

The Samovar

Russians love their tea! They drink weak black tea all day and have the perfect gadget for making sure the water is nice and hot. It is called a **samovar**. Every home, business, and school has a samovar. You will even see samovars on Russian trains.

The word samovar comes from two Russian words: *samo* which means own, and *varit* which means to boil. You put these two words together and they mean “to boil on its own.” You could compare a samovar to a vase that has been filled with water. Inside the vase is a tube where, in the old days, charcoal or pinecones were burned to heat the water. At the top of a samovar there is a flat base where a teapot is rested. At the bottom of a samovar is a tap that is turned and allows the water to pour from a spout to fill the teapot.

The first samovar factory was built in a small Russian town called Tula in 1778. Samovars were usually made of green, red and yellow copper, iron, Tula steel and brass. Rich people had samovars made of gold and silver. They were real works of art. Designs such as flowers, leaves and animals were used for the handles, spout and feet.

Today you can buy new samovars in Russia. They are painted with beautiful scenes of the countryside or with incidents from Russian folktales. These colorful samovars are heated by electricity.

Many tourists buy these beautiful examples of Russian tradition to take back to their own countries.

Use What You Know...Use Your Imagination!

Imagine you are a Russian child who has an old samovar in your home. Write a diary entry about this samovar. Tell what it looks like, how you use it, and what it has meant to your family.

