

# The Good Book Guide

REACTION AND REVOLUTION: RUSSIA 1894-1924. viii + 184 pp. Index. BOLSHEVIK AND STALINIST RUSSIA 1918-1956. viii + 192 pp. Index. Both by Michael Lynch and both third editions in the Hodder Murray - Access to History series, 2005. £8.99 each pbk

Michael Lynch has produced two excellent books, third editions in the well-known Access to History series. They have been of great use both to me as an AS/A2 teacher and to my students and many bought themselves a personal copy. They are well set out and easy to follow. Important questions are outlined and all key terms are defined, allowing easier independent learning - this is a feature new to the third editions. Both books have in-depth glossaries. Clear summary diagrams are provided for each key question and illustrate well how main issues link. This is always something students struggle with at first when they make the big jump up to AS level.

Where the third edition has excelled itself is the inclusion of relevant sourcework practice and AS and A2 questions and exam tips are given for all three boards - AQA, Edexcel, OCR. On top of this are excellent summaries of key historical debates surrounding key questions, something many of my students struggle with at first. Chapter 6, for example, of *Reaction and Revolution*, guides you through interpretations of Lenin and then the Revolution itself.

*Bolshevik and Stalinist Russia* has been revised for this edition so that it is directed even more on current



*Already doomed? Nicholas II in 1910*

specifications. Many books, for example, stop at the outbreak of the Great Patriotic War whereas it was good to see the book covered both the events of the war and its impact as well as a chapter on Stalin's role in the outbreak of the Cold War. The text, as outlined earlier, is easy to follow. Chapters are broken down into manageable chunks making discussion of key points easier. The chapters convey the main points quickly allowing wider reading to develop a full knowledge of the subject. These books cover substantial ground, are very easy to follow and teachers may find new areas of debate.

Joseph Wilkinson

BRITAIN 1929-98 by Christopher Rowe. Heinemann - Advanced History series. iv + 156 pp. Index. £9.99 pbk

Many textbooks used to be a pleasure to read, some from cover to cover. This book reflects the changes that have taken

place in 16+ History teaching during the last two decades. Instead of a continuous flow of prose we now have headings, subheadings, bullet points, short paragraphs and simple sentences geared toward providing tailor-made answers to specific AS/A2 questions.

Christopher Rowe's book is typical of the genre. Notwithstanding these caveats, having used with satisfaction *Italian Unification 1820-71* in the Heinemann Advanced History series, this title was opened with a degree of eagerness. It claims to examine in detail the factors that led to changes but it is neither advanced History nor an in-depth analysis. Here is an example from the A2 section: 'Would he [Hitler] have been stopped ... if Britain and France threatened war over Czechoslovakia in 1938? If so, Chamberlain's policy was disastrous (sic); but if not, if the cause of war was Hitler, then Chamberlain cannot be blamed too much' (page 67). Apart from facile analysis, this passage illustrates the poor proof reading, seen in numerous spelling errors. Punctuation follows its own rules and I have failed to fathom this sentence: 'Churchill's success in became the hero of Britain's "Finest Hour" seemed to prove the futility of all Chamberlain's policies' (page 71).

Textbook buyers expect a series to have a fair degree of consistency. A series can be likened to a chain: it is judged by the weakest link. This title has done no favours to Heinemann Advanced History.

Peter Wiser

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