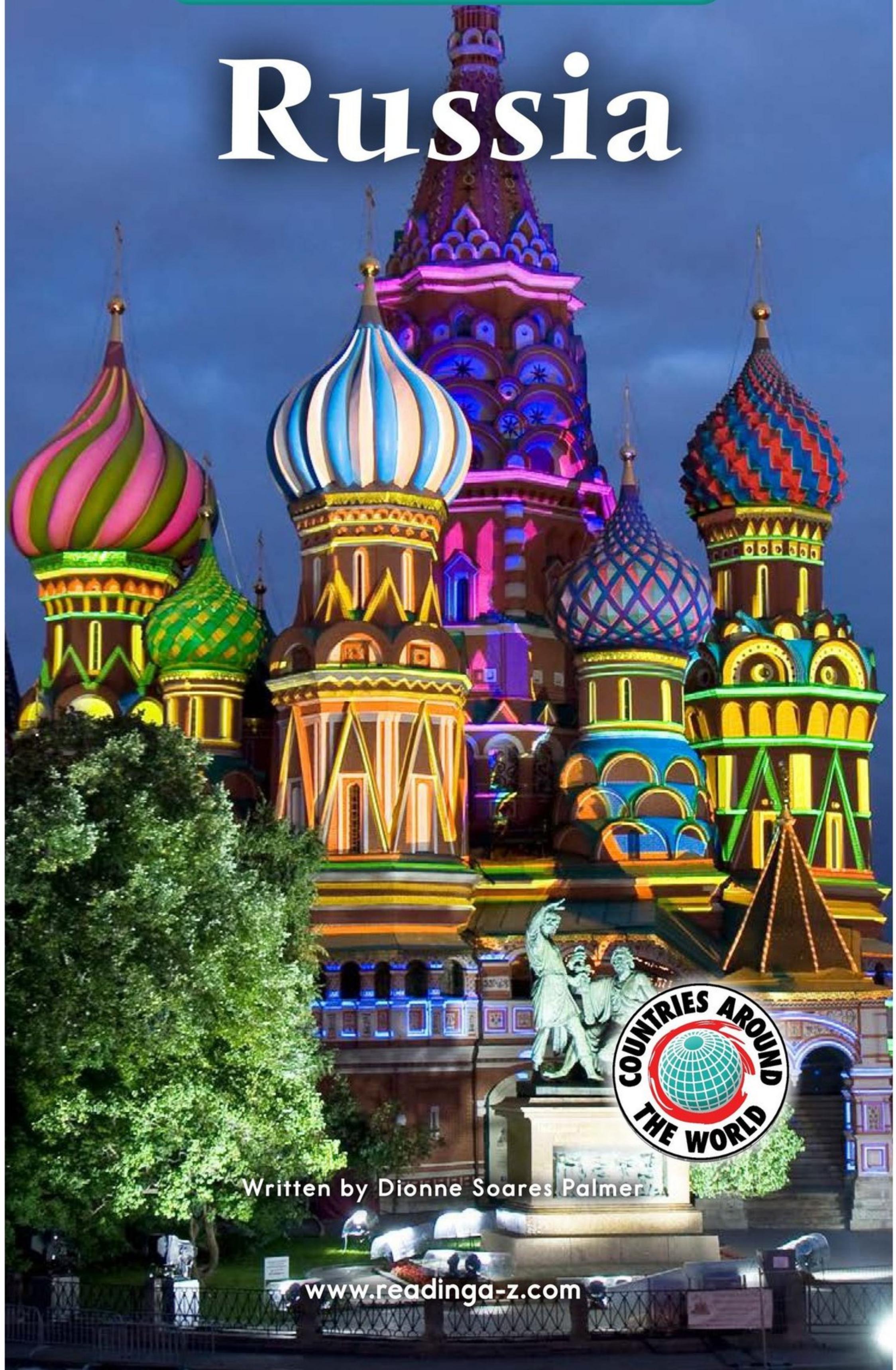


LEVELED Book • Y

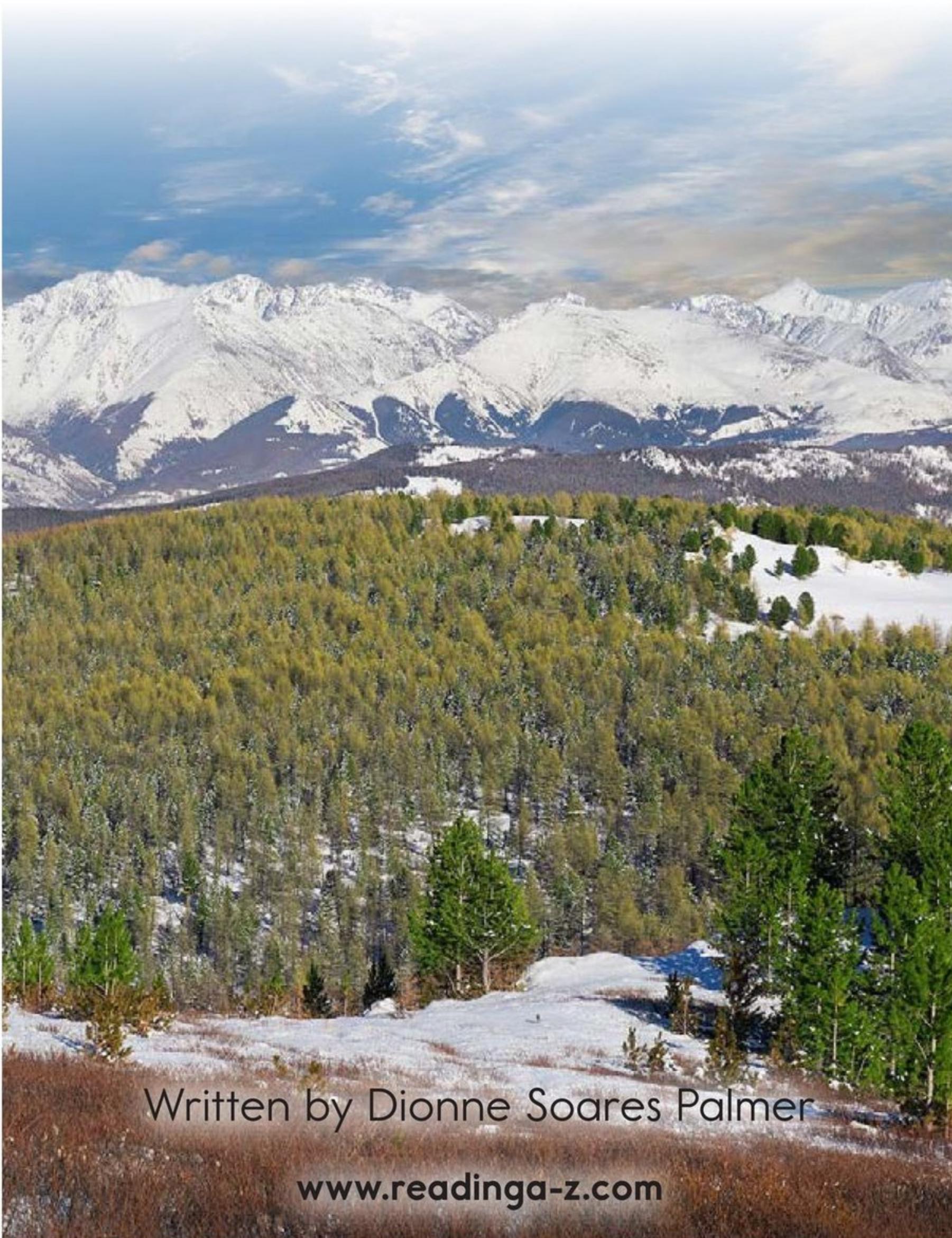
# Russia



Written by Dionne Soares Palmer

[www.readinga-z.com](http://www.readinga-z.com)

# Russia



Written by Dionne Soares Palmer

[www.readinga-z.com](http://www.readinga-z.com)

## Focus Question

How do Russia's culture and history make it a one-of-a-kind country?

# Words to Know

communist  
composers  
culture  
czarinas  
czars  
ecosystems

market economy  
monarchy  
Muslim  
natural resources  
parliament  
plateaus

Front cover: St. Basil's Cathedral in Moscow

Title page: A wintry landscape in Siberia

Page 3: A friendly snowball fight in St. Petersburg

## Photo Credits:

Front cover: © Afonskaya/iStock/Thinkstock; title page: © Yury Taranik/123RF; page 3: © Dmitri Lovetsky/AP Images; page 5: © Wastesoul/Dreamstime.com; page 6 (left): © Mikhail Grushin/123RF; page 6 (right): © Mertsaloff/iStock/Thinkstock; page 7 (top): © Andrew Caballero-Reynolds/Bloomberg/Getty Images; page 7 (bottom): © Ivan Sinayko/Dreamstime.com; page 9: © vicnt/iStock/Thinkstock; page 10 (top): © Sovfoto/Universal Images Group/REX/Shutterstock; page 10 (bottom): © Universal History Archive/Universal Images Group/REX/Shutterstock; page 11 (top): © liorpt/iStock/Thinkstock; page 11 (bottom): © Margaret Bourke-White/The LIFE Picture Collection/Getty Images; page 12: © Kommersant Photo/Kommersant/Getty Images; page 13: © alexvav/iStock/Thinkstock; page 14: © Trifonov\_Evgeniy/iStock/Thinkstock; page 15 (top): © Iculig/iStock/Thinkstock; page 15 (bottom): © dmitrydesigner/123RF

Russia

Countries Around the World  
Level Y Leveled Book  
© Learning A-Z  
Written by Dionne Soares Palmer

All rights reserved.

[www.readinga-z.com](http://www.readinga-z.com)

## Correlation

LEVEL Y	
Fountas & Pinnell	T
Reading Recovery	40
DRA	40



## Table of Contents

Where Is It? .....	4
People .....	6
Land .....	8
History .....	10
Celebrations .....	12
Food .....	13
Conclusion .....	14
Glossary .....	16



## Where Is It?

Russia is a huge country that stretches all the way from Eastern Europe to East Asia, encompassing eleven time zones and 16,377,742 square kilometers (6,323,500 sq. mi.) of land. Twice the size of the United States, Russia is the largest country in the world.

Seas and oceans surround Russia on two sides. The Arctic Ocean lies to the north and three seas are to the east. In Europe, Russia shares borders with Finland, Ukraine, and Kazakhstan among others. Its Asian neighbors include Mongolia, China, and Japan. Separated by the Bering Strait, Russia's far eastern tip is only 88.5 kilometers (55 mi.) from the west coast of the state of Alaska in the United States.

The capital of Russia is Moscow, a large city not far from the country's western border. More than twelve million people live there. One of the most famous places in Moscow is the Kremlin. The Kremlin was once used as a castle or fort. Today, this structure in Moscow is a group of buildings including palaces, cathedrals, and government offices. The Kremlin is the center of government for Russia and is the official residence of the Russian president. It is bordered at one end by a famous plaza called Red Square. Together, the Kremlin and Red Square are important not only to the people of Russia, but to the world. They will always be protected and restored.

St. Basil's Cathedral, built in the sixteenth century, is one of the most famous sights in Russia.



## People

Although Russia is very large, it ranks tenth in the world in terms of population. Around 142 million people (less than half the population of the United States) live there. About three-fourths of the population live in cities.

People in Russia speak about one hundred different languages in communities across the country, but most people speak Russian. Written Russian uses the Cyrillic alphabet, which is a modified form of the Greek alphabet.

Many people work in one of the major industries in Russia related to the land's **natural resources**. Russia has about one fourth of our planet's forests and, as a result, Russia is one of the biggest producers of lumber in the world. With oceans on two of its borders, Russia also has a booming fishing industry, and people from around the world eat fish caught off of Russia's coasts.

### The Cyrillic Alphabet

The Cyrillic alphabet has thirty-three letters, seven more than the alphabet used in English.



Аа Бб Вв Гг Дд Ее  
Ёё Жж Зз Ии Йй Кк  
Лл Мм Нн Оо Пп Рр  
Сс Тт Уу Фф Хх Цц  
Чч Шш Щщ Ъъ ыы  
Ьъ Ээ Юю Яя

Resources also include huge amounts of coal, oil, and natural gas. Russia is among the top three producers of the world's oil and natural gas.

Sports such as soccer and ice hockey are popular in Russia, and there are many outdoor activities to do in summer and winter months, such as swimming, tennis, volleyball, snowmobiling, ice fishing, sledding, and visiting hot springs. Russia has produced many of the best chess players in the world.



Fishermen haul a net of salmon in Russia.

The arts in Russia flourish. Many famous authors, poets, and **composers** of classical music have been of Russian birth. Russia is also a world leader in ballet. Perhaps one of the most famous

ballets in the world, *Swan Lake*, was written by the composer Tchaikovsky (chy-KAWF-skee), one of many legendary Russian composers.



The Moscow Ballet performs *Swan Lake*.

## Russia's Landforms



### Land

The landscape changes across Russia's expansive territory. The main geographical features are plains, plateaus, and mountains. The West Siberian Plain covers more than 2.6 million square kilometers (1 million sq. mi.) of territory in central Russia. Much of Russian territory is covered with mountains, most notably the Ural Mountains in the west and several mountain ranges in the south and east, including the Sayan Mountains. Rivers and lakes abound in Russia as well, including Lake Baikal, which is 1,620 meters (5,315 ft.) deep—the deepest lake in the world.

Russia is also home to different **ecosystems**. Flat, always frozen land called *tundra* covers the northern areas and makes up about one-tenth of Russia's total territory. The *taiga*, evergreen forests of spruce and pine, are located south of the tundra. These are the vast forests that support Russia's huge lumber industry. Forests composed of trees such as oak, maple, and birch grow in warmer areas. The southern areas of Russia are home to expansive grasslands called the *steppe*.

The Russian climate can best be described as very cold. The southernmost Russian areas are located at least as far north as Seattle, Washington, and most of the rest of the country is even farther north. The small village of Oymyakon in Siberia is the coldest permanent settlement in the world, with a record low temperature of  $-71^{\circ}\text{C}$  ( $-96^{\circ}\text{F}$ ). Some areas of Russia have only two to three months without frost each year. However, many areas of Russia also have lovely summers.



Russian taiga



Peter the Great

## History

Russia has a long history, but it did not have much power in Europe until the reign of Peter the Great (Peter I, 1682–1725). Peter improved Russia's military and economy, which modernized Russia and elevated it to the level of other European powers. In the eighteenth century, Russia gained important territories under Catherine the Great (Catherine II, 1762–1796). Under Catherine's leadership, Russia took control of parts of Poland and Turkey.



Catherine the Great

For hundreds of years, **czars** and **czarinas** ruled Russia. In 1917, after years of unrest, a revolution completely changed Russian politics. The revolution brought the end of the Russian **monarchy** and led to the formation of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) in 1922.

The USSR was the first country to be ruled by a **communist** government. The goal of communism is to lessen inequality among the people by having the government own the land, housing, and companies, and share wealth equally among citizens.

Russia took control of the countries in the USSR, including Ukraine and the countries now called Belarus, Georgia, Azerbaijan (a-zur-by-ZHAHN), and Armenia, among others. Moscow was the USSR's capital city. However, the USSR was troubled with economic and political problems that left many people in poverty. The USSR officially broke up on December 31, 1991, and after that Russia was no longer a communist country.

Today, Russia has more of a **market economy**. This means that businesses compete with one another rather than being controlled by the government. Since around the time of the fall of the USSR, Russia has been ruled by elected presidents and a **parliament**.



## Celebrations

Although Russia does not have a single official religion, the Russian Orthodox Church is its main religious institution. Therefore, many Russians celebrate Christmas, although in the Russian Orthodox Church the date falls on January 7 rather than December 25. Easter is another major holiday in Russia. Celebrating Easter usually involves preparing and sharing baked goods and painting hard-boiled eggs. Russia also has a large **Muslim** population. During the holy month of Ramadan, Muslim people eat only after sunset. Other Russian holidays include Independence Day on June 12 and Victory Day on May 9. Victory Day celebrates the end of World War II.

There is also an ancient holiday celebrating the end of winter, called *Maslenitsa* (MOSS-leen-yit-sah), and it involves eating a meal starring pancakes called *blinis* (BLEE-nees) that stand for the Sun. People usually serve blinis topped with butter, and sometimes they use caviar, berries, or sour cream. People celebrate with outdoor activities like sleigh rides and snowball fights and, in some communities, there are dancing bears as entertainment.

A woman makes blinis at a Maslenitsa celebration.



## Food

A soup called *borsch*, made with beets, cabbage, and other root vegetables such as onions and carrots, is popular in Russia and famous around the world. The beets give the soup a distinctive red color.



Borsch can be served hot or cold.

Some Russians make a traditional drink called *kvass* at home. People make kvass by soaking stale bread in water with yeast and sometimes other ingredients such as raisins or mint. Then they let the mixture sit for a few days. The finished product has a tangy, sour flavor.

Some people use kvass to make a traditional soup called *okroshka*, which has cucumbers, meat such as sausages and salami, and boiled eggs as ingredients. People serve okroshka cold and eat it in summer.

Before the twentieth century, people in Russia kept most foods from spoiling by salting, pickling, or drying them to last through the long, cold winters. Today, some of these techniques are still used to honor tradition. Across Russia, and particularly in major cities such as Moscow and St. Petersburg, restaurants offer different types of food from around the world.

Modern skyscrapers glow at night in Moscow.



## Conclusion

Russia is home to different landscapes and ways of life, from the bustling city of Moscow to huge wild forests, from coal mining to ballet dancing. The country's many natural resources provide the basis for many jobs in the Russian economy. It has had a long and often difficult history, going from a monarchy to a communist state to a free market economy in about a century. Throughout these changes, Russians continue to enjoy their traditional celebrations and foods, and Russian **culture** continues to grow in its beautiful, wintry homeland.



**Population:** 142,423,773

**Land:** 16,377,742 sq km (6,323,500 sq. mi.)

**Capital City:** Moscow

**Primary Language:** Russian

**Primary Religions:** Russian Orthodox and Muslim

**Name of Currency:** ruble



Source: CIA World Factbook (2016)

## Glossary

<b>communist</b> ( <i>adj.</i> )	of, relating to, or in support of a political system in which the government controls the economy and individuals are not allowed to own property (p. 10)
<b>composers</b> ( <i>n.</i> )	people who write music (p. 7)
<b>culture</b> ( <i>n.</i> )	the ideas and customs of a certain group of people (p. 14)
<b>czarinas</b> ( <i>n.</i> )	female Russian rulers before the Russian Revolution in 1917; women married to czars (p. 10)
<b>czars</b> ( <i>n.</i> )	male Russian rulers before the Russian Revolution in 1917 (p. 10)
<b>ecosystems</b> ( <i>n.</i> )	communities of living things together with their habitat (p. 9)
<b>market economy</b> ( <i>n.</i> )	an economy in which the price and production of goods are determined by supply and demand rather than by government control (p. 11)
<b>monarchy</b> ( <i>n.</i> )	a government ruled by a single, nonelected person, such as a king or queen (p. 10)
<b>Muslim</b> ( <i>adj.</i> )	of or relating to people who follow the religion of Islam (p. 12)
<b>natural resources</b> ( <i>n.</i> )	anything found in nature that is valuable to humans or can be used to make a product, such as minerals and forests (p. 6)
<b>parliament</b> ( <i>n.</i> )	a group of government officials who can make and change a nation's laws (p. 11)
<b>plateaus</b> ( <i>n.</i> )	large raised areas of flat land (p. 8)

# Russia

*A Reading A-Z Level Y Leveled Book*  
*Word Count: 1,449*

## Connections

### Writing

List at least five Russian holidays. Choose one holiday and write a report about it using information from the book and outside resources.

### Social Studies

Find out more about Russia's economic systems: communism and a market economy. Make a chart with two columns to organize the information about the systems. Then, discuss the pros and cons of each system with a partner.

The logo for Reading A-Z features the word "Reading" in a red, sans-serif font. The letter "R" is stylized with a yellow sun-like shape above it, having rays extending upwards and to the sides. To the right of "Reading" is the letters "A-Z" in a larger, bold, red, sans-serif font.

Visit [www.readinga-z.com](http://www.readinga-z.com)  
for thousands of books and materials.