The story of St. George appears in many Russian icons. He is the patron saint of Moscow, the capital of Russia. According to legend, a fierce dragon lived in a lake in Libya. He terrorized the people who lived in the town nearby. St. George appeared on a white horse to save the townspeople from the dragon. St. George icons show him on his horse, slaying the dragon. Sometimes, the princess he rescued is shown in the background.

Look below at the pictures of the dragons from some of the St. George icons in the Museum. Can you find the icons in the museum? (One of them is very tiny.) Which dragon do you think is the scariest? Can you draw one that’s even scarier? Use the space below.

Find the panel that has lots of icons of the Mother of God (Mary holding baby Jesus). Look carefully at the icon in the bottom right hand corner of the panel. What do you notice that’s different about this figure from all the other images of Mother of God?

Write your answer below:

Find the group of St. Nicholas icons. St. Nicholas was the patron saint of Russia and was very generous to the poor. If you say “Saint Nicholas” very fast you may hear that it sounds like Santa Claus—another name for him!

You might notice that these icons look a lot alike. In icon painting, a person is usually shown the same way every time, so that it is easy to recognize him. Look at the seven St. Nicholas Icons hanging on the wall, and answer the questions below.

How many St. Nicholas icons...
- Have a short gray beard? __________
- Have a tall forehead? __________
- Have a black and white band around his neck (called an “omophorion”) with crosses on it? __________
- Show him as an old man? __________
- Show him holding a building? __________
- Show him holding a book? __________
- Show him holding a sword? __________

St. Nicholas almost always appears as an old man with a short gray beard and a high wrinkled forehead wearing a band around his neck decorated with a cross. In one hand he sometimes holds a book, which is the Bible. Other times he holds a sword to show his willingness to fight for his faith. He may also carry a building that stands for the town where he lived.

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Hundreds of years ago in Russia, Emperor Leo passed a law saying that people could not paint icons. He made this law because he thought people were praying to the icons instead of praying to God. St. John of Damascus wrote a book about icons, saying that Leo’s law was wrong. To punish him, Leo ordered St. John’s hand to be cut off. John prayed to the Mother of God, asking her to heal his hand. She listened to his prayer and fixed his hand. John was so thankful that he made a small silver sculpture of his hand and attached it to the Mother of God painting. From then on, many paintings of the Mother of God show three hands.
Welcome to the Museum of Russian Icons! Use this Gallery Guide to help you explore the Museum’s collection. Pick up a pencil at the front desk, and get started!

What is an Icon?
An icon is a painting of a religious person or scene. Icons are painted on wooden panels with tempera paint, which is made from egg yolks mixed with pigments, or colored powders. Icons are an important part of worship in the Russian Orthodox religion. They are used in churches and in people's homes.

What is your favorite month of the year? Circle one...

January February March April May June July August September October November December
List some things that happen in that month to make it special:

Pick one of these events and draw it below:

Now imagine that you had to draw this event in a space less than one square inch! Do you think you can do it? How might you have to change your picture as you make it smaller? Try it below:

Find these words in the word search puzzle below. Circle each word as you find it. Remember to look in every direction: some words might be backwards or on a diagonal!

ICON
MUSEUM
TEMPERA
PAINTING
RUSSIA
PANEL
PIGMENT
NICHOLAS
GEORGE
DRAGON
MINYEIA

Ask for the word search puzzle key at the front desk of the Museum.