

Napoleon Invades Russia (Make a Map from this Reading)

Napoleon is at place A with a French army of about 190,000 soldiers. Write 190 on that line. Armies from five other countries came to join the invasion. Write 80 on line B (a Prussian army), 50 on line C (a combined Spanish, Portuguese, and Italian army), and 90 on line D (from Poland). The total invasion force had more than 400,000 troops – some sources say as many as 600,000.

(Because of the uncertain estimates of strength even at the beginning of the campaign, you should not try to memorize numbers like these. This is why we are making a general map!)

260,000 troops crossed the Niemen River with Napoleon at place E. (10,000 have already deserted!) The two southern armies joined near Grodno. Unfortunately, nearly 30,000 soldiers went home. How many were left to cross the river at Grodno? _____ Write that number on the line near Place F.

A Russian army was at Vilnius. Napoleon thought he could defeat that army. He ordered his army to march from Place E to Place G in two days. About how far did they go? Circle: 50 75 100 miles

Unfortunately, it started to rain. Many supply wagons got stuck in the mud. The Russians decided to retreat rather than fight a hopeless battle. They took all of the food and ammunition, burned the city, and headed east. Meanwhile, the southern army coming from Place F ran into a Russian army.

Only 70,000 made it to Vilnius. How big was Napoleon's army now? _____ Write that on line G.

60,000 troops went north to find food in the area around Drissa. Write 60 at Drissa (Place I).

The rest of the combined army followed the Russian army eastward to the river crossing at Place H. Because supplies were short, however, at least 70,000 soldiers deserted and went back home. How many soldiers were left in the army? _____ Write that number at Berezino (Place H).

The army lost another 25,000 soldiers to disease, desertion, and minor battles between Place H and Vitebsk (Place J). How many are left? _____ Write that number on the line at Place J.

There was a bigger battle at Smolensk (place K). This city was important way back in Viking times, 1000 years earlier, because it is located where the road crosses the Dnieper River, which goes south to the Black Sea. Write 145 at Place K – that's how many thousands were left (out of 400,000!)

The French army was down to about 130,000 when it arrived at Borodino (Place L). Here, the Russians tried to make a stand. Each side lost about 30,000 troops, but the battle was inconclusive. Napoleon refused to commit his elite Guard to the fight, and the Russians were able to retreat.

On September 14, Napoleon's remaining 100,000 troops marched into Moscow. They found the city set on fire. The retreating Russians had destroyed the water system and firefighting equipment. Moreover, a militia force of more than 500,000 was assembling east of Moscow and training to counter-attack. Napoleon decided to leave Moscow in mid-October and head back to France.

A battle at Place N blocked Napoleon's plan to go southwest into new country, where they might still find some food. The army headed west, now down to 90,000 and short of supplies. Thousands starved, froze to death, or deserted as they trudged on. By the time they arrived back at Smolensk, only 35,000 were still alive. Write that total on the dotted line under the city symbol.

They followed the river southwest, hoping to find more food and fuel. By the time they got to Borisov (Place O), there were only 20,000 left from the army that left Moscow. At Borisov, they were joined by 30,000 survivors from the battles around Place I. Write the total at Place O.

Unfortunately, the temperature dropped and stayed below zero. Russian militias kept attacking. Thousands of French soldiers were killed. Others died trying to cross rivers that were partly frozen. The army was down to 25,000 troops at Vilnius and 15,000 at Kovno. Write those numbers under the city symbols at Places G and E. Fewer than 10,000 soldiers made it back to France.

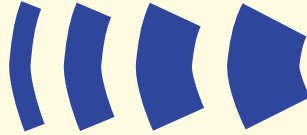
All in all, it was one of the biggest disasters in military history.

NAPOLEON INVADES RUSSIA

Size of French Army

Thousands of Soldiers

50 100 200 300



Name _____

100 miles



Riga

Drissa I

Vitebsk J

Smolensk K

Moscow M

Borodino L

N

Kovno E

Vilnius G

Berezino H

Borisov O

Konigsburg B

Grodno F

Minsk

190 A

C

Warsaw D

Kiev

The numbers on the map show thousands of soldiers.

Study the Reading and write numbers on the lines to show the size of the army at each lettered place.

(Dotted lines are for armies going back to France.)

Then draw lines between the places to show how armies moved.

Use thicker lines to show larger armies, as shown in the map key.

Teacher's Guide: **Napoleon's Invasion of Russia**

Overview: Students construct a simplified version of one of the most famous maps ever made. Charles Joseph Minard designed this map to show how the French army decreased in size as it fought its way to Moscow and then retreated through the harsh Russian winter. Why do an activity like this? Because studies show that students often need to construct different kinds of maps before they can effectively learn from them.

Grade: 7 - 12
Related Discipline: History
CC Standard: math, writing
Time: ½ to 1 class period

Setup: Napoleon's invasion of Russia is a dramatic story that needs little setup. There are plenty of videos and stories available to pique student interest. The powerpoint has some examples of the paintings that show the hardships endured by the French soldiers on this ill-fated expedition.

The goal of this activity is to take advantage of student interest to help them acquire greater facility in interpreting information presented in unconventional graphic form.

Procedure: This activity can be run two ways – as a relatively simple map construction from a data table, or as a more complicated reading-and-graphing activity. In both cases, students draw lines between places and adjust the width of the lines to indicate the size of the army. The simple version has a table of data on the map; the more complex version has a reading that students use as a source of information. It is also possible to add numbers to either map prior to duplication in order to make a version that is somewhere in between. Alternatively, you can release individual numbers to specific groups to serve as a kind of mid-project progress check.

Answers: The clickable pdf has layers that allow the teacher to demonstrate the first steps (or even finish the entire map as part of a presentation). The powerpoint has a copy of the original Minard map, which can serve as a kind of answer sheet for the activity. This map often appears, without explanation, in textbooks and on standardized tests. The powerpoint also includes some examples of the kind of public-domain maps and paintings that are easy to find with an image search on the web.

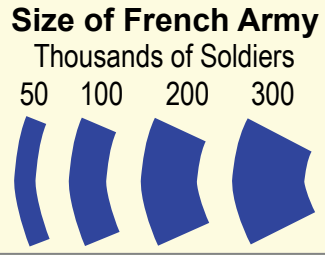
Debrief: The important message is that a cartographer can vary the widths of lines to represent volumes of “traffic” along many kinds of routes – rivers, army paths, railroads, highways, oil pipelines, exports, imports, migration flows between countries, even internet cables. Studies, however, show that at least some students are unable to interpret maps like these effectively until they have constructed at least one example themselves. The purpose of this activity is to give students a basemap, data table, and instructions for constructing a scaled-line map.

To help students put historic events in perspective, you might also note that Napoleon's invasion of Russia happened in 1812, the same year that the United States was fighting a war with Great Britain. The invasion of Russia helps explain why France could not offer the United States the kind of help that it provided during the American Revolution 35 years earlier.

Vocabulary: chronological order flowline map invasion retreat winter 1812

Extension: Examine other kinds of flowline maps, for topics that range from migration or refugee flows to oil exports or the international movements of blood diamonds. While interpreting maps of this kind, students can compare flows and calculate ratios to meet math objectives or write summaries to meet language-arts objectives.

NAPOLEON INVADES RUSSIA



Name _____

100 miles



Riga

Moscow

Minsk

Warsaw

Kiev

©2016 P Gersmehl Teachers may copy for use in their classrooms. Contact pgersmehl@gmail.com regarding permission for any other use.