Surviving the Russian Winter

Much of Russia has severe winters. In Moscow, snow usually begins to fall in mid-October and lasts until mid-April. Siberia has been known to have temperatures as low as -90°F. Back in the 18th century, Russians did not have down parkas or high-tech insulation for their homes. But they had other ways to cope with the climate.

For example, in the 18th century, Russian peasants added potatoes and corn to their diet. During the winter, these nutritious foods were used in soups and stews. Such dishes were warming and provided plenty of calories to help fight off the cold.

Silver Samovar

In the mid-18th century, samovars were invented in Russia. These large, often elaborately decorated urns were used to boil water for tea. Fire was kept burning in a tube running up the middle of the urn—keeping the water piping hot.

Crimean Dress

These people are wearing the traditional dress of tribes from the Crimean Peninsula, a region that Russia took over in the 1700s. Notice the heavy hats, the fur trim on some of the robes, and the leggings worn by those with shorter robes. All these features help to conserve body heat.

Troika

To travel in winter, the wealthy often used sleighs called troikas. Troika means “group of three”; the name comes from the three horses that draw this kind of sleigh. The middle horse trotted while the two outside horses galloped.
**FROSTY FACTS**

- According to a 2001 estimate, Russian women spend about $500 million a year on fur coats and caps.
- The record low temperature in Asia of -90°F was reached twice, first in Verkhoyansk, Russia, in 1892 and then in Oimekon, Russia, in 1933.
- The record low temperature in Europe of -67°F was recorded in Ust’-Shchugor, Russia.
- One reason for Russia’s cold climate is that most of the country lies north of the 45° latitude line, closer to the North Pole than to the Equator.

**Winter Festival**

Russians have never let their climate stop them from having fun outdoors. Here, they are shown enjoying a Shrovetide festival, which occurs near the end of winter. Vendors sold food such as blinis (pancakes with sour cream). Entertainments included ice skating, dancing bears, and magic shows.

The people in the foreground are wearing heavy fur coats. Otter fur was often used for winter clothing. This fur is extremely thick and has about one million hairs per square inch.

**Wooden House**

Wooden houses, made of logs, were common in Russia during Peter the Great’s time. To insulate the house from the wind, people stuffed moss between the logs. Russians used double panes of glass in their windows. For extra protection, many houses had shutters to cover the windows. The roofs were steep so snow would slide off.

**DATA FILE**

**Average High Temperature for January, Russian Cities**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>City</th>
<th>Temperature</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Moscow, Russia</td>
<td>21°F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perm, Russia</td>
<td>-12°F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rostov, Russia</td>
<td>-29°F</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Worldclimate.com

**Average High Temperature for January, U.S. Cities**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>City</th>
<th>Temperature</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Los Angeles, CA</td>
<td>66°F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minneapolis, MN</td>
<td>21°F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New York, NY</td>
<td>38°F</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Worldclimate.com

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**Connect to Today**

1. **Making Inferences** In the 18th century, how did Russians use their natural resources to help them cope with the climate?  

2. **Comparing and Contrasting** How has coping with winter weather changed from 18th-century Russia to today’s world? How has it stayed the same?