

ЧОУ ДПО Эдукацентр в Пушкине

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»**

Участники:



Philinov Vladlen

Novikova Ksenia



Balashova Ekaterina



Ivanov Maksim

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2022

Group essay contest

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

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Research work (essay)

**“The similarities and differences between the Russian, American and British  
senses of humour”**

Contestants:



Philinov Vladlen



Novikova Ksenia



Balashova Ekaterina



Ivanov Maksim

Supervisor: Prikhodko Valeria Romanovna

## Theses:

1. Humor is an integral part of everyday life
2. Aim and tasks of the research.
3. British humor. Its features and types.
4. American humor and its usage in everyday life.
5. The importance of humor in Russia.
6. The similarities and main features of American, British and Russian humor.

Many different cultures have been formed for the last centuries and each one has its own unique features and characteristics. This diversity was the result of individual historical development, differences in geographical location and climatic conditions. Language of any culture is some kind of a mirror, which is distinctive for each nationality. The language expresses such a unique aspect of human life as humor.

Humor is an integral part of everyday life. It, like music or literature, consolidates our daily lives. But much like language, the humor of each nationality has special features that express the mentality of each individual culture.

Our purpose is to get acquainted with it and identify the similarities and differences of Russian, English and American humor.

So, what is humor? From a scientific point of view, humor is a psychological feature of a person, which consists not only of the contradictions in the surrounding world, but also of evaluating them from a comic point of view.

#### British humor

“The English are not happy unless they are miserable” – George Orwell

British humor carries a strong element of satire aimed at the absurdity of everyday life. Common themes include sarcasm, tongue-in-cheek, banter, insults, self-deprecation, taboo subjects, puns, innuendo, wit and the British class system. These are often accompanied by a deadpan delivery which is present throughout the British sense of humor. It may be used to bury emotions in a way that seems unkind in the eyes of other cultures. Jokes are told about everything and almost no subject is off-limits, though a lack of subtlety when discussing controversial issues is sometimes considered insensitive.

We can distinguish the main types of English humor:

1. **Witty or dry humor.** It is an intelligent kind of humor that is the complete opposite of slapstick humor. Witty humor requires your mind to be active and engaged. It may not always be “laugh out loud” funny. In fact, the person who

uses dry humor often shows little to no emotion at all. This is why it is often called “deadpan” humor.

**2. Sarcasm.** Sarcasm can sometimes be a big part of witty humor. It is a kind of humor that can hurt someone else’s feelings when used in a mean way, but when used gently it can be funny without putting someone else down. Example of witty humor using irony and sarcasm:

- “Some cause happiness wherever they go; others whenever they go.” – Oscar Wilde

**3. Understatement.** An understatement is very British. It’s when someone deliberately makes out that something is less significant than it is. For instance, by saying “It’s a little bit windy, isn’t it?” when there’s a raging hurricane outside is an understatement.

**4. Satire.** Satire involves using biting humor to criticize people and institutions with power, like politicians. Satire is popular in the UK because Brits love taking people “down a peg or two” (humbling them when they get too arrogant).

Due to the widespread use of irony, sarcasm and other forms of humor in everyday life, it is difficult to make an Englishman laugh. The most common reaction you can get from an Englishman to a joke is a half-smile. The British got used to establish rules in their life and restrain their temperament, but as a result, it finds expression in humor. An Englishman can make rather a rude joke about appearance of his interlocutor, like a bald head, excess weight or a large number of freckles. Black humor and cynicism are also found everywhere in popular culture, but since such jokes are presented as comic situations, you should treat it appropriately and not hold against a snarky comment. Moreover, you will be expected to respond in the same way. Also, the smile of an Englishman of any generation can be caused by everyday jokes about the weather, politics and geographical neighbors: the Irish and the Scots.

- “English rain feels obligatory, like paperwork” – Maureen Johnson
- “What does the Queen of England drink? - Royal tea”

### American Humor

Americans prefer simplicity and straightforwardness. They tend to joke with a smile on the streets Americans are less likely to laugh at their own shortcomings American humor is simple-minded and uneducated. American humor prefers observational techniques. However, the style of observational humor (while not exclusively American) is very much a staple of the American style of humor since it seeks to point out the aspects of American culture and social discourse which are obvious while at the same time highlighting their ridiculousness.

Some of the things that Americans laugh at may not be understood by the foreign. You can see it especially in the cinema, because the United States is famous for its Hollywood films, and in particular comedies, most of which are based on the same stamps. Here are some examples that can be found in American films:

- Local policemen love donuts
- Throwing toilet paper at houses (This one is especially popular amongst teenagers and it is called T-Ping)

These cases suggest that humor in the United States often acquires a physical embodiment, that is why, among Americans, it has become a very popular phenomenon to prank each other. There are such TV shows as "Setup" and "Cruel Intentions", where stars and ordinary people take part at.

With the new changes, a special common culture of humor appears among the youth. Teenagers use templates, colloquial slang, memes. They are used for purposes of self-expression, they are used by businesses for advertising purposes, by political groups to make points or convey messages to their followers, for comedic purposes and even for religious reasons. Here are some examples:

- “What do you call a bee that lives in America? - A USB”

- “Barber – ‘Have a haircut, sir?’  
Gentleman – ‘Thank you, thought of having several of them cut.’”  
“Knock knock. - Who's there? -Joe King. -Joe King who?”

Despite the fact that American humor is free from national and other prejudices, some taboos on certain topics have appeared in the United States recently. Jokes about ethnic, religious, sexual or sexual issues have become particularly indecent. In America, it is believed that ridiculing such topics can offend the feelings of people who have suffered discrimination or acts of violence against themselves or their loved ones.

#### Russian humor

Humor is a very important part of our life because it helps us in hard moments. Everywhere it is different and has its own features. In Russia humor divides into: sarcasm irony and satire. Russian humor really stands out among the other. For example, German humor is a little rude or English one is very subtle, but Russian differs. It is human nature to cope with stress with the help of humor, because if you fail to change something, all what you can do is to laugh at it. Almost every Russian person understands this from birth. Therefore, some of the most common topics for humor in Russia are harsh climatic conditions, problems with utilities and corruption.

- The level of thinking of our deputies is such that if on Tuesday a deputy slips on ice and fractures his arm, he will fight not against the ice-cruled grounds but against the Tuesdays.
- If at the elections they voted for which of the deputies to put to jail, then voter turnout would be close to 100%.

This trend is also evident in the works of Russian classics. What better proof is there than the life of Nikolai Gogol of the age-old Russian bias against laughter, especially against the laughter that criticizes, satirizes, or (horror of horrors) gets ironic? For Russians the central problem of laughter (the unbridled laughter of



freedom) is this: nothing is off limits. This kind of laughter laughs at everything, holds every human being and every human institution up to mockery.

Sometimes there are short poems including nonsense and black humor verses, similar to the Little Willie rhymes by Harry Graham, or, less so, Edward Lear's literary "nonsense verse". Often, they have recurring characters such as "little boy", "Vova", "a girl", "Masha". Most rhymes involve death or a painful experience either for the protagonists or other people. This type of joke is especially popular with children. Russians can kindly make fun of family members, representatives of various professions (teachers, doctors), bosses and colleagues. It is believed that you should not be offended by such humor, since its goal only to cheer up.

- “Vovochka returns home from dentist. Father: - Well, hero, does the tooth hurt anymore? - I don't know. The doctor kept it for himself.”
- “A little boy found a machine gun — Now the village population is none.”

To sum up, humor is a crucial part of human's life, it can cover many areas and affect different topics. Humor in England, America and Russia has both similarities and differences. Most of the differences in English, American and Russian humor are related to the unique territorial location of these countries and their individual historical development. English, American and Russian humor deals with such general topics as the weather, territorial neighbors and human stupidity and greed.

The unique feature of English humor is its widespread use among different sectors of population as well as the ability of the British to laugh at themselves, their national characteristics and history. As for American humor, its unique feature is in breadth of the themes used and the ways in which it is presented, as well as the existence of taboo topics. Russians use humor in hard times as some kind of escaping from the reality. As globalization processes lead to cultural exchanges among citizens of different nations, including Britain, the US, and Russia. As the modern generation around the globe does not understand most older jokes, the

older generation doesn't understand many of the jokes of the younger one. But still it unites the people across the globe.

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