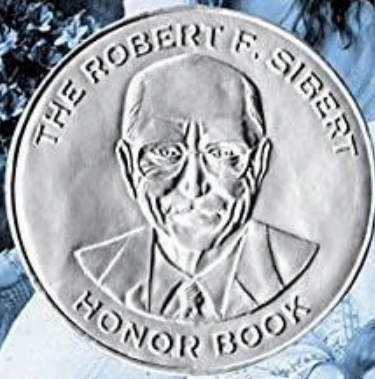


Winner of the *Boston Globe-Horn Book* Award for Nonfiction



Los Angeles Times
**BOOK
PRIZES**
WINNER

THE FAMILY ROMANOV

MURDER, REBELLION & THE FALL OF IMPERIAL RUSSIA

CANDACE FLEMING

INTRODUCTION

The Family Romanov: Murder, Rebellion, and the Fall of Imperial Russia

- o **Genre:** Nonfiction; young adult history
- o **Originally Published:** 2014
- o **Reading Level/Interest:** Lexile 950L; grades 7-10
- o **Structure/Length:** Prologue and 18 chapters; approx. 292 pages; approx. 9 hours, 23 minutes on audio
- o **Central Concern:** In 1894, during great wealth disparity and discontent in Russia, Nicholas II became the last Romanov family member to take the throne. Weaving together primary sources and narrative, the author traces the tragic history of the tsar's reign as his family retreats from the Russian people and revolution brews.
- o **Potential Sensitivity Issues:** Political violence and murder; assassination of a family, including children; antisemitism

Candace Fleming, Author

- o **Bio:** Born in 1962 in Indiana; began writing stories in elementary school; earned her BA from Eastern Illinois University, where she discovered her love of history; taught at the college level before becoming a full-time writer; was inspired to start writing children's books by reading books to her children; has written over 40 books, including picture books, novels, and nonfiction
- o **Other Works:** *The Lincolns: A Scrapbook Look at Abraham and Mary* (2008); *Amelia Lost: The Life and Disappearance of Amelia Earhart* (2011); *Strongheart: Wonder Dog of the Silver Screen* (2018); *Honeybee: The Busy Life of Apis Mellifera* (2020); *The Rise and Fall of Charles Lindbergh* (2020)
- o **Awards:** *Los Angeles Times* Book Prize for Young Adult Literature (2014); *Boston Globe-Horn* Book Award for Nonfiction (2015); NCTE Orbis Pictus Award (2015); YALSA Award for Excellence in Nonfiction (finalist; 2015)

CENTRAL THEMES

- **The Gulf Between Rich and Poor in Turn-of-the-Century Russia**
- **The Damage Caused by Poor Leadership**
- **Revolution and the Russian People's Fight for a Voice**

BEFORE READING... CONTEXT

The Family Romanov describes the political climate and factors surrounding the fall of the imperial family in Russia. Read the article suggested or a similar resource describing the political climate of Russia at the turn of the century and the causes of revolution in history to discuss factors that often lead to political reform.

- [This article](#) explains what revolution is and the various causes of revolution.
 1. What is a revolution?
 2. What social and cultural factors often play into revolution?
 3. What are some of the successful and unsuccessful examples of revolution in history?

Increased literacy and understanding of new political ideologies contributed to the eventual downfall of Imperial Russia. A new idea, formulated by Karl Marx and largely circulated by Vladimir Lenin, emerged on the Russian political scene. Consider discussing the political origins of Imperial Russia and the new ideas based on Marxism that began to gain popularity among the Russian working class.

- [This 10-minute video](#) describes the rise and fall of the Russian Empire.
- [This 5-minute video](#) describes Karl Marx's theories on the ideal political system.
 1. What might be the benefits and pitfalls of an imperial government?
 2. Why might people who suffer under imperialism find ideologies such as Marxism appealing?
 3. What impact might poor working conditions and wages have on the lack of support for imperialism?
 4. What might some consider to be the pitfalls of capitalist societies?
 5. What might be the drawbacks of Marxism?

Research and discuss the differences between capitalism, communism, and socialism.

Personal Connection Prompt

Tsar Nicholas II is born in a political era he claims he is ill-equipped to understand. Though he is a good person by many accounts, Nicholas's continued disregard for the unrest among the lower classes of society leads to his eventual downfall. This points to the importance of empathy and the potential consequences of failing to understand and empathize with those you serve.

1. Describe a time when you felt you could not achieve something because factors beyond your control seemed to be working against you.
2. Explain the obstacles that worked against you. Were you able to overcome them?
3. Are perspective and wise counsel essential in looking beyond circumstances to understand the root of a problem?
4. What problems might be solved if others gain understanding and perspective?

READING QUESTIONS & PAIRED TEXTS

Answer all questions in QIA (Question in Answer) format on a separate piece of paper. At the end of your answer, put the PAGE NUMBER on which the answer can be found in parentheses. TITLE each paper with the green titles above the questions you are answering.

Example of QIA: How do you answer a question using QIA?

Answer: You answer a question using QIA by turning it into a statement and then adding your answer. The answer uses all of the specific information in the question (the page number where the answer can be found goes here).

Prologue-Chapter 4

Reading Check

1. Why do the Romanovs host a party?
2. Who of Nicholas II's family was killed?
3. Who oversees Princess Alix Victoria Helena Louise Beatrice's education?
4. Who do the tsar and tsaritsa agree to canonize in an attempt to birth a son?
5. What disease does Alexei have?
6. What event occurs when peaceful protestors seek justice and protection and are attacked by Russian soldiers?

Short Answer

Answer each question in at least 3 complete sentences. Incorporate details from the text to support your response.

1. How are Nicholas and his wife described at the St. Petersburg party?
2. How does the author compare the lifestyles of the Russian nobles to the peasants in Russia?
3. Why does Nicholas II's father reject him?
4. What was the result of Princess Alix's conversion to Russian Orthodoxy?

5. How do the tsar and tsaritsa have a difficult beginning to their reign?
6. What is the impact of improved literacy in Russia?

Chapters 5-8

Reading Check

1. Who attacks the protesters after they demand the freedom of political prisoners?
2. Whom is Nicholas II prejudiced against?
3. What is the name of the holy man who appears to spontaneously heal Alexei overnight?
4. What does Prime Minister Peter Stolypin do to Rasputin?

Short Answer

Answer each question in at least 1 complete sentence. Incorporate details from the text to support your response.

1. How are the children of Alexandra and Nicholas II described?
2. Why does Rasputin develop a bad reputation in Russian society?
3. Why does the tsaritsa become angry with Rasputin?

Chapters 9-12

Reading Check

1. What did the woman who stabbed Rasputin believe he was?
2. Why do the people turn against Empress Alexandra?
3. What do leaders in the meeting of the Duma decide to do with Rasputin?
4. What poison does Yusopov give to Rasputin at the dinner party he invited him to?
5. What does Yusopov do when the poison doesn't work?

Short Answer

Answer each question in at least 1 complete sentence. Incorporate details from the text to support your response.

1. How do the Russians respond when Germany declares war?

2. How do Empress Alexandra and her daughters respond to the war with Germany?
3. What were the assigned roles of the Provisional Government and the soviet?

Chapters 13-15

Reading Check

1. What are Alexei and Tatiana ill with shortly before the rebellion?
2. Who protects the royals at the Tsarkoe Selo palace before abandoning their posts later?
3. What governing system is Lenin in favor of when he returns to Russia?
4. Where does Kerensky send the Romanov family due to the violent protests around Tsarkoe Selo?
5. Who takes over when the Provisional Government disappears “with barely a whimper”?
6. What causes Lenin to withdraw from the Great War?

Short Answer

Answer each question in at least 1 complete sentence. Incorporate details from the text to support your response.

1. Why are the people angered when Nicholas abdicates his throne?
2. Why do the Russian people begin to distrust the Provisional Government?
3. How does Lenin go about setting up his new system of government?

Chapters 16-18

Reading Check

1. What does one of Marie’s guards give her?
2. Who is the first officer in charge of the Romanovs in Ekaterinburg?
3. Who does Yurovsky fear will release the Romanovs from their prison?
4. Who ultimately assassinates the Romanov family?
5. What does Yurovsky take with him when he flees the city?
6. Who takes over Russia after Lenin dies?

Short Answer

Answer each question in at least 1 complete sentence. Incorporate details from the text to support your response.

1. Why does the new government want to give the world the impression that some Romanovs remain alive?
2. How do the conditions of communist Russia fail to live up to the people's expectations?

QUESTIONS

Multiple Choice

1. What is the author's purpose in comparing the life of the Romanovs with that of others in Russia?
 - A) To compare the happiness of the royals with that of those who suffered
 - B) To describe the attitudes of the wealthy as compared to their poorer citizens
 - C) To ensure the royals' perspectives might be considered
 - D) To emphasize the disproportionate distribution of wealth in Russia

2. What is the impact of increased literacy in Russia at the turn of the century?
 - A) There is a shift in religious attitudes that make way for Rasputin.
 - B) More citizens realize they are being mistreated.
 - C) The people can now read the goings-on of the palace.
 - D) They can understand the propaganda that is spread about Nicholas.

3. What event causes the Russian people to lose faith in Nicholas II?
 - A) The coronation disaster
 - B) October Manifesto
 - C) Bloody Sunday
 - D) Alexei's weakness

4. What does Philippe's statement, "...you will have another friend like me who will speak to you of God," foreshadow in the book?
 - A) The birth of Alexei
 - B) The Romanov's rise to sainthood
 - C) The arrival of Rasputin
 - D) The separation of church and state

5. What is the best reason why Nicholas II is considered a poor leader?
 - A) He will not fight with his army in the Great War.
 - B) He turns a blind eye to the suffering of Russian citizens.
 - C) He puts too much stock in what Rasputin wants.
 - D) He is afraid to be the strong leader his father was.

6. How does Fleming compare the Romanov children to other children in Russia?
 - A) The Romanovs are not allowed to grow up, while the poor grow up too fast.
 - B) The royal family and the poor have different lifestyles, but there is no visible difference between them.
 - C) The poor are freer to move about because they are not isolated like the Romanovs.
 - D) The royal family suffers the consequences of Nicholas II, while there is no accountability for the poor.

7. Why does Nicholas react with more restrictions when the people of Russia ask for freedom?
 - A) He does not have a relationship with his people.
 - B) He is given poor guidance from the people around him.
 - C) Empress Alexandra refuses to relinquish control of the country.
 - D) He is attempting to be the ruler his father thought he should be.

8. Overall, how might someone characterize Rasputin's efforts on behalf of the royal family?
 - A) Helpful
 - B) Self-serving
 - C) Miraculous
 - D) Enlightened

9. What is the most detrimental result of Alexei's disease of hemophilia?
 - A) It causes the royals to isolate themselves from their people.
 - B) It creates tension, as the people realize there may not be an heir.
 - C) The people revolt because they see it as a weakness.
 - D) It causes mistrust between the people and the empire.

10. How does the emperor often respond to difficulties in his empire?
- A) He gives his duties to other leaders.
 - B) He aggressively attacks opposing forces.
 - C) He acts as though difficulties don't exist.
 - D) He asks for advice from his counselors.
11. What is the best reason why Rasputin's relationship with the royal family is viewed as problematic?
- A) He is believed to have control of the empire.
 - B) He is frequently drunk and unruly.
 - C) He is not good at predicting outcomes.
 - D) He is known for being a lecher.
12. What was Lenin's motive for moving the Romanov family from their location in Siberia?
- A) He wants to humiliate them further.
 - B) He is afraid the Red Army will assassinate them.
 - C) He does not want them close to the capital city.
 - D) He does not want the Romanovs to escape justice.
13. What is ironic about Lenin's ideal government over the people?
- A) The people are unhappy with the division of land.
 - B) The people are still starving and more restricted than before.
 - C) There is suffering because the people work long hours in the factories.
 - D) The nobles are still not forced to work with the peasants.
14. How do the deaths of the Romanov children compare to that of Rasputin?
- A) They are all determined to continue living.
 - B) They are all rumored to have escaped.
 - C) They both seem difficult to kill.
 - D) They die in drastically different ways.

15. What is the most probable reason Nicholas II is cheerful in the final days of his life?

- A) He feels unburdened after the removal of his responsibilities.
- B) He tries to make the most of a bad situation.
- C) He does not care much for his people's plight.
- D) He is wholly unaware of the difficulties surrounding him.

IMPORTANT QUOTES

Write a brief paragraph of analysis that explains the significance of each quote. Be sure to address, as relevant, the character person speaking, to whom the words are spoken, the underlying meaning of the words, and the language used.

Quote	Analysis
<p>1 “In 1903—the same year as Nicholas’s costume ball—four out of every five Russians were peasants. And yet the upper classes knew next to nothing about them. They didn’t visit the peasants’ villages or deal with the hired laborers who worked their estates. Instead, they remained comfortably ensconced in luxurious St. Petersburg. From there it was easy to romanticize the peasants’ life. Most nobility (Nicholas and Alexandra included) envisioned peasants living in simple yet cozy huts, their ‘cheeks glowing with good health’; and their teeth ‘whiter than the purest ivory,’ gushed one Russian writer.” (Prologue, Pages 5 - 6)</p>	
<p>2 “Nicholas’s family, the Romanovs, had sat on the Russian throne for almost three hundred years, ruling their subjects under a form of government called autocracy. In an autocracy, one person—in this instance, the tsar—holds all the power. The Romanovs claimed God had given them this power, had chosen them to rule the Russian people. As God’s representative on earth, they maintained, the tsar should be left to run the country</p>	

	<p>according to his own ideas of duty and right.”</p> <p>(Chapter 1, Page 18)</p>	
3	<p>“On the afternoon of November 1, 1894, Tsar Alexander died. The grief-stricken Nicholas suddenly found himself ruler of all Russia. Terrified, he pulled his cousin Sandro into his study. ‘What am I going to do?’ he cried once he’d shut the door behind them. ‘What is going to happen to me...to all of Russia? I am not prepared to be tsar. I never wanted to become one. I know nothing of the business of ruling. I have no idea of how to even talk to the ministers.’”</p> <p>(Chapter 1, Page 29)</p>	
4	<p>“‘My poor Nicky’s cross is heavy,’ [Empress Alexandra] later wrote, ‘all the more so as he has nobody on whom he can thoroughly rely and who can be a real help to him.’ For now, Alix would become both wife and adviser. Reminding her future husband that beneath her long skirts she wore a pair of ‘invisible trousers,’ she vowed to ‘be all, know all and share all’ with him. ‘Beloved,’ she would repeatedly say over the coming years, ‘listen to me.’”</p> <p>(Chapter 1, Page 29)</p>	
5	<p>“And so, on the night of the tragedy, the imperial couple appeared at the glittering ball. They danced ‘on top of the corpses,’ noted one reporter.</p> <p>“The couple did try to comfort their subjects. They spent the next day visiting hospitals. They paid for all</p>	

	<p>the funerals. And they gave a thousand rubles—an enormous sum equal to years of a peasant’s income—to each of the victims’ families. But it was too late. The people’s first impression was the lasting one. And they took it as a bad omen. The reign of Nicholas II, many peasants predicted, would be beset with troubles from God.”</p> <p>(Chapter 2, Page 38)</p>	
6	<p>“These literate workers were now able to picture a government more responsive to their needs; they had ‘caught sight of a new life,’ recalled factory worker Semën Balashov, ‘one very different from our life of servitude.’ In January 1905, he joined ten thousand other men, women, and children who had abandoned their jobs. Taking to the streets, they refused to return to work until their demands were met. What did they want? A living wage, an eight-hour workday, affordable housing, and public education.”</p> <p>(Chapter 4, Page 60)</p>	
7	<p>“Despite the chaos in the city, Nicholas continued on as if nothing had happened. ‘The tragic aspect of the situation,’ one courtier wrote in his diary on October 14, ‘is that the tsar is living in an utter fool’s paradise, thinking that He is as strong and all-powerful as before.’”</p> <p>(Chapter 4, Page 65)</p>	
8	<p>“Heads bowed, workers returned to their factories, peasants to their villages. By the saber and whip, order had been restored. The lower classes no longer acted out, recalled</p>	

	<p>one noble, but their ‘courtesy, friendliness, bows [were replaced by] animosity [and] rudeness.’ Fear alone now kept the people in their place.”</p> <p>(Chapter 5, Page 80)</p>	
9	<p>“Rasputin, [Alexandra] believed, had interceded with God on her behalf, wrought a miracle through his power of prayer, vanquished death. Any lingering doubts she may have had about the starets were now completely swept away. Convinced that he spoke with God’s voice, she vowed to always listen...no matter what.”</p> <p>(Chapter 7, Page 112)</p>	
10	<p>“Back at Tsarkoe Selo, Nicholas knew very little about his soldiers’ plight. Daily reports from Sukhomlinov reassured him that both ‘morale and equipment [were] in splendid order.’ [...] It was obvious that Russia’s war effort was on the verge of collapse, and everyone in the tsar’s government knew it...everyone, that is, except Nicholas himself.”</p> <p>(Chapter 10, Page 135)</p>	
11	<p>“With the war, Alexandra ‘became overnight a changed being,’ recalled her friend Anna Vyrubova. Under her patronage, the Catherine Palace at Tsarkoe Selo was converted into a hospital, as were eighty-five other mansions and palaces in the St. Petersburg area. Still, Alexandra wanted to do more. So she enrolled in nursing courses, and she took nineteen-year-old Olga and seventeen-year-old Tatiana with</p>	

	<p>her. 'To some it may seem unnecessary my doing this,' she told Nicholas, 'but much is needed and every hand is useful.'"</p> <p>(Chapter 10, Page 138)</p>	
12	<p>"For many, [the Great Retreat] was the last straw, wrote one historian, 'the vital psychological moment...when [soldiers'] loyalty to the monarchy finally snapped. A government which had dragged them into a war which they could not hope to win, had failed to provide them adequate weapons and supplies...was not worthy of further sacrifices.'"</p> <p>(Chapter 10, Page 141)</p>	
13	<p>"Still the tsar clung stubbornly to his belief that God would set things right. 'It is His plan,' he said. 'You will see...everything [is] for the best.' And so Nicholas remained at Stavka."</p> <p>(Chapter 10, Page 145)</p>	
14	<p>"Not only was the citizenry convinced that Rasputin was a fake, but they saw the empress as a narrow-minded, reactionary, hysterical woman because she remained under the fraud's spell. Such gossip could only further degrade the monarchy, making them appear less near to God than ever before. For the good of the country, many now believed the starets' power had to end."</p> <p>(Chapter 11, Page 147)</p>	
15	<p>"And so it went—a crazy game of 'ministerial leapfrog'—as ministers were appointed and fired by</p>	

	<p>Nicholas at the behest of the empress and her starets [...] This complicated leapfrogging deprived Russia of its most able statesmen at a time when they were most needed. Instead, a group of incompetent, mediocre men now held the most important positions in government.”</p> <p>(Chapter 11, Pages 149 - 150)</p>	
16	<p>“‘It is a terrible thing,’ one Duma member remarked glumly. ‘The tsar offends the nation by what he allows to go on in the palace...while the country offends the tsar by its terrible suspicions. The result is the destruction of those centuries-old ties which have sustained Russia. And the cause of all this? The weakness of one man and one woman...Oh, how terrible an autocracy without an autocrat!’”</p> <p>(Chapter 11, Page 150)</p>	
17	<p>“Sandro realized there was nothing more to say. ‘It’s enough to drive you mad,’ he later wrote his brother. ‘Up here at [Tsarkoe Selo] it’s like water off a duck’s back, all is submission to God. How else can I explain...such total blindness and deafness? The tsar has ceased to rule Russia.’”</p> <p>(Chapter 12, Pages 160 - 161)</p>	
18	<p>“Desperate, Duma president Rodzianko sent Nicholas a frantic telegram: ‘The hungry, unemployed throng is starting down the path of elemental and uncontrollable anarchy [...] Your Majesty, save Russia [...] Urgently summon a person in whom the whole country</p>	

	<p>can have faith and entrust him with the formation of a government that all the people trust...In this terrible hour...there is no other way out and to delay is impossible.'</p> <p>"But when the telegram arrived, Nicholas didn't even bother to read it. Setting it aside, he said, 'That fat Rodzianko has written all sorts of nonsense to me, to which I shall not even reply.' And he spent the rest of the evening playing dominoes."</p> <p>(Chapter 12, Page 163)</p>	
19	<p>"There was, [Nicholas] concluded, no other choice. He would have to give in and appoint a government acceptable to the people. He immediately telegraphed Rodzianko with his offer. Minutes later, Rodzianko answered: 'His Majesty...[is] apparently...unable to realize what is happening in the capital. A terrible revolution has broken out...The measures you propose are too late. The time for them is gone. There is no return.'"</p> <p>(Chapter 13, Page 174)</p>	
20	<p>"Alexandra, her face ashy white, took Nicholas's arm and walked out the door. Behind them came the children, all five of them in tears. Overhead, the sky was a rosy pink, the first rays of sunlight bathing the palace and the park in a golden haze. As the cars pulled away, the family turned and watched until their beloved Tsarkoe Selo faded into the distance.</p> <p>"They would never see it again."</p> <p>(Chapter 14, Page 195)</p>	

21	<p>“The March Revolution had happened spontaneously, without any planning whatsoever. But the October Revolution was a well-organized and quiet coup. In later years, the Soviet Union would mythologize the October Revolution, inventing stories of fierce battles and daring exploits. But in truth, there was little drama. That night, the Provisional Government vanished with barely a whimper. All power had indeed passed to the soviets.”</p> <p>(Chapter 15, Pages 201 - 202)</p>	
22	<p>“Lenin had promised workers and peasants that, under Bolshevik rule, he would replace the unjust social order with a system of equality. So almost immediately after assuming power, he declared ‘a war to the death against the rich, the idlers and the parasites.’ Between November 1917 and March 1918, he decreed dozens of new policies that transferred much of the country’s public and private wealth into the government’s hands.”</p> <p>(Chapter 15, Page 204)</p>	
23	<p>“‘How much longer will our unfortunate motherland be torn and ripped apart? Sometimes it seems as if [I] have no more strength to stand it. I don’t even know what to hope for, what to desire.’ [Nicholas] tried to comfort himself. ‘Everything is in the hands of God! He is our only recourse,’ he repeated over and over.”</p> <p>(Chapter 15, Page 221)</p>	

24	<p>“After overthrowing their tsar, smashing two systems of government, and launching the country into what would be three years of civil war, had Russians improved their lives? Hardly. By 1920, the Bolsheviks—who had recently changed their official name to the Communist Party—were beginning to establish policies that would eventually oversee every aspect of a citizen’s daily life.” (Chapter 18, Page 244)</p>	
25	<p>“Plotnikov started to dig. Soon he uncovered a pile of bone fragments. DNA tests run on them proved they were the remains of Alexei and one of his sisters. ‘My heart leaped with joy,’ Plotnikov said of his discovery. ‘I knew the Romanov children would finally be reunited with their family.’</p> <p>“But as of this writing, the remains of the last two Romanovs have yet to be buried. Instead, they lie in a cardboard box in Moscow’s State Archive of the Russian Federation, waiting for the day when all seven Romanovs will once again be together; as Nicholas called them, ‘a small family circle.’” (Chapter 18, Page 253)</p>	