The Golden Horde

1. Group of Mongols overran Russia between 1237 and 1241
2. Further overran Poland, Hungary, and eastern Germany, 1241-1242
3. Maintained hegemony in Russia until the mid-fifteenth century

Christian western Europe initially had been pleased by Mongol successes against Islam. The attitude changed when the Mongols moved westward; they invaded Hungary in 1240 and raided widely in central and southeastern Europe.

The Mongol Drive to the West.
- By the 13th century Kiev was in decline and Russia was divided into many petty kingdoms. They were unable to unite before the Mongols (called Tartars by Russians). Batu, Chinggis Khan's grandson, invaded in 1236 and defeated Russian armies one by one. Resisting cities were razed. In 1240 Kiev was taken and ravaged. Novgorod was spared when its ruler submitted peacefully.

Russia in Bondage. The Russians became vassals of the khan of the Golden Horde, a domination lasting for two and one-half centuries.
- Russian princes paid tribute.
- Peasants had to meet demands from both their own princes and the Mongols. Many sought protection by becoming serfs. The decision inaugurated a major change in rural social structure: serfdom endured until the mid 19th century.
- Some cities, especially Moscow, benefited from the increased commercial possibilities brought by Mongol rule. It grew at the expense of nearby towns and profited as tribute collector for the khans. The metropolitan of Moscow was made the head of the Russian Orthodox church. When the power of the Golden Horde declined, Moscow led Russian resistance to the Mongols. The Golden Horde was defeated at Kulikova in 1380. Later attacks by Timur finished breaking the Mongol hold on Russia. They remained active in the region through most of the 15th century, but from the end of the 14th century Moscow was the center of political power in Russia.
- The Mongol occupation was very important for Russian history. Their example influenced military and political organization. Most significantly, the Mongols isolated Russia from developments in western European civilization.