

Russian resources

This lesson takes a look at the power Russia derives from its oil and gas resources

Key questions

- What is fossil fuel?
- What kinds of fossil fuel are there and why are they unevenly distributed?
- Who relies on Russia for their energy supplies?
- What is an energy pathway?
- How does energy dependency influence geopolitics?
- What is shale gas?
- What is a Transnational Corporation (TNC)?
- Who are the oil oligarchs?

Subject content areas

- Understanding what **fossil fuels** are and how they are made and unevenly distributed.
- Understanding the **global significance** of Russia as an energy **superpower**, especially in its dealings with eastern Europe.
- Understanding how energy **pathways** and energy **dependency** influence political relationships between different countries.

Downloads

- Fossil fuels (PPT)
- Russia's energy pathways (PDF)
- Who benefits? (PPT)
- Teacher notes PDF | MSWORD
- Images (PPT)

Starter

Fossil fuels

A PowerPoint presentation kicks off the lesson by providing a brief insight into different types of conventional and unconventional fossil fuel, and introduces the concept of energy pathways.

- Ask students what they already know about fossil fuels, either from geography or science lessons.
- What are the main types of fossil fuels?
- What environmental problems are associated with their use?

Main

Russia's energy pathways

Russia has great stores of oil and gas, making it a wealthy and powerful country. Russia has recently gained an important role as an 'energy superpower' influences its relationships with other countries.

This lesson is skills-orientated and introduces students to a range of graphical techniques used by geographers.

Students should be provided with the A3 worksheet, completion of which will take up the bulk of this lesson.

- They will be mapping the outflows of fossil fuels from Russia, and identifying countries with the greatest dependency on Russian energy supplies. This involves the construction of proportional arrows and simple choropleth mapping, which the teacher can demonstrate. The width of the arrows is proportional to the amount of gas being bought/sold.
- The proportional arrows will show significant outflows of gas from Russia to its neighbours in eastern Europe and also to western Europe.
- The choropleth map, based on the bar graph shown on the worksheet, will show many countries taking all or the majority of their gas from Russia. Those with the highest dependency should be shaded in a

darker colour. As an extension activity, students could try to describe any pattern which emerges from their shading.

If time allows, there can also be a discussion based on the completed map. What does your completed map tell you about the pattern of energy pathways in Europe? What does it tell you about dependency on Russian energy? How might this affect the relationship that European governments have with their Russian neighbour? Recently, Russia annexed (seized) a part of one of its neighbour states, Ukraine. Foreign governments had difficulty deciding how to react to this event. Can you suggest why?

As a further extension activity for homework or an extra research lesson, grounded in interconnected thinking, students could investigate the link between dependency on Russian fuel and the recent drive towards greater domestic energy security, via shale gas, in the EU. Find out what they know about the 'fracking' debate and the reasons why the UK government is keen to promote the extraction of shale gas. How might the 2014 crisis in Ukraine have strengthened the UK government's belief that greater supplies of domestic energy are needed?

Plenary

Who benefits from Russian oil?

- Russia's oil and gas resources are controlled by companies and individuals who have become enormously wealthy in the post-Soviet period. A final, brief PowerPoint identifies some of the main players in Russia's oil industry (Transnational Corporations include Gazprom) and the role fossil fuels have played in making Russia into a 'two-speed' society (investigating the 'oil oligarchy').
- This provides a natural link to the final lesson which examines Russia's level of economic development.