

Countries Around the World™

Romania

Program Summary

Meet 9-year-old Vlad. He and his family live in Bucharest, the capital of Romania. Join Vlad as he and his friend Diana exchange gifts as a part of *mărțișor*, a festival that celebrates the arrival of spring. After school lets out, Vlad and Diana stop on a bridge to admire the Dâmbovița River before heading to the old town section of Bucharest, where they snack on some pastries and gaze at a fortress that once belonged to Vlad Țepeș — the historical inspiration for the fictional character of Count Dracula! Discover some of the religious traditions of Romania when an Eastern Orthodox priest comes to Vlad's house to impart a blessing before the family takes a trip to the countryside. The first stop on their trip is the town of Brașov, where Vlad and his family visit a Gothic church and shop in the covered marketplace for cloves of garlic. Finally, Vlad and his family arrive at their ultimate destination: Bran Castle, also known as Dracula's Castle, the place where Vlad Țepeș once lived!

Country Information

- **location:** southeastern Europe, bordering the Black Sea; bordered by Bulgaria, Hungary, Moldova, Serbia and Ukraine
- **capital:** Bucharest
- **official language:** Romanian
- **type of government:** republic
- **total area:** approximately 237,500 sq km
- **climate:** temperate; cold, cloudy winters with frequent snow and fog; sunny summers with frequent showers and thunderstorms
- **terrain:** the central Transylvanian Basin is separated from the Plain of Moldavia to the east by the Carpathian Mountains and separated from the Walachian Plain to the south by the Transylvanian Alps
- **major bodies of water:** Black Sea, Dâmbovița River and Danube River
- **natural resources:** includes petroleum, timber, natural gas, coal, iron ore, salt, arable land and hydropower
- **industries:** includes textiles, footwear, light machinery and auto assembly, mining, timber, construction materials, metallurgy, chemicals, food processing and petroleum refining
- **agricultural products:** includes wheat, corn, barley, sugar beets, sunflower seeds, potatoes, grapes, eggs and sheep

Vocabulary

mărțișor — A traditional celebration in Romania that heralds the beginning of spring

tributary — A smaller river or stream that flows into a larger body of water.

Communist — Referring to a political and economic system called Communism, in which private property is abolished and all goods are owned jointly.

leu — The currency of Romania.

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Roma — A member of an ethnic group of people who speak Romany and live all across Europe.

Moldavia — A region in northeastern Romania.

Wallachia — A region of southeastern Romania.

Transylvania — A region of central Romania.

tochitură — A dish made from fried meats, sausage and polenta, which is corn meal.

medieval — Referring to the Middle Ages, the time period that stretched roughly from the fifth to the 15th century. The term was coined to describe the era in between the time of ancient Rome and the Renaissance.

façade — The front of a building.

bazaar — A market that consists of a street lined with shops and stalls.

Pre-viewing Discussion

- Distribute outline maps of Romania to the class. Have them find and label the capital, other major cities, major bodies of water and the neighboring countries and their capitals. Questions to ask include: How many countries border Romania? Which country shares the longest border with Romania? Which country shares the shortest? Based on Romania's location, what do you think the climate is like? Do you think there are different climate regions in Romania? How might the climate on the coast of the Black Sea be different from the climate in Romania's interior?
- Ask students about their favorite holidays and why they like them. Then, talk about all the different holidays celebrated in your community and country. What do these holidays reveal about American values and traditions? How are these holidays different from each other? What do they share in common? Why do we celebrate them? As they prepare to watch the program, have students watch for examples of holidays celebrated in Romania.
- Discuss what makes places different from each other. Begin by having students brainstorm a list of things that they think make places unique. Follow up with questions, such as: Are people a part of making a place unique? How? How would you characterize the place where you live? What makes it unique? As they prepare to watch the program, ask students to predict how Romania is different from their communities. After the program, follow up by asking students to compare their predictions about Romania with what was shown. What were some of the things that were different? Was there anything that was similar to where you live?

Follow-up Activities

- Every March 1st, many Romanians and Moldavians celebrate *mărțișor*, a festival that welcomes the arrival of spring. Divide the class into small groups and have each group find facts about *mărțișor*. Once the groups have finished their investigations, lead a discussion about *mărțișor*, that compares and contrasts it with holidays and festivals that they celebrate. As a culmination, students can plan and participate in a classroom *mărțișor* celebration. Students can adorn the classroom with decorations and make cards and gifts for each other that incorporate the symbolism of *mărțișor*. As an extension, students can invent their own holidays that celebrate the arrival of different seasons and create posters that announce their new holidays and provide information about them.
- Due to its geographic location on the Balkan Peninsula, Romania is considered a Balkan nation along with Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, Montenegro, Macedonia, Albania, Bulgaria and Moldova. Have students pick two other Balkan nations and find facts about them. Students can then compare and contrast those nations with Romania by creating Venn diagrams. An interactive tool for creating Venn diagrams with three circles can be found at www.readwritethink.org/student_mat/student_material.asp?id=32.

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- National symbols, like the flag or a coat of arms, can reveal a lot about the values, beliefs and traditions of a country and its people. Students can learn about the significance and symbolism of the Romanian coat of arms by visiting www.roembus.org/English/romanian_links/stema.htm. Discuss what the coat of arms says about the Romanian people and the values they hold. Then, students can design coats of arms with images and symbols that represent their families and/or communities, and write informative captions that explain what the imagery of the emblem represents. Students can take turns sharing their work with the class.
- Use clay, salt dough or another medium to create a raised relief map of Romania. Advise students to sketch the country on sturdy pieces of cardboard first. When molding the clay, be sure to clearly depict the different landforms and bodies of water of Romania, like the Carpathian Mountains, the Transylvanian Alps and the Danube River. When the model dries, use paint or other craft materials to provide a greater level of detail for the map, such as outlines of the regions of Wallachia, Transylvania and Moldavia. As an extension, students can create compass roses and determine the scale of their relief maps.
- Vlad Țepeș, the inspiration for the character of Dracula, was actually a 15th-century prince who ruled Wallachia, which would eventually become part of the country of Romania. But over the centuries, many myths and legends have sprung up about Țepeș that obscured the truth of who he really was. Students can separate the fact from fiction by investigating Țepeș' life and creating biographical booklets about him. As supplements, the booklets can include pictures, illustrations and time lines, and can even include "myth vs. reality" segments in which students compare the apocryphal stories about Vlad Țepeș to the historical record. As a prewriting activity, students can visit readwritethink.org/materials/bio_cube/ to create a "bio-cube" — a fun, foldable, 3-D graphic organizer for biographical information.
- Tania Zamorsky's *Classic Starts* series adaptation of Bram Stoker's novel, *Dracula* (Sterling Publishing, 2007), is a great way to introduce students to the tale of the world's most infamous vampire and one of the premier Gothic horror stories. After reading *Dracula* to the class, students can share their impressions of the story and discuss its elements. Then, working in small groups, students can complete story maps for *Dracula* by visiting www.readwritethink.org/materials/storymap/index.html. Keeping the same groups, encourage students to discover how the character of Dracula is related to the historical figure of Vlad Țepeș and use graphic organizers to organize their findings. As an extension, students can create character trading cards for *Dracula* by visiting readwritethink.org/materials/trading_cards/.
- Students can learn a few basic Romanian words and phrases and listen to sound files of their pronunciation by visiting www.bbc.co.uk/languages/other/quickfix/romanian.shtml. Then, using the Romanian words for "yes" (da) and "no" (nu), poll the class with a series of questions to which the students answer either "da" or "nu." Have you ever been camping? Have you ever flown in an airplane? Have you ever eaten sushi? Compile the number of *yes* and *no* answers for each question and have students convert the numbers into fractions and decimals. Students can then make percentages from the numbers and create a chart for the class that shows the results of the poll.
- The legend of the vampire is still very prominent in Romania, due in no small part to the enduring legacy of Vlad Țepeș and his literary alter ego, Dracula. However, regions all over the world have their own stories about mythic creatures, mysterious beings and magical, otherworldly forces that have the power to influence the events in people's lives. Invite students to investigate tales of the supernatural from around the world. After students find a story that interests them, they can create booklets that explain elements of the tale, including its history and country and culture of origin. Students can create pictures and illustrations to accompany their booklets. An interactive tool for creating a booklet can be found at www.readwritethink.org/materials/stapleless/index.html. For reference, share Judy Allen's *Unexplained: An Encyclopedia of Curious Phenomena, Strange Superstitions, and Ancient Mysteries* (Houghton Mifflin, 2006) with the class.
- Invite students to write acrostic poems about Romania by using words associated with the country, such as "Transylvania," "mărțișor" and "Balkan." For an interactive guide on writing an acrostic poem, visit www.readwritethink.org/materials/acrostic/. Encourage students to share their poems with the class. As an extension, students can work together to collect pictures of things mentioned in their poems for inclusion in a classroom collage about Romania.

Suggested Internet Resources

- www.katw.org/pages/sitepage.cfm?id=63
This site introduces students to the lives, customs, and cultures of children in Romania. Includes lesson plans.
- www.brancastlemuseum.ro/indexfrm_en.htm
The official site of Bran Castle. Includes information on Dracula and the history of the castle.
- news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/country_profiles/1057466.stm
Learn more about Romania's history, geography, leaders and culture at this up-to-date site by the BBC.
- www.cia.gov
The CIA World Factbook web site presents detailed and up-to-date information on Romania and many other countries. Topics include geography, people, government, economy, transportation and communication. On the main page of the CIA site, click on the "World Factbook" link.

Suggested Print Resources

- Knox, Barbara. *Castle Dracula: Romania's Vampire Home*. Bearport Publishing, New York, NY; 2005.
- Pundyk, Grace. *Welcome to Romania*. Gareth Stevens, Milwaukee, WI; 2004.
- Sanborne, Mark. *Romania*. Facts on File, New York, NY; 2003. A resource for teachers.
- Willis, Terri. *Romania*. Children's Press, Danbury, CT; 2001.

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