

# Ivan the terrible's influence essay



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Ivan the Terrible was the most ruthless, yet innovative leader of his time, and was the first to establish a modern government. Ivan was the first to edit the law code and create a more democratic style of legal proceedings, and also the first to help eliminate corruption from Russia's way of life. He helped to revolutionize Russia from a medieval state, to an empire by expanding trade. Ivan the Terrible is truly the most influential tsar of Russia, of all time. Ivan Vasilyevich IV, also known as Grozny, which translates to awesome, was born on August 25, of 1530, in Kolomenskoye, Russia.

Ivan was proclaimed the grand duke of Muscovy at the age of three, upon his father's death, Vasily Ivanovich III; however, he was not in control of the government until 1544, at age 14. Like his name, Ivan's childhood was also terrible, by today's standards. His father died when he was only three, due to blood poisoning, and his mother when he was seven, although the cause of death is undetermined, it is suspected she was assassinated via poison. Upon this Ivan and his younger brother were taken it by the boyars of the Shuisky and Belsky families.

A boyar was the second highest rank in Russian and Bulgarian government, to only the princes and tsar (noble). According to Ivan's own letters, they were treated very cruelly and violently by the boyars. This naturally created an unquenchable odium toward the boyars and their cause, and a growing respect towards their enemies, the lower class. It is believed that during this time is what caused Ivan to hold human life and dignity with such contempt, especially nobles.

As a young boy, it is rumoured he would torture small animals, like many young serial killers do today. Contrary to one would believe from his actions, Ivan was deeply in love with God. It is said that he would often develop calices on his forehead, from bowing his head to the floor, when kneeling and praying. On January 16 of 1547, Ivan was crowned as the first tsar of all Russia. On February 13 of the same year, Ivan married his first of six wives, Anastasia Ramonovna. This was the one and only true love of Ivan's life. It is with her that he has his two sons, Ivan, and the mentally ill Feodor.

Ivan was said to be very suspicious and paranoid throughout his reign, but when Anastasia became ill and died in the summer of 1560, what was left of Ivan's compassion died as well. Ivan had believed she was poisoned by the boyars, and took out Anastasia's death on everyone. Torturing and murdering many innocents he believed to be associated with Anastasia's death. The first half of Ivan's reign, contrary to his nickname, was peaceful. It was then that he: reformed and revised the law code, known as " sudebnik", formed the " streltsy", under the " Zemsky Sobor", which was the first Russian parliament, made up of a group of nobles.

In 1553, Ivan established the Moscow Print Yard, which contained Russia's first printing press. Through the rest of the decade several religious books were printed in Russian, as they were the first Ivan wanted. The conquest of Kazan and Astrakhan were the first of many sieges. On June 16, 1552, Ivan led an army of 150, 000 Russian troops towards Kazan, in an attempt to end a two decade on-going war. Through superior weaponry and military engineers, Kazan fell on October 2, upon the water supply being cut off, and walls being breached.

The majority of the population was slaughtered, and anywhere from 60, 000 to 100, 000 Russian prisoners were released. Grozny celebrated by building several churches, the most spectacular being Saint Basils Cathedral. It was something so magnificent, that Ivan thought it was necessary to blind the architects to who created it, so they could never build something as beautiful again. Ivan was now more ruthless than ever. The 1560's began a new era, the era of the Oprichnina or the Oprichniki. These were essentially Ivan's secret police, who would massacre anybody who opposed Ivan or his beliefs.

They dressed in all black, the traditional colour of death, and even rode black horses too. The saddle bared two emblems: a broom, and a dog's head. The broom was to symbolize the Oprichniki's mission to sweep Russia clean of Ivan's enemies, and the dog head was to signify that they are a watchful eye for the tsar. On one account, Filipp Kolychev, the head of the church in Novgorod had criticized the Oprichniki and the way they handled things. In response to this, Ivan decided to send the Oprichniki to pillage the town of Novgorod. 3, 000 of Ivan's own people were massacred, in a place home to only 10, 000 people.

Upon the conquest of Siberia in 1580, Ivan helped launch Russia to be a 4, 046, 856 square kilometre empire. Ivan's reign came to an end, when he died due to what was thought to be a stroke while playing chess, on March 18, 1584. However, Ivan's tomb was opened during renovations in the 1960's, and his remains were examined, and found to have very high levels of mercury. An indication that Ivan may have been poisoned. Three years before his death, Ivan was in a typical rage, and decided to beat his eldest son's pregnant wife, for not dressing up nice enough.

When Ivan's son, also named Ivan, ran to his wife's rescue, he was struck in the head by a staff from his father, killing him. This left the intellectually disabled Feodor to take over the throne. Feodor died without a son, and ultimately plunged Russia in the "Time of Troubles". One way that Ivan helped to influence the idea of western life, is because in a weird sort of way, he was the first to imply that everybody should be equal. Almost every other nation at this time had a strict chain of being.

This means that people were ranked with significance, by their social status. The nobles were so much more powerful than the peasants, that they could physically own them, and use them as slaves. Unlike the leaders before him, Ivan, although raised by boyars, despised them. When he edited the Sudebnik in 1550, he surprisingly made life fairer for his citizens, and even created a system we continue to use today. He declared that there must be active elected representatives of local communities for whenever legal proceedings would take place.

This is a process we continue to use today; the elected representatives are now called "jurors", and decide the fate of the accused. The Sudebnik also ensured all peasants that they could leave their feudal lords. However, only after they made a payment of two fixed fees. But it was still a breaking point for equality, for it Ivan had never done this, then perhaps the peasants would have never got the freedom that they deserve. When Ivan took the throne, Russia was in an economic crisis. Part of the problem was that Ivan was the heir and ruler of Russia at eight, but was unable to use any of this power.

Instead the boyars possessed it, and instead of working together, they foolishly fought over power amongst themselves, and let Russia continue on an economic downfall. During this time Ivan witnessed how the boyar's corruption and greed was destroying Russia's political sphere, so he did what any effective leader would do, change the failing political system. The out dated appendage system decentralized the state. Having noticed this, Ivan, set out to create strong, united nation. Ivan created chancellery offices that would take care of any bureaucratic duty.

He also put an end to "feeding" of government officials from local stores. Instead they were given a salary, which ultimately led to a more organized tax collection system, and made administrators dependant on central authority. But what Ivan wanted, was for Russia to have a revolution, but it was almost impossible because of Russia's location. Ivan knew the only way to do this was to expand trading partners. This is a very logical way to think, as a Renaissance revolution had occurred in Florence, Italy just a century earlier, for the same reason.

Florence was the centre trading point for all surrounding countries, so there was constantly a ton of money flowing through it, which eventually inspired a revolution. The difference with Russia, however, was that it was far to the north. Ivan already had trade with China, India, and Persia, upon defeating Kazan and gaining access to the Caspian Sea. But what Ivan really wanted, was access to the Baltic Sea. Having this would open up vast options for trade, such as Sweden, Norway, or Denmark. So, In 1555 Ivan launched a 24 year war with Livonia in attempt to acquire access to the Baltic Sea that he so desperately needed.

He then found himself fighting Swedes and Lithuanians as they supported Livonia, and was defeated in 1579. However Ivan was unsure of his chances of victory to begin with. To ensure his access with the west, in the later part of 1555, Ivan decided that, perhaps it would be smart to be on good terms with the English, and establish trade with them via the White Sea, located on the North East coast of Russia. This inevitably led to the Muscovy Company Establishment; A safe, secure, and dependable source of trade.

Though Ivan was never able to gain access to the Baltic Sea, he was able to improvise and find other ways of establishing trade. Ivan's techniques may have been very gruesome, or barbaric, but they worked. Ivan took Russia and carved it to be the powerhouse it is today. He implemented law procedures that still continue to be used in present day. Ivan created a non corrupt government. He then helped revolutionize Russia through trade and establishing the first Russian printing press. Ivan the Terrible may be a despicable figure, but he did what was necessary to force Russia out of a time of disparity.