



Sasha Litvin of Russia

From the Children of Other Lands Series

**Teacher's Guide Written by
Barri Golbus**

**Produced by
Colman Communications Corp.**

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Children of Other Lands: Sasha Litvin of Russia

Time: 14:29

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

As the video opens, the Sasha Litvin wakes up an hour early to get to a rehearsal at his school. The nine-year-old is a student at the St. Petersburg School of the Arts, where he is slated to star in the school's "Fall Festival" program. After he washes, Sasha has a small breakfast of tea and bread with cheese, then dashes out of his apartment to catch a trolley. The ten-minute ride to school takes him past massive high-rise apartment buildings at the outskirts of the city. The weather is cloudy and cold, typical for an autumn day in St. Petersburg, located in far northwestern Russia. Viewers are then given some brief information on the city's geography. At school, Sasha rehearses with Ms. Mikhailovana. His first class of the day is French. Afterwards, he and his classmates have break-

breakfast. Next, he goes to arithmetic, where he takes a unit test on equivalent fractions. Because it has turned rainy and blustery, the children have an indoor recess after the test, then go to music theory class. At lunch, the students have *kasha*, a small slice of meat, bread and *kampot*. After lunch, it's time for choral class. As the children sing, viewers see artwork in the hallways. Some of the pictures depict the historical buildings in St. Petersburg. A tour of the city's most beautiful historical areas follows, and a brief



history of the city is given. On the following day, Saturday, Sasha's father, a tug boat captain, allows his son to bring a friend, Dennis, onto his boat, where the two boys learn how tugs are used to repair the hundreds of bridges located in the city. They also sail on the

Neva River, which flows through St. Petersburg. As they do, Mrs. Litvin and Sasha's 15-year-old sister prepare dinner. On Sunday, the family heads to Babushkin Park, where Sasha and Dennis ride the roller coaster, bounce on the trampoline and swing on the swings. Monday is the day of the School of the Arts "Fall Festival." Sasha nervously waits backstage, then makes his big entrance! The show is a success, and at its end, all the children sing a rousing rendition of "Marching Across the Land."

STUDENT OBJECTIVES

After viewing this video and participating in the suggested activities, students should be able to do the following:

- (1) Locate St. Petersburg and Russia on a map or globe.
- (2) Briefly review the living patterns of a Russian child, including schooling, leisure activities and eating habits.
- (3) Compare and contrast their lives with the life of Sasha Litvin.

SUGGESTED LESSON PLAN

Introduction

Locate Russia on your classroom map or globe. Then locate St. Petersburg. Does anybody in your class know a person who lives in Russia? Has anyone ever visited Russia? If so, have class members discuss what they know about that country. Then ask your students if they've ever known a child who has lived in Russia. Would it be different from living here? Would a person live in a different kind of house? Eat different foods? Wear different kinds of clothing? Go to a different kind of school? See different things on the street?

Pre-Viewing Activities

Tell the class they will now see a video entitled "Sasha Litvin of Russia." Explain that the program will tell not only about Sasha and his family, but also about the city and country where he lives. Ask the class to pay close attention to how the city looks, and the different activities of the people who live there. Explain that after everyone sees the video, you'll want to compare how Sasha lives and how they live.

Post-Viewing Activities

Ask the class which portion of the program they found most interesting. Was it the "Fall Festival" program? Discuss the role of the cold, rainy weather in Sasha's life. Then turn your attention to the Neva River. In what ways does it play a major role in the Litvins' life? On the chalkboard, write three categories, "My Life," "Sasha's Life," and "Similar or Different?" Discuss schooling, recreation, nutrition, religious beliefs, home, and neighborhood. As the class discusses each of these aspects of Sasha's and their own lives, write their comments on the chalkboard. During the discussion of religious beliefs, you may

want to mention that the government in Russia discouraged the practice of religions until fairly recently. For that reason, many Russians do not actively participate in religious activities.

TRANSCRIPT OF THE VIDEO

It's a damp September morning in St. Petersburg, Russia. And in an outlying apartment building, in flat number 54, it's time for Aleksandr Valereevich Litvin, better known as "Sasha," to wake up — an hour earlier than usual.

He's scheduled to be at school before classes start today to rehearse for the "Fall Festival" program — a very big event at Sasha's school!

Unfortunately, nine-year-old Sasha has never been much of a morning person. When he gets up, his world moves in slow motion.

Sasha's morning routine of washing, brushing his teeth and dressing takes so long, in fact, that he has only a few minutes to eat.

But then, Sasha's mother doesn't normally fix a large breakfast for him — just a cup of tea and some bread with cheese — because his school will serve a morning meal later on.

That's almost three hours away, however. For now, all that's important is to quickly cross the housing complex to catch the trolley that will take him through *Krasnogvardiskiy*, the neighborhood where he lives and goes to school.

On the way, Sasha passes many of the high-rise apartment buildings found at the edges of his city.

St. Petersburg is located in northwestern Russia, a large country that spans all the way from eastern Europe to the Pacific Ocean, across the continent of Asia.

The city lies at the mouth of the Neva River, where it spills into the Gulf of Finland. Often, strong westerly winds blow across the gulf, sweeping flood waters into St. Petersburg.

Those winds also bring a lot of rainy weather to the city. In fact, on average, it rains there almost one out of every three days.

About ten minutes later, Sasha arrives at his school. It sits near the center of yet another large housing project and is called the St. Petersburg School of the Arts.

Most of its 125 first through sixth graders plan to become singers, dancers, artists or actors, like Sasha.

This morning, he's working with Ms. Mikhailiovana, who's in charge of the "Fall Festival" program, and who will, along with her star pupil, host next week's big event.

About halfway through the rehearsal, Mrs. Litvin drops by. She takes an active interest in her son's acting skills.

Sasha will play a famous Russian puppet clown, Petrushka, for the program, and his mother, who coaches actors and actresses, offers a few suggestions.

After rehearsal, Sasha begins his regular school day in Miss Bikaeyeva's French class, where everyone's learning how to write arithmetic problems the teacher dictates in French.

Later, as French class winds down, several cafeteria workers ready the lunchroom for breakfast.

At nine o'clock, all the intermediate-level students have their morning meal — usually hot cereal and a fruit drink called *kampot*.

After breakfast, it's on to arithmetic class, where Mrs. Stepanova, the math teacher, gives some final instructions for a unit test on equivalent fractions.

After the examination, the class spends the rest of the period on a new unit — adding and subtracting hours, minutes and seconds.

When it's cold and blustery outside, as it is today, the twenty-minute morning recess is held in the hallways.

After recess, the students settle down to music theory class. Everyone listens intently while several of their classmates read fables they've written, and then play a song they've composed to accompany the fable.

By lunch time, the weather in St. Petersburg continues to be stormy, so those who live nearby, and who go home for lunch, are bundled up.

In the cafeteria, everyone else is treated to hot noodle soup. Bread is also served as part of the mid-day meal.

The main course, a dish called kasha, is made of buckwheat. It's topped off by a small portion of meat similar to bologna.

Kampot is served, too.

The first class after lunch is chorus, taught by Mr. Imameeva.

Later, the class will have art. Some of their work is on display in the hallway. Among other things, the pictures show religious scenes, historical events and the magnificent buildings of St. Petersburg.

And there are hundreds of those buildings, each more beautiful than the other.

In fact, many people believe St. Petersburg is one of the most beautiful cities in the world.

It is also a city with an interesting and colorful history, one that dates back some 300 years, when the Russian king, or czar, Peter the Great decided to build the city and make it Russia's capital.

Russian queens and kings ruled the country from St. Petersburg for more than 200 years, until 1918.

Then a shot was fired from this ship now docked on the Neva River — a shot that signaled a revolution that would overthrow the ruling family.

But, of course, the city still remains, although there have been many changes over the years.

St. Petersburg, for instance, has become a major shipbuilding center.

It's also an export center. Many of the ships that sail from its docks carry chemicals, clothing, plastics, and machinery made in the city's factories.

And with so many historical buildings, statues, and picturesque waterways, St. Petersburg has a large tourist industry.

Visitors often marvel that the city is built on 42 islands, all of which are joined by hundreds of bridges.

When those bridges need repair, a tug boat with special equipment may be sent out to do the job. Sasha's father is the captain of one of those tugs.

Sasha's best friend, Dennis, has always wanted to see the boat. So captain Litvin has suggested that Sasha invite Dennis for a tour on a Saturday afternoon.

First, they go to the bridge, where many of the tug's controls are found.

Dennis is obviously curious about all the switches and knobs there. Captain Litvin allows him to flip one, and this is what happens!

Sasha's been on the tug many times, but still enjoys pulling the levers, pretending to be a tug boat captain himself!

For the next part of the tour, Mr. Litvin takes the boys to the upper deck, where much of the bridge repair equipment is found, as well as the engine, on the bottom right, that controls the anchor.

When it's lowered, the anchor keeps the tug in place, which, as you can imagine, is very important when repairing bridges.

Back inside, Captain Litvin then shows the route down the Neva River the boys will take later, as soon as the crew members arrive — which they do, one at a time.

For the rest of the afternoon, Sasha and Dennis, in the tug, ply the waters of the Neva.

As afternoon turns to evening, Mrs. Litvin and Sasha's 15-year-old sister, Anya prepare dinner back home.

Tonight, the Litvin's meat dish will be fried liver. There will also be a red pepper and tomato salad, boiled potatoes and a pot of hot mushroom soup.

During dinner, Captain Litvin recounts Sasha's and Dennis's day on the river.

Anya says that she'd rather stay at home on wet, blustery days — even if she's stuck doing her homework!

The Litvins then make their plans for tomorrow, going to Babushkin Park — if it's a nice day.

Fortunately, it is. Sunday turns out to be bright, brisk and sunny.

Many St. Petersburg residents take advantage of their city's beautiful parks on such days.

They find that leaving their small apartments and getting outside help erase the dreariness of being cooped up during bad weather.

The Litvins, and Sasha's friend Dennis, are no exception.

Sasha and Dennis spend several hours enjoying themselves — on the swings, on the park's small roller coaster and on the trampoline.

Then, after Dennis leaves for home, Anya takes Sasha on a brief horse ride.

The calm of Sunday's afternoon in the park gives way Monday's excitement — excitement that comes before an important performance, such as the "Fall Festival" show.

There's excitement in the audience as well.

Soon, it's time for Sasha — that is, "Petrushka" — to make his entrance.

After the opening portion of the show, there's a quiz game that features questions about autumn written on paper leaves.

Next, two children are given a stick and a ball of yarn. And then, amidst a flurry of excitement, they try to be the first to roll up the yarn!

After that, blindfolded contestants try to identify, by touch, different kinds of fruit.

Finally, the all winners are announced, and each is presented with certificates and baskets of fruit to share with their teammates.

The "Fall Festival" program ends with a rousing rendition of the song "Marching Across the Land." The show has been a tremendous success. Everyone's had a wonderful time, perhaps most of all, Sasha!

Aleksandr Valereevich Litvin — he's been the star of the "Fall Festival." But he's also a student, a son, a brother and a friend following a very busy life in the beautiful city of St. Petersburg, Russia.