

Lesson One: The Rise of Russia through Peter the Great

Overview of Lesson: Students will be introduced to Russian history/civilization from Kievan Rus through Peter the Great. Through an introductory lecture and timeline activity, the reigns of major rulers/Tsars will be covered and an emphasis placed on how Russian history paralleled, yet was unique from Western Europe's.

This lesson will take at least two 50 minute periods.

Objectives:

1. Students will be able to locate Russia on a map of "Eurasia," and explain how Russia's geography contributed to its history.
2. Students will identify the major time periods and rulers in Russian history from the rise of Kiev through the reign of Peter the Great.
3. Students will be introduced to the Russian Orthodox religious tradition.
4. Students will understand the chronology of major rulers/events in Russian history in relation to other major events of world history.

Focus Questions:

1. How did Russia's geographic location and characteristics influence her history?
2. Where were the centers of early Russian civilization, and how were they significant?
3. How did Russia become "Orthodox?"
4. Why was one Ivan "Great" and the other "Terrible?"
5. How did the Romanovs end up ruling Russia?
6. How did Peter see Russia's political, social, and economic future differently from his predecessors? How did he attempt to make his vision a reality?

Resources/Materials:

- World map (wall or pull-down world map, or handouts of map of Russia from National Geographic – <http://www.nationalgeographic.com/mapmachine>)
- overhead projector, blank transparency, and overhead pens
- poster board or large paper (6 total)

- markers of assorted colors
- handouts of lecture outlines

Procedures/Activities:

1. Brainstorm activity: Ask students to share what they know about Russian history. To solicit ideas, ask them for names, places, or ideas that come to mind when they hear the word “Russia.” List what they come up with on an overhead, then set it aside, and tell the students you will revisit the list later.
2. Point Russia out on the map, and ask students if Russia is a part of Europe or Asia. When the students correctly answer, “both,” tell them that its location caused Russia to be influenced by both European and Asian traditions, and also to be fearful of attack from powerful neighbors to the West, North and South. Explain that Russia was seen as exotic to her Western European neighbors, because of the Asian influence.
3. Lecture on the Rise of Russia – hand out outline to students, and have them fill in supporting details as you provide them (see lecture notes). After the lecture, put on the overhead from the brainstorming activity, and put an asterisk by the names/events covered in the lecture.
4. Timeline Activity: Divide the class into six groups, give each group a poster board or large piece of paper. Assign each group one of the following time periods:

9th – 12th centuries; 13th-14th centuries, 15th century, 16th, 17th, early 18th

Using their lecture notes, textbooks, and other world history resources you are able to provide in the classroom, have each group construct a timeline for its assigned time period. Each group should choose at least five significant events from Russian history to put on its timeline, using one color of marker. Then the group should put 5 events from European, Asian, or African history (depending on subject area of class) on the timeline that occurred during the same time period, using a different color marker. Students should provide a key, indicating which color refers to Russian/ other events.

Evaluation/Assessment:

1. Have students share the timelines with the whole class and explain the events they chose to put on their timelines and why they chose those events. Give the students a grade based on number of events, significance of events chosen, presentation, and explanation.

2. Students may be quizzed/tested on the lecture material as a part of a unit test

Extension Activities:

1. Students could do further research on one of the early Russian leaders and write a persuasive essay arguing how his/her contributions to Russian history were significant.
2. Slides of various figures in Russian history could be used to illustrate the lecture. Pictures may be found on the internet, or school libraries may have access to World History slide collections.

Rise of Russia

- I. Geographic Factors

- II. Early People

- III. Kievan Rus
 - A. Oleg – Unites Kingdoms (880)
 - B. Prince Vladimir Chooses Orthodox Religion from Byzantium (988)
 - C. Prosperous Kiev

- IV. Mongol Invasion and Rule (1237-1450)
 - A. Destruction and Isolation
 - B. Moscow
 - 1.
 - 2.
 - 3.

- V. Ivan III – “The Great” (1462-1505)
 - A. Marriage
 - B. Autocrat and Tsar
 - C. Defeat of Mongols

- VI. Ivan IV – “The Terrible” (1533-1584)
 - A. Early Reign
 - B. Brutality
 - C. St. Basil’s

- VII. Time of Troubles (1598- 1613)

- A. Description
- B. 1613 – Romanov Elected Tsar
- C. Romanovs Consolidate Power
 - 1.
 - 2.

VIII. Alexis I (1645-1676)

- A. Reform in Church
- B. European Interest

IX. Peter I (1682-1725)

- A. Interest in Western Europe
- B. Table of Ranks (1722)
- C. St. Petersburg (1703)
- D. Strengthened Russian System

Lecture Notes:

- I. **Geographic Features** – Russia is mostly a great plain, extending from Europe into Siberia. It has mountain ranges at its borders, and many rivers and lakes, but it's essentially landlocked, so access to the sea has always been a goal of leaders. It's located far North (same latitude as Canada in South, Alaska in North), so cold climate, not much good soil. Its location on two continents had an impact on its history.
- II. **Early People** – Slavs were the earliest people – defined by language they spoke which was an early Russian. There was influence of early invaders, like the Greeks, who colonized there, the Huns and Scandinavians known as Varangians.
- III. **Kievan Rus (Russia)** – Cities of Novgorod and Kiev united into the state of Rus under Oleg in 880. Prince Vladimir selected Byzantine (Orthodox) Christianity in 988. Kiev in the 10th and 11th centuries was a prosperous center of Byzantine art, architecture, and culture
- IV. **Mongol Invasion** – Russia was under the control of Mongol Khans Genghis Khan's grandson Batu invaded and destroyed every town (Kiev destroyed), and cut Russia off from the rest of the world. Moscow was founded as a military outpost in 1125, and grew in prestige due to its princes' close relationship with the Khans (collected tributes for them), and Moscow became a center of the Orthodox Church when the Metropolitan moved his seat there (became known as the "Third Rome" (after Rome, Constantinople). The Prince of Moscow (Ivan I) was named "Grand Prince" by the Khan.
- V. **Ivan III** – married niece of last Byzantine Emperor (fall of Constantinople – 1453), took symbol of Byzantine emperors (double eagle) as symbol of Russia. In 1472, started using titles of autocrat (sole ruler) and Tsar (from Roman "Caesar") and declared independence from Mongols, defeated Khan in 1480.
- VI. **Ivan IV** – first to be crowned with official title of "Tsar." Early reign successful in conquering much territory, appreciated value of foreign trade, cultures (correspondence with Elizabeth I). In 1560, his beloved wife died, and he became a ruthless man who saw treachery everywhere, murdered many people, including his own son. Built St. Basil's from 1555- 1560 in Moscow, beautiful, unique church which exemplified Russian architectural style
- VII. **Time of Troubles** – Boris Godunov had been elected Regent for Ivan's son (mentally disabled) and then Tsar, but controversy over claim, so there followed chaotic time during which rivals fought over

throne, until 1613 when the National Assembly elected Michael Romanov as Tsar (family would rule until 1917). Romanovs consolidate power through repressing representative institutions and strengthening serfdom (peasants bound to landed manors) to get nobles' support (1675 – serfs bought and sold as slaves)

- VIII. Alexis I** – Reforms take place in Church led by Patriarch Nikon, “Old Believers” reject reform and are persecuted, become cult; the foreign quarter of Moscow is expanded, and court becomes a mixture of Eastern and Western customs.
- IX. Peter I** – influenced by Western ideas from an early age, because spent much time in foreign quarters of Moscow as child where he learned about shipbuilding, navigation from Dutch and English sea captains. Spent year abroad and became convinced Russia was backward compared to Western Europe, so tried to learn what he could to bring Western methods of organization and technology back to Russia – standardized army, built navy, hired European advisors, forced women to give up veils (had been secluded in Asian tradition), introduced Western clothing. He got rid of the “Duma” and established a Senate that was controlled by him. He put the Church under State control (became supreme religious and secular leader), declared himself emperor. He required all nobility to serve in the army or civil administration and set up a Table of Ranks, which gave everyone a place according to his bureaucratic or military office. The first 8 grades were nobility. In 1703, he founded St. Petersburg as his “window on the West” from land he conquered from Sweden and moved capital there and forced nobles to move there. He wanted St. Petersburg to be a symbol of a new, Westernized Russia, as opposed to Moscow, which represented traditional, Slavic culture. Many Russians resented these changes and his taxes on beards, hats, coffins, voting, mills, etc which were required in order to pay for the city and his European advisors. Despite opposition, Peter was a strong leader who laid the groundwork for what would be called the “Russian System” throughout the 18th and 19th centuries: he strengthened autocracy, serfdom, and bureaucracy, while bringing his country out of isolation, making it an international power.