

Module: Russia and Central Asia
Topic Content: Cultural Influences of Russia and Central Asia

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Russian Ballet and Music



Ballet is a highly regarded art form in Russia. Ballet originally came to Russia from France. However, Russian society embraced and developed the dance form. Some of the most famous ballets come from Russia, including *Swan Lake*, *The Nutcracker*, and *Romeo and Juliet*. *Swan Lake* and *The Nutcracker* were composed by the classical Russian composer Peter Tchaikovsky. Tchaikovsky is one of many famous Russian composers. Like ballet, music is an important facet of Russia's cultural heritage.

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Fabergé Eggs



Fabergé eggs are ornate Easter eggs made of valuable metals and gemstones. They are named for their creator, a Russian jeweler named Peter Carl Fabergé. Most of these eggs were created for the Russian Tsar and the royal family, but a few were crafted for other wealthy patrons. Only 57 eggs survive today.

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Matryoshka Dolls



Matryoshka dolls, or Russian nesting dolls, are hollow wooden dolls that decrease in size and nest inside one another. The word “matryoshka” translates to “little mother.” Traditionally, the largest doll represents a mother and the smaller dolls represent children. Today, these dolls are crafted based on a variety of themes.

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Russian Icons



Icons reflect the influence of Orthodox Christianity on Russian culture. An icon is an artwork that depicts a religious subject. Russian icons are typically small paintings on wood with deep religious symbolism. Some of these icons are hundreds of years old, and represent the earliest examples of Russian painting.

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Red Square



Red Square is the main city square of the Russian capital Moscow. One of Russia's most famous landmarks, St. Basil's Cathedral, is located in Red Square. St. Basil's is an Orthodox church with colorful onion-domed towers. The structure is so iconic that many foreigners confuse St. Basil's for the nearby Kremlin. The Kremlin is a walled citadel located in Red Square. It contains several buildings, including the official residence of the Russian President, Grand Kremlin Palace.

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Siberian Villages



Siberia is a sparsely populated region. There are large cities found in the south, but the harsh climate limits settlement in the north. Despite the difficult living conditions, small Siberian villages can be found throughout "the sleeping land." The population of these remote villages can range from a few dozen to a few hundred.

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Mosques



Islam is the predominant religion in Central Asia, and the second most practiced religion in Russia. The Saint Petersburg Mosque is just one of approximately 8,000 mosques in Russia. The Saint Petersburg Mosque has two minarets that reach 160 feet. A minaret is a tower used for the Islamic call to prayer.

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Soviet-Style Apartment Blocks



During the Soviet era, there was a housing shortage in cities. In response, the government constructed low-cost concrete apartment buildings. These structures were prefabricated, so they could be built quickly and cheaply. The apartments were typically over crowded, and many were designed with communal bathrooms. Most apartments were limited to five stories, as elevators were considered too costly.