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About the Authors - 6th Grade World Geography

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Chapter 7

Europe and Russia

QUESTIONS TO GUIDE INQUIRY

1. How are we as members of a global community interconnected?
2. How do governments differ around the world?
3. How does our government compare to others?
Section 1

Physical Geography - Russia

QUESTIONS TO GUIDE INQUIRY

1. How are we as members of a global community interconnected?
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Geography

Russia, with over 6.6 million square miles of varied climate and landscape, is the largest country in the world. It is nearly twice the size of the United States or Canada. Covering almost one-eighth of the Earth’s surface, it ranges from the Arctic Circle in the north, to the borders of China in the south, from Europe in the west to the Pacific Ocean to the east. It spreads through two continents and 11 time zones. The Ural Mountains, some of the oldest mountain ranges, stretch from the north to the south. Russia borders more countries than any other and has 12 major seas.

Siberia, in the north, covers three-fourths of this landscape, with most of it being frozen tundra in the far north, meaning very little can grow because it is too cold. Okmyakon is the coldest inhabited city in the

Image source: http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/3/3c/Russia_edcp_relief_location_map.jpg

Interactive 7.1 Google Maps - Russia

Use this interactive widget to zoom in on and see the physical characteristics of Russia. What is your description of where Russia is located?
world with temperatures dipping down to -70°F. Only small trees, shrubs and moss survive the frigid temperatures. Winters are long with few people inhabiting this region. The endangered Siberian tiger can be found in this region. Permafrost, or frozen ground, prevents any agriculture.

Forested areas are south of the tundra where pine trees and evergreens are found. Most of the western part of the country is forests and steppes, or dry, flat plains, covering a major portion of the remaining land. Russia contains four of the world’s largest rivers: Ob, Volga, Yenisei and Lena. The Lena stretches for 2,800 miles and is also one of the world’s longest rivers. Lake Baikal, believed to hold one-fifth of the world’s fresh water, is the oldest and deepest freshwater lake in the world. Over 330 rivers flow into the Baikal and nerpas, one of the only freshwater seals in the world is found in this lake.

The Kamchatka Peninsula juts into the Pacific Ocean, nearing the tendrils of Alaska. Over 150 volcanoes hover over the people living there. Most are non-active, but the threat of dangerous eruptions looms. The chain of islands rests within the Ring of Fire. The Kuril mountain chain, made up entirely of volcanoes, reaches from the southern tip of the Kamchatka Peninsula to northern Japan.
Moscow, the capital, is located in the western part of the country where the largest population live along the Moskva (Moscow) River. The Moscow Kremlin, an ancient fortress, rebuilt to retain its ancient heritage is home to the Russian central government. In addition to being the official residence for the President, it includes five palaces, four cathedrals, and various other structures. It was initially constructed in the 1500s and has had many improvements and additions over its long history, always serving as a seat of power for those who ruled.

Using the climate and physical maps on this page, answer the geographic question: “What is it like there?”
Approximately 50 countries make up Europe, including the world’s smallest country and parts of the world’s largest country. Russia, the largest, extends all the way to the eastern part of Asia and the Vatican City, in Rome, is the smallest at .17 square miles. Less than 840 people live there, yet they have their own currency, post office, and security. The famous Sistine Chapel's ceiling painted by Michelangelo in the early 1500s attracts many visitors. The Pope, or leader of the Catholic Church, resides in this tiny country.

Europe is the second smallest continent, only larger than Australia; however, it is the third largest in population, with over 722 million people. Europe is made of many peninsulas. The Ural Mountains and the Caspian and Black Seas naturally separate Europe.
from the continent of Asia.

Mt. Vesuvius

Mount Vesuvius’s most famous eruption was in A.D. 79 and buried and destroyed the cities of Pompeii and Herculaneum. Located in Italy, it is the only volcano on Europe’s mainland to have erupted in the last 100 years. With 3 million people living near by, it is also one of the most dangerous volcanoes in the world.

Interactive 7.2 Learning About Europe

Learn more about Europe and play some interactive games at this website (requires internet connection).

Image source: http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/b/bc/Pompeii_Garden_of_the_Fugitives_02.jpg

Interactive 7.3 Google Maps - Europe

Use this interactive widget to zoom in on and see the physical characteristics of Europe.

Image source: https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/e/ec/Regions_of_Europe_Map.png

Regions of Europe
Pre-History

The earliest settlers to Prehistoric Europe came from the African continent during the Paleolithic era, somewhere around 45,000 and 25,000 B.C.E. These were small bands of people who were most likely following animals to hunt. As these early Europeans settled in and adapted to their environment, they eventually began to develop more complex societies. Agriculture was developed around 7000 B.C.E., allowing people to settle in one place. Over the next 4000 years, many different technological advances were introduced from various other groups coming from the Mediterranean area. These ideas gradually spread northward and were adopted by some of the more well-known civilizations of this time period, such as the Minoans and the Mycenaeans. These groups flourished during the Bronze Age, when bronze tools and weapons were developed and first used.

QUESTIONS TO GUIDE INQUIRY

1. How are we as members of a global community interconnected?
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The Greeks

Following the end of the Minoan and Mycenaean civilizations, around 7 B.C.E., the Greek civilization began and later flourished during the 5th to 4th centuries B.C.E. A period known as Classical Greece began with the defeat of the Persian invasion. Later, with the conquests of Alexander the Great, the Greek civilization spread from the Mediterranean Sea into Central Asia. Many aspects of the Classical Greek culture, including religion, architecture and philosophy, became a major influence on the Roman Empire. Rome then went on to continue to spread the ideas of the Greeks throughout Europe and the Mediterranean area. This is why the Greeks are viewed as being the culture which has provided the basis of all modern Western culture. More than any other aspect of the Greek culture which has flourished and spread is their idea of “Democracy.” Democracy means “rule by the people.” The Greeks developed a system of government with three different branches (much like the United States has today): a governing body who wrote laws; a council of representatives from the ten main tribes of Athens; and a court where citizens argued cases before a group of randomly selected jurors. “In a democracy,” the Greek historian Herodotus wrote, “There is, first, that most splendid of virtues, equality before the law.” Although Greek democracy only lasted a few years, this development has spread worldwide and changed the face of the world as it we know it today.

The Romans

Beginning in the eighth century B.C.E., Ancient Rome grew from a small town in central Italy into an empire that at one point covered most of Europe, parts of the Middle East, northern Africa and various islands in the Mediterranean. Like the Greeks, the Romans left a legacy that we can still see today. Latin, the Roman language, forms the basis of the Romance languages (Italian, French, Spanish, Portuguese and Romanian). The modern Western alphabet and calendar are based on those used by the
Romans. The transition of the Romans from a mythology-based religion to their acceptance of the new religion of Christianity contributed to the growth of Christianity as a major world religion. Rome functioned as a republic, where people were represented by officials in government for 450 years. After the rise of the general Julius Caesar in the first century B.C.E., the republic came to an end. Following the assassination of Caesar, Augustus rose to become Rome’s first emperor. His reign began an age of peace and prosperity. By 300 A.D. the Roman Empire had grown so large, it was divided into two parts. “Old Rome” would be part of the Western Roman Empire. The Eastern Roman Empire, also known as The Byzantine Empire, would be established in the far eastern part of the Mediterranean and have a new capital, Constantinople. Around 476 C.E., the Germanic peoples of northern Europe grew in strength and repeated attacks led to the fall of the Western Roman Empire. You will be learning much more about the ancient history of Europe in 7th grade.
Recent History

With the influx of resources from the New World, technological changes occurred rapidly. From steam engine locomotives to the airplane, humankind was rapidly advancing. This was seen at the outbreak of World War I in 1914. With nations feeling invincible with their new modern armies, the powers of Europe took up sides. The Allied Powers, led by Britain, France and Russia (and by the United States in 1917), defeated the Central Powers which were led by the German Empire and Austria-Hungary. When Germany finally surrendered in 1918, the major nations involved in the war met at the Paris Peace Conference. The Big Four (England, France, United States and Italy) imposed their harsh terms in the Treaty of Versailles. Germany was forced to give up much of its overseas territories, made to pay large reparations, and was basically humiliated by the victors.

Totalitarianism

Following World War I, The Great Depression broke out in 1929. In Europe the economic problems faced by the people led to desperation. In these desperate times the people in many European nations demanded change, and this led to the collapse of democracy in many countries. Adolf Hitler was the leader of a small political party in the 1920s. As the living conditions worsened in Germany, his party became more and more popular. Hitler, who had been arrested at one time for attempting to overthrow the government, was appointed Chancellor of Germany due to the large popularity he had with the German people. After rearming Germany, Hitler and his ally, Benito Mussolini of Italy, began taking steps to gain full control of Europe. After the invasion of Poland by Germany in 1939, Great Britain and France had seen enough and declared war. This was the beginning of World War II. Germany conquered France and had Great Britain close to defeat. After not being able to conquer the island nation, Hitler turned his forces on the Soviet Union. In 1941, after the Japanese attacked the United States, the Americans entered the war on the side of the Allies (Great Britain, France, Russia). In 1944, the Allies invaded France in the D Day invasion. Germany surrendered one year later.
The Iron Curtain

After World War II, Europe was divided by what Winston Churchill of Great Britain called, “The Iron Curtain.” The Soviet Union dominated the nations of Eastern Europe after the war. All of the nations in the region became communist states. The other nations of Europe were primarily democratic, capitalist countries who followed the leadership of the United States. The United States and the Soviet Union were the two world superpowers. Most of the non-communist countries in Europe joined a joint military alliance called the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). The countries guided by the Soviet Union joined the military alliance known as the Warsaw Pact. Germany was divided by the allies after the war, and remained so for decades, with West Germany being a democratic nation, and East Germany being communist.

Fall of Communism

Under the leadership of Mikhail Gorbachev, the Soviet Union began economic and political reforms. But as the government began to allow its people more freedoms in 1989, communism in the nations of Eastern Europe began to fall. Even the Berlin Wall in Germany was torn down. This had been built in the 1950’s to keep communist East and democratic West separate. This eventually led to the fall of communism and the break-up of the Soviet Union itself in 1991. As a consequence, Germany was reunited and Europe’s integration grew deeper. The European Union, which had been an idea primarily aimed at the democratic western nations, began to expand to include many of the formerly communist European countries.
Political History

How are the governments of European countries different? Are there similarities? The region that consists of Europe and part of Russia is very diverse. The people come from around 50 different countries and even greater differences in cultures and ethnic groups.

The cultures and history of Europe and Russia have led its people to create some of the most powerful governments in history. Other factors, including political and economic struggles, have created change and revolution in many countries of the region. With the fall of Rome, many small kingdoms rose and fell in Europe and Russia over the next few hundred years. Modern nations began to develop in the mid to late 1400s. As time passed many of these new lands were being ruled by monarchies under the control of kings and czars.

The Modern Era saw two revolutions that would shape the political landscape for years to come. The Industrial Revolution would bring an economic change to the world. In Europe the creation of a manufacturing age led European nations to become the first developed countries in the world. Moving from an agricultural-based society to one founded in manufacturing led to many changes in the political landscape. The second revolution was political. By the mid-1600s a number of political revolutions were happening across Europe. The revolutions...
began changing how countries would be ruled, in some cases this led to the rise of democratic governments. In others, Russia for instance, the political revolutions led to the rise of dictators. Today elected governments of various forms rule most of the countries in this region.

**Governments of Europe**

Most governments in Europe are made up of elected officials who follow a democratic ideal. Most countries are **Republics**. A republic is a democratic form of government where elected officials represent the citizens. The biggest difference between many of the countries is their official heads of state. Some countries, like the United Kingdom, have a prime minister who is the head of the government and a king or queen who is the head of state. This form of **Constitutional Monarchy** keeps the tradition of a monarch but allows the people to govern themselves. In most republics throughout Europe you will find a prime minister as the head of government and a president as the head of state. The two roles differ greatly; the head of government takes on the responsibility of being the leader of the government body, while the head of state is a figurehead who represents the country to other governments.

**Russia**

From 1922 to 1991 Russia was part of a larger nation known as the Union of Soviet Socialist republics (USSR) or the Soviet Union. The union was made up of subnational republics governed by the Communist Party with a highly centralized government and economy. As the state grew, it became a world superpower thanks in large part to its large military. In 1991 the superpower collapsed. The Soviet leader at the time, Mikhail Gorbachev, looked to reform the union and move it toward more of a social style democracy. This led to a nationalist movement and attempted **coup**, an attempted forced overthrow of a government. Both failed but succeeded in creating even more instability. In late 1991, Gorbachev resigned and the Union was dissolved into independent states, with Russia being the largest.

**Interactive 7.7 Governments of the World**

Follow this link to visit an interactive map that shows the governments of Europe and Russia.
Even though Russia is not as big as the Soviet Union was, it is still the largest country in the world. Prior to the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the government owned and ran the country’s farms, factories and businesses. As the government came to an end, the government sold off its factories and businesses. The sales did not benefit a majority of the Russian people.

Today the businesses, farms and factories of Russia are privately owned. Unfortunately, they are not always run well. Many of them needed repair and modernization following the Soviet sell off, but new owners were unable or unwilling to pay for the needed repairs. Others made goods that were poor in quality in an attempt to quickly become wealthy. No one wanted to buy such poor goods. This resulted in many businesses failing and the economy struggling to move forward.

**Government in Russia Today**

The dissolution of the Soviet Union brought about many changes. In 1993 the Russian Constitution of 1978 received a revision to meet the needs of the new country. It states that the government exercises executive power over the Russian Federation (Russia). The government is made up of three branches and the Central Bank. Each branch is broken down into different groups who hold responsibilities within their branch of government.

The members of the government issue decisions and orders that must not contradict the constitution, constitutional laws, federal laws and the presidential decrees. The government must submit and implement a federal budget, a financial policy for the federation and a uniform state policy in areas of health care, social security, culture, science and education. The government must also manage the federal property, ensure the country’s defense, manage foreign policy and ensure the rule of law, human rights, public order, crime control and basic freedoms are upheld.

**European Union**

As World War II came to a close, many western European countries found it difficult to rebuild their shattered economies. As the reality of this struggle arose, a movement for European unity
began to take hold. Beginning in 1950, Robert Schuman, a French leader delivered a speech laying out ideas to bring peace to Europe though economic cooperation. Schuman proposed that France, Germany and others in Europe should work cooperatively to manage their coal and steel productions. Six countries agreed with him, and out of this the European Coal and Steel Community was born. This group created a common market for the coal and steel industry. Within the common market, trade barriers were removed and tariffs were lowered.

By the early 1990s a number of European countries agreed an economic community could be created within Europe to bring greater cooperation among the individual countries. In 1992 representatives from a number of European governments met to create the Maastricht Treaty. This agreement would set up the European Union, a new governing body aimed at creating supranational cooperation among its member countries. The prefix supra means “on top of.” Supranational is a term referring to the government of the European Union standing above the governments of the member countries. The European Union (EU) uses supranational cooperation to work towards shared goals. Member countries give up some power and control over certain areas, but remain separate countries. While they are united in many ways they are divided in others. It is these forces that work both for and against the EU.

Have you ever traveled from one country to another? Is crossing an international border easy or difficult? What are some of the issues with traveling from the United States to Canada? Do we see those same issues when traveling from state to state?

In the United States, traveling from one state to the next is easy. There are no border checkpoints to cross or customs to pass through. When you travel from one state to the next, you have no need to trade your dollars in for the new state’s money. Imagine traveling in Europe. Prior to the creation of the EU, each time you went to another country it was much like traveling from the United States into Canada.
Living in the United States, people move freely from one state to the next. Someone might live in Michigan and work in Indiana or Ohio. There are borders defining a state's boundaries but people are able to cross them with no impact on their day to day lives. Europe is just slightly larger than the US. Many countries are comparable in size to US states, however, prior to the creation of the EU it was very difficult to travel country to country. National laws made it difficult for someone to live in one country and work in another.

Today member countries of the EU have a common economic goal. They promote many different ways to promote economic cooperation between each other. One is the creation of a common market. This has been important in creating cooperation among member countries. In this common market, goods and people are able to move freely across borders. This allows people to have the benefit of working in one country and living in another. The people also have more choices in what they can buy. With no tariffs on EU goods, prices are lower. This encourages people to purchase goods from EU countries and strengthens the economy at the same time. The EU has taken other steps towards economic cooperation. Many member countries have adopted a common currency called the Euro. Now Europeans no longer have to exchange their money as they travel and trade in other member countries. This makes living and doing business in EU member countries easier.
member nations. Culturally, the EU has worked at creating a common European culture. The EU has its own Flag, has adopted the Beethoven song “Ode to Joy” as its national anthem, and celebrates Europe Day every year on May 9th. Politically, the EU encourages cooperation between the governments who run the member nations. The EU government works to bring its members together to work on issues they have in common. This allows them to work on large scale problems, like pollution, together. Promoting a common European cultural identity is difficult. The countries of the EU are very diverse. They include people of many different languages, religions, beliefs, traditions and values.

Issues with EU Cooperation

The EU doesn’t always work together. With all the diversity that makes up the member countries it can be difficult to get everyone to agree on everything. Member nations do not always agree on the issues they face or on how to address many of these issues. Economic differences create a number of strains within the EU. Generally speaking the Western European countries are wealthier than those in the rest of Europe. This can create a number of issues as the EU focuses funds on poorer countries to bring them up to the EU’s economic standard. The differences in wages from country to country has prompted a number of people to leave poorer countries for jobs in wealthier ones. The adoption of the Euro is another issue. Not all member countries have adopted it as their national form of currency. Economically, this has created some division within the EU. Politically, the government of the EU does not trump the governments of the member countries. Giving up political power is not easy for governments to do. Some member countries still want to make their own decision on issues like defense and foreign affairs, especially when they don’t agree on a decision made by the EU. With the EU having no real recourse for countries who go out on their own at times, there is no incentive to follow all the decision made by the European Union.

The “Brexit”

In the summer of 2016, following years of discussion, two very vocal groups of people once again brought the issue of the United Kingdom (Britain, Whales, Scotland, and Ireland) remaining in the European Union. On one side of the debate, “Britain Stronger in Europe” was the name of the group campaigning heavily for Britain to remain in the union. “Vote to Leave” was the official group that was pushing for a break. On the one side, those who wanted to withdraw argued that membership undermined their own sovereignty. The other side agreed, but argued that in a world with super powers, the benefits of being part of a massive organization such as the EU outweighed the loss of some power.
When put to a vote, 51.9% of the people living in the United Kingdom voted to leave. The process of leaving the EU will take several years to complete, and it has already had an effect on the markets across Europe.

For more information on the Brexit, take a look at this continually updating website with backstory, history, and the latest news.

Now it’s time to return to your interactive journal and think about the questions that have guided this chapter:

How are we as members of a global community interconnected?
How do governments differ around the world?
How does our government compare to others?