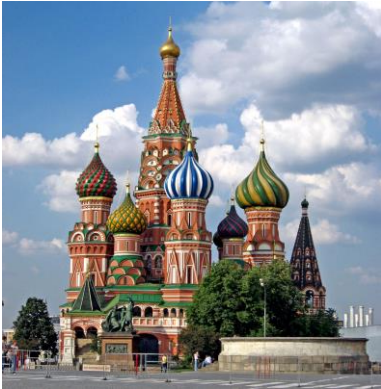# The Rise of Russia

In the 700's and 800's C.E., the Vikings settled among the Slavs on the vast European plain. The two cultures mixed and then became the early Russians. The city of Kiev was the center of the first Russian state.

Other civilizations influenced the early Russian people. Byzantine missionaries brought Christianity to Russia. Overtime, Byzantine Christians formed the Russian Orthodox Church. The Russian people took Byzantine forms of art, music, and architecture. They built their churches with Byzantine-style domes.

St. Basil's Cathedral in Moscow   Interior view of St. Basil's Cathedral

In the early 1200's, the Mongols conquered Russia. Mongol rule cut Russia off from Western Europe. While European countries were advancing in science and art, Russia remained isolated and backwards.

Over time the princes of Moscow gained more power. Its location on the Volga River helped establish vital trade routes and the absolute power of the Mongols served as a model for Russian rulers. The Russian Orthodox Church center moved from Kiev to Moscow making it the spiritual center of Russia.

Three rulers, all named Ivan, played major roles in creating a Russian Empire.

Ivan I was the prince of Muscovy from 1328 to 1341 C.E. [Muscovy was the name given to the Russian state ruled from Moscow]. Ivan believed that it was better to work for the Golden Horde of the Mongols rather than oppose it. He collected money (tributes) for the Mongols not only from the people in Muscovy but also from other Russian princes. This helped expand the area that Ivan controlled. In return for his services, the Mongols allowed him to keep a share of what he had collected. Ivan I became wealthy under this system, leading to him being called Ivan Kalita, which means "moneybags."

Like Ivan I, later rulers gained more land for the state of Muscovy. However, it was no until the reign of **Ivan III** that the Mongols lost their control over the region. Ivan III ruled Muscovy from 1462 to 1505 C.E. He became known as **Ivan the Great** because he enlarged Muscovy's territory so that it was the largest Russian state at that time. He eventually became so powerful that he simply refused to pay the Mongols any more tributes. It was during his reign, the Russian state gained independence from the Mongol Tatars, finally ending 200 years of their rule. He then took the title of Czar (Tsar) after limiting the power of his nobles and claimed the he, as the Absolute Ruler was like the "highest god."

Ivan IV took full control of the government in 1547 C.E. and he began his reign of power that would last until 1584 C.E. As an **Absolute Ruler**, he believed that that people respected a ruler only when they feared that ruler. He is known as **Ivan the Terrible**. He created fear amongst his people with acts of violence, such as having the tongue torn out of a man who had criticized him.
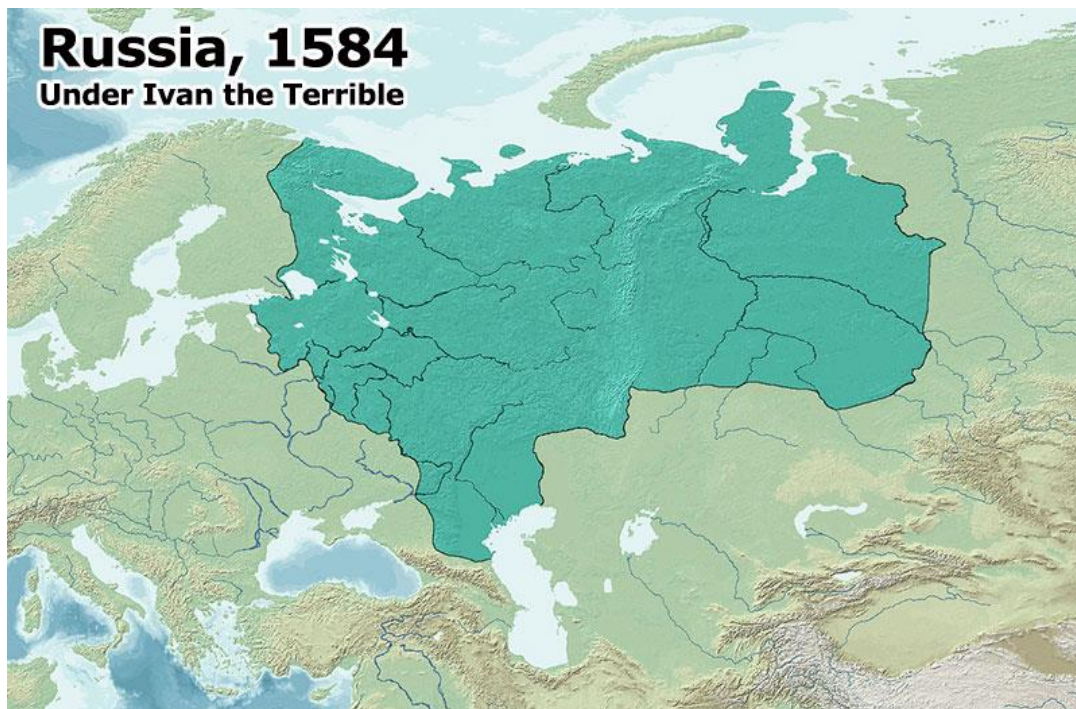
Ivan the Terrible
1547-1584

- Centralizes royal power
- Takes power from the nobles
- Forces serfs to stay on the land
- Kills nobles who revolt against him
- Destroys towns that do not support him

He finished the expulsion of the Mongols that was started by Ivan III and he ruled an empire that stretched from the Volga River to the Caspian Sea. In celebration of his final victory over the Mongols he built the Cathedral of St. Basil in Moscow (pictured earlier).

Surprisingly, Ivan IV had more books than any other ruler of the time. He brought the first printing press to Russia and recommended that all schools in his lands provide music lessons to the students. If not for his use of the power of fear, Ivan IV could have been known as Ivan the Great!

Russia, 1584
Under Ivan the Terrible

After Ivan IV (Ivan the Terrible) came a series of somewhat ineffective rulers that continued to rule Russia the same way as before. They were Theodore I (1584-1598), Boris Godunov (1598-1605), Theodore II (1605-1605), Demetrius I (1605-1606), Basil IV Shuiski (1606-1610) which was also during the "Time of Troubles" in Russian history that was from 1610-1613, Michael Romanov (1613-1645), Alexis I (1645-1676), Theodore III (1676-1682) and then Ivan V from 1682 to 1689.

Ivan V ruled jointly with Peter the Great until 1689 when he was deposed and Peter the Great became the new czar and absolute ruler of Russia.

Peter the Great began to modernize Russia. He introduced western technology, improved education, developed new industries, and encouraged trade. He strengthened the Russian government by reducing the power of the nobles.

Peter the Great also used terror to carry out his plans. He forced the Russian people to become more western. He was best known for cutting off the beards of his boyars (nobles) in order to conform to his ideals of westernization. He maintained the policy of serfdom in Russia, long after it had been abolished in the majority of Western Europe.

Peter the Great   Cutting the beard off a Boyar

Peter the Great built the strongest army in Europe. He expanded Russian territory and gained ports on the Baltic Sea. He wanted a **warm-water port** so that he could trade with the West all year but he was not successful. He did have Russian pioneers explore Siberia and the Bering Strait between Siberia and Alaska. Some Russians eventually settled on the West Coast of America including regions of California.

In 1762, **Catherine the Great** came to power. She reorganized the government and the laws, set up state schools for boys and girls, and further encouraged Western ways. Catherine continued to expand Russia, acquiring a warm-water port on the Black Sea.

In the 1770's, Catherine and the rulers of Prussia and Austria reached an agreement to conquer and divide up Poland. By 1795, the kingdom of Poland ceased to exist.

RULER OF RUSSIA and YEARS	PETER THE GREAT 1689 TO 1725 C.E.	CATHERINE THE GREAT 1762 TO 1796 C.E.
Government	• Absolute Ruler • Strengthens government • Takes power from the nobles • Spread serfdom	• Absolute Ruler • Organizes the government • Gives more rights to the nobles • Allows peasants to suffer
Reforms	• Improves education • Develops new industries • Encourages trade	• Organizes the system of laws • Sets up state schools for children
Wars	• Created largest army in Europe • Conquers land along Baltics	• Conquers warm-water port • Seizes territory from Poland
Ideas from Western Europe	• Builds capital city of St. Petersburg in western style • Forces Russians to dress like Western Europeans	• Encourages Western European ways • Introduces French language and ways of life

The Expansion of Russia, 1500–1800

1462	Acquisitions to 1682
Acquisitions to 1505	Acquisitions to 1725
Acquisitions to 1584	Acquisitions to 1796

SKILLBUILDER: Interpreting Maps
1. **Location** Locate the territories that Peter added to Russia during his reign, from 1682 to 1725. What bodies of water did Russia gain access to because of these acquisitions?
2. **Region** Who added a larger amount of territory to Russia–Ivan III, who ruled from 1462 to 1505, or Peter the Great?