

Российский экономический университет им. Г.В. Плеханова

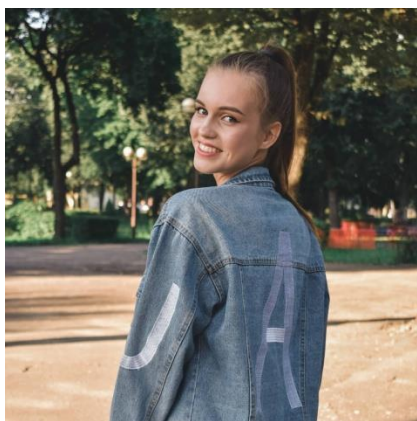
Командный конкурс эссе

“Unity in Diversity: Russia and the English-Speaking World. Time for equal opportunities”

Исследовательская работа (эссе)

“Англия в описании русских путешественников 18-19 веков ”

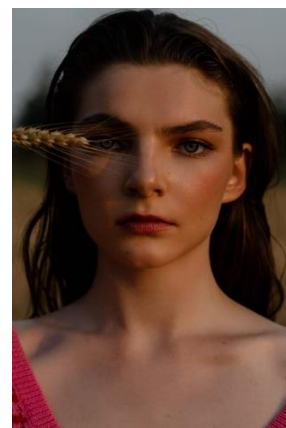
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Москва

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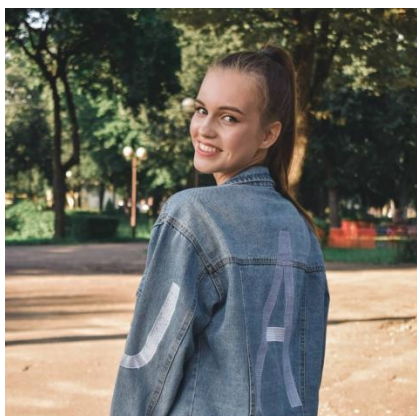
Group essay contest

**“Unity in Diversity: Russia and the English-Speaking
World. Time for equal opportunities”**

Research work (essay)

“England as described by Russian travelers of the 18th-19th centuries”

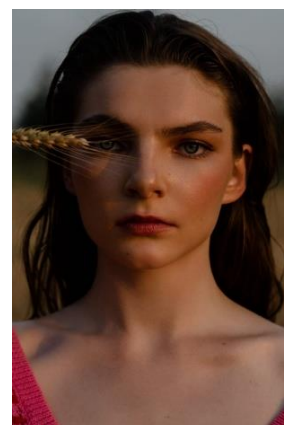
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2022

England as described by Russian travelers of the 18th-19th centuries

Bukhtiyarova E., Minyushkina Z., Chasova A, Egorova A., Boufalik E.

Theses:

1. The interest of the citizens of the Russian Empire in what the Foggy Albion was like had long been known; people from all walks of life sought to be there and to see with their own eyes this wonderful inner world of England.
2. The comparisons which were drawn between England and the Russian Empire were what struck the heirs to the throne, for they saw precisely the golden England, with all its festivities, military parades, and entertainment of an appropriate level.
3. Secular England, a side which was fully exposed to Russian ladies of noble blood, who had the opportunity of attending balls and spending their evenings in the company of British earls or for the discussion of literature.
4. The difference between the ladies who came from the Russian Empire and the ladies from England became noticeable almost immediately, because one had secular receptions in priority, and the other - home comfort.
5. England was open not only to high society, but also to people seeking an education, as can be seen from the surviving records of the students on their journey.
6. Any dignitary traveled with a servant. From the recollections of the servants we learn about the life of the lower classes of society and their working conditions.
7. Attractive was the philosophy of reasoning of English scholars to the figures of science and culture from the Russian Empire, who described the cultural side of England in the 18th-19th centuries.
8. We find England of the 18th and 19th centuries fascinating and varied from the memories of very different people of different professions, walks of life, and different views.

England as described by Russian travelers of the 18th-19th centuries

Bukhtiyarova E., Minyushkina Z., Chasova A, Egorova A., Boufalik E.

Mysterious England, covered with heathy fields and hidden in foggy forests, masking its own secrets behind the incomprehensibly stained-glass windows, has always impressed an ordinary traveler and thoughtful wealthy grandee.

Mutual interest between the Foggy Albion and Russian Empire has been great since old times, and it reached its pic during the reign of Queen Victoria - the time when a large number of public works appeared in Russia, written from the words of travelers about the “good old England”, dedicated to various aspects of Victorian society and to the characterization of the British. One of the most reliable sources about the manners and traditions of Victorian England may be considered N. Karamzin's “Herald of Europe”. In “Letters from a Russian Traveler” his passion for England can be seen from the first lines: "England may be called the land of beauty - and the traveler who is not captivated by pretty Englishwomen, who - especially coming from France, where there are very few beauties - can look indifferently on their charms, must have a stony heart." [3, p. 120] Today we know England as the super-rich and posh center of Europe, where everything breathes with comfort and aristocratism. But what was England like from the point of view of Russian travelers in the 18th and 19th centuries?

Every journey started from the road, which was one of the country’s most striking economic indicators. According to travelers' memories, they could only be admired in England (pic.1). Despite the high quality of roads, the journey from Russia to England still took from 5 to 30 days. Nevertheless, the royal people have been there not just once. Fortunately, the monarchs recorded their experiences in diaries, which now allow us to see England through their eyes. Colonel Urievich noted that the royalty who visited England on business were

also taking part in court celebrations (pic. 2) and military parades. Nicholas I remembered the cock fights which he had been watching for an hour and a half, but he was less impressed by the bull's dog-hunting – it seemed too cruel for him. The heir, Alexander II, well remembered the meetings of both Houses of Parliament and the High Royal Court, as well as the national celebration: the races in Epsom and Ascot.

The numerous category of Russian travelers were ladies fascinated by well-mannered earls, European fashion, and magnificent balls. We can identify Catherine Dashkova, Ekaterina Vorontsova, princess Tarakanova. The “Season” is the most important part of British summer which is mentioned in almost any of Victorian ladies’ memoirs, where we can read how main London gossips presented their best attires at the horse racing, drank expensive champagne on indecently luxurious balls and dinner parties or threw their husbands’ money around at the milliner.

Russian ladies memorized how intellectual was the nature of conversations and highlighted that main topics were read books, visited operas and theaters, and later-gambling. One of the most important arrangements of the Summer Season was Queen Charlotte’s Ball or the Debutante Ball (pic. 3). An event where young British girls got into adult society. Travelers unfamiliar with English culture could easily spot the competition around debutantes for the potential fiancé at first sight. The girls had to make titanic efforts to get around each other in this unequal battle. Jane Austen highlighted, “No one can be really esteemed accomplished who does not greatly surpass what is usually met with. A woman must have a thorough knowledge of music, singing, drawing, dancing, and the modern languages, to deserve the word; and besides all this, she must possess a certain something in her air and manner of walking, the tone of her voice, her address and expressions, or the word will be but half-deserved.” [8, p. 154]

In winter, preference was given to holding charity or family evenings. Russian ladies were especially impressed by children's fancy dress parties and Cinderella balls, informal evenings for the smallest Britons from 5 to 14 years old.

However, not only lovers of a carefree life could enjoy the beauties of England and be surprised by the diversity of the culture of this country. Young people of the high-ranked families were important guests in England too. Having gone there for study, they could not miss the chance to entertain. They paid attention to the House of Ale – pubs (pic.4). One of the lucky guys was Nikifor Alferi who described pastime there in detail. The atmosphere in such places was not very comfortable, but inexperienced students were unfamiliar with the luxury of expensive leather chairs in clubs for dignitaries. Those young people who traveled in the 19th century wrote in their diaries that the life of London pubs and later coffee houses continued. There one could not only spend time with friends at dinner, but also buy the latest press. Often in the memoirs of young men, *The Workman's* magazine is mentioned, which covered issues of the economy and relations between the worker and the employer, which was especially relevant for foreign students at that time.

The travelers devoted separate pages of their memoirs to the national cuisine which was not particularly exotic. The English mostly eat eggs, ham, veal cutlets and steak for breakfast. However, the presentation of the dishes and the service on the table was “like a kind of holy ceremony”, as Russian writer Elisabeth Vodovozova noted. It was thanks to the travelers' notes that the tradition of the tea party, which originated in England and was so much loved by the domestic nobility, spread in Russia.

Britain was also an attraction for those who went there, neither to have fun nor to study, but those who wanted to make themselves known to the world. We are talking about scientists, doctors and other professionals. They saw English people contemptuous, overly proud and “eccentric”, but owned a bright

mind in addition. Dmitri Mendeleev recalled that English chemists did not hold to any beliefs and were free to experiment. Ivan Turgenev noticed on the one hand richness and beauty of language, there speech was magnificent, harmonious, and graceful. On the other hand, English writers were not very financially generous. An artist Mikhail Belski astonished that stereotypically cold and smug English express themselves so vividly in art, with no limits to their imagination, rejecting rules and trying different materials and styles.

It is also worth mentioning a category of travelers who officially did not belong to them but were there in gist. These are servants of nobles, personal maids of ladies, coachmen and lackeys. One girl, who arrived in England with her Russian mistress, noted that apart from the marriage certificate in the closet of a British colleague there was nothing that would please the eye. She was also struck by the fact that the whole life of British maids revolves only around their masters, and they have no time either for handiwork or for elementary chatter with other servants at home. And if in Russia the hostess could even build some friendly relations with a personal maid, then in England the ladies were cold and almost did not communicate with their maids, sometimes without even knowing their names.

So what did Russian travelers in the 18th and 19th centuries see England? Different, very different. Some saw it as the symbol of freedom of mind and the flourishing of advanced technology, others remembered it as a land of luxurious balls and simple cuisine. This depends on one's social situation and the purpose of one's visit, but one thing is certain - every Russian was overwhelmed by the magnificence of English culture and art, the advanced economy and, of course, the manners of the English themselves. Karamzin, one of the brightest Russian admirers of England, wrote: "...I am in England too, in that land which in my childhood I loved so heartily and which by the character of its inhabitants and the degree of national erudition is surely one of the first states of Europe. - Everything is different here: other houses, other streets, other people, other food

- in a word, it seems to me that I have moved to another part of the world». [3, p. 85] Our contemporaries, who visited England, may easily agree with his words. After all, there is no Russian traveler who stays indifferent to the fantastic English scenery in the style of Charlotte Bronte, the Victorian Gothic period and the coloring of British culture (pic.5).

Appendixes:



pic.1. "English roads"



pic. 2. "The royal lunch"



pic.3. "The debutante ball"



pic.4. "London tavern"



pic.5. “London in 19th century”

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