

# Russian Language & Culture

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## Education Pack v1

An introduction to Russia for  
upper primary and early secondary  
students by **Jenny Carr** and  
**Marta Tomaszewski**

In collaboration with



**Russian language and culture v.1** consists of this education pack and accompanying slide presentations for each of the topics.

These materials will introduce young people to a variety of aspects of Russia. They will learn a little of its language and start to decode its unfamiliar alphabet, find out about the country, its history, its exciting contribution to our understanding of space, sample its rich literary heritage, and get to know about daily life in Russia from some of its young people.

*Russian Language and Culture v.1* can be used by teachers in its entirety, as a short course on Russia beginning with an introductory session to a larger group in Assembly, or as standalone sections as relevant for example to study of history, other languages, or topic work. The 6 teaching plans in the Education Pack are designed to provide guidance and notes for the slides.

*Russian Language and Culture v.1* is designed for pupils in the upper part of UK primary schools and the early years of secondary schools. It is a fuller version of the *Russian Language & Culture Education Pack*, adapted for primary schools by the British Council and published in June 2020 on <https://www.britishcouncil.org/school-resources/find/classroom/russian-language-culture>.

Download *Russian Language and Culture v.1* incl. slides and updates: <https://www.russianinScotland.com/>.

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# A few words about Russia ...

Russia is the largest country in the world in terms of geography, spanning both Europe and Asia with 11 time zones. The Russian language is spoken in the country itself, in many of its neighbours, and by the sizeable Russian diaspora worldwide – an estimated 250m speakers in all, ranking 8<sup>th</sup> among world languages. Russian is one of the official languages of the United Nations and Russia is one of the five permanent members of the UN Security Council.

The population of Russia is smaller than its size suggests - 146 million people in 2020, only about 1.87% of the total world population. In such a large geographic area as Russia you will not be surprised to find that there are over 150 different ethnic groups and a number of different languages are spoken. The vast majority of people (around 80%) are European Russians. The next largest group, 5%, are Tatars. Next in size are Ukrainians, Bashkirs, Chuvashes, Chechens and Armenians (around 1% each). The Russian economy has grown this century but is still heavily dependent on oil and gas, and now ranks around 11<sup>th</sup> in the world (gross GDP).

We will introduce you to a country that has aspects both familiar and exotic – like its alphabet which has some letters easily understood by an English speaker, some that English speakers might think they can read, but can't, and some very different, and often rather beautiful, but which make a strange language surprisingly easy to read once you take the trouble to find out what they stand for. At first glance Russia might seem similar to other countries, especially now that Moscow's streets are full of international brands, but sometimes this is a false familiarity. Look a bit deeper though and what is at first sight exotic, once understood turns out to be straightforward and more familiar than you might expect.

An important country too. Russia's impact on world politics is larger than might be expected from its population size or economic strength and that is an important reason why an understanding of its culture and history is not only fascinating but essential.

# 1. Introduction to Russia

These slides contain background information on Russia and an introduction to other elements of the education pack which we hope will enable teachers to engage the interest of students.

- You might play Tchaikovsky's *Nutcracker Suite* as pupils come in, accompanied perhaps with a rolling slideshow of Russian views.
- Greet pupils with the Russian for *hello*: привет – pronounced pree-vyet. Then explain that they are going to find out about Russia, the largest country in the world, speak a little Russian and learn to read a new alphabet.

Over 150 million people speak Russian, making it the 8<sup>th</sup> most commonly spoken language in the world. It is the official language in Russia itself and is also spoken by some, but nowadays not a majority, of the people in neighbouring countries like Estonia, Latvia and Ukraine.

Have any students visited Russia or met any Russians?

If you have Russian-speaking students they could help with your presentation?

- The Assembly presentation will start with 4 slides giving students 10 interesting facts about Russia and then a bit more information about the country itself.
- Topics to be covered later will be briefly introduced in a further 5 slides.

## 10 INTERESTING FACTS ABOUT RUSSIA TO START YOU OFF

Slide 2 – facts 1-8. Build up the slide by clicking to reveal each new item.



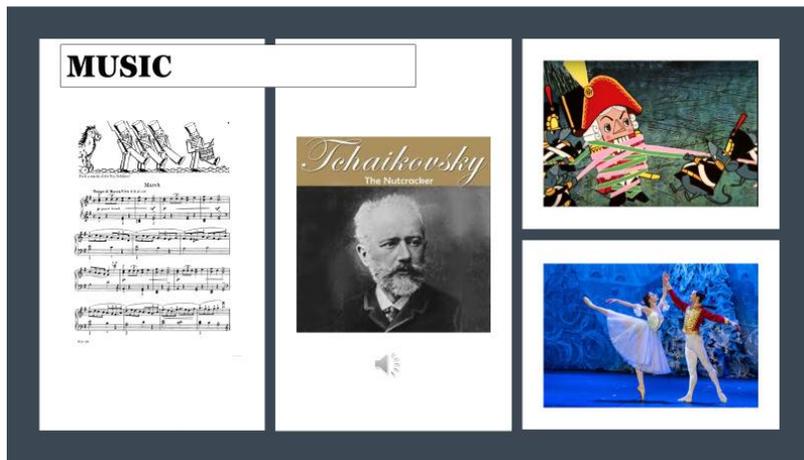
**1. Russia is the largest country in the world** (more about that on slide 5)

**2. The FIFA football World Cup was held in Russia in summer 2018.** Matches were held in 11 different cities. It was the most expensive World Cup ever, costing over \$14billion. Did you watch any of the matches? Do you know any fans who went to Russia?

**3. A Russian doll is a матрёшка (mat-ryosh-ka) in Russian.** Do you know what is inside her? And which country she was invented in? (Japan)

4. **This is the Russian flag.** Which other countries' flags have red, white and blue stripes? One way to remember which is the Russian flag is that it shows the red earth under blue water with a white snowy sky on top.
5. **Russian money is the ruble (рубль).** This is a ruble coin, worth about 1p (in 2019)
6. **This is the Russian alphabet.** It has 33 letters, some of which look like ours but some (Ж) are completely different
7. **Most Russian churches have "onion domes", sometimes covered in gold like this one.** Russia's main religion is Christianity, and the main denomination is the Russian Orthodox Church. There are a number of other religions practised too, including Islam.
8. **There are bears (and wolves and tigers) in the Russian forests!** Bears (including teddy bears and bears in stories) are known as Миша (Misha, pronounced Meesha) in Russia. Misha is a short form of the name Michael, like Micky or Mike.

### Slide 3. Russian music



9. **You heard some Russian music as you came in. The composer's name was Tchaikovsky.**  
(You can hear it again if you press the audio button on this slide).

These are some pictures from *The Nutcracker*, a famous ballet Tchaikovsky wrote which is often shown during the winter holidays because it is about a Christmas party when all the tree decorations start dancing. The first picture on the right shows mouse-soldiers tying up the Nutcracker after a fierce battle. The second is the Nutcracker, transformed into a handsome prince, dancing with Clara the heroine.

There are many other famous Russian musicians – do you know any?

You can find a video of Tchaikovsky's *Nutcracker* on YouTube.

## Slide 4. Russian sport



- 10.** Ice hockey is probably the most popular sport in Russia. Even the president plays it in his free time. Many other sports are popular too though, particularly football and athletics.

Do you know any Russian sports stars? How about Maria Sharapova? What is her sport?

## Slide 5. Russia is a very large country (the largest)

*Build up the slide by clicking to reveal each new item.*



1. What is the capital city called?
2. Picture of St Basil's Cathedral in the centre of Moscow
3. Russia is mostly quite flat – but there is a range of mountains here.
4. Picture of the Ural Mountains
5. The mountains are the border of the continent of EUROPE. Most Russians live in that part of Russia – and European Russia is the largest European country. Although not in the EU.

6. The continent of ASIA starts on the other side of the Ural mountains so Russia is in two continents (like Turkey).
7. A lot of Asian Russia is covered in forest and VERY cold in winter
8. This huge area is called Siberia. In winter it can be MINUS 40 degrees Centigrade which is very cold (but in summer it averages +35 degrees).
9. The length of Russia from West to East is about 6000 miles. This means that  
... when we are waking up in the UK  
... it is mid-morning in Moscow  
... and nearly bedtime in the far east.

## What else would you like to know about Russia?

Some things we'll find out more about in the rest of this course are:

We'll start to speak (and read) **Russian** ...

Поговорим по-русски  
Pa-ga-va-reem pa-rooskee  
Let's speak Russian



A grid of the Russian alphabet (А, Б, В, Г, Д, Е, Ж, З, И, Й, К, Л, М, Н, О, П, Р, С, Т, У, Ф, Х, Ц, Ч, Ш, Щ, Ъ, Ы, Э, Ю, Я) with small illustrations for each letter.



find out about 1000 years of Russian history

A collage of historical Russian scenes, including a battle, a portrait of a man, a portrait of a man in a hat, a woman in traditional dress, and the Russian flag.

get ideas for books to read (in English)



A collection of book covers, including 'The Golden Rulebook', 'The Snow', 'THE BALLOON', 'CHILDREN', and 'THE HOUSE'.

learn about Russia and Space



A collage of images related to Russia and space, including a portrait of a man, a satellite, a woman in a space helmet, a man in a suit, a woman in a space helmet, and a satellite in space.

and about daily life in Russia



A collage of images related to daily life in Russia, including a house, a school, a celebration, food, and free time.

# Lesson Plan:

## An introduction to the Russian Language

### Slide 1

**РУССКИЙ АЛФАВИТ**

Russian Language  
Русский язык

Russian uses a different alphabet, but it's not as difficult to read as you might think:

- Some of the letters are the same as English ones.
- Russian is phonetic – so each letter represents one sound. So, once you recognise the letters, you can read aloud in Russian and a Russian person will understand you
- Some words are the same in Russian as in English.

Let's learn how to:

- read some of the Russian letters
- greet someone in Russian
- say which sports you like and don't like

You could ask:

- if any of your pupils know of other languages that are written using different alphabets
- if they can spot any letters that look like English (Latin alphabet) letters
- if they know anyone who speaks Russian or even if they know any words or phrases in Russian

Ensure that they know what is meant by 'phonetic' by giving some examples of words in English that are and are not phonetic (e.g. 'banana' is and 'through' isn't).

Throughout the powerpoint, the Russian letters/words can be heard by clicking on the audio icon on the slides

## Slide 2

There are 33 letters in the Russian alphabet. Let's learn to read some of them...

Letters that look like English letters and sound like them too.	Letters in disguise! They look like English letters but sound different.	Letters that don't look like English letters at all!
• Аа sounds like <b><u>ah</u></b>	• ВВ sounds like <b><u>v</u>ery</b>	• Бб sounds like <b><u>b</u>all</b>
• Ее sounds like <b><u>ve</u>llow</b>	• НН sounds like <b><u>n</u>et</b>	• Гг sounds like <b><u>g</u>oal</b>
• Кк sounds like <b><u>k</u>ettle</b>	• Рр sounds like <b><u>r</u>ed</b>	• Ии sounds like m <b><u>ee</u>t</b>
• Мм sounds like <b><u>m</u>an</b>	• Сс sounds like <b><u>s</u>now</b>	• Лл sounds like <b><u>l</u>ove</b>
• Оо sounds like <b><u>o</u>ffer</b>	• Уу sounds like b <b><u>oo</u>m</b>	• Пп sounds like <b><u>p</u>ot</b>
• Тт sounds like <b><u>t</u>iger</b>	• Хх sounds like <b><u>h</u>al</b>	• Фф sounds like <b><u>f</u>oot</b>
		• Шш sounds like <b><u>sh</u>oe</b>

This slide contains some of the most common letters in Russian and all of the letters that will be needed for the next slide. The 'sounds like' elements appear when you click on the slide and the sound of each Russian letter is the sound of the element of the English word that is in bold and underlined (so the Russian letter Cc is an English Ss, for example).

The yellow section should be straightforward. You could ask them to guess what each letter in the orange section sounds like before revealing the answer. For the red section, pupils could tell you what each letter reminds them of and how they might remember them.

You could ask you pupils to choose a letter, 'trace' it with their fingers on the desk and their partner has to say the sound of the letter out loud.

### Slide 3

Can you find the Russian word for these sports?



пинг-понг  
теннис  
футбол  
хоккей  
баскетбол  
нетбол

On this slide, there are six sports that your pupils may play written in Russian and they will ‘fly’ to the correct picture when you click on the slide. Ask your pupils to decode each word and match them up.

The words, from top to bottom, are:

**peeng-pong** (table tennis) - fairly popular in Russia

**t-ye-nees** (tennis) – they might have heard of Maria Sharapova

**foot-bol** (football) – this is very popular in Russia and there are also lots of mini-football clubs for children and teenagers

**hok-e-y** (hockey) – ice-hockey is very popular in Russia. If you want to talk about what we know as hockey to a Russian, you would need to say ‘hockey on grass’.

**basketbol** (basketball) – basketball is fairly popular in Russia

**nyet-bol** (netball) – not really known in Russia

## Slide 4

**Russian names**

Russians have three parts to their name: first name, patronymic and surname. The patronymic is formed by adding an ending to their father's first name. A boy would add an ending such as **-ovich**. A girl would add an ending such as **-ovna**.



**Александр Иванович Гончаров**

Alexandr Ivanovitch Goncharov is my full name, but hardly anyone ever uses it. I normally only ever see it written down on official documents.

Nearly everyone calls me Sasha. I have a girl cousin, Alexandra, who also gets called Sasha by everyone. It's very confusing at family parties!

**Саша**

*We haven't learnt all the Russian letters that appear on this page, but which ones do you recognise? Could you match up the Russian names with the versions in English letters if they were jumbled up? What clues would you use to help you?*

**Саш!**

'Sash!' is what my friends shout when they want to get my attention. I hear this a lot when we are playing ice-hockey!

Sashenka is what my mum calls me. It's a bit like saying 'sweet little Sasha' in English. It was OK when I was younger but now I find it really embarrassing!

**Сашенька**

On this slide, pupils find out about Russian names. Sasha is the short/familiar form for both Alexander and Alexandra (i.e. Alex). Ask your pupils what different people call them – does their name get shortened at all (e.g. 'Tom' rather than 'Thomas')?

Russians don't have middle names, but have a name based on their father's name instead. It may not be appropriate to ask pupils what their patronymic would be (they can use their grandfather's name if using their father's name is not an option) but they could try to work out what the patronymic would be of famous people/cartoon characters if they know what that person's father is called.

Can they read any of the names purely from the Russian letters? The English version of each name is given in the corresponding grey thought bubble.

Ask your pupils if they know any other Russian first names.

## Slide 5

What's your name?

Hi! Привет! (Preevuet)

Hi! Привет! (Preevuet)

How are you? Как дела? (Kak dela?)

Good! How are you? Хорошо! (Horosho!) Как дела? (Kak dela?)

Good, thanks! Хорошо, спасибо (Horosho, spaseebo)

My name is Ira. What's your name? Меня зовут Ира. (Meynya zovoot Eera.) Как тебя зовут? (Kak tebya zovoot?)

My name is Kolya. Меня зовут Коля (Meynya zovoot Kolya)

What's your name? Как тебя зовут? (Kak tebya zovoot?)

Read this dialogue out loud with a partner. Can you guess what the Russian means?

This slide contains a simple conversation in Russian. The English for each speech bubble will appear as you click on the powerpoint slide. However, before you do that, ask your pupils to read out the dialogue with a friend, using the phonetic transcription in English letters. They should also recognise some of the letters in Russian. They can replace the names given with their own names.

## Slide 6

♥ I like... I don't like... ♥

A couple more letters for you to learn:  
Юю sounds like **you**  
Яя sounds like **ya**

I like = я люблю  
(ya lyooblyoo)

I don't like =  
я не люблю  
(ya nye lyooblyoo)

Я люблю баскетбол  
I like basketball

Я не люблю теннис!  
I don't like tennis!

Which sport does Ira like and which one doesn't she like?

Now it's your turn! Tell your partner which sports you like and don't like... in Russian!

Pupils learn two more Russian letters here so that they can read and say 'I like/I don't like' in Russian. The 'sounds like' for the two letters will appear when you click on the powerpoint.

Ask pupils to tell you which sports Ira likes and doesn't like and ask them how they worked that out before revealing the answers by clicking on the powerpoint.

Pupils can then practise saying which sports they like and don't like. They can just stick to the sports on slide 3, but many sports are called the same in both Russian and English.

## Slide 7

Did you know...

- The Russian alphabet is called the Cyrillic alphabet. Some other languages, such as Serbian and Ukrainian, use it too.
- 'Cyrillic' is named after St Cyril – one of the two Greek monks who travelled to Russia and invented Russian's writing system.
- About 288 million people speak Russian.
- About 65,000 people in the UK speak Russian as one of their main languages.
- Russia is such a large country that surely there must be lots of different dialects and accents. No! In the north of Russia, 'o' is pronounced more like an 'a' and that's the only big difference. Once you can speak Russian, you can understand and be understood by anyone else who speaks it.
- Russian is also spoken in many other countries, such as Uzbekistan, Belarus, Latvia, Kazakhstan, Ukraine, Lithuania, Azerbaijan, Moldova and Estonia.

This slide contains some general facts about Russian. You could

- put the '288 million' in context by saying that the population of the UK is around 66 million
- ask if they know anyone who speaks Russian
- ask about different accents and dialects in the UK and which words they use that people from other parts of the country might not understand (asking what they call a bread roll is often a good start – lots of different words for this around the country)
- show them a world map and point out the other countries where Russian is commonly spoken (note that it isn't an official language in all of those countries, but there is a large Russian-speaking population in all of them for historical reasons)

## Slide 8

Keen to find out more?

Is there anyone in your school or local community who speaks Russian? Say привет to them next time you see them! Maybe they could teach you some more Russian.

Find a copy of the full Russian alphabet with the sounds explained in English. You could write a secret message - English words in Russian letters – and ask your friends to decode it.

Russian people love going on holiday where it's warm. If you ever go to Turkey, Spain or Cyprus, listen out for anyone speaking Russian.

Have a look on the back of food packets – if there is information written in many languages, you might find Russian there. Can you recognise any of the letters?

Try learning some Russian using an app such as Duolingo or a book such as 'Russian Script Hacking'.

A copy of the Russian alphabet can be found here:

<https://www.findoutaboutrussia.co.uk/russian-alphabet.html>

More about where Russians go on holiday can be found here:

<https://www.tourism-review.com/russian-outbound-tourism-industry-news10935>

Useful resources:

Duolingo - <https://www.duolingo.com/>

Russian Script Hacking - <https://library.teachyourself.com/id004325513/Russian-Script-Hacking>

# Lesson Plan:

## 1000 (+) years of Russian history



This slide shows you the main events in Russian history – starting a long time before there was such a country as Russia.

The different periods are shown in different colours.

Do you know what was happening in your country at those times?

## *from 1500 BCE Slav tribes settled in E. Europe and W. Russia*



*“Europe c. 600 A.D.”*

*Source: Muir’s Historical Atlas, 10<sup>th</sup> edn., 1965, page 4*

The brown areas on this map show where **the Slav peoples** were living about 2500 years ago, in 600 CE. As you see they were as far west as present-day Germany, Czechia and Austria and by 600 had started to live in what is now the western edge of Russia and north Ukraine. The Southern Slavs occupied the area from the Danube to the Black Sea.

Eastern Russia was inhabited by **nomadic tribes like the Scythians and others.**

The names of present-day countries are in **RED CAPITALS.**

Nowadays the Slav countries are Belarus, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czechia, Poland, Russia, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, and Ukraine. Their languages are related and have many similarities. Examples of other language families in Europe are LATIN languages (French, Italian, Spanish, Portuguese), GERMANIC languages (English, Dutch, German) and CELTIC languages (Irish, Gaelic, Welsh, Cornish, Breton).

The early Slavs lived in small agricultural settlements in the Central European forests, often near rivers, and seem to have worshipped nature.

## 700 –1000 CE Vikings

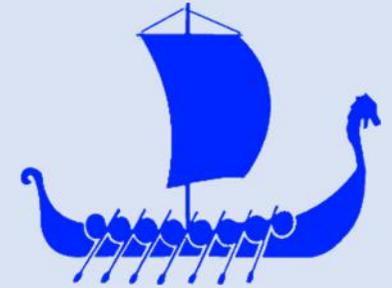


**700 onwards:** The **Vikings** sailed down the rivers from Scandinavia and began to set up as rulers of city states.

The main state was based in **Kyiv**, another important state was **Novgorod** in the north. The artist Vasnetsov imagines the first meeting between the **Varangian** (the Russian name for Vikings) prince of Novgorod **Rurik** and the Slavs.

Rurik and his successors ruled Kyiv Rus and then Russia for nearly 1000 years (they were taken over by the Romanov dynasty in 1610).

*Viktor Vasnetsov, 1909. "The Invitation of the Varangians: Rurik and his brothers arrive in Staraya Ladoga".*



*St. Cyril and St. Methodius*

**Late 800s:** Monks, and brothers, Cyril and Methodius invented an early version of the **Cyrillic alphabet** called *Glagolitic*. They mixed Latin letters (eg “a”), with Greek (eg “п” which sounds like “p”) and probably Hebrew (eg “ш” which sounds like “sh”) to best represent the sounds of the Russian language. Many other Slav languages, like Bulgarian and Serbian, use Cyrillic though some (eg Polish and Czech) use the Latin alphabet like the West European languages.

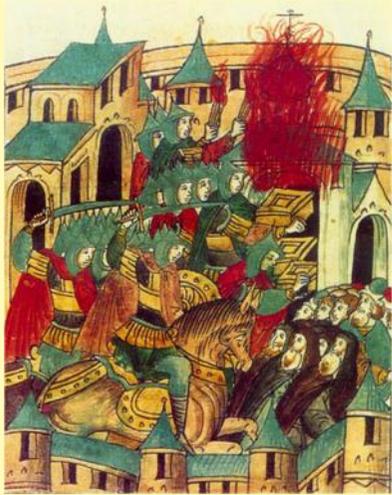
**900s:** The birth of Russia, as Kyiv Rus.

In 980 **Vladimir the Great**, a great-grandson of Rurik, was proclaimed prince of all Russia. He is also known as St Vladimir because he introduced Christianity and baptised his subjects.

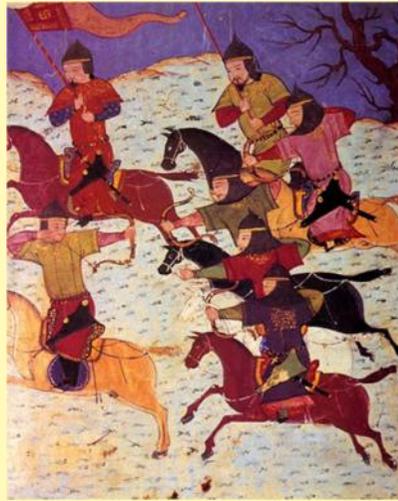


*Vladimir the Great – statue in Kyiv*

## 1237-1480 Occupation by the Mongol Golden Horde



The sack of Suzdal by Batu Khan in 1238.  
Miniature from 16th-century chronicle.

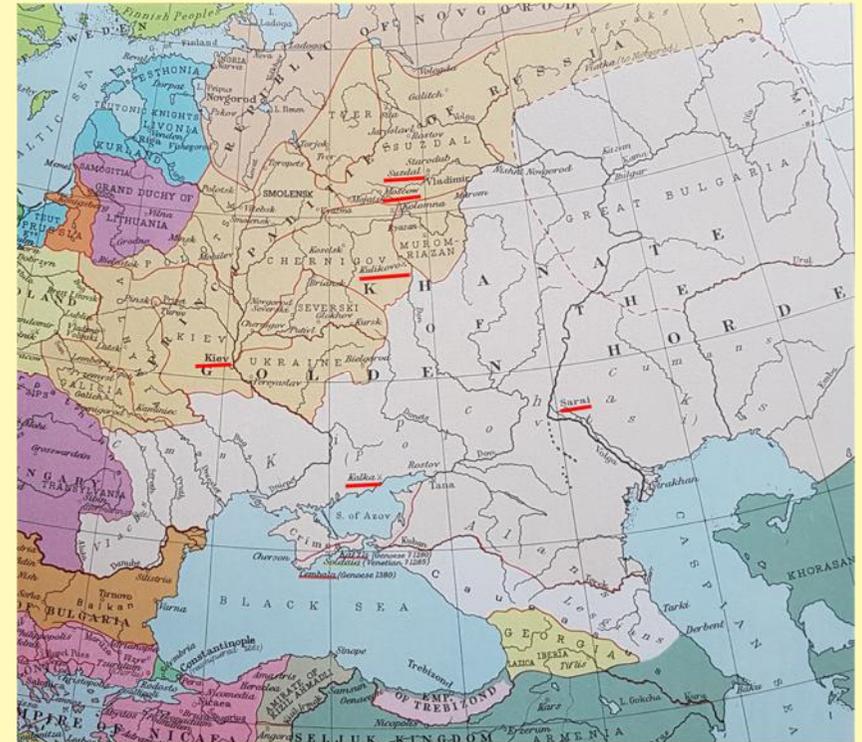


Mongol Cavalrymen Engage the Enemy.  
14<sup>th</sup> century manuscript, Bib. Nat., Paris.



In 1237 the Mongol “Golden Horde” invaded Russia and occupied the country for over 200 years. They were led by the descendants of Genghis Khan from the Mongolian steppes in the Far East but ruled Russia from their headquarters in Sarai on the River Volga. The Russian princes had to travel there every year to pay tribute to the Mongol khans.

The Mongols were nomads, travelling and fighting on horseback and living in tents called yurts (whose golden colour is said to be the reason they were called the Golden Horde). They were merciless when attacking the Russian towns, murdering everyone in sight, and forced the princes to tax the people heavily to pay their tributes.

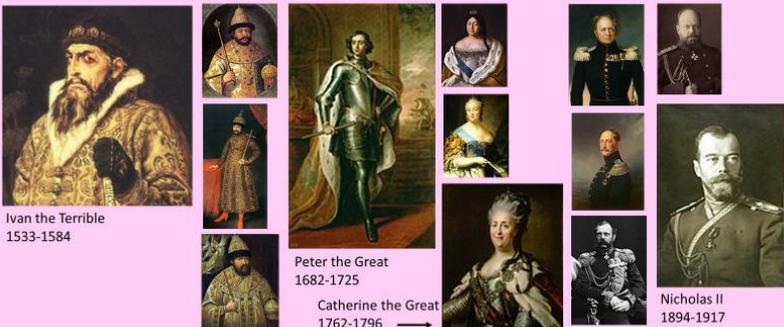


“Eastern Europe c1250.”

Source: Muir’s Historical Atlas, 10<sup>th</sup> edn., 1965, page 19

## 1533-1917 Russian Tsars ruled Russia

1533-1917 Russian tsars ruled Russia. Russia began to expand east of the Urals in the 16C and by the 19C had become an empire encompassing many nearby countries.



Ivan the Terrible  
1533-1584

Peter the Great  
1682-1725

Catherine the Great  
1762-1796

Nicholas II  
1894-1917

Mongol rule was finally overthrown in 1480. Thanks to strong Russian leadership Moscow had become an influential city and had even become the centre of Orthodox Christianity in Russia. In 1480, with a Russian prince named Grand Duke Ivan III at its head, Moscow rose up to fight for power and Mongol control of Russia finally ended. Ivan III became known as Ivan the Great. Ivan the Great's grandson was **Ivan the Terrible**, the first tsar.



The slide shows photographs of all the Russian tsars – but we have picked two of the most prominent in the information boxes below.

### **IVAN THE TERRIBLE 1530-84**

Ivan was heir to the **Ruriks**, a royal family descended from the 9th century Viking prince Rurik.

At the age of sixteen Ivan was crowned Tsar of all the Russias. He was the first ruler to be called 'Tsar' (a word related to 'Caesar' or emperor), much grander than 'Grand Prince'. By the end of his reign his lands covered not only all European Russia but much of Siberia. St Basil's Cathedral in Moscow was built in 1555 in honour of his capture of the Tatar city of Kazan.

He was on the throne when the first English travellers came to Russia, explorers and merchants. He was glad to be in touch with Queen Elizabeth I of England and they exchanged gifts. He even proposed marriage.

Why 'Terrible'? Did it mean he was very wicked or awe inspiring as a tsar should be? Or both?



*"Botik", the 7m sailing boat Peter learned to sail on as a teenager. He found it rotting in the palace grounds and had it restored. It had been made in Europe and inspired him to rebuild the Russian fleet.*

## **PETER THE GREAT 1672-1725**

Peter was the first tsar of the **Romanov** dynasty. The **Ruriks** had ended in a period of unrest and fighting among the nobles (called *boyars*), in which a boyar called Mikhail Romanov was finally victorious. Peter was his grandson.

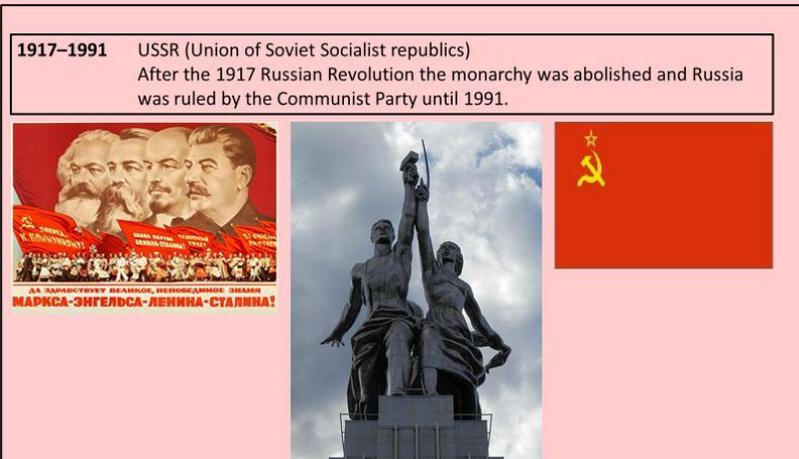
Why 'Great'? He was certainly tall (2.03 metres) but that wasn't it. His greatness lay in the huge changes he made to Russia during his reign. He was determined to modernise the disorganised, poor and feudal country he inherited and wanted to make it more European.

First of all he moved the capital to St. Petersburg, with sea access to Europe.

Then he tried to learn as much as he could about European technology, especially shipbuilding and architecture. He travelled to Europe to study and lived in London for a while.

On his return Peter tried to reorganise the country by improving education and forcing the boyars to work for their living in his new civil service. He even made them wear Western clothes and cut off their old-fashioned beards.

## 1917 – 1991 Socialist Revolution and Communist Party rule



Images L-R:

A poster with the slogan “Long live the great unconquerable banner of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Stalin!” and the portraits of those men. Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels were Germans whose writings (eg *The Communist Manifesto*) were the basis of the communist ideology. Vladimir Lenin and Joseph Stalin were the first heads of state for the USSR.

Statue of an industrial worker holding a hammer, and an agricultural worker holding a sickle.

The Soviet flag – red for communism, with the hammer and sickle and red star logo.

What was the USSR like?

USSR stands for the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, the “Soviet Union” for short:

Union: the USSR included 15 countries, from Belarus in the west to Kazakhstan in the east, most of which had been Russian colonies in the tsarist period and all of which became independent again after 1991.

Soviet: the Russian word for “council”. The USSR was to be ruled by councils of working people, not by the aristocracy.

Socialist: they claimed to be socialist, aiming to become communist in the future

Republics: the countries of the USSR were not run by tsars

Almost everything was controlled by the government: not just hospitals and schools but also shops, factories, transport and more. This gave the government a huge planning job in order to cover all the details needed. They also controlled all the newspapers, TV and radio so it was difficult for people to find out what was really happening. People couldn’t criticise things publicly –so instead they told each other jokes like this one:

How do we know that Adam and Eve were Soviet citizens?

They had one apple between the two of them, they had no clothes, and they believed they were living in paradise.

## Children in the USSR

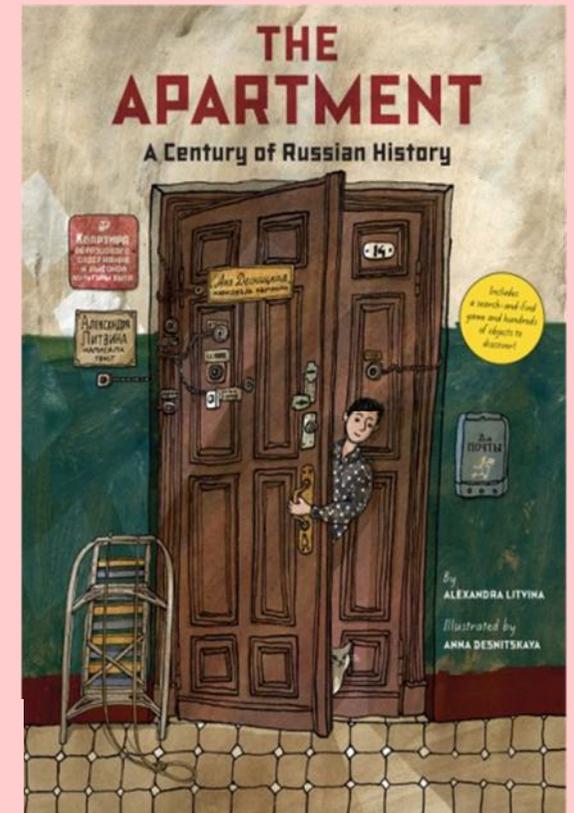
From 1947 children wore school uniform, in an old fashioned style copied from schools before the 1917 Revolution. The girls had an everyday version with a brown apron on top of their dress, and a “for best” with a white apron. Many children belonged to the Communist Party youth group (a bit like scouts and guides, but political) and wore red neckscarfs to show their membership, like some of the boys in the photograph below.



<https://galinabulakh.wordpress.com/2013/11/02/my-soviet-education/>

To find out about what it was like to live in the Soviet period I recommend you look through this book – the history of a typical apartment in Moscow through the eyes of the children and families who live there. The apartment changes from a smart home for just one family in 1902 to a “communal” flat where lots of families lived in one room each, sharing the kitchen and bathroom, and finally to a trendy restaurant in 2002. You can trace their lives, their favourite toys and other household objects over 100 years.

*“The Apartment. A Century of Russian History”.*  
Alexandra Litvina. Abrams Books for Young Readers 2019



# Lesson Plan: **Some ideas on Russian books to read**

Do you like books that are serious, funny, sad, or full of interesting facts? Or perhaps all of those things at once and sometimes a bit crazy too? If so it's time to discover Russian literature!

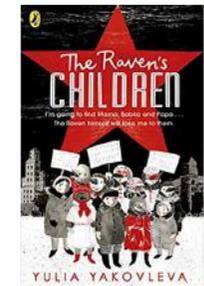
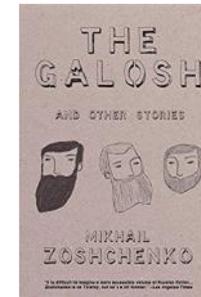
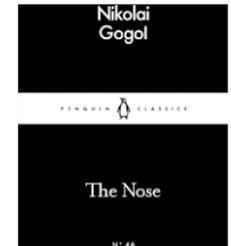
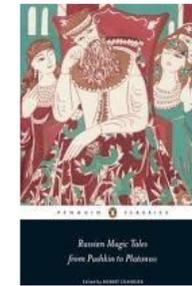
In the sample of stories we've chosen you can read about a **cunning fox**, a **talking fish** and a **wicked witch**, a **man who loses his nose...** and then meets it walking the streets, about **life just after the Russian Revolution**, about the grim reality of **prison camps** in the 1950s and about the terrifying 1930s seen through the eyes of **children who lost their parents** and couldn't understand why.

How can you choose where to start?

One way is to read short extracts from the beginning (mostly) of all these stories. We hope you will want to read the rest later. They are all quite short.

That will give you a taste of Russian literature and get you thinking about what the stories are really about – and maybe help you understand Russia better too.

There are a lot more books and writers to try – visit your school or local library and see what you can find there.

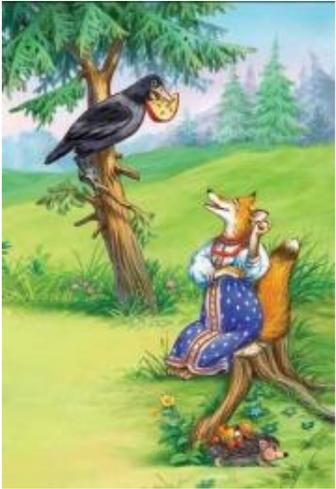


*“There are few people in the West who understand Russia well — those who know and understand Russia were raised on Russian literature”*

(Peter Aven, Russian billionaire businessman. Interview with *The Bell* newsletter, Nov 2019)

# *The Fables of Ivan Krylov*

by Ivan Krylov. Written 1809-44. Translated by Stephen Pimenoff. Publ. Dedalus 2017  
Book I, No. 1, pages 21-22



Find more of Krylov's fables online:

**Audio:**  
[librivox.org/kriloffs-fables-by-ivan-krylov/](http://librivox.org/kriloffs-fables-by-ivan-krylov/)

**Text:**  
[en.wikisource.org/wiki/Angosy\\_of\\_fables/Russian\\_fables](http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Angosy_of_fables/Russian_fables)

## **The Crow and the Fox**

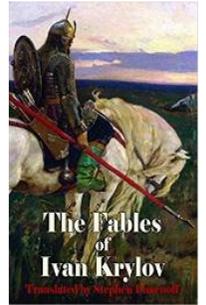
*How many times has the world been told  
That flattery is vile and harmful? But it has done no  
good:  
In the heart the flatterer always finds a little corner.*

-----

God sent to a Crow somewhere a little piece of  
cheese.

Having settled herself on a fir tree,  
The Crow prepared to breakfast.  
She grew thoughtful, holding the cheese in her beak.  
Unfortunately, a Fox happened to be running near:  
The scent of the cheese stopped the Fox in her tracks:  
She saw the cheese, and was captivated by it.  
The cunning creature approached the tree on tiptoe  
Twitching her tail, and not taking her eyes off the  
Crow.

She said so sweetly, scarcely breathing:  
"My dear, how beautiful you are:  
What a neck you have, what wonderful eyes!  
What a neck you have, what wonderful eyes!  
They are such as to be found only in fairy tales!  
What feathers! What a nose!  
And indeed angelic must be your voice!  
Sing, my dear, don't be shy! If, little sister,  
With such beauty you are also good at singing,  
Surely you would be our queen of birds!"  
From flattery the Crow's head was turned,  
With delight her breath was taken away;  
And at the friendly Fox's words  
She cawed with all her might.  
The cheese fell - and was caught by the cunning  
Fox.

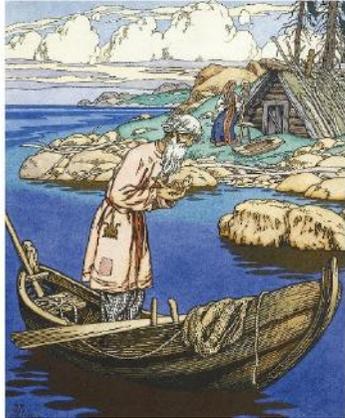
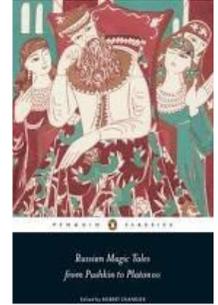


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## ***A Tale about a Fisherman and a Fish*** (extract)

by Alexander Pushkin. 1833. Translated by Robert and Elizabeth Chandler.

Published in *Russian Magic Tales: from Pushkin to Platonov*, Penguin Books 2012, p.18.



*Ivan Bilibin 1933*

By the very edge of the blue sea  
lived an old man and his old woman.  
For three and thirty years they had lived  
in a tumbledown hut made of mud.  
The old man caught fish in his fishing net;  
the old woman spun with her spinning wheel.  
One day the old man cast his net  
and all he caught in his net was slime.  
The old man cast his net a second time  
and all he caught in his net was weed.

A third time the old man cast his net  
and what he found in his net was a fish --  
no ordinary fish, but a golden fish.  
The fish begged, the fish begged and  
implored;  
the fish prayed in a human voice:  
'Release me, set me free in the sea --  
and in return you'll receive a grand  
ransom,  
I'll grant you whatever you wish.'  
The old man was amazed and frightened.

.....

*Find other translations of this story online, for example:*

Retold by Arthur Ransome: <https://fairytalez.com/the-golden-fish/>

From *Russian Magic Tales by Pushkin to Platonov* translated by copyright © Robert Chandler 2007 published Penguin Books 2007. Reproduced by permission of Penguin Books Ltd. ©2012.

## **Baba Yaga** (extract)

A Russian fairy tale retold by Arthur Ransome in "Old Peter's Russian Tales", illus. Dmitri Mitrokhin, publ. Frederick A. Stokes Company, New York 1917, pp. 88-105.



*Dmitri Mitrokhin*

*More about Baba Yaga:*

[www.findoutaboutrussia.co.uk/folk-tales.html](http://www.findoutaboutrussia.co.uk/folk-tales.html)

Inside the railing was Baba Yaga's hut, and it stood on hen's legs and walked about the yard. And in the yard there was standing Baba Yaga's servant, and she was crying bitterly because of the tasks Baba Yaga set her to do. She was crying bitterly and wiping her eyes on her petticoat.

"How lucky," says the little girl, "that I picked up a handkerchief!" And she gave the handkerchief to Baba Yaga's servant, who wiped her eyes on it and smiled through her tears.

Close by the hut was a huge dog, very thin, gnawing a dry crust.

"How lucky," says the little girl, "that I picked up a loaf!" And she gave the loaf to the dog, and he gobbled it up and licked his lips.

The little girl went bravely up to the hut and knocked on the door.

"Come in," says Baba Yaga.

The little girl went in, and there was Baba Yaga, the bony-legged, the witch, sitting weaving at a loom. In a corner of the hut was a thin black cat watching a mouse-hole.

"Good-day to you, auntie," says the little girl, trying not to tremble.

"Good-day to you, niece," says Baba Yaga.

"My stepmother has sent me to you to ask for a needle and thread to mend a shirt."

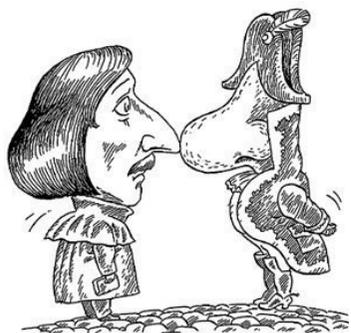
"Very well," says Baba Yaga, smiling, and showing her iron teeth. "You sit down here at the loom, and go on with my weaving, while I go and get you the needle and thread."

The little girl sat down at the loom and began to weave.

Baba Yaga went out and called to her servant, "Go, make the bath hot and scrub my niece. Scrub her clean. I'll make a dainty meal of her."

## **The Nose** (extract)

by Nikolai Gogol 1835-36. Translated by Ronald Wilks. Publ. Penguin Books 2015, p1.



Gogol's *The Nose*. Wikimedia

A translation of "The Nose" can also be downloaded from:

[www.gutenberg.org/files/36238/36238-h/36238-h.htm#Page\\_67](http://www.gutenberg.org/files/36238/36238-h/36238-h.htm#Page_67)

An extraordinarily strange event took place in St Petersburg on 25 March. Ivan Yakovievich, a barber who lived on Voznesensky Prospekt (his surname has been lost and all that his shop sign shows is a gentleman with a lathered cheek and the inscription 'We also let blood'), woke up rather early one morning and smelt hot bread. Raising himself slightly on his bed he saw his wife, who was a quite respectable lady and a great coffee-drinker, taking some freshly baked rolls out of the oven.

'I don't want any coffee today, Praskovya Osipovna,' said Ivan Yakovlevich, 'I'll make do with a hot roll and onion instead.' (Here I must explain that Ivan Yakovievich would really have liked to have had some coffee as well, but knew it was quite out of the question to expect both coffee and rolls, since Praskovya Osipovna did not take very kindly to these whims of his.) 'Let the old fool have his bread, I don't mind,' she thought. 'That means extra coffee for me!' And she threw a roll on to the table.

Ivan pulled his frock-coat over his nightshirt for decency's sake, sat down at the table, poured out some salt, peeled two onions, took a knife and with a determined expression on his face started cutting one of the rolls.

When he had sliced the roll in two, he peered into the middle and was amazed to see something white there. Ivan carefully picked at it with his knife, and felt it with his finger. 'Quite thick,' he said to himself 'What on earth can it be?'

He poked two fingers in and pulled out - a nose!

Ivan Yakovlevich let his arms drop to his sides and began rubbing his eyes and feeling around in the roll again. Yes, it was a nose all right, no mistake about that. And, what's more, it seemed a very familiar nose...



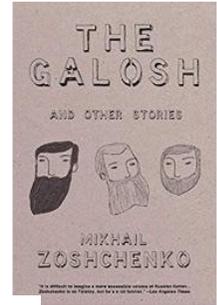
From 'The Nose' from *Diary of a Madman, The Government Inspector, & Selected Stories* by Nikolay Gogol, translated by Ronald Wilks published Penguin Books 2005. Reproduced by permission of Penguin Books Ltd.

## *A Thief* (extract)

by Mikhail Zoshchenko, 1923. Translated by Jeremy Hicks. Published in *The Galosh and other stories*, The Overlook Press, 2009, p.27.



1920s tram in St Petersburg,  
Wikipedia



Vaska Tyapkin was a pickpocket by profession. He was mainly active on the trams. But don't envy him reader, it's a worthless profession. You go through one pocket - crap: a lighter, maybe; you go through another - more crap: a handkerchief, or ten cigarettes say, or maybe even worse, an electricity bill.

It's a joke, not a profession.

And as for more worthwhile things, like watches or wallets, not bloody likely.

It's a mystery where passengers keep them these days.

And people have become so damned mean. You've got to keep your eyes open, or it'll be *your* pocket they'll clean out. And they really will clean you out. It's easily done. You're eyeing the conductor's bag and that's it, they've already cleaned you out. For crying out loud...

And as for their valuables, the passengers are so mean they probably wear them on their chests or maybe on their stomachs. Places like that are tender, you see, and you can't tickle them at all. You hardly need scratch them with your finger and there'll be shouting: They've robbed me. A disgusting sight.

It's a bloody worthless profession.

.....

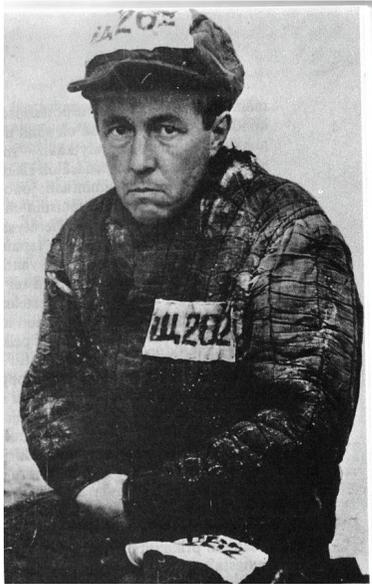
Some information on  
Zoshchenko and links to  
public domain versions of  
his work here:

[wiki2.org/en/Mikhail\\_Zoshchenko](http://wiki2.org/en/Mikhail_Zoshchenko)

Reproduction rights applied for

## **One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich** (extract)

by Alexander Solzhenitsyn, 1962. Translated by Ralph Parker. Publ. Penguin Books 1963, p7.



Alexander Solzhenitsyn in prison uniform 1953.

Wikimedia

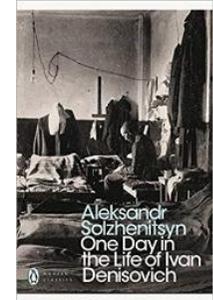
As usual, at five o'clock that morning reveille was sounded by the blows of a hammer on a length of rail hanging up near the staff quarters. The intermittent sound barely penetrated the window-panes on which the frost lay two fingers thick, and they ended almost as soon as they'd begun. It was cold outside, and the camp-guard was reluctant to go on beating out the reveille for long.

The clanging ceased, but everything-outside still looked like the middle of the night when Ivan Denisovich Shukhov got up to go to the bucket. It was pitch dark except for the yellow light cast on the window by three lamps - two in the outer zone, one inside the camp itself.

And no one came to unbolt the barrack-hut door; there was no sound of the barrack-orderlies pushing a pole into place to lift the barrel of nightsoil and carry it out.

Shukhov never overslept reveille. He always got up at once, for the next ninety minutes, until they assembled for work, belonged to him, not to the authorities, and any old-timer could always earn a bit - by sewing a pair of over-mittens for someone out of old sleeve lining; or bringing some rich lag in the team his dry valenki\* - right up to his bunk, so that he wouldn't have to stumble barefoot round the heaps of boots looking for his own pair; or going the rounds of the store-huts, offering to be of service, sweeping up this or fetching that; or going to the mess-hall to collect bowls from the tables and bring them stacked to the dishwashers - you're sure to be given something to eat there, though there were plenty of others at that game, more than plenty - and, what's worse, if you found a bowl with something left in it you could hardly resist licking it out. ....

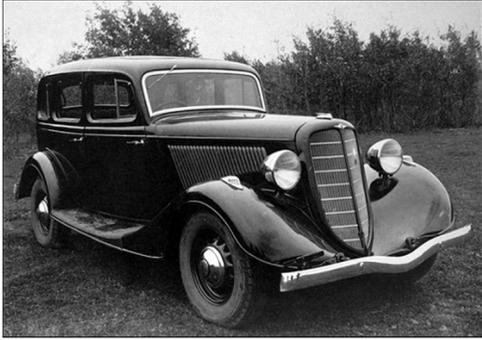
\**Knee-length felt boots for winter wear.*



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## *The Raven's Children* (extract)

by Yulia Yakovleva, 2016. Translated by Ruth Ahmedzai Kemp. Publ. Puffin Books 2018, p112.



GAZ M1 (1935-40)  
[www.classiccarcatalogue.com/brand/GAZ.html](http://www.classiccarcatalogue.com/brand/GAZ.html)



Shura rushed away from the house and his enraged sister, telling himself it was to save her from being caught. He ran along the pavement ...

Towards the raven-black car that growled menacingly as it rumbled down the road. The Black Raven crept slowly along the embankment, as if listening to the houses and windows. He seemed huge, but otherwise quite ordinary - the kind you see everywhere on the streets. This made him especially frightening, with his lacquered, black wings gleaming.

Shura ran to meet him, waving his arms. His heart was throbbing painfully in his chest. He was terrified.

*I'm no coward, Shura told himself. I'll prove it to her.*

'Hey! Hey, you... You're looking for me.'

The Raven stopped. Shura stood directly in front of him. He felt hot and clammy under his armpits. The Raven's crooked eyes peered at Shura without any expression.

And Shura said: 'I'm here.'

From *The Raven's Children* by Yulia Yakovleva (Penguin Classics 2018) Original Copyright © Yulia Yakovleva, 2016, English language translation copyright © Ruth Ahmedzai Kemp, 2018

# Lesson Plan:

## Russians in Space

Russia, with the other countries of the Soviet Union until 1991, was one of the leaders of space exploration in its early years and continues to be actively involved today.

This slide shows some of the highlights of that involvement – the rest of the presentation outlines its history in more detail.



## Slide 1

### 1903 – the idea



Based on a rocket sketch by Tsiolkovsky in 1903

*“The Earth is the cradle of mankind, but mankind cannot stay in the cradle forever.”*

*“First, inevitably, the idea, the fantasy, the fairy tale. Then, scientific calculation. Ultimately, fulfillment crowns the dream.”*



Konstantin Tsiolkovsky 1857-1935



*“Konstantin Tsiolkovsky, the Russian father of rocketry, was a self-educated man, but he developed insights into space travel and rocket science that are still in use over a hundred years later, earning him a place in history as one of the pioneers of aeronautics”.*

[www.space.com](http://www.space.com), Nola Taylor Redd

### Illustrations L-R:

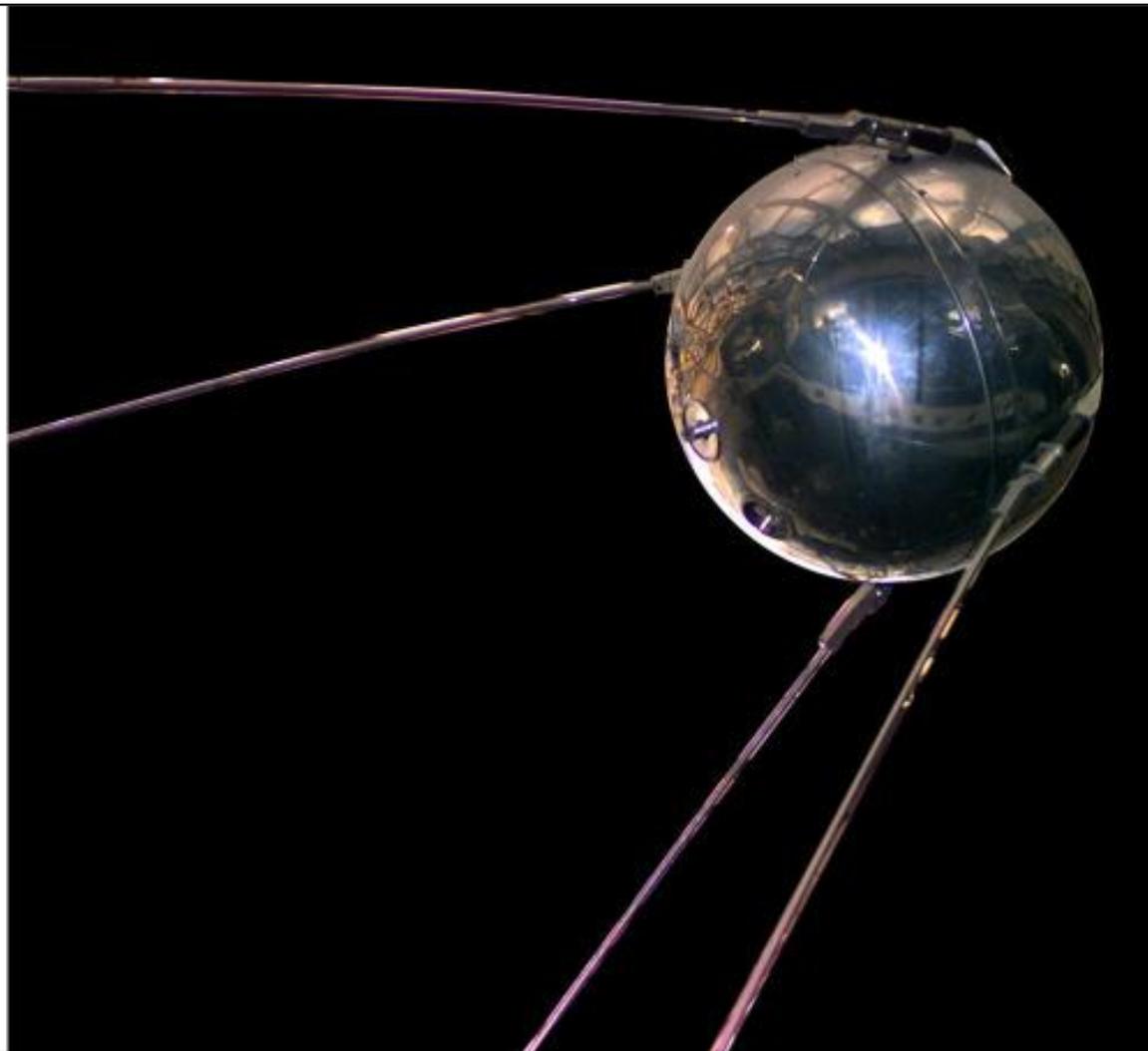
- Rocket sketch based on Tsiolkovsky's *The Exploration of Cosmic Space by Means of Reaction Devices*, 1903. You can find out more on the Smithsonian Museum website: <https://pioneersofflight.si.edu/content/tsiolkovsky-spacecraft-model>
- Statue of Tsiolkovsky in the Alley of Cosmonauts in Moscow. (Image credit: Andromed/Shutterstock.com)
- Tsiolkovsky experimenting with speed. [www.rulit.me/books/ciolkovskij-put-k-zvezdam-read-503846-1.html](http://www.rulit.me/books/ciolkovskij-put-k-zvezdam-read-503846-1.html)

Home-educated from the age of 14 because he was very deaf, Tsiolkovsky became even more passionately interested in maths and physics, as well as reading science fiction like the books of Jules Verne, and studied and experimented all his life. He was a schoolteacher and must have been one of the most eccentric and inspiring!

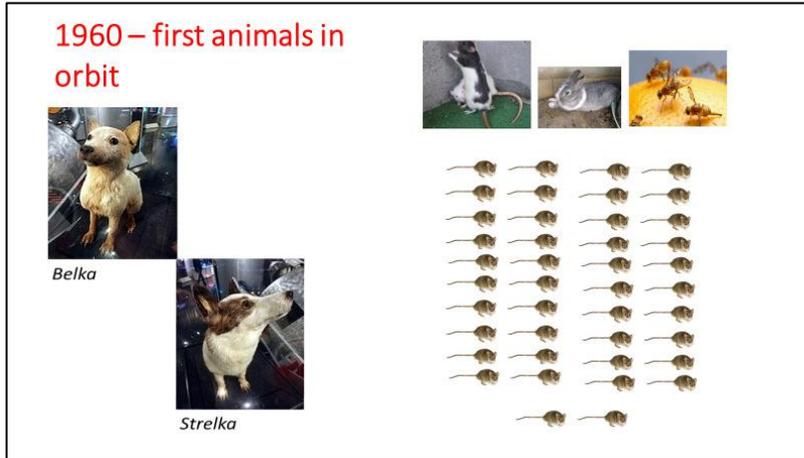
*What can you find out about Tsiolkovsky's life and his space discoveries and predictions?*

## 1957 – Sputnik

- **Sputnik 1**, the world's first satellite, was launched on October 4 1957. The launchpad in Kazakhstan has been used by all Russian space flights since.
- Sputnik 1 was 58 cm (23 inches) in diameter and circular “like the planets” by order of the chief designer **Sergei Korolyov**.
- A lot of people saw the light of Sputnik's rocket booster on the night of the launch and radio enthusiasts could pick up its signals.
- It took 96 minutes to orbit the earth and travelled at 29,000 km/hour. It kept going for 3 months then burned out and fell back to earth.



## Slide 3



The dogs Belka and Strelka, with the other creatures on their flight (a grey rabbit, 2 rats, 42 mice and a lot of fruit flies) were the first living creatures to successfully orbit the Earth and return safely afterwards.

You can see a short documentary of the flight here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u4SUH9qITxE>

You might enjoy the animated film *Belka and Strelka. Space dogs* (2010, dir. Inna Evlannikova and Svyatoslav Ushakov) which is available in English entitled just *Space Dogs*.



Why do you think animals were sent into space?

## Slide 4

**1961 – the first person in orbit**



**Yuri Gagarin**  
The first human to travel to outer space. Squeezed into the Vostok capsule Gagarin orbited the earth just once in 108 minutes before ejecting and parachuting to earth.



The R-7 (Semyorka) rocket launched Gagarin's **Vostok 1 spaceship** on 12 April 1961.



**Sergey Korolyov**  
The most important single person in the success of Soviet space achievement. Known as the “Chief Designer”.

### **YURI GAGARIN** 1934-68

Gagarin was born in the relatively peaceful setting of a collective farm in a village about 100 miles west of Moscow. When he was 6 the German army occupied the village and he showed his courage with exploits such as pouring mud into German tank batteries. His subsequent career as a test pilot, and first man in space, needed plenty of that courage.

As a young factory apprentice he began his flying career by joining the air cadets, flying old biplanes, but was soon promoted to train as a

military pilot flying new Mig jets. And in 1957 Gagarin was sent to Star City near Moscow as one of the first intake of “cosmonauts”. Four years later, on 12 April 1961, he was the first man in space.

Read more in *Starman: The Truth Behind the Legend of Yuri Gagarin* by Piers Bizony, 2011

### **SERGEY KOROLYOV – known only as the “Chief Designer”** 1907-66

Korolyov began his career as an aircraft designer but by the 1930s he had been recruited to work on rockets at a military research centre set up by Marshall Tukhachevsky of the Red Army. By the late 30s Stalin had begun his programme of mass arrests, including large numbers of army officers including Tukhachevsky. Korolyov was swept up in these terrible events and sentenced to 10 years in a labour camp in Kolyma, Siberia – which could easily have been a death sentence. Luckily for him he was transferred to a research laboratory for prisoners in Moscow which probably saved not only his life but also the future Soviet space programme.

His most important invention was the **R-7 rocket** which was used in 1961 to send Gagarin’s space capsule into orbit, and is the basis for the Soyuz rockets that take astronauts to the International Space Station today.

Slide 5

Human beings start to explore space

1960s, 70s and 80s



## Slide 6

### 1986-2001 MIR Space Station

Mir was the last Soviet space station becoming Russian at the end of the Soviet period in 1991. Space cooperation with the USA began at this time and American and other foreign astronauts began to use Mir.

*"the strangest, biggest structure ever seen in outer space. Traveling at an average speed of 17,885 mph, the space station orbited about 250 miles above the Earth. Mir was both great and graceful—and incongruous and awkward—all at the same time"*

*"a dragonfly with its wings outstretched"*

*"a hedgehog whose spines could pierce a spacewalker's suit"*

*"six school buses all hooked together"*



Quotes from NASA <https://history.nasa.gov/SP-4225/mir/mir.htm>

How would you describe Mir?

## Slide 7



After the USSR collapsed in 1991 the newly independent Russian Federation (Russia) took over the Soviet space programme and for a few years collaborated with the USA, sharing the Mir space station.

That has now been replaced by the International Space Station (ISS) which Russia has its own section of (shown in the box at top left of the main photograph), and collaborators now include many more countries, as listed above.

The photograph in the bottom right of the slide shows the method of descent of all astronauts and cosmonauts, which has now reverted to the Soviet system of a Soyuz capsule parachuted into the Kazakh desert.

The video on the next slide shows something of life for Russian cosmonauts on the ISS.

## Slide 8

### Life on the International Space Station (ISS)



Other YouTube videos to look for include:

*"Station Tour: Russian Segment"*.

*"Canadian Astronaut Chris Hadfield Training in Russia"*. Hadfield explains why all astronauts need to speak good Russian!

Russian cosmonauts on the ISS (YouTube – *"Life on the International Space Station HD"*)

What is it like in the Russian section of the International Space Station? To end this section have a look at the short videos recommended on the slide. Here are some more:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tgRMAVoHRbk> life on the ISS

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LS8Q8-Lz5Mk> landing

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M2\\_NeFbFcSw](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M2_NeFbFcSw) travelling to ISS (20min)

# Lesson Plan: **Daily life in Russia**



In this section you can read letters from some young Russians which will tell you a lot about their daily life, particularly school and after school activities but also such things as life in lockdown in 2020, where they live, how they get about, a favourite recipe, a recommendation for a cool place to hang out in Moscow, how 12 year old boys might celebrate their birthdays, and what the ancient Russians wrote on. And more!

Most of the letter writers live in Moscow but one lives in a city in the republic of Tatarstan and another in a village in Ingushetia.

After the letters we've added notes and a bit more information on some of the main holidays in Russia and other things we think you might be interested in.

Meet Anya, Vera, Liza, Nikita, Misha, Sabrina and Leila:



## LETTERS FROM MOSCOW



Hi!

My name is Anya. I am 13 years old. And I am from Moscow. I live in a block of flats in a flat on the 8<sup>th</sup> floor with my parents and grandparents. I live not far from the Big Moscow Circus. When I was younger I liked it and used to go there quite often.

I study at school. My school is not near my house and it takes me about 40 minutes to get there: I walk, take a bus, then go by metro, and walk again. My school is in the centre of Moscow. It is just within ten minutes' walk of the Kremlin and Red Square and there are a lot of museums around.

I go to school six days a week (from Monday till Saturday). And we have six lessons every day (from 9 a.m. until 2.40 p.m.). That's OK, but what I don't like is that there is too much homework I have to do every day after school (even on Sunday! ☹). So I have too little time to rest and I hardly ever go to bed before midnight.

I have a hobby. I am interested in art. Four times a week after school I go to the Art School and stay there for about 3 hours. We have 7 different lessons on drawing, painting, sculpture, decorative art and history of art. And sometimes we draw outdoors in places like parks and zoos. I love it! We also go sometimes to art trips. For example, last October I went to Florence to study the art of Renaissance and to paint a little too.

At school we have long summer holidays (for all summer! ☺) and 3 short holidays (only for a week) in every other season. I love traveling and try to travel a lot during my holidays. For the spring and autumn school holiday I usually go somewhere with my class and our class teacher. Russia is a big country, and we have already been to many interesting places in different parts of Russia (like Saint Petersburg,

Poland). New Year holidays I always spend with my parents. We prefer to go out of the city somewhere we can ski and skate and have other winter fun with snow. In summer I sometimes go camping with the school tourist club. And next summer I want to go on a real archaeological expedition to Velikiy Novgorod. We will be digging up a historical site. I hope I will find some real ancient item or a birch bark manuscript. I am really looking forward to it!

Anya, from Moscow



*My name is Vera.*

*I live in Moscow, Russia. I am 15.*

*I am home-studying now, so I have a lot of time for hobbies.*

*Last year I started playing drums, and this September my friends invited me to play with them on a school contest. I was really scared and nervous at the beginning, but they turned out to be super-nice and friendly so now I am very happy to play in a band. There are five of us - Kate and Julia play the guitar, Maria plays the bass and Igor plays the piano. I also play some other instruments and love music very much.*

*What I like the most in Moscow are markets that tourists don't know about. One of them is called "Locus Solus". It's not just a flea market, but a very friendly place where you can always find a person to talk to. Besides, various events like master-classes or board-game competitions often take places there.*

Hi!

My name is Liza, I am 13 years old. I live in Moscow, Russia. I have a twin brother Luka and a big brother Nikita. We live in a block of flats on the 18th floor. Our apartment is rather small, I have to share the bedroom with my brothers. Instead, we have a huge park just under our windows. In summer we usually ride bikes and play ping-pong there, in winter we do cross-country skiing or skating, there is a skating rink in our park with music and lights. Another favorite family activity is collecting mushrooms. There are no mushrooms in our park, we collect them in the forest near our country house in summer.



I study in a biology class. I go to school six times a week, Sunday is a day off. I, usually, wake up at 7:30 am and go to school by tube. In summer, I also can take a scooter, because it's faster. First lesson starts at 9 o'clock. Each lesson lasts 45 minutes. We have a break for 20 minutes after each lesson. I, usually, have 6-7 lessons every day and finish school about 3-3:30 p.m., but two days a week I have 8 lessons and stay at school till 5:30 pm. In the biology class Biology and Chemistry are the main subjects. So I have 8 biology lessons and 6 chemistry lessons per week. Tomorrow, during the biology lesson we will be dissecting a small shark and studying its internal organs, and then we will be drawing them. This is a bit scary, but really exciting! I am looking forward to it. After that, my friend Xenia and I are going to paint the shelf for plants in our class. We have already painted the shelf pink, and now we are going to draw flowers on it. I think it will look fabulous.

Besides, we study Geography, English, Computer science, Algebra, Geometry, History, PE and Physics in school. I also have Russian lessons, where we study how to write correctly, and literature, where we study different authors and their writings. At school we mostly read Russian authors: Pushkin, Lermontov, Chekhov, Gogol, but we read English and American authors as well: Shakespeare, Dickens, O. Henry. Now in my class we discuss To Kill a Mockingbird by Nelle Harper Lee and my twin brother studies Lord of the Flies by William

Gerald Golding. I prefer to read something more contemporary though, some fantasy or stories about teenagers and school life.

Sometimes instead of studying in school I go to Zvenigorod Biostation with my biology class for several days. It is not very far from Moscow and I like it there. We study ornithology, hydrobiology and botany (field biology) there. I love nature. ;)

Despite hard studying at school, I have some hobbies as well: I play the guitar, study in the Art school and love to bake. I can cook different dishes like cakes, spaghetti, pizza, salads and others.

I have sent you the recipe of the pancakes I make sometimes. Bliny (in Russian) are quite popular in Russia.  
Bye, Liza

Hi there,

I'm a 12 year old Russian boy and I'm a pupil at No.1317 school.

The main language in our school is Russian. We study maths, geography, English, history, biology, civics, PE and literature.

We start our school day at 8.30am. We usually have six lessons each day. We have a 15 minute break after every lesson. We have to wear a blue school uniform. We also can't take away our food from the canteen.

We sometimes go on day trips with our teachers. The last trip was to the theatre. We always celebrate on every occasion by making a concert, it's really interesting.

By the way I also play tennis. I have my tennis lessons from 3 to 5 times a week after school. I often take part in competitions. I have visited a lot of cities such as Ryazan, Minsk, Perm and Kazan. The last competition was in Perm and I took second place and got the cup.

Have a good day,  
Nikita



My name is Misha and I am 12 years old (13 in January). I live in Moscow, near the main university and I get to school by metro every day. I am in 7th grade in school 57, which some of the others have told about.

Beside school I study in some extra classes for things I like. For example, on Mondays and Thursdays I go to my theatrical studio. There are about 15 students and every year or half a year we are getting ready to present a show. Two years ago we presented «The Government Inspector» by Gogol', a Russian writer, and this year we are doing Chekhov. Every «class» is 2 hours and we rehearse for the show, but it is also a very happy experience because there we are all friends.

On Wednesdays I learn in VMSH – the evening maths school. Even my parents had studied in this class when they were my age! It is also for 2 hours. In the beginning everyone gets a sheet with some math problems – and we just solve them!

When you solve one, you have to call one of the «teachers» - usually they are university students - and describe to him your solution.

On Thursdays, before theatre I have the «What-Where-When»-game practice. It is an intellectual competition similar to Brain Ring. Our class has our own team in the whole school's competition!

On Fridays I have even two different classes: first – the linguistic club. We discuss one or two linguistic problems, similar to the ones in the Moscow Traditional Olympiad. In those, you are given a bunch of words or sentences translated to some weird language you don't know, but somehow you are able to recognise a rule in this language and translate some sentences yourself.

The second class is VPSH – the evening programming school. Those lessons could be different week by week: sometimes we learn how to build a particular program; sometimes we are working in a practice competition for starter programmers and sometimes our teacher just explains how something works.

I like all my classes and it's good that I'm able to visit all of them.

Soon there are the New Year holidays. Every year when school ends my family and I go to our dacha in the countryside, near a small town called Hot'kovo, in Abramtsevo. We meet there altogether – me, my parents and brother, my grandparents, my other grandmother, my uncle, aunt and three cousins. Usually, in winter it's very snowy there, so – me, my cousins plus my friend who also comes for holidays with his family – we all spend the time outside. We play just primitive snowballs, or build snow castles and snowmen.

On New Year's Eve we decorate the Christmas tree and then, after midnight, we have a big dinner with all my family. Then we take the presents from under the tree and give them to whomever they are addressed to. When the presents are finished, we go out to see the fireworks.

New Year is the most important celebration of the year because we start getting ready for it long before itself and people often celebrate it with all their family.



## LETTERS FROM TATARSTAN AND INGUSHETIA

Not all Russians live in Moscow! We've got two letters for you from people living in other parts of that huge country – Sabrina from Tatarstan and Leila from Ingushetia.

Can you find Tatarstan and Ingushetia on a map?  
What else can you find out about them?



*My morning begins at 7am. When I get up the rest of the family are usually already up and my mum is making breakfast, probably fried eggs. After breakfast I set off for school, and in winter if it's cold outside I have to put on lots of warm clothes so that I don't freeze.*

*I'm at School No. 167, which is 10 minutes walk from my home. My friend Samira often walks with me – we are in the same class. Most days we have five 40 minute lessons and a long break when we have lunch in the canteen. I don't like the food there, particularly the meatballs, but sometimes they make something good. I often take a packed lunch – apple, chocolate, biscuits and juice. When lessons are finished I have afterschool classes: music school, piano, choir, English, fashion club, dance, computer studies, art. I've almost no free time.*

*I get home around 6 or 7 in the evening and in the winter it's getting dark by then. I've still got my homework to do.*

*I like to message friends on social media and lie on the sofa with my phone. Later in the evening when my parents have put my little sister to bed we watch some TV together or play a board game.*

Sabrina, age 11. Tatarstan



*I'm Leila and I'm 13. I live in the best republic, Ingushetia. I live in the countryside and because of the Covid lockdown I'm not having much fun.*

*I've got a large family and spend most of my time outdoors because I have to help my mum in the vegetable garden.*

*Because of the lockdown we had lessons online. To be honest I'm really missing school, my teachers and classmates. As for schoolwork, I'll tell you in secret that it's easier to do it in school than at home. They explain things better and everything is completely different.*

*Now it's the holidays and one of the things I have to do is look after the chickens – feed them, give them water, watch that our neighbour's cats don't get them. When I have free time I normally play with my friends and things like that.*

*I haven't told you about my old granny – she's 80 – and I also need to help her. I hope that the rest of the summer won't be so boring, that all the lockdown problems will go away and most of all that we get to go away on holiday. Maybe to the sea, or to the mountains. We have very beautiful mountains and wonderful wildlife. My mum has relations in a mountain village so I'd like to go there too.*

Leila, age 13. Ingushetia

## RUSSIAN HOUSING



The great majority of Russians live in flats, mostly built in the 20C or more recently.

On the left is Anya's block of flats in Moscow.

Many flats have children's playgrounds at the back, like the flats on the right.

More information:

<https://www.rbth.com/lifestyle/328337-10-shocking-things-about-russian-homes>



Other types of Russian housing are "dachas" (holiday houses in countryside, often with vegetable gardens, see below left); misnamed "cottages" (*kottedzhi* in Russian) which are expensive suburban houses for the wealthy like the estate in the centre photograph below; and a diminishing number of old wooden houses, mainly in provincial towns (the example on the far right below is in Syzran on the Volga near Saratov) and often in poor condition.



What do Anya, Liza and Misha tell you about their homes and families?

## MOSCOW TRANSPORT

In larger cities like Moscow and St Petersburg the Metro (underground) is quickest for long distances. This is part of Moscow Metro map: Anya goes to school on the red line, which goes under the river and right into the centre.

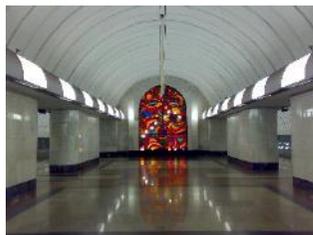
The stations are very grand and don't have advertisements on the walls. Here are some examples – can you find them on map?



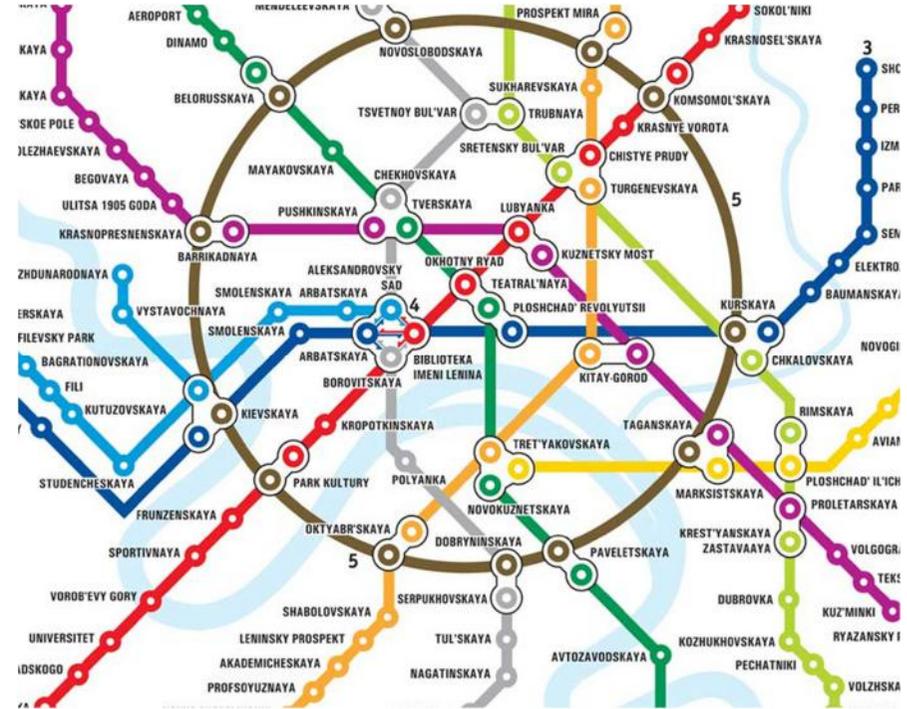
Mayakovskaya station (1938)  
Named after Russian poet Mayakovsky  
*Dark green line*



Kievskaya station (1954)  
Named after Kiev Rail Station, where trains leave to go to Kyiv in Ukraine.  
*Brown circle line*



Dubrovka station (2016)  
In Dubrovka region of Moscow  
*Light green line*



the  
on  
the

Other forms of transport are buses, trolleybuses, trams, minibus-taxis and taxis. Or scooter? You have a lot of choice!



## RUSSIAN SCHOOL – some more information



On the left is the main building of Anya's school. Her classroom is in the old building (centre) and she also sent us a photograph of what that looked like 100 years ago.

Most schools have numbers not names – Nikita tells us he goes to School No. 1317 and Sabrina is at School No. 167. Schools have eleven classes – pupils start in Class 1 at 6 or 7 years old and finish in class 11 at 17 or 18. Many children have had 3 or 4 years in kindergarten before they start school so will have learned the basics of reading and arithmetic there.



The school year starts on 1 September which is the Day of Knowledge (or the "First Bell") and treated like a festival. This video shows Class 1 pupils taking part in events at their new school with flowers for their teacher and a poetry recital.

<https://bit.ly/2EiuBTS>

The long summer holiday lasts from the beginning of June to the end of August.

Not all schools have a uniform but some do.

Most schools are coeducational.

*What else would you like to know? You will find more information about schools on <http://factsanddetails.com/russia>*

## CELEBRATIONS

These are greetings cards for some of the main holidays celebrated in Russia.



NEW YEAR'S  
EVE 31 Dec



MASLENITSA  
Feb/March



WOMEN'S DAY  
8 March



EASTER  
March/April



VICTORY DAY  
9 May

Misha and Ania have sent us descriptions of **NEW YEAR** and **MASLENITSA**. What can you find out about the other holidays?

Misha: "On **NEW YEAR'S EVE** we decorate the Christmas tree and then, after midnight, we have a big dinner with all my family. Then we take the presents from under the tree and give them to whomever they are addressed to. When the presents are finished, we go out to see the fireworks. New Year is the most important celebration of the year because we start getting ready for it long before itself and people often celebrate it with all their family."

Ania: "**MASLENITSA** is another feast people celebrate in Russia. It takes place in late February or early March, just before the Great Lent. It lasts for a week and in every home people bake pancakes and sometimes go to see their relatives or friends to eat pancakes together. There are different recipes of pancakes ('bliny' and 'oladi' in Russian), but my favourite are thin ones made with milk and yeasts, my mom cooks them only during Maslenitsa. Our school usually organizes charity fairs that week, children can buy home-made pancakes and cookies, and other various home-made crafts which they brought from home. For younger children some games and game competitions are organized in the schoolyard. At the end they also watch how Maslenitsa (a big doll) is burnt in a bonfire. I've never thought about what the Maslenitsa doll symbolises. Probably it is a pagan symbol."

## RUSSIAN REPUBLICS

Two of our letter writers come from Russian Republics – these are countries within Russia (properly called the Russian Federation), not independent states.

### Ingushetia



On the southern border of European Russia, high in the north Caucasus mountains, Ingushetia has an external border with Georgia to the south and internally it borders two other Russian Republics, Chechnya and North Ossetia. Its capital is Magas and the country has under half a million inhabitants. Ingushetia has a rich and interesting history and very beautiful mountain scenery. It first became part of the Russian empire in 19C.

*Did you know:* the wheel might have been invented in Ingushetia about 5000 years ago.

### Tatarstan



*Kul Sharif Mosque in Kazan*

Tatarstan is also in European Russia, on the river Volga about 1000 miles from Moscow on the west and bordering the Ural mountains on the east. It has a population of 3.7m people.

An important trading area before the Mongols took it over in the 13C, Tatarstan has been ruled from Moscow since Ivan the Terrible captured Kazan, its capital, in the 16C. Converted to Islam in the 10C Tatarstan is still an important Islamic republic, and nearly 60% of the population today are Muslim.

*Did you know:* a delicious crunchy sweet called chakchak (fried scraps of dough soaked in honey) is very popular in Tatarstan.



## FOOD – two Russian recipes for you to try:

Russians like to start their main meal of the day with soup, and a favourite soup in both Russia and nearby Ukraine is **Borshch**. **Blini** are very popular in Russia, with a variety of fillings. At Maslenitsa they are the main dish, like pancakes on Shrove Tuesday in the UK.

### Borshch

#### Ingredients:

- 3 beetroots, 2 potatoes, 2 carrots
- $\frac{1}{4}$  cabbage, 1 onion
- 3 teaspoons tomato puree
- 4 teaspoons butter
- 1 litre stock (stock cubes in boiling water are fine)
- Salt and pepper to taste
- 1 teaspoon sour cream and (if you can find it) a sprinkling of dill to garnish each bowl.



#### Method:

- 1) Wash the vegetables. Peel and chop the beetroot, carrot and potato, slice the cabbage and onion thinly.
- 2) Put all the prepared vegetables into a saucepan.
- 3) Add the tomato puree (or a thinly chopped tomato) and cover with hot water or stock.
- 4) Bring to the boil and simmer for about 30 minutes without covering the pan. Stir occasionally.
- 5) Add salt and pepper and cook for another 10 minutes or so.
- 6) Delicious served with sour cream and finely chopped herbs (eg dill).

Makes approx. 6 servings

### Liza's recipe for blini (pancakes)

#### To make the dough you need:

- 1 cup (130 g) of flour
- 1 teaspoon of baking powder
- 2 eggs
- $\frac{1}{2}$  teaspoon of salt
- 2 tablespoons of sugar
- 1 cup (250 ml) of milk
- 1 tablespoon of cooking oil



#### The recipe:

- 1) Combine and mix all the ingredients well in a large bowl.
- 2) Spoon the batter into the hot frying pan; cook on both sides until golden brown.
- 3) Serve the pancakes with honey, jam, caviar, sour cream or cheese