**World Literature: Russia**

**The purpose of this twelve-week unit is twofold: to introduce students to some of the shorter masterpieces of Russian nineteenth-century literature and to explore the impact of twentieth-century historical events on Russian writers and their works.**

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**Overview**

* + In the first part of this unit, students read short works by Pushkin, Gogol, Tolstoy, or Chekhov to be introduced to shared themes and literary devices. The class should read no more than three short works in four weeks, in order to devote adequate attention to each. At the end of the unit, teachers choose a novel to read as a seminal text, or opt for the short absurdist vignettes of Daniil Kharms. The literary reading in this part of the unit should be paired with historical readings. By the end of the unit, students begin to understand Russian literature from both a literary and a historical standpoint and will have a foundation for further reading and study.

*Note: the tenth-grade World Literature course consists of three twelve-week units. Four units have been provided (Russia; Africa and the Middle East; Asia; and Latin America); schools may select three out of the four. The middle unit will likely cross from one semester into another; teachers should divide it accordingly.*

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**Focus Standards**

* + These Focus Standards have been selected for the unit from the Common Core State Standards.
    - **RL.9-10.3:** Analyze how complex characters (e.g., those with multiple or conflicting motivations) develop over the course of a text, interact with other characters, and advance the plot or develop the theme.
    - **RL.9-10.5:** Analyze how an author’s choices concerning how to structure a text, order events within it (e.g., parallel plots), and manipulate time (e.g., pacing, flashbacks) create such effects as mystery, tension, or surprise.
    - **RI.9-10.3:** Analyze how the author unfolds an analysis or series of ideas or events, including the order in which the points are made, how they are introduced and developed, and the connections that are drawn between them.
    - **RI.9-10.6:** Determine an author’s point of viewor purpose in a text and analyze how an author uses rhetoric to advance that point of view or purpose.
    - **RI.9-10.7:** Analyze various accounts of a subject told in different mediums (e.g., a person’s life story in both print and multimedia), determining which details are emphasized in each account.
    - **W.9-10.1:** Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.
    - **W.9-10.2:** Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas, concepts, and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content.
    - **SL.9-10.3:** Evaluate a speaker’s point of view, reasoning, and use of evidence and rhetoric, identifying any fallacious reasoning or exaggerated or distorted evidence.
    - **L.9-10.3:** Apply knowledge of language to understand how language functions in different contexts, to make effective choices for meaning or style, and to comprehend more fully when reading or listening.

[Common Core State Standards, ELA](http://commoncore.org/free/resources/CCSSI_ELA_Standards.pdf) (1.5 MB)

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**Suggested Student Objectives**

* + - Read works of Russian literature both for their intrinsic qualities and for their relation to the historical context.
    - Analyze the motives, qualities, and contradictions of a character in Russian literature (including the narrator).
    - Describe the effect of the narrative structure, pacing, and tone in a work of Russian literature.
    - Analyze the role of utopian ideology in select works of Russian literature.
    - Consider the impact of the Bolshevik Revolution and Communist rule on twentieth-century Russian writers and literature.
    - Offer insightful inferences regarding the themes of the text.
    - Create a clear, original, specific thesis statement.
    - Organize concrete evidence and/or supporting textual details to support a thesis statement.
    - Use precise language, avoiding casual language and clichés.
    - Write appropriate transitions to organize paragraphs.
    - Apply new terminology to the texts.
    - Analyze how historical events influence literature.
    - Analyze how literary devices help convey theme.
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**Suggested Works**

* + (E) indicates a CCSS exemplar text; (EA) indicates a text from a writer with other works identified as exemplars.

**Literary Texts**

Note:  Teachers may substitute a story for another story by the same author, or they may substitute one author for another major author from the same period. The selections should combine well, and there should be a balance of nineteenth- and twentieth-century literature. Roughly 4-5 weeks should be devoted to nineteenth-century works, 2-4 weeks to a pivotal text, and 4-5 weeks to a twentieth-century work and historical readings.

**Short Stories**

* + - “The Nose” (Nikolai Gogol) (E)
    - “The Overcoat” (Nikolai Gogol) (EA)
    - “The Tale of How Ivan Ivanovich Quarelled with Ivan Nikiforovich” (Nikolai Gogol) (EA)
    - “Home” (Anton Chekhov) (E)
    - “Ward No. 6” (Anton Chekhov) (EA)
    - “Rothschild’s Fiddle” (Anton Chekhov) (EA)
    - “The Duel” (Anton Chekhov) (EA)
    - “Sleepy” (Anton Chekhov) (EA)
    - “The Head-Gardener’s Story” (Anton Chekhov) (EA)
    - “The Steppe” (Anton Chekhov) (EA)
    - Tales of the Late Ivan Petrovich Belkin (Alexander Pushkin) (selections)
    - *Today I Wrote Nothing: The Selected Works of Daniil Kharms* (Daniil Kharms) (selections)
    - *Diary of a Madman and Other Stories* (Nikolai Gogol) (EA)

**Novels/Novellas**

* + - *Notes from the Underground* (Fyodor Dostoevsky) (EA)
    - *The Death of Ivan Ilyich* (Leo Tolstoy)
    - *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich* (Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn)
    - *A Dead Man’s Memoir* (Mikhail Bulgakov)

**Plays**

* + - *The Seagull* (Anton Chekhov) (EA)
    - *The Inspector-General: A Comedy in Five Acts* (Nikolai Gogol) (EA)

**Poems**

* + - “The Twelve” (Aleksandr Blok)
    - “To Urania” (Joseph Brodsky)

**Informational Texts**

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* + - *Literary St. Petersburg: A Guide to the City and Its Writers* (Elaine Blair) (excerpts about authors in the unit)
    - *Everyday Stalinism: Ordinary Life in Extraordinary Times: Soviet Russia in the 1930s* (Sheila Fitzpatrick) (chapters 1, 5, and 8)
    - *The Proud Tower: A Portrait of the World Before the War, 1890-1914* (Barbara Tuchman) (chapter 2)
    - *Russia and the Soviet Union: An Historical Introduction from the Kievan State to the Present* (John M. Thompson) (chapters 9-12)
    - Excerpts from *The Gulag Archipelago: An Experiment in Literary Investigation* (Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn)

**Literary Nonfiction**

* + - *Nikolai Gogol* (Vladimir Nabokov) (chapter 1)
    - “A Slap in the Face of Public Taste” (Velimir Khlebnikov, Aleksey Kruchenykh, and Vladimir Mayakovsky)
    - *Poets With History and Poets Without History* (Marina Tsvetaeva)
    - *My Pushkin* (Marina Tsvetaeva)
    - *Night Wraps the Sky: Writings By and About Mayakovsky* (Vladimir Mayakovsky and Michael Almerayda, ed.) (selections)

**Art, Music, and Media**

**Music**

* + - Dmitri Shostakovich, *The Nose* (1928)
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**Sample Activities and Assessments**

* + ***Teachers Note:*** *After reading and discussing a work or pairing of works as a class, students prepare for seminars and essays by reflecting individually, in pairs, and/or in small groups on a given seminar/essay question. Ideas are student generated in this way. (Seminar/Essay assignments include more than one question. Teachers may choose one or all the questions to explore in the course of the seminar; students should choose one question for the essay.) Seminars should be held before students write essays so that they may explore their ideas thoroughly and refine their thinking before writing. (Click here* *to see a sample seminar scoring rubric.) Page and word counts for essays are not provided, but teachers should consider the suggestions regarding the use of evidence, for example, to determine the likely length of good essays. In future iterations of these maps, links to samples of student work will be provided.*

**Collaborate**

Reflect on seminar questions, take notes on your responses, and note the page numbers of the textual evidence you will refer to in your seminar and/or essay answers. Share your notes with a partner for feedback and guidance. Have you interpreted the text correctly? Is your evidence convincing? (RL.9-10.1, SL.9-10.1)

**Seminar and Essay**

How reliable is the narrator in the short story “The Nose”? What does the loss of the nose symbolize? Why does the author use the absurd in his writing? Use at least three pieces of textual evidence to support an original thesis statement. (RL.9-10.1, RL.9-10.4, SL.9-10.1, W.9-10.2, W.9-10.9)

**Seminar and Essay**

What is the comment being made by “The Overcoat” on the characteristics of communism? Is the story of “The Overcoat” ironic? How is the story of Akaki an example of carnivalesque? How is it an example of paranormal? Use textual evidence from chapter one of *Nikolai Gogol* (Vladimir Nabokov) and the short story itself. Write an essay that uses at least three pieces of textual evidence to support an original thesis statement answering one of these questions. (RL.9-10.1, SL.9-10.1, W.9-10.2, W.9-10.9)

**Seminar and Essay**

Explore the spiritual and emotional changes of Ivan Ilyich in Tolstoi’s *The Death of Ivan Ilyich* or of Dr. Ragin in Chekhov’s “Ward No. 6.” How and why does the main character change throughout the story? Use textual evidence to support your claims in a seminar. Write an essay using three to six pieces of textual evidence to support an original thesis statement. (RL.9-10.1, RL.9-10.2, SL.9-10.1, W.9-10.2, W.9-10.9)

**Seminar and Essay**

Why does Dostoevsky’s “Underground Man” reject the idea of the Crystal Palace? Use textual evidence to support your response. Write an essay using at least three textual details to support an original thesis statement. (SL.9-10.1, W.9-10.2, W.9-10.9, SL.9-10.3, L.9-10.3)

**Seminar and Essay**

Discuss “A Slap in the Face of Public Taste” before and after learning the historical context. How do historical references affect your interpretation of the document? Refer to the literary and informational texts to support your response. Write an essay using at least three textual details to support an original thesis. (RI.9-10.6, SL.9-10.1, W.9-10.2, W.9-10.9)

**Seminar and Essay**

How does the Bolshevik Revolution help us understand Blok’s poem “The Twelve” (or another work of early twentieth-century Russian literature)? Use evidence from informational texts, as well as the poem itself. Write an essay using at least three pieces of textual evidence to support an original thesis. (RL.9-10.6, RI.9.10.3, SL.9-10.1, W.9-10.2, W.9-10.9)

**Oral Presentation**

Conduct and present researchon the life of one of the authors whose work you have read for this course. How have historical events affected the author’s point of view? How does the author express his point of view through the use of a narrator? Cite at least three pieces of textual evidence to support an original thesis statement. (SL.9-10.4)

**Oral Presentation**

Cite examples of narrative repetition or digression in one of the works you have read; comment on its significance in the story. (RL9-10.5)

**Speech**

Recite a favorite passage from one of the stories in this unit. Include an introduction that states:

* + - From where it is excerpted
    - Who wrote it
    - Its literary significance (RL.9-10.2, SL.9-10.4, SL.9-10.6)

[Scoring Rubric](http://commoncore.org/free/resources/Socratic_Seminar_Rubric_SP.doc)

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**Additional Resources**

* + [Friends & Partners—Linking U.S.-Russia Across the Internet](http://www.friends-partners.org/friends/culture/literature/russianlit.html) has numerous resources related to Russian and Eastern European Literature

[REESWeb: The world wide web virtual library for Russian and Eastern European Studies](http://www.ucis.pitt.edu/reesweb/) (University Center for International Studies, University of Pittsburgh) has a plethora of resources on Russian and Eastern European history, culture, politics, languages, and more

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**Terminology**

* + - the absurd
    - allusion
    - antihero
    - Bolshevik Revolution
    - carnivalesque
    - communism
    - digression
    - fantasy
    - fate
    - grotesque
    - gulag
    - irony
    - narrator reliability
    - paranormal
    - persona
    - repetition
    - Stalinism
    - verse (syllabic, accentual, syllabic-accentual)