When Russia entered World War I, it was totally unprepared. Its military leaders were weak, and its factories could not make enough weapons and supplies. In the first years of the war, more than two million Russian soldiers were killed. Czar Nicholas II, the Russian monarch, went to the battlefront. Nicholas thought it would help if he personally led the troops. He left his wife, Alexandra, in charge of the government while he was gone.

By March 1917, the Russian people were angry. Millions of soldiers were dying in the war. At home, there were food and fuel shortages. The government had started rationing bread, or limiting the amount people could buy. Led by working-class women, angry workers went on strike. Thousands marched through the streets of Petrograd, Russia, yelling, “Bread! Bread!”

Alexandra wrote to Nicholas at the battlefront and told him what was going on. She told him, “This is a hooligan movement. Young people run around and shout that there is no bread, simply to create excitement. If the weather were very cold, they would all probably stay at home.” The czar ordered troops to stop the protests by shooting into the crowd if necessary. But the soldiers refused to follow his orders. Many joined the demonstrators. The czar had lost his power. Nicholas was forced to step down as czar of Russia.

Russia’s temporary government decided to stay in World War I to protect its honor. People were not happy with this decision. They were tired of fighting, starving, and suffering. Groups called soviets formed across the country in towns and rural areas. The soviets were local councils made up of workers, peasants, and soldiers who wanted change. Some of the soviets had more power in their areas than the temporary government.

A political party called the Bolsheviks became powerful by gaining the support of soviets around the country. Under the leadership of V. I. Lenin, the Bolsheviks promised an end to the war. They also said that land would be given to the peasants. Their slogans were “Peace, Land, Bread” and “All Power to the Soviets.” The Bolsheviks overthrew the temporary government and seized power. Soon, they renamed themselves the Communists.

Not everyone was happy with the Communists. A civil war broke out in Russia. However, by 1921, the Communists had total control of Russia. Lenin organized Russia into several self-governing republics that all answered to the central government in Moscow. In 1922, the country was named the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, or USSR.
Changes in Russia

Multiple Choice
Circle the best answer, and write the letter in the box.

1. Russia was totally unprepared to enter __________.
   A. the Russian Revolution
   B. World War I
   C. World War II
   D. the Cold War

2. By March 1917, the Russian people were angry because __________.
   A. millions of soldiers were dying
   B. there were fuel shortages
   C. the government had started rationing bread
   D. all of the above

3. __________ was forced to step down as czar of Russia.
   A. Nicholas II
   B. Alexandra
   C. V. I. Lenin
   D. Rasputin

4. The Bolsheviks renamed themselves the __________.
   A. soviets
   B. Communists
   C. capitalists
   D. hooligans

5. In 1922, Russia was named __________.
   A. the Russian Empire
   B. the United States of Russia
   C. the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
   D. the Communist State of Russia
Changes in Russia

Crossword Puzzle
Write the best answer in each blank, and complete the crossword puzzle.

ACROSS
2. Many soldiers who had been sent to stop the protests joined the _________.
4. By 1921, the ________ had total control of Russia.
5. The ________ overthrew the temporary government and seized power.
7. Czar Nicholas’s wife, ________, wrote that the protests in Petrograd were “a hooligan movement.”
9. After the Communists seized power, Russia entered a/an _________ _________.
10. ________ stayed in World War I to keep its honor.

DOWN
1. One of the Bolshevik slogans was “________, Land, Bread.”
3. ________ thought it would help if he personally led the troops into battle.
6. Some _________ had more power in their areas than the temporary government.
8. _________ was the leader of the Bolsheviks.
Map – The Soviet Union, 1917–1938

Use the map to answer the following questions. Write the answers in complete sentences.

1. Name two countries that border the USSR.

2. Name two countries that were part of the Russian Empire but were not part of the USSR.

3. Name one body of water that borders the USSR.
Quiz: Changes in Russia

True/False
Decide if each statement is true or false, and write “true” or “false” in the blank.

________ 1. The Bolsheviks renamed themselves the Communists.

________ 2. Lenin was the czar of Russia during World War I.

________ 3. Russia dropped out of World War I to keep its honor.

________ 4. Some soviets had more power than the temporary government.

________ 5. In 1922, Russia was renamed Petrograd.

Multiple Choice
Circle the best answer, and write the letter in the box.

6. __________ of Russian soldiers died in World War I.
   A. Hundreds
   B. Thousands
   C. Millions
   D. Billions

7. One of the Bolshevik slogans was “________.”
   A. Peace, Land, Bread
   B. Peace, Money, Land
   C. Land, Money, Food
   D. Peace, Bread, Wine

Short Answer
Answer the following question in complete sentences.

8. Who was Alexandra?