

Joslyn Art Museum Comprehensive Study Lesson Plan

Created by Sue Oles, Trever Reeh & Laura Huntimer

RUSSIAN PORTRAITURE

Focus: Konstantin Makovsky, *Russian Beauty and Cat*

Objectives – Students will:

- Create a portrait after contemplating what future fashion and architecture will look like.
- Respond to artists' rebellions from the Academies.
- Present theories regarding why cats are popular subjects in art and how they are a phenomenon on the Internet.
- Connect with Russian culture using Makovsky's artworks.

Suggested Materials: Konstantin Makovsky teaching poster, drawing media and tools, Venn diagrams, computers/iPads for research

Vocabulary: Academy, aristocrat, beauty, culture, customs, national costume, patriarchal society, portrait, rebel/rebellion, Russian architecture terms, social status

Procedure:

- **Engage:** Clothes as a gateway to culture. Have students examine what they are wearing. Ask what they tell us about our culture.
- **Art Talk 1:** Russian Culture through Art. Using Makovsky's *Russian Beauty and Cat*, students can learn much about Russian culture during that time. Refer to the gallery experience at April Thursdays for Teachers and lesson plan create by Dr. Tatyana Novikov. <http://goo.gl/vGm2IH>
- **Art Talk 2:** *The Wanders*. Discuss this group, who rebelled against the Academy, and their important mission. Compare with another significant Academy rebellion (the Impressionists). Refer to the teaching poster for additional information.
- **History:** Who was Konstantin Makovsky? Refer to resources in the **Teacher Support Materials** for additional information. <http://goo.gl/vGm2IH>
- **Aesthetics:** Cats in Art. Have students research how artists have portrayed felines over time. What is the fascination with them? Why are they so popular online? Have students present their theories. (see Twitter handle @CuratorialCats and Walker Art Center's Internet Cat Video Festival)
- **Production:** Fashion & Architecture in 2035. Have students think about what will be worn 20 years from now. Think about what contemporary architecture will be like, too. Have them create a portrait similar to *Russian Beauty and Cat* only set in 2035. (potential *Hunger Games* tie-in for older students).



Konstantin Makovsky, (Russian, 1839–1915), *Russian Beauty and Cat*, 1865, oil on canvas, 45 1/4 x 36 1/2 in., Joslyn Art Museum, Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Charles W. Martin, 1954.172

- **Close:** Ask students if they could be friends with *Russian Beauty*. Use a Venn diagram to organize their thoughts and information.

Extensions:

- **Cultural Connections:** Study rebellions in American cultural history. Use a Venn diagram to compare and contrast with Russian artists "The Wanderers" rebellion against the Academy.
- **Fine Arts:** Selfies. Ask students to take a series of selfies with the goal to capture their personality through the image. As they study them, have them think about the clues included in the photos?
- **Language Arts:** Tell the Story. Who is the *Russian Beauty*, and why is she gazing out the window? Write a story about what her expectations may be. What evidence is present in the painting help craft this story?
- **Math:** History of Math. Russia was a dominant force in mathematics during that era with Moscow University as the most prestigious place to study in the world. Study Nikolai Lobachevsky non-euclidean shapes/spaces. Share that Moscow only cancelled school if it was -30 degrees F below zero. Students attended school in coats and mittens to keep their hands warm during math class. These were the extremes of Russia during this time period.
- **Science:** Show students how *Russian Beauty's* eyes seem to follow the viewer. Have students research this phenomenon that has to do with how the artists used light and shadow in their paintings. Discuss how popular culture uses it (think, Scooby-Doo mysteries). Here is a study in Ohio State's *Research News* to get you started <http://goo.gl/8WlUQu>

Academic Standards & additional resources:

Available on online version at www.joslyn.org/education/teachers/thursdays-for-teachers
[select Lesson Plans, then European]

About the Artwork:

Best known as a painter of peasant scenes and founding member of the revolutionary movement known as the "Wanderers," Makovsky established himself early on as a champion of Russian subject matter. Entering the Imperial Academy in St. Petersburg — the only avenue for aspiring artists in the tightly controlled Czarist state — in 1858, Makovsky took an active part in an unprecedented rebellion against the authorities in 1863 and, with thirteen other students, formed the *Artel' Khudozhnikov*, an independent artists' cooperative. The *Artel'* advocated freedom from Academic rules and subject matter and saw themselves as part of a new moral and rational order.

Russian Beauty and Cat perfectly embodies the modified realism and dawning nationalism of mid-century Russian artists. A carefully painted Tartar woman leans out an ornately carved window frame. The elaborate jewelry of her adornments contrasts with the softness of her face and bare shoulders —slightly sensual note accentuated by the contented, purring cat that she strokes.

IMAGE: Konstantin Makovsky, (Russian, 1839–1915), *Russian Beauty and Cat*, 1865, oil on canvas, 45 1/4 x 36 1/2 in., Joslyn Art Museum, Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Charles W. Martin, 1954.172

LESSON PLAN

Russian Culture through Art: Understanding Women's Lives

Featuring Konstantin Egorovich Makovsky

Created by Tatyana Novikov, Professor of Russian Studies at the University of Nebraska at Omaha,

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Grade Level Elementary

Overview

Russian art opens up a fascinating world of history and culture. This lesson offers the audience an invitation to share and experience these events by presenting the artwork of Konstantin Makovsky, a Russian nineteenth century painter, who was famous for his portraits of women in Russian national costumes. An examination of Makovsky's paintings will allow the audience to explore the history of women in Russia, and to learn about the historical status of women and their social, cultural, and intellectual influence on Russian society.

Anticipatory Set

- Konstantin Makovsky was a master history painter, with many of his painting depicting an idealized view of Russian life prior to Peter the Great's modernization of Russia. Today, his portraits are some of his most recognized and sought after works.
- Makovsky's painting *Russian Beauty with a Cat* (1865) is a favorite of many who visit The Joslyn Art Museum.
- Students will be asked to define the portrait as a kind of painting. In Makovsky's time only painters with a great deal of skill could make portraits come to life as he did.
- We will discuss Makovsky's original composition, attention to detail, the realistic depiction of the subject's costume, and the decorative elements of the painting's background.



Objectives

- Students will learn to examine a portrait
- Students will learn to recognize elements of the Russian national costume and lifestyle
- Students will investigate the peculiarities of Makovsky's art
- Students will explore other paintings by Makovsky and get important insights into Russian women's history

Resources

- Konstantin Makovsky – <http://www.wikiart.org/en/konstantin-makovsky#close>
- Joslyn's Makovsky Teaching Poster & powerpoint presentation – <http://goo.gl/vGm2IH>

Lesson Outline

Viewing and examining K. Makovsky's *Russian Beauty and Cat* (Group activity, 15 minutes)

1. Discussing a Russian national costume is depicted in the painting
2. How does the painting (the costume and the surroundings) reflect the subject's social status?
3. Exploring the ethnic details of the painting's background and the decorative elements used in the depiction of the house.
4. What makes this portrait so attractive and magical? Why do you feel so close to the girl?
5. What aspects of the painting highlight the beauty of the subject?

LESSON PLAN

Women in Russia (16th–17th centuries): Exploring K.Makovsky's art (power point presentation and discussion of paintings, 45 minutes)

1. Medieval Russian marriage. Discussion of engagement and wedding customs. Family dynamics. The ideal Russian wife as promoted by Russian Orthodox teachings.
Why was the wedding not exciting but sad and upsetting for Russian women?

Paintings by Makovsky: *Boyar's Wedding Feast, The Russian Bride's Attire, Boyaryshnya*

2. The view of the Russian Orthodox church on women's role in the family and society.

Paintings by Makovsky: *Woman Spinning Thread, Woman Making Lace*

3. *Terem* – seclusion of aristocratic women in their homes; seclusion as a mark of honor. *Terem* is attributed to the growth of misogyny as suggested by the Orthodox church.

Paintings by Makovsky: *The Boyarina, Boyarina by the Window, The Russian Bride's Attire*

4. Women in patriarchal society. *Domostroi* – a code of church rules regulating the life of people. The pattern of daily life in Russian families. Entertaining guests.

Paintings by Makovsky: *From the Everyday Life of the Russian Boyar in the Late XII century, Portrait of a Girl, Woman in a Russian Dress, Girl with a Sheaf, A Goblet with Mead*

5. How did the Russian national costume style develop? What did it represent?

Paintings by Makovsky: *Portrait of Zinada Yusupova; Russian Beauty with Kokoshnik, A Girl in a National Costume, A Young Boyarina, Russian Beauty Wearing a Kokoshnik*

6. Did the Russian society value women highly?

Academic Standards

Available on online version at www.joslyn.org/education/teachers/ [select Lesson Plans, then European]

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IMAGE: Konstantin Makovsky, (Russian, 1839–1915), *Russian Beauty and Cat*, 1865, oil on canvas, 45 1/4 x 36 1/2 in., Joslyn Art Museum, Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Charles W. Martin, 1954.172

Russian Culture through Art: Women in Russia (16th -17th centuries)

Presented by Dr. Tatyana Novikov, Professor of Russian Studies, UNO



Featuring Konstantin Makovsky's Art

Konstantin Makovsky – a painter of history



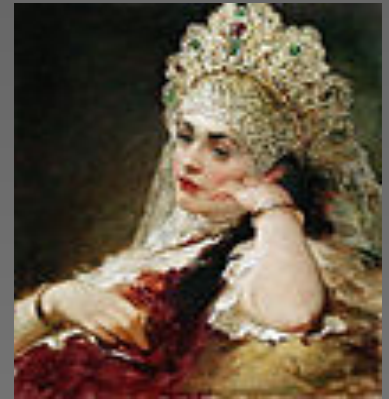
1839-1915

- K. Makovsky was an influential Russian artist, who captured the essence of everyday life in Russia's past.
- He was born to a prominent family of artists and musicians.
- Makovsky was a master history painter, with portraits being some of his most recognized works today.
- He created beautiful portraits of women in Russian national costumes.

Makovsky portrayed an idealized view of Russian past



- His portraits of women in distinctive national costumes are adorned in beautiful garments and jewels.
- Their traditional headdress, a *kokoshnik*, is adorned with intricate embroidery and delicate pearls cradle their forehead.
- Married women covered their hair, but maidens had their braids to the side.
- Women wore loose pinafore style dresses with straps. They were worn by girls and married women from *boyars* (titled aristocracy) and merchants' families to peasant women.



Patriarchal families allowed authority of only one person – the man



Makovsky. Alexis I's Bride Show

- The adoption of the Byzantine Orthodoxy (988AD) promoted the growth of patriarchal system. Women were associated with sin and evil.
- Simultaneously developed the notion of the extreme superiority of the masculine sex over the feminine.
- Such opinions about women strengthened the power of the husband over the wife in patriarchal families.

Medieval Russian marriage

- In all social orders, the parents concluded marriages for their children. Parents, particularly fathers, had absolute control over the fate of their children, and daughters were obliged to submit themselves entirely to their fathers.

- Marriage was a business arrangement between families by “buying and selling.”
- The girl had no right to an opinion of her own, no choice.
- The bride and groom almost never saw each other until the wedding.



Marriages were concluded exclusively among believers



Makovsky. The Russian Bride's Attire

- Marriages with persons of other faiths were deemed “unworthy.”
- The church permitted no more than two marriages.
- An exception allowed a third marriage, if no children had been born of the first two.
- On the wedding day, the bride awaited the groom at her parents' home.
- The day before, her dowry had been brought to the groom's house, and the groom and his relatives had sent marital gifts to the bride's family.

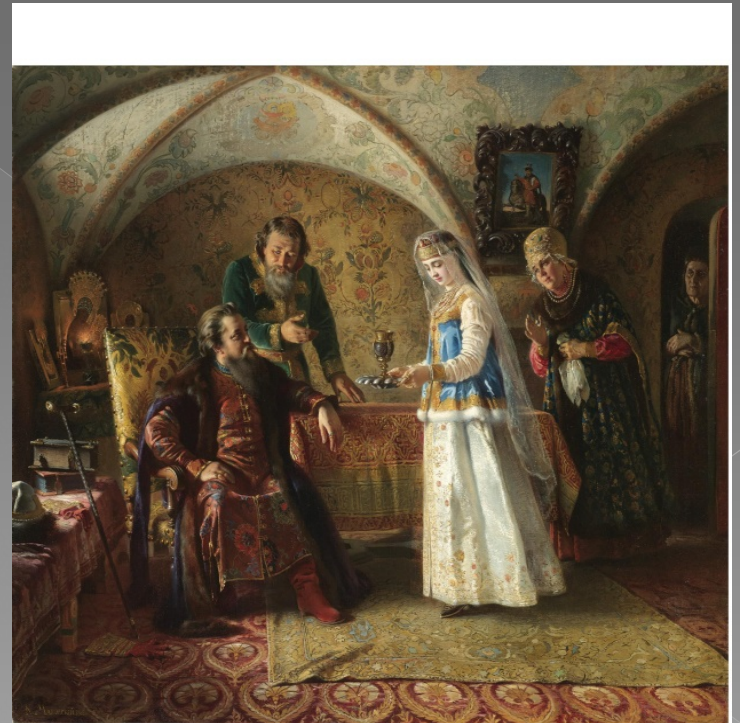
In all wedding songs, the bride constantly laments

- She laments that she has to leave her family; that she is to be taken to a “far off, distant country,” to live in an “unknown family.”



Makovsky.
Boyaryshnya

Makovsky. From the Everyday Life
of a Russian Boyar in the Late XVII
Century



All marriages were arranged by parents



- Marriages took place at parents' insistence.
- People were obliged to marry within their social order.

Makovsky. Boyar's Wedding Feast

The bride passed entirely into the possession of her husband

- The dowry was the property of the husband, and the wife herself was the principal item of that property.
- There was a custom by which the father took a lash and struck his daughter saying: "My daughter, by these blows you recognize the authority of your father. Now this authority passes into other hands. In my stead you will be punished for disobedience by your husband."



Makovsky.
Boyarynya



Russian Beauty
with a Kokoshnik

A wife could not divorce her adulterous husband



Tsar Mikhail is selecting a wife

- The husband of an adulterous wife had not only the right but an obligation to divorce her.
- A husband who forgave his wife's betrayal was himself punished by a fine.
- Under Orthodox canons, many lesser offenses by a wife were equated with adultery.

The church did not exalt women's role in the family and society



Makovsky.
Woman in a
Russian Dress

- Scriptural passages were invoked to demonstrate the inferiority of women.
- The ideal woman would have to be not only silent and submissive but also God-fearing, ascetically chaste, indifferent to her own welfare, and ready to fulfill any task for her husband.
- Church literature supported a concept of the ideal marriage, where the wife was “quiet,” “humble,” “silent,” and “submissive to her husband's will.”

Marriage existed for the purpose of perpetuating the race



Makovsky. Zinaida
Yusupova.



Makovsky.
Boyarynya

- ❖ The church and the society encouraged women to bear many children.
- ❖ “A wife is given to a man for a single purpose, to bear children.”
- ❖ Barrenness was viewed as a great misfortune, one of the most terrible punishments from God: “It is a great evil, if no children are born.”
- ❖ The greatest merit of a woman was her ability to give birth to children.
- ❖ Sterile wives spent all their time in prayer.

Sterile wives were often forced to divorce or take the veil



Makovsky. Portrait of a Young Nun

- ❖ Divorce and a forced taking of the veil were especially frequent in the royal family.
- ❖ Tsarina's sterility was considered a national calamity, and gave the subjects of the tsar the right to demand his divorce.
- ❖ Revolting scenes often accompanied the forced taking of the veil.

What was the terem?



- The terem made its appearance in the life of Russian women in the 16th century.
- It was a rear part of the house, or an upper part like an attic, where the women were confined in seclusion.
- The fence surrounding that part of the house was very high, so that the women could walk in the garden without being seen.

That period witnessed a sharp transition in the status of women

The terem stood for seclusion, isolation. Behind terem walls, women were safe from attack and insult. Their visitors could be monitored.



Makovsky. Boyarynya by the Window.



Didactic literature reinforced the idealization of the secluded terem woman



Makovsky. The Boyarynya



- Russians did not respect women who were not locked up in a terem.
- Seclusion was a mark of honor.
- The terem, with its strict isolation of marriageable young women, was intended to keep them pure.

Aristocratic men and women moved in separate spheres



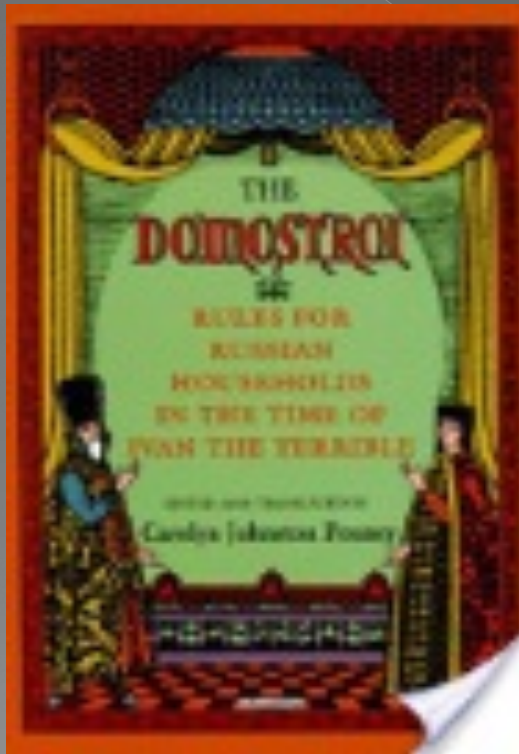
Makovsky.
The Young Bride

- The secluded terem woman was meek and quiet, fearing to transgress the established norms of behavior.
- The husband in the family was like the tsar in the state.
- Unlike Western European nobles, Muscovites strictly preserved the separate quarters for men and women.



Women in the
terem

Domostroi



- Domostroi was a code of church rules regulating the life of the people.
- The directions it contained covered the whole of Russian life – spiritual, domestic, and social.

Noble girls were reared in the terem

Aristocratic girls were trained only to become wives. They had to be virtuous and submissive, first to their parents and later to their husbands. Young girls were carefully secluded in the women's quarters of the house.



Makovsky.
Portrait of a Girl in
a Russian Dress



Makovsky.
A Young
Boyaryshnya

Orthodox teachings idealized virginity and the ascetic life



- Young women in Russia were a sort of currency with which nobility and wealth could be obtained.
- Virginity was one of the criteria for determining a girl's value.
- A daughter of a boyar who had not “despoiled her virginity” might be successfully married to a nobleman, or even the tsar himself.

Girls were married very young

The minimum age for marriage – 15 for boys and 12 for girls – was often not observed. For the bride, the wedding was not exciting but sad and upsetting. It marked a leap into the unknown, a farewell to childhood.



Makovsky. At the Spinning Wheel



Makovsky.
Boyarynya

For noble women, marriage meant continued seclusion in an unfamiliar household.



Makovsky.
Boyarynya



Makovsky. Young
Lady Looking in a
Mirror

She was rarely permitted to go to church or into the society of her women friends. In a company of friends, she was permitted to talk only about needlework.

Nobody was supposed to see the imperial women



- The women of the imperial family spent their days in their section of the palace.
- They spent almost all their time in prayer and needlework.
- The life of the tsar's daughters resembled that of nuns.

The pattern of daily life in Russian families was similar



Old Moscow

- Most people got up before dawn.
- At midday meal, the women did not sit at the table with the men; they ate afterward what the men left.
- After the meal, Russians were accustomed to relax and sleep.
- Women from the serf and urban classes had no time for recreation.
- They worked from morning to night, caring for livestock and tending vegetable gardens. In villages, women engaged in fishing and processing fish and caviar for storage.

The Russian Household



The Domostroi recommended that the Muscovite housewife keep a large store of food at home – enough for the entire family for a year. Every day had its project: salting or pickling mushrooms or vegetables; smoking or drying meat or fish; pressing oil; churning butter; curing cheeses or sour cream; brewing beer and vodka. They also baked their own bread.

Entertaining Guests



Makovsky.
Portrait of a Girl



When guests came to visit, a hostess was obliged to serve a wide variety of dishes. She did not herself attend the reception of male visitors. It was the men's feast.

The Domostroi defines respective duties of husband and wife



Makovsky.
Boyaryshnya.

- The wife is to be kind, silent, hard-working, obedient, and she is to submit to physical punishment.
- And if the wife, the daughter, or the son pays no attention to the punishment, then the husband or the father can beat them with a lash.
- The Domostroi imposed a childish submission upon wives and dictated that women submit to the authority of their husbands.
- Literary texts of that period depict women as models of common sense, serenity, patience, and devotion.

The Domostroi recognized only the head of the house



Domostroi sanctioned in the senior absolute power, unrestrained freedom of will; and in the junior, submission and obedience, unlimited servility and complete childishness.

Seclusion deprived women of all possibility of developing intellectually



Tsarina Natalia, wife of tsar Aleksei and mother of Peter the Great

- No one was permitted to see the tsar's wife or daughters.
- Even the court physician was not permitted to see them.
- When the tsarina was ill, the physician had to feel the sick woman's pulse, but he could not touch her bare hand.
- The higher the position of the woman's husband, the closer was her seclusion.

Upper-Class Women



Makovsky. Tea
Drinking

The principal beauty of a woman consisted in her fleshiness. "May God make me fleshy; rosiness I can get for myself."

Rich Russian women of the 16th and 17th centuries spent their time in sleeping, eating, drinking, prayer, church service and pilgrimages to various convents.

In the 16th and 17th centuries, bright colors were in fashion



- For the most intelligent women, there was the reading of the lives of the saints.
- There were amusements: music in its most crude and primitive forms.
- Next in importance were the puppet theater, bears with their trainers, rope dancers and the like.
- Drinking was popular and found its way to the terem, where the women drank like men.

The ideal female beauty



- The ideal female beauty among all orders of Russian society was tall, stately, and serene and fluid in movements.
- To be beautiful, a woman was supposed to hold her head up proudly but cast her eyes down modestly.
- Thinness and pallor were considered signs of illness or bad habits.

The Distinctive Russian National Dress



- Women's costume hid the contours of the figure under layers and folds of cloth and deemphasized waist and bosom. This style of dress reflected the perception of women's place in society – a society in which women were desexed and subjugated. Women were objects to possess. The society did not value women highly.

Makovsky.
Boyaryshnya

A wife had no personality of her own



Makovsky. A goblet of meade

- Under the patriarchal system, a wife was brought up in slavery and stupefied by the family atmosphere.
- She was the property of her husband and could not wish for anything else.
- The patriarchal system attained its purpose in establishing the absolute autocracy of the husband; it made the woman servile, without any sense of dignity.

Did the terem secure a moral life in Russian society?



If the woman was subdued, the man on the contrary was put on a pedestal. He had an unrestrained and unlimited power, and he made use of both.

Makovsky. At
the spinning
Wheel

Could there be real love between husband and wife?



Makovsky. Russian Beauty.

At best, there could be only humility and devotion on the part of the wife, and condescending patronage on the part of the husband.



Makovsky. Alexandra

In Russia men were not gallant towards women



Makovsky. Russian girl with a sheaf

- Foreign travelers often noted that about Russian men.
- How could they be gallant, when even almost to the present time one could often hear a man repeat the proverb:
- “A hen is not a bird, and a woman is not a human being”?

Discussion Questions for *Russian Beauty with a Cat* (1865)

Dr. Tatyana Novikov, Russian Studies Professor, University of Nebraska at Omaha



1. Identify features of distinctive Russian national dress. What elements are not typical?
2. What is the subject's social status? Is she married?
3. Explore the ethnic details of her home: the decorative frame pattern of the *nalichniki* (the wood carved decorations around window frames); the bottom sill that the girl leans onto has beautifully carved carving detail, popular with Russian folk architecture; visible parts of the *izba* (large wooden homes). Is the window tall? Does her home show an upper class status? Construction of round log dwellings and the beautiful carving was done by a skilled craftsman for a family with the means to afford it.
4. The composition of the painting. Why do we feel the girl is so close we could reach out and touch her?
5. What aspects and details of the painting highlight the beauty of the girl?
6. What makes Makovsky's art so realistic?

IMAGE: Konstantin Makovsky, (Russian, 1839–1915), *Russian Beauty and Cat*, 1865, oil on canvas, 45 1/4 x 36 1/2 in., Joslyn Art Museum, Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Charles W. Martin, 1954.172