

The first person to travel in space was a Russian, Yuri Gagarin.



KidsPost



Our names are . . .

Alik & Edik

RUSSIA
5,000 miles
FROM WASHINGTON

This is the ninth in a series of KidsPost Journeys around the world to show readers how children in other countries and cultures live and play. Today we JOURNEY TO RUSSIA. See where we go next.



Alik

Favorite food: Macaroni, chicken and bananas. "I don't like meat of any kind other than chicken." Really enjoys ice cream.
Favorite season: Summer. "Most of all because I can swim and go to camp."
Favorite sports: Likes all sports, especially running, "I'm the fastest runner in the class."

Edik

Favorite food: Enjoys any kind of meat. Chicken cutlets are his favorite. He also like fruit, especially apples. "I've never refused any food in my life." Hates ice cream.
Favorite season: Winter. "It is easier to study because I don't want to go outside to walk or play."
Favorite sports: Basketball. "Sports are very useful for health."

Russia is a country that for many years considered the United States its enemy. Now the governments of the two countries are more friendly. Adults and children in each country have learned that their biggest difference is where they live.

Alik and Edik Romanov are brothers living in the town of Komsomolsk in Russia. Alik is 13 and Edik is 12. They live in an orphanage along with 120 other children ages 7 to 18. Because their parents are no longer able to care for them, the brothers have been in orphanages for five years.

"We lived at home until then," Alik said. While the brothers each can say a few words in English, they spoke to a visitor with the help of a translator.

Komsomolsk is located in the Ivanovo region, a six-hour bus ride from Moscow. (Regions in Russia are sort of like the states that make up the United States.) It is not a rich town. Most of the streets are mud or gravel. Cars are rare.

The orphanage is a sprawling building with many cracked windows, a leaky roof and only one set of showers. Alik and Edik live together in a room with several other boys about their ages. Each boy has a bed, a chair and a small cabinet to keep his things. There are a few televisions in the orphanage but few other electronic gadgets. The boys have to do chores to help out. "Four or five times a month in groups we sweep and wash the floors. . . . We also have to clean our rooms," Alik said.

Three meals and a mid-afternoon snack are served each day. Breakfast is usually porridge, bread and tea or juice. Lunch is often a soup or stew with bread and cheese. Dinner consists of vegetable salads, a meat — often chicken — and noodles.

Both boys are in the fifth grade. Classes are held in the orphanage. So even if the weather is horrible outside, and it can get really bad in Russia, there are no snow days.

Edik really enjoys math. "I like to solve problems. I like to

study. Last term I only had good or excellent marks." When he grows up he would like to work as a translator. "I want to know different people and see different places. . . . I'd like to go to America."

Alik enjoys working with his hands and has built shelves and storage boxes in class. He also likes cars. He would like to become a taxi driver. "I know a lot about Ivanovo. I know all the streets. I want to learn new streets, towns and people."

When they are not in class, the two boys enjoy playing games. They have gym classes several times a week, and



BY RAY JOHNSON FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

The brothers live in this orphanage in Russia.

they play on the orphanage grounds. The people who run the orphanage work very hard to give the children attention and love. The assistant director there, Natalia Vassilieva, can switch from acting like a tough army drill sergeant keeping control of 120 kids to being like a kind mother. In fact, many of the children call her "Mom."

Alik and Edik are likely to be in an orphanage until they turn 18. Then they will either continue their education or serve in the Russian Army for two years.

Like brothers everywhere, sometimes Alik and Edik don't get along. "He can be rude sometimes," Edik said of his brother. But sibling rivalry goes only so far. "We are proud of each other very much," Alik said. "We like to be near each other."

— Trey Johnson

Inside Russia

Population: About 145 million people; almost 17 percent are 14 or younger.

Size: Russia is the biggest country in the world. It covers almost 6.6 million square miles, nearly twice the size of the United States.

Capital: Moscow.

Languages: Mostly Russian, but there are many other languages spoken.

Religions: Russian Orthodox Christianity and Islam.

Education: Kids ages 6 to 15 must go to school.

TV: There are 42 TV sets for every 100 people in Russia. That's about half the rate of the United States.

Did you know? Russia and the United States typically win many medals at the Olympic Games. But when Russia (then called the Soviet Union) hosted the Olympics in 1980, the United States didn't win any medals. Then when the United States hosted the Olympics in 1984 (in Los Angeles, California), the Soviet Union didn't win any medals. That's because the U.S. didn't participate in the 1980 Games and the Soviet

Union didn't compete in 1984.

A Russian you might know: Alexander Ovechkin (right), the Washington Capitals' star rookie, was born in Moscow.



MAP BY MARY KATE CANNISTRA — THE WASHINGTON POST; ALIK AND EDIK PHOTO BY TREY JOHNSON — THE WASHINGTON POST; OVECHKIN PHOTO BY SCOTT CUNNINGHAM — GETTY IMAGES

TODAY'S NEWS

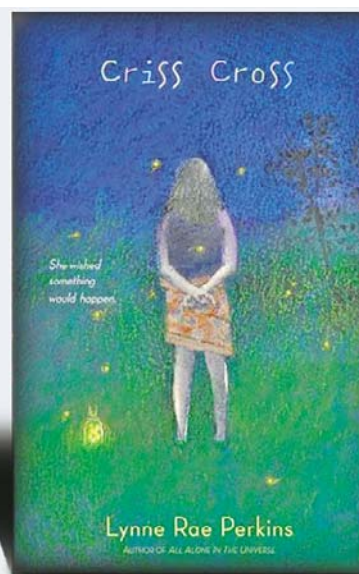
Awards for 'Criss Cross,' 'Hello, Goodbye Window'

Have you read "Criss Cross" by Lynne Rae Perkins?

There are a bunch of librarians who think you should! The book won the John Newbery Medal yesterday for the best work of children's literature.

"Criss Cross" is a sequel to "All Alone in the Universe" and tells the story of 14-year-old Debbie, who loses her locket at the start of the book. The locket's trip provides the action for this novel, which is more about the friendships kids have than it is about the plot.

The Randolph Caldecott Medal for best picture book was awarded yesterday to "The Hello, Goodbye Window," illustrated by Chris Raschka.



Newbery-winner "Criss Cross" follows the trail of a lost locket.

The Newbery award has been given out since 1922 by the American Library Association. The Caldecott has been awarded since 1938.

Newsy Number

81

That's the number of points **Kobe Bryant** of the Los Angeles Lakers scored in Sunday's basketball game against the Toronto Raptors. It's the second-highest total by a player in NBA history. (Wilt Chamberlain scored 100 points in a game in 1962.) The entire Washington Wizards team scored only 82 points in a game on Sunday.

PHOTO BY LOUI SHEPLER — LOS ANGELES TIMES VIA AP



WEATHER



TODAY: Breezy with sunshine.

HIGH 55 **LOW** 34

TOMORROW: Partly sunny; colder. High 44. Low 27.

ILLUSTRATION BY ARIANA ZIMMERMAN, 6, BURKE

WEATHER TRIVIA
WHAT IS THE RECORD LOW TEMPERATURE FOR ASIA?
ANSWER: MINUS-90 FAHRENHEIT IN OIMEKON, RUSSIA, FEB. 6, 1933.

SPEAK OUT

THIS WEEK'S TOPIC Tough Subjects

The school year is about half over. (We'll leave it to you to decide if that's good or bad news.) Go to www.washingtonpost.com/kidspost and tell us:

- What's your hardest subject this year?
- A. Math
- B. Science
- C. English
- D. Social studies
- E. They're all a snap!



BY ELAINE THOMPSON — ASSOCIATED PRESS

Not so hard: Stand up and cast your vote for your most difficult subject.

Now write to us about what subject is hardest for you and why. Send your letters to KidsPost, The Washington Post, 1150 15th St. NW, Washington, D.C. 20071. Or e-mail us at kidspost@washpost.com (with "tough" in the subject line). Or fax: 202-496-3780.

SURVEY SAYS

Last week's survey asked: **How do you feel about the warm weather?** More than 330 readers responded:

