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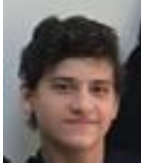

Командный конкурс эссе

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

Исследовательская работа (эссе)

«Англия в описании русских путешественников 18–19 веков»

Участники:

		
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Серпухов

2022

Serpukhov College
Group essay contest

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

Research work (essay)

« England as described by Russian travellers of the 18th–19th centuries»

Participants:

		
Alexey Dmitievich Hetmanov	Roman Dmitievich Denisenko	Vasily Vladimirovich Kuptsov
		
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Serpukhov
2021

Theses:

1. Introduction. Russia's interest to England.
2. Nickolay Mikhailovich Karamzin's journey, his travel novel, attitude to religion.
3. Pyotr Andreevich Vyazemsky: emphasis on moral superiority and strength of the British.
4. Ivan Alexandrovich Goncharov: self-respect and coldness of the British towards others.
5. Alexander Ivanovich Herzen Herzen: harsh criticism.
6. Nickolai Ivanovich Turgenev: on the legal system of Great Britain.
7. Nickolai Ivanovich Turgenev and Dioneo (I.Shklovsky): about the foreign press.
8. Conclusion.

План

1. Вступление. Интерес России к Англии.
2. Путешествие в Англию Николая Михайловича Карамзина. Его роман о путешествии, отношение к религии в Англии.
3. Петр Андреевич Вяземский: моральное превосходство и сила британцев.
4. Иван Александрович Гончаров. Самоуважение британцев и их холодность по отношению к другим людям.
5. Александр Иванович Герцен. Жесткая критика англичан.
6. Николай Иванович Тургенев о правовой системе Великобритании.
7. Николай Иванович Тургенев и журналист Дионео (И.Шкловский) о зарубежной прессе.
8. Заключение.

Since the time of Peter the Great England has drawn attention of the Russians. In the XVIII-XIX centuries the tendency continued, and Russian tsars, from Alexander I to Nicholas II, paid visits to Great Britain. The great interest to England among the nobility resulted in Anglomania. Aristocrats were fond not only of the English language and literature, but also borrowed the principles of household management and admired the state system of a distant island country. Enlightened people of Russia of the XVIII-XIX centuries – writers, critics, journalists – visited England. It was London, the capital of Great Britain, where the oppositionists – Alexander Herzen, Nikolai Ogarev, Peter Kropotkin – emigrated to. Many aspects of life in England, of the English character were interesting and unusual for the Russian travellers. Some of the exiles highly appreciated them, others – didn't.

Diaries and memoirs, along with the fiction of that time, represent an essential source for studying the ideas of Russians about England and the English. Our research work is based on the papers written by the Russian scholars. Thus, the result of the Russian writer Nickolay Mikhailovich Karamzin's long journey to Europe in 1789-1790 was the first Russian travel novel "Letters of a Russian Traveller".



N. M. Karamzin described England, which he visited during the trip, among other countries. He wrote in his "Journey to London" [1]: Who will tell you: "Noisy London!" – that one who has never seen it. Crowded, true, but quiet in an amazing way, not only in comparison with Moscow. It seems as if people here either haven't woken up from sleep or are excessively tired of activity and are in a hurry to rest. If from time to time the sound of carriages did not shake the nerve of your hearing, then you, walking in the streets here, could think that your ears were lying down. I have entered various coffee houses: twenty, thirty people are sitting in deep silence, reading newspapers, drinking red Portuguese wine, and it's good if you hear two words in ten minutes – what are they? "Your health, gentlemen!" Is there any wonder that the British are famous for their profundity in philosophy? They have time to think. Is there any wonder that

their speakers in Parliament, having started to speak, do not know how to finish? They are bored of being silent at home and in public.

If Peter the Great cut a window to Europe, Karamzin drove to Britain through this window in a carriage full of books and notebooks. While traveling, he did not only admire the views, but he also studied Europeanism, making a new Russian culture with his own hands. An interesting point in his papers concerns the freedom of faith and justice systems in Russia and in England. He writes: "Every form of faith is tolerated here, and is there at least one Christian sect in Europe that would not exist in England? Puritans and Calvinists, Methodists, Presbyterians, Uniates, Quakers, Gerngutors; in a word, everything whatever you ask for." "There are many good things in England," he wrote, "and best of all public institutions that prove the beneficent wisdom of government. Ask an Englishman what are its main benefits? He will say: "I live where I want; I am sure of what I have; I am not afraid of anything but the laws." The Russian traveller notes that it is the constitutional system of England that is the basis for the well-being of this nation. It is not surprising that the "Letters of a Russian Traveller" were persecuted by the censorship in Russia, and later, after publication, had a great influence on several generations of writers.

Many little things in the lifestyle of the British did not hide from Karamzin's attentive gaze. He remarked: "Thieves are nowhere more tolerated than in London: here they have their clubs, their taverns and are divided into classes. The British are afraid of strict police and would rather be robbed than see guards and pickets everywhere, live in the city as in if a camp. But they take a precaution: they do not carry a lot of money with them and do not walk at night."

Paying tribute to English literature, calling it special and "excellent in various parts", Karamzin, nevertheless, believes that: "In dramatic poetry, the English have nothing excellent except the works of one author, and this author is Shakespeare, and the English are rich"... "Current English literature is not worth attention at all: now they write only the most direct novels here and there is not a single good poet." The theater also disappoints him: "For the first time I saw Shakespeare's Hamlet - and it

would be better if I hadn't seen it! The actors speak, not play; they are poorly dressed, the scenery is poor."

The Russian nobility and educated people wanted to know the life in England by their own observations. Styles of life, habits and traditions of the residents differed from the travellers' ones. Sometimes the travellers described England with the words, which can be treated as an offence. As O. A. Kaznina [2] accurately noted, all the travellers, "regardless of the degree of their previous acquaintance with English culture <...>, convey a sense of the striking strangeness and dissimilarity of English culture to everything that their previous experience of wandering confronted them with. They show England and the English through the eyes of a naive stranger, an "outsider", a representative of another civilization <...> Under the influence of the English experience, the experience of Russian reality becomes different for Russian writers".

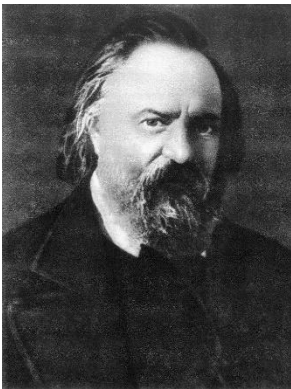


Pyotr Andreevich Vyazemsky, a poet of the Golden age of the Russian poetry, also left memories about England. "Looking at an Englishman, especially in England, you feel his moral dignity and strength. And this, though with sadness in half, explains the superiority and heaviness of English politics in the affairs of Europe and the whole world. The English despotism of the customs transcends any concept. A foreigner will not be allowed into the opera hall if he has a gray hat in his hands. If you ride an omnibus and bow to a stranger in the street, he will take it as indecency and offense. At dinner, if your style of eating is not the same as others, if you put a glass on the wrong side, if you cut but not break your slice of bread: all this can ruin your reputation in public opinion; and no matter how smart and kind you are, you will be known as a savage".



Ivan Alexandrovich Goncharov, a Russian novelist, once in England, immediately went to London. "I went to see the Thames twice and both times I saw only impenetrable steam," he wrote. During the first week in England, the writer visited all the "official" London sights and began to observe the residents of the

city, that was much more interesting to him. "Rather than look at the sphinxes and obelisks, I stood for an hour at a crossroads and watched two Englishmen meet. First they try to tear off each other's hand, then inquire about each other's health and wish each other every well-being. Their gait or some kind of amble and the importance on their face are so comical, it means a deep respect for themselves, some contempt or, at least, coldness towards others, but reverence for the crowd, that is, for society." Goncharov enjoyed visiting local shops in London and returned loaded with purchases. And then, putting everything on the table, he admitted that they were not necessary at all, he had already had something similar. "It is London where you buy a book that you will not read, a couple of pistols, without hope of shooting them, porcelain, which is not needed at sea and inconvenient to use, a cigar box, a stick with a dagger."



From 1852 to 1864, the revolutionary Alexander Ivanovich Herzen, a Russian writer and thinker, the father of "Russian socialism" lived in England. He dedicated pages to it in his book "My Past and Thoughts": "There is no city in the world that would wean people off and accustom them to loneliness more than London. Anyone who knows how to live alone has nothing to fear from London boredom." Herzen disliked England and the English. The characteristics of people and the country found in his letters to his closest friends are contemptuous: "The English are just an inferior breed of people, they are positively stupid and surprisingly ill-mannered"... "I believe that there is a need, very important mostly for mental hygiene, to occasionally leave England in order to respect it more and get disgusted with it more. I am amazed at every step – loud conversation, laughter, strangers talking in the cars, smoking – there are big buffets everywhere at the stations - people run around, eat cakes with laughter, drink cognac, and only the English are not people as disgusting as in England. Everyone sorts a brooding stopped. Yes, it is a great misfortune that it is impossible to leave (and of course, it is impossible) England."



In the nineteenth century, the British Empire was the strongest state, invincible on the sea; its financial resources were in full order. England of the XIX century had a leading form of government, sustainable Democratic institutions, actively forming civil society. It was very interesting for Russian travellers. Some of them have learned from their experience about the progressive English political system, especially if compared to Russia. Nickolai Ivanovich Turgenev, a Russian economist, a writer, a participant of the Decembrists revolt, recalled: “I know from reliable sources that my extradition was seriously demanded by George Canning, the Prime Minister of Great Britain. But I also learned that in response to the note for my extradition, the English Minister ensured that the note was received, without saying a word about its content.” In connection with this situation, N. I. Turgenev was indignant that Russian diplomats were not aware of the political rights in England: “What do these Russian diplomats do abroad if they do not even know the fundamentals of the social structure of the country in which they are, its legislation and the governing bodies? They demand my extradition from the English Minister, George Canning! I claim, it's something incredible.”



Isaac Vladimirovich Shklovsky, a writer, a journalist, an ethnographer, who wrote essays from London under the nickname Dioneo, described the English system of government as follows: «The royal troops would not have stopped to arrest or shoot as many revolutionaries as they wanted; but the same revolutionaries elected to parliament represented something inviolable in the eyes of the troops...».

We should say that the travellers also admired the civil position of the English press and the independence of the press from the government, which was also best understood in comparison with the politically backward Nickolay the Second's Russia (we are talking about the lawsuit of the Decembrists). As N.I.Turgenev witnessed: “The behavior of the periodical press in England and in France during this

process was of the kind it should have been. The press recorded facts that reached it from the theater of events; it made comments and expressed its views only to the extent that the nature of the facts themselves and the degree of their reliability allowed. Not a single English and not a single French newspaper, at least from those that I know, took as a face value everything said in the report of the commission of inquiry. Not a single one wanted to give this clerical concoction the faith that a charging document drawn up in countries where justice is done in legal forms and determined by them as it usually deserve in such cases. On the contrary, not finding a protection next to the prosecution, the newspapers abroad refrained from taking a certain position in relation to the prosecutor, who was at the same time a judge, and the accused, deprived of any opportunity not only to defend himself, but also to answer the questions.” Moreover, according to Russian travellers, “some newspapers openly recognized the impossibility of speaking out in the absence of elementary principles of any proper legal proceedings.”

Many things in England seemed incomprehensible to Russian travellers, they admired some things, they criticized some other things. They admired, for example, the structure of the justice system, the independence of the press. They criticized the British for their coldness, excessive restraint, as it seemed from the outside.

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