Crossroads of Rus

Tracing the connections that set Rus apart from western Europe

AWH.C.10.3.D "divergence of Russia from Western Europe (e.g., Orthodox Christianity, Baltic Crusades, the Mongol Yoke)."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline two details showing Rus's religious ties to the east, circle two details showing conflict or contact with western Europe, and number two details showing how Mongol rule shaped Rus politics.

Three Frontiers of Rus

1. In 988, Vladimir, ruler of Kyiv, adopted Christianity from the Byzantine world. Churches in the lands of Rus followed eastern Christian practices, used icons in worship, and developed religious ties to Constantinople. Their clergy belonged to what became known as Orthodox Christianity. In much of western Europe, churches followed Latin Christian practices and looked to the pope in Rome. The split between eastern and western churches deepened in 1054, though differences had grown for centuries. Rus did not shut out western neighbors: merchants still traveled between Novgorod and Baltic ports. Yet religious authority and worship connected Rus more closely to Byzantium than to Rome.

2. At the eastern edge of the Baltic Sea, Latin Christian armies launched crusades during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Military orders, including the Teutonic Knights, fought to convert or control peoples around the Baltic. These campaigns also brought crusaders into conflict with the Rus principality of Novgorod. In 1242, Novgorod's forces defeated an army led by the Teutonic Order near Lake Peipus. For Novgorod, western European crusaders were not simply fellow Christians; they could be armed rivals across a religious frontier. Still, trade across that frontier continued, so conflict did not erase contact with western Europe.

3. Meanwhile, Mongol armies conquered many Rus cities in the 1230s and 1240s, including Kyiv in 1240. The Mongol rulers of the Golden Horde usually governed Rus principalities indirectly: local princes stayed in place but had to pay tribute and seek the khan's approval to rule. Historians sometimes call this period the “Mongol Yoke,” although Rus rulers also negotiated and competed for power within that system. Moscow's princes later gained influence partly by collecting tribute for the Horde. Western European kingdoms faced their own wars and taxes, but they did not live under this long-lasting system of Mongol tribute and political oversight.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How did the religious ties of Rus differ from those of much of western Europe?

2. How did the Baltic Crusades create a frontier between Novgorod and western Europeans without ending contact between them?

3. How did Mongol rule place different political demands on Rus princes than those faced by western European kingdoms?

4. Why would it be misleading to describe all three influences in the passage as foreign conquests of Rus? Use evidence from two paragraphs.

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write a 75 to 100 word letter from a Novgorod merchant around 1300 to a trading partner in a western Baltic port. Show how your trade crosses a religious frontier, how Mongol rule affects your home government, and why these differences do not end contact.

ANSWER KEY

Crossroads of Rus

HIGH SCHOOL · AWH.C.10.3.D

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline two details showing Rus's religious ties to the east, circle two details showing conflict or contact with western Europe, and number two details showing how Mongol rule shaped Rus politics. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How did the religious ties of Rus differ from those of much of western Europe?	**Rus churches followed eastern Christian practices and had ties to Constantinople. Much of western Europe followed Latin Christian practices and looked to the pope in Rome.**
2	How did the Baltic Crusades create a frontier between Novgorod and western Europeans without ending contact between them?	**Novgorod fought crusaders led by the Teutonic Order, but merchants continued to trade across the Baltic.**
3	How did Mongol rule place different political demands on Rus princes than those faced by western European kingdoms?	**Rus princes had to pay tribute and seek the khan's approval to rule. Western European kingdoms did not face that long-lasting system of Mongol oversight.**
4	Why would it be misleading to describe all three influences in the passage as foreign conquests of Rus? Use evidence from two paragraphs.	**Vladimir adopted Christianity from the Byzantine world, while Mongol armies conquered Rus cities. These were different kinds of influence.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

To my trading partner in Lübeck, I am packing furs to send west. We can bargain across the Baltic even though your church looks to Rome and mine follows Orthodox traditions linked to Constantinople. Some of our neighbors remember fighting the Teutonic Order near Lake Peipus, so I know this route can bring danger as well as trade. At home, our princes must answer to the khan and raise tribute for the Golden Horde. Our worlds meet in the market, but our rulers face different pressures.

Accept accurate comparisons that distinguish religious ties, crusading conflict, and Mongol political oversight. For Part 3, look for a plausible merchant's voice, all three requested ideas, and a response of 75 to 100 words.