

Russia and the Caucasus

Section 1



MAIN IDEAS

1. The physical features of Russia and the Caucasus include plains, mountains, and rivers.
2. Climate and plant life change from north to south in Russia and vary in the Caucasus.
3. Russia and the Caucasus have a wealth of resources, but many are hard to access.

Key Terms and Places

Ural Mountains mountain range where Europe and Asia meet

Caspian Sea borders the Caucasus, the world's largest inland sea

Caucasus Mountains mountain range which forms the Caucasus region's northern border with Russia

Moscow Russia's capital

Siberia a vast region in Russia, stretching from the Urals to the Pacific Ocean

Volga River located in western Russia, the longest river in Europe

taiga a forest of mainly evergreen trees covering much of Russia

Section Summary

PHYSICAL FEATURES

The continents of Asia and Europe meet in Russia's **Ural Mountains**, forming the large landmass Eurasia. A large part of Eurasia is Russia, the world's largest country in area.

Three much smaller countries, Georgia, Armenia, and Azerbaijan, lie to the south in the Caucasus. This area, which lies between the Black Sea and the **Caspian Sea**, is named for the **Caucasus Mountains**.

Plains and mountains cover much of Russia and the Caucasus. The fertile Northern European Plain, Russia's heartland, extends across western Russia. Here lies **Moscow**, Russia's capital.

Beyond this plain, the vast region of **Siberia** stretches from the Ural Mountains to the Pacific Ocean. The West Siberian Plain is a huge, flat,

Which two continents meet in the Ural Mountains?

What three countries make up the Caucasus?

What is the capital of Russia?

Section 1, continued

marshy area. East of this plain lies the Central Siberian Plateau. High mountain ranges run through southern and eastern Siberia. Eastern Siberia is called the Russian Far East, which includes the Kamchatka Peninsula and several islands. This area is part of the Ring of Fire, known for its earthquakes and active volcanoes.

What is the Ring of Fire?

The Caucasus countries consist mainly of rugged uplands. The Caucasus Mountains contain Europe's highest peak, Mount Elbrus.

Rivers in Russia include the Ob, Yenisey, Lena, and **Volga**, the longest river in Europe. Russia also has some 200,000 lakes, including Lake Baikal, the world's deepest lake. The Black Sea connects to the Mediterranean Sea and is important for trade. The Caspian Sea is the world's largest inland sea.

What is the longest river in Europe?

CLIMATE AND PLANT LIFE

Russia is mainly cold, with short summers and long, snowy winters. Plant life includes small plants in the north and the vast **taiga**, a forest of mainly evergreen trees. Climate in the Caucasus ranges from cooler in the uplands to warm and wet along the Black Sea to mainly hot and dry in Azerbaijan.

NATURAL RESOURCES

Russia and the Caucasus have a wealth of natural resources, including rich soils, timber, metals, precious gems, and energy resources. These resources have been poorly managed, however, and many remaining resources lie in remote areas.

What are the region's natural resources?

CHALLENGE ACTIVITY

Critical Thinking: Making Generalizations Based on what you've read so far, write a short essay about what it might be like to live in Russia.

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Section 2



MAIN IDEAS

1. The Russian empire grew under powerful leaders, but unrest and war led to its end.
2. The Soviet Union emerged as a Communist superpower with rigid government control.
3. Russia's history and diversity have influenced its culture.

Key Terms and Places

Kiev early center of Russias, now the capital of Ukraine

Cyrillic a form of the Greek alphabet

czar emperor

Bolsheviks Communist group that seized power during the Russian Revolution

gulags Soviet labor camps

Section Summary

THE RUSSIAN EMPIRE

In the AD 800s, Viking traders from Scandinavia helped create the first Russian state of Kievan among the Slavs. Kievan was centered around the city of **Kiev**, now the capital of Ukraine.

Over time, missionaries introduced Orthodox Christianity and **Cyrillic**, a form of the Greek alphabet which Russians still use today.

In the 1200s, Mongol invaders called Tatars conquered Kiev. Local Russian princes ruled several states under the Mongols. Muscovy became the strongest state, with Moscow its main city. After about 200 years Muscovy's prince, Ivan III, seized control from the Mongols. Then in the 1540s, his grandson Ivan IV crowned himself **czar**, or emperor. He became known as Ivan the Terrible for being a cruel and savage ruler.

Muscovy developed into the country of Russia. Peter the Great and then Catherine the Great ruled as czars, building a huge empire and world power.

What is Cyrillic?

What name was Ivan IV given for being such a cruel and savage ruler?

Section 2, continued

Unrest, war, and other problems weakened the Russian empire. In 1917, the czar lost support and was forced to give up the throne. The **Bolsheviks**, a Russian Communist group, seized power in the Russian Revolution. Bolshevik leaders formed the Soviet Union in 1922.

What was the name of the Russian Communist group that seized power during the Russian Revolution?

THE SOVIET UNION

The Soviet Union became a Communist country, led by Vladimir Lenin. This type of government controls all aspects of life and owns all property. After Lenin's death in 1924, Joseph Stalin ruled as a brutal dictator. He set up a command economy. His government made all economic decisions, took over all industries and farms, and strictly controlled its people. Anyone who spoke out against the government was sent to **gulags**, harsh Soviet labor camps often located in Siberia.

Who was the first leader of the Soviet Union when it became a Communist country?

After suffering many losses in World War II, Stalin worked to create a protective buffer around the Soviet Union. He set up Communist governments in Eastern Europe. As a result, the Cold War, a period of tense rivalry and arms race between the United States and the Soviet Union, developed. The Soviet Union grew weak in the 1980s, then it fell apart in 1991.

What was the Cold War?

CULTURE

More than 140 million people live in Russia. Most are ethnic Russians, or Slavs, but Russia also has many other ethnic groups. The main faith is Russian Orthodox Christian. Russia has made many contributions to the arts and sciences, including ballet and space research.

How many people live in Russia today?

CHALLENGE ACTIVITY

Critical Thinking: Drawing Inferences What do you think Russia would be like today if the Soviet Union had not collapsed? Give support for your answer.

Russia and the Caucasus

Section 3



MAIN IDEAS

1. The Russian Federation is working to develop democracy and a market economy.
2. Russia's physical geography, cities, and economy define its many culture regions.
3. Russia faces a number of serious challenges .

Key Terms and Places

dachas Russian country houses

St. Petersburg city founded by Peter the Great and styled after those of Western Europe

smelters factories that produce metal ores

Trans-Siberian Railroad the longest single rail line in the world, running from Moscow to Vladivostok on the east coast

Chechnya a Russian Republic in the Caucasus Mountains, an area of ethnic conflict

Section Summary

THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION

The Russian Federation is governed by an elected president, an appointed prime minister, and a legislature called the Federal Assembly. Since 1991, Russia has been changing from communism to a democracy with a market economy based on free trade and competition. These changes have led to economic growth that is most visible today in Russia's cities. A wide range of goods and services can be found here. Most Russians live in large apartment buildings in cities, but they still enjoy nature. Cities often have large parks and many richer Russians own **dachas**, or country houses.

What is the Russian legislature called?

CULTURE REGIONS

The Russian heartland consists of four major culture regions—the Moscow, St. Petersburg, Volga, and Urals regions.

What are the four regions of Russia's heartland?

Section 3, continued

Moscow is Russia’s capital and largest city. The Kremlin holds Russia’s government offices, beautiful palaces, and gold-domed churches. Moscow is a huge industrial region.

Founded by Peter the Great, **St. Petersburg** was styled after cities of Western Europe and served as Russia’s capital for some 200 years. Its location on the Gulf of Finland has made the city an important trade center.

The Volga River of the Volga Region is a major shipping route and source of hydroelectric power. Factories here process oil and gas. The Caspian Sea provides black caviar.

The Urals region is an important mining region. **Smelters**, or factories that process metal ores, process copper and iron.

Siberia is east of the Urals. Winters there are long and severe. Siberia has a many natural resources, but accessing them is difficult. Lumber, mining, and oil production are the most important industries. Most towns follow the route of the **Trans-Siberian Railroad**, the longest single rail line in the world.

Siberia’s coastal areas and islands are known as the Russian Far East. Resources include timber, rich soils, oil, minerals, and fishing. Vladivostock is the area’s main seaport.

RUSSIA’S CHALLENGES

Russia faces economic, employment, health, population, environment, and ethnic challenges. A major ethnic conflict is in the Russian republic of **Chechnya**, where some people desire independence.

CHALLENGE ACTIVITY

Critical Thinking: Drawing Inferences Based on what you’ve learned about each region, which area do you think holds the most potential economically for Russia? Why?

Where is St. Petersburg located?

Which river is a major shipping route in the Volga Region?

What are winters like in Siberia?

What is notable about the Trans-Siberian Railroad?

Vladimir Lenin

1870–1924



HOW HE AFFECTED THE WORLD

Vladimir Lenin was a Russian **revolutionary** who changed the course of European history by establishing a Communist Soviet Union.

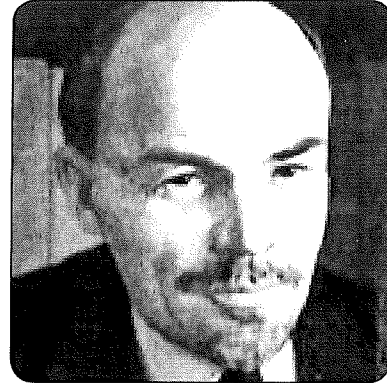


As you read the biography below, think about how Lenin's determination affected Russia's history for much of the 1900s.

Vladimir Lenin became a revolutionary as a young adult, around same the time his brother was executed for conspiring to assassinate the Russian **czar**. He was banished from studying at a university for his activities, but he finished his law studies independently. He practiced law briefly before focusing on Marxism—the belief that a society will naturally progress from capitalism to communism.

Lenin spent much of the years between 1895 and 1917 either banished from Russia or in voluntary **exile**. During this time, he developed and wrote about a branch of Marxism that called for a **proletariat** revolution to bring about communism. Namely, he wanted the working class to overthrow the **bourgeoisie** and establish a classless society. This means that land and property are owned in common, not by individuals. Lenin believed in achieving this by force.

World War I proved the perfect opportunity for Lenin to stage his revolution. He believed this war



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VOCABULARY

revolutionary one who fights for radical change

czar emperor

exile forced absence from your country

proletariat working class

bourgeoisie class that owns most of the wealth

was caused by greed on both sides for land. After three years at war, Russian peasants supported Lenin's plan for peace with Germany. The German government supported Lenin's plan as well.

In 1917 Lenin and his Bolshevik Party (his brand of Marxism) took power. They established a Soviet government with Lenin as their leader. The government kept its promise of peace with Germany by signing a treaty. They also ended private ownership of land and distributed it among the working class. Factory workers finally had control over their production—in theory. Lenin set up a Communist dictatorship and put down all opposition.

After his death in 1924, his body was specially preserved and placed on display in Moscow. It is still on display.

WHAT DID YOU LEARN?

1. Identify What were some of the major components of Lenin's political beliefs?

2. Evaluate Do you think Lenin was a popular leader in his country? Give reasons for your answer.

ACTIVITY

Suppose that it is October 1917, and you are Vladimir Lenin. You are about to give your first speech as the new, victorious leader of Russia. What will you say to the men and women of your country? Write your speech on a separate piece of paper.