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**“Единство в различии”**

Исследовательская работа (эссе)

«Wisdom of proverbs and sayings»



Выполнил: Ноздрачева Анастасия Константиновна

Ученица 9 класса

Руководитель: Кольцова Ангелина Николаевна

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Individual essay contest

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

Research work (essay)

“Wisdom of proverbs and sayings”



Written by: Nozdracheva Anastasia Konstantinovna

9th grade student

Supervisor: Koltsova Angelina Nikolaevna

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## **Thesis plan**

### **1. A wisdom of proverbs and sayings**

The wisdom, spirit and experience of any nation are concentrated in proverbs and sayings. They are centuries-old observations of people's environment.

### **2. Ancient times**

It is difficult to say when proverbs were created. It can be assumed that their origins go back to ancient times.

### **3. Animals in proverbs**

There are proverbs and sayings related to animals in English and Russian and they are the most numerous.

### **4. Legends about a magpie**

There are many proverbs in Russian and English associated with this curious bird. There are several versions of the origin of these proverbs.

### **5. Richness and diversity of language and culture**

By understanding and appreciating animal proverbs, we can gain a deeper understanding of the richness and diversity of language and culture.

**In the simplicity of the word is the greatest wisdom.  
Proverbs are always brief, but they contain enough  
wisdom and sentiment to fill a book.**

**A.M. Gorky**

### **A wisdom of proverbs and sayings**

Can you imagine a circus without clowns, an artist without paints, and a school without students? It's difficult...And a language without proverbs and sayings? Simply impossible!!! For a long time, knowledge was transmitted orally from generation to generation. And in order not to miss and not to confuse anything, folk wisdom was clothed in short, capacious and figurative forms — in proverbs and sayings. Proverbs and sayings are a historical mirror of the life of society. The exact rhyme, simplicity and brevity make proverbs and sayings persistent, memorable and necessary in speech. The wisdom, spirit and experience of any nation are concentrated in proverbs and sayings. They are centuries-old observations of people's environment: everyday life, social and labor activities, religious views of people. Proverbs and sayings teach people to understand life, give them a direction of life behavior and criticize negative phenomena in them such as greed, stupidity, talkativeness, laziness

### **Ancient times**

It is difficult to say when proverbs were created. It can be assumed that their origins go back to ancient times, to the time of paganism or at the time of the emergence of human speech. Perhaps the first proverbs were depicted on the walls, in the form of pictures, because even then a person needed to convey his observations and inferences. For people who were illiterate, proverbs and sayings became a peculiar form of preserving and transmitting their observations, their life experience to succeeding generations. The proverbs were put into short succinct and imaginative forms so as not to miss or misunderstand anything.

Proverbs and sayings can be seen in ancient Egypt. They were first summarized and classified by Aristotle. In his words “Proverbs are elements of the old philosophy which survived because of their brevity and precision.”

### **Animals in proverbs**

Humans have been around the animals since the beginning of time. It is no coincidence that the first rock paintings in the caves of Lascaux and Altamira depict animals as ancient companions of a man. The animal threatens, helps, can become a loyal friend or the worst and most dangerous enemy.

In the era of primitiveness, people associated their ancestry with a totem, an ancestor animal and believed in the blood relationship of a man and an animal (bear, wolf and swan). Cats, dogs, cows were deified in many ancient cultures. The image of the Beast also occupies an important place in the pagan traditions of the Slavs and a person is often compared to an animal. Many signs and beliefs are associated with the world of animals. Therefore, the images of various animals are imprinted in proverbs and sayings that help us learn a lot about the uniqueness of the national character, the mentality of a particular nation. In fact, the attitude towards an animal is something that reflects the degree of humanity in the person himself. The number of proverbs and sayings about animals is the most numerous.

Not surprisingly, there are proverbs and sayings related to animals in English and Russian. Everyone knows that the British are big animal lovers. The British perceive animals as another baby to the mother, a sister or brother to an only child, a grandchild to the elderly, for all of them pets provide pleasure and companionship.

As for the Russian language, most likely, they had a belief that long time ago all animals were humans, but later, those of them who took false oaths, committed evil deeds and committed other unseemly acts were turned into animals, fish and birds. An animal sees everything, hears everything and even anticipates. Moreover,

it can feel as a human being. However, being deprived of human speech, animals can communicate with each other and warn of danger.

### **Legends about a magpie**

Have you ever watched a magpie? This long-tailed bird is known to be curious. Noticing an outsider in the forest, it considers it its duty to accompany him, alerting all the inhabitants of the forest: "Beware! Strangers are coming!"

There are many proverbs in Russian and English associated with this curious bird.

How do you tell someone that you know some secret information without giving out the informant? Perhaps the most tactful beginning would be the phrase "a little bird sang to me." There are also analogs: "the magpie on the tail brought", "I heard rumors."

The English proverb **a little bird told me** means "маленькая птичка сказала мне". There are several versions of the origin.

Most likely, the phrase appeared at the time when carrier pigeons delivered letters to people. Often their contents were secret. And then to the question "How do you know?" it was possible to answer without lying: "A bird told me."

It turns out that the first to whom the little bird "sang" were the recipients of the letters sent by the winged mail? It's possible. But there are other hypotheses.

The second version refers us to the Scandinavian myths: the hero Sigurd (aka Siegfried) soaked himself in the blood of the dragon Fafnir which he killed. Thanks to this he began to understand the language of birds. Sigurd heard the bird singing about his foster father's intention to kill him. Eventually, the hero remained alive, and the phrase became winged.

Another version was given by the American writer Hugh Henry Breckenridge (1748-1816). He found an explanation of the proverb in the King James Bible, more precisely, in the Book of Ecclesiastes. The meaning of a similar quote boils

down to the fact that it is worth watching your words and thoughts, "for the bird of heaven will carry the voice."

Among the first "listeners" of the little birds may have been King Henry IV, according to the Shakespeare Chronicle, or at least Shakespeare himself. At the end of the second part of the play, Prince John of Lancaster utters the phrase:

I will lay odds, that ere this yeere expire,  
We beare our Ciuill Swords, and Natiue fire  
As farre as France. I heare a Bird so sing,  
Whose Musicke (to my thinking) pleas'd the King.

Considering the Russian proverb **Сорока на хвосте принесла**, you can recall the legend of Marina Mnishek, who turned into a magpie when she had some troubles, and flew out of the window of her terem. That's why, the magpie was cursed in Russia. There is also another version. For a long time there were no magpies in Moscow, because one of them once gave out a Bunch of boyars with her chirping, who was hiding from enemies in the forest on the spot where Moscow now stands. He was killed there. And the dying boyar cursed the stupid bird. It was also said that Metropolitan Alexy forbade magpies to appear in Moscow, because he believed that magpies were bringing witches there. There is also a legend about a pious Muscovite who gave away all his goods to the poor and left himself only the last piece of cheese to go on a pilgrimage to holy places. And the magpie stole this cheese. For this, God ordered it not to appear in the city anymore, and the bird was nicknamed "the magpie thief" by the people. But the most interesting legend relates to the events of the end of the XVI century, to the last days of the reign of Ioann the Terrible. It is known that the Tsar on the eve of his death ordered to catch witches all over the country and bring them to the capital square. The Tsar came out and ordered everyone to be covered with straw and set on fire from all sides. The witches were engulfed in flames - and they raised screeching, screaming and meowing. A thick black column of smoke rose, and magpies flew out of it, one after another apparently, invisibly. So, all the witches turned around at forty and

deceived the Tsar. Then the Terrible Tsar was angry and sent a curse after them. "So that you," he says, "from now on and forever remain magpies!" So they all fly as magpies now.

The English proverb a little bird told me and the Russian proverb a magpie on the tail brought have the same meaning. The English proverb has historical importance, it is associated with Scandinavian myths and King Henry IV. The Russian proverb also has historical roots and is associated with the reign of Ioan the Terrible. Learning English and Russian proverbs we can know some interesting facts about the history of England and Russia.

### **Richness and diversity of language and culture**

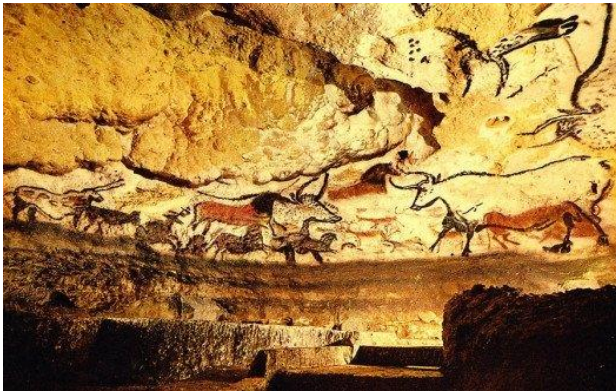
In conclusion, animal proverbs serve as a fascinating reflection of language and culture, highlighting the ways in which animals have been used as symbols and metaphors throughout human history. While there are differences in the use of animal proverbs in British and Russian culture, there are also significant similarities, emphasizing the shared human experience of interacting with and understanding the natural world. By understanding and appreciating these animal proverbs, we can gain a deeper understanding of the richness and diversity of language and culture.



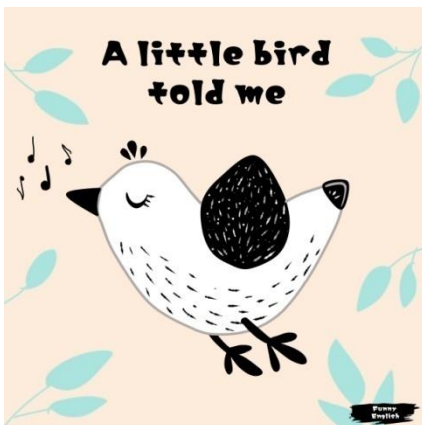
## Application



In Aristotle's words "Proverbs are elements of the old philosophy which survived because of their brevity and precision."



The first rock paintings in the caves of Lascaux and Altamira depict animals as ancient companions of a man.



An English proverb **a little bird told me**



Russian proverb **Сорока на хвосте принесла**



The hero Sigurd (aka Siegfried)



American writer Hugh Henry Breckenridge (1748-1816)



King Henry IV



Shakespeare



Marina Mnishek daughter of Sandomierz voivode Jerzy Mniszek and Jadwiga Tarlo, wife of False Dmitri I, married to him in May 1606, shortly before his death, and crowned as a Russian tsarina (the only woman crowned in Russia before Catherine I); then wife of the next impostor, False Dmitri II, who claimed to be the first. Actively participated in



The Tsar Ioann the Terrible

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