

Putin's historic visit to Israel (Fri 29 Apr, 2005)

WARM-UPS

CHAT: Talk in pairs or groups about: Jerusalem / Vladimir Putin / Ariel Sharon / Russia / Israel / Cold War / Syria / Iran ... For more conversation, change topics and partners frequently.

JERUSALEM: Spend one minute writing down all of the different words you associate with the Jerusalem. Share your words with your partner / group and talk about them.

GOOGLE SEARCHERS: For this activity, become a "Google Searcher" – visit other sites (your classmates) and try to find out what they know about Israeli-Russian history. These "searches" may be good places to start: Soviet Union / Cold War / KGB / Six-Day War / Sinai / Golan Heights / Mikhail Gorbachev / Glasnost.

In groups, share the information you found in your searches.

MR PUTIN'S VISIT: Read the following comments on Mr Putin's visit and agree or disagree with them with your partner / group:

- It is a wonderful event and will help bring peace to the region.
- Russia is on the outside of Mid-East affairs. It will never be a major player.
- Twenty per cent of Israel's population is Russian-speaking. The visit is natural.
- Mr Putin is jealous of America's influence in the region.
- Israel and Russia are partners in the War on Terror. It is right they should meet.
- Russia's desired sale of arms to Israel's neighbours may destabilize the region.
- Better late than never.
- Putin's visit to Israel shows the Arab world things must change.

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PRE-READING

WORD SEARCH: Look in your dictionaries / computer to find collocates, other meanings, information, synonyms ... of the words 'historic' and 'meeting'.

TRUE / FALSE: Look at the article's headline and guess whether these sentences are true or false:

- a. Russia's President Putin went to Israel to visit biblical sights. T / F
- b. President Putin wants a new role for Russia in the Middle East. T / F
- c. President Putin is the first Russian or Soviet leader ever to visit Israel. T / F
- d. After the Six-Day War in 1967, many Russians had cold shoulders. T / F
- e. Mr Putin and Mr Sharon will discuss many complex issues. T / F
- f. Mr Sharon has welcomed with open arms a peace conference idea. T / F
- g. Israel is still at war with Syria. T / F
- h. Mr Putin has insisted he is not helping Iran develop nuclear weapons. T / F

SYNONYM MATCH: Match the following synonyms from the article:

- | | | |
|----|-----------------|---------------------|
| a. | historic | function |
| b. | role | broad |
| c. | reassert | plan |
| d. | arms | cut |
| e. | severed | momentous |
| f. | wide | jeopardize |
| g. | initiative | intentions |
| h. | sticking points | weaponry |
| i. | compromise | bones of contention |
| j. | purposes | strengthen |

PHRASE MATCH: Match the following phrases from the article (sometimes more than one combination is possible):

- | | | |
|----|----------------------|-----------------------------|
| a. | historic | links |
| b. | new | issues |
| c. | losing | terrorist hands |
| d. | head | role |
| e. | severed diplomatic | influence in the region |
| f. | complex | its ability to fight terror |
| g. | sticking | war with Syria |
| h. | still technically at | meeting |
| i. | fall into | of state |
| j. | compromise | points |

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READING:

GAP-FILL: Fill the gaps with the words in the column on the right.

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BNE: A _____ meeting took place in Jerusalem earlier when Russian President Vladimir Putin and Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon met for talks on a new role for Russia in the Middle East. Mr Putin is hoping to reassert Russia's _____ in the Middle East since losing _____ in the region following the end of the Cold War. The three-day visit is the first ever to Israel by a Russian or Soviet head of state. Russia has historically _____ and sold arms to Arab countries. Moscow severed diplomatic links with Israel after the Six-Day War in 1967 that led to a twenty-year _____ of the Jewish state.

influence
cold-shouldering
presence
backed
historic

The two leaders will discuss a wide range of complex issues, including a _____ by Putin to hold an Israeli-Palestinian peace conference in Moscow later this year. That initiative was _____ by Mr Sharon even before Mr Putin arrived in Israel. Other _____ points to be discussed include Russian arms sales to Syria and Russia's role in Iran's nuclear programme. Israel is still _____ at war with Syria and is concerned the proposed Russian sale of anti-aircraft technology may fall into terrorist hands or _____ its ability to defend Israeli citizens. Mr Putin has insisted that Russia's role in Iran is only for peaceful purposes, such as energy, and not nuclear weapons.

sticking
dismissed
compromise
proposal
technically

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DISCUSSION

- a. Were you interested in this article ?
- b. Were you surprised at anything you read in the article?
- c. Are you skeptical about anything you read in the article?
- d. What do you think of President Putin's visit?
- e. What do you think of the fact it's the first ever visit to Israel by a Russian or Soviet leader?
- f. Do you think Mr Putin's visit will change anything in the Middle East?
- g. Should Russia sell arms to Syria?
- h. Should America sell arms to Israel?
- i. Should Russia be helping Iran in its nuclear programme?
- j. Should Israel have nuclear weapons?
- k. Will Israel and its neighbours ever live together in peace?
- l. Should Prime Minister Sharon have accepted President Putin's suggestion of a peace conference?
- m. Does Russia have a role to play in the Middle East?
- n. Does America have too much power in the Middle East?
- o. Are relations between Israel and its neighbours getting better or worse?
- p. Did you like this discussion?
- q. Teacher / Student additional questions.

ISRAEL/RUSSIA HEADLINES: Talk to your partner / group about the following headlines that might emerge over the coming months and years:

- a. Russia – the new peace broker in the Middle East
- b. Israel to pull down security fence.
- c. Sharon and Putin to receive Nobel Peace Prize
- d. Israel agrees to destroy its nuclear weapons in exchange for peace with Arab neighbours
- e. Iran's nuclear weapons capability confirmed
- f. East Jerusalem becomes Palestinian capital city
- g. Bush gives Iran 48 hours to start dismantling nuclear weapons
- h. Russia to host Israeli-Syria peace talks
- i. Israel attends regional Arab development conference
- j. Israel at a state of near civil war over West Bank settlement dismantling

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HOMEWORK

- 1. VOCABULARY EXTENSION:** Choose several of the words from the text. Use a dictionary or Google's search field (or another search engine) to build up more associations / collocations of each word.
- 2. INTERNET:** Search the Internet and find information on Vladimir Putin. Share your findings with your class next lesson.
- 3. RUSSIAN-ISRAELI TIES:** Make a poster of the history of ties between Russia and Israel since 1948. Show it to your classmates in your next lesson.
- 4. DIPLOMAT'S DIARY:** Imagine you are a diplomat for your country. Write the journal / diary entry for one day of your work.

TEXT:

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BNE: A **historic** meeting took place in Jerusalem earlier when Russian President Vladimir Putin and Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon met for talks on a new role for Russia in the Middle East. Mr Putin is hoping to reassert Russia's **presence** in the Middle East since losing **influence** in the region following the end of the Cold War. The three-day visit is the first ever to Israel by a Russian or Soviet head of state. Russia has historically **backed** and sold arms to Arab countries. Moscow severed diplomatic links with Israel after the Six-Day War in 1967 that led to a twenty-year **cold-shouldering** of the Jewish state.

The two leaders will discuss a wide range of complex issues, including a **proposal** by Putin to hold an Israeli-Palestinian peace conference in Moscow later this year. That initiative was **dismissed** by Mr Sharon even before Mr Putin arrived in Israel. Other **sticking** points to be discussed include Russian arms sales to Syria and Russia's role in Iran's nuclear programme. Israel is still **technically** at war with Syria and is concerned the proposed Russian sale of anti-aircraft technology may fall into terrorist hands or **compromise** its ability to defend Israeli citizens. Mr Putin has insisted that Russia's role in Iran is only for peaceful purposes, such as energy, and not nuclear weapons.