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## Learn about... HISTORY

С этого номера мы начинаем новую рубрику “Learn about...” В ней мы будем публиковать короткие рассказы о разных областях науки и жизни, которые можно использовать в качестве дополнительных материалов для чтения. К рассказам разработана система простых упражнений, направленных на усвоение и закрепление нового языкового материала. Рассказы способствуют формированию межпредметных связей на уроках английского языка и расширяют фоновые знания учащихся по ряду дисциплин. Предполагается, что **до чтения рассказов** учащиеся попытаются ответить на предтекстовые вопросы (этап активизации фоновых знаний), а затем прочитают тексты и проверят свои знания. После чтения школьникам можно предложить заполнить таблицу:

Before reading	After reading
I knew:	I learned:
I wanted to know about:	I want to know more about:

# 14

September

## When is New Year's Day?

Grades 10–11

1. When do we celebrate New Year's Day? Is it on the same day in every country around the world?
2. When did people start celebrating New Year's Day in Russia?
3. On what other days did people use to celebrate New Year in Russia? Read the text to find out.



If we had been living 600 years ago, in the 15th century, we'd be celebrating New Year's Day on 14 September. Well, almost, because then it wouldn't have been the New Style calendar.

We all know that in Europe New Year's Day is January 1st. We also know that some people in Russia celebrate “old style new year” on January 14 alongside with the Russian Orthodox Church. But has it always been like this? Like with so many things in life, the answer is “No”.

Many ancient cultures used to celebrate New Year in March. This is what Babilonians did. This is what some countries still do these days, like the Iranian new year Nowruz, the Sikh New Year and many others, whose New Year is connected with the spring equinox (March 21st, the day when the

Sun is at the zenith over the equator). Some scientists believe that in **Pre-Christian** Russia New Year was celebrated on March 22nd.

When Russia **adopted** Christianity and its Julian calendar, a new date was appointed for the New Year's Day. This date was March 1st. However, this date was not a very **convenient** one. It was not connected to an astronomical event, like the equinox. It was not connected to the change of seasons, as with Russia's colder climate, spring did not really begin in early March. So in 1492, following the example of the Russian Orthodox Church which **shifted** the New Year's Day onto September 1st according to the ancient Greek tradition, Prince Ivan III issued an order. He said that from then on New Year would be celebrated on September 1st.

The new date made much more sense to the people. By that time the **bulk of work** in the fields was already done and **taxes** were to be paid. On This day in Moscow thousands of people would come to the palace square. The Patriarch and many priests wearing special clothes would come out to the people. From the other side of the square the Prince with his court would come to meet the priests. When they met, the Patriarch would give the Prince a kiss, and the prince would kiss the Patriarch's cross. After a short **prayer** the start of another year was proclaimed.

It was not until 1700 and Peter the Great's rule that people began to celebrate New Year on January 1st. So for more than 200 years September 1st was

the official New Year's Day. This date is based on the old style, Julian calendar, and the new style New Year would have been celebrated today.

*Check if you answered correctly.*

### Glossary:

**Pre-Christian** — before Christianity

**adopt** — start using as one's own

**convenient** — good (in time or place)

**shift** — move

**bulk of work** — most of work

**tax** — money that citizens pay to the state

**prayer** — a sacred text said to thank God or ask for something

# 11

## October

## British coins

### Grades 8–9

1. What information can you find on coins?
2. What language is used on British coins?
3. What is the title of the British monarch?
4. What do the letters D.G.REG. F.D. stand for on British coins? Why did they appear on coins? Read the text to find out.



If you take a look at a British coin, you will see that the Queen's title is styled as follows: D.G.REG. F.D.

The letters D.G.REG. stand for Dei Gratia Regina, the Latin for "Queen by the Grace of God". But what do the two letters, F.D., stand for? Their history is in fact very interesting.

493 years ago, on October 11, 1521 the Roman Pope Leo X **conferred** a new title on the English King Henry VIII. The title was "Defender of the Faith" and in Latin it reads as follows: "FIDEI DEFENSOR". The title was conferred in recognition of Henry's book "Assertio Septem Sacramentorum" (Defence of the Seven Sacraments), which defended seven principles of Roman Catholic Church and was directed against some new ideas introduced by Martin Luther. This was when the **abbreviation** for the title, F.D., appeared on English coins.

However, it is interesting to note that in 1530 King Henry VIII **declared** himself the head of a new church, the Church of England, and the then-Pope Paul III took the title away and Henry was **excommunicated**. Still, since the king liked the title, and the title was restored to the king by Parliament.

The title is used on coins as F.D. or Fed. Def. This reference was first added to British coins in 1714, during the reign of King George I. The decision of the Royal Mint to **omit** reference to the phrase (and other parts of the monarch's style) from the **pre-decimal** British so called "Godless Florin" in 1849, caused such a scandal that the coin was replaced.

The current royal title is styled as follows: "Elizabeth the Second, by the Grace of God, of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and of Her other Realms and Territories Queen, Head of the Commonwealth, Defender of the Faith".

*Check if you answered correctly.*

### Glossary:

**confer** — give a title

**abbreviation** — short form

**declare** — to announce

**excommunicate** — say that someone is no longer a member of church

**omit** — to miss out

**pre-decimal** — before the decimal coin system was introduced

18

OCTOBER

## HOW WAS ALASKA SOLD AND BOUGHT?

Grades 6–7

1. What part of North America used to belong to Russia?
2. When did it change owners? Why?
3. Did the USA want to buy Alaska? Read the text to find out.



October 18 is Alaska Day. Alaska Day celebrates the formal **transfer** of Alaska from Russia to the United States, which took place on October 18, 1867. The date is given according to the Gregorian calendar, in Russia it was still October 7 according to the Julian calendar.

Why did Russia sell Alaska to the USA? Was the price good? Were the USA happy to buy this land? It is interesting to look at these questions from the viewpoint of people who lived in 1867.

At the time Russia was in a difficult position. The country lost the Crimean War in 1856 to the joint forces of the British, the French and the Ottoman empires, it was not at all strong in military terms and whatever navy and resources it had was needed to protect and support the **newly-acquired** regions along the Amur and the Ussuri Rivers. So the country did not have too many resources to spend on Alaska. Besides, the neighbouring region of British Columbia began to develop fast after gold was discovered there, and Britain spared neither finance nor military power to support it. During the Crimean War Britain evinced a great interest in adding Alaska to the territory of British North America (now known as Canada). The British empire was a rival and a likely enemy, and the Russian navy in the Pacific Ocean was not enough to protect Alaska from the perspective enemy. Also, the USA were growing fast: it was just a few years earlier, in 1848, that the country won the territory of the present-day states of California, Nevada, Utah, and parts of Colorado, Arizona, Oklahoma, New Mexico, and Wyoming in a war with Mexico, as well as the territory of Texas which was **annexed** in 1846. Seeing the expansionist politics of both Britain and the USA and the problems that the defense of Alaska would face, the Russian government decided to sell the territory and focus on developing the lands around Khabarovsk and Vladivostok.

At first the offer to buy Alaska was made both to Great Britain and to the USA in 1859. But Britain showed no interest in paying money for Alaska, and the USA were too busy digesting the new southern states and then the country got stuck in its own Civil War. So the **negotiations** were **resumed** by the Tsar's **ambassador** only in March 1867. And at 4 o'clock in the morning of March 30, 1867, a **treaty** to sell Alaska was signed with the purchase price set at \$7,200,000.00 about 2.3¢ per acre (\$4.74/km).

The United States Senate **ratified** the treaty on April 9, 1867 but the House of Representatives was against this purchase and did not agree to give the money for it until July 1868. To achieve this, the Russian ambassador even had to **bribe** a few politicians.

The transfer ceremony took place in Sitka on October 18, 1867. Russian and American soldiers paraded in front of the governor's house; the Russian flag was lowered and the American flag raised followed by **peals** of artillery.

*Check if you answered correctly.*

### Glossary:

**transfer** — to pass from one owner to another

**newly-acquired** — something that was bought or conquered recently

**annex** — add part of the territory of another state to a different state

**negotiations** — talks

**resume** — to restart

**ambassador** — official representative of a state in a different country

**treaty** — contract

**ratify** — to officially approve so that a document comes into power

**bribe** — to give money secretly in return for a favour

**peal** — loud sound of cannons or thunder

2

November

## THE FIRST CHEERLEADERS

Grades 5–6

1. When can you see cheerleaders?
2. Were the first cheerleaders male or female?
3. How many cheerleaders were in the first team?
4. Are there any male cheerleaders in the USA now?

Read the story to find out.



November the 2nd is the birthday of organised cheerleading. You have all seen girls in short skirts dancing and cheering on the field during intervals at sports games. In fact, the first cheerleader was male. Of course he was not wearing a skirt when he was cheerleading, but do you know what he did and when? Or where he was from?

The first cheerleader's name was Johnny Campbel and he was a student at the University of Minnesota. On November 2, 1898 during a football match he directed a **crowd** in cheering "Rah, Rah, Rah! Ski-u-mah, Hoo-Rah! Hoo-Rah! Varsity! Varsity! Varsity, Minn-e-So-Tah!". And all the first cheerleaders

were male. Very soon the University of Minnesota organised a team of "yell leader" which consisted of 6 males. The first female cheerleading teams were organised in 1923. Nowadays it is estimated that in the USA 97% of cheerleading participants overall are female, but males still make up 50% of cheering squads at the collegiate level.

*Check if you answered correctly.*

### Glossary:

**crowd** — a group of people that are not organised

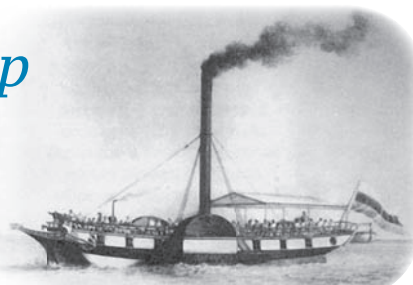
15

November

## The first Russian steamship

Grades 7–8

1. When was the first Russian steamship launched?
2. Where did the engineer who constructed it come from?
3. Which was faster, the first steamship or a rowing boat?



On November 15, 1815 the first Russian steamship *Elisaveta* was **launched** in St Petersburg. It ran from St Petersburg to Kronstadt and back. The steamship was constructed by a Scottish engineer Charles Baird who came to work in Russia in 1792 and built his plant called Baird Works.

The ship was, in fact, a **paddleboat**, which moved with the help of paddle wheels. It was made from wood and had a **steam engine** which made 40 **revolutions** per minute. During the first run of the *Elisaveta*, the commander of the Kronstadt port ordered a rowing boat to follow the ship. There were times when the rowing boat could go faster than

the *Elisaveta*. It took the first Russian steamship 5.5 hours to reach Kronstadt with the average speed of 9.3 km per hour, but this was the beginning of the Russian steam fleet.

*Check if you answered correctly.*

### Glossary:

**launch** — start to use

**paddleboat** — a ship moved by a wheel

**steam engine** — motor powered by steam

**revolution** — turn