

Russia, Europe, Asia and the Ural Mountains

This lesson takes a first look at Russia, a country so large that it covers two continents.

Key questions

- How big is Russia?
- Where does Europe end and Asia begin?
- How old are the Ural Mountains and how were they made?
- How does the theory of plate tectonics work?
- What was Pangaea and when did it exist?
- What is 'Eurasia'?

Subject content areas

- Understanding how the Ural Mountains are the product of tectonic movements operating over long geological timescales (Permian, Triassic, Jurassic).
- Understanding how physical processes operating in distant geological times have played a key role in shaping territorial, political and cultural maps of the present, specifically, the divide between Asia and Europe which Russia straddles.

Downloads

- How big is Russia? (PPT)
- Eurasia (PPT)
- Main activity (PPT)
- Making a map (PDF)
- The story of the Urals (PDF)
- Teacher notes PDF | MSWORD

Starter

How big is Russia?

The aim of the 'how big is Russia?' PowerPoint is for your class to think spatially and gain both locational knowledge and place knowledge about Russia, the world's largest, by area, country.

The PowerPoint shows different ways of thinking about the size and scale of the world's largest country. A series of cryptic numbers are shown, and students must guess their meaning. This can be done as a book exercise, with answers at the end, or as a 'hands up' activity.

For instance:

- Russia is an enormous country, **twice the size** of the USA and **70 times** the size of the UK.
- Russia has **14 neighbours**

Main

Mapping Russia

Students will have between five and ten minutes to apply themselves to completing a map of Russia using the first A4 hand-out

- A class set of the A4 hand-outs will need to be printed
- Atlases may need to be provided

Students will add scale, North arrow and key features (this could include: Ural Mountains, important cities, neighbour states) to an outline map of Russia

Where Europe ends and Asia begins: the Ural Mountains

The movement of plates 250-300 million years ago resulted in collision and the uplift of the Urals.

- As a class, students will be guided through the basics of tectonic theory, with reference to the PowerPoint provided for use with the main activity. This analyses tectonic maps and movements, augmented by photographs of the Urals today.
- A class set of A3 worksheets will need to be printed. These show six snapshots of plate positions over the last 250 million years and students need to deduce the correct sequence of events. [They may need to be helped to understand that higher sea levels can make it look as if a continent is separating, when in fact it has been partially submerged.]
- Working in pairs or individually, students will explore the sequence of events that led to the formation of the Urals and Russia.
- The worksheets can be peer marked, self-marked or collected for teacher assessment.

Plenary

What is 'Eurasia'?

- Eurasia is the focus of a brief concluding PowerPoint presentation.
- In geography, the word Eurasia can be used instead of 'Europe and Asia', helping us to understand Russia's location in the world.
- This will take no more than a couple of minutes, unless students are required to make notes, in which case allow a little longer.