

Муниципальное автономное общеобразовательное учреждение

Домодедовская средняя общеобразовательная школа № 8

Командный конкурс эссе

“Unity in Diversity: Russia and the English-Speaking World.

Time for Equal Opportunities”

Исследовательская работа (эссе)

«Сходства и различия русского, английского и американского чувства юмора»

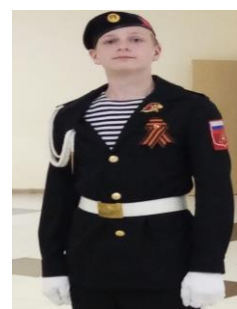
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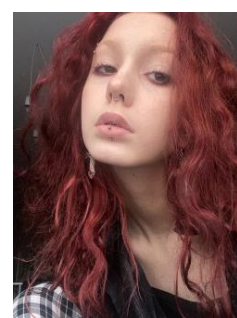
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Municipal Autonomous Educational Institution

Domodedovo Secondary School № 8

Group essay contest

“Unity in Diversity: Russia and the English-Speaking World.

Time for Equal Opportunities”

Research work (essay)

«The similarities and differences between the Russian, American and British senses of humour»

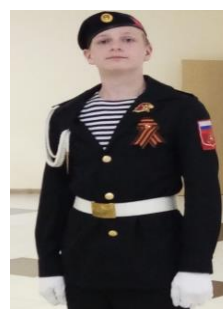
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2021 - 2022 г.г.

Thesis plan

1. The universal conspiracy or "The question of the existence of a universal theory of humor." (introduction; definition of a term «humor»);
2. Cultural prerequisites for the emergence of works of humorous content (individual features of humor inherent in each country separately);
3. The Healing Power of Humor (common features of English, American and Russian humor that help people accept life as it is and even better).

«The similarities and differences between the Russian, American and British senses of humour»

1. *The universal conspiracy or "The question of the existence of a universal theory of humor."*

If you happened to watch the TV series "The Big Bang Theory", perhaps, you would remember the episode where Dr. Sheldon Cooper decided to develop a universal theory of humor: he conducted various studies of this phenomenon: studies jokes and anecdotes, facial expressions of speakers and even made his girlfriend listen to every word from the dictionary he read and answered how funny this word was. When he stopped at the word "kumquat", then to his question about whether it was funny and how she felt when she heard this word, Amy answered: " I don't want to meet you anymore!"

The scene is hilarious, of course. Nevertheless, as you know, attempts to explore humor as a phenomenon, of course, were conducted.



Definition of a humor can be treated in different ways. It is explained by the fact that this phenomenon is multifunctional and involves many life`s spheres. One of these functions is communicative which is about a circulation of the information between people.

In this case, Relief theory is the most applicable and conduces mainly to the discharge. However, humorous statements and images are accessible only to those people who have a sense of humor. I. Jakab (1998) wrote that humor was a state of

consciousness, a tendency that endowed a person with the ability to see the hidden meaning and connections between repressed emotions and ideas, the ability to transform them into socially acceptable, free forms. These thoughts connect with the semantic theory of humor which claims that there is a necessity for the certain knowledge structure about the subject of the joke. The structure of knowledge is associated with both the person`s interior and his mentality.

In all countries, the mentality is different; it is defined by ethnic characteristics: culture, language, common territorial integrity, historical memory. From the above we get that the humor of various countries has differences. Further, using the example of the USA, England and Russia, we are going to explore what remains universal in humor, and what is exclusively national.

2. Cultural prerequisites for the emergence of works of humorous content

If we are talking about the peculiarities of the sense of humor in such different countries, it is fair to start with the participants who were involved in this amazing process from the very beginning.

Speaking of 19th century Russia, we note there were a lot of satirical writers, who ridiculed the government and situation in the country avoiding censorship in every possible way, for example Anton Chekhov and Mikhail Saltykov-Shchedrin. The writers changed the names of the cities, names of the characters and hid the government behind of animals or another things, in their works. Secondly, it is worth mentioning humor of 20th century. The genre of political jokes began to develop and flourished during the seventy years of Soviet rule. This anecdotes also were heavily censored. If somebody was caught telling or listening to such an anecdote, this person could get several years in prison. But on the other hand, in these seemingly difficult conditions such a movement as «The club of the cheerful and resourceful» appears in the USSR. It was the TV show, in which teams from various collectives competed in humorous answers to asked questions, improvisations on given topics etc. There were also TV magazines, for example «Eralash» and «Kalambur».



«It's a good sign to let the cat first into a new apartment!»

Both contained short funny stories about different life situations. But there was a difference between them, the first one was for children and the second one was for older people.

But if we talk about humor in the *United Kingdom* it is worth mentioning that English humor has always been specific and incomprehensible to some people. There were many excellent humorist writers in 19th century England, but K. Jerome, should definitely be singled out. His book "Three in one Boat", published in 1889, was written as a humorous account of three friends on a boat trip along the Thames. The book was initially perceived by readers as a serious guide. And only after some time the amazing world of comedies was revealed to readers. Charles Dickens was also a humoristic writer. He drew so many comic human characters that one could make residents of an imaginary city out of them.

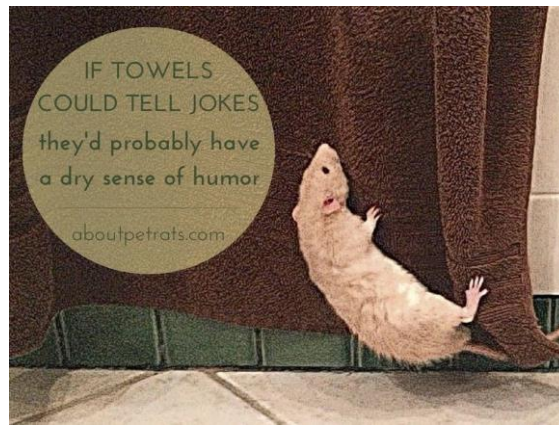
In 20th century there was a wonderful actor Charlie Chaplin. Silent films brought him popularity, even when sound appears, he remains faithful to the old traditions and film technology. Later, appears Mr. Bean, who was originally a character of the brand, but then starred in a 14-episode TV show, and even later in an animated series.

Speaking of *American humor*, it is impossible not to mention such a writer as Johnson Hooper. His first released work was «The Alabama Census», based on his own practice working as a census taker in Tallapoosa County. A year later, he began writing short stories about the swindler Simon Suggs, which he collected and published in 1845 under the title "The Adventures of Captain Simon Suggs"; generally, cruelly and absurdly humorous, but at the same time one of the most

racist books of his time, describing gambling in the Southwest in the *Flash Times*. This work made him world famous and may have inspired one or more of Mark Twain's characters.

At the end of 20th century, sitcoms and comedy films began to be shot. The most popular of them were «Friends», «Difficult child», «Home alone» and «Babysitters». People found them funny, because American humor is generally easy to understand and aimed at a wide audience. Later, in 21st century, new films began to appear, but humorous TV shows have become much more popular than movies. An example is such TV programs as «The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon», «The Late Show with James Corden». Both shows feature famous people, who discuss burning topics and talk about situations from their lives. The programs also include games, musical performances or sketches.

Paying attention to some features inherent only in a certain nation, we can note *Specific of English (British) humor*. Many Brits believe that the British sense of humor is unique, more subtle and more highly developed than other nations. Popular British playwright Oscar Wilde made this point quite clearly and deliberately when he said, "It is clear that humor is far superior to humor". Almost every conversation between Brits is bound to feature some form of irony, sarcasm, understatement, self-deprecation, teasing or mockery. There is one rule that helps people feel the difference. It says, "If someone is saying something which makes absolutely no sense with a straight face, they're probably joking". There are some main features that characterize British humor: irony, sarcasm and deliberate understatement. For the best thing about British humor is that it is not something you can learn, it's something that grows in your mind.



American humor is just easier to understand than British. This type of humor is about everyone and everything. Humor usually concerns aspects of American culture, and depends on the historical and current development of the country's culture.

The United States has many diverse groups from which to draw on for humorous material. The strongest of these influences, during the 20th century at least, has been the influx of Jewish comedians and their corresponding Jewish humor, including some of the most influential: The Three Stooges, The Marx Brothers, Lenny Bruce, Rodney Dangerfield, Jackie Mason, Woody Allen, Mel Brooks, Larry David, Jerry Seinfeld, Jon Stewart, and Lewis Black, just to name a few. In the latter half of the 20th century, comedy from the United States saw its African-American comedians come to the forefront. With exposure stemming from TV shows such as *The Jeffersons*, *Saturday Night Live* and *The Cosby Show*, black comedians became household names.

If we talk about the origins of *Russian* humor, laughter has long been considered a sign of bad taste. Many considered it a manifestation of the devil. But at the same time in ancient Russian culture we are introduced to such people as jokers and skomorokhi. An important feature of Russian humor is undoubtedly the influence of the word and the reaction that follows it. It is appealing in its unexpectedness and unpredictability, one could say that it invigorates and gives energy to the action. Russian laughter is characteristic of changing, acquiring new forms and meanings. This is most characteristic of modern Russian humor.

Acceptable to Russian humor is the recognition of errors in various spheres of life, whether political, historical, or social. The nature of Russian laughter is good, even if not everything can be attributed to this trait. Domestic humor is characterized by naturalness, simplicity, which one perceives as something universally recognized, but at the same time ridiculous. Just as a clear response to Russian humor can be seen in literary works. In Russian humor, according to the division of features, various kinds of jokes originated.

3. The Healing Power of Humor.

As Sir Palam Granville Woodhouse said: "Telling an English joke, you feel a sense of slight superiority. Listening to an English joke, you feel a sense of slight inferiority."

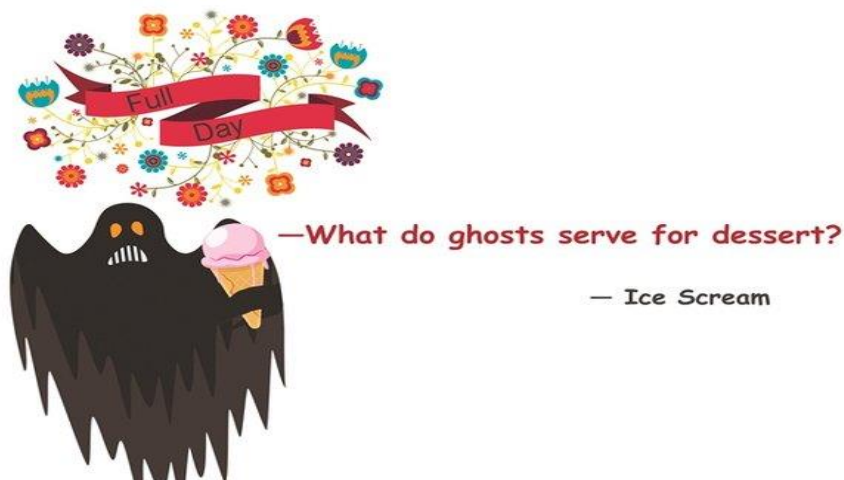
By exploring the historical background of humor of a particular culture, we can certainly understand the reasons for the behavior of the British or Russians in a particular situation, which is an advantage when studying any phenomenon in theory. But we can consider the manifestation or realization of this heritage on concrete examples: for example, for a long time on Russian television we watched the animated series "Well, wait!" (Nu, pogodi!). The main characters of which are a Wolf and a Hare. The plot is based on the pursuit of one after another, in fact, the Wolf hunts the Hare on a daily level, endlessly getting into various comical situations. The main part of the audience of this cartoon is working people, children, elderly citizens: The wolf is an ordinary average city dweller, not always law-abiding, and also with bad habits. Hare - on the contrary: the character is positive, economic and well-mannered. Often their relationship is quite strained, in a word, "hunting", but sometimes they are quite tolerant of each other. These two characters embody a difficult relationship in a society where there have long been clichés about how to behave and not to behave in order to have a certain reputation. The hare almost always turns the wolf around his finger. The plot seems to tell the viewer - be educated and hardworking, then such a loafer is not a hindrance to you. This animated series is still popular today.

Comparing it with another famous animated series, already of American origin, "Tom and Jerry" is presented to our attention. Also very funny and dynamic. But the jokes are completely different, the plots are simpler: the viewer laughs at how the cat's teeth are regularly knocked out, mice step on the tail, endless "falling", "destruction", very vivid actions. Such cartoons are also loved by children and people who have come to rest after a long working day. But the plot is predictable. There is no intrigue, as, for example, in the Russian "Well, wait!". In that case, the animals are forest animals, but here they are pets.

Russian humor is more free, American humor is convenient and easily assimilated.

Examples of Russian comedy films, in addition to the generally accepted set of acting techniques, often rely on Russian literature (again about classics!), which cannot be said about Americans: their bright and beautiful films are still quite simple in content, despite the rich equipment.

If we talk about the culture of Great Britain it is filled with borrowings, and history is full of examples of deterrence and counterbalance ("no one is waiting for the Spanish Inquisition"), the humor is so disguised that it is difficult to exhale and laugh widely. Therefore, examples of amazing holidays or the witty dialogues of Jane Austen with a subtle subtext or the arguments of Jerome K. Jerome in Russian translation are not always so sparkling.



Whether it's the Americans with their ability to joke about lawyers, dentists. The same "Simpsons" managed to show in their unpretentious plots both the future president of America and the luminary of science - Stephen Hawking. No one else took a swing at it, but the Americans managed. And this series was also a success! Nevertheless, when we understand the background of this humor, we become closer to each other. The Knock-knock jokes also become funny to the Russian listener, and Sheldon Cooper's lines become catch phrases. Because we are united by the most important thing - mutual interest in each other's lives, what is called the dialogue of cultures and the desire to expand our horizons, to discover the unknown and speculative.

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