

1.

1. When was Moscow founded and who is considered its founder?
2. Who is Ivan the Terrible? Why is he called “the Terrible”? What is his name in Russian? Is the translation “Terrible” adequate?

According to canon, Moscow (Москва) was founded when, in 1147, Yuri Dolgorukiy told Sviatoslav Olgovich to “Come meet [him] in Moscow!” In the years that followed, they began fortifying it. Olgovich was a former Prince of Novgorod [see #2 below]; Dolgorukiy a Rurik prince consolidating rule over the Duchy of Vladimir-Suzdal – in modern times, the Duchy of Moscow. It was Dolgorukiy’s efforts to capture Kiev, and eventual success (despite his untimely death), that helped shift the power balance in Rus’ from Kiev in the south to Suzdal in the north. It is he who we consider Moscow’s founder.

Ivan IV Vasilyevich lived from 1530 to 1584, during the latter half of which he was the Tsar of Rus’. He was a tyrant who nonetheless reformed the law of the land, laid the foundations of the administrative bureaucracy, and introduced printing presses to his country. He is also the conqueror extraordinaire who made modern Russia as vast as it is. His sobriquet comes from the last twenty years of his reign. Over time, he became sufficiently paranoid about treason to announce his abdication in 1564, but the boyar court of Moscow was so incompetent that they begged him to return. He agreed on the condition of becoming an absolute monarch. He promptly gathered a personal guard, the Oprichniki, who were responsible to essentially no-one besides himself, and began wrecking havoc on the nobility, whilst the Oprichnina guard began terrorizing the peasantry. The climax of this madness was when Ivan ordered his henchmen to sack Novgorod in 1570 for alleged “treason,” at a time when it had just experienced a massive epidemic, and in which Ivan’s penchant for sadistic torture apparently blossomed in full force. Think roasting, scalding, freezing people, and things like that. So yes, a deserved name. In Russian, “Terrible” becomes Грозный (“Formidable”).

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Moscow>

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yuri\\_Dolgorukiy](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yuri_Dolgorukiy)

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sviatoslav\\_Olgovich](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sviatoslav_Olgovich)

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vladimir-Suzdal>

<https://russiapedia.rt.com/prominent-russians/history-and-mythology/yury-dolgoruky/>

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ivan\\_the\\_Terrible](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ivan_the_Terrible)

2.

1. Who is Pushkin? What is his full name in Russian? Is he significant to Russian Culture?
2. What is Novgorod famous for? How did Novgorod choose its rulers?
3. Who was Alexandr Nevsky? What is he famous for?

Pushkin’s full name is Alexander Sergeyevich Pushkin (Александр Сергеевич Пушкин). He was a writer roughly contemporary with Goethe who, during his brief lifespan (1799-1837), produced a monumental contribution to Russian literature. In fact he is often compared against Shakespeare. The comparison is not insubstantial: Like Shakespeare, Pushkin innovated a style that mixed high and low registers as well as introduced an enormous body of new vocabulary into his language; unlike him, he wrote actual novels in addition to his plays and poetry. Prior to this homework, I was familiar with *Mozart and Salieri* via Forman’s film *Amadeus*, and *Evgeny Onegin* via Tchaikovsky’s opera. Pushkin died young – like so many artists of the Romantic era – from a fatal duel (exactly like the mathematician Evariste Galois, whose lifespan was contained in Pushkin’s).

Wikipedia says that Novgorod (“the Great” – Великий Новгород) is the “cradle of Russian statehood.” It is supposed to have been founded in the middle of the 9<sup>th</sup> century; I observe that this is contemporary with the lives of Saints Cyril and Methodius, integral figures to Russian language and culture. Apparently recent archaeology disputes this, favoring a date roughly a century later. Whatever the case, Novgorod was the second-most important city after Kiev in Kievan Rus’, the alliance/confederation of Slavic tribes that existed in western Russia during this time. Possibly one factor was that it lay along the northern “Varangian” trade route connecting Scandinavian Europe to the Greeks. Apparently it figures in Norse sagas. Its importance meant that by custom, the ruler of Novgorod was the Kievan prince or heir apparent; in the absence of such, it was ruled by so-called *posadniks* (посадники). Of these the most famous was Yaroslav the Wise, whose son Vladimir the Great became a Kievan prince and founded the St. Sophia Cathedral.

For context: Rus’ was contemporary with Byzantium and the Golden Age of Islam. Beginning in 1136 it became the “Novgorod Republic” but princes continued to exert considerable power over it. While it fell to the Mongol hordes in the 13<sup>th</sup> century, Novgorod itself successfully resisted the khans, at the cost of submitting to pay tribute to them (this is now the time of Nevsky). The city gradually declined in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. It was trashed by the Nazis in World War II. Nonetheless the St. Sophia Cathedral, the Novgorod Kremlin, and the Millennium of Russia monument exist to this day.

Alexander Yaroslavich Nevsky (Александр Ярославич Невский) was the prince of the Novgorod Republic in the middle of the 13<sup>th</sup> century. He is credited with protecting Novgorod at the age of 19 from an invading Swedish army (and its allies) by pre-emptively attacking them on the Neva River on 15 July 1240. Wikipedia has a wry little paragraph about how, suspiciously, no non-Russian source mentions this legendary battle. Having cemented his power and popularity among the Novgorodians, Nevsky next had to deal with the twin dangers of Catholicism and the Golden Horde. Note that the Mongols had already successfully invaded Rus’ at the time of the Battle of the Neva. Nevsky essentially rejected Rome’s suggestion to start war between Rus’ and the Horde, and instead chose to pay tribute to the latter. As [“some”] historians see it, this was decisive in influencing Russian culture towards the Eastern Orthodox, rather than the Catholic, Church. Some of the nobles of Novgorod, or *boyars*, weren’t too happy with Nevsky’s choice, which caused unrest (something about tax collectors losing their noses). However Nevsky prevailed and eventually, through the grace of the Khan, became the Grand Prince, i.e., ruler, of all Russia toward the end of his life, in 1252. Before his death, he became a monk with the name Alexis.

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alexander\\_Pushkin](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alexander_Pushkin)

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Veliky\\_Novgorod](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Veliky_Novgorod)

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kievan\\_Rus%27](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kievan_Rus%27)

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Trade\\_route\\_from\\_the\\_Varangians\\_to\\_the\\_Greeks](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Trade_route_from_the_Varangians_to_the_Greeks)

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alexander\\_Nevsky](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alexander_Nevsky)

3.

1. How many different ethnicities lived in the former USSR?
2. What is the ethnic composition of the Russian Federation (how many different ethnicities)? How many languages are spoken on the territory of the RF? You can name major language groups (ex., Slavic) or give the number of languages spoken and highlight the major ones.

The ethnic composition of the former Soviet Union can be divided into three large groups – Slavic ethnicities, Turkic ethnicities, and ethnic groups of the Caucasus – together with a smattering of other smaller groups, encompassing speakers of (non-Slavic) Indo-European (e.g., Armenian), Uralic (e.g., Finnish, Hungarian), Mongolic, Tungusic, and Paleo-Siberian languages. There were well over a hundred

ethnic groups in total. According to Wikipedia, the population of the USSR at the time of its collapse was ~287 million, with Slavic peoples representing roughly 70% and Turkic peoples roughly 12%.

Of the titular nationalities corresponding to Slavs, the largest in Soviet times was the Russian SFSR (Soviet Federative Socialist Republic), followed by Ukraine, then Byelorussia (i.e., Belarus). In the USSR most Slavs were nominally atheist but many were Russian Orthodox or Jewish. The largest Turkic groups very roughly corresponded to what English speakers think of as the “-stan” countries, and of these, the largest in *modern* times are the Azerbaijanis and Uzbeks, followed by the Kazakhs, Tatars, Turkmen, and Uighurs. (But their eponymous countries lie outside of modern Russia.) Broadly, the Turkic groups follow Sunni Islam, with the notable exception that the Azerbaijanis are Shia. The largest Caucasian groups include the Circassians, Chechens, Georgians. Of the groups living in the Caucasus that speak Indo-European languages, the most famous are probably the Armenians, the Ossetians, and various Iranian groups like the Kurds and Yazidis.

We should note: It’s possible to count “Jewish/Semitic” as a distinct ethnic identity, in which case their population was roughly 1% of the total in the USSR of the ’40s and roughly 0.1% of Russia now. However, I assume that these numbers are census numbers, hence self-reported, and I have no idea how accurate a picture they give.

In present-day Russia, there are either 185 or 186 ethnic groups depending on which Wikipedia group you consult. The largest by far is Russian Slavs (~78%); among the minorities, the largest groups are the Ukrainians and the following Turkic groups: Tatars, Bashkirs, Chuvashs. (This doesn’t contradict what I wrote earlier, because now we aren’t considering post-Soviet countries besides Russia.) The largest migrant groups are Armenians, Azerbaijanis, and Kazakhs.

Russian is the only official national language. There are 35 official regional languages. There are a dozen or so Turkic languages with official status, and about half as many Uralic ones. The only official Mongolic languages are Buryat and Kalmyk; the latter is endangered.

The languages spoken in practice generally fall along ethnic groupings: The Slavic languages (Russian, as well as Ukrainian, Belarusian, etc. unofficially), the Turkic languages (with essentially the same names as the Turkic ethnic groups I listed above), the Uralic languages, the Mongolic languages. I should also note the interesting fact that Tuvan is Turkic, not Mongolic, despite its geographical distribution.

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Demographics\\_of\\_the\\_Soviet\\_Union](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Demographics_of_the_Soviet_Union)  
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ethnic\\_groups\\_in\\_Russia](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ethnic_groups_in_Russia)  
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List\\_of\\_ethnic\\_groups\\_in\\_Russia](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_ethnic_groups_in_Russia)  
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Turkic\\_peoples](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Turkic_peoples)  
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Peoples\\_of\\_the\\_Caucasus](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Peoples_of_the_Caucasus)  
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Languages\\_of\\_Russia](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Languages_of_Russia)

4.

Since we are talking about having breakfasts and dinners, what is *káша*? Here is a description of *káша* by one Russian: “For as long as I can remember, kasha was everywhere. Everyone was cooking it, eating it, singing and watching cartoons about it.”

What do Russians have to have for lunch (обед)?

Find three Russian proverbs about food, provide their English equivalents, and then explain what the proverbs actually mean.

Kasha (ка́ша) is porridge: grains, often but not necessarily buckwheat (гречиха), boiled in water or milk and topped with butter. Sweetened kasha with milk is a traditional children's food. In Jewish culture it is used in kasha varnishkes, a mixture of kasha, bowtie pasta, and gravy.

Apparently soup is an indispensable part of lunch. Examples include borscht (beetroot soup), shschi (cabbage soup), rassolnik, and solyanka (the last two made with meat and pickled cucumber).

...вешать лапшу на уши – ...*to hang noodles on the ears*

= to make a fool of a person, to cheat them

Знает кошка, чьё мясо съела. – *The cat knows whose meat it munched.*

= A guilty party knows its guilt.

Индюк тоже думал, да в суп попал. – *The turkey also pondered, but wound up in the soup.*

= You can think as hard as you want, but you still might go nowhere.

(Translations mine)

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kasha>

<https://understandrussia.com/russian-lunch-and-dinner/>

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Borscht>

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shchi>

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rassolnik>

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Solyanka>

<https://russian.stackexchange.com/questions/601/put-noodles-onto-somebodys-ears>

<https://blogs.transparent.com/russian/food-for-thought-food-idioms-in-russian/>

5.

1. Who is the famous Russian witch? What is her name? Where does she live? What does she eat? What mode of transportation does she use? What does she look like? What is her personality like?
2. Find a picture of her and her estate or describe her and her estate.
3. Name at least one more typical villain of Russian fairy tales. (*Hint: One of the main ones has the word Бессмертный in his title.*)

BABA YAGA (Баба Яга) is Russia's big witch. She can usually be found sprawled over the stove of her hut, which is mounted on chicken legs, which, by the way, is a clear exemplar of George Lucas's pillaging of folklore (cf. Star Wars VI). She eats children, it's a free country. And she flies around in a mortar with a pestle as the...rudder? (Her chimney is the launchpad.) She's pretty gruesome and embodies all that is foul about elderly femininity in the Russian psyche. Her personality is also foul but I suppose she is not necessarily villainous, playing more of an amalgam of trickster, crone, monster, Mother Goddess, and what Wikipedia calls the "donor" archetype (I'll give you young'un a test; if you pass, you'll gain a reward).

To describe B.Y., one could list any number of trite adjectives – old, ugly, filthy, wizened, crooked – but here's an especially revealing trivium: It's rumored her affinity for snakes is connected to the fact that she has but one, skeletonized leg. Here is old Bony-Legs's house:



Your hint is referring to Koschei the Deathless (Кощей). Here we see J.K. Rowling's pillaging at work: Koschei's epithet arises from his having hid his soul in a needle in an egg in a duck in a BUN (= hare) in a precious treasure chest buried under a tree in the mythical island of Buyan (Буян). He is the villain of Stravinsky's *Firebird*: He imprisons Prince Ivan, but thanks to the magical dance powers of the Firebird, Ivan manages to escape and destroy Koschei's soul-egg, thereby freeing all of Koschei's prisoners and dispelling his evil enchantments.

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Baba\\_Yaga](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Baba_Yaga)  
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Donor\\_\(fairy\\_tale\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Donor_(fairy_tale))  
<https://huki6019.files.wordpress.com/2015/03/baba.jpg>  
<https://russiapedia.rt.com/of-russian-origin/baba-yaga/>  
<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Koschei>

6.

To answer this week's questions, you will need to visit the "Revolution Everyday" exhibit at the Smart Museum on campus.

Identify the following geographic items in the Russian Federation:

1. The longest river, the biggest lake, the tallest mountain range, the tallest peak, the lowest point, the coldest area, the hottest area
2. Which oceans and seas does Russia have access to?
3. How many climatic zones does Russia have? Name them.
4. Which territory is called the Far East? How is it different from Siberia? What is the regional center of the Russian Far East? What is Magadan famous for?

*Bonus question:* According to a 1928 issue of Red Students magazine, how often should one change one's underwear?

The Volga, which curls from western to central Russia and drains into the Caspian Sea, is not only the longest river in Russia, but in Europe as well. The title of the largest lake depends on whether the Caspian Sea, between Russia and Iran, is counted as a lake; if not, then the title goes to Lake Baikal in southern Siberia, which is also the largest freshwater lake in the world.



Russia has nine major mountain ranges, of which the tallest is the Caucasus, dividing Russia from Georgia and Azerbaijan. And the tallest peak in the Caucasus is (the western summit of) Mount Elbrus, at 4741 m tall and 5642 m above sea level. Other famous mountain ranges include: the Urals, dividing Russia from Europe; and the Sayan and Altay mountain ranges, between Russia and Mongolia/China. The lowest elevation in Russia is the Caspian Sea.

The coldest (inhabited) location in Russia is Oymyakon in the Far Eastern Federal District, but only a few thousand people have ever lived there. The warmest is Sochi, in the southwestern tip of the country, where winter temperatures are ~5-10 C and summer temperatures are ~20-30 C.

Russia borders the Pacific, Arctic, and North Atlantic Oceans. According to Wikipedia, Russia borders thirteen seas, of which the most famous – besides the Caspian – might be the Baltic Sea (south of the Scandinavian countries), the Black Sea (between Russia and Europe, and into which rivers like the Danube drain), and the Bering Sea (between the far east and the Pacific).

Here is a Wikipedian's map of the climatic zones of Russia:

## Köppen climate types of Russia



Russia distinguishes between the Far East (i.e., the Far Eastern Federal District) and Siberia (i.e., the Siberian Federal District). Siberia is in the geographical center of the country and the Far East is the actual eastern end. The administrative center of the Far East is Khabarovsk, to the northeast of China, but

the most populous city is Vladivostok, close to China and North Korea. Magadan Oblast is the least populated oblast in all of Russia.

I'll answer the bonus question later...

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Geography\\_of\\_Russia](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Geography_of_Russia)  
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Volga\\_River](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Volga_River)  
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Caspian\\_Sea](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Caspian_Sea)  
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lake\\_Baikal](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lake_Baikal)  
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Caucasus\\_Mountains](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Caucasus_Mountains)  
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mount\\_Elbrus](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mount_Elbrus)  
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List\\_of\\_mountains\\_of\\_Russia](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_mountains_of_Russia)  
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List\\_of\\_extreme\\_points\\_of\\_Russia](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_extreme_points_of_Russia)  
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Climate\\_of\\_Russia](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Climate_of_Russia)  
<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oymyakon>  
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sakha\\_Republic](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sakha_Republic)  
<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sochi>  
<https://www.economist.com/the-economist-explains/2014/02/06/why-sochi-is-ironically-the-perfect-place-for-the-winter-olympics>  
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Russia\\_K%C3%B6ppen.svg](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Russia_K%C3%B6ppen.svg)  
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Category:Seas\\_of\\_Russia](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Category:Seas_of_Russia)  
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Russian\\_Far\\_East](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Russian_Far_East)  
<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Khabarovsk>  
<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vladivostok>  
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Magadan\\_Oblast](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Magadan_Oblast)  
<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Magadan>

7.

1. It's time to look up to the stars for this culture hunt! What are the names of the planets in Russian?
2. We all know that the United States engaged in a "Space Race" with the Soviet Union in the 20<sup>th</sup>. Just as the American space program was in this country, the Soviet space program was a tremendous source of pride and inspiration for the nation and people. It's time to learn a little more about the Soviet and Russian programs by briefly identifying the following:

Спúтник-1  
Востóк (космическая прогрáмма)  
Юрий Гагáрин  
Валентина Терешкóва  
Бéлка и Стрélка  
Мир (орбитáльный комплéкс)

The planets are: Меркурий (Mercury), Венера (Venus), Земля (the Earth), Марс (Mars), Юпитер (Jupiter), Сатурн (Saturn), Уран (Uranus), Нептун (Neptune). And Pluto is Плúтон.

*Sputnik* ("Traveling-companion") *1* was the first man-made satellite. It was launched by the Soviet Union on October 4, 1957 from Baikonur and orbited the Earth for three weeks on battery power, and two more months without.

(*Sputnik 2*, on November 3, 1957, was the Laika flight. Laika died of overheating within hours of her launch into space.)

The *Vostok* (“Orient”) program was the first Soviet human spaceflight program. It ran six manned spaceflight missions, the first and most famous being *Vostok 1*, which put Yuri Gagarin into orbit on April 12, 1961.

Valentina Tereshkova became the first woman in space on June 16, 1963, flying on *Vostok 6*. A colorized photo of her from Reddit:



Belka and Strelka were the first Soviet space dogs to return from their journey alive. They flew on *Korabl-Sputnik 2*, or *Sputnik 5*, on August 19, 1960.

The *Mir* (“Peace”) space station, which operated from 1986 through 1996, was the first continuously-operating space station in history. Like the later ISS, it was assembled in modules over a span of years, and powered by photovoltaic arrays. The longest human spaceflight ever occurred on *Mir*: Valeri Polyakov stayed in space for 437 days and 18 hours.

<http://www.funrussian.com/2016/09/27/solar-system-space-words-russian/>

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sputnik\\_1](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sputnik_1)

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Laika>

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vostok\\_programme](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vostok_programme)

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yuri\\_Gagarin](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yuri_Gagarin)

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Valentina\\_Tereshkova](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Valentina_Tereshkova)



[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Baikonur\\_Cosmodrome](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Baikonur_Cosmodrome)

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mir>

[https://old.reddit.com/r/ColorizedHistory/comments/9pw6yb/first\\_woman\\_to\\_go\\_into\\_space\\_valentina\\_tereshkova/](https://old.reddit.com/r/ColorizedHistory/comments/9pw6yb/first_woman_to_go_into_space_valentina_tereshkova/)

8.

1. Who is Ю́рий Но́рште́йн and why is he called the “Golden Snail”? Watch the following and tell us what you think. Do you agree that this [link] is considered a masterpiece?

2. What on earth is a Чебура́шка? Find a picture of it and include it in your answer. What does a crocodile have to do with it? Watch the following [link] and briefly summarize what you see!

Yuri Borisovich Norstein is a contender to be the greatest movie animator of all time. He is known as the Golden Snail because he works so slowly. Apparently he was fired from Soyuzmultfilm in 1985, because after two years, he had only finishing ten minutes of his adaptation of Gogol’s *The Overcoat*. He’s still working on it in this decade, and thus far, has only finished roughly ten to fifteen more minutes of what is hoped to be a 65-minute-long film.

I stumbled on *Hedgehog in the Fog* (*Ёжик в тумане*) over two years ago! I think this is Norstein’s most famous film, at least in the West. It is truly great. I empathize with the hedgehog on a spiritual level.

The Russian cartoon character Cheburashka is a “creature unknown to science.” Here is his photo from episode one:



Supposedly, his name is a diminutive of the Russian slang for “tumbled” (чебурахнулся). In-world, he lives in a tropical forest until he accidentally falls asleep in a crate of oranges that gets shipped to Russia (Moscow?). In Russia he becomes best friends with Gena the Crocodile, who works as a zoo animal(!). Cheburashka himself gets a job as a window display in a shop that sells what Wikipedia calls “factory seconds” (= defective products).

The classic Cheburashka series ran during the 70’s (more precisely, four series between 1969 to 1983), but there have been efforts to bring him back, most notably in Japan. Historically, the copyright issues around his image have been deeply contentious.

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yuri\\_Norstein](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yuri_Norstein)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Rugwd8ZNHY>

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cheburashka>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Lw7yNxSGMdQ>

9.

We will leave Russia for this and the next culture hunt, and turn our attention to several former Soviet Republics – so-called “spheres of Russian influence.”

The Caucasus (Кавка́з) is an amazing region from a linguistic and anthropological point of view. Find out the following information (answer briefly!):

1. How many languages are spoken in the area/how many ethnicities call Кавка́з their home?
2. What three post-Soviet states are located on the territory of Кавка́з? (Provide their names in Russian.)
3. What areas are “hot spots” politically and why? (Briefly!)
4. When and under what circumstances did Кавка́з become part of the Russian zone of influence? (*Hint: Think back to the times of Russian empire.*)

It may be misleading to give an exact answer to “how many languages are spoken in the Caucasus.” What one can say is: There are probably over fifty *indigenous* languages, which provide a rough way to partition up the people there into ethnic groups, and which fall into three families: The Kartvelian languages (including Georgian), the Northeast Caucasian or Caspian languages (including Chechen), and the Northwest Caucasian or Pontic languages. (Here, “Pontic” refer to the Black Sea.) The northern languages are infamous for having enormous consonant inventories on the order of > 80 consonants. Before taking this class, I had heard of the NW Caucasian language Ubykh, whose last fluent speaker, Tefvik Esenç, died in 1992—one can listen to a recording of his voice on Youtube, where he recounts a yarn about eating fish making a person smarter.

The post-Soviet countries in the Кавказ are Армения (Armenia), Азербайджан (Azerbaijan), Георгия (Georgia). Georgia is between Russia and Turkey and faces the Black Sea to the west. Azerbaijan is between Russia and Iran and faces the Caspian to the east. And Armenia is in the middle and to the south of these two.

Any account of “modern” politics in the Caucasus should include background on the Russian-Chechen conflict. This has been going on unofficially for hundreds of years, but in my lifetime, the first big event was the Chechen Wars of the 90s. The Chechens are an ethnic group in the North Caucasus who predominantly practice Sunni Islam. In brief, separatists broke off from the Soviet Union, formed the Chechen Republic of Ichkeria, fought a guerilla war to establish their independence, experienced political collapse culminating in the imposition of sharia law, fought a second war in which they lost, and ultimately got folded into modern Russia. Chechen terrorism continues to be a significant problem in Russian society.

Closer to the present day, we have the following situation: All three of Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia suffer from corruption and political-rights abuses, but the worst case is definitely Azerbaijan—which, nonetheless, is the strongest of the three economically and politically (e.g., it has a UN seat). In the early 90s, Armenia and Azerbaijan went to war over a region called Nagorno-Karabakh, now a *de facto* independent state self-styled as the Republic of Artsakh. Artsakh is culturally closer to Armenia but at present does not want to merge with it. To this day, Azerbaijan continues to call for Armenian troops to vacate its soil outside of Nagorno-Karabakh. Georgia has at least two comparably serious situations, caused by Russian military aggression: Abkhazia, a region on the Black Sea, and South Ossetia, a region in the central north. Both had wars in the 90s, but there was a more recent war in South Ossetia in 2008.

To understand the source of anger in the Caucasus toward Russia: Russia, under Tsar Alexander I, took control of the Caucasus in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, in a sequence of conflicts against (Qajar) Persia/Iran

called the Russo-Persian Wars as well as with Turkey. Following this, Russian forces committed genocide, forced deportations, and forced expulsions of many of the ethnic groups there, most notably in the Circassian Genocide of the 1860s-70s. This was an enormous atrocity resulting in about 1.5 million deaths.

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Caucasus>  
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Peoples\\_of\\_the\\_Caucasus](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Peoples_of_the_Caucasus)  
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ethnic\\_groups\\_in\\_Russia](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ethnic_groups_in_Russia)  
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Languages\\_of\\_the\\_Caucasus](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Languages_of_the_Caucasus)  
<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ubykh>  
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Post-Soviet\\_states](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Post-Soviet_states)  
<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Armenia>  
<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Azerbaijan>  
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Georgia\\_\(country\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Georgia_(country))  
<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nagorno-Karabakh>  
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nagorno-Karabakh\\_War](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nagorno-Karabakh_War)  
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Russo-Georgian\\_War](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Russo-Georgian_War)

<https://foreignpolicy.com/2013/03/08/political-tremors-in-the-caucasus/>  
<https://carnegieendowment.org/2017/05/31/u.s.-policy-toward-south-caucasus-take-three-pub-70122>  
<https://www.fpri.org/article/2017/01/will-shape-caucasus-2017/>  
<https://iwpr.net/global-voices/shifting-energy-politics-caucasus>  
<https://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2014/10/what-happens-caucasus-when-rus-2014102972425540341.html>

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Russo-Persian\\_Wars](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Russo-Persian_Wars)  
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Russian\\_conquest\\_of\\_the\\_Caucasus](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Russian_conquest_of_the_Caucasus)  
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Russo-Circassian\\_War](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Russo-Circassian_War)  
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Circassian\\_genocide](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Circassian_genocide)

10.

Continuing on the subject of territories that fall within the sphere of “Russian influence”:

1. What is the Commonwealth of Independent States? How do you say this in Russian? Which countries are members?
2. Select a member country of this organization and briefly discuss the following:
  - History of “Russian influence” in this country
  - Extent of “Russian influence” in the country today. Think in terms of demographics, language, treaties, trade, etc.
3. Which former Soviet republics are NOT members of the Commonwealth? Are they within the sphere of “Russian influence”?

The Commonwealth of Independent States, Содружество Независимых Государств in Russian, is a league of nine post-Soviet states that agree to work together politically, economically, and militarily. It currently includes Russia, Belarus, Moldova, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Kazakhstan. In practice, for the smaller states, membership in the CIS signifies willingness to cooperate with Russia. Turkmenistan and Ukraine participated in the founding of the CIS, but did not sign its charter, making them “associate members”; however, Ukraine withdrew altogether in 2018 as a result of the Russian annexation of Crimea and the War in Donbass. In a similar spirit, Georgia withdrew in 2008 due to the Russo-Georgian War in South Ossetia and Abkhazia.

The Baltic states – Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania – refused participation altogether as they consider the Soviet era to be an occupation. Notably, these are generally the most democratic of all the post-Soviet states. They remain within the Russian sphere of influence, mainly because they are dependent on Russian oil/gas. The main contributor to the inefficiency of their energy production is the persistence of problems from the era of Soviet control of energy, e.g., the lack of desulfurization equipment in Estonia. Estonia and Latvia have severe pollution issues; Wikipedia claims Lithuania has been doing better.

I'm going to focus on Kazakhstan. Russian influence in the region dates back to the 19<sup>th</sup> century, when Kazakhstan was one of the “pieces” in the Great Game between Russia and the British Empire. This period went badly for the Kazakhs, who, being predominantly Muslim and nomadic, held a very different style of life from their Westernized Russian encroachers. The culmination was the Central Asian Revolt of 1916, sparked by the attempt to conscript Muslims into the Tsar's army. A new rebellion, the Basmachi Revolt, started up when the Bolsheviks seized power the following year. This was eventually put down in the early 1920s through a combination of overwhelming Russian military force and a series of concessions to local Muslim authority that swayed the population to the Russian side rather than the *basmachi* side. Through the course of the Soviet era, Kazakhs became a minority within their own homeland, dwindling to 30% of the population (while Russians were 43%). The first Soviet nuclear bomb was tested in Kazakhstan, near modern-day Semey / Semipalatinsk, in 1949.

Kazakhstan became independent from the Soviet Union on October 25, 1990. To mark its independence, the government moved the capital from Almaty (still the largest city) to Astana. Nonetheless, over a quarter of the population remains Russian today. The economy has shifted markedly from the primarily agricultural economy of Soviet times to a severe reliance on petroleum (56% of all exports). Russian influence continues to be felt economically, e.g., in the lease of Baikonur to Russia for the cosmodrome; in language use, as most Kazakhs speak Russian; and in the fine arts, where Western influences (e.g., in classical music) are often rooted in earlier Russian cultural imports. Despite Kazakhstan's demographic, economic, and cultural ties to Russia, it gave humanitarian aid to Ukraine and publicly supported its “territorial integrity,” while making sure to affirm a mediating rather than prejudicial role in Russian-Ukrainian negotiations.

A map of pre-2008 CIS member and associate member states, from WorldAtlas.com:



[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Commonwealth\\_of\\_Independent\\_States](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Commonwealth_of_Independent_States)  
<https://www.worldatlas.com/aatlas/infopage/cis.htm>  
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Post-Soviet\\_states](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Post-Soviet_states)  
<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kazakhstan>  
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History\\_of\\_Kazakhstan](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_Kazakhstan)  
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Basmachi\\_movement](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Basmachi_movement)

11.

Who was Vladimir Vysotskiy (Владимир Высоцкий)? Discuss his impact on Russian (and Soviet) Culture. Follow the link below to get better acquainted with Высоцкий. What do you think of him? [[link](#)]

Vladimir Semyonovich Vysotskiy (Владимир Семёнович Высоцкий) was a Russian singer-songwriter and actor from the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. He was famous for his irreverent lyrics, flamboyant stage presence, sex-symbol status (including marriage to beautiful actresses), and struggles with alcoholism and other drug addictions. He was ignored or villified by the Soviet press but provided a welcome alternative to its saccharine patriotism, especially on the subject of war. In his countercultural image, he is a figure comparable to Tom Waits in America or (as Wikipedia suggests) George Brassens in France. The comparison with Tom Waits is also apt because Vysotskiy's singing voice resembles the sound of rusty chainmail being polished against a gravel driveway. His style exaggerated this by drawing out, not the vowels of his lyrics, but the *consonants*.

A performance relatively free of this: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OBLWDk8q6Tc>

And one full of it: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vA0aWBGqTR4>

But perhaps we should leave the reader with Vysotskiy's own remarks, quoted without citation on Wikipedia, admonishing us that he does "not belong to what people call bards or minstrels or whatever."

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vladimir\\_Vysotsky](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vladimir_Vysotsky)  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sZ97BTBGCM>  
<http://www.vysotsky.com/1033.htm>

12.

No journey through Russian Culture would be complete without mentioning the баня. What is a баня? What are the rituals associated with it? That is, how do Russians typically enjoy баня? In your answer don't forget to mention банный веник. Also, who or what is a банник? While we're on the topic, who or what is домовой?

The banya (баня) is the Russian version of a sauna. It's ubiquitous. It's not limited to wealthy people or only found in large cities. Usually, there are three rooms involved: An entrance room or предбанник, where people prepare for or take a break from the steam and possibly drink tea whilst doing so; the steam room itself or парная; and a room where people can cool down and/or wash themselves, e.g. with a washtub or ушат.

Typically, people go to the banya with friends. They may go into the steam room before the steam has started while the room is hot, so they can build up their sweat first. They stay there until they are thoroughly drenched in their own juices, intermittently taking breaks in the предбанник, also typically having long discussions about poetry and the meaning of life throughout the process. They also beat one



another with oak-leaf brooms called вѣники that have been dipped in cold water, ostensibly to “improve circulation” while the steam is cooking them from the outside in. Then they leave and immerse themselves in a cold wash, or possibly Siberian snow, and proudly affirm themselves reinvigorated by this ordeal, as in the proverb

В ба́не помы́лся — за́ново роди́лся.  
To be washed in the banya is to be born anew.

Altogether the banya ritual definitely seems like an “acquired taste.” There are many superstitions, sayings, etc. about how sweat helps “protect” one’s skin from the hot steam, how steam cleans out skin, how banya cures illness and stimulates weight loss.

The bannik (ба́нник) is a Slavic spirit-deity said to reside in the banya. He is an impish trickster in the shape of a wizened & lecherous old man who can behave as both poltergeist and oracle. He is one manifestation of the tutelary (guardian/patron) spirits in Slavic culture, called the домово́и, that originate in pre-Christian religion. As his name suggests, the домово́й is the guardian deity of a household, who can both help and harm (and in the case of a disaster, abandon). He is regarded as the spiritual origin (“fountainhead”) of the family’s kin network.

To this day, folk belief in the домово́и has never quite been eradicated by Christian influences. While the major Christianization of the Slavs occurred circa the 12<sup>th</sup> century, as a result of Germanization via the Northern Crusades, the old religions persisted into the 15<sup>th</sup> century – as attested by evidence of *kurgan* burials – until the ascendancy of the Russian Orthodox Church caused many pagan practices, e.g., sunwise direction in ritual processions, to be absorbed into Christian ones.

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Banya\\_\(sauna\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Banya_(sauna))  
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Slavic\\_paganism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Slavic_paganism)  
<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bannik>  
<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Domovoy>

<http://masterrussian.com/russianculture/banya.htm>  
<https://chicagosweatlodge.com/>

13.

What is Ма́сленица? Will we be seeing one this year? If so, when? What are some of the traditions associated with it? What is sure to be eaten? What is чу́чело Ма́сленицы and what is its fate? Watch the following video and write down 10 new words/expressions that will help you get through the experience of Ма́сленица. [[link](#)]

Disclaimer: The Wikipedia article on this subject is fairly sketchy.

Maslenitsa (Ма́сленица) is ostensibly the Slavic equivalent of Shrovetide – though it seems to have originated in pagan spring-welcoming rituals devoted to the god Volos (Veles). Undoubtedly the tradition of burning the Maslenitsa scarecrow/effigy (чу́чело Ма́сленицы) is a vestige of this. In the modern, Christianized era, it marks the last week before the Eastern Orthodox Lent – Great Lent (Великий пост) – during which dairy products can still be consumed but meat is forbidden. Note that the timing of Great Lent generally differs from that of Lent, including how Eastern vs Western Christians calculate the date of Easter. This year, Maslenitsa is March 4-10, and Great Lent is March 11 to April 27.

Apparently the English translation of the name (vetted by Google Translate, who I trust in this matter) is “Pancake Week.” Compare to Shrove Tuesday being called “Pancake Tuesday.” But a more accurate translation for Масленица might be “*Butter Pancake Week*,” as the pancakes in question are predominantly *bliny* (блины), i.e., crepes/blintzes. The point is to use up one’s milk and eggs before Lent: *bliny* are made with rich batter and often filled with quark / other cheese products and served with sour cream.

From the video, an outline:

Понедельник – Встреча (“Welcoming”)

Вторник – Заигрыш (“Merrymaking”)

Young men invite women to go on sleigh rides (катание на санях).

Среда – Лакомка (“Sweet-Tooth Day”)

The son-in-law (зять) visits his mother-in-law’s (тёща) to eat crepes.

Четверг – Широкий (“Wide [Maslenitsa]”)

Folk games and contests.

Пятница – Тещины Вечера (“Mother-in-Law’s Eve”)

The mother-in-law repays the visit to her son-in-law and tastes her daughter’s crepes.

Суббота – Золовкины Посиделки (“Sister-in-Law’s Gathering”)

Воскресенье – Прощание (“Forgiveness”)

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Maslenitsa>

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shrove\\_Tuesday](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shrove_Tuesday)

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Veles\\_\(god\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Veles_(god))

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Great\\_Lent](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Great_Lent)

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Blini>

<https://lidenz.ru/maslenitsa-russia-celebrated-go/>

[http://news.ifmo.ru/en/features/life\\_in\\_russia/news/6460/](http://news.ifmo.ru/en/features/life_in_russia/news/6460/)

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?time\\_continue=3&v=MbxfYrYAK0s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=3&v=MbxfYrYAK0s)

14.

1. The first line of Moscow Metro was opened in 1935. Today, Moscow Metro is one of the best systems of public transportation in the world. It is also an object of public art. Explore the internet for pictures of famous Moscow Metro stations and paste photo(s) of your favorite station(s). Write the names of this/these station(s) in Russian. Here are some Russian language sites:

2. Humor is an intricate part of every culture. Russians are fond of telling jokes. Here are some examples of simple jokes (there are much more sophisticated ones). Translate them [from] Russian to the best of your ability:

The Moscow Metro opened in 1935 and now spans 12 lines, 224 stations, and 381 kilometers—not including the Central Circle or the Monorail. It is the fifth-longest metro system in the world. Here’s a map:

## MOSCOW METRO & MONORAIL SCHEME



The metro stations are acknowledged masterpieces of Soviet architecture, frequently incorporating marble walls and ornate chandeliers, as well as influences ranging from medieval to Art Nouveau.

*Aviamotornaya (Kalininsko-Solntsevskaya)*

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aviamotornaya\\_\(Kalininsko%E2%80%93Solntsevskaya\\_line\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aviamotornaya_(Kalininsko%E2%80%93Solntsevskaya_line))





*Elektrozavodskaya*

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Elektrozavodskaya\\_\(Moscow\\_Metro\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Elektrozavodskaya_(Moscow_Metro))



*Kropotkinskaya*

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kropotkinskaya>





*Novoslobodskaya*

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Novoslobodskaya>







*Slavyansky Bulvar*

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Slavyansky\\_Bulvar](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Slavyansky_Bulvar)











*Taganskaya (Koltsevaya)*

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Taganskaya\\_\(Koltsevaya\\_line\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Taganskaya_(Koltsevaya_line))



А)

Муж пришёл (came) вечером домой. Жена говорит:

- Ты знаешь, наш сын сегодня сказал первое слово! Знаешь, какое? «Папа»!!!
- Правда?! Как я рад! А где это было?
- В зоопарке. Мы гуляли, и он увидел обезьяну.

Б)

- Мама, вчера, когда я играл на барабане, пришёл дядя Коля, который живёт на втором этаже.
- И что он сказал?
- Мама, дядя Коля очень хороший! Он дал мне нож и сказал: - Посмотри, что в барабане!

А)

The husband came home in the evening. The wife said:

- “You know, today our son spoke his first word! Do you know what it was? ‘Papa!’”
- “Really?! How proud he makes me! Where did this happen?”
- “At the zoo. We were strolling through and he saw a monkey.”

В)

“Mama, yesterday, when I was banging my drum, Uncle Kolya—who lives on the second floor—came down.”

“And what did he say?”

“Mama, Uncle Kolya was doing very well! He gave me a knife and said: Have a look at what’s in the drum!”

<http://mosmetro.ru/>

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Moscow\\_Metro](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Moscow_Metro)

<https://russiabile.com/using-moscow-metro/>

<http://www.traveller.com.au/why-you-must-visit-the-subway-in-moscow-even-if-you-dont-use-the-train-gwyhe3>

<https://www.rbth.com/arts/328682-moscow-metro-most-beautiful-stations>

<https://vagrantsoftheworld.com/moscow-metro-stations/>

<https://www.theatlantic.com/photo/2017/05/scenes-from-the-moscow-metro/528660/>

<https://travel.rambler.ru/?updated>

<https://lastdjedai.livejournal.com/107465.html>

<https://www.davidburdeny.com/photographs/russia-a-bright-future-2014-2015/1>

<https://misterburton.com/moscow/>

15.

It’s time to take a look at some Russian superstitions. Briefly answer 5 of the following questions regarding some of the most common Russian superstitions.

- Why should you never sit at the corner of a table?
- An empty bottle (and keys, and coins) should never go where? Why?
- What should you do if you receive knives as gift? Why?
- Oops! You’ve forgotten something at home. What should you do?
- Why should one never greet or bid farewell with someone in the threshold?
- How might you doom an unborn baby?
- What should you do if you meet someone with the same name as yours?
- Why should one not whistle inside?
- What should you do before leaving on a trip? Why?
- What on earth is тѣфу-тѣфу-тѣфу???

If you sit at the corner of a table, you won’t get married (“for seven years”). If you’re a kid, this is probably okay.

Don’t put an empty bottle back on the table, but on the floor. Apocryphally, this custom originated with the Cossacks who drove Napoleon back to France in 1814, who noticed that French restaurants charged for alcohol based on the number of empty bottles still on the table. Presumably keys and coins follow the same mojo.

If you get a knife or other sharp object as a gift, you should pay the bequeather back a ruble, to deflect the danger-mojito of the gift.

If you forget something at home, you should look in the mirror before you leave again.

If you shake hands, greet, bid farewell, etc. over a threshold of a home, the домово́и will get pissed off.



A person who whistles in their home will lose their money.

A person should observe a minute of silence before leaving on a trip, ostensibly to give them time to check that they haven't forgotten anything, but REALLY to pay respects to the домовои.

One spits over one's shoulder (with the sound тьфу-тьфу-тьфу) to ward off the Devil. Originally he was supposed to perch over the left shoulder, but it seems there is now dispute regarding left versus right.

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Russian\\_traditions\\_and\\_superstitions](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Russian_traditions_and_superstitions)

<https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2015/06/09/11-russian-superstitions-because-we-were-scared-to-do-13>

[https://www.rbth.com/arts/lifestyle/2016/01/21/10-common-russian-superstitions\\_561149](https://www.rbth.com/arts/lifestyle/2016/01/21/10-common-russian-superstitions_561149)

16.



Who painted this? Briefly discuss the artist. What is the name of this painting? Who is depicted in this painting? Give a brief description of each figure depicted. While we are on the topic, what is a *bylina* (былина)?

This work was painted by Viktor Vasnetsov in 1898. Vasnetsov, who lived from 1848 to 1926, helped bring about the “Russian Revivalist” movement in art through his depictions of fairy-tales and mythology. Notably, in the 1870-80s, he painted many scenes from the *byliny*, the traditional oral epics of East Slavic folklore, with titles such as *Prince Igor's Battlefield* and *Three Princesses of the Underground Kingdom*. Although these paintings were rejected by the public of their time, they ultimately exerted a strong influence upon Russian nationalist aesthetics at the turn of the century. As the 20<sup>th</sup> century began, Vasnetsov received commissions to design “fairy-tale” mansions, including the Russian pavillion at the 1898 World Fair in Paris; mosaics for the Alexander Nevsky Cathedrals in Warsaw and Moscow; and military uniforms for the Russian army. Vasnetsov's works – even his sober religious frescos of the late 1880s – were grand, richly-colored, and thoroughly romanticist in their worldview.

Historians believe the *byliny* (singular: *bylina*) date back to the Kievan period of East Slavic culture, before its fall to invading Tatars in the 13<sup>th</sup> century. The heroes they portray are often inspired by historical figures, but broadened into epic archetypes. Their plots often rely on tropes and themes well-worn in “quest” literature: A young protagonist venturing away from home for the first time, battles with monsters, witches who transform men into animals, and fantastical mixtures of Christian and pagan beliefs. A famous collection of *byliny* was compiled by Ivan Sakharov in 1839.

The painting above, titled *Bogatyrs*, depicts Dobrynya Nikitich, Ilya Muromets, and Alyosha Popovich. In folklore, a *bogatyр* (богатырь) is the Russian equivalent of a Western medieval knight; the term has since come to mean heroes and courageous people more generally. They are inspired by the *druzhiny* who served the Kievan Prince as elite warriors (the senior members were precisely the *boyars*, the prince’s advisors). The three in the painting are the “main” *bogatyrs* of Kievan myth.

– Dobrynya is a fictionalized version of a warlord who served Svyatoslav the Great and his son Prince Vladimir (980-1015). In addition to his warrior talents, he is trained as a courtier and knows how to play music. He is cunning and courteous, despite being of peasant birth. According to Wikipedia, a famous story of Dobrynya’s youth concerns his encounter with a dragon of “twelve trunks” and her brood. (Dobrynya wins.)

– According to the myth, Ilya Muromets was unable to walk until he was 33 (supposedly, Jesus Christ’s age at death?), when he was healed by two pilgrims. Subsequently, a dying knight named Svyatogor bequeathed to him super-strength in order to help him liberate Kiev from barbarians in the name of Prince Vladimir. Ilya’s personality combines courage and naivete with a quick temper. In later life he becomes a wise old monk.

– Alyosha Popovich, despite being a smart-aleck and a deceiver, is nonetheless also a renowned bogatyr of Prince Vladimir. Wikipedia recounts the following tale: The dragon Tugarin attended one of Vladimir’s banquets, where he behaved rudely and insulted the prince. Alyosha taunted Tugarin into throwing a dagger, which his squire Yekim managed to catch. Tugarin challenged Alyosha to one-on-one combat the next day, but through his cunning, Alyosha managed to prevent Tugarin from using his wings, and ultimately killed him with the very dagger Tugarin had thrown the day before. In one version of the myth, Alyosha disguises himself as a pilgrim in order to get close enough to Tugarin to taunt him effectively.

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bogatyr>

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dobrynya\\_Nikitich](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dobrynya_Nikitich)

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ilya\\_Muromets](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ilya_Muromets)

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alyosha\\_Popovich](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alyosha_Popovich)

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Druzhina>

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Viktor\\_Vasnetsov](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Viktor_Vasnetsov)

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Russian\\_Revival\\_architecture](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Russian_Revival_architecture)

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Romantic\\_nationalism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Romantic_nationalism)

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bylina>