



Families of Russia

Teacher's Guide

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Russia Rural Script

It's 6 o'clock in the morning and grandmother's already busy feeding our animals. We live in a small village called Retkino. (Red'kino with soft d) My name is Nicolai and I'm 10 years old.

When the weather gets really cold, we're glad we don't have to go outside to take care of our animals.

After grandpa died, grandma was lonely, so she asked mom and dad and my brother and me to come and live with her. We have a house in another village but for now we don't use it. Living here is really good for us because mom and dad have jobs, and Grandma takes care of running the house while my parents are away at work.

Grandma wakes me up at 7. By the time I get dressed mom and dad have already left for work.

Grandma usually makes my breakfast. I'm having a sweet biscuit and a cup of tea with honey in it. This honey is from the beehives we keep in our backyard.

The cat's fixing his hair, and I do the same with mine. Grandma gives me some money to buy a snack at school. It takes me about twenty minutes to walk to school.

I go to a public school, so my parents don't have to pay for me to go there. My brother, Andrei, used to go to my school when he was my age. He's 18 now, so he goes to a trade school where he learns how to make and fix things.

I'm in 5th grade. We have 23 kids in our class. Our first class is math. Everyone in Russia thinks education is important, and our teacher says 98%, or almost all Russians, can read and write.

When we need a break we do some exercises. Then we're ready to settle down and concentrate again.

While I'm in class my mom's at work in the hospital. If the hospital building needs to have something fixed, they call mom and she arranges to have the work done. She makes sure the building and equipment are always working, so the doctors and nurses can just help sick people get well.

My dad's an electrician. When he's not working on a job, he reads the latest safety regulations in the office. Today Dad's going out to change a burned out street light. To climb up the pole, he uses special clamps that fasten to his shoes. For safety, he fastens a belt around himself and the pole. If the clamps break, the safety belt will

help him hold onto the pole. Dad says this wouldn't be a good job for a person who's afraid of heights!

This pole is near our house, so Dad goes home to have lunch with grandma. Whenever grandma fixes smoked fish she has interested friends watching her. Our cats, Mur'ka and Sen'ya, think it's time for them to eat, too. Grandma gives Senya the fish's tail.

Dad finishes lunch with a cup of tea. He sweetens it with jam that grandma made with strawberries from our garden.

When I come home from school, I take off my shoes. Here in Russia we always wear slippers in the house and leave our outdoor shoes in the front hall.

Lunch is almost ready. I'm having rabbit, bread, potatoes, fish and fruit juice called sok. We have potatoes with almost every meal.

After lunch I do my eye exercises. A muscle in one of my eyes is weak, which makes it hard for me to read. Wearing glasses helps, but I still need to do these exercises to help make the eye muscle stronger. Grandma covers my strong eye when I read so the weak eye gets used to working harder. I exercise my eye for half an hour a day.

My big treat after school is to ride my motorcycle. I look forward to it all day.

While I'm riding Andrei and dad go to the grocery store. Andrei usually does the grocery shopping. Andrei pays for the groceries with rubles. The clerk would rather add with the abacus than with her calculator. The abacus has been used for thousands of years. Some people can do math on an abacus faster than on a computer!

When they get back, dad cuts firewood with his chain saw. This wood isn't for heating our house, because houses in our village are heated from one big furnace that burns a kind of coal called peat. Pipes carry the heat to all the houses in the village. Mom says most new villages in Russia heat homes this way.

Dad's cutting wood to heat our family's banya, which is like a steam bath or sauna. Most people go to banya every week. Some people go to public banyas, but we have our own. Getting it ready is a big job.

It takes a couple of hours for the fire to heat water above the wood stove. The fire also heats an oven filled with rocks. When we go to banya we'll pour water on the hot rocks to make steam.

While Dad waits for the water to heat, he works in our greenhouse. The sun heats the greenhouse so it's warmer than outside. In very early spring, when the weather's still too cold for plants to grow in the garden, we plant vegetable seeds in little pots in the

warm greenhouse. The plants can grow here until later in the spring, when it's warm enough to plant them in the garden. The greenhouse gives plants more time to grow, which is important because Russia has short summers and long, cold winters.

My parents say most families in Russia have a garden to raise their own food. A lot of city people have small houses and gardens in the country where they can go during their vacation and on weekends. Families enjoy spending time outside and working together in the garden.

Grandma says having a garden is especially important now, because a lot of change is taking place in our country and it's not always easy to buy things in stores. Russia used to be a communist country called the USSR. Since 1991 Russia has been changing into a democratic country. That's a hard thing to do in a short time. Grandma says the changes made life pretty hard for a while, but she thinks things are getting better.

Our family doesn't have to buy very much food because we have our own meat and eggs, and we grow our own fruit and vegetables. Cabbages and potatoes will last all winter if we keep them cool. We store our cabbages in the corner of our garage, where they'll be cold but won't freeze. Under the garage is a secret chamber ... well it's not really secret...but it's a chamber... where we store our potatoes.

We can tomatoes and several different kinds of fruit that we've grown. Canning means heating the food to kill any germs or bacteria and then sealing the jar so no air can get in. Food can last several years that way.

We try to make things instead of buying them whenever we can. Andrei built his own tool called a lathe that he uses to shape things from wood. The lathe spins the wood around while Andrei uses a chisel to cut the wood. Andrei made this candleholder last month at his school.

Making things from wood is a tradition in our area of Russia. This craftsman is making a wooden bowl on a lathe. He cuts away wood from the outside of the block to make a round, bowl shape. Next he cuts a bottom into the bowl. Then he hollows out to make the inside of the bowl. If he takes out too much wood, he'll go right through the side of the bowl. Now he's fitting a piece of wood for a lid. It's time to cut off the bowl. The craftsman will make several more bowls from the wood that's still left on the lathe.

Painters decorate the bowls and lots of other wooden things, like boxes and icons. I think painting icons like this would be the hardest. Icons are religious pictures painted on small flat pieces of wood. I have an icon of St. Nicolai, who I was named after, hanging over my desk in my bedroom. Grandma says St. Nicolai will watch over me and protect me.

I usually have about an hour and a half of homework a night. When I get stuck, grandma helps me with my math. She's really good at it. She says it's because she's learned math four times:....Once when she was a girl, then when she helped my mom, again when she helped Andrei, and now when she helps me!

When I finish my homework it's time for our banya. Usually Dad, Andrei and I go first. Then Grandma and Mom. Dad says some people go to a public banya at the same time every week with friends, and it's almost like a club. We pour water on the hot stones to make lots of steam. Dad says using birch branches like this gets rid of poisons in our bodies, so the banya helps keep us from getting sick. Before we get out, we soap up and rinse off. You wouldn't believe how hot it is in there! Sometimes we get so hot, that in the winter we run out and jump in the snow!

The banya has made me so relaxed and sleepy that I can hardly stay awake for dinner.

When we finish eating, I go right to bed. Goodnight!

Russia Urban Script

It's early morning here in Nizhny Novgorod. Our city was built here, where the Volga and the Oka Rivers meet, almost 800 years ago. In early times, when there were no railroads and not even many roads, people used boats to travel and trade. So most very old cities like ours were built along rivers, lakes or ocean harbors.

My name is Anya and I'm 7 years old. I live here with my Mom, Dad and 11 year old brother, Dima.

Today mom wakes me up at 7 so I can be at school by 8. Dima can sleep later because he doesn't go to school until this afternoon.

In Russian schools kids often go to school half days, so that one group can go in the morning and another group in the afternoon. That's because we don't have enough classrooms or teachers right now. I study during the first shift, and Dima studies the second shift. His classes usually start in the afternoon and last till 5.

It's October and the weather's getting cold, so I wear several layers of clothes. Many students in Russia wear uniforms to school.

I'm taking medicine because I've had a bad cough for over a week.

We usually have sausage and cheese sandwiches and tea for breakfast. Mom puts water into a small teapot with the tea leaves. She lets it sit for a few minutes before she pours the tea into each cup.

She can add water to make it the way each of us likes it. We like to sweeten our tea with jam.

After breakfast Mom walks me to school, which is about 15 minutes away. I go to a public school Number 165 with about 800 students. I'm in the 1st grade and there are 21 kids in my class.

Our first class is Russian. Today we're practicing writing. Russian uses the Cyrillic alphabet. Some Cyrillic letters look a lot like the Roman alphabet that's used in many other parts of the world.

Our teacher asks us to draw a picture for the words cat, whale, and a girl named Katya. In Russian all these words start with "K".

When the teacher sees we're tired we take a break and have some fun. We're singing about exercising our hands and body.

Then we have a snack in the school cafeteria. We're having bread, hot cereal and coffee with milk.

While I'm in school, dad's at work. He's just gotten an emergency call about a broken water pump. Dad's an electrician for the city's water department. The water that comes from our faucets has to be pumped from the river, then pumped to the treatment plant where it's cleaned, and then pumped to our homes.

If a pump breaks down, some people might not have water in their homes, which Dad says could be very serious if there's a fire. So my dad makes sure someone repairs the pumps quickly. That means that he can be called in the middle of the night to help get a pump running again.

Dad says anyone who works with electricity has to know what they're doing. You can't see the electricity that's going through the wires, and if you touch the wrong wire you can get burned or even killed.

At home mom's washing clothes. She'll hang them to dry in the bathroom or on our balcony. While the clothes are washing, mom goes to the grocery store about 15 minutes away. She likes to shop everyday so that the food she buys will be fresh.

Today she's getting bread, fish, and chicken.

When I get home from school at 2, I like to draw till it's time for gymnastics, which I have twice a week. Mom and I take a bus to the gym.

Mom says we're lucky to have such a good public transportation. We can go almost anywhere in Russia by bus, subway, or train so most people don't need cars. She says the Moscow subway is one of the most modern and busiest in the world. It carries 8 million people a day, more people than all the people that live in New York City! Grandpa told Mom it was built extra-far underground so that it could also be used as a bomb shelter. Russia has been in a lot of wars, and during the cold war everyone was afraid nuclear weapons might be used, maybe even by mistake.

The gym's a busy place. This is a ballet class. My teacher says some of the world's best ballet dancers are Russian. Russians love reading, music and dancing. You've probably heard of some of our writers, like Tolstoy, and composers like Tchaikovsky, and artists like Chagall.

Some of us work individually. I'm warming up before I start my gymnastics lesson. To be accepted at this school you have to do some exercises like tests to see if the teachers think you can learn to be a good gymnast or dancer. Once we're accepted, lessons are free.

A coach helps me learn the exercises. Then it's up to me to practice until I can do them by myself. Here I'm learning on a balance beam that's only a few inches from the floor. Once I have the idea, I practice on the higher balance beam. My coach says that to learn new movements, my body and mind need to repeat them over and over. So the main thing is to keep trying and not get discouraged because it takes a long time.

When we get home mom fixes dinner. We usually have either a cabbage soup called schi, or beet soup called borsht, some kind of meat like chicken or fish, potatoes, and tea.

I make lace patterns with cut paper while I wait for dinner.

We eat at 6 o'clock.

Usually after dinner Dima and I play on rings and bars that Dad put up for us in the living room. Sometimes Dad sings and plays his guitar for us.

Mom says I get my musical ability from dad. I take piano lessons twice a week on days when I don't have gymnastics, so I practice for a few minutes every night.

A little before 9 it's time to put away my things and make up my bed.

We keep my blankets inside my bed, which is a sofa during the day.

I read a story to mom every night. Then it's time to go to sleep.
Good night!

Glossary

Abacus: An instrument with beads to help in arithmetic

Ballet: A form of entertainment where people dance to musical accompaniment

Beehives: Homes for bees.

Communist: A system of government that believes that most property should be owned by all of the people or the state.

Composer: A person who writes music so that it can be played

Democratic: A system of government that believes that most people should determine who rules them

Electricity: a form of power that can be harnessed to produce heat, light and motion

Guitar: A stringed musical instrument

Gymnastics: A sport that involves movement on bars, rings as well as other equipment and floor exercises.

Nuclear weapons: Weapons that utilize the great power of atomic forces.

Peat: a mineral resource that can be burned to give off heat.

Pump: A machine that pushes or pulls liquids or gases

Rubles: The Russian money

Subway: an underground railroad

Discussion After Viewing

- Ask each child to list some of the similarities and differences between their family and school and those in the video.
- If children have friends or relatives from Russia, ask the children to interview them and bring in items, photos, and stories about them.
- Invite someone from Russia to talk with the class about their life in Russia (what was school like?), play a traditional instrument, or tell a Russian story.
- Russia has changed greatly in the last few years. Ask your Russian visitor to view “Families of Russia” ahead of time so he or she can compare and contrast the lives of these families with their own when they were growing up in Russia.

Questions

1. Why does Russian have short summers and long winters?
2. Why do Russians use the Cyrillic alphabet?
3. Why do many people in Russia have a garden to raise their own food?
4. How old is Russia?
5. How big is Russia?
6. Why do many people have a negative image of Russia?

Answers to Questions

1. Why does Russia have short summers and long winters?

Russia lies to the north in the same latitudes as Canada. In the northern hemisphere winter the axis of the Earth tilts away from the Sun, so the further north the land the less exposure to the sun. This makes their winters longer. The curve of the earth is more pronounced in the north thus the amount of sunlight it receives is less during the winter than parts of the northern hemisphere further from the North Pole..

2. Why do Russians use the Cyrillic alphabet?

In the early part of the history of Russia, the principal cultural influence was the Byzantine Empire, the heirs of the Eastern Roman Empire. The Byzantine use the Greek alphabet from which the Russian Cyrillic evolved.

3. Why do many people in Russia have a garden to raise their own food?

Many city people have a country house where they go for the weekend. There they can grow their own vegetables, or even raise chickens and rabbits.

4. How old is Russia?

Russia evolved about 1200 years ago in the European part of the country

5. How big is Russia?

Russia is the largest country in the world. It is approximately twice the size of the United States or China or Brazil.

6. Why do many people have a negative image of Russia?

Russia was a great imperial power during the last 400 years. They have conquered the lands of the Muslim and Turkic peoples to their south, taken the lands from the Poles in the west and the native people of Siberia to the east. One of her most famous rulers was called Ivan the Terrible for his tyrannical and bloody reign. In czarist times, there was the persecutions of the Jews, and the oppression of the

serfs. The Russians fought a ferocious civil war during and after the Bolshevik revolution. Massacres, famines and war killed 15 million people. After Joseph Stalin came to power, the Soviet Union would be ruled by a paranoid, homicidal tyrant. In his collectivization of agriculture, hundreds of thousands to millions of peasants were starved. He had millions of innocent people shot and sent to the concentration camps. At the beginning of the Second World War, Stalin invaded Poland together with Nazi Germany. He ordered the massacre of twenty thousand Polish officers and intellectuals. During the Second World War, the Soviet forces lost millions of soldiers because of the incompetence of Stalin. At the end of the war he had those Soviet soldiers captured by the Germans thrown into his prison camp. Also during the war, Stalin forced the relocation of thousands of Poles and other border nationalities; Tatars and other suspect nationalities. Many of those relocated died from disease and malnutrition. At the end of the Second World War, the vengeful Soviet forces responded to the cruelty perpetrated by the Nazi forces by similar war crimes on the civilian population of Germany. The countries of Eastern Europe lost their independence and were forced in the Soviet system with all its repression. A litany of arrests, torture, executions was visited on all those that the state deemed potentially subversive. Alexander Solzhenitzen, in his book the Gulag Archipelago detailed all the horrors of the prison camps in the Soviet state under Stalin.

After the war, Stalin authorized the North Koreans to invade the South, starting a war that cost millions of lives. After his death, the Hungarian people revolted against their Communist leaders, and the Soviet army invaded and crushed the uprising. In the 1980s, the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan and caused untold death and misery as millions were made homeless and refugees.

Today, Russia is engaged in a brutal war against the Chechen people, it is trying to subvert the government of Georgia and has engaged in armed intervention in that country.

Some Things We've Learned About Russia

(Please circle the correct answer).

1. T F Russian is the national language of Russia.
2. T F Most people in Russia live on farms.
3. T F Russia is on the continent of Europe and Asia.
4. T F Weather in most parts of Russia is hot.
5. T F Bread, cheese and potatoes is eaten often in Russia.
6. T F Russia's population has many ethnic groups
7. T F Very few Russians use technology.
8. T F In Russia, people appreciate the arts.
9. T F The official currency of Russia is the ruble.
- 10.T F Russia is a communist country.
- 11.T F Russia is a large country.
- 12.T F Russia has some of the best transportation systems in the world.
13. Do you think Russians are proud of their country?
14. Draw a series of pictures telling Nicolai or Anya's story. Try to include as much detail as you can remember from each part of the story.

Introduction

Russia is the largest country in the world. It is famous for the onion domes of the Kremlin fortress in Moscow, the vast tundra and taiga of Siberia, and the Bolshoi Ballet. It is the home of the poet Aleksandr Pushkin, the author Leo Tolstoy and the first space traveler Yuri Gagarin. Russia is emerging from the shadow of the Soviet Union and communism and is finding its way towards its future.

The Land

Russia is about twice the size of the United States or China. The barren arctic lands lie in the extreme north, followed by a belt of treeless tundra, which has an underground layer that is permanently frozen. Further south lies the taiga, a region of marshes and very extensive forest that cover half the land. In the southernmost third of the country, mixed forest dominate the western half while steppes dominate the east. The country is dominated by the huge Russian plain in the west, by the even larger West Siberian Plain to its east, the Central Siberian Plateau and the mountain ranges in the Far East and south.

The country is drained by 5 great rivers: the Ob-Irtysh, the Lena and the Yenisey run north through Siberia to the Arctic Ocean, while the Amur flows into the Pacific, and the Volga flows into the Caspian Sea.

The Climate

Russia's great size, its northerly position and the mountain ranges in the south and east determine to a great extent her climate. Rainfall decreases generally from the northwest to the east and south where the aridity makes agriculture difficult.

Temperatures generally decline as one moves from west to east and south to north. At every latitude, the temperature tend to lower than those of other places in the world. For example the average summer temperatures in the south of the country is 68 degrees Fahrenheit or 20 degrees Centigrade.

Plant and Animal Life

The taiga is the largest expanse of trees in the world and is the home of elk, bear, wolf and fox. Deer, squirrels live in the mixed forests while antelopes, the fox and marmots inhabit the steppes.

The People

82% of the population is Russian. More than 75 other ethnic groups also live in Russia. The most numerous of these are the Tatars and Chuvash who number about

3% of the population. The many linguistic groups include those from the Caucasus, Turkic speakers, Iranian, and Siberian.

Russians have a very well developed education system, practically everyone is literate. The country's standard of living belongs in the middle-income range, with wide differences in income. The elderly and those working in the countryside are generally very poor. The great majority of people have housing, use public transport to go to work, and get adequate food. A growing minority have been able to use the opportunities of the free markets to prosper. They are engaged in business for themselves and finding niches to help the former state owned firms and newly formed companies emulate Western business methods such as advertising, computerization, and financial services. Russia is still a major exporter of commodities like petroleum, natural gas, minerals and timber. It also exports arms, and little other manufactured goods.

History

Many diverse people have inhabited the lands of Russia for many thousands of years. Little evidence remains of large permanent settlements. It is believed that many nomadic people passed through the southern part of the country.

It is known that the East Slavs were moving south and east from the area of the present day Poland between the 4th and the 8th century of the Common Era. It is also known that that by the late 8th century, trade routes were established as far as the Volga river system by both Germanic traders from the northeast and by Muslim merchants from the south.

The history of Russia begins with coming of a Scandinavian people known as the Varangians, who crossed the Baltic Sea and landed in Eastern Europe. The leader of the Varangians was the semi legendary warrior Rurik, who led his people in 862 to conquer the town of Novgorod. Through conquests and alliances a large state was created centered about the Slavic city of Kiev. Kievan Rus declined as patterns of trade shifted in the eleventh century.

In the thirteenth century, the Mongols conquered most of southern Russia. The remaining northern principalities were unconquered but paid tribute. The Mongol state was known as the Empire of the Golden Horde and was administered by Turkic clan leaders of the steppe and Muslim merchants.

A period of disunity among the Russian principalities and weakness in the Mongol state led to the rise of Moscow in the early fifteenth century. Moscow slowly absorbed, conquered all the northern Russian principalities. A period of civil strife led to the election of a Romanov as a new tsar in the early seventeenth century. In the intervening period, the nobility gained control of the land and reduced the free peasants to serfdom.

It seems that at all times the emerging Russian state was in conflict with its neighbors, the Tatars, the Lithuanians, the Poles and the Ottoman Turks. The tsar along with the powerful boyar merchant and noble families often ruled Russia. The state even controlled the Russian Orthodox Church, which monopolized the press. The state and its bureaucracy controlled more and more of the resources of the country, whether commercial or industrial. The expansion brought war as well as great wealth and thus fed itself. It is during this period that Russia started diverging from its Western European neighbors. No collection of competing states could develop in the Russian plain, as no natural borders existed. No city-states survived to provide refuge to the serfs, to provide the rise of local autonomy and the development of self-rule. One's duty was to inform on those who broke the law, the penalty for failure being the same as for breaking the law. But the Russian state was able to trade for what it could not develop. Timber, furs, minerals went west and craftsmen and machinery came east.

By the end of Peter the Great's rule in the early eighteenth century, Russia was well integrated into the rest of the European intellectual world. It had an Academy of Science, and many foreigners staffed the Russian bureaucracy, bringing with them expertise in the sciences and engineering.

By the early nineteenth century, Russia became the preeminent land power in Europe, helping defeat Napoleon. But internally it lagged behind the West Europeans. The bureaucracy was in the main staffed by poorly educated officials. Ability was stifled by an emphasis on seniority in promotion. The bureaucracy answered to no independent judiciary, there was no free press, and thus corruption was rampant. Defeat in the Crimean War in 1856 at the hands of the English and the French led to calls for more reform. Serfdom was abolished, law courts were modeled after those of Western Europe, and elected assemblies at the provincial and county levels were introduced.

Still the revolutionary ideas from the United States and France led many to seek even greater democracy. Revolutionaries assassinated Alexander II in 1881. An unsteady balance existed in Russia, on the one hand the peasantry remained in poverty as their numbers grew and not enough industry developed to employ the surplus. At the same time the government strove to make itself more appealing to foreign investors, placing itself on the gold standard in 1897. A tremendous amount of investment came in. Yet the creation of a new industrial working class did not dissipate the pressures. This new class was like those around the world overworked and poorly paid. But there were few avenues for them to express their discontent, trade unions were forbidden and the landowning and business class dominated the elected assemblies.

The end of the monarchy was brought about by mismanagement and misrule. Defeat in the Russo-Japanese war in 1905 led to petitions for a popularly elected legislative assembly. One group of workers trying to submit the petitions was fired upon and 130 killed. This Bloody Sunday massacre led to creation of the Bolsheviks, a party committed to the overthrow of the monarchy. Desperate measures to give the franchise to all adults were adopted. The election brought about a highly polarized

legislature unable to carry out needed reforms. The tsar could not accept that he could be at most a figurehead. The half-modernized state performed poorly in the First World War and the government clumsily attempted to crush all dissent.

The Bolsheviks under Lenin and Trotsky organized the peasants and workers and overthrew the government. They emerged victorious in a bloody civil war with monarchists and anarchists and established the Soviet Union. After Lenin's death, Stalin then proceeded with a program of rapid industrialization using the agricultural surplus taken from the peasants who were forced into communes. He turned the apparatus of Communist Party into his personal command and emerged as a ruthless dictator. Despite his violent purges of the Communist Party and the officer corps, the starvation of the Ukrainian peasants, and his poor initial generalship, the courage and determination of the Russian people enabled Russia to emerge victorious in the Second World War. An estimated 40 million people died between First and Second World War.

The Soviet Union emerged as a superpower after the Second World War, striving against the United States and its allies to gather other countries into its camp. It reached its highest point in the mid 1970s, as its command economy was able to produce a tremendous amount of machinery, arms and apartments. By spending as much as 25% of its budget on the military, it was able to match the United States in military technology and nuclear arms. But the failure of the command economy to produce much in the way of innovations led to its decline. When the Soviet Union disintegrated in 1991, it had lagged behind the United States greatly in technology and standard of living.

Democratic elections were instituted. Ukraine, the Baltic States, and those in Central Asia and the Caucasus seceded from the Soviet Union. Poorly executed economic reforms left much of the industry in the hands of the managers. Many pensioners were impoverished. The legacy of the planned economy meant that the factories were often located in unsuitable locations or were designed for defense production and hence not economical. With the fragmentation of the Soviet Union, key parts of the industrial supply chain left Russia, and geared their output to Western markets. Political and monetary instability as well as reluctance to yield control to foreigners discouraged foreign investment.

Russia is slowly rebuilding and creating the institutions that underpin a modern economy. Under President Putin, Russia had wrested back control of the profitable mineral development industry providing the country the wherewithal's to finance its development. It is slowly developing its entrepreneurs and giving them the leeway to grow and prosper. A trickle of foreign investment has come in and the country is fostering closer links with the rest of the world. The rise in the price of petroleum and other commodities in early 2000s have lifted the output of Russian industry. Today Russia sits in an ambiguous position, unsure as to how to treat the world.

Websites

www.pbs.org/weta/faceofrussia/intro.html

Books

Celebrating Birthdays in Russia Ages 6-10

Russia the Land, the People, the Culture Grades 4~5

Russia in Pictures Grades 7~9

A Look At Russia Ages 4-8

Russia ABC Ages 5-11

Russia Q & A Grades 2~5

Activity 1

Make a Babushka Doll

Items needed

A large can, a medium can and a small can. Make sure the cans are opened and make sure that they can fit into each other easily. Teachers make sure there are not sharp edges.

Make papier-mache by stirring in 3-4 tablespoon of flour in 2 cups of warm water.

Cut newspaper into strips about 1 inch wide.

Dip the strips into the mix and stick onto the cans. Cover all surfaces with two layers of papier-mache. Leave to dry for a day. Decorate cans with color paints. They are usually decorated with a picture of girl with flower dress.

Activity 2

Have students find make a Russian cathedral with onion domes. Have them color in the onion domes and spires. You can look up “onion domes” on Yahoo or see this link
<http://members.tripod.com/~WOLFIELUC/rusdomes.html>



Recipes

Borscht

5 lb. beets with the tops
enough water to cover the beets at least 3 to 4 times their height
2-3 large onions
3 tablespoons salt
1/4 to 1/2 cup lemon juice depending on taste
1/4 cup honey (optional)

1. Cut off beet greens from the beets but leave about an inch or two of the stocks on top of the beets.
2. Scrub the beets thoroughly.
3. Put the beets in a large pot. Cover them with cold water-- fill the pot about 3/4 full with water. Bring the water to a boil. Boil this for about 15-25 minutes until the beets are cooked.
4. Remove the beets from the water. Pop the skins off the beets.
5. Keep the water. This is the beet juice.
6. Strain the beet juice through a cheesecloth sieve (there will be a few sand grains.) Remember to put a pot underneath.
7. Peel the onion.

Hint: The easiest way to peel an onion is to cut the onion in quarters. With the tip of the onion on the cutting board, take your knife and cut off a tiny portion off the tip on both ends, The onion peels slide off easily and you can use these onion peels in your chicken soup!

8. Use a food processor to grate the beets and onions.
9. Put the grated onion and beets into the pot with the strained beet juice. Bring to a quick boil. Add the salt, lemon juice and honey and simmer until the honey has dissolved.

Flag of Russia



Map of Russia



Geography

Location:

Northern Asia (the area west of the Urals is considered part of Europe), bordering the Arctic Ocean, between Europe and the North Pacific Ocean

Area:

total: 17,075,200 sq km

land: 16,995,800 sq km

water: 79,400 sq km

Area : approximately 1.8 times the size of the US

Land boundaries: 20,096.5 km

border countries: Azerbaijan 284 km, Belarus 959 km, China (southeast) 3,605 km, China (south) 40 km, Estonia 294 km, Finland 1,340 km, Georgia 723 km, Kazakhstan 6,846 km, North Korea 19 km, Latvia 217 km, Lithuania (Kaliningrad Oblast) 280.5 km, Mongolia 3,485 km, Norway 196 km, Poland (Kaliningrad Oblast) 232 km, Ukraine 1,576 km

Coastline: 37,653 km

Climate:

ranges from steppes in the south through humid continental in much of European Russia; subarctic in Siberia to tundra climate in the polar north; winters vary from cool along Black Sea coast to frigid in Siberia; summers vary from warm in the steppes to cool along Arctic coast

Terrain:

broad plain with low hills west of Urals; vast coniferous forest and tundra in Siberia; uplands and mountains along southern border regions

Elevation extremes:

lowest point: Caspian Sea -28 m

highest point: Gora El'brus 5,633 m

Natural resources:

wide natural resource base including major deposits of oil, natural gas, coal, and many strategic minerals, timber
note: formidable obstacles of climate, terrain, and distance hinder exploitation of natural resources

Land use:

arable land: 7.17%
permanent crops: 0.11%
other: 92.72% (2009)

Irrigated land: 46,000 sq km (2003)

Natural hazards:

permafrost over much of Siberia is a major impediment to development; volcanic activity in the Kuril Islands; volcanoes and earthquakes on the Kamchatka Peninsula; spring floods and summer/autumn forest fires throughout Siberia and parts of European Russia

Geography - note:

largest country in the world in terms of area but unfavorably located in relation to major sea lanes of the world; despite its size, much of the country lacks proper soils and climates (either too cold or too dry) for agriculture; Mount El'brus is Europe's tallest peak

People

Population:

140,041,094 (July 2009 est.)

Age structure:

0-14 years: 14.8%
15-64 years: 71.5%
65 years and over: 13.7% (2009 est.)

Median age:

total: 38.4 years

male: 35.2 years

female: 41.4 years (2008 est.)

Population growth rate:

-0.467% (2009 est.)

Birth rate:

11.1 births/1,000 population (2009 est.)

Death rate:

16.06 deaths/1,000 population (2009 est.)

Net migration rate:

0.28 migrant(s)/1,000 population (2009 est.)

Sex ratio:

total population: 0.86 male(s)/female (2009 est.)

Infant mortality rate:

total: 10.56 deaths/1,000 live births

Life expectancy at birth:

total population: 65.94 years

Total fertility rate:

1.41 children born/woman (2009 est.)

Nationality:

noun: Russian(s)

adjective: Russian

Ethnic groups:

Russian 79.8%, Tatar 3.8%, Ukrainian 2%, Bashkir 1.2%, Chuvash 1.1%, other or unspecified 12.1% (2002 census)

Religions:

Russian Orthodox 15-20%, Muslim 10-15%, other Christian 2% (2006 est.)

note: estimates are of practicing worshipers; Russia has large populations of non-practicing believers and non-believers, a legacy of over seven decades of Soviet rule

Languages:

Russian, many minority languages

Literacy:

definition: age 15 and over can read and write
total population: 99.4% (2002 census)

Government

Country name:

conventional long form: Russian Federation

conventional short form: Russia

local long form: Rossiyskaya Federatsiya

local short form: Rossiya

former: Russian Empire, Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic

Government type:

Federation

Capital: Moscow

geographic coordinates: 55 45 N, 37 35 E

time difference: UTC+3 (8 hours ahead of Washington, DC during Standard Time)

daylight saving time: +1hr, begins last Sunday in March; ends last Sunday in October

note: Russia is divided into 11 time zones

Administrative divisions:

46 oblasts (oblastey, singular - oblast), 21 republics (respublik, singular - respublika), 4 autonomous okrugs (avtonomnykh okrugov, singular - avtonomnyy okrug), 9 krays (krayev, singular - kray), 2 federal cities (goroda, singular - gorod), and 1 autonomous oblast (avtonomnaya oblast')

oblasts: Amur (Blagoveshchensk), Arkhangel'sk, Astrakhan', Belgorod, Bryansk, Chelyabinsk, Irkutsk, Ivanovo, Kaliningrad, Kaluga, Kemerovo, Kirov, Kostroma, Kurgan, Kursk, Leningrad, Lipetsk, Magadan, Moscow, Murmansk, Nizhniy Novgorod, Novgorod, Novosibirsk, Omsk, Orenburg, Orel, Penza, Pskov, Rostov, Ryazan', Sakhalin (Yuzhno-Sakhalinsk), Samara, Saratov, Smolensk, Sverdlovsk (Yekaterinburg), Tambov, Tomsk, Tula, Tver', Tyumen', Ul'yanovsk, Vladimir, Volgograd, Vologda, Voronezh, Yaroslavl'

republics: Adygeya (Maykop), Altay (Gorno-Altaysk), Bashkortostan (Ufa), Buryatiya (Ulan-Ude), Chechnya (Groznyy), Chuvashiya (Cheboksary), Dagestan (Makhachkala), Ingushetiya (Magas), Kabardino-Balkariya (Nal'chik), Kalmykiya (Elista), Karachayevo-Cherkesiya (Cherkessk), Kareliya (Petrozavodsk), Khakasiya (Abakan), Komi (Syktyvkar), Mariy-El (Yoshkar-Ola), Mordoviya (Saransk), North Ossetia (Vladikavkaz), Sakha [Yakutiya] (Yakutsk), Tatarstan (Kazan'), Tyva (Kyzyl), Udmurtiya (Izhevsk)

autonomous okrugs: Chukotka (Anadyr'), Khanty-Mansi (Khanty-Mansiysk), Nenets (Nar'yan-Mar), Yamalo-Nenets (Salekhard)

krays: Altay (Barnaul), Kamchatka (Petropavlovsk-Kamchatskiy), Khabarovsk, Krasnodar, Krasnoyarsk, Perm', Primorsk (Vladivostok), Stavropol', Zabaykal'skiy (Chita)

federal cities: Moscow (Moskva), Saint Petersburg (Sankt-Peterburg)

autonomous oblast: Yevrey [Jewish] (Birobidzhan)

note: administrative divisions have the same names as their administrative centers (exceptions have the administrative center name following in parentheses)

Independence:

24 August 1991 (from Soviet Union)

National holiday:
Russia Day, 12 June (1990)

Constitution:
adopted 12 December 1993

Legal system:
based on civil law system; judicial review of legislative acts; has
not accepted compulsory ICJ jurisdiction

Suffrage:
18 years of age; universal

Executive branch:
chief of state: President Dmitriy Anatolyevich MEDVEDEV (since
7 May 2008)
head of government: Premier Vladimir Vladimirovich PUTIN
(since 8 May 2008)

cabinet: Ministries of the Government or "Government" composed of the
premier and his deputies, ministers, and selected other individuals; all are
appointed by the president

note: there is also a Presidential Administration (PA) that provides staff
and policy support to the president, drafts presidential decrees, and
coordinates policy among government agencies; a Security Council also
reports directly to the president

elections: president elected by popular vote for a four-year term (eligible
for a second term); election last held 2 March 2008 (next to be held in
March 2012); note - no vice president; if the president dies in office,
cannot exercise his powers because of ill health, is impeached, or resigns,
the premier serves as acting president until a new presidential election is
held, which must be within three months; premier appointed by the
president with the approval of the Duma

Legislative branch:

bicameral Federal Assembly or Federalnoye Sobraniye consists of the Federation Council or Sovet Federatsii (168 seats; as of July 2000, members appointed by the top executive and legislative officials in each of the 84 federal administrative units - oblasts, krays, republics, autonomous okrugs and oblasts, and the federal cities of Moscow and Saint Petersburg; to serve four-year terms) and the State Duma or Gosudarstvennaya Duma (450 seats; as of 2007, all members elected by proportional representation from party lists winning at least 7% of the vote; members elected by popular vote to serve four-year terms) elections: State Duma - last held 2 December 2007 (next to be held in December 2011)

Judicial branch:

Constitutional Court; Supreme Court; Supreme Arbitration Court; judges for all courts are appointed for life by the Federation Council on the recommendation of the president

Diplomatic representation in the US:

chief of mission: Ambassador

chancery: 2650 Wisconsin Avenue NW, Washington, DC 20007

telephone: [1] (202) 298-5700, 5701, 5704, 5708

FAX: [1] (202) 298-5735

consulate(s) general: Houston, New York, San Francisco, Seattle

Diplomatic representation from the US:

chief of mission: Ambassador

embassy: Bolshoy Deviatinskiy Pereulok No. 8, 121099 Moscow

mailing address: PSC-77, APO AE 09721

telephone: [7] (495) 728-5000

FAX: [7] (495) 728-5090

consulate(s) general: Saint Petersburg, Vladivostok, Yekaterinburg

Economy

Russia ended 2009 with its first contraction since the financial crisis of 1998. Russia has undergone significant changes since the collapse of the Soviet Union, moving from a globally-isolated, centrally-planned economy to a more market-based and globally-integrated economy. Economic reforms in the 1990s privatized most industry, with notable exceptions in the energy and defense-related sectors. Nonetheless, the rapid privatization process, including a much criticized "loans-for-shares" scheme that turned over major state-owned firms to politically-connected "oligarchs", has left equity ownership highly concentrated. The protection of property rights is still weak and the private sector remains subject to heavy state interference. Russian industry is primarily split between globally-competitive commodity producers - Russia in 2009 became the world's largest exporter of both oil and natural gas and is also the third largest exporter of steel and primary aluminum - and other less competitive heavy industries that remain dependent on the Russian domestic market. This reliance on commodity exports makes Russia vulnerable to boom and bust cycles that follow the highly volatile swings in global commodity prices. The government since 2007 has embarked on an ambitious program to reduce this dependency and build up the country's high technology sectors, but with few results so far. A revival of Russian agriculture in recent years has led to Russia shifting from being a net grain importer to a net grain exporter. The economy had averaged 7% growth since the 1998 Russian financial crisis, resulting in a doubling of real disposable incomes and the emergence of a middle class. The Russian economy, however, was one of the hardest hit by the 2008-09 global economic crisis as oil prices plummeted and the foreign credits that Russian banks and firms relied on dried up. The Central Bank of Russia spent one-third of its \$600 billion international reserves, the world's third largest, in late 2008 to slow the devaluation of the ruble. The government also devoted \$200 billion in a rescue plan to increase liquidity in the banking sector and aid Russian firms unable to roll over large foreign debts coming due. The economic decline appears to have bottomed out in mid-2009 and by the second half of the year there were signs that the economy was growing, albeit slowly. Long-term challenges include a shrinking workforce, a high level of corruption, and poor infrastructure in need of large capital investment.

GDP (purchasing power parity):
\$2.103 trillion (2009 est.)

GDP - real growth rate:
-8.5% (2009 est.)

GDP - per capita (PPP):
\$15,200 (2009 est.)

GDP - composition by sector:
agriculture: 5%
industry: 37%
services: 58% (2009 est.)

Labor force:
75.81 million (2009 est.)

Labor force - by occupation:
agriculture: 10. %
industry: 32%
services: 58% (November 2009 est.)

Unemployment rate:
8.9% (2009 est.)

Population below poverty line:
15.8% (November 2007)

Household income or consumption by percentage share:
lowest 10%: 1.9%
highest 10%: 30.4% (September 2007)

Inflation rate (consumer prices):
11.9% annual average
(2009 est.)

Agriculture - products:
grain, sugar beets, sunflower seed, vegetables, fruits; beef, milk

Industries:

complete range of mining and extractive industries producing coal, oil, gas, chemicals, and metals; all forms of machine building from rolling mills to high-performance aircraft and space vehicles; defense industries including radar, missile production, and advanced electronic components, shipbuilding; road and rail transportation equipment; communications equipment; agricultural machinery, tractors, and construction equipment; electric power generating and transmitting equipment; medical and scientific instruments; consumer durables, textiles, foodstuffs, handicrafts

Industrial production growth rate:
-11% (2009 est.)

Exports:
\$295.6 billion (2009 est.)

Exports - commodities:
petroleum and petroleum products, natural gas, wood and wood products, metals, chemicals, and a wide variety of civilian and military manufactures

Exports - partners:
Netherlands 11.2%, Italy 8.1%, Germany 8.0%, Turkey 6.0%, Ukraine 5.1%, Poland 4.5%, China 4.3%, (2009)

Imports:
\$196 billion (2009 est.)

Imports - commodities:
machinery and equipment, consumer goods, medicines, meat, sugar, semifinished metal products

Imports - partners:
Germany 13.5%, China 13.2%, Japan 6.5%, Ukraine 6 , US 4.5%, Italy 4.3% (2009)

Exchange rates:
Russian rubles per US dollar – 32 (2009), 25.659 (2007), 27.19 (2006), 28.284 (2005), 28.814 (2004), 30.692 (2003)

Communications

Telephones - main lines in use:
44.1 million (2009)

Telephones - mobile cellular:
187 million (2009)

Transportation

Airports: 1,260 (2007)
- with paved runways: 601

Railways:
total: 87,157 km
broad gauge: 86,200 km 1.520-m gauge (40,300 km electrified)
note: an additional 30,000 km of lines serve industries (2006)

Roadways:
total: 871,000 km
paved: 738,000 km (includes 29,000 km of expressways)
unpaved: 133,000 km (2004)

Waterways:
102,000 km (including 33,000 km with guaranteed depth)
note: 72,000 km system in European Russia links Baltic Sea,
White Sea, Caspian Sea, Sea of Azov, and Black Sea (2006)

Ports and terminals:
Azov, Kaliningrad, Kavkaz, Nakhodka, Novorossiysk, Primorsk,
Saint Petersburg, Vostochnyy