

Russian to Change

By Amy V. Cummings for Blue Ridge Public Television (WBRA, WMSY, WSBN)

Franklin County High School, Rocky Mount, VA

Grade Level

10

Time Allotment

Two and one half 90-minute class periods

Overview

In this lesson students will investigate the causes of the collapse of the Soviet Union and changes in the economy, government, and society of Russia since then. Students will use Internet and print materials to examine the past and make predictions about Russia's future.

Subject Matter

Social Studies

Learning Objectives

Students will be able to:

- Explain the causes of the collapse of communism in the Soviet Union;
- Describe the consequences of the collapse of the Soviet Union and the formation of fifteen independent states;
- Use maps, pictures, and data to analyze the past and future challenges to Russia.

Standards

This lesson correlates with Virginia Standards of Learning available at

<http://www.pen.k12.va.us/VDOE/Instruction/sol.html>

Standard WHII.12a

The student will demonstrate knowledge of major events and outcomes of the Cold War by

- a. explaining key events of the Cold War, including competition between the American and Soviet economic systems and the causes of the collapse of communism in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe.

Media Components

Video

- *Voyager: Experience in Global Geography, Episode 5: Russia: Rebuilding a Nation*

Internet

- BBCi Collapse of the USSR: Ten Years On

This site from BBC News includes an interactive map that gives information on what has happened in each of the independent republics since the breakup of the Soviet Union.

http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/english/static/in_depth/europe/2001/collapse_of_ussr/maps/1.stm

- Encarta Encyclopedia Russia article

Microsoft's Encarta Encyclopedia article gives excellent information about the Soviet Union before its breakup and Russia since then.

http://encarta.msn.com/encyclopedia_761569000/Russia.html

- CIA World Fact Book: Russia

The Russia page of the CIA World Fact Book gives up-to-date information on statistical and demographic information on Russia.

<http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/rs.html>

- CNN Interactive: Cold War Episode 23: The Wall Comes Down

This is CNN's interactive page that gives excellent information and pictures concerning the fall of the Berlin Wall.

<http://www.cnn.com/SPECIALS/cold.war/episodes/23>

- CNN Interactive: Cold War Episode 24: Conclusions

The CNN article pulls together conclusions about the causes of the fall of communism in Eastern Europe and its aftermath.

<http://www.cnn.com/SPECIALS/cold.war/episodes/24>

Materials

- A computer with Internet access and PowerPoint for each student or group
- One disk per student or group to save information, images, and presentations
- Books from the Library Media Center related to the Soviet Union, fall of communism, and Russia

Software

- Microsoft PowerPoint

Hardware

- VCR and television or VCR connected to LCD projector to show video clip
- Television connected to computer with s-video or computer connected to LCD projector to show BBC Web site to students and for students to make PowerPoint presentations.
- Scanner may be needed for students to scan pictures, charts or graphs from books to insert into PowerPoint.

Prep for Teachers

- Cue the video to 12:24 when the narrator says, “Russia’s history goes back several thousand years...” and the boy is walking down the steps.
- Check out and set up equipment such as LCD projector and television with s-video, if using.
- Schedule time in the Library Media Center or computer lab for students to do research.

Introductory Activity

1. Ask students to brainstorm what they think of when they hear the word, “Russia.” Elicit student responses and list them on the board. Student responses will vary, but most likely some will make suggestions that actually relate to the former Soviet Union such as USSR, Stalin, Lenin, Iron Curtain, KGB, etc. Point out the USSR terms that they mention and say that those terms relate to the former Soviet Union, a nation that Russia used to be a part of, along with fourteen other states that are now independent countries.
2. Show the BBCi Collapse of the USSR: Ten Years On site (http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/english/static/in_depth/europe/2001/collapse_of_ussr/maps/1.stm) using a presentation device. Provide students with a **FOCUS FOR MEDIA INTERACTION** by asking if anyone can name the countries that were once part of the Soviet Union. Point out the location of Russia and the locations of the 14 other independent states that were part of the Soviet Union. Move the cursor over and name each one. Discuss the challenges listed on the site for Russia and some of the other former Soviet states with which they are familiar.

Learning Activity

1. Tell students that we will now look at a video clip to see how and why the Soviet Union broke apart into 15 independent countries.
2. Provide students with a **FOCUS FOR MEDIA INTERACTION** by saying, “Listen for the big changes that took place in Russia during the twentieth century.”

Play (12:24) Audio: “Russia’s history goes back several thousand years.”
Visual: The boy is walking down the steps.

Stop (12:59) Audio: “...the rise of Russia at its core.”
Visual: Stalin is waving.

Ask students what the big changes were. Students should respond that the big changes were the downfall of the czars and the rise of the USSR with Russia at its core.

3. Provide students with a **FOCUS FOR MEDIA INTERACTION** by saying, “Listen in the next segment for which country the USSR took an opposite position from in the Cold War.”

Play (12:59) Audio: “...the rise of Russia at its core.”

Visual: Stalin is waving.

Stop (13:07) Audio: “...Cold War.”

Visual: The truck with the missile rolls down the street.

Ask students which country the Soviet Union was in opposition to during the Cold War. Students should respond that it was the United States. Remind students that the Cold War was not literally a war between the U.S. and USSR, but a series of conflicts such as the Cuban Missile Crisis, Korean War, and Vietnam, in which often U.S. forces or U.S.-backed forces fought Soviet-backed forces.

4. Provide students with a **FOCUS FOR MEDIA INTERACTION** by saying, “Listen in the next segment for three changes that took place in the USSR in 1991.”

Play (13:07) Audio: “...Cold War”

Visual: The truck with the missile rolls down the street.

Stop (13:27) Audio: “...fifteen republics are now independent nations.”

Visual: The man is taking down the communist symbol.

Ask students what three changes they heard mentioned. If they cannot name all three, **REWIND** and **PLAY** again. Students should say that the communist party lost control of the government, democratic forces took over, and that the USSR dissolved into fifteen republics that are now independent nations.

Culminating Activity

1. Explain to students that the fall of communism had a significant impact on the economy, politics, and society of Russia and fourteen other states. All economic activity had been controlled by the government, so many problems came with the freedom that the people had wanted so badly.
2. Explain to students that they will form task-force groups in order to complete a project that will investigate the breakup of the Soviet Union and the changes and challenges to Russia since the fall of communism. Students will find the information by completing a WebQuest. Students should have time to begin their research before the end of the first day of the lesson. This WebQuest can be created in Word with hyperlinks for the web sites to be used (attached), or it may be accessed at <http://wizard.hprtec.org> id# 37654. The steps of the WebQuest are as follows: (student copy is attached at end)

Russia Since the Fall of Communism WebQuest

Introduction:

The fall of communism and breakup of the Soviet Union had a significant impact on the economy, politics, and society of Russia and fourteen newly independent states. The Soviet government had controlled many aspects of people's lives, as well as nearly all economic activity. Therefore, when the Soviet government collapsed, the government-funded jobs held by most people were gone. Many problems came with the freedom that the people had wanted so badly. How have Russia and the fourteen other former-Soviet states coped with the changes they have had to face? What is it like to live in Russia now? Let's find out!

Task:

Let's imagine that ten students from Russia, one of fifteen former Soviet states, will be arriving at school in two weeks in order to participate in a month-long program to experience the American educational system. They will participate in classes and learn about American culture and society by staying with host-families that also have students in the school.

Our school needs to be prepared to receive these guests. We need to know as much as we can about the former Soviet Union and Russia. There are a lot of misconceptions about Russia based on how things were during the time of the Soviet Union. We need to overcome this obstacle before we can properly receive our guests. Hopefully, our students will learn as much from the visit as our Russian guests, and preparation is the key.

Process:

Our class will divide into task-force groups whose job it will be to gather information on Russia to share with the rest of the school. Each group will create a PowerPoint presentation to present its findings to other classes. Each PowerPoint presentation should contain the following information:

- Title slide
- A map of the former Soviet Union with each state that is now an independent nation clearly labeled
- Political and economic reasons for the fall of the communist system and hence, the Soviet Union
- Information regarding the political system and economy of Russia today
- Information about what it is like to be a teenager in Russia today
- Political and economic difficulties encountered by Russia since 1991
- Graphs, charts, statistics, etc. that show economic strength and weakness in the economy (comparisons to the U.S. are helpful to give some perspective, such as phones, computers, cars, etc. per household)

Students should use the following as sources to complete the task:

- Print materials from the Library Media Center such as encyclopedias, periodical, and books about Russia and the Soviet Union.
- The following Web sites:
BBCi Collapse of the USSR: Ten Years On

http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/english/static/in_depth/europe/2001/collapse_of_ussr/maps/1.stm

Encarta Encyclopedia Russia article
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Evaluation

Students will be evaluated based on the quality of information found, completeness of the presentations, and evidence of hard work by every member of the group.

Conclusion

You should be able to see clearly how having this information will help us get the most out of the Russian students' visit. Understanding the perspective of others, or "where they're coming from" helps us understand how they think and feel. Just as each of us is a product of our life experiences, so are people from other parts of the world. Obviously, then, understanding our Russian guests' life experiences will help us understand them and be able to learn a great deal from them.

3. Students should have the second day of the lesson to research and finalize their PowerPoint presentations. The first half of the third day should be used to allow students to share their presentations with the class. Since all groups were required to make basically the same presentation, each group should be allowed to present one component of their presentation.

Cross-Curricular Extensions

The Soviet Union stressed the importance of the arts, though they were heavily censored. Have students investigate the music, visual, and performing arts of the Soviet era, and compare it to what is being produced in Russia now.

Community Connections

- Invite a professor of Eastern European studies from a local college to come to speak to classes about the challenges Russia has had to face since 1991.
- Invite an exchange student from an Eastern European country come to speak to classes about what it is like to live in post-Soviet Eastern Europe.

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Student Copy

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