

## Preface to Teachers

*Advanced Russian through History: Дела давно минувших дней* covers the history of Russia from its distant past to the present. It is designed to meet the needs of mixed groups of students, including heritage learners and students of Russian as a foreign language, who have had the equivalent of approximately 350 hours of Russian-language classroom instruction or have at least intermediate mid or high oral and reading proficiency. The book consists of 36 chapters focusing on the history of Russia, from Kievan Rus' to the Post-Soviet era. Each chapter consists of:

- a written text (in this textbook)
- a mini-lecture.(on the CD-ROM packaged with this textbook)
- learning tasks on the web (at <http://www.yalebooks.com/advrushist>)

The text of each chapter was written by a Russian scholar working at a Russian institution. The same scholar also delivered a recorded mini-lecture (which runs from 3–7 minutes) on a topic related to the chapter's text. The mini-lecture is *not* an oral performance of the text. Rather, it contains additional information or discussion. It is an entirely distinct text, the transcript of which is included neither in the textbook nor among web-based learning tasks.

Each chapter is accompanied by learning tasks designed to meet the needs of students striving to reach advanced-level or higher competency in reading, speaking, listening, and writing. The learning tasks are on the website provided by Yale University Press ([www.yalebooks.com/advrushist](http://www.yalebooks.com/advrushist)), but are described in greater detail in this volume in the section, "About the Learning Tasks." In this essay we provide pedagogical suggestions for teachers assigning the tasks to their students.

In order to complete all the tasks for any given chapter, students may need 10–15 hours, depending on the length of the film screened for task 23. However, we do *not* recommend that all students be assigned all the tasks. Rather, we recommend that teachers assign or students choose more of the earlier tasks in the beginning of the semester, more of the middle tasks in the middle of the semester, and more of the later tasks toward the end of the semester. Note that later tasks are more challenging than earlier tasks. Moreover, different students can be assigned or can choose different chapters. Students may also want to work in groups to prepare oral presentations on the chapter studied by the whole class or chosen by several students.

We suggest that students complete tasks 1 and 2 and read through tasks 3–6 *before* reading the text for any chapter. These pre-reading activities will help improve comprehension of the text. We recommend working through tasks 5–6 after the first reading and tasks 7–20 as students read and re-read the text. Tasks 21–25 are designed as post-reading activities. In addition to these activities, one may want to search for images of individuals featured in the text at a Russian search engine, such as [www.google.ru](http://www.google.ru), and to compare and discuss the images.

In-class activities may consist of grammatical analysis of participles and other forms targeted in the grammar section of each chapter's tasks, but we prefer to think of classes at this level of consisting more productively of discussions of the text, the authors' ideological perspectives (task 7 in each chapter), circumlocution activities (task 12), and working on presentations summarizing the text (tasks 20, 22). Listening to mini-lectures (task 21) can be done partially in class and also as homework. After watching films the class could analyze the differences among historical depictions between the text and the film (task 23). Discussion of images found through a Russian search engine may be scheduled as a pre- or post-reading activity.

As students reach toward advanced-level oral proficiency, they need opportunities to speak in extended discourse. Accordingly, class activities at this level need to provide students with the challenge of speaking in longer turns. In order to keep class meaningful for all students, not merely the one student speaking at any given moment, we recommend that instructors establish the expectation that whenever one student is speaking, other students are expected to listen, prepare questions for further discussion, and be ready to add other information or perspectives.

Because the chapters were written by several different scholars, the texts do not necessarily grow in complexity with each chapter. Rather, certain chapters are stylistically more challenging than others. The students with whom we have piloted these materials have reported that the texts by Tendriakova were the most accessible, while those by Ershov and Kobrinsky were the most challenging.

The textbook can be used as a complete course or together with other instructional materials and assignments and provides a range of reading, listening, speaking, and writing tasks; however, this book does not include any grammar explanations. We recommend that students at this level consider a solid reference grammar, such as Wade's *Comprehensive Grammar of Russian*.

We encourage students and teachers to read the appendix on reading strategies because we believe that the development of a broad range of reading strategies at this level is the key to reaching advanced- and even superior-level reading proficiency in Russian.

We hope you find our book useful and interesting.

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