

# Russian Language & Culture

—  
Education Pack



## Introduction

**Languages are the bedrock of the world's cultural heritage. Every language offers a rich and unique insight into different ways of thinking and living as well as into the history of the myriad of cultures and peoples across the globe.**

British Council: Languages for the Future

Russia is a fascinating, diverse country stretching over two continents with a rich culture and history. This education pack helps primary teachers to introduce some aspects of Russian language and culture to their pupils. It contains lessons and assembly plans, factual information and resources to help pupils develop a deeper knowledge and understanding of the rich language and culture of Russia and the lives of young Russians.

The materials are designed to be flexible and adaptable for use in a variety of settings. They can be used as starting points for individual lessons and assemblies or form part of larger cross-curricular joint projects involving collaboration over a number of subjects. Your pupils can learn how to greet a friend in Russian and start to decode its unfamiliar alphabet, find out about Russia's exciting contribution to our understanding of space and make a balloon rocket. You can also sample its rich literary heritage and get to know about daily life in Russia from some of its young people.

Did you know that Russia is the largest country in the world? It is about 6000 miles in length and that means that when we are waking up in the UK it is mid - morning in Moscow and nearly bedtime in the far east.



# Contents

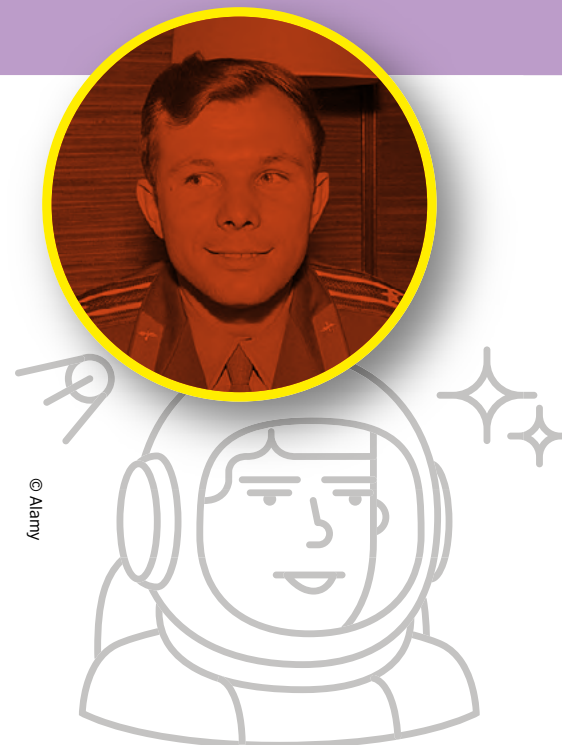
Introduction .....	page 2
Assembly plan: Let's find out about Russia .....	page 4
Russian language .....	page 12
Russians in space – balloon rocket challenge .....	page 14
Russian literature .....	page 18
Everyday life for young people .....	page 21
Letters from Russian children .....	page 22
Celebrations .....	page 25
Russian food and recipes .....	page 27
Make a Fabergé egg .....	page 28
Find out more .....	page 30



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## Assembly plan: Information for teachers

These notes include background information and ideas that you can use or adapt for an assembly.

Play some music by the Russian composer Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky for your pupils to listen to as they come into and out of assembly. Tchaikovsky was probably the most popular Russian composer in history and is celebrated for his ballet music, especially *Swan Lake*, *The Sleeping Beauty* and *The Nutcracker*.

Begin the assembly with the Russian greeting for hello: привет – pronounced preev-yet. Then explain that in today's assembly we are going to find out about the country of Russia. Ask what they already know about this fascinating country? Did they recognise the music on the way in by the famous Russian composer Tchaikovsky? What did it make them think of? Have any of them danced to it?

If you have pupils whose families are from Russia, you could invite them to help you to present the assembly and prepare some short phrases in Russian to demonstrate and translate.

## Assembly slides

1: Introduction to Russia

2: Map of Russia

3: Russian flag

4: Russian alphabet

5: Russian names

6: Russian dolls

7: The Crow and the Fox



## Slide 1

Russia is the largest country in the world. It is so big that it has 9 time zones and is part of two continents - both Europe and Asia. The border between the two continents runs through a mountain range called The Ural Mountains. On one side is Europe and on the other is Asia. A lot of Asian Russia is covered in forest. It can be hot in the summer, but VERY cold in the winter.

There are bears (and wolves and tigers) in the Russian forests! Bears in Russia (including teddy bears and bears in stories) are known as Миша (Misha, pronounced Meesha). Misha is a short form of the name Michael, like Micky or Mike.





## Slide 2

Can you see that Russia shares borders with many countries? Ask pupils sitting near the front to come and point out some of the countries they can see on the map and the location of the capital city Moscow.





## Slide 3: Russian flag and architecture

This is the Russian flag. Many other countries' flags also 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.



Russia's main religion is Christianity, and the main denomination is the Russian Orthodox Church. Russian churches have “onion domes”, sometimes covered in gold like this one. There are a number of other religions practised too, including Islam.



## Slide 4

The alphabet used by the Russian language has 33 letters and is called the Cyrillic alphabet, (named after Cyril the monk who is said to have created it). It is used by a variety of languages, with some slight variations, around the world including many Slavonic languages such as Bulgarian and Serbian and others, including many of the non-Slavonic languages of the former USSR and Mongolian within the Peoples' Republic of Mongolia.

You can see some Russian letters in this grid. Some of the letters look familiar, but some are completely different. Can the pupils spot letters that look like English (Latin alphabet) letters?

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!
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Aa sounds like c<u>a</u>t</li> <li>• Ee sounds like <u>y</u>eellow</li> <li>• Kk sounds like <u>k</u>ettle</li> <li>• Mm sounds like <u>m</u>an</li> <li>• Oo sounds like <u>o</u>ffer</li> <li>• Tt sounds like <u>t</u>iger</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ВВ sounds like <u>v</u>ery</li> <li>• НН sounds like <u>n</u>et</li> <li>• Рр sounds like <u>r</u>ed</li> <li>• Сс sounds like <u>s</u>now</li> <li>• Уу sounds like b<u>oo</u>m</li> <li>• Хх sounds like <u>h</u>a!</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Бб sounds like <u>b</u>all</li> <li>• Гг sounds like <u>g</u>oal</li> <li>• Ии sounds like m<u>ee</u>t</li> <li>• Лл sounds like <u>l</u>ove</li> <li>• Пп sounds like <u>p</u>ot</li> <li>• Фф sounds like <u>f</u>oot</li> <li>• Шш sounds like <u>sh</u>oe</li> </ul>



## Slide 5: Russian names

All Russians have middle names that are based on their father's first name. This 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. So for example, Harry Potter whose father's name was James, would be Harry Jamesovitch Potter and Ginny Weasley would be Ginny Arthurovna Weasley. However, it can be a bit more complicated as there is no H sound in Russian, so Harry Potter is known as Gary Potter in Russian.

Invite a boy and girl who you know will be comfortable to talk about their family, to come out and tell you the first name of their father. Ask them to have a go at making a Russian version of their name.



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## Slide 6

Other familiar objects that are often associated with Russia include decorated wooden dolls with a secret inside them known as – a матрёшка (or mat-ryosh-ka) in Russian. One well known Russian doll maker has made a matryoshka set that included seventy-two figures! If you are able to find a set of Russian dolls, demonstrate and ask the pupils to guess how many smaller dolls they think will be inside before revealing them.





## Slide 7

Russia is well known for its stories and literature. To conclude the assembly, read aloud a famous Russian fable by Ivan Krylov about a vain crow and a cunning fox. Perhaps ask pupils to help you by holding up pictures or puppets as you tell the story. Fables always contain morals in their stories. Ask your pupils if this story reminds them of any other fables they know. What do they think is the moral of this Russian tale?

### 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!  
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.

# An introduction to Russian Language Русский язык

## Information for teachers

Over 150 million people speak Russian, making it the 8th most commonly spoken language in the world. In the UK, about 65,000 people speak Russian as one of their main languages. It is also spoken in many other countries, such as Uzbekistan, Belarus, Latvia, Kazakhstan, Ukraine, Lithuania, Azerbaijan, Moldova and Estonia.

The Russian alphabet is phonetic. However, it's not as difficult to read as you might think. Some of the letters are the same as English ones, and once you recognise the letters, you can read aloud in Russian and a Russian person will understand you.

Russia is such a large country that you would think that there must be lots of different dialects and accents, but that is not the case. Once you can speak Russian, you can usually understand and be understood by anyone else who speaks it.

For English speaking learners of the language, the Russian alphabet can be divided into 3 main groups: letters similar or identical to English, letters similar in appearance to English but which have different sounds, and those totally alien to the English reader, though some have very similar sounds to English!

**Curriculum Links:** Languages

**Core skills:** Communication and collaboration

**Learning objectives:** To find out more about the Russian alphabet, learn how to greet someone and count from 1 – 10 in Russian.

**Resources:** You will need copies of Russian greetings, letters and numbers on the activity sheet, access to the Internet.

## Share the copy of part of the Russian alphabet on slide 4, which contains some of the most common letters in Russian.

Discuss other languages that are written using different alphabets. Ask your pupils to choose a Russian letter from the third column, 'trace' it with their fingers, and then write it on mini whiteboards. Then quiz their partner who will try to say the sound of the letter out loud. Ask them to try writing a secret message - English words in Russian letters – and ask their partner to decode it. A full version of the Russian alphabet can be found in Appendix 1 at the end of the pack.

### Partner school activities

If you are working with a partner school, you could share secret messages with your partner school to translate.






## Activity sheet 1


### The Russian alphabet


#### Greeting and counting in Russian


Watch a short clip of two people greeting each other in Russian. <https://vimeo.com/421587519>. Encourage your pupils to listen carefully to these Russian phrases. Ask them to try saying them aloud, and then work with a partner to introduce themselves in Russian. The phonetic pronunciation is in brackets.


Здравствуйте (zdravstvuyute) – **hello** 

До свидания (da svidaniya) – **good bye** 


Привет (preevyet) – **hi (informal)** 

Пока (paka) – **bye/see you later (informal)** 


Как дела ? (kak dela ?) – **how are you?** 


Хорошо (harasho) – **good** 

Плохо (plokha) – **bad** 

Спасибо (spasiba) – **thank you** 


Как тебя зовут? (Kak teeb-ya zavoot?) – **what is your name?** 


Меня зовут Ольга (Menya zavoot Olga) – **My name is Olga** 


Да (da) – **yes** 


Нет (nyet) – **no** 


You could also try counting from zero to ten in Russian using the following information and short video <https://vimeo.com/421587746> and learning some more Russian phrases using an app such as Duolingo

1 – Один (adeen) 


2 – Два (dva) 


3 – Три (tree) 


4 – Четыре (chiteereh) 


5 – Пять (pyat) 

6 – Шесть (shest) 

7 – Семь (seeyem) 

8 – Восемь (voseeyem) 

9 – Девять (dyehvvet) 

10 – Десять (dyehsyet) 

## Russians in space

### Notes for teachers to share with pupils

Russia was one of the leaders in the early years of space exploration. It achieved a number of pioneering accomplishments and continues to be actively involved in this field of science today. These achievements included Sputnik 1, the world's first satellite which was launched on October 4th 1957 from a launchpad in Kazakhstan - used by all Russian space flights since. Sputnik 1 was 58cm in diameter and designed to be circular like the planets. 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 29,000km/hour. It kept going for 3 months then burned and fell back to earth.

Russia also sent the first men and women into space. On 12 April 1961, cosmonaut Yuri Gagarin squeezed into the Vostok 1 capsule. He orbited the earth once in 108 minutes before ejecting and parachuting to earth. This event is still celebrated every year as a day of national pride in Russia on 12 April, which is known as Cosmonauts' Day. Two years later, Valentina Tereshkova became the first woman to travel into space on a solo mission at the age of just 27. On June 16, 1963, she was launched into space in the spacecraft Vostok 6. She spent more than 70 hours completing 48 orbits of the Earth on her own.

Encourage your pupils to discover more about some of the Russian innovations in space exploration by creating an illustrated timeline using the information on activity sheet 2.

After the USSR collapsed in 1991, the newly independent Russian Federation took over the Soviet space programme and for a few years worked with the USA, sharing the Mir space station. That has now been replaced by the International Space Station (ISS) with collaborators from five space agencies from Russia, the United States, Japan, Europe and Canada.

Curriculum Links: Science, Design Technology

Core skills: Communication and collaboration, critical thinking and problem solving.

Learning objectives: To learn about the history of Russian space exploration and the work of the international space station. To carry out science experiments making balloon rockets.

Resources: You will need activity sheet 2, scissors, glue, resources to make balloon rockets.



## Russians in space

### Russians in space

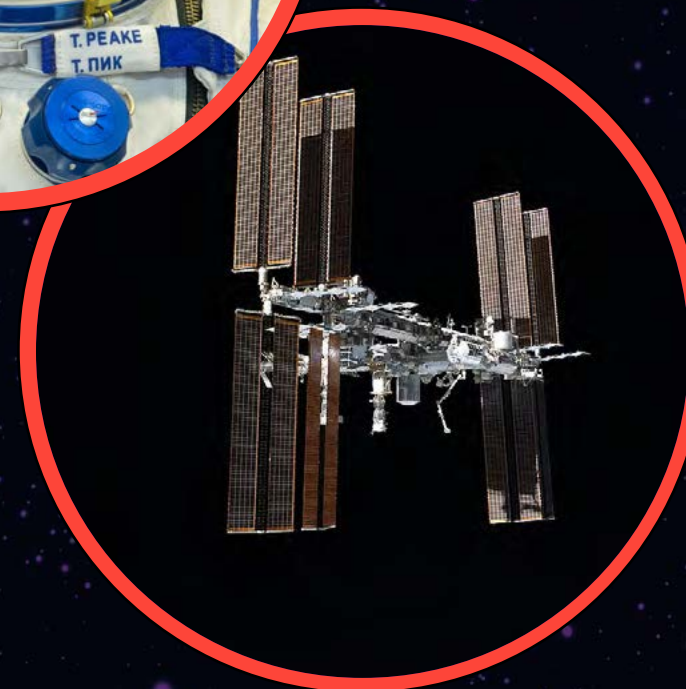
In 1991 Helen Sharman was the first British astronaut to visit the Mir Space station and in 2016 Tim Peake was the first European Space Agency astronaut from Britain to travel to the International Space Station (ISS.) Tim spent six months on the ISS working on a range of science experiments with other astronauts from the US and Russia. Information, a short film and images about Tim's journey to the International Space Station on a Soyuz rocket can be found at these links from the Science Museum: <https://learning.sciencemuseumgroup.org.uk/resources/image-bank-tim-peakes-spacecraft/> and <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6FHOvZFQ6iA&feature=youtu.be>

Share the link with your pupils and ask them to discuss the following questions posed by the Science Museum in small groups:

- What interests you or surprises you about these images?
- If you lived on the ISS for six months what would you take with you to remind you of home?
- Do you think it's important to spend money sending humans into space? Give your reasons.
- Do you think humans will ever live on another planet? What makes you think this?
- What else would you like to find out about the work of the ISS?



Wikimedia Commons



Wikimedia Commons

## Activity sheet 2

Cut out the information and pictures about Russian space innovations and stick them in the correct order to create your own illustrated Russian space timeline.

1960



**Dogs Belka and Strelka**  
Aboard Sputnik 5 are the first animals to return safely from orbit

1961



**Yuri Gagarin**  
The first man in space

1971



**First space station**  
Salyut 1

1984



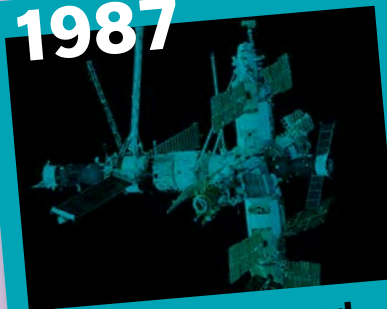
**Svetlana Savitskaya**  
The first woman to perform a spacewalk

1963



**Valentina Tereshkova**  
The first woman in space

1987



**First crew to spend over one year in space on board of Soyuz TM-4 - Mir**

1957



**First satellite**  
Sputnik 1



## Activity sheet 3

### Balloon rocket challenge

Divide your students into small groups and provide them with the materials they need to make balloon rockets.

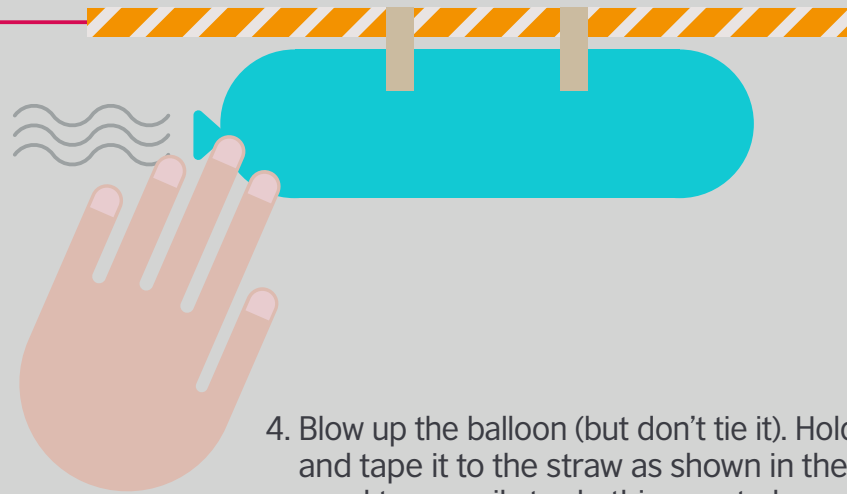
Show your pupils some examples of rockets blasting off. In the Soyuz rockets, a forward motion called thrust is created by the force of burning rocket fuel from the rocket's engine. As the engines blast down, the rocket goes up! In this investigation, thrust comes from forcing the air out of the balloon. The air trapped inside the balloon pushes out the open end, causing the balloon to move forward along the string.

#### You will need:

A variety of balloons (longer balloons work best), long pieces of thin string or cotton (about 10-15 feet long), straws, masking tape, marker pen

#### Instructions

1. Tie one end of the string to a chair, or other support.  
Alternatively ask one member of the group to hold it tight.
2. Help each other to put the other end of the string through the straw.
3. Pull the string tight and tie it to another support in the room or ask another member of the group to hold it tightly.



4. Blow up the balloon (but don't tie it). Hold the end of the balloon and tape it to the straw as shown in the illustration. You may need two pupils to do this: one to keep the air pinched inside the balloon and the other to tape the balloon to the straw.
5. Count down together, let go of the end of the balloon and watch the rocket blast off along the string.
6. Mark the string to see how far it went.

Having made your rocket fly, ask each group to investigate the following variables:

Does the shape of the balloon, length of the straw, and angle of string, affect how far (or fast) your rocket travels?

#### Extension activity

If you want to continue your rocket experiments in an outside area, watch the following clip from the BBC Terrific Scientific series to see how you could use vinegar and bicarbonate of soda to provide the thrust for a bottle rocket challenge! Make sure that you take all the usual health and safety precautions and stand well back when you launch your bottle rockets. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/teach/terrific-scientific/KS2/zr63d6f>

#### Partner school activities

If you are working with a partner school, you could exchange photographs and the results of your rocket investigations.

## Russian literature

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

The following extracts are from two famous Russian stories about a wicked witch and a man who loses his nose! They both stop at a crucial part of the story.

Read the extracts with your pupils. Ask them to discuss with a partner which is their favourite and what they think might happen next. Collect their ideas and then ask the pupils to continue writing their own version to the story. Remind them to try and use the same style and include tension and a resolution. They could also illustrate their stories and perhaps create their own class book of Russian tales.

**Curriculum Links:** English

**Core skills:** Communication and collaboration, creativity and imagination

**Learning objectives:** To engage pupils with traditional Russian stories and carry out activities to deepen their comprehension, understanding and engagement with the text.

**Resources:** You will need copies of the stories to read aloud.



## Baba Yaga

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 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..."



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, and available under the Project Gutenberg License at [www.gutenberg.net](http://www.gutenberg.net), EBook #16981.

## The Nose

On the 25th March, 18—, a very strange thing took place in St Petersburg. On Ascension Avenue there lived a barber of the name of Ivan Jakovlevitch. He had lost his family name, and on his sign-board was depicted the head of a gentleman with one cheek soaped, the only inscription to be read was, “Blood-letting done here.”

On this particular morning he awoke pretty early. Becoming aware of the smell of fresh-baked bread, he sat up a little in bed, and saw his wife, who had a special partiality for coffee, in the act of taking some fresh-baked bread out of the oven.

“To-day, Prasskovna Ossipovna,” he said, “I do not want any coffee; I should like a fresh loaf with onions.”

“The blockhead may eat bread only as far as I am concerned,” said his wife to herself; “then I shall have a chance of getting some coffee.” And she threw a loaf on the table.

Ivan Jakovlevitch drew a coat over his shirt, sat down at the table, shook out some salt for himself, prepared two onions, assumed a serious expression, and began to cut the bread. After he had cut the loaf in two halves, he looked, and to his great astonishment saw something whitish sticking in it. He carefully poked round it with his knife, and felt it with his finger.

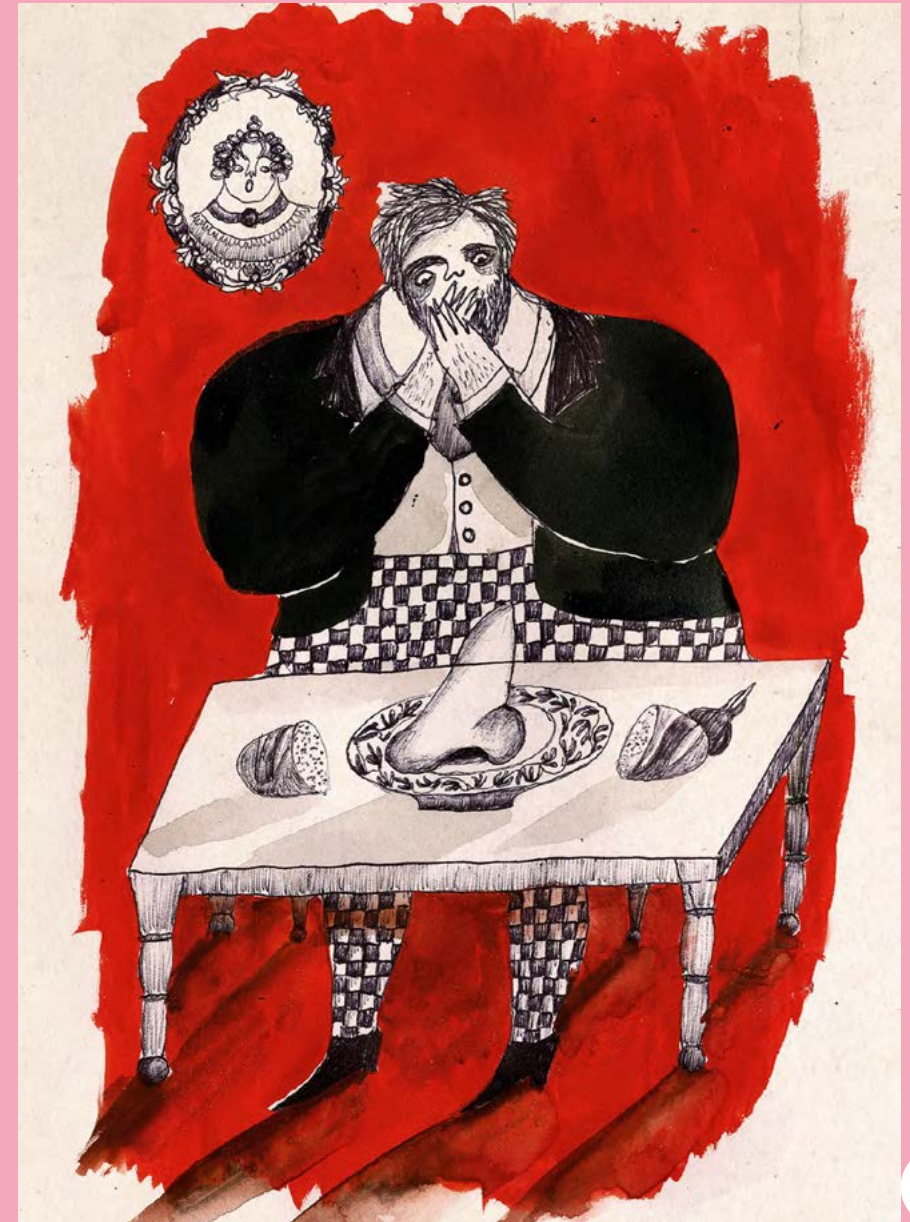
“Quite firmly fixed!” he murmured in his beard. “What can it be?”

He put in his finger, and drew out—a nose!

Ivan Jakovlevitch at first let his hands fall from sheer astonishment; then he rubbed his eyes and began to feel it. A nose, an actual nose; and, moreover, it seemed to be the nose of an acquaintance!

*The Nose (extract)*

by Nikolai Gogol 1835-36. Published in English by Frederick A Stokes in “The Mantle and other Stories”, pp.67-106, with translation by Claud Field. Available under the Project Gutenberg License at [www.gutenberg.net](http://www.gutenberg.net), EBook #36238.





## Everyday life for young Russians



Background information for teachers to share with pupils.

Most Russians live in modern flats; many of which have playgrounds attached to them. Other types of Russian housing include “dachas” which are holiday houses in the countryside, often with vegetable gardens, “cottages” (kottedzhi in Russian) which are expensive suburban houses and a diminishing number of old wooden houses, mainly in provincial towns.

The school year for Russian children starts on 1 September which is known as the Day of Knowledge (or the “First Bell”) and is treated like a festival. In many schools, pupils and parents form a crowd outside the school, photos are taken, and first year students give flowers to their teachers.

Most Russian schools have numbers instead of names. Pupils start school in Class 1 at 6 or 7 years old and finish in class 11 at 17 or 18. Many schools are coeducational, some but not all have uniforms and the school year runs from September to the beginning of June. The school day normally starts at 8 a.m. and finishes at 1 or 2 in the afternoon. Students generally attend classes 5 days a week, although some schools also require extra study on Saturdays.

In this section of the pack you can read letters from young Russians who are 12 and 13 years old, telling you more about their school and family life, after school activities and favourite celebrations.

Divide your class into small groups and give each group one of the letters. Ask them to read the letter together, discuss and make some notes about things that particularly interest them in the letter, anything they would like to know more about and three points of interest to share with the rest of the class. When each group has shared their information with everyone, pupils could write a reply to one of the letters sharing information about their school life and after school activities.

**Curriculum Links:** PSHE

**Core skills:** Communication and collaboration

**Learning objectives:** To learn about the lives of young people in Russia today.

**Resources:** You will need copies of the letters from Russian young people, paper and pens.





My name is Misha and I am 12 years old. I live in Moscow, near the main university and I go to school by metro every day. I am in 7th grade in school 57.

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 get 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, and it is a very happy experience because there we are all friends.

On Wednesdays I learn in the evening maths school. Even my parents studied in this class when they were my age! It is also for 2 hours. In the beginning everyone gets a sheet with some maths 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 them your solution.

On Fridays I have 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 into 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 the evening computer 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 go to all of them.

Soon it will be 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 throw snowballs or build snow castles and snowmen.

Misha





Hi!

My name is Anya and I am from Moscow. I live in a block of flats in a flat on the 8th 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.

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! 😊).

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 travelling 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, Kazan, Vladimir, Suzdal, the Caucasus). This year we have even been abroad with my class and travelled across 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 items or a birch bark manuscript. I am really looking forward to it!

Anya, from Moscow





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. 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 favourite 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 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 10 minutes after each lesson. I, usually, have 6-7 lessons every day and finish school about 3-3:30 pm, but two days a week I have 8 lessons and stay at school till 5:30 pm. 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 Science, we also study Geography, English, Computer science, Algebra, Geometry, History and PE 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 such as Shakespeare and Dickens. I prefer to read something more contemporary though, some fantasy or stories about teenagers and school life.

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

Bye, Liza



## Festivals and celebrations

Throughout the year Russians celebrate a number of festivals which commemorate religious occasions such as Easter and Christmas as well as historical and political events, Russian culture and music. These include Maslenitsa, Women's Day, Easter, Victory Day and New Year's Eve.

Russia's New Year celebrations include the lighting of the New Year's tree and a visit from Ded Moroz (or Grandfather Frost), the Russian version of Santa Claus.

At Maslenitsa - the Russian pre - Lent festival, children play games, eat pancakes, and visit local festivals during which a model of "Lady Maslenitsa" is burned to welcome springtime weather and the return of the sun.

Victory Day is celebrated on 9 May and marks the end of the Great Patriotic War, which is how Russians refer to WWII. It is a public holiday, and many people attend parades and lay flowers at war memorials as a mark of respect for soldiers that lost their lives.

**Curriculum Links:** Personal, Social and Health Education, Design Technology, Art and Design

**Core skills:** Communication and collaboration, creativity and imagination.

**Learning objectives:** To learn about Russian festivals and make versions of popular Russian dishes and their own Fabergé eggs.

**Resources:** You will need ingredients to make borsch and blinis, art materials and access to the Internet.





## Activities

Read the following descriptions by Misha and Anya telling how they celebrate the festivals of New Year and Maslenitsa. Food is an important part of these festivals. Discuss the types of food associated with your favourite festivals and then try making recipes for bliny and borsch on the activity sheets, which are often eaten by Russian families at celebrations and festivals.

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."

Anya: "MASLENITSA is another feast people celebrate in Russia. It takes place in late February or early March, just before 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 mum cooks them only during Maslenitsa. Our school usually organises 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.





## Activity sheet Recipes

### 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
- ½ teaspoon of salt
- 2 tablespoons of sugar
- 1 cup (250 ml) of milk
- 1 tablespoon of cooking oil

#### Method:

- 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. You will need an adult to help with this.
- 3 Serve the pancakes with honey, jam, caviar, sour cream or cheese.



### Borshch Soup

Ingredients:

- 3 beetroots, 2 potatoes, 2 carrots
- ¼ cabbage, 1 onion
- 3 teaspoons tomato puree
- 4teaspoons 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 (e.g. dill).

Makes approx. 6 servings



## Activity sheet

### Make your own Fabergé eggs

Easter in Russia is called Paskha (Пасха) and is another important annual festival. Instead of giving chocolate eggs, Russians take ordinary eggs and dye them lots of different colours and give them as gifts as part of the celebrations. The most lavish and famous decorated eggs were created by artist and goldsmith Peter Carl Fabergé. He was the goldsmith to the Russian Imperial Court between 1885 and 1916. The Imperial eggs are considered some of the world's greatest artworks and were made as Easter gifts for the Russian Tsars as Easter gifts for their wives and mothers.

They were very highly decorated and often contained a tiny surprise hidden within. Inside one egg was a little golden hen, and inside the hen was: a diamond miniature of the royal crown, and a tiny ruby egg pendant that could be hung on a necklace. In 2014 one of the Imperial Fabergé eggs was sold for £20 million.

Follow the instructions on the activity sheet to make your own decorated Fabergé eggs.





## Activity sheet

Follow the instructions on the activity sheet to make your own decorated Fabergé eggs.

You will need:

- balloons
- newspaper or paper for recycling
- white glue or wallpaper paste
- small tray or shallow container
- bowl
- scissors
- paint brush
- paint (optional)
- glitter glue (optional)
- decorations



1. Blow air into a balloon until it reaches the right size for your egg. Tie with a tight knot.
2. Tear paper or newspapers into fairly large pieces. You will need 3 layers of paper to cover the balloon. It's a good idea to alternate newspaper pieces with coloured paper, so you can see the different layers clearly.
3. Dip the paper into the paste. Place the paper on the balloon. Smooth out the edges of paper with your finger or with a paint brush.
4. Repeat until you cover the entire balloon. You may find it easier and less messy if you rest the balloon on top of a large bowl as you work.
5. Once you've covered the balloon, smooth the edges of the pieces of paper using your finger or a paint brush.
6. Make a second and third layer.
7. Let your papier mâché dry. This may take about 2-3 days. When it is dry, pop the balloon with a pin or with the point of a pencil.
8. Decorate your egg with paint, sequins and glitter glue.

### Additional activities

Encourage your pupils to find out about other famous Russian artists such as Wassily Kandinsky and have a go at creating their own brightly painted versions of his famous abstract painting Squares with Concentric circles painted in 1913.

### Partner School activities

If you are working with a partner school, your pupils could:

- exchange letters sharing information about their school days, after school activities and favourite celebrations, along with photographs of their versions of decorated Fabergé eggs and Kandinsky Concentric Circles.

### Celebrate your learning

To celebrate your learning, invite friends and family to school. They could see an exhibition of your Fabergé eggs, watch your pupils demonstrating Russian phrases and balloon rockets and try some blinis and borsch. Your students could also challenge them to write some letters of the Russian alphabet and listen to their stories.

## Find out more

### Appendix 1

Аа	=	a	As in ah	Пп	=	p	As in purple
Бб	=	b	As in black	Рр	=	r (rolled)	As in red
Вв	=	v	As in vet	Сс	=	s	As in sock
Гг	=	g	As in good	Тт	=	t	As in tip
Дд	=	d	As in doctor	Уу	=	oo	As in boot
Ее	=	ye	As in yellow	Фф	=	f	As in father
Ёё	=	yo	As in yogurt	Хх	=	kh	As in Bach, or loch in Scottish
Жж	=	zh	As in pleasure	Цц	=	ts	As in bits, or tsar
Зз	=	z	As in zoo	Чч	=	ch	As in chocolate
Ии	=	ee	As in eel	Шш	=	sh	As in shelter
Йй	=	y	As in boy	Щщ	=	shch	As in fresh cheese
Кк	=	k	As in keep	Ъъ	=	-	hard sign (no sound of its own)
Лл	=	l	As in look	Ыы	=	i	As in bit
Мм	=	m	As in mother	Ьь	=	-	soft sign (no sound of its own)
Нн	=	n	As in nice	Ээ	=	e	As in fed
Оо	=	o	As in cot	Юю	=	yu	As in university
				Яя	=	ya	As in yard



## Find out more

### Appendix 1

To investigate other rocket experiments, go to the following links:

Rocket mice

<https://learning-resources.sciencemuseum.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/SMG-Learning-Activities-Rocket-Mice.pdf>

To find out more about women and space exploration go to:

<https://www.space.com/16143-women-space-firsts-gallery.html>

To discover more about Russian arts and crafts go to:

<https://www.hermitagemuseum.org/>

<https://www.activityvillage.co.uk/russia-crafts>

The following websites contain information about cultural information and learning Russian:

[www.findoutaboutrussia.co.uk](http://www.findoutaboutrussia.co.uk)

[www.russianinscotland.com](http://www.russianinscotland.com)

Find out more about Russian stories from the following links:

Audio: <https://librivox.org/kriloffs-fables-by-ivan-krylov/>

More about Baba Yaga:

<https://www.findoutaboutrussia.co.uk/folk-tales.html>