

Chapter 23

SS6G11 The student will describe the cultural characteristics of Europe.

- Explain the diversity of European languages as seen in a comparison of German, English, Russian, French, and Italian.
- Describe the major religions in Europe; include Judaism, Christianity, and Islam.
- Explain how the literacy rate affects the standard of living in Europe.

What Language Do You Speak?

Europe is a continent of diverse languages. Some are in the same language family, so people from one country can often understand the language of people from another country. Many Europeans are bilingual (speak two languages) or multilingual (speak several languages). The native languages in Europe belong to the Indo-European language family. Branches of the Indo-European family include the Germanic languages, Romance languages, and Slavic languages. The Germanic languages and Romance languages use the same alphabet, while the Slavic languages use a Cyrillic alphabet based on ancient Greek letters.



Word Definition
diverse: different and varied



- **Germanic:** Examples include German and English. English is spoken in more parts of the world than any other language.
- **Romance:** Examples include French and Italian. The Romance languages are based on Latin, the language of the ancient Romans.
- **Slavic:** Russian is an example of a Slavic language.



Essential Skills

Read each clue below. First, fill in the answer at the end of the clue. (Look up things you don't know on a map of Europe.) Then, write G for Germanic, R for Romance, and S for Slavic in the box.

1. This language is spoken in the United States. _____
2. This language is spoken in the country that is shaped like a boot. _____
3. This language uses an alphabet based on Greek letters. _____
4. People who speak this language live directly south of the United Kingdom. _____
5. This language is in the same family as English. _____

What's Your Religion?

Three major religions in Europe include **Judaism, Christianity, and Islam.**

- **Judaism** is the religion and culture of the Jewish people and the first recorded faith to worship only one God. The beliefs and history of Judaism make up the historical foundation of many other religions, including Christianity and Islam.
- **Christianity** is a religion based on the teachings of Jesus Christ. Its sacred scripture is the Bible.
- **Islam** is the religious faith of Muslims founded by Muhammad in the 7th century. Allah is the sole deity and Muhammad was his prophet.

Christianity is the dominant religion in both Western Europe and Eastern Europe. There are two major divisions: Catholic and Protestant. The majority of Christians in Europe are Catholic, and are concentrated in the southern region in countries like France, Spain, and Italy. More Protestants are found in northern countries like Germany and the United Kingdom. Most Eastern Europeans (including Russians) practice Eastern Orthodox Christianity.

There have been small populations of Jews in Europe for centuries. Today, most European Jews live in France, the United Kingdom, Russia, and other countries that were formerly part of the Soviet Union.

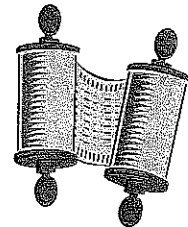
Many **Muslims** are immigrating to Western Europe, making Islam the fastest growing religion in Europe. Muslim populations are highest in France, Germany, and the United Kingdom. There are large Muslim populations in Eastern European countries like Albania and Bosnia.



Essential Skills

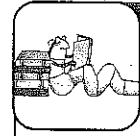
Read each statement below. Write J for Judaism, C for Christianity, or I for Islam next to each one.

- ___ 1. This faith is the historical foundation for Christianity and Islam.
- ___ 2. This faith is the dominant religion in Europe.
- ___ 3. France, Spain, and Italy follow this religion.
- ___ 4. This religion is the fastest-growing religion in Europe.
- ___ 5. Most Russians follow this religion.
- ___ 6. Many followers of this religion live in countries that used to be part of the Soviet Union.
- ___ 7. Muhammad founded this religion in the 7th century.



Reading is Essential!

One factor that has a huge effect on a country's economic health and its citizens' standard of living is the **literacy rate**. Literacy is the ability to read and write. A standard of living is often determined by one's education and income. A country that improves the literacy rate among its citizens will improve the standard of living within that country and improve its economy. Educated and skilled workers are an important factor in a country's economic growth!

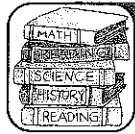


Word Definition
standard of living:
measure of a nation's quality of life based on income, education, life expectancy, and other factors

In general, European countries have high literacy rates close to 100 percent and good standards of living. France and Germany are good examples. Both countries have 99 percent literacy rates and high standards of living. Both countries place great emphasis on education and have many universities. The concept of kindergarten to get children learning at an early age was started in Germany.



However, literacy rates do not always tell the whole story. In Russia, for example, there is a high emphasis on education and the literacy rate is 99 percent, but the economy has struggled since the breakup of the Soviet Union in 1991. The Russian emphasis on science and math education did not provide many students with skills needed in the new market economy. Unemployment was a serious problem. The good news is that change is taking place in Russia, and the standard of living and economy are improving.



Enrichment

Circle the correct answers below.

- The standard of living is determined by:
a. income
b. education
c. both
- Literacy is the ability to:
a. read
b. write
c. both
- A country with a high literacy rate typically has a high _____.
a. standard of living
b. death rate
c. number of doctors
- The literacy rate and standard of living in Europe are:
a. low
b. high
c. not measured



Look-It-Up!

Use the Internet or an encyclopedia to look up the literacy rates for other European countries you are studying, including Belgium, Italy, Poland, Spain, Ukraine, and the United Kingdom. Make a chart on a separate piece of paper. Do you see much difference in their literacy rates?

Government/Civics

Understandings

Chapter 24



READ: IMPORTANT INFORMATION

SS6CG4 *The student will compare and contrast various forms of government.*

For detailed information and activities for this standard, see pages 37-40.



SS6CG5 *The student will explain the structure of modern European governments.*

a. Compare the parliamentary system of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland (United Kingdom), the federal system of the Federal Republic of Germany (Germany), and the federation of the Russian Federation (Russia), distinguishing the form of leadership and the role of the citizen in terms of voting and personal freedoms.

b. Describe the purpose of the European Union and the relationship between member nations.

Let's Look at Governments

There are many different forms of government. The two most common democratic governments are **parliamentary systems** (legislature holds power) and **presidential systems** (power divided between branches). Governments also distribute power and determine how citizens participate differently:



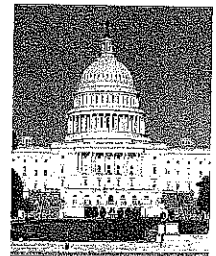
Big Ben and Parliament Buildings, London, England

Distribution of power:

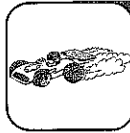
- **Unitary:** central government has all power
- **Confederation:** loose alliance; political units control their own laws; central government makes decisions only on issues that affect the entire group
- **Federal:** power divided between central government and smaller political units

Citizen participation:

- **Autocracy:** one leader controls power; citizens do not participate
- **Oligarchy:** small group controls power; they are the only citizens who participate
- **Democracy:** people have full and equal rights to participate

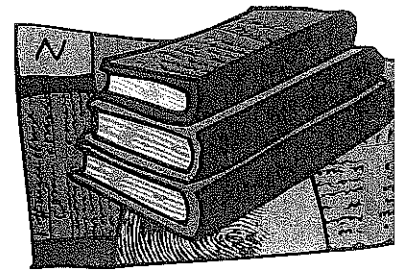


U.S. Capitol, Washington, D.C.



Quick Quiz

Write T for True and F for False.



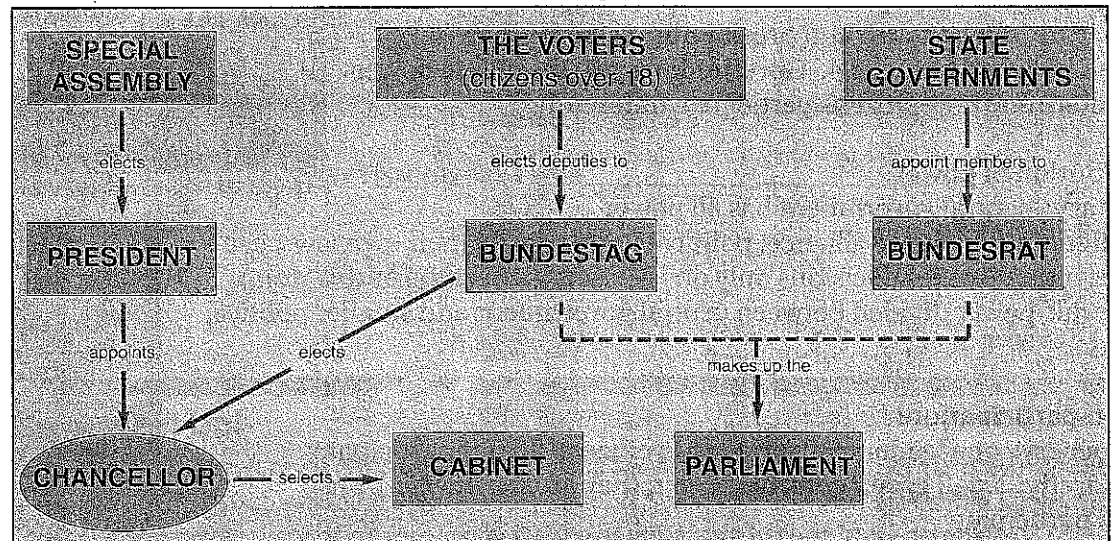
- ___ 1. The legislature holds the power in a presidential system.
- ___ 2. Citizens participate fully in a democracy.
- ___ 3. Citizens participate fully in an autocracy.
- ___ 4. The central government controls all power in a unitary system.
- ___ 5. Federal systems divide power between a central government and smaller units.

Modern European Governments

There are several types of government in Europe. The governments of the United Kingdom, Germany, and Russia are described below.

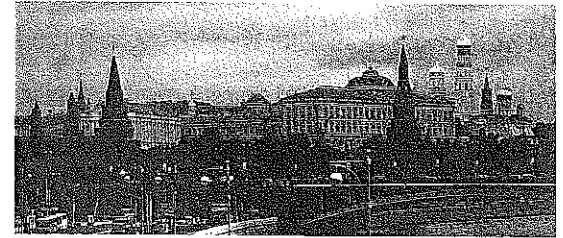
- The **Federal Republic of Germany** (Germany) has a **federal system** of government, which means that power is shared between a central government and 16 state governments. Germany's **leadership** includes a president and a chancellor. The president is the head of state but has little political power. The **chancellor** is the powerful head of government. He is elected by one of the houses of Germany's Parliament. The two houses of the legislature (Parliament) are the *Bundestag* and the *Bundesrat*. Germany's constitution guarantees basic rights and **personal freedoms** like the right to vote, equal rights, and freedom of speech, religion, and press.

Structure of Germany's Government



• The **Russian Federation** (Russia) is a federation established in 1991 where power is divided between a central government and 89 smaller political units. The Russian government was established in 1991 when the Soviet Union dissolved. Its **leader** is a **president** elected by the people. The president then appoints a prime minister, who is second-place in leadership. Russia's legislature, the Federal Assembly, has two houses called the Federation Council and the State Duma.

Russia ratified a new constitution in 1993. It guarantees basic rights and **personal freedoms** like the right to vote, equal rights, and freedom of religion, speech, and the press. Other important rights granted, which were often denied during Communist rule, include the right to private telephone calls and mail correspondence, and freedom of movement, which allows citizens to leave Russia and come back freely.



The Kremlin, Moscow, Russia

• The **United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland** (United Kingdom) has a **parliamentary** system of government. The leadership of the United Kingdom includes a monarch (king or queen) as the ceremonial head of state. The monarch, who today is Queen Elizabeth II, has very little power. The **prime minister** is the head of government. The power in the UK's government lies with **Parliament** (the legislature), which makes the country's laws and elects the prime minister. Parliament has two houses—the House of Commons and the House of Lords. Citizens are granted basic rights and **personal freedoms** like the right to vote and freedom of speech, press, religion, and assembly.



Think About It

Complete the table below comparing the governments of the UK, Germany, and Russia.

	Govt. System	Leadership	Legislature	Freedoms
United Kingdom				
Germany				
Russia				



Quick Review

Circle the correct answer to each question.

1. The monarch has the most power in the government of the United Kingdom. Yes No
2. The United Kingdom has a parliamentary system of government. Yes No
3. The German chancellor is more powerful than the president. Yes No
4. Germany has a federal system of government. Yes No
5. In Russia, power is divided between a central government and many political units. Yes No
6. Russia's leader is elected by the people. Yes No

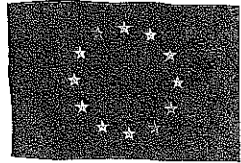


Background Check

Although Russia's constitution calls for freedom of the press, that freedom is not always guaranteed in the former Communist country. Reporters Without Borders, an organization that monitors freedom of the press, ranks Russia very low on its list of press freedom among countries around the world.

The European Union

The **European Union (EU)** is an organization of more than 25 European countries originally founded to encourage trade within Europe. Today, it has grown into a very strong multinational union and the world's leading trade power. The EU even has its own flag! The EU's purpose is:



- To create a peaceful, stable environment between European countries
- To promote free trade among members leading to one common market
- To help ensure the safety and security of member nations
- To cooperate and assist each other in social issues such as preserving the environment and protecting human rights

The EU has built a strong relationship between its member nations. Dropping all tariffs has led to greatly improved trade and higher standards of living among members. Wealthier countries are sharing their wealth with poorer countries. Countries are helping improve their environment by setting up strict environmental standards. Workers are allowed to cross borders easily to work in other EU countries. A Court of Human Rights has been established to protect citizens' rights in member countries.

One of the most important accomplishments of the European Union is the establishment of a **single currency called the euro**. Now, countries that use the euro do not have to worry about exchanging currency or about constantly changing exchange rates. The euro makes trade easier, more efficient, and less costly!



Essential Skills

Put a check mark next to the benefits of the European Union.

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Free school funding | <input type="checkbox"/> Free trade |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Increased number of television stations | <input type="checkbox"/> Higher standards of living |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Protection of the environment | <input type="checkbox"/> Single currency |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Workers can work in many other countries | <input type="checkbox"/> Lower income taxes |



Look-It-Up!

Use an encyclopedia or the Internet to find out how many members the European Union has today. Write the number here. _____ What was the last country (or countries) to join? _____