Chapter 15

The Culture of Russia
The Cultural Geography of Russia
Chapter Objectives

- Describe Russia’s population, including its makeup, density, and distribution.
- Identify key developments in the history and government of Russia.
- Discuss the role of religion, education, health care, and the arts in the cultural life of the region.
POPULATIN PATTERN

Section 1
Objectives

• Identify the ethnic groups that make up Russia.
• Explain the distribution of population in this country.
• Describe the effect of climate on the culture and lifestyle of Russians.
Terms to Know

- Ethnic group
- Nationality
- Sovereignty
Geographic View

Historic church in Moscow
Geographic Literacy

During the last half of the 1800s, Russia’s urban population increased from about 10 percent of the total population to about 21 percent. By 1910 St. Petersburg and Moscow were two of the ten largest cities in Europe. Although overcrowding and poor sanitary conditions led to outbreaks of disease, urban populations continued to swell as rural farmers moved to the cities.
Russia’s Ethnic Diversity

- Although 80 percent of Russians are ethnic Russians, the country is home to more than 100 *ethnic groups*.
- **Ethnic Regions** The Russian Empire and the Soviet Union controlled many non-Russian ethnic groups and territories.
- Today, 32 of these ethnic groups have their own republics or administrative territories within Russia.
- **The Slavs** Ethnic Russians are part of a larger ethnic group called Slavs. Poles, Ukranians, and other eastern Europeans are also Slavs.
- Most Slavs practice Eastern Orthodox Christianity, which was brought to Russia from the eastern Mediterranean area.
Russia’s Ethnic Diversity

- Turkic Peoples  The Turkic peoples—living mostly in the Caucasus Mountains, Siberia, and the middle Volga area—are Russia’s second-largest ethnic group. They are mostly Muslim.
- The Tatars—the largest Turkic group—live in Tatarstan in east-central Russia and have a limited degree of autonomy.
Russia’s Ethnic Diversity
Russia’s Ethnic Diversity

- Caucasian Peoples  Living in the Caucasus area of southeastern Russia, the Caucasians are mainly Muslims and have similar languages and cultural traditions.
- Many Caucasian groups, such as the Chechens, are now demanding self-rule.
Population Density and Distribution

- Russia is the world’s sixth most populous country, but it does not have a large population relative to its land area.
- Population and the Environment: Russia’s average population density is about 22 people per square mile (9 per sq. km).
- However, about 75 percent of all Russians live in western Russia, where there are about 120 people per square mile (46 per sq. km).
Population Density and Distribution
Population Density and Distribution

- **Population Trends** During the Soviet era, many ethnic Russians left their homes to resettle in non-Russian republics.
- Russia, however, is experiencing a population crisis. Because of inadequate health care, the number of deaths now exceeds the number of births.
HISTORY AND GOVERNMENT

Section 2
Section Objectives

- Describe the ancestry of the Russian people.
- Explain the government rule of the czars and its effect on Russian society.
- Identify the causes of the breakup of the Soviet Union.
- List present and future challenges that Russia faces.
Terms to Know

- Czar
- Serf
- Russification
- Socialism
- Bolshevik
- Communism
- Satellite
- Cold War
- Perestroika
- Glasnost
Geographic View

Mikhail Gorbachev
Geographic Literacy

In 1928, the Soviet Union developed its first Five-Year Plan, which was intended to create a modern industrial economy. Older industrial areas expanded, and new technological and engineering projects were begun in remote areas. Between 1928 and 1933, the defense industry tripled its output, and by 1941 the Soviets had laid solid foundations for their later rise as a superpower.
Early Peoples and States

- The land now called Russia had its origins in the A.D. 600s, when Slavic farmers and hunters settled near the waterways of the North European Plain. Eastern Slavs—the ancestors of modern Russians, Ukrainians, and Belarussians—settled along the Dneiper and Volga Rivers.

- **Kievan Rus** During the 800s, Scandinavian warriors called the Varangians settled among the Eastern Slavs, eventually adopting the Slavic language and culture.
Early People and States

- **The Rise of Russia**  By the late 1400s, the city of Moscow had become the center of an expanding city-state known as Muscovy.
- The Muscovites became strong enough to drive out the Mongols and lay the foundations of Russia.
- In 1533 Muscovy’s ruler, Ivan IV, became the first crowned czar of Russia.
Romanov Czars

- In the late 1600s, Peter the Great was determined to modernize Russia. Under him, Russia enlarged its territory, built a strong military, and developed trade with Europe.
- Peter built a new capital city, St. Petersburg, as a “window to the West.”
- During the late 1700s, Catherine the Great continued to expand Russia’s borders.
- By this time, a large gap had opened between the Europeanized nobility and the virtually enslaved serfs, who followed traditional Russian ways.
Romanov Czars
The Russian Revolution

- During the 1800s the people of Russia grew more discontented as the government carried out halfhearted political reforms and repression.
- The serfs were emancipated in 1861, but they were poorly educated and had few economic opportunities.
- The government’s Russification policy led to harsh treatment of non-Slavic Russians, especially Jews.
Russian Revolution

- Karl Marx’s belief in a workers’ revolution and a classless society captured the imagination of many young, educated Russians.
- In 1917, the hardships of World War I and long-standing discontent made Czar Nicholas II so unpopular that workers and soldiers forced him to give up his throne.
The Soviet Era

- The Soviet Union Promising “Peace, Land, and Bread,” the Bolsheviks under Vladimir Ilyich Lenin seized power in November 1917.
  - In 1922 the Bolsheviks, now known as Communists, established the Soviet Union, with Moscow as the capital.
  - Lenin’s successor, Joseph Stalin, set out to make the Soviet Union a strong industrial power by taking complete control of the economy.
  - Stalin eliminated all forms of dissent.
  - As a result of Stalin’s policies, millions of Russians either were killed or died from hunger or brutal conditions in labor camps.
The Soviet Era
The Soviet Era - Superpower

- During World War II, the German army invaded Russia.
- Soviet military forces and civilians defeated them but at the cost of more than 27 million lives.
- By 1949 most of eastern Europe was under Soviet control.
- From the late 1940s to the late 1980s, the Soviet Union and the United States engaged in the Cold War, the struggle between communism and capitalism for world influence.
The Soviet Breakup

• In 1985 Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev introduced reforms aimed at revitalizing the stagnant Soviet economy and allowing greater political openness.

• Gorbachev’s reforms failed to save the Soviet Union, which in 1991 broke up into independent republics.
The Soviet Breakup
A New Russia

• **A Market Economy**  In 1991, Russia’s government began moving toward a free market economy.
  
  The immediate result was inflation and a rise in unemployment. By 2000, however, the Russian economy began to improve.

• **Separatist Movements**  Beginning in the early 1990s, separatist groups within Russia—such as the Chechens—increased demands for self-rule or complete independence.
Objectives

- Describe the role of religion in Russian society.
- Identify contemporary challenges for education and health care in Russia.
- Describe the cultural heritage found in Russia’s art, literature, and music.
Terms to Know

- Atheism
- patriarch
- icon
- pogrom
- intelligentsia
- socialist realism
A Geographic View

A Russian family reciting poems
Geographic Literacy

During the Soviet era, Russian Olympic athletes received government subsidies, competed internationally, and became symbols of the country. Today, Russian figure skaters are considered the best in the world. The USSR/Russia, for example, has won all the gold medals in pairs figure skating since 1964.
Religion in Russia

• Eastern Orthodox Christianity was central to the Russian state for almost a thousand years until the 1917 Revolution. After acquiring power, the Soviet government discouraged the practice of religion and encouraged atheism.

• Christianity in Russia Today, many Russians are once again practicing Eastern Orthodox Christianity.

• Islam Islam is the second-largest religion in Russia. Most of Russia’s Muslims live in the southern parts of the country.
Religion in Russia

- Judaism  Throughout Russia’s history, its Jewish population has often faced discrimination and persecution.
- Under the czars, Jews could live only in certain areas and were the targets of organized massacres called pogroms.
- During the Soviet era, religious persecution continued.
- Today Jewish religious life survives in Russia despite large-scale emigration.
- Buddhism  Most of Russia’s Buddhist population live in two ethnic republics—Kalmykia, near the Caspian Sea, and Buryatia, near Lake Baikal.
Education

• Because of the Soviets’ emphasis on mandatory education, nearly 100 percent of Russians are literate.
• Education in Russia suffers from inadequate funding.
• Teachers are poorly paid, schools are in disrepair, and many young Russians concentrate on earning money rather than getting an education.
Education
Health Care

- Lifestyle choices such as smoking and drinking alcoholic beverages, disease, and inefficient health care systems all threaten the well-being of Russia’s people.
The Arts

- **Russia’s Artistic Golden Age** Russia’s artistic golden age began during the 1800s and lasted well into the 1900s.
- **Painters like Marc Chagall** and composers such as Pyotr (Peter) Tchaikovsky made contributions to their fields that have had an international impact.
- **Russian literary giants** include novelists Leo Tolstoy and Fyodor Dostoyevsky, playwright Anton Chekhov, and poets Alexander Pushkin and Anna Akhmatova.
- **Several Russian operas and ballets** are based on Russian literary masterpieces.
The Arts

- Culture and the Soviets  The Soviets insisted that all art must glorify communism, so artists were strictly censored.
- Post-Soviet Arts  Beginning in the mid-1980s, government controls on the arts loosened, sparking renewed cultural activity.