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In 476 CE, the fall of Rome completed a long decline for the Western Roman Empire.
In 565 CE, the Eastern Roman Empire—also known as the Byzantine Empire—was on the rise.
The Slavs were among the earliest people to settle in Russia.

**Big Question:** How did Russia become a Christian country?
In 954 CE, Princess Olga of Kiev traveled to Constantinople, where she learned about Orthodox Christianity.

**Big Question:** How did Russia become a Christian country?
CHAPTER 1: Russia’s Beginnings

After converting to Orthodox Christianity in 988 CE, Prince Vladimir forced all the people of Kiev to convert, too.

**Big Question:** How did Russia become a Christian country?
In 1054 CE, the Christian Church split into Western Catholic and Eastern Orthodox Churches.

Big Question: How did Russia become a Christian country?
CHAPTER 2: The Mongols Invade

The Mongols attacked Kiev and other Russian cities, and then left the Tatars in charge of the conquered lands.

**Big Question:** What are some key features of Russian geography, and how have these features influenced the nation’s history?
Between 1271 and 1295, Venetian Marco Polo traveled throughout Asia, exploring the Mongol Empire.
CHAPTER 2: The Mongols Invade

The city-state of Muscovy became increasingly powerful under strong rulers, such as Ivan I (“Ivan the Moneybag”).

Big Question: What are some key features of Russian geography, and how have these features influenced the nation’s history?
Ivan III, also known as Ivan the Great, ruled with absolute power and declared himself czar.

Big Question: How did Ivan III gain more control over those he ruled?
CHAPTER 4: Ivan the Terrible

Ivan IV, also known as Ivan the Terrible, expanded Russia’s borders.

Big Question: Why was Ivan IV called “Ivan the Terrible”? 
CHAPTER 5: Peter the Great

Big Question: What did Peter the Great hope to do for Russia?

Peter the Great modernized and Westernized Russia. He hired European architects to design and build the Winter Palace in St. Petersburg.
CHAPTER 6: Catherine the Great

Catherine the Great was born a German princess but became one of Russia’s greatest rulers.

Big Question: Why did serfdom continue in Russia?
Feudal Japan

Timeline Cards
CHAPTER 1: The Rise of an Empire

In about 400 CE, the Yamato became the strongest clan in Japan.

Big Question: How did China and Korea influence the development of Japanese culture?
In the 500s CE, Buddhism spread to Japan from other Asian countries.

**Big Question:** What are the basic teachings of the Shinto and Buddhist religions?
By 800 CE, Japanese rulers, such as Emperor Kanmu, had become richer, but more isolated within the palace walls.

**Big Question:** In what ways was a shogun more powerful than an emperor?
Big Question: In what ways was a shogun more powerful than an emperor?

In 1192 CE, the emperor declared Yoritomo supreme warrior, or shogun.
CHAPTER 3: Japanese Feudalism

Japan developed a feudal system with a specific order of social classes.

**Big Question:** In what ways was a shogun more powerful than an emperor?
CHAPTER 4: Everyday Life and Arts

Big Question: How did daily life differ based on people’s place in society?

Peasants and townspeople enjoyed Kabuki plays.
CHAPTER 5: Changes Come to Japan

Big Question: How did foreign trade bring about the end of the shogun era?

From 1268 to 1281 CE, Kublai Khan attempted to make Japan part of the Mongol Empire.
Big Question: How did foreign trade bring about the end of the shogun era?
CHAPTER 5: Changes Come to Japan

Big Question: How did foreign trade bring about the end of the shogun era?

European traders and missionaries brought new weapons and ideas to Japan.
CHAPTER 5: Changes Come to Japan

Big Question: How did foreign trade bring about the end of the shogun era?

In 1853 CE, Commodore Matthew Perry opened trade between the United States and Japan.
Big Question: How did foreign trade bring about the end of the shogun era?
Early Russia
Subject Matter Expert
Matthew M. Davis, PhD, University of Virginia

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Feudal Japan
Subject Matter Expert
Yongguang Hu, PhD, Department of History, James Madison University

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