

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

Research essay
“Fears, taboos, ambitions and dreams of Russian and British
teenagers”



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*We started a movement ... to build
character, citizenship and confidence in young people"*

Andrew Shue

It would be better if those two had stayed at home that evening...

They were two friends living far from each other - on different continents, but their passion for computer games made them friends. They met there, in an online game. And since then, they have been regular visitors at the computer club. They often came there to play and enjoy their teenaged lives.

However, on this particular occasion there was no way to predict such a stormy development of events...until it was too late to turn back the hands of time. After entering the game, an invitation link to a new level appeared on the screen for both the boys. "Quests, adventures, tasks!" the message read. Curiosity prevailed, and our heroes followed the link. Suddenly they were both blinded by a bright light and to their utter surprise they realized that they were transported into an alternative reality and found themselves near to a huge, magic tree within the game itself. The trees branches appeared to reach for the stars themselves, while their firm roots held the trunk sturdily to the ground.

Would you like to know what happened later? Oh, it was an exciting story indeed, with lots of adventures and thrilling moments, just like teenagers like getting into. But we'd like to go deeper, and while being young people, try to understand the thoughts and souls of the teens.

The boys told us this story in order to help teenagers from different countries understand them better through self-awareness of what they're afraid of and their ambitions to strive for in real life. And most importantly, what is worth dreaming about and what is important not to be scared of doing. But in order to achieve your goal, you have to sweat a lot, confirming the words of the famous inventor, Thomas Edison, who said: "Genius is 1% inspiration and 99% sweat" [6].

FEARS

"The Secret to Heroism: Never Let Fear Rule Your Life" Bernard Shaw

Modern teenagers and their fears are the two elements, two molecules, dare we say here, that inevitably follow each other. The psychology of adolescents is imperfect, incomplete yet, you know.... More than this, it is influenced by many factors, such as family relationships, primarily, school problems, rough going with friends. Neither can we discount elementary TV viewing and world topics being discussed in the world today.

We don't ask teenagers to be heroes, but we've got a great desire to help them feel good in the world they live in. Modern teenagers can't stop being afraid of misunderstandings, on the part of parents mostly. They think their parents don't feel the same things teenagers do or understand their feelings and thoughts about life. It's more typical of British teens, in fact. According to the British Media "...young people in Britain have more detached relationships inside their own families. In English-speaking countries there is usually much less parental supervision than in Russian families, for example..." [3]. In Russia adults manage to keep a stronger eye on their teens.

There are plenty of kids out on the streets in both countries, afterwards. In Britain, kids are exposed to serious gangs and gang violence that can spill over from the streets into their own homes. For example, the Brixton bullies and other serious gangs as well as drugs and drug peddlers targeting younger children. In Russia teens meet the same negative fears but to a less degree.

The fear of not getting a decent job and not finding your place in life disturbs them a lot.

All the fears associated with the reasons mentioned above are inherent in all teenagers, regardless of the country of their residence. The only difference lies in how big these fears are, how teens allow these fears to 'get to' them...

TABOOS

*“Soul is to be found in the vicinity of
taboos” Thomas Moore*

Let's remember our friends, parted at the tree. After running for some distance Jack stopped suddenly. Why, do you ask? Those were taboos that stopped Jack in his tracks. But what is a “taboo” in fact? It is “something that you should not say or do because people generally think it is morally wrong, unpleasant, or embarrassing” [1]. We agree here, but not completely. We know for sure that taboos can rule our lives. “The use of taboo expressions suggests that speakers have, or wish to have, a close personal relationship with others” [1]. Teenagers are not an exception. In our situation Jack realized that it wasn't a good idea to leave a friend alone. That first and most significant taboo ‘do not leave a friend in trouble’ worked perfectly for Jack. The fact that Jack adhered to this taboo deserves our full respect and makes him a real friend indeed!

Among other taboos that adolescents punt as a reason to do or to avoid doing something, we consider it necessary to note the following inner rules: do not use illegal drugs, do not swear, do not steal, do not lie to adults, respect others and not only your peers, as well as trust and respect the younger generation. On the other hand, the thing strictly forbidden is also the most desirable one. As a result, many young people take risks in every possible way in order to get the most desirable thing they are denied, the tidbit. Teenagers begin to deceive adults, making excuses or trying to avoid some kind of action. They try to protect themselves from adults, hiding in their own world. Thus, it is recommended that adults don't impose too many restrictions. Everything should however have its limits. Have you got another idea?

Thus, we're here to give a small piece of advice to parents: kids are very different; but they are still human beings. Don't limit them so much that you alienate them. Let them develop in their own way and do not take away

opportunities from a teenager by brainwashing them with numerous taboos. Don't box them in, let their personalities develop.

AMBITIONS “Strength will certainly be found if you tirelessly strive for something” *André Maurois*

And what about Ivan? What did he feel while sitting alone in that big tree? Sitting there alone, he had enough time to think about his own life. Being a Russian youth, he felt really afraid initially. However, very soon he calmed down and his thoughts brought him to something more pleasant and important than his fears. He had a lot of thoughts and concerns mulling in his mind, but his only overpowering intention right at that time was to go down, find his friend Jack to have a talk with him. These intentions of Ivan's seem to be very close to ambitions. While carrying out our research, we have found out some difference between them. Let's be more specific: an ambition is “... something that you want to do or achieve very much” [2]. And they can help a person to develop his personal human being. A teenager might ask himself: “Who am I? What do I live for? What do I want to be?” A quote by Walcolm Forbes might be relevant here: “...too many people overestimate what they are not, and underestimate what they are” [4].

Teens from different countries most probably have similar ambitions and goals: they strive for learning, having fun, finding a job, making true friendships that even lead to deeper relationships. A striking difference is that from the age of 14 to 16 English teenagers pay great attention to their education and are even keen on attending plenty of courses in order to achieve success in life. While in Russia, young people are often forced to choose a specific academic direction by their parents which no doubt leads to conflicts with peers and parents. Unfortunately, this can provoke dissatisfaction with the lives of teenagers in future. Thus we can say with almost certainty that every teenager strives to be

loved and respected in the family and to be an authority in a company at this difficult age.

DREAMS *"Build your own dreams, or someone else will hire you to build theirs»* *Farrah Gray*

Coming back to our heroes, what did they dream about...? We suppose to state that Jack and Ivan's dreams in life do not differ much. Recently, everyone has been saying that the current generation is bad and ungrateful, modern teenagers do not have high values, they are not interested in anything, but only think about how to buy a new gadget for themselves, play another computer game, sit in social networks. And we ask ourselves what modern teenager dreams about in reality. Does he really think only about material values, are there spiritual values in his head? The answer didn't make us wait long. He is waiting for communication, included in the activity, where he would feel on an equal footing with adults.

We cannot but share this point of view that contemporary teens dream about many things, such as becoming great sportsmen, for example. Sports plays a huge role in the UK [5]. After all, it is not for nothing that we often see a great number of athletes from this country participating in the Olympic Games. But sports started developing in Russia nowadays too. Other desired dreams are as follows: to become good spouses someday, have kids and become useful citizens of the world. Dreams of British and Russian adolescents are pretty similar in fact. Their wish to have a true family, a well-equipped dwelling place (accommodation), have a prestigious (highly-paid) job and become popular among as many people as possible. Just like their peers abroad, young Russian people do sports, make technological progress move forward with hope for a better life! At the end of the journey the boys got to know themselves much better and could trust each other endlessly. We wish every teenager be happy, like those boys.

We'd like to finish up our essay by the words of a famous person in all epochs, Winston Churchill. He said once: "Success is not final; failure is not fatal: it is the courage to continue that counts".

Teenagers in both the countries, in England and Russia are unique in their own way, so it is difficult to single out a common character. May be this is the ability to present themselves in society...But it's very personal, you know...

The main feature that unites them is the ability to be in a team, to work cohesively. Both British and Russian adolescents believe in teamwork. They rely heavily on each other for peer approval and are frightened when someone acts or looks different. This thing is the most precious to our mind.

In conclusion, we would like to say that teenagers are still children with developing personalities! And these are adults who need to support teens' growth and can let them be themselves!

Bibliographic list

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Attachments:

Приложение 1. A running boy in a virtual game



Приложение 2. Fears of teenagers



Приложение 3. Taboos of teens



Приложение 4. Ambitions of teens



Приложение 5. Dreams



Приложение 6. Ideal family



THESES:

1. We are here to help teenagers from different countries to understand themselves better through self-awareness of what they're afraid of and their ambitions are. What should or shouldn't they strive for in real life. And most importantly, what is worth dreaming about and what is important not to be scared of doing. In order to achieve your goal of becoming a Big Man, you have to sweat a lot...

2. The psychology of adolescents is imperfect, incomplete yet. More than this, it is influenced by many factors, such as family relationships, school problems, insecurity with friends, and even elementary TV viewing and world topics being discussed in the world today. Modern teenagers in both countries, Russia and Britain are normally afraid of something very significant to them.

3. Taboos in teens' lives have religious or social connotations; they are numerous, and they rule the lives. Modern teenagers are very different; but they are still human beings. We must not limit them to many taboos. Don't box them in, let their personalities develop.

4. Ambitions they help a person to develop his human being, his character after all. Young people strive to find their place in life, a place under the sun. Ambitions help to achieve goals and realize dreams.

5. In fact most teens dream of becoming a part of a big world. They are waiting for communication, included in the activity, where they would feel on an equal footing with adults.

6. Both in England and in Russia, all people are unique in their own way. Teenagers are not exception, but are still children with developing personalities who need being supported by adults to preserve their uniqueness.