Title: Peter the Great

Overview: Students will:
• read about Peter the Great
• gather knowledge about Peter’s life and work in relation to Russia

Lesson Focus:
• Social Studies Content Standard 2 Historical Perspective. “All students will understand narratives about major eras of American and world history by identifying the people involved, describing the setting, and sequencing the events. (Comprehending the Past).”
• Benchmark 3 middle school
• Benchmark 4 high school

Materials:
• article on Peter the Great (see attached sample article)
• paraphrase chips
• questions

What to Do:
1. Students read article on Peter the Great

2. After reading the piece and taking notes on Peter the Great students practice the literacy strategy of paraphrasing. Paraphrase Passport, (Kagan Cooperative Learning Structure) will be used.

3. Steps for Paraphrase Passport are described as follows.
   o Students are sitting in groups of 4.
   o Each student gets 4 paraphrase chips.
   o One student at a time contributes an idea based on the reading.
   o Another group member is to correctly restate (paraphrase) that idea before giving his/her own statement related to the article.
   o The idea is to not give up a chip. Students share and review the information they read. Also students all have an opportunity to talk within the group. Students also get feedback regarding their communication skills.

4. Upon completion of Paraphrase Passport a class discussion of Peter the Great could occur. See sample questions, which are attached.

5. Students could write an essay on Peter the Great upon completion of the activity.
Sample Questions

1. How did Peter’s leadership affect the course of history?

2. How has the work of Peter the Great had an impact on the modern world?

3. How did Peter the Great’s work affect Russia at the time?
Teacher Notes on Peter the Great

*Born in 1672 in Moscow.

* Peter’s reign was from 1689 – 1725.

* Religion meant little to him—hostility to the church.

* Peter had an interest in expanding Russia’s export trade via maritime.

* The main feature of his reign was the Great Northern War with Sweden (1700-1721).

* He wanted to make Russia a European power.

* Peter worked to change Russian society.

* Through most of Peter’s reign, Russia was at war.

* 1700 Peter introduced the Julian calendar. Russia used this calendar till 1917.

* Peter made Russia into a European power.

* He broke Swedish power in the Baltic region.

* His second wife was Catherine, who succeeded him.

* He loved to learn and even practiced dentistry.

* Established Russian presence on the Black Sea.

* 1695 went to war with Turkey and lost.

* First reigning Russian sovereign to travel abroad. Traveled from March 1697 to August 1698 on the “Great Embassy.”

* Trimmed beards and imposed a tax on beards.

* First public theater was in 1756. The theater was not a high priority for him.
The Duc de Saint-Simon Memoirs

Peter the Great (1682–1725) was in every sense larger than life. He was 6 ft 7 in (2 m) tall, with enormous appetites. Energetic and inquisitive, he loved to learn new skills, including dentistry, which he practised on any courtier foolish enough to admit to toothache. He was fascinated by dwarfs and physical freaks and was capable of great generosity and great cruelty. His achievements have kept him at the forefront of debate about Russian history. In the 19th century he was a hero to progressives and Westernizers and a villain to the Slavophiles, who believed that his reforms had damaged Russian society by cutting it adrift from its traditions. Soviet historians found much to admire in Peter’s ruthless pursuit of progress. Stalin described Peter’s reign as ‘a singular attempt to jump out of our country’s frame of backwardness’. Alexander Solzhenitsyn characterized Peter as ‘a man of mediocre, if not savage, mind’, and emphasized the spiritual, cultural and human costs of his policies.

Early life
After his coronation in 1682, Peter and his mother, Natalya Naryshkina, resided at Preobrazhenskoe near Moscow. There is no reliable evidence that Sophia banished them there, and Peter made regular ceremonial appearances at court with his half-brother and co-tsar Ivan. Peter’s tutor Nikita Zotov inspired him with stories of the military exploits of earlier tsars. A Dutchman, Karsten Brand, repaired an old boat for him, launching a lifelong enthusiasm for things nautical. Peter formed squads of servants and young noblemen, and with the help of foreign experts recruited from Moscow’s German Quarter, these play regiments developed into the Preobrazhensky and Semeonovsky Guards, the elite of the modern army that Peter was to create.

After the downfall of Sophia, Peter left the government in the hands of his mother and her boyar advisers, who had no difficulty in controlling his co-ruler, Tsar Ivan V. Peter was thus able to pursue his enthusiasms for shipbuilding and debauchery in the German Quarter. He valued his friendships with foreigners such as Patrick Gordon and François Lefort,
both of whom had rallied to him in the crisis of 1689. Gordon and Lefort et al aged Peter’s love of drinking and firework displays, pastime which led to accidental deaths among his friends, as did his practice of training his regiments with live ammunition. From Lefort he inherited a mistress, Anna Mons, the daughter of a German innkeeper. Peter visited Archangel in 1693, and, delighted by his first sea trip, ordered the construction in Holland of a 44-gun frigate.

Peter’s circle included men of humble origins, such as Peter Shafirov, a Polish-Jewish merchant, and Alexander Danilovich Menshikov, who was rumoured to have been a Moscow pie-seller, but was in reality a stable lad at Preobrazhenskoe. The boyars resented the power that such men came to enjoy. Peter organized his cronies into a ‘Most Drunken Synod of Fools and Jesters’, whose conclaves took the form of drinking bouts and parodies of Orthodox ritual, which scandalized the faithful, including Peter’s wife Evdokia. They had married in 1689, and the birth of their son Alexei in 1690 strengthened Peter’s dynastic position, since Ivan’s children were all daughters. Evdokia bore Peter two other sons, who both died in infancy.

Peter’s aims
After the death of his mother in 1694, Peter began to take a more active role in government. His principal goals were the enhancement of Russia’s international standing, the establishment of a Russian presence on the Black Sea, and gaining access to the Baltic at the expense of Sweden. His actions do not suggest a preconceived strategy. He seized opportunities when they presented themselves, and suffered serious reverses. His internal reforms were largely dictated by the needs of war. Most of his goals were inherited from his forebears. Only in the creation of a navy, in the subordination of the church to the state and in the enforcement of Western customs did he attempt a complete break with the past. In other areas what differentiated Peter’s reign from those of his predecessors was the greatly accelerated rate of change.

In 1695 Peter went to war against Turkey, with the intention of capturing Azov. After an unsuccessful siege, the Russians retreated. Peter’s response to this setback was that Azov could be taken if Russia had a fleet with which to conduct a blockade. Shipyards were created at Voronezh, and Peter himself laboured alongside the foreign experts and conscript workers. By the time the fleet was ready, Peter was sole ruler of Russia, Ivan having died on 29 January 1696. Three of Ivan’s five daughters survived beyond infancy. One of them, Anna, was to be empress of Russia, and Ivan’s great-grandson and namesake was briefly to occupy the throne in succession to her. The combination of a naval blockade and a land assault secured the capture of Azov in July 1696.

The Great Embassy, revolt and reaction
Having achieved a military success, Peter felt able to set out for Western Europe. The Great Embassy of 1697–98, though it is remembered chiefly
for Peter's quest for technological expertise, had serious diplomatic purpose. Peter hoped to strengthen the treaty with Austria and the Venetian Republic which committed those states to an offensive alliance against Turkey. Jan Sobieski, king of Poland, died in June 1696. Peter supported the successful candidate for the Polish throne, Augustus, Elector of Saxony, in the hope that Augustus would keep the Poles in the anti-Turkish alliance. The Great Embassy was not a diplomatic success. The Treaty of Friendship with Prussia which Peter signed in July 1697 did not commit the Prussians to give military help to Russia, and the Austrians, preoccupied with the succession to the Spanish crown, no longer wished to continue the war against Turkey. Peter chose to make peace with Turkey in 1699 – retaining Azov but agreeing to destroy the Russian-held fortresses in the lower Dniester region.

A revolt by the streltsy forced Peter to return to Moscow. The revolt was motivated partly by the fear that Peter, who favoured further Westernization of the armed forces, would abolish the corps. By the time Peter reached Cracow, the streltsy had been crushed. He was thus able to break his journey to meet Augustus II, the new king of Poland, with whom he established a rapport that was to bear fruit in the form of an alliance between Saxony-Poland, Denmark and Russia in 1699, aimed against Sweden.

Peter reached Moscow in August 1698 and established a commission to investigate the streltsy revolt. Extensive use was made of torture. More than 1,000 streltsy were executed, some of them hanged outside the windows of the rooms at the Novodevichy Convent in which the former Regent Sophia lived. Peter believed that she had encouraged the uprising, in the hope of regaining power. The Moscow streltsy regiments were dissolved, and their members exiled to the provinces. The savagery of Peter's reaction may in part be explained by his terrifying memories of the 1682 revolt, but the streltsy were also a symbol of the backward-looking forces in Russian society which he was determined to overcome. Though there was no proof of her involvement in the revolt, Sophia was forced to take the veil. She died in 1704. Peter also consigned his wife Evdokia to a convent. He may have contemplated marrying his mistress Anna Mons, but in 1703 he discovered that she had been unfaithful, and abandoned her.

Peter's celebrated trimming of the boyars' beards in August 1698 was more than a crude practical joke. He was determined to introduce Western customs into Russia. He imposed a tax on beards and decreed that courtiers and officials must wear Western clothes. In December 1699 he ordered the adoption of the Western New Year and the Julian version of the Western calendar. The Gregorian calendar was viewed in Russia as Catholic and therefore heretical. The practice of confrontation royal women to the Terem Palace was abolished in 1702, and court ladies were compelled to attend social functions.

The first phase of the Great Northern War
Sweden appeared to Peter to be an easier target than Turkey. Its ruler, the 18-year-old Charles XII, was inexperienced and the economy was not strong enough to support Sweden's Baltic empire. Yet the war against Sweden which began in 1700 went badly. The militarily gifted Charles XII was able to pick his enemies off one by one, forcing the Danes to capitulate on the very day that the Russians entered the conflict. The Russian siege of Narva ended in November 1700 in a disastrous defeat at the hands of a much smaller Swedish force.

The lessons that Peter learned from Narva were that the victory would take time, and would only be achieved by modernization. The Swedish invasion which he feared did not materialize. Charles XII chose to attack Poland, where he became bogged down in a complex situation, and this gave Peter a valuable breathing space.

Narva had revealed that the Russian forces were poorly equipped and trained. An artillery school was established in 1701. New uniforms were introduced, and the English flintlock musket was copied. Within a year of Narva, Russia was producing more cannon than Sweden. Conscription was made more systematic from 1705 onwards, with a levy of one recruit per 20 households which produced almost 45,000 men, who were formed into new regiments, trained and organized along Western European lines. Service was for life, and conscripts were therefore lost to their families. The Admiralty Department, whose task was the construction and equipping of warships, was set up in 1701. The Admiralty dockyards developed into a huge economic enterprise employing a workforce of 10,000. By the end of the reign Russia had a fleet of 800 galleys and 48 ships of the line.

In 1702 Russian forces began to win victories over the Swedes, and in May 1703 they captured the Neva delta, gaining access to the Gulf of Finland. The campaign was pressed forward into Estonia, Livonia and Courland in 1704-06. By then, Charles XII was winning the war in Poland, and in 1706 he forced Augustus II to renounce the Polish crown and make peace. Once again Peter faced the danger of a Swedish invasion, but Russia's position was stronger than it had been after Narva, whereas Sweden was war-weary and economically weakened.
In 1703 Peter met the woman who was to become his second wife and the first empress of Russia. Maria Skavronskaia, a girl of Lithuanian peasant origin, had fallen into the hands of the Russians when they captured Marienburg. She converted to Orthodoxy, taking the name Catherine. Menshikov made her a member of his household, and it was there that she met the tsar, whose mistress she immediately became. Stocky and buxom, Catherine did Peter’s laundry, calmed his rages, shared the discomforts and dangers of his campaigns and gave him 12 children. Peter married her privately in November 1707, and in February 1712 the couple went through a public and official wedding, after which Catherine was acknowledged as tsaritsa.

St Petersburg
The capture of the Neva delta enabled Peter to embark on the development of a new seaport city in May 1703. The chosen site of St Petersburg was impractical, being marshy and prone to flooding. Timber was available in the vicinity, but stone – Peter’s preferred building material – and labour were not. The peasants, prisoners of war and criminals who were brought in to construct the city died in their tens of thousands of disease and malnutrition. Peter moved his family to the new city in 1710 and designated it as the capital of Russia in 1712. By the time of his death, St Petersburg had a population of 40,000.

The economy and society
The desire to build up the armed forces drove the government’s economic policies. By 1725 Russia had 86 metal and gun factories and 15 textile factories, and much of this was achieved by state investment. Private manufacturers were exempted from taxation, and Peter protected Russian industry by raising tariffs on imported goods. Conscription and forced labour imposed heavy burdens on the population. The high costs of war were met by debasing the currency, by increasing existing taxes, and by introducing taxes and monopolies on such diverse items as horse-collars, playing cards, mirrors, coffins, cucumbers, baths and weddings. Peter’s greatest taxatinal innovation was the soul tax of 1718, a poll tax which eventually brought in more than four times the revenue raised by all other direct taxes. To keep track of expenditure Peter insisted that government departments maintain proper accounts, and in 1710–11 the first attempt was made to calculate a budget.

These changes were not popular. In the period 1700–10 Peter faced a number of provincial revolts, including a rebellion in Astrakhan in 1705–06, a rebellion among the Don Cossacks in 1707–08 and extensive peasant violence in central and western Russia in 1708–10. The unrest was brutally suppressed. Peter was equally intolerant of political dissent. The Preobrazhensky Prikaz, a department originally established to administer the affairs of the Guards regiment of that name, developed into a ruthless political police force. A decree of 1714 defined the nature of political crimes for the first time, and the government encouraged informers by offering them money.

The Poltava campaign
In 1708 the Swedes invaded Russia. Peter’s strategy was to retreat, laying waste to the country, and drawing his enemy into the heart of Russia. Charles XII diverted his forces away from Moscow towards the Ukraine, where he hoped to recruit the support of Mazepa, a Cossack hetman. Less than 2,000 Cossacks followed Mazepa into the Swedish camp, and Charles’ hopes of Turkish assistance were disappointed. The Swedish army endured a winter of unusual severity, their privations worsened by Peter’s victory over the Swedish supply column at Lesnaya in October 1708. Charles pressed on towards Poltava in the hope of finding provisions for his exhausted and depleted army, and laid siege to the town in April 1709. Peter, who had a preponderance of troops and artillery, mounted a direct attack on 27 June 1709. The battle of Poltava was a decisive victory for the Russians. Peter toasted the captive Swedish commanders with the words ‘I drink to the health of those who taught me the art of winning victory’. Charles XII escaped to Turkey, where he remained until 1714.

Administrative reforms
Peter’s need for reliable supplies of conscripts and revenue led him to modernize the administration, but his early reforms were improvised and poorly planned. In 1708 he created eight enormous territorial divi-
sions (gubernya), each with a governor responsible for policing, roads, the administration of justice, and taxation. Peter soon realized that this system was not satisfactory. The need for a body to administer Russia while he was on campaign led him to create the Senate in 1711. This committee of nine officials became a permanent replacement for the Boyar Duma. It was supposed to supervise the governors, act as the highest court in Russia and translate the tsar's ideas into detailed decrees. The Senate was not equal to these tasks. Of the original members, one was illiterate and two were later punished for corruption. A huge backlog of work accumulated. Peter understood the need to root out corruption and tax evasion, and in 1711 created a body of investigators, known as fiscals, under the control of an Oberfiscal, Alexei Nesterov, who was himself later executed for corruption.

The second Turkish War
In the aftermath of Poltava, Peter helped Augustus II to regain the Polish throne, under Russian suzerainty, and completed the conquest of Karelia and Livonia. His forces captured Riga, Vyborg and Reval in 1710. Charles XII persuaded the Turkish sultan Ahmed III to declare war on Russia in November of that year. On 7 July 1711 a Russian army commanded by the tsar found itself on the banks of the River Prut, surrounded by a much larger Turkish force. After two days of fighting the Russians were facing disaster, and Peter chose to negotiate. The Turkish terms, though harsh, were lighter than he had feared. He had to surrender Azov, Taganrog and the forts on the Dnieper, refrain from further interference in Poland, and allow Charles XII free passage back to Sweden.

The Great Northern War continued
Peter's next campaign, in Finland in 1713–14, was more successful and on 27 July 1714 the Russian fleet won an important naval victory over the Swedes off Cape Hangö. These successes aroused in the minds of other rulers fears that Russia might replace Sweden as the dominant power in the Baltic. Pressure from other powers forced Peter to withdraw his troops from Poland and, in 1717, to abandon his plan to use Mecklenburg as a base from which to attack the Swedes.

Peter's second European journey
Peter's second foreign journey took him to Copenhagen, Amsterdam, Paris and Berlin in 1717. The French court was astonished at the informality of the tsar's behaviour. When he met the seven-year-old King Louis XV, he picked the boy up and embraced him. The only diplomatic result of the journey was the Treaty of Amsterdam – a triangular friendship agreement between Peter, Louis XV and Friedrich Wilhelm I of Prussia which involved no military obligations. Peter's hope of detaching France from Sweden was not realized. He returned to St Petersburg in October 1717.

Peter and Alexei
Peter's son Alexei showed no taste for military life. Made governor of Moscow in 1708, Alexei found administration boring, preferring to read devotional literature. Peter was angered and disappointed by a son who was a pious, moody drunkard who did not share his enthusiasm for Western ideas. Alexei married Charlotte Christina of Brunswick-Wolfenbüttel in 1711. Charlotte was unhappy, and viewed with alarm the 'prince's party' of boyars and clergy who disapproved of Peter's reforms that gathered round her husband. She presented Alexei with a daughter, Natalya, in 1714, and died in October 1715 shortly after giving birth to a son, Peter Alexeyevich.

Once Peter's wife Catherine gave birth to a son, Peter Petrovich, in 1715, the succession no longer depended solely on Alexei, and relations between the two men deteriorated further, with the tsar threatening to disinherit Alexei and consign him to a monastery. Fear of the latter fate caused Alexei to flee from Russia with his mistress Afrosinia in the autumn of 1716, first to Vienna and then to Naples. In October 1717 Peter's envoys caught up with Alexei and browbeat him into returning home, where he was forced publicly to renounce the crown. Peter believed that Alexei's flight was part of a conspiracy. A new government department, the Secret Chancellery, was established to investigate the case and to root out opposition. Under pressure, Alexei named 50 people as his 'accomplices', including his mother Evdokia. Though many of those he had named were tortured, no evidence of a conspiracy emerged. Alexei was compelled to witness the execution of some of his closest friends. Evdokia was spared but sent to a remote convent.

Afrosinia, who had been imprisoned on her return to Russia, alleged that Alexei had told her that when he was tsar he intended to reverse Peter's policies. Confronted with his mistress' treachery, Alexei admitted that i
there had been a rebellion against Peter, he would have joined it. After two sessions of torture, he made a fuller confession and was sentenced to death. It was then announced that he had died of a seizure on 15 June 1718. There is no evidence to support the rumour that he died at his father’s hand.

Further administrative reforms

In his second period of administrative reforms, Peter adopted a more systematic approach. In 1719 the vast gubernia (territorial divisions) were divided into 45 (later 50) provinces, each under the authority of a military governor. The provinces were subdivided into districts, with a land commissar in charge of each. A system of urban local government was created in 1721, with the intention of giving the more prosperous citizens control of policing and internal security. These arrangements, which were based on the Swedish model, did not work well. There were not enough educated and reliable people to operate them, and Peter had increasingly to rely on his soldiers to get things done. By 1722 it was clear that the landowners were not willing or able to collect the soul tax efficiently, and the task was handed over to the army.

In 1718 Peter transformed central government by replacing the system of overlapping departments (prikazy) with committees of ministers and senior officials called Colleges. Each of the nine Colleges had a specific area of responsibility and a staff of officials. These arrangements, which were modelled closely on the Swedish system, allowed the development of departmental expertise. The Preobrazhensky Prikaz, Peter’s political police department, survived this reorganization. As in provincial administration, Peter’s reforms were hindered by a lack of able and educated administrators. In 1721 he created a new post, Procurator General of the Senate, to take over the duties of the Oberfiscal and supervise the Colleges.

Service, education and the church

Peter believed it to be the duty of members of the nobility to serve the state. In 1714 he forced them to entail their estates to a single heir, so that other sons would have to serve in the armed forces or the administration. Traditional titles such as boyar were abandoned in favour of ‘count’ and ‘baron’. In 1722 he issued a Table of Ranks, based on Swedish, Danish and Prussian models, which recognized three categories of service: the armed forces, the court, and the administration. Each category had 14 ranks. Those who reached the eighth rank were accorded a status equivalent to the ancient nobility.

Social status was now dependent on service, and the ladder of rank could not be climbed without education. Peter encouraged the translation into Russian of textbooks on practical subjects such as arithmetic and astronomy, and established schools of mathematics and navigation, civil engineering, surgery and mining. At the end of his reign he was planning the establishment of an Academy of Science. Education was made compulsory for members of the nobility, who from 1714 were forbidden to marry until they had acquired a certificate of elementary education.

Within a few decades they had embraced Western culture to the extent that French became the spoken and written language of Russia’s elite.

The tsar believed that the church should be controlled by and serve the needs of the state. When Patriarch Adrian died in 1700, Peter did not appoint a replacement. The patriarch’s lands were placed under the control of the Monastery Department, and their revenues were appropriated by the state. Over the next 20 years the church, whose taxational privileges had been abolished in 1699–1700, was subjected to increasing state control. In 1716 bishops were required to take an oath of obedience to the tsar. Peter promoted churchmen, such as Feofan Prokopovich, archbishop of Novgorod, who preached the absolute authority of the tsar. In 1721 Peter abolished the patriarchate and placed the church under the control of the Holy Synod, a body subject to the right of veto of the Chief Procurator, a lay official appointed by the tsar. Peter’s attitude to the Old Believers was relatively tolerant. They were forced to pay double taxes, but were not persecuted. This treatment failed to win them over. Together with many of the Orthodox faithful, the Old Believers were convinced that Peter was the antichrist, partly because he tolerated Lutheran and Catholic worship.

Peter’s reforms introduced dangerous contradictions into the Russian polity and society. The church, as the partner of the monarchy, had enthusiastically disseminated the belief that the tsar was God’s chosen ruler and that obedience to him was a religious obligation. Peter turned the church into a department of state which his successors exploited, under-funded and neglected, thus undermining the church’s ability to legitimate their rule. The educated elite which emerged in Russia as a result of Peter’s reforms came to regard the state-controlled church and its teachings with scepticism or contempt. Scepticism about religion led naturally to scepticism about the theological underpinnings of tsarist rule.
The Great Northern War concluded

Peace negotiations between Russia and Sweden began in 1718, but were cut short when Charles XII was killed in action in Norway later that year. Sweden's new ruler Ulrika Eleonora decided to continue the war, hoping for the emergence of an anti-Russian coalition among the European powers. This did not occur and the British, whose navy was unable to prevent Russian galleys from raiding the Swedish coast, persuaded the Swedes to resume negotiations with the Russians. Agreement was reached at Nystad on 30 August (10 September NS) 1721. The treaty allowed Russia to keep most of her territorial gains, though Peter agreed to return the Åland Islands and most of Finland. Russia now had a Baltic coastline stretching from Riga to Vyborg. Peter celebrated this triumph by assuming the titles 'Peter the Great, father of his country, Emperor of all Russia' in October 1721. The presence, by 1725, of more than 20 permanent diplomatic missions in European capitals demonstrated Peter's determination that Russia should be a respected member of the international community.

Peter's Asian policies

Peter annexed Kamchatka and the Kurile Islands, and at the end of his reign commissioned the Danish explorer Vitus Bering to discover whether there was a land bridge between Siberia and North America. His hopes of increasing Russia's trade with China were disappointed. The embassies that he sent to Peking in 1692 and 1719 secured no concessions from the Chinese. His attempt to establish a protectorate over the khanates of Khiva and Bokhara also failed. His campaigns against Persia in 1722 and 1723 gained Russia a precarious foothold along the western shores of the Caspian Sea.

Personal relationships

The death in 1719 of Peter Petrovich, the only surviving legitimate son of the tsar, created a dynastic problem. Peter was reluctant to leave the crown to Peter Alexeyevich, the son of Alexei. He may have considered repudiating Catherine, whose looks had been ruined by heavy drinking, and marrying his latest mistress, Maria Cantemir, in order to beget a male heir. Yet he remained loyal to Catherine and, in May 1724, crowned her as empress.

In the 1720s Peter began to turn on his closest associates. Menshikov, whose corruption had frequently been forgiven, was arraigned before an investigatory commission in 1723, and was still under suspicion at the time of Peter's death. Vice Chancellor Shafirov was found guilty of embezzlement in the same year and exiled. Even Catherine, who had been having an affair with William Mons, the brother of Peter's former mistress, was in danger. In November 1724 Mons was executed, and it is likely that Peter's death spared her further punishment.

The death of Peter

Peter was now suffering from back pains, abscesses and a urinary tract infection, problems which did not prevent him from wading into the sea to rescue some fishermen whose boat was in danger of capsizing. The fever which he subsequently contracted weakened him further, and in January 1725 he underwent an operation to remove kidney stones. Gangrene set in and he died early on 28 January 1725. Although he had decreed in 1722 that henceforward Russia's emperors would designate their successors, he died without having named an heir.

Unable to defeat both Turkey and Sweden, Peter had wisely chosen to concentrate on the weaker opponent, and his breakthrough to the Baltic established Russia as a European power. His territorial acquisitions and military reforms laid the foundations for future imperial expansion. Many of his administrative reforms proved durable, though some of the institutions that he created were modified or abolished by his successors. His heavy reliance on the army as an organ of government did not survive the reign of Catherine II. In essence the state remained a mechanism for raising, financing and controlling the armed forces. Peter had made that mechanism more elaborate, more specialized and more efficient.