**PART 1**

The rise of Moscovy (as the principality was named) was made possible due to several factors. First and foremost was its location in the area between the rivers at the crossroads of Russia’s trade routes. Another factor was its prestige as a seat of the Russian Orthodox Church, which became important after the fall of Constantinople in the 15th century. Moreover, during the 1350s, the Mongol-Tatar Golden Horde was weakened by numerous struggles for power within its vast empire. Meanwhile, the Kremlin was being strengthened. In 1380, Dmitry led the Russian army to confront the Horde near the River Don. The battle of Kulikovo was the Russians’ first victory, and this historic event was commemorated by the foundation of the Donskoy Monastery on the site where Dmitry assumed the title of Donskoy. However, the Horde remained a serious threat. In the years that followed, Russian icon painting reached its zenith. The names of the artists were Theopohanes the Greek, Andrei Rublyev and Daniil Cherniy, who worked in Moscow. In 1453, the Byzantine capital Constantinople fell to the Turks.

**PART 2**

Tatar Yoke was finally thrown off in the reign of Ivan III, Dmitry Donskoy’s grandson. He was known as Ivan the Great. He married Sophia Palaiologina, the niece of the last Emperor of Byzantium. She presented the country with its coat-of-arms – a double-headed eagle. Ivan III used it as a symbol of his claim to rule the Eastern and Western Roman Empires. So, Ivan’s marriage provoked the idea of Russia being one and only successor of the Great Constantinople and the only true defender of the Orthodox Church. Having gained power over Yaroslavl, Rostov, Tver and Pskov before his marriage, Ivan III continued the expansion of Moscovy. By the end of his reign even independent Novgorod had submitted, giving Moscow control of a huge area that stretched as far north as the White Sea. Thus, he acquired the title of the “Gatherer of the Russian lands” and “Autocrat of all the Russians”.