

Eastern Europe and Western Russia

Lesson 1: Physical Geography

ESSENTIAL QUESTION

How does geography influence the way people live?

Terms to Know

upland the high land away from the coast of a country

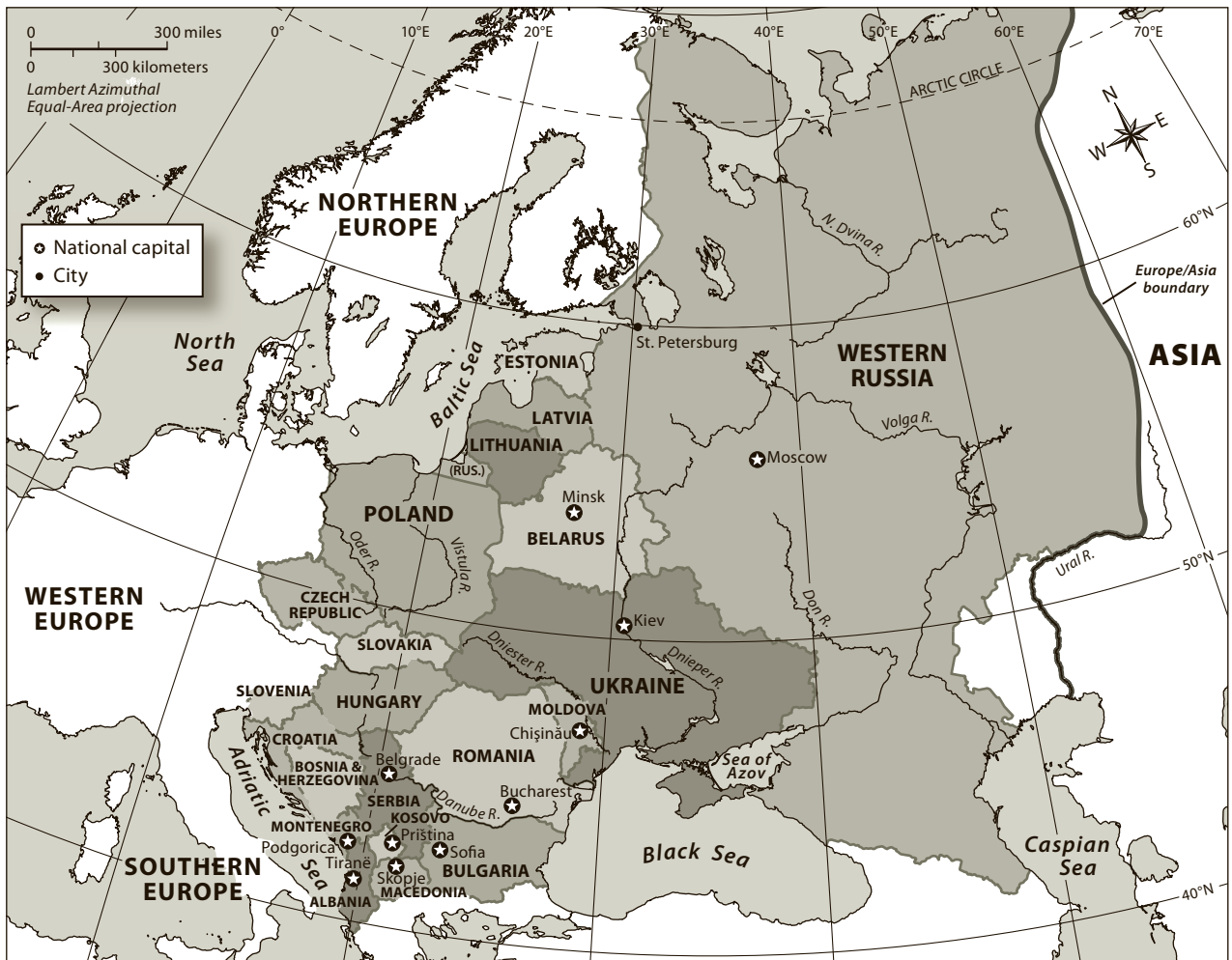
steppe a partly dry grassland often found on the edge of a desert

balkanization conflict among ethnic groups within a region

brackish water that is somewhat salty

reserves estimated amount of a resource in an area

Where in the World: Eastern Europe and Western Russia



Eastern Europe and Western Russia

Lesson 1: Physical Geography, *continued*



Marking the Text

1. Read the text on the right. Underline the sentence that tells where the border between Europe and Asia is located.



Locating

2. Two basins are part of the geography of the region. Where are they located?



Defining

3. What helped lead to the *balkanization* of the Balkan Peninsula?



Explaining

4. In what way have the landforms in the Balkan Peninsula shaped the cultures of the region?

Landforms and Waterways

Guiding Question *In what way have the landforms in the Balkan Peninsula shaped the cultures of that region?*

Eastern Europe includes 10 countries in the north and 11 on the Balkan Peninsula. Russia is a huge country, extending through 11 time zones in Europe and Asia. Western Russia is the portion that lies within Europe. The region rests mostly on a group of plains. The largest is the Russian Plain. It begins in Belarus and Ukraine and stretches east about 1,000 miles (1,609 km). It rises to form the central Russian **upland**. This is an area of high elevation. To the east are the Ural Mountains. Beyond that is the west Siberian plain.

The Northern European Plain includes Poland and extends into parts of Western Europe. South of it is the Hungarian Plain, which includes parts of many countries. The Transylvanian Basin is in Romania. A basin is an area that slopes downward from the land around it. Much of the Ukraine is **steppe**, or vast, level areas of land that support only low-growing vegetation, like grasses.

South of the Russian Plain are the Greater and Lesser Caucasus Mountains. These two mountain chains extend from the northwest to the southeast with a valley between them. The Ural Mountains form a boundary between Europe and Asia east of the Russian Plain. The Urals are up to 250 million years old. The northern Urals are covered in forests and some glaciers. Grasslands cover the southern Urals.

The Carpathian Mountains extend eastward from the Alps. The Vienna Basin separates the two ranges. The Carpathians run through the northern Balkan Peninsula and are linked to the Balkan Mountains. The region is so mountainous that human settlements are isolated. This isolation results in cultural diversity. It is also a source of conflict among ethnic groups. Conflict among ethnic groups within a region is known as **balkanization**.

The Baltic Sea lies northwest of Russia and Eastern Europe. The Baltic is shallow and **brackish**, or somewhat salty, because it is seawater mixed with river water. In the southwest, the Adriatic, Ionian, and Black Seas surround the Balkan Peninsula. The Black Sea borders the southern coast of Ukraine and southwestern Russia. It also separates Turkey from Ukraine and the Balkan Peninsula. At Europe's most southeastern point is the Caspian Sea. It is the world's largest inland body of water.

There are many rivers, canals, lakes, and reservoirs in Eastern Europe and Western Russia. Most are used for transporting both freight and passengers. They also are used to create electricity.

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Lesson 1: Physical Geography, *continued*

Rivers of Eastern Europe and Russia		
River	Location	Use
Volga	Russia	freight and passenger traffic, hydroelectric power
Dnieper	Russia, Belarus, Ukraine	hydroelectric power, irrigation
Dniester	Carpathian Mountains to the Black Sea	freight and passenger ships
Danube	southwestern Germany to the Black Sea	transportation, hydroelectric power, fishing, irrigation

Climates

Guiding Question *How does climate affect plants that are grown and harvested in Eastern Europe and Western Russia?*

Several types of climate are found in Eastern Europe and Western Russia. Much of the region has a humid continental climate. These areas have mild or warm summers and long, cold winters. In places such as Croatia, Serbia, and Bulgaria, summers are hotter, and winters are similar to those farther north. Albania and Macedonia have a more Mediterranean climate. Summers are hot and dry, and winters are mild to cool and rainy.

Russia's far north has a subarctic climate. Winters are very cold, with temperatures as low as -40°F (-40°C). Summers are short and cool, although temperatures can reach 86°F (30°C). Farther north is Novaya Zemlya. This is an archipelago consisting of two large islands and several small islands. The climate is polar, and a large part of it is covered in ice year-round. A small number of herders and fishers inhabit the southern island.

Natural Resources

Guiding Question *What are three important challenges to the development of resources in Eastern Europe and Western Russia?*

Russia is by far the largest country in the world. However, only about one-sixth of its land is suitable for agriculture. Most agricultural land is in a fertile triangle extending from the Baltic Sea to the Black Sea. Farmers grow crops such as wheat, oats, and barley.

Marking the Text

5. Review the table on the left. Highlight the names of rivers that provide hydroelectric power to the region.

Reading Progress Check

6. How is the location of the Black Sea strategic to the region?

Explaining

7. Why do grasses and low, scrubby bushes form the primary vegetation on the archipelago of Novaya Zemlya?

Reading Progress Check

8. What area in Eastern Europe or Western Russia has a climate most similar to where you live?

Eastern Europe and Western Russia

Lesson 1: Physical Geography, *continued*



Marking the Text

9. Read the text on the right. Highlight the names of products of Russia's forest industry.



Reading Progress Check

10. Why are Russia's mineral industries so important to its economy?

More than one-fifth of the world's forests are in Russia. They cover an area almost the size of the continental United States. Lumber, paper, and cardboard are important products. Forests grow slowly because of the long, cold winters. Intense harvesting and slow growth rates threaten both forests and the forest industry. Wildfires in 2010 destroyed 37 million acres (15 million ha), further damaging Russia's forestry and agricultural industries.

The countries of this region also have many mineral resources. Most of Russia's vast coal, oil, and natural gas **reserves** are in Siberia. Reserves are the estimated total amount of a resource in an area. Russia's coal and rich deposits of iron ore fuel the country's steel industry. Machines made from steel are used to build Russia's automobiles, railroads, ships, and many consumer products.

Poland's mineral resources include aluminum, coal, copper, lead, zinc, and sulfur. Romania has rich coal deposits and oil in the Black Sea. Hydroelectric and thermal power plants provide energy. There are also copper and bauxite, the raw material for aluminum.

Russia's fishing industry is important to the country's economy. Many of Russia's lakes and rivers are used for freshwater fishing. Romania's fishing industry is concentrated in the southeastern part of the country. The Danube River supplies the most fish.

Writing

Check for Understanding

1. **Informative/Explanatory** What role does the Danube River play in Eastern Europe?

2. **Informative/Explanatory** Which energy sources are important in Eastern Europe and Western Russia?
