

**Chapter 10 Primary Source Activity**



The earliest Russian state (textbook pages 236–237) began under the princes of the city of Kiev (now in Ukraine). In about the year 1115, one of those princes, Vladimir II Monomakh (1053–1125), wrote a “Testament” to his sons, giving them advice and telling about his life and exploits. It is included in *The Primary Chronicle*, a collection of documents put together by monks. At the time, Russian nobles were buried on their sleighs; when Vladimir says “sitting upon my sledge,” he is anticipating death. ♦ *As you read, think about the harshness of life in this frontier period. Then, on a separate piece of paper, answer the questions that follow.*

**Prince Vladimir’s Testament to His Sons**

**I**, wretched man that I am. . . named at baptism Vasilii and with the Russian name Vladimir. . . sitting upon my sledge, have meditated in my heart and praised God, who has guided me, a sinner, even to this day. Let not my sons or anyone else who happens to hear this document laugh at its contents. But rather let any one of my sons who likes it take my words to heart and not be lazy, but work hard.

. . . Do not be lazy in your own households, but keep watch over everything. Do not depend upon your steward or your servant lest they who visit you ridicule your house or your table. When you set out to war, do not be lazy, do not depend upon your voevody [commanders], do not indulge yourself in drinking, eating, or sleeping. Set the sentries yourselves, and at night go to sleep only after you have posted them on all sides of your troops, and get up early. Do not put down your weapons without a quick glance about you, for a man may thus perish suddenly through his own carelessness. . . .

Wherever you go and wherever you stay, give food and drink to the needy. Furthermore, honor

the visitor, if not with a gift, at least with food and drink, wherever he comes from and whether he is a commoner, a nobleman, or an ambassador; for travelers spread the word everywhere as to whether a man is good or bad.

. . . I now narrate to you, my sons, the fatigue I have endured on journeys and hunts ever since the age of thirteen. . .

Among all my campaigns there are 83 long ones, and I do not count the minor adventures. I concluded 19 peace treaties with the Polovtsians both while my father was living and since then. . . .

I devoted much energy to hunting as long as I reigned in Chernigov. . . . At Chernigov, I even bound wild horses with my bare hands. . . .

In war and at the hunt, by night and by day, in heat and in cold, I did whatever my servant had to do, and gave myself no rest. . . .

Without fear of death, or war, or wild beasts, do a man’s work, my sons, as God sets it before you.

“ . . . Do a man’s work, my sons, as God sets it before you.”

Source: *A Source Book for Russian History*, Vol. I (Yale University Press, 1972).

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**Questions to Think About**

1. What is the basic advice that Vladimir gives to his sons about how to behave in peace and war?
2. From Vladimir’s last lines to his sons, what would you conclude were the main dangers facing people at this time? What other evidence is there?
3. **Recognizing Ideologies** Vladimir’s advice to his sons reflects his beliefs about how a noble ought to behave. What are some of those values?
4. **Activity** What was happening in the rest of the world when Vladimir wrote his testament? Look through other chapters of the textbook to bring together dates for a time line from about 900 to 1200.

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