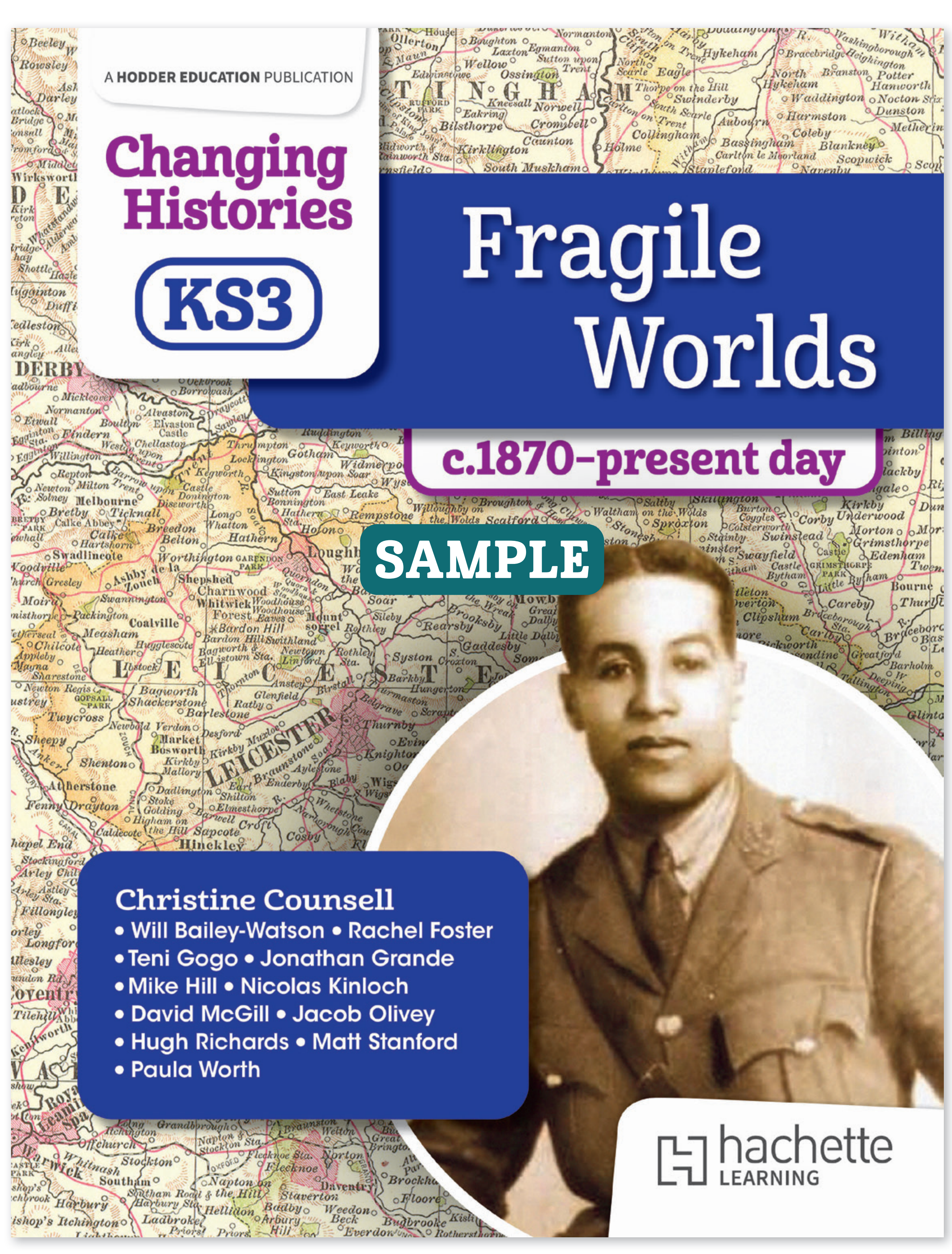

A HODDER EDUCATION PUBLICATION

Changing Histories

KS3

Fragile Worlds

c.1870–present day

SAMPLE

Christine Counsell
• Will Bailey-Watson • Rachel Foster
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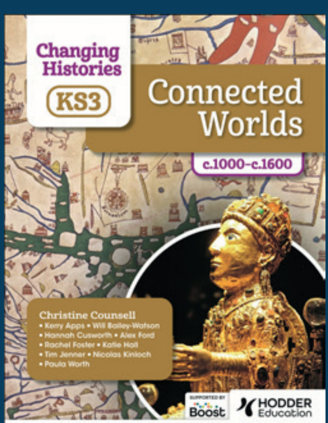

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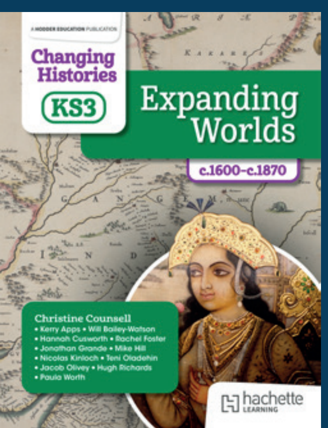

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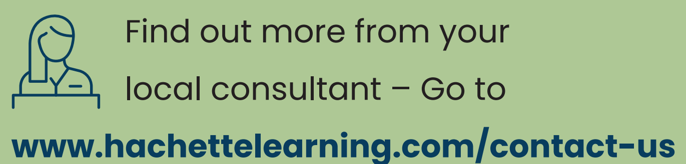

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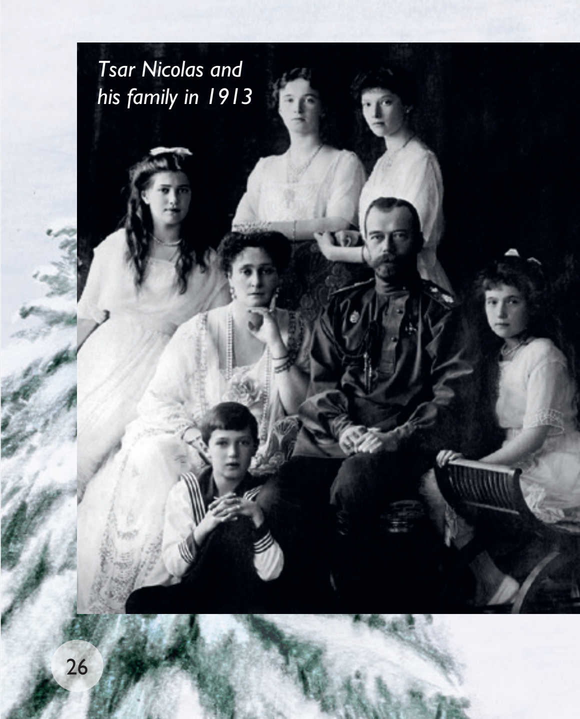
5 Photographs for the Tsar

How did a master photographer portray the Russian Empire?

The photographer's dream

In 1909, a car glides through frosty landscape. Trees and marble statues peer out of undisturbed snow. In the car's back seat, a man with round glasses leans forward and looks through the front window. He sees an enormous palace on the horizon. Its walls and columns sparkle golden in the winter sun. Few have ever laid eyes on this enchanted fairyland. This is the *Tsar's Village* – country home of Russia's emperor.

Sergei Prokudin-Gorsky, the man in the back seat, is unusual. He is a master of both chemistry and art. He has worked at the best universities in Russia and Germany. Soon, Sergei and his assistants are carrying boxes of heavy equipment into the palace. For hours, they hang up black curtains and a white screen. They set up a strangely humming machine.



Tsar Nicolas and his family in 1913

Just before 8.30 p.m., Sergei's audience arrives: great nobles, generals, royal advisors. An expectant hush spreads. The doors on the right swing open. There stands a man with a full beard and stunning grey-blue eyes. Tsar Nicholas II has arrived.

The magic lantern

Myths and legends surround the Tsar. Russians call him the 'father of the people'. As leader of the Church, he is an almost holy figure. Tsar Nicholas takes a seat in the front row. His elegant wife and their five children, the royal Romanov family, are at his side.

Now Sergei's assistants switch off the lights. Sergei slots a small glass plate into his special machine, a projector that he calls 'the magic lantern'. Suddenly, flowers and autumn forests flash across the screen. The audience gasps. How the images dazzle and shine! How beautiful they are!

Sergei is a master photographer, and he has perfected a new technique. He places three images over each other, using red, green, and blue filters. Together, they play a trick on the eye. The photographs appear in full colour. His audience has never seen anything like it.

For empire and emperor

The performance pauses for a break. Majestically, the Tsar strides towards Sergei. 'What do you have in mind for this beautiful work?' he asks politely. 'What is the future of your machine and pictures such as these?' Sergei's heart jumps. He has the Tsar's undivided attention.

Sergei reveals his cherished dream: to photograph the entire Russian Empire – its people, its nature, its buildings. He wants to project these images on screens in classrooms across Russia. If only Russian schoolchildren could see their homeland in all its splendour! How proud they would be of their country, their culture and their Tsar!

Sergei is a Russian **nationalist**. He loves his homeland. He wants others to love it too. But his request is bold. The Tsar does not allow people to travel freely across his empire. Entire regions are closed off, guarded by soldiers and spies. Sergei's journey would cost a fortune, too. He would have to travel by rail, ship and car. Who could possibly afford such a journey? Only the Tsar.

There is a pause. Time seems to slow. Has Sergei asked for too much? But then, the Tsar's moustache curves into a smile, and he nods.

Ticket to adventure

The Tsar gifts Sergei a special train with blackened windows. The Russian Empire stretches 7,000 miles from west to east, and 3,000 from north to south. The Tsar rules one-sixth of the Earth's entire surface. He gives Sergei two pieces of paper that he must always carry in his pocket. One allows Sergei to travel wherever he wants. The other commands Russian officials to help him with his project, whatever it takes.

Soon, Sergei's train is thundering east into an unknown world. Adventure awaits.

Your enquiry

Sergei Prokudin-Gorsky's photographs are astonishing **sources** for historians. They seem like a time machine that shows exactly how the Russian Empire was. But is it really so straightforward?

Sergei chose carefully what he photographed. He had neither enough glass plates nor enough time to capture everything. He left out many things. He arranged how people stood and instructed them how to pose.

In this enquiry, you will look beneath the surface of Prokudin-Gorsky's photographs and explain how they portrayed the Russian Empire.

Sergei Prokudin-Gorsky

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The Russian countryside

In 1909, Sergei Prokudin-Gorsky heads east on his special train, complete with a laboratory and strange-smelling chemicals. One of his assistants is Dmitri, his 20-year-old son. In his briefcase, Sergei carries a list of everything he must photograph. The Tsar expects to see:

- great monuments
- old churches
- natural wonders.

Sergei and his assistants are soon at work. They work from first sunlight until dusk. Shadows and glares make their work difficult. They often shoot pictures from many different angles, carrying their heavy equipment up and down hills. Sergei works late into the night, checking each image carefully – but even a master makes mistakes. Once, a small crack in the glass turns into a bright pink wedge.

Natural wonders prove hard to capture. In Sergei's photographs, fast-flowing rivers turn bright red. Waterfalls glow in strange rainbow lights. Clouds transform into mysterious blurs. These images will be no good for the Tsar.

Peasants on the land

Travelling east, Sergei sees golden fields stretching into the distance. He sees wooden huts with straw roofs, clustered into tiny villages. He sees peasants with weathered skin, cutting and tying grass into bundles of hay – bundles that look like giant yellow hats sitting on the land.

Life is harsh in the Russian countryside. Peasants work on small fields with tough soil. They pay high taxes to nobles and priests. They are only one bad harvest away from starvation. While he sets up his camera, Sergei hears peasants grumble. The mood is tense and resentful. Sergei knows that Russian nobles are always worried about peasant rebellions.

But in Sergei's photographs, we only see peasants hard at work. We see prim and proper peasant girls, posing in traditional dresses and offering berries as if there was plenty to eat. How still they must have stood for Sergei's camera! Any movement would have turned the images into a ghostly blur.

In these photographs, we see the Russian countryside as Sergei wanted to see it. We see obedient peasants, playing their small parts in a great empire. We see them willingly serving their masters, from local nobles to the Tsar. We see no sign of struggle or rebellion, only duty and tradition, only the humdrum of peasant life, unchanged for centuries.

Monasteries and shrines

Travelling between far-flung villages, Sergei stops to visit old churches and monasteries. Walking through their cool vaults, he photographs sacred shrines and images of saints. How Sergei loves these scenes. They show Russia exactly as he wants others to see it: traditional and faithful. Surely, the Tsar will like these images, too. What better way to show the Tsar's sacred power?

Churches, monasteries and saints make Sergei's work a little easier too. They always stand perfectly still. Solemn and motionless, they never blur.

Return to the palace

Months later, Sergei and his crew return to the Tsar's palace. Sergei slots a new set of glass plates into his humming projector. He is nervous. Will the Tsar like what he has brought?

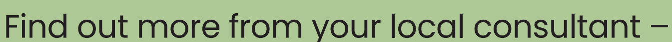
There is no need to worry. The Tsar's eyes glisten with joy. How beautiful his empire is! How loyal and faithful his people! Sergei's photographs are everything he wants to see, and more.

It is a triumph for Sergei. His photographs are not untruthful. Nothing is staged or faked. But Sergei has chosen carefully what he shows, and how. He has portrayed Russia as he and the Tsar both want to see it.

Tsar Nicholas later writes in his diary: 'At 9 p.m., Prokudin-Gorsky showed us his beautiful colour photos in the semi-circular hall. Dmitri and I played billiards.' Sergei's journey has been a great success – but there is no time to rest. The Tsar's advisors soon hand him another list. Sergei's quest is not over.

Step 1

Write a paragraph to answer two questions. What choices did Prokudin-Gorsky make when he photographed the Russian countryside? Why did he make these choices?



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Bukhara and Samarkand

In 1911, Sergei's train is rolling south. Two years have passed since he began his epic journey across the Russian Empire. He has travelled far and wide. He has shown his images to the Tsar's court and to clapping audiences in Saint Petersburg. Now Sergei's train moves through deserts into green valleys and oases. He is heading towards legendary lands that most Russians will never see.

Sergei and his crew are bound for Central Asia.

Centuries ago, the Silk Road connected these lands. Merchants travelled here on **caravans**, connecting distant empires through trade. But by 1911, these ancient lands have become the Russian Empire's newest province. Even the railway tracks are only a few years old.

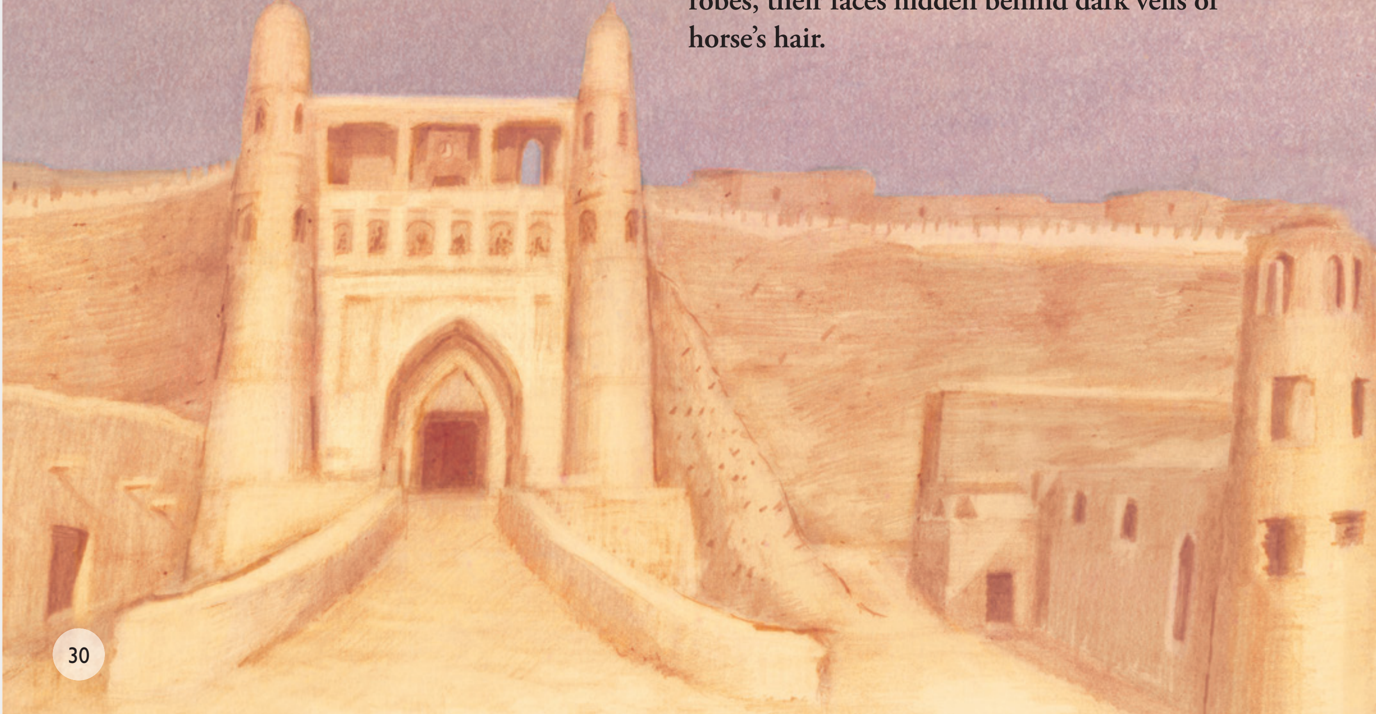
Since the 1870s, while other empires colonised Africa, the Russian tsars turned their eyes south. Their soldiers marched into Central Asia with powerful rifles, crushing resistance. Translators and government officers followed to colonise and rule.

Legendary cities

Sergei's train hisses and smokes as it comes to a halt. His helpers unload heavy suitcases and boxes, filled with expensive camera equipment. Sergei is eager to start. He wants to explore Bukhara and Samarkand, two ancient cities that once lay on the Silk Road. But his time is limited. What will he find?

The ancient cities are labyrinths of alleys and homes. Sergei is fascinated by the people who live here. In Bukhara, he photographs the local ruler, known as the emir. How powerful he looks with his golden sword and embroidered gown! But Sergei knows that Central Asia's emirs and khans have become mere **puppet rulers**. He will be able to show this photograph and say: 'Look at this man who once held power. He now obeys the Tsar.'

Sergei is interested in ordinary people, too. In Samarkand, he photographs men drinking spiced tea in open-air restaurants. He photographs a textile merchant at his stall, sitting before rolls of silk and a framed page of the Qur'an. He photographs women in blue robes, their faces hidden behind dark veils of horse's hair.



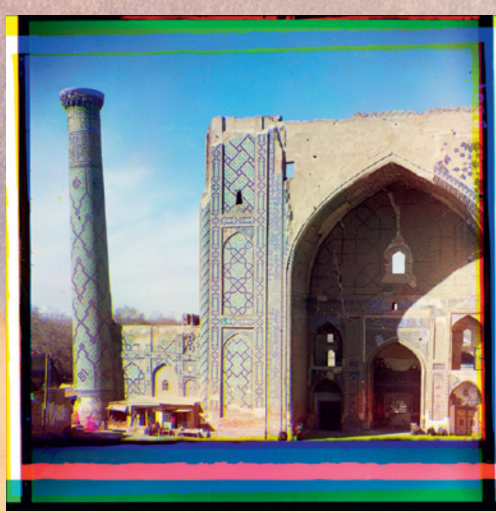
Sergei wants his images to stress just how different these people are from their Russian rulers. This highlights the Tsar's power. How vast his empire must be if it contains such different peoples! In a way, Sergei's camera conquers Central Asia once more. Every click, every popping flashbulb seems to say: these lands, and these people, now belong to the Tsar.

Ancient wonders

Wandering through Bukhara and Samarkand, Sergei marvels at the ancient mosques and madrasas, built by legendary rulers of the past. He photographs their crumbling walls, their falling towers, their master-crafted tiles that have cracked into sky-blue shards. What great scholars once called these buildings home? How many silk merchants rested in their shade?

Sergei's photographs stress just how ancient these buildings are, how majestic they once must have been. Everyone who sees them will surely understand: the Tsar rules legendary lands. But there is a quieter message too. The ancient mosques were once glorious buildings, created during an Islamic golden age. Sergei's photographs seem to whisper: 'All this is in the past. Now and in the future, these cities will be Russian.'

In Bukhara and Samarkand, Sergei takes over a hundred photographs. Later, he will file them in leather albums and create colourful versions for the Tsar. For now, he must leave the ancient Silk Road behind. There is more he must see.



Step 2

Write a paragraph to answer two questions. What choices did Prokudin-Gorsky make when he photographed Bukhara and Samarkand? Why did he make these choices?

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The steppe

In 1911, Sergei leaves Samarkand behind. Snow-capped mountains loom in the distance. Beyond lies India, known as 'the Raj' – a land ruled by the British. As Sergei turns north, perhaps he wonders how long the uneasy peace between Europe's emperors can hold.

Travelling north, Sergei and his crew pass through green valleys. Here silkworms feed on mulberry leaves. Farmers grow sweet melons, apricots and grapes. Villagers chase after jackals that try to steal their chickens. Rice and mutton bubble in large cauldrons, as musicians play tunes for the village feast.

Then, slowly, the landscape begins to change. The ground flattens, and trees disappear. Yellow grass rustles in the icy wind. Sergei and his helpers have reached the **steppe**.

Wandering worlds

There is a ghostly beauty about the steppe, but these are harsh and unforgiving lands. Little grows here – just tough, feathery grass. An eerie silence hangs over the land. Sergei and his helpers pause. Noises travel on the wind – hooves stomping on the ground, animals shuffling and braying. Then, Sergei sees them on the horizon: riders and their herds.

These riders have lived on the steppe for generations. Here they graze their sheep, horses and long-haired camels. The people of the steppe – Kyrgyz, Turkmen and Kazakh – are **nomadic**. Always on the move, they have mastered living on this cold and quiet land.

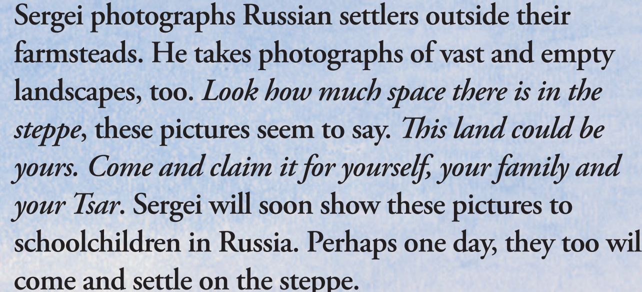
Sergei sets up his camera, eager to capture these nomadic people and their ways. He photographs the leather-covered yurts; the woollen robes, tall, fur hats and heavy rugs that keep them warm. Sergei cannot wait to show these photographs to the Tsar.

Contested land

But nomadic life is under threat. For generations, these families have wandered the steppe with their herds. Their animals must move to graze but now Russian soldiers block their paths. The soldiers are building fortresses across the steppe. They redirect rivers to water cotton fields. They bring Russian peasants to settle and farm the land. More than 3 million have already arrived.

Russian leaders and soldiers want nomadic people to disappear. They call them dogs and *inorodtsy* – 'aliens'. They steal and slaughter their animals. They beat their families, sometimes to death. When nomadic families fight back, attacking settlements or roads, their resistance is brutally crushed.

None of this violence appears in Sergei's photographs. Why would he show such terrible scenes to schoolchildren and the Tsar? Sergei knows that his emperor wants more Russian peasants to move to the steppe. His images will help.



Sergei photographs Russian settlers outside their farmsteads. He takes photographs of vast and empty landscapes, too. *Look how much space there is in the steppe*, these pictures seem to say. *This land could be yours. Come and claim it for yourself, your family and your Tsar*. Sergei will soon show these pictures to schoolchildren in Russia. Perhaps one day, they too will come and settle on the steppe.

The photographer's journey

Three years later, in the warm summer of 1914, Sergei is back home. He looks through the picture albums that document his journey. He looks at photographs of peasants and saints, oases and mosques, foreign peoples and distant lands.

Sergei would like to travel even further, but his project's future is in doubt. In 1914, Russian newspapers are filled with unsettling reports. Reports of murder, crisis and war. The fragile peace between Europe's emperors, it seems, might at last come to an end.

Step 3

Write a paragraph to answer two questions. What choices did Prokudin-Gorsky make when he photographed the steppe? Why did he make these choices?

Shaping your answer

Today, over a hundred years after Sergei Prokudin-Gorsky's journey, people are still fascinated by his photographs. Museums and galleries still show them in exhibitions.

You are now ready to write a summary introducing museum visitors to Prokudin-Gorsky's photographs. What should they know about them? How did these photographs portray the Russian Empire?

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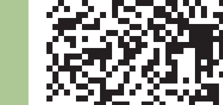

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12 Life under communist rule, 1917–39

Did Stalin transform the Soviet Union?

On 23 February 1917, Petrograd's factories lie silent. No smoke rises from their tall chimneys. No one has come to work today. The city's workers are on strike.

Thousands of starving women, protesting wartime shortages, fill the streets. They are soon joined by thousands more striking workers. They wave red banners and shout their revolutionary demands: 'Down with the War! Down with the Tsar!' Some carry sledgehammers and iron spikes.

Over the next two days, the protests grow. Tsar Nicholas II panics. On 25 February, he orders his soldiers to clear the crowds, to show no mercy. But his soldiers refuse to shoot; some even join the workers. The Tsar has lost control.

Within a week, it is all over. On 2 March, the Tsar is forced to abdicate – to give up his royal power. Over 300 years of Romanov rule have come to an end.

Peace, land and bread!

After the Tsar abdicated, his nobles agreed to share power with the workers. The workers met in councils, called soviets.

But some revolutionaries wanted to go further.

These revolutionaries had a leader. He had spent hours studying Karl Marx's famous book, *Das Kapital*. He hated what Marx called the capitalist class – the wealthy men who owned Russia's factories. He believed that the workers should run the factories and share all wealth equally. This leader's name was Vladimir Lenin.

The starving workers of Petrograd looked up to Lenin. He promised them 'Peace, land and bread!' He promised to take from the rich and give to the poor. He promised to turn Russia into a workers' paradise.

In Petrograd, the Tsar still lived in his palace. Outside, the workers grew angrier each day.

All power to the soviets!

Finally, in October 1917, Lenin's supporters stormed into the Tsar's palace. They slashed his paintings and drank his wine. They arrested the nobles. They shouted, 'All power to the soviets!'

Lenin's supporters set out to destroy Russia's old ways. In 1918, they murdered Tsar Nicholas II and his family. Soon, the country descended into a brutal civil war.

After years of chaos and bloodshed, Lenin's supporters won this civil war. In 1922, at a meeting of soviets from across the old Russian Empire, Lenin announced the creation of a new country – the Soviet Union.

Lenin's supporters were members of the same group. It was called the Communist Party. In the Soviet Union, communism soon became an extreme version of socialism – where the government controlled people's lives and tried to force everyone to be equal.

Lenin promised to create a workers' paradise. But when he died in 1924, many workers were still starving.

A painting of Stalin by Isaac Brodsky (1933)

The man of steel

In February 1931, Lenin's mummified corpse rests inside a glass box. Each day, thousands of workers travel to Moscow to pay their respects.

Nearby, hundreds of factory managers wait in a freezing theatre. Red banners fly outside. Huge paintings of Karl Marx and Lenin hang on the walls. An orchestra plays a communist song. Suddenly, the music stops. The Soviet Union's new leader is ready to speak.

> Capitalists always beat the backward and the weak. But now that we have overthrown capitalism, power is in our hands, in the hands of the people.
>
> We are fifty or a hundred years behind the advanced countries. We must make good this distance in ten years. Either we do it, or we shall be crushed.
>
> Joseph Stalin, 'On the tasks of workers in the economy', 1931

Everyone in the theatre stands and applauds. The new leader looks out at the audience. He has oily black hair and a large moustache. His yellow eyes glow like a tiger's. His surname means the 'man of steel'. This is Joseph Stalin.

Your enquiry

Stalin wanted to make the Soviet Union a modern, industrial superpower. He was desperate to catch up with countries such as Britain and the USA. Some thought this was impossible. Others said it would require a total change – a transformation.

In this enquiry, you will learn what changed in the Soviet Union during the 1930s. You will then decide whether Stalin really transformed his country and its people.

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The countryside

Late in 1929, a special article appeared in *Pravda* – the Communist Party's official newspaper. In this article, Stalin laid out his grand plan to transform the Soviet Union.

> We are advancing full steam ahead along the path of industrialisation. We are leaving behind the old Russia's backwardness. We will become a country of metal, a country of cars, a country of tractors. And when we have put the worker in a car, and the peasant on a tractor, the Soviet Union will overtake the capitalists!

In just five years, Stalin wanted to double coal and steel production. In just five years, he wanted to build huge farms to feed the workers. In just five years, he wanted to turn the Soviet Union into a modern, industrial superpower. This was Stalin's Five-Year Plan.

This poster encouraged peasants to learn more about collective farms. It says: 'Collective farmer, read the book!' (1931)

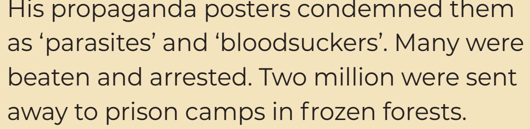
Collective farms

Stalin explained that his Five-Year Plan would transform the countryside. Here, most peasants were still using horses and wooden ploughs to farm the land. Not much had changed for hundreds of years.

Stalin therefore announced enormous changes. From now on, peasants would work together on enormous farms. They would grow more grain, using modern machines. They would hand over their harvests to the government, so that food could be shared equally across the country. All peasants would have to join these collective farms.

From 1930, Stalin's soldiers and officials forced peasants to join collective farms. They destroyed ways of life that had been unchanged for centuries. Kazakh herders on the steppe had to abandon their nomadic way of life. Ancient village churches were turned into barns.

Some peasants refused to give up their land and join collective farms. Stalin called them *kulaks*, meaning 'tight-fisted' or greedy.



His propaganda posters condemned them as 'parasites' and 'bloodsuckers'. Many were beaten and arrested. Two million were sent away to prison camps in frozen forests.

Farming for Stalin

By 1932, almost 70 per cent of the Soviet Union's peasants had joined collective farms. The government now controlled their land, crops and animals.

Stalin's propaganda made collective farms look like paradise. In one poster, peasants were shown leaving a backward village and walking onto a modern collective farm – with electricity and tractors.

The reality was very different. Few tractors arrived. Many peasants still dragged their wooden ploughs through frozen soil. They still worked from sunrise until sunset. They still harvested grain, cabbage and potatoes by hand.

Holodomor

Stalin knew that his Five-Year Plan would be expensive. He therefore began selling grain abroad, to countries such as Britain and Germany. But there was a problem. Storehouses across the Soviet Union were running low.

Peasants on collective farms had no reason to work hard; whatever they grew was taken away by the government. Two million peasants had also been locked away in prison camps. Within two years, grain production collapsed from 73 million tonnes in 1930 to just 55 million in 1932.

If Stalin kept selling grain abroad, his people would starve.

Stalin pushed ahead with his plan. His soldiers kept collecting grain, leaving peasants with nothing. Desperate families ate dogs and rats to survive. Some even turned to cannibalism. One member of the Communist Party later wrote:

> I emptied out the old folks' storage chests, stopping my ears to the children's crying and women's wails. In the terrible spring of 1933, I saw people dying from hunger. I saw women and children turning blue, still breathing but with lifeless eyes.
>
> Lev Kopelev, *No Jail for Thought* (1975)

Many reports of starvation reached Stalin. Each made it clear that collectivisation was causing a famine. Stalin ignored them. Instead, he banned journalists from visiting the collective farms – and banned peasants from leaving. He even ordered that anyone who stole grain should be shot.

In the past, there had been famines under the Tsar's rule – but never on this scale. Historians estimate that up to 8.5 million peasants starved to death between 1932 and 1933. This famine devastated the entire Soviet Union, but it was at its worst in Ukraine and Kazakhstan. Today, it is known as the *Holodomor* – 'death by hunger' in Ukrainian.

Step 1

Stalin wanted to transform the countryside. But what really changed for the Soviet Union's peasants during the 1930s? Copy and complete this table.

What changed?	What did not change?
By 1932, 70 per cent of peasants were forced to join collective farms.	Peasants still dragged wooden ploughs through frozen ground.

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The cities

In the Stalingrad Tractor Factory, huge steam engines clank and hiss. Black smoke billows from tall chimneys. The ground shakes with the rumble of machines.

A manager shouts orders at exhausted workers. Faster! Now! Go! Thousands of men and women work non-stop, 12-hour shifts.

Sweat drips from the manager's forehead. Time is running out. Even 144 tractors a day is not enough. The Stalingrad Tractor Factory will not meet its target. What will Stalin say?

Increasing production

The Five-Year Plan set targets for mines and factories. Stalin wanted to double coal and steel production between 1928 and 1933. These resources, he believed, would transform his Soviet Union into a modern, industrial superpower.

Propaganda celebrated the Five-Year Plan. Stalin said that he was fighting a 'war against backwardness'. Managers who failed to meet their targets were seen as 'traitors'. Some were executed by firing squad.

For many mines and factories, Stalin's targets were impossible to meet. Even the modern Stalingrad Tractor Factory could not keep up.

Poor-quality products were rushed out. Overworked machines broke down. Terrified managers lied to government inspectors. Countless workers were killed in industrial accidents.

Despite these problems, production increased dramatically during the Five-Year Plan. New steel factories, coal mines and oil fields opened. Steel production increased from 4 million to 6 million tonnes. Coal and oil production nearly doubled. Thousands of cars, tractors and tanks soon rolled off factory production lines.

Journalists and politicians in other countries looked on with amazement. How had Stalin done it?

Urban misery

In 1932, workers arrived in the frozen steppe. Carrying pickaxes and shovels, they had come to mine a mountain filled with precious iron ore. Many lived in a new city nearby, built during Stalin's Five-Year Plan. Its name was Magnitogorsk – 'city of the magnetic mountain'.

During the Five-Year Plan, 40,000 workers lived in Magnitogorsk. Some worked in mines. Others worked in a gigantic steel factory, one of the largest in the world.

'Victory of the Five-Year Plan – a blow to capitalism!' (1931)

Conditions in Magnitogorsk were miserable. Workers lived in wooden huts that were battered by blizzards and dust storms. They were tormented by rats, bed bugs and lice. There was no clean water or medical care. Thousands died from hunger, cold and disease.

Magnitogorsk was not unusual. During the Five-Year Plan, countless peasants left the countryside to work in overcrowded cities. Multiple families were made to live together in shared apartments, divided only by curtains.

In 1936, an American journalist wrote this description of conditions in Moscow:

> The room contained approximately 500 narrow beds, covered with mattresses filled with straw or dried leaves. There were no pillows or blankets. Men's coats were their covers. Some of the workers had no beds and slept on the floor or in wooden boxes. I could not stay very long. I could not stand the stench of unwashed bodies. The only washing facility was a pump outside. The toilet was a rickety, unheated shack.
>
> Andrew Smith, 'I was a Soviet Worker' (1936)

Life has improved, comrades!

In his speeches, Stalin celebrated the successes of his Five-Year Plan. 'Life has improved, comrades!' he said in 1935. 'Life has become more joyous!' Factories now made radios and record players. Magazines advertised perfumes, chocolates and 'Soviet Champagne'.

But in Magnitogorsk and other cities, workers frowned. Their wages were still low. They still lived in cold and filthy rooms. There were still food shortages, just as there had been under the Tsar. Shops sometimes filled their shelves with empty boxes. Shoes and soap were often impossible to find.

The Soviet Union was still far from being a workers' paradise. In 1936, one mother wrote to her daughter:

> There is an awful panic for bread here. Thousands of peasants are sleeping outside the bread stores. They came from 200 kilometres away. It is just indescribable horror. It went below freezing and seven people froze to death taking bread home.
>
> Part of a letter quoted in Sheila Fitzpatrick's *Everyday Stalinism* (1999)

Step 2

Countless factories and mines opened during Stalin's Five-Year Plan. But was life in the cities really transformed? Make another table. What changed? What did not change?

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People's minds

In January 1934, a thousand politicians from across the Soviet Union wait inside the Kremlin. This palace once belonged to the Tsar. Now it is the headquarters of the Communist Party. Finally, Stalin stands to speak.

```
The Soviet Union has been transformed. It has cast off backwardness. From an agricultural country it has become an industrial country. From a country of small farms, it has become a country of collective, mechanised agriculture.
```

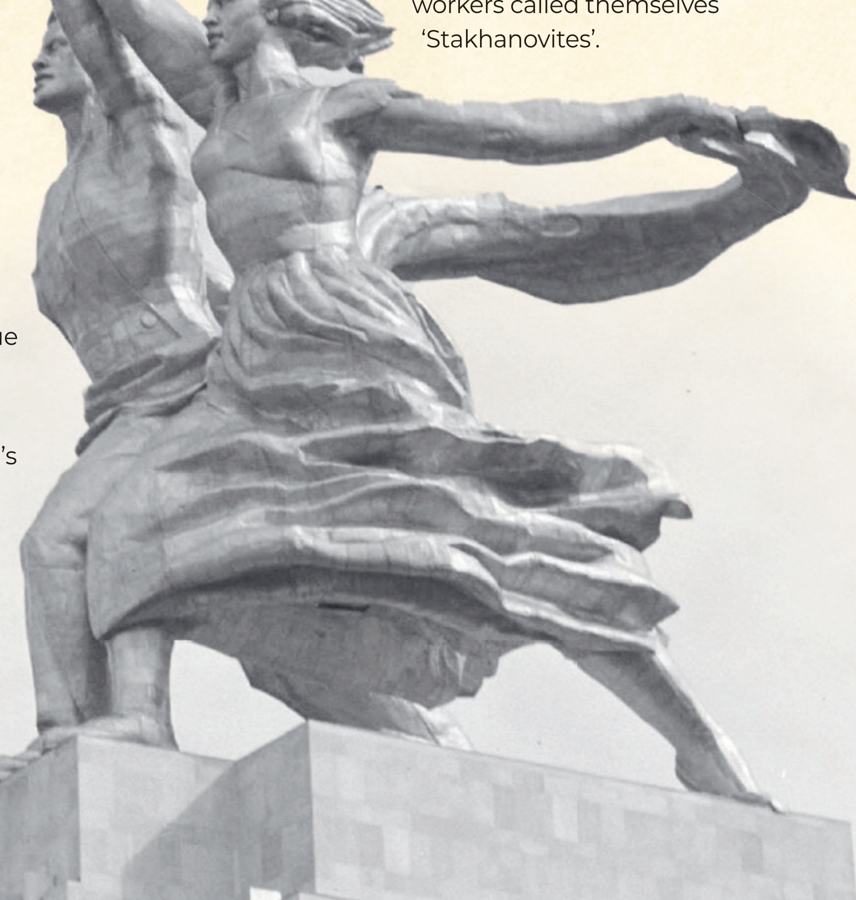
New Soviet Man

In 1934, Stalin's Five-Year Plan was complete. Peasants now worked on collective farms. Machines rattled in factories. Coal, oil and steel production had rapidly increased.

Stalin now wanted to go even further. Changing the countryside and the cities was not enough. The Soviet Union was not yet a modern, industrial superpower. And something else needed to change if that was really to happen.

Stalin believed that the people themselves were still 'backwards' and slow. How could he make them work harder? How could he make them true communists, willing to sacrifice everything for the Soviet Union?

Stalin wanted to transform his people's minds. He wanted everyone to become a 'New Soviet Man'.



This sculpture was made by Soviet sculptor Vera Mukhina for the 1937 World's Fair in Paris and later moved to Moscow. The workers hold aloft the Soviet symbols of hammer and sickle.

Heroes of the Soviet Union

Across the Soviet Union, propaganda soon celebrated hard work and sacrifice. Posters praised men and women working in factories and fields. One huge steel statue, called 'Worker and Peasant Woman', showed two muscular figures raising a hammer and a sickle – symbols of the Soviet Union.

In 1934, Stalin created a new award: 'Hero of the Soviet Union.' This gold star medal rewarded the greatest sacrifices and achievements. One winner was Alexei Stakhanov, a coal miner who worked harder than anyone else. In 1935, he mined 102 tonnes of coal in just six hours.

Propaganda soon made Stakhanov famous across the Soviet Union. Boys grew up wanting to be like him. Other workers called themselves 'Stakhanovites'.

Alexei Stakhanov poses in a coalmine (c.1935)

Opium of the people

Stalin wanted to wipe out 'backwards' traditions, too. Many people in the Soviet Union were Orthodox Christians. For hundreds of years, they had chanted ancient prayers in church. They celebrated holy days with incense and bells. They lit candles for the dead.

Stalin hated religion. Like Karl Marx, he saw it as 'the opium of the people' – a drug that capitalists used to control their workers.

Soon, Stalin's officials travelled across the Soviet Union with orders to wipe out religion. They arrested Orthodox priests. They shut down thousands of churches and turned them into warehouses. In Moscow, they even used dynamite to blow up the Cathedral of Christ the Saviour. Stalin planned to replace it with a 'Palace of the Soviets', topped with a 100-metre statue of Lenin.

In Central Asia, Stalin's officials closed mosques and Islamic schools. Hijabs were banned and burned on bonfires. Men were pressured to shave their beards.

Saying prayers, telling jokes

On the surface, Stalin's rules seemed to work. Churches and mosques remained closed. Church bells and the call to prayer fell silent.

But changing people's minds was not so simple. During the 1930s, Christians still whispered prayers and lit candles at home. Muslims secretly fasted during Ramadan. Copies of the Bible and the Qur'an were kept hidden away.

Not everyone wanted to be like Alexei Stakhanov either. Many grumbled about long working hours and low pay. Sometimes they told jokes about life in the Soviet Union:

```
What nationality were Adam and Eve? Soviet, of course. Who else would walk around barefoot and naked, have one apple to share between them, and think they were in paradise?

This joke is quoted in Orlando Figes' Revolutionary Russia, 1891–1991 (2014).
```

Historians still have questions about these jokes. Were they just a way to have a laugh? Or were they a challenge to Stalin's power? Stalin certainly did not find them funny. Telling 'anti-Soviet' jokes soon became a crime punishable by years in prison camps – and in some cases, death.

Step 3

Stalin wanted to create a 'New Soviet Man'. But how much did he really transform people's minds? Make another table. What changed? What did not change?

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The Great Terror

In January 1936, Gelya Markizova waits inside the Kremlin. Sitting next to her father, she feels like a princess in a fairytale palace. Gelya has travelled all the way from Mongolia with her father, who manages the collective farms there. She is so proud to be joining him for dinner.

But as the evening drags on, Gelya just cannot sit still. She does not understand the long, dull speeches about tractor factories and steel production. Gelya is only seven years old.

Unnoticed, Gelya slips off her chair and wanders off. By the time her father realises that she is gone, it is too late. Holding a bunch of flowers, Gelya walks towards the front of the hall – towards Stalin.

The Kremlin falls silent. Gelya smiles and announces, 'These flowers are for Comrade Stalin from the children of Mongolia.' There is a long pause. Stalin looks puzzled. Then, a smile forms across his face. He picks up Gelya and hugs her.

People stand and applaud. Camera shutters click and flashbulbs pop. These photographs will change Gelya's life.

Stalin and Gelya Markizova, 1936

Gelya the icon

Within days, Gelya Markizova became famous. The image of her in Stalin's arms was printed in Communist Party newspapers. One headline read, 'Comrade Stalin, the Best Friend of Children'. A sculptor was ordered to turn the image into a statue.

Soon, there were images of Gelya and Stalin everywhere. Their smiling faces could be seen in schools, hospitals and even prison camps.

Imaginary enemies

Stalin was not always so cheerful. In 1937, he became paranoid that other members of the Communist Party were plotting against him. His secret police now wrote him long lists of spies, traitors and other 'enemies of the people'. Most had not committed any crimes.

This was not entirely new. In the past, the Tsar had used his own secret police to arrest and punish people – but never on this scale. In just one year, between 1937 and 1938, Stalin's secret police shot at least 681,000 people. Millions more were sent to slave labour camps in Siberia, known as *gulags*.

No one was safe during Stalin's Great Terror.

In December 1937, Gelya Markizova wakes up in the middle of the night. Someone is banging on the door. When her mother opens it, men in secret police uniforms barge in. At first, Gelya does not understand what is happening. The men search every room, throwing books and letters across the floor. Gelya cries in her mother's arms, as her father is led away.

Gelya soon writes a desperate letter to Stalin, begging for his help. ***There must be a mistake***, she writes. ***My father is a loyal communist.*** Stalin never replies. Gelya's father is found guilty of spying for Stalin's enemies. He is executed as an 'enemy of the people'.

Stalin and Mamlakat Nakhangova (left), 1939

Changing the truth

Gelya's father's crimes were entirely made up, but they still caused problems for Stalin's officials. What should be done with the millions of images of Gelya and Stalin? Not all the statues could be removed, and it was illegal to destroy images of Stalin.

Instead, the truth would have to change.

From now on, the girl in the photograph was not Gelya. Stalin's officials claimed that she was Mamlakat Nakhangova, a teenage cotton picker from Kazakhstan. Everyone could see that this was not true. Mamlakat was too old and too tall. But no one dared to question Stalin.

By 1939, Stalin even grew suspicious of his own secret police. He had its leader executed and erased from all photographs. The Great Terror finally came to an end, but people across the Soviet Union still lived in fear. Gelya's story was not unusual. The secret police had destroyed millions of lives.

Step 4

Add to your Step 3 table focusing on people's minds. During the 1930s, Stalin used propaganda and terror to control people in the Soviet Union. In what ways was this a change? What had not changed?

Shaping your answer

During the 1930s, Stalin wanted to change the Soviet Union and its people. He wanted to transform a 'backwards' country into a modern, industrial superpower.

You are now ready to explain whether Stalin transformed the Soviet Union. Write about the countryside, the cities and people's minds.

You will find it helpful to consider: Did things change as Stalin wanted? Were his changes exaggerated in propaganda? Did he change what people believed, or only how they behaved when others were watching?

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19 Meanwhile, in Britain, a new world emerges from the snow

The story of the winter of 1962–63

December 1962

Christmas Day, 1962. Beneath ceilings of hand-made paper chains, adults clutch glasses of sherry. Glad of their coal fires, they do not feel the bitter east wind.

At 3 p.m., families gather around tinsel-topped television sets. Children must drop their comics and dolls. Teenagers must stop Elvis belting out rock and roll. It's time for the Queen's Christmas broadcast. Memories are stirred. As the Queen talks, the sea ice advances.

Troubling memories of the past

The Queen celebrates Britain's tolerance of all races. But only four years ago, racial violence had terrorised the streets of London's Notting Hill. The Queen celebrates the march of science. It brings remarkable improvements to daily lives. But only nine weeks ago, American President John F Kennedy made a terrifying announcement. Russian nuclear weapons were now on America's doorstep, in Cuba. Worried parents had whispered *Where would the children shelter? Under the dining room table?*

Troubling visions of the future

With blizzards battering their windows, Scottish Highlanders turn up the volume. The Queen is now urging people to help lonely neighbours. In Britain's new high-rise flats, many older people feel abandoned. Glasgow's shiny tower blocks look alien, almost eerie, in the falling snow.

High pressure over Scandinavia pushes yet more cold air westwards, from Siberia, from eastern Europe, towards the British Isles.

Snow reaches southern England

On Boxing Day, 1962, hand-knitted mittens catch the first fragile flakes. Soon they are throwing snowballs. London parks and Welsh fields are loud with laughter as children slide down slopes on tin trays. Thirteen-year-old Philip, a Devon farmer's son, cannot wait to try out some skis.

On treacherous roads, Judy, a London housewife, is now being driven at a snail's pace. She is on her way to see *The Nutcracker* at the Royal Festival Hall. Will she make it? On northern roads, six-foot snow drifts have already cut off Scotland from England.

It does not stop snowing for ten weeks.

The countryside in danger

Birds caught in gusts of freezing air are paralysed. They fall to the ground like bricks. Waterfowl cannot fish in the frozen estuaries. Sheep and cattle find little food in the icy fields. Some disappear in deep drifts.

Farmers in Devon wrap newborn chicks and ducklings in woollen hats and tuck them into airing cupboards. Helicopters drop hay and tinned food on the frozen tors of Dartmoor. When the water mains freeze, Philip's father pumps cold water from an old well under the farmhouse kitchen.

As the new year approaches, Britain's hills, forests and moors lie still. But, underneath, something stirs. Change is readying to break through Britain's frozen fields.

The silence deepens as the snow thickens. Huddling by the fire, families listen non-stop to the radio. They hum along to a song, 'Love Me Do', by a new band from Liverpool.

January 1963

Tuning into the television

New Year's Day, 1963. Cold in her thin stockings, Judy worries about food shortages. Lorries cannot carve through the snowdrifts to the farms. Dorset farmers pour away 250,000 gallons of milk. Rationing, so recently ended in the early 1950s, is back.

Snowed-in families turn on the telly. That new band, energetic in matching shiny suits, are fun to watch. They are called The Beatles.

Not all television is fun. ***Waiting for Work***, a new documentary about unemployment in northeast England, reveals the struggles faced by working-class families. Some live on one meal a day. Some say they feel forgotten by politicians in the south.

But Prime Minister Harold Macmillan isn't listening. Over a long lunch, finished with fine whisky, the aristocratic Macmillan maintains that the British people have never had it so good.

Breaking the old rules

While England's old divides remain, a glacial change is on the way: in society, in politics, in sport. Working-class cricket players are now given the same status as wealthier cricketers. Britain's rigid social class system is weakening.

It's the new Saturday TV programme that most threatens to shatter the old rules. This programme, *That Was The Week That Was*, is different. It shocks audiences. Its writers seem ready to tease and mock *anyone*! Prime Minister Macmillan, stiff in his tweedy jacket, is a target for ridicule.

Like the tree roots in Britain's frozen ground, social norms are cracking.

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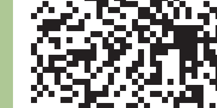

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February 1963

February brings no relief from the cold. School toilets are still frozen over. Policemen still wear pyjamas under their uniforms. In a Devon farmhouse kitchen, Philip warms more new lambs by the oven.

In his diary, Prime Minister Macmillan writes, 'This has been a shattering time ever since Christmas.'

Freedom to run for the bus

Across London, Judy's daughter Pamela braves the snow in a mini-skirt. Judy and her friends want to go shopping, and they are lucky to find a bus. Hundreds of buses can't move, their diesel frozen. The bus conductor collects tickets on the open platform of a red double-decker. From Chingford, sitting on the bus's bright-red vinyl benches, passengers look out on St James's Park on their way to Chelsea. The park's oak trees are cracked with frost.

In Chelsea, Mary Quant's shop is packed with young people buying her newest designs: mini-skirts, stretch tights, low-waisted trousers. Quant's clothes are designed to allow women to run for the bus, to dance in a club, to move. Gone are Judy's long-waisted frocks and fiddly stockings. Now, young women chew gum and wear their hair unbrushed.

Boys, too, are changing their look. Some copy the pudding-basin haircuts of The Beatles. The band's debut single has made it to number 1 in the charts. John Lennon and his bandmates have just recorded their first album and Pamela can't wait to hear it.

New music, new fashion, new lifestyles. Before, being young was just a stepping stone to being married. Now, the journalists talk about 'teenagers'. They say *everyone* wants to be young. They say being young is being free.

The NHS steps up in the snow

As Judy frets about Pamela wearing trousers, medics struggle to care for their communities. District nurses and midwives battle drifted snow to reach their patients. Hundreds of babies are delivered by midwives arriving on bicycles. Mothers are given the new disposable nappies. The usual towel nappies freeze on washing lines, stiff as boards.

In Scotland, Dr Taylor abandons his car and walks for miles to visit six-year-old Mary in the village of Fyvie. Mary needs hospital. When the tractor cannot get through the drifts, Mary is carried to hospital in her father's arms.

Conversations about gay rights

Down in Manchester, 19-year-old Colin is also in hospital. The doctors keep telling Colin that his electric shock treatment can 'cure' homosexuality.

In 1962, sex between men is still illegal. Undercover police officers, nicknamed 'Betty Bracelets' by the gay community, pose as gay men. But some cinema managers turn a blind eye. In Chelsea's vibrant Gateways Club, it is said that women dance openly together.

It will be many years before laws change, but conversations about gay rights are growing louder.

Questions for women

Women are also talking about their rights. Fifteen months ago, the NHS gave married women access to the contraceptive pill. Women now have more control over their bodies. On 9 February 1962, the Oxford Union had voted to admit female undergraduates as full members.

But many men have voted against allowing women into their clubs.

On 19 February 1963, an explosive new book about gender is published by American writer Betty Friedan. This book, *The Feminine Mystique*, asks a big question: 'Is this all?'

Is marriage, motherhood and managing a house the route to female satisfaction?

More and more women say 'no'. More women begin to carve out a new world for themselves. By 1964, even Judy will wear black stretch tights to her keep fit classes.

March 1963

On 9 March, Judy takes Pamela to see The Beatles for her birthday. When the band appears, girls scream. The Beatles' new album is experimental, optimistic, catchy. Their music appeals across age, class and race. The Beatles are now the most famous band in Britain.

The breaking of the ice

As the snow finally melts, last year's milk bottles are found on doorsteps. Blossom emerges on the apple trees. Philip is delighted to play football again on the bright green grass.

Problems must be faced. Heavy rain and melting snow cause extensive flooding in Scotland. There are fewer sheep to shear on Welsh farms. Around half the wild bird population is dead.

Old prejudices remain. Clerks refuse to serve a West Indian man requesting work at a London **labour exchange**. Next month, in April 1963, a protest will be led by Bristol's black community against a bus company's refusal to employ non-white bus crews.

But, in many ways the world feels new. Old ways – music, fashion, mindsets – seem to have disappeared with the melting snow.

The Swinging Sixties have begun.

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27 Changing Britain, changing history

How did Margaret Thatcher interpret the Victorian era?

1979

On Valentine's Day in 1979, Britain disappears under freezing fog. Blowing from the east, a blizzard rattles farmhouses and high-rise towers. Snowdrifts bury cars and roads. It is the coldest winter in over 15 years. Few love letters will be delivered today.

But these are not Britain's only problems on this cold February day. For months, workers have been on strike. Struggling to keep up with rising **inflation**, they are demanding higher pay. Uncollected rubbish lies on snow-covered streets. Lorries stand still in frozen garages. Dead bodies lie unburied.

Many people wonder if the Prime Minister, Jim Callaghan, can solve the crisis. His Labour Party has been in charge for most of the last 15 years. In pubs and boardrooms, people argue. Who can bring down inflation? When will the strikes end?

Newspapers will soon give these turbulent weeks a name. Borrowing a line from Shakespeare, they call the winter of 1978–79 the 'Winter of Discontent'.

Mrs Thatcher

The same morning, a woman leafed through the day's newspapers in her London office. It was only seven o'clock, but Margaret Thatcher was already at her desk.

The headlines made for grim reading. Inflation was rising. Bin workers, ambulance drivers and railwaymen were on strike. Without oil deliveries for heating, a thousand schools remained closed. Thatcher shook her head. A Member of Parliament for 20 years, she had seen Britain struggle before – but never like this.

More recently, Thatcher had become leader of the Conservative Party. If new elections were held, she could become Prime Minister. Some doubted, however, that she could win over the country. Even colleagues described her as stern and intimidating. Thatcher's eyes glared during arguments, and her voice had been trained to sound deep and tough. 'When she talks to you on the telly, you feel about five years old,' one voter said.

Others admired her as a strong leader, hardworking and sharp. More than anything, Thatcher seemed determined to turn the country around. 'I can't bear Britain in decline,' she would soon tell an interviewer. 'I just can't.'

Victorian splendour

Each day, Thatcher was reminded that Britain had not always struggled like this. Built during the Victorian era (1837–1901), the Parliament buildings around her seemed to prove it. Two gigantic towers glistened in the winter sun. Inside, gold-framed paintings showed great battles from the past. And then there was the sheer scale of it all: long corridors, tall arches, towering spires. Everything projected such strength, wealth, confidence.

Thatcher admired the Victorian era. Growing up, she had often sat at her grandmother's feet, listening to stories about her life as a Victorian girl. She had spent hours in her family's small shop, where she was expected to work hard – just like a Victorian child. In an interview, she later said:

> I was brought up by a Victorian grandmother. You were taught to work jolly hard, you were taught to improve yourself, you were taught self-reliance, you were taught to live within your income. You were taught selfrespect, you were taught tremendous pride in your country.
>
> Adapted from an interview on the radio programme *The Decision Makers* (IRN), April 1983

How could Britain become strong and prosperous again? Thatcher often wondered. Perhaps part of the answer lay in her grandmother's childhood stories. Perhaps, if the British people became more like their Victorian forefathers, they could drag their country out of this hole.

Britain's golden age?

Not everyone agreed. Some pointed out that the Victorian era had been a time of great inequality in society, with terrible conditions for the poor. Had Margaret Thatcher not read the novels of Charles Dickens?

Thatcher dismissed these arguments defiantly. 'The Victorian age has been very badly treated in socialist propaganda,' she told businessmen in a speech in 1976. Victorian inventions and factories had once made Britain great, she insisted. 'We can hardly afford to **denigrate** them.'

To her, the Victorian era was a golden age in Britain's history. And she believed it held the key to Britain's future, too.

Your enquiry

In speeches and interviews, Margaret Thatcher often spoke warmly about the Victorian era – even though she lived many decades later. In this enquiry, you will learn how she viewed the Victorians: what exactly did she have in mind when she spoke about Britain's past?

The Coronation of Queen Victoria *(1839). How does it contrast with this photograph of Britain in 1979 shown opposite?*

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Harsh medicine

In spring 1979, Margaret Thatcher is on the move. She visits hospitals in Wales. She gives speeches in Birmingham. She laughs with farmers in the countryside. Camera crews follow her wherever she goes. Nervous excitement is in the air. On 3 May, there will be an election.

The outcome feels uncertain. Prime Minister Callaghan promises stability with Labour. Margaret Thatcher promises sweeping change with the Conservatives. On Election Day, nearly 30 million voters make their choice. For the first time ever, the results are broadcast live on television.

The Conservatives win. Margaret Thatcher will become Prime Minister. She will be the first woman to hold the position. When she arrives at 10 Downing Street, she stands out in her blue blazer and skirt. As she walks through the black door, some people cheer. Others boo.

Victorian inspiration

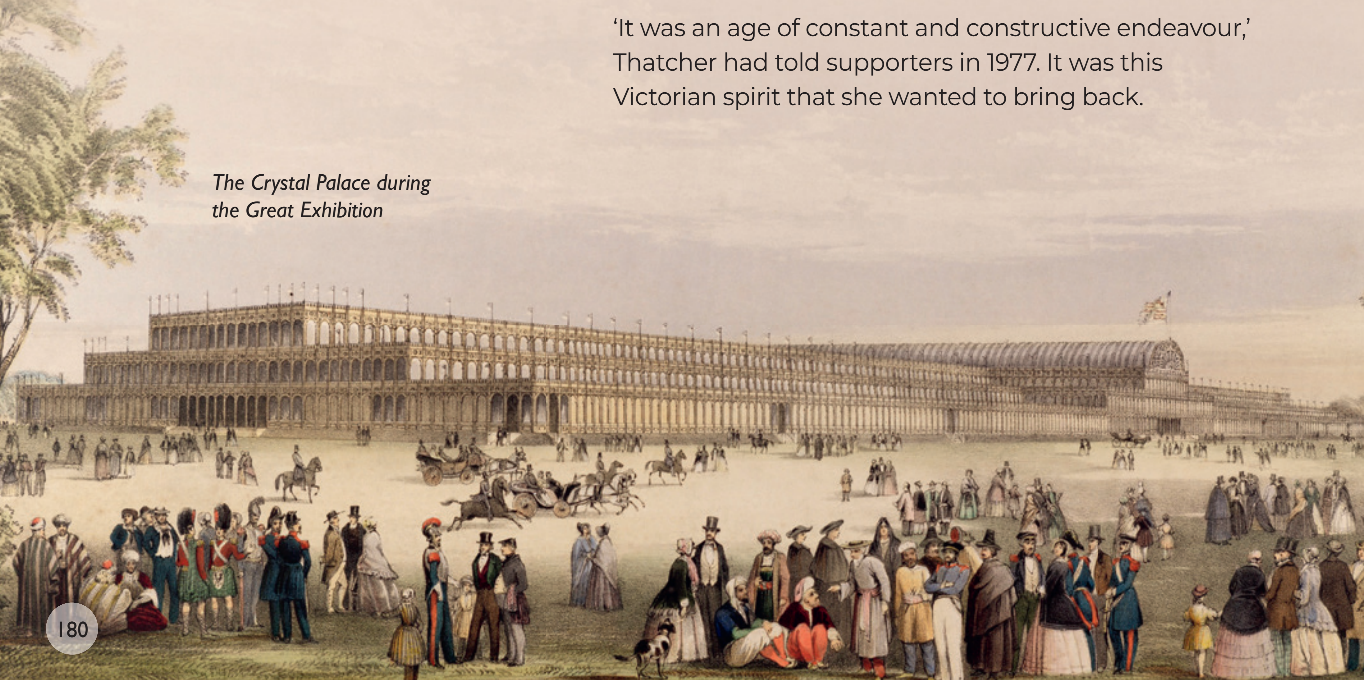
Within days, more than 13,000 letters arrived to congratulate Margaret Thatcher. Despite this, she knew that difficult years lay ahead. Thatcher had promised sweeping changes, and not everyone would like them. In a reply to one admirer, she wrote: 'The battle has now begun.'

Thatcher wanted to make Britain strong and prosperous again, just as it had been in Victorian times. Back then, great inventors had built towering bridges and glass palaces. Busy factories had churned out textiles and steel. Merchants had struck deals and shipped goods across oceans. 'We used to be famous as a nation of shopkeepers and the workshop of the world,' Thatcher had told businessmen in 1975. 'We must get our reputation back.'

But this would not be easy. Indeed, Thatcher believed that something important needed to change within the British people. They had to become more like their Victorian forefathers – but how?

Thatcher had a plan. In Victorian times, the government had stayed mostly out of people's lives. There had been almost no welfare state either. This had made the Victorians hardy, independent and confident, she believed. Without government support, there had been no choice but to stand on one's own two feet.

'It was an age of constant and constructive endeavour,' Thatcher had told supporters in 1977. It was this Victorian spirit that she wanted to bring back.



The Crystal Palace during the Great Exhibition

Do-it-yourself nation

Thatcher soon made sweeping changes. Payments for the unemployed were reduced. Instead, Thatcher offered unemployed people help to start their own businesses. Building plans for new council homes were stopped. In an interview, she explained: 'I think too many people have been given to understand, "I have a problem, it is the government's job to cope with it!" or, "I am homeless, the government must house me!"'

Thatcher and her ministers believed these changes would also reduce inflation. They believed that reducing the amount of money that the government spent around the country would mean that each pound would become more valuable and prices would drop. Thatcher also made it more expensive to borrow money. She hoped this would make people thriftier.

Trade unions and opposition MPs were appalled, but Thatcher was undeterred. She had become Prime Minister with one aim, she said: to change Britain 'from a give-it-to-me, to a do-it-yourself nation.'

March for Jobs

Thatcher's changes soon began to bite. Many people sighed in relief as inflation finally came down. But not everyone was happy. Unable to borrow money, businesses dismissed workers to save costs. Old shipyards, steel factories and car plants went bankrupt and closed. The number of unemployed people climbed, almost doubling within two years: from 1.4 to 2.5 million.

Unease and anger spread. Riots erupted in poor neighbourhoods. In May 1981, hundreds of unemployed people marched across the country, from Liverpool to London. Waving large banners and chanting demands, they called it the 'People's March for Jobs'. Bishops prayed for them. Musicians held a large 'Rock for Jobs' concert in support.

The protestors arrived in London after four weeks, carrying a petition. Signed by over 250,000 voters, it urged Margaret Thatcher to change course. Even her own colleagues grew concerned. But Thatcher remained convinced: her changes were needed to make Britain strong and prosperous again.

'Yes, the medicine is harsh,' she said in an interview. 'But the patient requires it.'

Step 1

How did Margaret Thatcher view the Victorian era? Write a summary. You can start like this: 'Margaret Thatcher viewed the Victorians as driven and independent, not helpless and needy.'

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Rule, Britannia

On 2 April 1982, Margaret Thatcher wakes from restless sleep. Only hours earlier, terrible warnings had reached her from across the ocean. She still hopes that they will not come true.

The day is tense. Time creeps by in nervous silence. Then, at lunchtime, an adviser finally brings the dreaded news. His voice is quiet and tense. Britain is under attack, he says.

The Falklands

On 2 April 1982, Argentina invaded the Falkland Islands, a British territory in the South Atlantic Ocean. The Falklands' British governor and soldiers were quickly defeated. Now Argentina's flag fluttered over the islands.

Wind-swept and barren, the Falklands were one of the last remnants of the British Empire. Britain had colonised them back in 1833, establishing settlements along penguin-filled shores. By 1982, around 1,800 British people still lived there.

For weeks, Thatcher had heard rumours that Argentina might attack. General Galtieri, the Argentinian dictator, wanted to show strength. In speeches, he had promised his people to conquer the nearby 'Islas Malvinas', as they called them. Now he was following through.

Going to war

Just before 11 a.m., Thatcher's car and police escort arrived back at 10 Downing Street. For three hours, she led emergency meetings to decide Britain's response.

Some ministers were cautious. It would be an enormous risk to strike back, they said. What if Britain lost? The Falklands were 8,000 miles away. Would it not be better to negotiate?

Thatcher disagreed. To her, Argentina's invasion was an insult. During the Victorian era, would other countries have dared to provoke Britain like this? Back then, the British Empire had ruled millions. It had been so vast that people called it 'the empire on which the sun never sets'.

How could Britain accept humiliation now? What would other nations think? Thatcher's decision was firm: Britain would go to war.

Fighting at sea and in the sky

Three days later, on 5 April, a British fleet set sail from Portsmouth. Soldiers' families hugged and cried as the enormous warships disappeared on the horizon. It would take them three weeks to reach the Falklands.

Meanwhile, reporters gathered outside 10 Downing Street. 'What if Britain loses the war?' a TV reporter asked Margaret Thatcher. 'What if your plans fail?'

'Failure?' Thatcher shot back. 'Do you remember what Queen Victoria once said? "Failure – the possibilities do not exist."'

Bitter fighting broke out when Britain's fleet reached the Falklands. British and Argentinian jets duelled over the islands, twisting through the skies. Britain's HMS *Sheffield* was struck and lost at sea. Sailors clung to rafts as their warships sank or burned. Hundreds drowned when a British submarine torpedoed an Argentinian vessel.

The Royal Navy in the Atlantic Ocean at the time of the Falklands War.

Meanwhile, debates raged in Parliament as the war dragged on. 'Stop this nineteenth-century gunboat diplomacy,' said one Labour MP. 'This is 1982, not 1902,' said another. 'The Prime Minister cannot act like a latter-day Queen Victoria.'

For weeks, Thatcher barely slept.

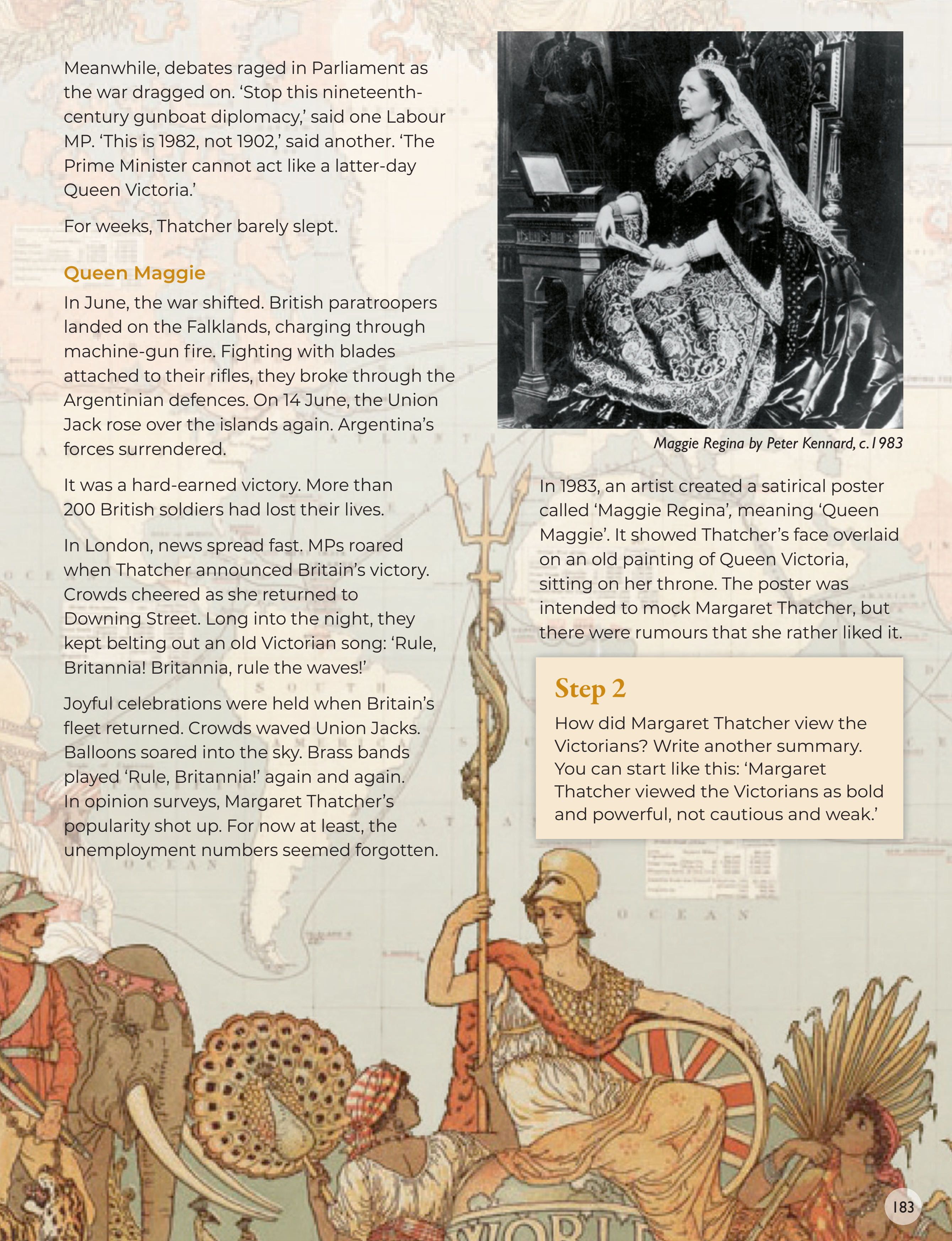
Queen Maggie

In June, the war shifted. British paratroopers landed on the Falklands, charging through machine-gun fire. Fighting with blades attached to their rifles, they broke through the Argentinian defences. On 14 June, the Union Jack rose over the islands again. Argentina's forces surrendered.

It was a hard-earned victory. More than 200 British soldiers had lost their lives.

In London, news spread fast. MPs roared when Thatcher announced Britain's victory. Crowds cheered as she returned to Downing Street. Long into the night, they kept belting out an old Victorian song: 'Rule, Britannia! Britannia, rule the waves!'

Joyful celebrations were held when Britain's fleet returned. Crowds waved Union Jacks. Balloons soared into the sky. Brass bands played 'Rule, Britannia!' again and again. In opinion surveys, Margaret Thatcher's popularity shot up. For now at least, the unemployment numbers seemed forgotten.



Maggie Regina by Peter Kennard, c.1983

In 1983, an artist created a satirical poster called 'Maggie Regina', meaning 'Queen Maggie'. It showed Thatcher's face overlaid on an old painting of Queen Victoria, sitting on her throne. The poster was intended to mock Margaret Thatcher, but there were rumours that she rather liked it.

Step 2

How did Margaret Thatcher view the Victorians? Write another summary. You can start like this: 'Margaret Thatcher viewed the Victorians as bold and powerful, not cautious and weak.'

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Victorian values

In summer 1983, Margaret Thatcher zooms across the country. Crowds cheer and boo as her helicopter lands in fields and factory yards. Her admirers call her the 'Iron Lady' and wave Union Jacks. Her opponents chant, 'Maggie, Maggie, Maggie, out, out, out!'

Soon, they can all have their say. On 9 June, there will be another election.

Unemployment is still high, but inflation has tumbled. Thatcher's dramatic victory in the Falklands has won her new admirers, too. When the votes are counted, the results are not close. The Conservatives win a landslide victory. Margaret Thatcher remains Prime Minister.

Past wisdom

With a crushing election victory behind her, Thatcher was determined to make even more sweeping changes. To keep voters on her side, however, she would need to shape her message carefully.

Ever since the 1983 election campaign, Thatcher had been talking about the Victorian era more than ever. In interview after interview, she used the same phrase: Victorian values. 'Living within your income, thrift, self-reliance, personal responsibility,' she explained on TV. 'All of those things were very characteristic of Victorian times, and I think we could do with more of those now.'

Perhaps Thatcher was thinking back to thrifty shopkeepers who never took a day off work, such as her grandmother and parents. Perhaps she imagined Victorian housewives, polishing the family silver in their neat homes.

Either way, her words sparked controversy. 'Victorian Britain was a place where a few got rich and most got hell,' one Labour politician shot back. 'The "Victorian Values" that ruled were cruelty, misery, drudgery, squalor and ignorance.'

But Thatcher's supporters did not see it that way. For them, Victorian values sounded reassuring. Thatcher seemed to say that she was not pushing them into an uncertain future. On the contrary: she was guiding Britain back to its golden age. 'Those were the values when our country became great,' Thatcher insisted in a TV interview.

Sweeping change

Thatcher's new changes came quickly. At this time, many coal mines were owned by the government. Thatcher now announced that they would be closed. The mines were losing money, she said, and should not rely on government support.

This painting, Many Happy Returns of the Day (1856), by the artist William Powell Frith, presented the idealised home life of a Victorian family. What details can you spot?

Police struggle against striking miners outside Parliament, June 1984

Fearing for their jobs, thousands of coal miners went on strike. Thatcher sent the police to keep coal deliveries running. In South Yorkshire, 6,000 policemen chased striking miners through a field. Officers on horseback charged the crowds, swinging batons. Hundreds were arrested.

More changes followed. In 1986, Thatcher swept away old trading rules. Giant international banks could now buy up British firms. Computers made trading faster and more global, too. Floods of money poured into London from abroad. Everything happened so fast that people called it the 'Big Bang'.

All the while, Thatcher assured voters that sweeping change was needed, that her plans would make Britain strong and prosperous again. Many agreed. In 1987, Margaret Thatcher won another election, the third in a row.

Thatcher's legacy

Margaret Thatcher governed Britain until 1990, becoming its longest-serving Prime Minister in modern times.

In April 1989, a popular magazine, the *Radio Times*, marked her tenth year in power. The front cover showed a Thatcher-lookalike dressed as Britannia, a national symbol from Victorian times – complete with a plumed helmet and Union-Jack shield. But had Thatcher really led Britain into a new Victorian age?

Some historians suggest that Thatcher's changes made Britain less like the Victorian era, not more. Thousands of factories and over a hundred coal mines closed during her time as Prime Minister. Traditional British firms disappeared during the 'Big Bang'. Rather than being the 'workshop of the world', Britain became a **deindustrialised** country: by 1990, most people worked in services such as banking.

Some historians have therefore described Margaret Thatcher's interpretation of the past as selective. They suggest that she clearly admired some aspects of the Victorian era – certain people, places, values – but perhaps did not think quite as much about others. Can you explain what they mean?

Step 3

Write another summary. You can start like this: 'Margaret Thatcher viewed the Victorians as successful and honourable.'

Shaping your answer

In this enquiry, you have learned about Margaret Thatcher and her interpretation of the past. Using your notes, explain how she viewed the Victorians. When Thatcher spoke about the Victorian era, what sorts of people, places, values and institutions did she have in mind?

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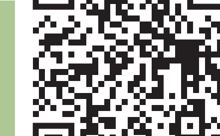

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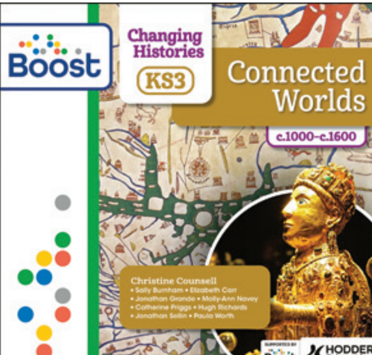

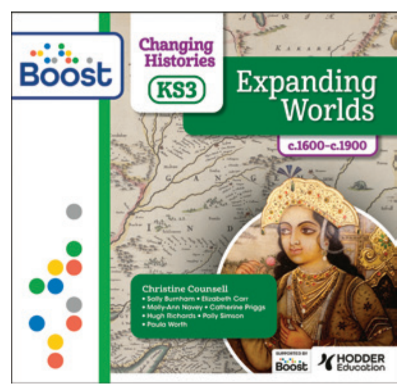

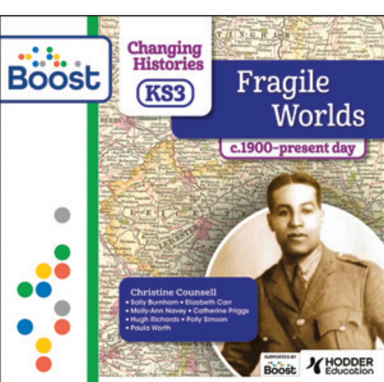

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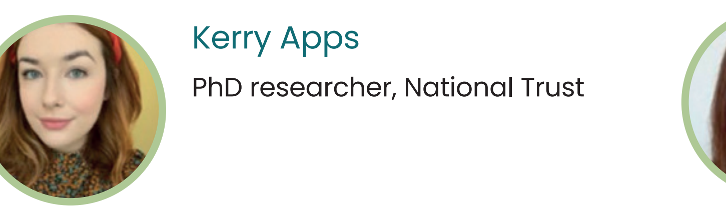

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