

REGIONAL GEOGRAPHY OF RUSSIA AND ITS CAUCASUS PERIPHERIES: A TEACHING/LEARNING MODEL FOR SECONDARY SCHOOL

INTRODUCTION

The geography of Russia is an appropriate topic of study in the early 2000's for a multitude of reasons. Some of these include the following: Russia is the largest nation in the world and its natural resources base is phenomenal; the country is still struggling to change from a communist dictatorship to an open political system and a free market economy; Russia is constantly in the news as it cooperates and conflicts with the European Union, the United States, the nations of Islam and China; and, it is a fascinating country that has the capability to successfully launch and operate a space station yet has trouble meeting the basic consumer needs of its citizens. A study of Russia easily lends itself to testing major geographic concepts and generalizations such as those listed below. A brief consideration of the Caucasus nations, former Soviet republics of Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan, is logical here, because they are oriented toward the North rather than the South. This does not mean that relations are smooth in this area of the world. Conflict is a normal condition among the three smaller nations and with Russia.

There are many good sources for information and analysis for Russia. The author of this unit has liberally borrowed ideas from Concepts and Regions in Geography, written by Drs. Harm deBlij and Peter Muller and published by John Wiley and Sons. Numerous facts were up-dated from the Central Intelligence Agency's The World Factbook – 2000 which is provided in full in the appendix of the unit. The outline of the content was developed by and has been used by the author for over 40 years in classes from the 7th grade to graduate school. The outline, or model, is an intellectual tool that can be used to understand any place large or small. The model is discussed in paper 3 on the Florida Geographic

Alliance web site (<http://getp.freac.fsu.edu/fga/>). It has transfer value as a teaching/learning model. Much of the content and the author's interest in Russia and the former Soviet Union has come not only from graduate study, but from multiple trips to the former Soviet Union and to Russia.

Teachers and students should feel free to use the entire unit, not as a formal guide to follow, but as a series of suggestions to start from both in content, and more importantly, as a way to become familiar with the methodology of geography. From the content, the use of maps, and teaching/learning strategies the unit should help students and teachers learn how to better understand a geographic region. This is achieved by knowing what questions to ask, how to organize data, and how to use the concepts of areal distribution and spatial relationships to analyze a country (or a non-political region) in order, as an informed citizen, to better understand current affairs and world problems.

This unit is a geography study because it is an examination of a defined place, the political region called Russia. It is a spatial analysis of selected aspects of Russia. It studies the Location and Physical Characteristics of the country, its Population and Cultural Characteristics, History, Major Economic Activity and Land Use, and the Problems and Prospects of the nation. Maps, the primary tool of the geographer, are used to show the specific location of some data and sometimes broad, or general locations of other phenomena. The geographer then examines the areal distribution of data by looking for spatial patterns, densities, dispersion and diffusion. In addition the geographer examines data for spatial relationships, looking for the interaction of phenomena within space and the interaction of places. In this study, these methodological steps will be applied to obtaining a better understanding of what I call the spatial personality of Russia. This spatial analysis makes the study geographic, not the content studied.

OBJECTIVES

Cognitive:

To gain an understanding of:

- The advantage of using a geographic model or frame of reference to study a place
- The importance of size and location to Russia's geographic character.
- The advantages and disadvantages of the nation's size and location.
- The broad physical patterns of climate, landforms, soils and vegetation and their importance.
- How these physical characteristics have influenced Russia's history
- The existence and impact of the country's natural resource base.
- The fact that Russia, for such a large nation, has a relatively small population.
- The roll war and revolution have played in determining Russia's population size and make-up.
- The advantages and disadvantages of having such a diverse population
- The problems Russia has in converting from a command economy and dictatorial political systems to an open and market driven system
- The problems of maintaining a strong international position in military and outer space programs while striving to overcome a serious lack of consumer products for Russian citizens.

Psychomotor

Be able to:

- Develop and use a geographic model to gain an understanding of a place.

- Use the model to identify relationships between and among physical and cultural factors
- Use a map to discuss the major problems of Russia's location and size
- Use a globe and an outline map to identify and plot Great Circle distances from Moscow to various cities on the globe.
- Place on an outline map the general location of the various physical factors and areas of population and industrial concentrations mentioned in this unit.
- Use a wall map to give an explanation of the influence the Arctic Ocean, the North Atlantic Current and the Himalayas have on Russia's climate
- Draw the Trans-Siberian Railroad route on a map and locate several important cities from European Russia to the Pacific.
- Research historical events in reference and history books and explain how the physical environment influenced them.
- Use an outline or wall map to show the extent of Mongol, French and German invaders incursions into Russia.
- Use an outline or wall map to show where Russia has had major conflicts with its neighbors.

Affective

Have an appreciation of:

- The size of the nation of Russia relative other important countries and to its contiguous neighbors
- The hardships Russian people have been through due to invasions of non-Russian people.
- The hardships placed upon the Russian people by the Czars and the Communist leaders due to enforced migration of citizens as a result of punishment or harsh government policies
- The physical demands made on Russian people by the severe winter weather

- The difficulties the Russian people have in order to build structures or develop economic activity in the Arctic north.
- Of the feeling of insecurity of both Russians and their neighbors due to long and insecure borders

SELECTED GENERALIZATIONS

- The significance of the physical environment is a function of the attitudes, objectives and technical skills of a population.
- The physical environment will suggest and limit people's activities, but it does not dictate.
- The location of a huge natural resource base does not automatically ensure a nation of a highly developed economy and a high per capita income
- The development of a sound economy is largely dependent on political stability.
- The development of a sound economy is dependent on a well-developed social and physical infrastructure.
- The character of a place is the product of the past as well as an interim phase in an ever-changing existence.
- The value of resources tends to decrease relative to distance as the cost of utilization increases.

RUSSIA SELECTED CONCEPTS

- Absolute Location
- Relative Location
- Permafrost
- Chernozem soil
- Taiga
- Tundra
- Steppe
- Distance Decay (friction of distance)
- Time/Distance
- Great Circle Route

- Economic and Social Infrastructure
- Deficit Births
- Exclave
- Core Area
- Trans Siberia Railroad
- Pacific Rim
- Siberia

NATIONAL AND STATE STANDARDS

National and State Standards are written very broadly. Some aspect of every standard Geography for Life is covered in this unit. Very likely, this also applies to State Standards too.

CONTENT

Location and Physical Characteristics

An understanding of the geography of Russia is based on the analysis of both size and location.

- Size is important due to the areal extent. Russia is 1/6 of the earth's surface (6.6 million square miles) and nearly twice the area of Canada (3.8 million sq. mi.), the second largest nation. The U.S. has 3.6 million sq. mi. Another way to measure size is by total population. Russia has a population of about 150,000,000 people. This number is relatively small considering the areal size. This will be discussed later in the unit.
- Russia extends nearly 6,000 miles from west to east and over 2,000 miles from north to south.
- In the high latitudes it is important to consider "great circle routes" when thinking about distances from place to place. Moscow is about 5,000 miles from Vladivostok and 5,000 miles to Washington, D.C.
- Moscow is located at a latitude very close to that of Juneau Alaska.

- As a result of Russia's areal extent, the country includes 11 time zones and has 14 contiguous neighbors. So many neighbors have both good news and bad news aspects. Look at the map and see how many of these situations you can identify.
- Great size also impacts geopolitical influence, which includes potential conflicts with neighbors.
- Disadvantages of areal size include: requirement of a huge expenditure for infrastructure (roads, airports, electric power, housing, security, health facilities, schools, etc.)
- The friction of distance (sometimes called distance decay) requires great costs to tie the various aspects of social and economic life together.
- Large areas can encompass many different ethnic groups (over 100 in Russia) as well as many different local and regional histories, which become a factor in unifying a people.

NATURAL RESOURCES

Location: Absolute and Relative

- Such a large area suggests the possibility of a large and varied base of natural resources. This is true as Russia is largely self-sufficient in natural resources.
Look in an atlas and notice the huge store of natural resources such as oil and gas, iron ore, copper, coal, manganese, uranium, and many other strategic resources.
- One hundred and fifty million population, although a relatively small total, especially for such a huge nation in size, is a potentially large workforce or manpower for a military purpose. It can also be a problem when the economy is in trouble and unemployment arises.
- In 2002 Russia has overtaken Saudi Arabia as the world's largest oil producer. Large oil deposits are also found in the Caspian Sea area. Work has started on a major Eurasian

- pipeline from the Balkan area through Georgia to the Turkish Mediterranean port of Ceyhan.
- Russia extends from about 20 degrees east to 170 degrees west. Notice the 170 degrees is west because Russia extends across the 180th meridian. North to south, Russia extends from 82 degrees south to 42 degrees. This southern most point is at the latitude (approx.) of New York City, northern Colorado and northern California. The northern border of the contiguous U. S. is 48 degrees. This location by degrees is called absolute location.
 - An important aspect of this absolute location is the far northerly character. High latitudes translate into cool to very cold weather. More will be said about Russia's climate later.
 - Russia's relative location is understood when we look at the phenomena contiguous to it. For example, the country is a part of a very large continental landmass. In fact, the largest landmass on the globe, sometimes called Eurasia. The western part of Russia is in Europe and the eastern part is in Asia. Most geographers accept the Ural Mountains as the dividing line between Europe and Asia. As noted earlier, Russia has 14 neighbors with whom it shares a border. This includes Lithuania and Poland. Why are these countries included? The answer is the existence of an exclave- Kaliningrad. An exclave is a body of land belonging to one country, but existing completely outside that nation.
 - Relative location notes that two other very important countries are but a very few miles from Russia- Japan and the United States. The Kuril Islands are still a contentious area following the post WWII occupation by Russia and the Big and Little Diomedes islands in the Bering Straits. Big Diomedes is Russian and Little belongs to the US. They are about 5 miles apart.
 - Political agreements, which will allow Russia to use the Black Sea ports, have been developed, but a look at the map

- will show the major problem of distance from the Black Sea to the Atlantic Ocean.
- Throughout history, the lack of adequate warm water ports has caused various nations in Europe and Asia to fear the possibility of Russian expansionism.
 - A real conflict over geopolitical control of south central Asia erupted in 1979 when the then Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan and became mired in an eight year war similar in many ways to the US involvement in Vietnam. It helped accelerate the downfall of the Soviet Union.

Climate

- Contiguous water bodies warm most landmasses. A look at the map shows oceans to the north and east and seas west and southwest. Again, the major influence is the northern latitude. A wind flows southeast from the Arctic and creates very cold winter temperatures, which affect everything from agriculture to resource development and location of population.
- Russia has over 25,000 miles of coastline. Only about 5% of that coastline is open and ice-free year-round. Russia, therefore, has not one good year-round port. Murmansk on the Arctic Ocean and Vladivostok/Nakhodka on the Pacific are the only large ports on the major oceans. St. Petersburg on the Baltic and Odessa and Sevastopol on the Black Sea are important ports with major problems. The Baltic is very confining and the latter two ports are in the Ukraine, which was a Soviet republic but is now a separate country. Interestingly, Murmansk is by far the most northerly port, but it is also the closest to a year-round ice free port, due to the influence of the North Atlantic drift, which begins as the Gulf Stream.
- At this point, it is important to look carefully at the climate maps in an atlas. Notice both the patterns of temperature by

season as well as the patterns of rainfall. Generally, it can be seen that there is a band of frigid temperatures across the northern coast of the Arctic Ocean. This is a region called tundra. South of this is a band of very cold, sub arctic temperatures. This band widens in the east to include most of the area called Siberia. Rainfall in these northern lands is between 10-20 inches a year. In the West, an area of cold winters and cool summers with a precipitation total of 20-40 inches is where the major population and economic activity are located.

- South of this is a band of steppe climate. This region is semi-desert with occasional rainfall. This area extends eastward to Mongolia. It is a grassland, where the soils are good but the lack of rainfall makes agriculture very difficult.
- Why is it that Russia receives so little rainfall? In the north it is generally because of the low temperature. In the south central region, the Himalayas block the rain-laden winds that come off the Indian Ocean. The winds cool as they cross the high mountains and drop their moisture. On the north side of the mountains the winds descend, warm and instead of dropping rain, they absorb moisture from the land and create a desert climate region.
- While discussing climate in Russia, it is important to note the effect of the winter temperatures on the efforts of Napoleon and Hitler to conquer that nation. Not only the climate, but also the term distance decay must also enter that discussion.

Physiographic Regions

The following is a very generalized description of the landforms of Russia. For a more detailed picture, see CONCEPTS AND REGIONS IN GEOGRAPHY as well as a good physical map of Russia.

- The most productive landform region of Russia is the Russian Plain, that area west of the Ural Mountains. It is an

extension of the North European Lowland that stretches from the Atlantic coast of Europe into Russia. This plain has been used as a route of armies throughout European history, usually to the detriment of Russia.

- To the east of the plain are the Ural Mountains. They are low, like the Appalachians of the US and they are the location of many rich natural resources.
- The West Siberian Plain is to the east of the Urals. This is by far the largest marsh area, and the largest unbroken plain, in the world. It is wet and very cold most of the year. Very few cultural activities of any kind are found here. In the very far south of this region is the route of the Trans-Siberian Railroad. A number of cities have been developed along this route from the southern Urals all the way to Vladivostok on the Sea of Japan.
- The Central Siberian Plateau is an elevated extension of the Plain. It is drier but extremely cold and isolated. Through the plain and the plateau traverse three of the largest rivers of the world, the Ob, the Yenisey and the Lena. They flow north into the Arctic Ocean and therefore are of limited use as productive waterways. In addition, the Ob has been used as an industrial sewer and is polluted with toxic and radioactive wastes.
- The southern and eastern portions of Siberia are highlands of significant elevations. On the Pacific, several of the mountains on the Kamchatka Peninsula are active volcanoes. A magnificent and unique feature of this southern Siberian region is Lake Baykal (sometimes spelled Baikal). It is the deepest freshwater lake in the world and, by volume, the largest. Unfortunately, in the last thirty years, it has been polluted to a considerable degree. Several industries were closed in the 1990's, including several large paper plants.

Soils and Vegetation

- Much of European Russia has good to excellent soils. However, adequate rainfall is often a problem. North of a line at approximately 50 degrees north, the soils are developed under forest cover. They are generally fertile, agricultural soils. A short growing season is due to its northern location. South of the above line are very fertile, deep, black soils called chernozem. They are potentially very productive, but agriculture suffers from a lack of moisture. Since the breakup of the Soviet Union, the best area for agriculture is found in the Ukraine.
- Generally, north of the line at 50 degrees north, the vegetation is forest, while to the south it is grass due to less moisture. Other good soils are few. Those are found along rivers like the Amur, in the Far East, and in alluvial fans, at the base of the southern Siberian mountains. The great, slow growing forests of Siberia are mixed coniferous, but mostly needleleaf, called taiga.

POPULATION AND CULTURAL CHARACTERISTICS

Since 1991, with the break-up of the Soviet Union, many Russians have wanted to move back to Western Russia, whether from the former republics or from the army, but they cannot do so because of the lack of housing and due to unemployment problems in the country.

- In the 1880's Russia had twice the population of the United States. Today, the US has about 280 million people and Russia has about 150 million. A major geographic understanding about this situation is that Russia endured a period of major military and political disasters. In the early 1900's a series of political revolutions and rebellions occurred, followed by World War I. During each of these events many people lost their lives, were deported or left the country. The Russian Revolution of 1917 initiated a series of policies by the communist government that cost the nation millions of citizen's lives. In addition to that, World War II involved the Soviet Union and again, the country lost an

estimated 27 million lives. This is a brief, over-generalized paragraph, but it does provide the answer to the relative decline in Russia's population. More details follow.

- When a number of people are taken from a population, for whatever reason, it modifies the group that is left in several ways. It changes the age distribution, the human skills inventory as well as the sex make-up of the remaining population. In addition, for example, when a great number of young men are killed, as was the case in Russia, the group losses not only those individuals, but it causes the phenomena called “deficit births”. In other words, the children those men would have fathered are never born.
- World War I and the revolution, including famine, military losses, etc., are said to have cost Russia 17 million deaths and 8 million deficit births.
- Repressive policies of Lenin and Stalin (mostly Stalin) 1922-1953 cost an estimated 8 million deaths and 4 million deficit births.
- World War II, 27 million deaths and 13 million births. THIS BRINGS THE ESTIMATED TOTAL POPULATION LOSS FROM ALL OF THESE EVENTS TO 77 MILLION INDIVIDUALS.
- By comparison, US losses and deficit births in World Wars I & II, Korea and Vietnam are estimated to be about 1 million.
- Today, data on the number of males and females show a large surplus of females over males over the age of 50. This shows up in the data found in the CIA-World Factbook located on page 3 of the Appendix of this paper. That source also shows life expectancy, birth and death rates and other information.
- Russia has a problem currently with the large number of ethnic groups besides Russian. Many of these people have a strong dislike for Russia and would like to have their own country. This is the basis for the recent violence by

Chechnya. Chechnyans have tried to revolt against Moscow to get their own country. Russia has tried to put this revolt down by military force with serious damage on both sides. Russia feels it cannot give in to Chechnya because it would encourage other ethnic groups to try to follow their lead. An important part of the ethnic problem is the fact that some people, like Chechnyans follow the Muslim religion rather than the Russian Orthodox faith.

- The US and Russia have both been affected by migration, though in opposite directions. Over the years the US population has been increased by immigration while the Russian experience has shown a considerable loss due to emigration.
- Historically, population patterns have been changed due to invading armies from as far back as the Mongol, through Napoleon, to World War II. During the mid 1940's through the mid 1950's Russians were moved, along with the industrial activities they were engaged in, from the threatened west to the area beyond the Ural Mountains, mainly along the Trans-Siberian Rail line.
- Politically, under Stalin, many Russians were moved from Western Russia to non-Russian areas, both to the South and to the East. This spatial move was done to "Russify" the non-Russian Republics, which were then part of the Soviet Union.
- As the country tries to move to a capitalist economy, the government has given many of its citizen's vouchers or "credit" to buy, or build, housing. This effort has been held up due to the lack of a banking system, a lack of building companies, criminals who have taken much of the money under false pretenses and a general lack of a business infrastructure.
- In general, Russia's population has a large number of well-educated people. However, they do not have the political and

economic infrastructure and the capital to develop a sound social system. It will be very frustrating for Russians and others to understand the time it will take to change a system that has been under totalitarian control for 70 plus years to one that has taken Europe and the US hundreds of years to evolve.

HISTORICAL SURVEY

The history of a place is also an important part of it's geography because it helps give the place it's unique "spatial personality". A very short summary of recent history is given on page 1 of the CIA Factbook material. A short historical description of the Soviet Union is found in Chapter 2 of DeBlij/Muller text, Concepts and Regions In Geography. Figure 2-5 in this text shows the 15 independent countries that made up the former Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR). Detailed histories are found in any school library. A continuous search for pertinent news and investigative report stories is an exercise in current history.

MAJOR ECONOMIC ACTIVITY AND LAND USE

Again, the CIA Factbook material has a good summary of recent economic activity and problems on page 6.

- Russia was a great nation in terms of territory it commanded by the time of Tsar Peter the Great (1682-1725). This strong leader looked to Europe to build Russia into an economic giant. He built St. Petersburg, his "window on the Baltic", visited several Western European countries and substantially strengthened Russia as a world power. He improved much of the economic infrastructure and, maybe most important, provided economic and political stability for the strengthening of the national economy.

- An important reality in understanding the geography of Russia is the fact that it has a very large natural resource base. It lacks very few resources to develop a strong economy. However, as noted earlier, much of the resource base is located much too far from existing industry and it is not possible to build factories on the tundra or other cold environments so far away from existing activity. Roads, airports, buildings, etc., built on permafrost fall apart when the warmth of the construction melts the frozen soil and the construction base disappears. It is too expensive to provide the engineering to overcome this problem at this time.
- Russia must strive to produce goods, not only for its own citizens, but also for an export market so it can provide employment, wages, and begin to earn international currency. A possible good situation is the investment by American and European (particularly Scandinavian) companies to develop oil resources. The old problem of the less-developed countries is true here as it is much better to process their resources in Russia rather than to ship them overseas so some other country can benefit from the value-added manufacturing step.
- Major manufacturing regions in Russia are: Moscow Central; Volga; Ural; Kuzbas (south central Siberia); Baykal Corridor; and the Far East. Due to the industrial development of Northern Kazakhstan prior to the break up of the Soviet Union, a major industrial region in the northern part of that Central Asian country is still important to Russia's manufacturing capacity. Most of the population of Northern Kazakhstan is Russian and there is close industrial cooperation between the two countries.
- Still, Russia is caught in the situation in which it feels it has to spend vast amounts of money on a space program it cannot afford and a military that is still in very poor repair. Such are some of the economic problems of Russia.

PROBLEMS AND PROSPECTS

Some selective problems and prospect topics are provided below. As the unit progresses add to the list.

Problems:

- High latitude/cold climate
- Large size/ “distance decay”
- Lack of good year-round ports
- Building on permafrost
- Deficit in male population
- Many different ethnic groups
- Serious lack of consumer products
- Need to develop stable political system
- Internal ethnic conflicts

Prospects:

- Large size
- Abundance of natural resources
- Potential to develop a free-enterprise capitalistic economic system
- Foreign investment to develop resources
- Potential to develop the manufacturing sectors of the economy to benefit from the “value added” process
- Potential to develop a democratic political system

SUGGESTED TEACHING/LEARNING STRATEGIES

Teachers should not hesitate to use this unit because they do not feel they know enough about the nation of Russia to lead an investigation. A review of the content of this unit and a reading of the chapter on Russia in one of the two college textbooks listed in the bibliography of this unit will be enough to get started on firm ground. It is important for the teacher to approach the unit as an investigator with the students, not as an

expert. You do know more than they do, but more important, you know how to approach the subject as a geographer who is going to do research on a regional topic. A brief review of some recent newspapers and news magazines would also give you a head start.

Remember, these are suggested activities. It is not likely that all of them could be used in a class unless it is done by committees with reports made and an opportunity for questions to be asked and discussed. Many other activities are just as good. Each teacher knows the interests and capabilities of the class and can pick and choose teaching activities accordingly. A list of teaching strategies taken from GEOGRAPHY FOR LIFE is found in the Florida Geographic Alliance paper “How Knowing the Definition of Geography Affects Teaching Strategies”. See (<http://getp.freac.fsu.edu/fgal/>)

In all of the teaching activities and in the assessment steps the teacher should emphasize the geographic methodologies of areal distribution (location, density, pattern dispersion and diffusion) and spatial interaction (showing the relationships of phenomena in place and the relationships of places). Good spatial description, verbal and written, should be stressed and the question WHY? Should always be utilized. Some suggested teaching/learning strategies are:

- If the geographic model suggested by this author has not been introduced and discussed, it would be useful to do it as soon as the unit is introduced and several motivating topics are identified. An understanding of the rationale of the model is important. (This rationale is provided in an accompanying paper from the Florida Geographic Alliance. See web site above).
- Show two world maps (wall, overhead or desk outline), one using a cylindrical projection (or Mercator) and the other an equal area projection, such as a Robinson or a Goode’s Interrupted Homolosine. Have students compare the relative size of Russia on each one. Discuss the exaggerated

- distortion of the high latitudes of the cylindrical map and how this effects the perception of people about the size of Russia. It is big enough without the exaggeration.
- As an extension of the above exercise have students discuss, or list, points on the following topics: size, latitudinal location, many neighbors, long coastline, etc. Three lists could be made. One would be facts about Russia's size and location; the second would be several general statements about how Russia seems to compare to other nations, and a third list of questions the map exercise generates that will be answered during the development of the unit.
 - Have students use maps of physical characteristics (landforms, soils, climate, vegetation, natural resources) to develop ideas about physical patterns on the Russian landscape. Such maps can be found in reference atlases or in college textbooks such as those listed in the bibliography of this unit. Students might be asked to study the maps and draw simplified maps that generalize the more detailed information.
 - Have students examine maps of cultural data (population, cities, ethnic and language groups, industrial areas, transportation facilities, economic activity, etc.) This exercise is not only to generate new data, but it is to better understand, verify, and evaluate information presented to the class by classmates, lectures, film, videos, etc. Students should realize that not all of the data they receive would always be in agreement. They must be on the lookout for discrepancies and try to decide what data is best.
 - The teacher should always be on the lookout for good pictures, news articles, videos, etc. that might be used in teaching such a unit. An excellent set of overhead materials often is available from textbook publishers such as the two mentioned in the bibliography. A very good series of videos POWER OF PLACE, made for National Public Television, is

available from Wiley and Sons if your school district does not have the contract rights to show it.

- Using the cultural data collected, have the students analyze the data by identifying patterns on the landscape, developing statements about relative location, densities, and noting how phenomena are dispersed.
- An important step in geographic analysis mentioned in the previous activity is the identification of relationships. Have students list relationship statements or generalizations about physical and cultural data. Many such statements are given in the unit content. Some example topics are: long coasts yet few seaports; major population centers and the physical environment; lack of infrastructure development in Siberia; cultural development and the transSiberian railroad.
- Inspecting historical maps of the Russian boundaries at different times can identify diffusion, the movement of phenomena through time over space. Another good example of diffusion is seen in the Florida Geographic Alliance unit “The Conquering of Siberia”, which discusses the various Russian efforts to get control of Siberia and its resources.
- A library research project could center on the lack of development of the great region, Siberia, and its resources. Subtopics should include: the problem of “distance decay”; latitude and cold weather and how it suggests and limits human activity; what infrastructure is needed and practical; the orientation of Siberia to the Pacific Rim rather than to European Russia; or the history of interesting Siberian cities such as Birobidzhan (a city begun for Jewish citizens), Komsomalsk-on-the-Amur (a city built for young people), Khabarovsk (an early service and transportation center), Vladivostok (major naval base) or Nakhodka (a relatively new commercial port on the Pacific).
- Have students examine the two columns of Ten Geographic Qualities of Russia and the United States (taken from the

Wiley and Sons text) found in the Appendix of this paper. Students can find similarities and differences which may be used for class discussion or research reports.

- Test as many of the generalizations as is practical, develop and test new generalizations and explain and add to the list of concepts provided. Think about inductive and deductive teaching/learning activities as these exercises are accomplished.

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<http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook>

APPENDIX

CIA Factbook

SUGGESTED EVALUATION TECHNIQUES (to be added)