

Name:

Date:

Russian Geography



Russia is the world's largest country covering a seventh of the world's land. It extends so far that Vladivostok in the east is seven hours ahead of Moscow.

The Ural Mountains run for 1600 miles from the Arctic Ocean to Kazakhstan, dividing the country between Europe and Asia. Russia is rich in natural resources such as **timber, natural gas and oil**.

What Russia has in resources, it lacks in warm-water ports. Russian ports freeze over for almost nine months every year. The climate of Russia is incredibly cold, which actually is a natural form of protection against foreign invaders.

Yet in fact Russia's size created certain significant weaknesses. Governing large countries is still problematic in the age of instant mass communication, but Russian government developed at a time (under Peter the Great, 1689-1725) when there was little alternative to centralized authority. Poor roads, no railways and unfavorable climate meant that mid-seventeenth century Russian messengers could expect to travel a maximum of 50 miles in 24 hours. Delivery of messages to and from the empire's extremities could thus take many days.

Identify and describe the advantages and disadvantages of Russian Geography:

Byzantine Influence on the Development of Russia



The Byzantines greatly influenced the people of Eastern Europe. The people of Eastern Europe are called Slavs. The Slavs moved from central Asia into the present-day countries of Russia, Ukraine, Yugoslavia, Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Slovenia, Croatia, and Poland. The largest group of Slavs was the Russians.

The Slavs admired Byzantine civilization. Around 900 A.D., two monks or members of a religious order, began to preach to the Slavs. The monks, Cyril and Methodius, converted many Slavs to Christianity. The Slavs had no written language. The monks invented an alphabet for their spoken language. This alphabet is called the Cyrillic alphabet. Byzantine Christianity helped bring the people of Eastern Europe together. The Slavs accepted the Eastern Orthodox Church, the religion of the Byzantines. However, most of the rest of Europe belonged to the Roman Catholic Church. This difference isolated the Slavs from the rest of Europe.

Byzantine Art and architecture was predominant in Kiev and other Russian cities. Icons encouraged piety, and religious images became a principal form of Russian artistic expression. The onion domes of early Russian churches were an attempt by Russian architects to imitate the domed structures of Constantinople using wood as the primary building material.

The Byzantines traded greatly with Russia. Trade encouraged cultural diffusion. The Russians built their churches to look like Byzantine churches. A second influence was in the area of government. The Russians were affected by their contact with the Byzantines and tried to imitate their system of government. The Tsars modeled themselves after Byzantine emperors rather than the monarchs of Western Europe.

The Princes of Kiev exercised firm control over the Russian Orthodox Church. They drew inspiration from the Byzantines, and compiled a written legal code, and controlled trade with Byzantium and other areas. They gradually gained control of a large and wealthy society. By the eleventh century, Kiev had over four hundred churches and eight large marketplaces. By the early twelve century, the population was greater than thirty thousand. Sadly, a major fire in 1124 destroyed six hundred churches there.

Byzantine Influence on the Development of Russia

Who were the Slavs? Where does the largest population of Slavs live?

Who were Cyril and Methodius? And how did they influence the Slavs?

How did the work of Cyril and Methodius isolate the Slavs from the rest of Europe?

How did the Byzantine empire influence art and architecture in Russia?

How did trade with the Byzantine Empire influence the Russians?

How did Byzantine politics influence the Russian elite?

The Mongol Horde Conquers Russia



The Mongol horde proved unstoppable on land. They conquered every territory they invaded with a brutality rarely witnessed in history. The Mongols invaded Europe in 1223 sweeping away feudal opposition. The invaders left briefly to return in 1237 with an all-out assault on Russia. Resistance lasted three years before Russia submitted. The Mongol occupation left Russia behind the rest of Europe in economic, technological, and societal evolution.

The Mongol Empire stretched from China to the Middle East to Russia. Russia fell in 1240. The Russian nobility knew the Mongols were coming. The horde attacked in 1223 and defeated them at Kalka River. The invaders mysteriously retreated after the victory. The Russians were left to wonder who attacked them, where they came from, and why they attacked and left.

The Russians forgot about the strange alien invaders until they returned 14 years later. The Mongols surprised the unprepared Russian nobility with a fierce invasion force that swept across the Volga River in late 1236. The great Khan demanded Russian surrender a year later, but Yuri II declined the invitation. In response, the Mongols obliterated the city of Ryazan.

The Russians lacked the unity or military dynamism necessary to defeat the horde. The Mongols defeated Yuri's sons in battle and burnt Moscow to the ground. They laid waste to the capitol city of Vladimir on February 7, 1238. The crown prince escaped, but most of the royal family died in the siege.

The Mongols did not stop at the capitol. They systematically destroyed city after city and region after region on their conquest. They completed their mission in December 1240 with Kiev's capture. The Mongols ruled Russia until the late 15th century and the rise of the Czars.

Mongol rule kept Russia isolated from the rest of Europe. As a result, the kingdom fell behind their contemporaries as Europe advanced out of the Middle Ages to rule the world. Mongol influence and the subsequent clean-up effort after the horde's demise locked Russia out of the Renaissance and Reformation, and the Age of Exploration as well. In the end, Russia finally moved to catch up under Peter the Great.

The Mongol army emerged from nowhere. The Russians never saw them coming and moved slowly to react. Feudal tactics failed to counter the Mongol onslaught and Russia fell to the horde. Mongol rule slowed Russian development and isolated the kingdom from the world. It took an imaginative, inquisitive, and forward thinking ruler, Peter the Great, to modernize the nation.

The Mongol Horde Conquers Russia

Describe the legacy of the Mongolian empire.

What did Russian Yuri II's refusal to surrender to the Mongol horde 14 years after the invasion in 1225 A.D lead to?

Why was Russia unable to stop the Mongol invasion?

How did the Mongol invasion and occupation of Russia impact the future of Russia? What major events did they get locked out of?

Under which rulers did Russia begin to modernize? When did the Russians finally start to try and catch up to other European nations?

To what extent do you believe that the impact of Mongolian occupation and isolation of Russia can be seen in years leading up to World War I, during the war, and beyond?

<u>Before World War I</u>	<u>During World War I</u>	<u>After the War</u>