

Task 1. Reading.

Between the West & the East...

During the reign of saint Alexander Nevskiy, Rus remained independent from the Catholic West – in this direction the great prince acted as a warrior, while in his relationships with the East he was a diplomat who managed to save the lands of Rus during the invasion of the Mongols...

The XIII century is truly considered as one of the most difficult periods in the history of Russia: feudal wars that destroyed political, economic, spiritual & cultural life continued, while in 1223 the Mongols – great conquerors from the central part of Asia – came to the borders of the country.

In this trouble time, son Alexander was born to the family of prince Yaroslav Vsevolodovich – the boy was bound not just to follow his father's footsteps, but also to crown his with immortality in the history of the Russian State...

Alexander was born on the 13th of May 1221 in the town of Pereslavl-Zalesskiy, while already at the age of four the little boy was ordained a warrior. In 1233, the 12-year-old Alexander under the leadership of his father took part in a military mission to the town of Yuryev for the first time. That mission was not successful, while the devastation caused by Batu Khan in 1237-1238 became the reason of active measures of Livonian Order & Sweden aimed at the occupation of the Novgorod republic. Already since 1236, young Alexander began to protect the lands from the Swedish, Livonian & Lithuanians.

In 1240, the Swedish came on shore in the mouth of the river Neva to attack Novgorod, while the knights of the Livonian Order sieged Pskov. The Swedish military leader sent an arrogant letter to Alexander: "If you are able to resist, you should know that I am already here & I will conquer your land". Before the battle, elder Pelgusiy had a vision where a boat with Russian warriors & saints Boris & Gleb on board was sailing along the river Neva to help their relative. Alexander decided not to wait for the actions of the Swedish & moved to the river Neva – the Swedish were caught unawares & were completely defeated. This victory made Alexander a hero.

On the 5th of April 1242, at the Chudskoe lake the warriors under the leadership of Alexander demolished the army of Livonian Order – this way our Western neighbours were deprived the possibility to occupy our Eastern territories. During the Battle on the Ice, 50 knights were captured – that had never happened before.

Alexander managed to expand Novgorod lands conquering some territories of the Livonian Order. Now the main strategic direction of the foreign policy of Alexander became his relationships with the Horde. In this sphere, he was patient, cool-headed & prudent trying not to cause the anger of the Mongols. Being proficient warriors but at the same time not always farsighted rulers the Khans of the Golden Horde seldom interfered the internal issues of the conquered countries – so did their religion & consequently their spiritual life. This was crucial for the prince who to obey, as the Catholic West cruelly punished the conquered nations enslaving them – that was how some states perished. Alexander Nevskiy understood it – that is why the concessions he made in his relationships with the Golden Horde gave Rus not only time to revive devastated principalities, but also to grow stronger spiritually that would become the key to the future united state...

In 1246, prince Yaroslav was poisoned in Karakorum, while after he died in 1247, his son Alexander inherited Kiev & "land of Rus". The same year, Alexander visited Batu Khan who kindly accepted the prince & even adopted him.

Alexander Nevskiy continued to reign Rus until 1263. On his way back home from Karakorum the prince fell ill & passed away on November 14 the same year. Possibly, he was poisoned like his father.

During Moscow Bishop's council in 1547, Alexander Nevskiy was canonized. In 1724, Peter I ordered to transfer the relics of the holy prince to the Alexander Nevskiy monastery in Saint Petersburg.

Alexander Nevskiy is considered to play his unique role in the history of Russia. For his entire life, he did not lose any battle. He is considered to be the patron saint of the Church & the defender of the Orthodox faith. He is venerated as a talented diplomat, military leader who managed to protect Rus from many enemies also preventing the invasion of the Mongols. Nowadays, streets & squares, monuments & churches in many Russian towns are built in honour of him.

Questions after the text:

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| 1) Why was XIII a trouble time in the history of Russia? | 3) Why Alexander Nevskiy decided to obey the Horde & not the Catholic West? |
| 2) What happened before the Battle of Neva? | 4) Why is saint Alexander Nevskiy considered to play the unique role in the history of Russia? |

Task 2. Grammar exercises.

Transform the following sentences into Passive.

1. Alexander Nevskiy defeated the knights of the Livonian Order during the Battle on Ice.
2. Historians consider Alexander Nevskiy to be the defender of the Russian Orthodox Church.
3. Possibly, the Mongols poisoned Alexander Nevskiy.
4. People build monuments & churches in honour of saint Alexander Nevskiy.
5. People venerate Alexander Nevskiy as one of the greatest military leaders of the Russian State.