



# Russian expansion to the sea

from the Esri GeoInquiries™ collection for World History

Target audience – World history learners

Time required – 15 minutes

**Activity** Discover when and how Russia acquired territory between 1553 and 1914 to become the largest country in the world.

**Standards** **C3: D2.His.1.9-12.** Evaluate how historical events and developments were shaped by unique circumstances of time and place, as well as broader contexts.  
**C3: D2.His.14.9-12.** Analyze multiple & complex causes & effects of events in the past.

**Learning Outcomes**

- Students will trace the expansion of the Russian Empire through time and space.
- Students will identify and explain the underlying causes of Russian expansion.

**Map URL:** <http://esriurl.com/worldHistoryGeoInquiry9>

## Ask

### What was the extent of Russia in the 1500s?

- Click the link above to launch the map.
- ? Which physical features defined Russian territory in 1533? [*Water to the north, mountains to the east*]
- Use the Measure tool. [*See the Use the Measure Tool tip on page 2.*]
- ? What was the west-east distance of Russia in 1533? [*~1,300 miles*]
- ? In what directions did Russia expand by 1598? [*South and east*]

## Acquire

### Why did Russia expand east?

- ? By what year did Russia reach the Pacific Ocean? [*1689*]
- ? What was the west-east distance of the Russian Empire by 1689? [*~4,000 miles*]
- ? Why does the line curve when measuring? [*To account for the curvature of the earth.*]
- With the Details button depressed, click the button, Contents.
- Click the checkbox to the left of the layer name, Territories Acquired.
- Click Pop-up #1.
- ? Why was the fur trade a motive for expansion? [*There was a market for fur in Europe.*]

## Explore

### What challenges did Russia's quest for a warm-water port meet?

- ? Turn on the Cities layer, and pan west so that you can see both Canada and Russia.
- ? What part of Canada is at the same latitude as Moscow? Murmansk? [*Far northern areas*]
- ? Which ports in Russia would you expect to be ice-free in winter? [*St. Petersburg, Novorossiysk, Astrakhan, and Vladivostok are possible answers.*]
- ? Why would the lack of ice-free ports be a disadvantage? [*Trade by sea could not occur all year.*]
- ? Click Pop-up #2.
- ? What geographic factors limit the port at Astrakhan? [*The Caspian Sea, surrounded by land, does not connect to other bodies of water.*]

## Analyze

### When and where did Russia expand west?

- ? Why would Peter the Great want to claim St. Petersburg? [*To increase trade with Europe*]
- Click Pop-up #3.
- ? When and how did Peter the Great acquire St. Petersburg? [*1703, through war with Sweden*]
- ? Why do you think St. Petersburg is called Russia's "Window to the West"? [*It faces Europe.*]
- ? Where was most of the territory acquired by Catherine the Great (1796) located? [*In Europe*]
- Use the Measure tool.
- ? What was the extent of the Russian Empire by 1796? [*~4,200 miles*]

## Act

### What geographic features impeded Russia's southward expansion in the 1800s?

- Read aloud, "In addition to warm-water ports, Russia sought lands in areas with milder climates more suitable for agriculture."
- Turn on the Other Empires layer.
- ? Which empires do you think were most likely to prevent Russia from acquiring ports on the Black Sea? [*The Ottoman and Persian empires*]
- Click Pop-up #4.
- ? What were the results of the Crimean War? [*Russia was defeated and lost Black Sea ports.*]
- ? Into what other areas did the Russian Empire expand by 1914? [*Caucasus and Turkestan*]

### USE THE MEASURE TOOL

- Click Measure, select the Distance button, and from the drop-down list, choose a unit of measurement.
- On the map, click once to start the measurement, click again to change direction, and double-click to stop measuring.
- Hint: Position the area of interest on the map so that it is not obscured by the Measure window.

### TURN A MAP LAYER ON AND OFF

- Make sure that the Details pane is selected, and click Show Contents Of Map.
- To show individual map layers, select the check boxes next to the layer names.
- Hint: If a map layer name is light gray, zoom in or out on the map until the layer name is black. The layer can now be turned on.

## Next Steps

**DID YOU KNOW?** ArcGIS Online is a mapping platform freely available to public, private, and home schools. A school subscription provides additional security, privacy, and content features. Learn more about ArcGIS Online and how to get a school subscription at <http://www.esri.com/schools>.

**THEN TRY THIS...**

- Create a crowd-sourced story map including images of Russian ports during various seasons.
- Using an ArcGIS Online organizational account for schools, use the Buffer Analysis tool to identify cities and areas affected by the Trans-Siberian Railroad.

## TEXT REFERENCES

This GIS map has been cross-referenced to material in sections of chapters from these high school texts.

- *World History: The Human Journey* by Holt — Chapters 10 & 16
- *World History by Glencoe* — Chapter 14
- *World History by Prentice Hall* — Chapter 16
- *World History: Patterns of Interaction* by McDougall Littell — Chapter 21