МУНИЦИПАЛЬНОЕ ОБЩЕОБРАЗОВАТЕЛЬНОЕ УЧРЕЖДЕНИЕ
ДАВЫДОВСКИЙ ЛИЦЕЙ

Командный конкурс эссе

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

Исследовательская работа (эссе)

## “Мир иллюзий Самуила Маршака и Льюиса Кэрролла”


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DAVYDOVO LYCÉE

Group essay contest

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

Research work (essay)

## “World of Illusions: Samuel Marshak and Lewis Carroll”


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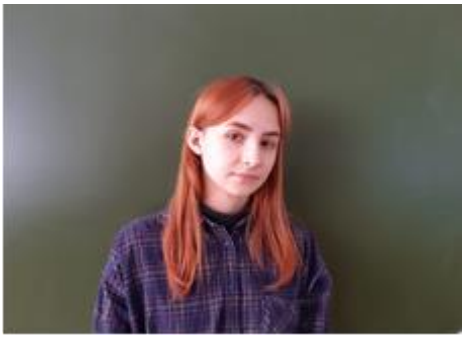

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## Theses

Illusion exists only in our mind. Illusion in the works of Carroll and Marchak is expressed so brightly and neatly that it seems to us that fictitious objects, activities and characters exist in material form.

Lewis Carroll, Mathematics professor lived in the reign of Queen Victoria, and Samuel Marshak, famous Russian poet and translator of the twentieth century, immerse us into the world of illusions in their immortal works.

Lewis Carroll wrote "Alice in Wonderland", the book full of illusions, grotesque, fantastic things. We are fully aware that many things in this book are illusions, but it does not prevent us from believing them at least for a minute. We understand that the existence of some characters in "The lobster quadrille" and "You are old, Father William" is absolutely impossible, but our imagination makes us picture these individuals as real ones.

Samuel Marshak was able to convey the imaginary and unreal world of illusions when translating some poems from "Alice in Wonderland" into Russian. Owing up to Marshak's talent, Carroll's poems began to sparkle in a new way. The essential illusion, intrinsic to Carroll's poems, was not lost.

The creative work of Lewis Carroll and Samuel Marshak made wonders and is still making people believe in miracles. The world of illusions of Lewis Carroll and Samuel Marshak is so skillful and realistic that while reading their works we forget for a minute about reality and find ourselves living in his fairy tale.

**World of Illusions: Samuel Marshak and Lewis Carroll**

The best thing that a man can do is to choose an illusion which could help him live.

Lewis kept this consideration in mind while writing his immortal work of the Victorian era “Alice in Wonderland”. In his book, the writer immerses us into the world of illusions, which provokes debates and questions.

Illusion exists only in our mind. This perception helps us to imagine the way something looks like and sounds. Naturally, it is very difficult to convey the imaginary and unreal world when translating books into a foreign language. Nevertheless, Samuel Marchak was able to handle this job and translated some poems from “Alice in Wonderland” so perfectly well that it seems they had been written initially in Russian. Illusion in the works of Carroll and Marchak is expressed so brightly and neatly that it seems to us that fictitious objects, activities and characters exist in material form.

Charles Lutwidge Dodgson (picture 1), under the name of Lewis Carroll, Mathematics professor in Christ-Church (one of Oxford colleges) lived and created in the XIX century, in the reign of queen Victoria. His famous work “Alice in Wonderland” was translated into 125 languages of the world.

The book is full of illusions, grotesque, fantastic things whose explanations still raise debates. There is a theory that the writer suffered from sick headache, activity of the parietal lobe of the brain, which prompted him to the birth of famous illusions in the tale. Moreover, one hypothesis states that in Carroll’s tales there is encrypted information about other measurements. However, just like the actuals of the Victorian era, times of life and creative work of Carroll, the author reflected in confusion on the cheerful mess of his tale. People, events, details of daily routine: everything that was familiar to Carroll and his

young readers, come into the world here and there in amusing and unrecognizable ways.

Samuel Marshak (picture 2) is a famous Russian poet, playwright, critic, and author of numerous books for children. He was creating in the first part of the twentieth century. Nevertheless, when speaking of the world of illusions we are going to refer to him as a translator.

Samuel Marshak repeatedly paid his attention to the works of Lewis Carroll. He translated some poems from “Alice in Wonderland” such as “You are old, Father William” and “The lobster quadrille”.

By the way, Lewis Carroll is considered the successor of «nonsense poetry» by Edward Lear. Samuel Marshak has also translated Lear’s works. It is no wonder that Alice Liddell who had to spend her time at «adult reading», pines for the amusing and absurd characters of Wonderland. Englishmen of the time had a taste for the nonsensical and the absurd. Such a taste for absurdity allowed Victorians to escape the stiff formality of their time.

Vivid, full of mysteries and imagination, English poetry transferred easily under Marshak’s pen Out of his translations he made full-fledged and original works that became a children’s classic in a way. Owing up to Marshak’s talent, Carroll’s poems began to sparkle in a new way: we saw other chiaroscuros, heard mockery and derisive laughter. At the same time, the essential illusion, intrinsic to Carroll’s poems, was not lost. We saw Father William upside down while speaking to his son, and maritime habitants hurrying to the coast in order to dance a quadrille.

"Samuel Marshak has never translated letter by letter and word by word. But always: humor by humor and beauty by beauty", - was how K. Tshukovsky described the talent of Marshak as a translator[1].

In English poetry translations, it is easy to recognize Marshak's pen: economy and accuracy of the word, extreme simplicity and clarity, energetic line, willed and vigorous intonation, courage of imagination, and poetic flight. Furthermore, illusions where Lewis Carroll immerses us in his poems, Samuel Marshak reconstructs with impeccable accuracy. As if we imagine and believe that a true eel is really balancing on the nose of Father William, and a turtle is rushing for the ball to the beach. His poem translations are easily read and often we do not even realize that these are translations. Marshak managed to unite a peculiar form of English ballade to the vivid colloquial naturalness of Russian speech.

Certainly, the illusory world of Lewis Carroll would be impossible to understand without absolute knowledge of its original language. Samuel Marshak had a perfect command of English and it helped him to perceive the game of imagination, put on by Lewis Carroll in his works, and to find poetic possibilities for his own creations.

"You are old, Father William", - this is one of the nonsense verse masterpieces, which is a kind of witty parody of the half-forgotten moral poem by Robert Southey called "Old Man's Comforts and How he Gained Them". In his poem Lewis Carroll keeps characters, rhyme, and poem meter, however, he replaces the moral by frank nonsense, setting up the illusion; a distorted perception of the character Father William. Carroll's parody turned out so successful and so loved by listeners that he drew some illustrations for it (picture 3).

[1] Druskin, L. (1984), "Childhood", *Rescued Book. Memoirs of a Leningrad Poet,* Overseas Publications Interchange Ltd, London, pp. 70-71.

While reading this poem, we are astonished by the acrobatic capabilities of elderly Father William, his witty answers and his still lively sense of humor, which perplex even his son. We understand that the existence of such person is absolutely impossible, but our imagination makes us picture this individual as a real one. And ultimately we admire and envy the optimism and vital force of this character, however illusory and impossible he is.

The poem “The lobster quadrille” did not appear for no particular reason. During Victorian times quadrille was the most modern dance and Liddell girls were taught that dance, too. Because of Marshak’s talent, we see this dance performed by the maritime habitants (picture 4). We are fully aware that this is an illusion, but it does not prevent us from believing it at least for a minute.

In his translation, Marshak was not afraid to replace the whiting with cod and the guinea pig with the dolphin, but he did what was essential. He makes us imagine all of the characters and makes us mentally dance together with them. We worry and reflect on their problems: how to hold onto the dance and not to be sucked into the sea by a wave. It seems logical to us that the French coast is not far, and sooner or later the snail is going to swim to it and end up on land. Marshak managed to see and hand over to us the essential message of this poem: if you look for the way out, you are going to find it. However, one must not forget to enjoy oneself and to take pleasure in life.

While translating these poems, Marshak used to say that one needs to look in not only the book but the life around and inside oneself. This was the secret to his success.

The creative work of Lewis Carroll and Samuel Marshak made wonders and is still making people believe in miracles. While growing up, becoming adult and growing old, people sometimes need to believe in something that makes their life easier and a little more magical. The world of illusions of Lewis Carroll and Samuel Marshak is so skillful and realistic that while reading their

works we forget for a minute about reality and find ourselves living in his fairy tale.

Reference list


1. Carroll, L. (2015), *Alice in Wonderland*. (Translated by Demurova, N.), Labirint, Moscow.
2. Druskin, L. (1984), “Childhood”, Rescued Book. Memoirs of a Leningrad Poet, Overseas Publications Interchange Ltd, London.
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4. Lewis Carroll / New World Encyclopedia – URL: https://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Lewis_Carroll (accessed 16.12.2021). – Text: electronic.
5. John Tenniel / New World Encyclopedia – URL: https://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/John_Tenniel (accessed 16.12.2021). – Text: electronic.
6. Samuil Marshak / en.wikipedia.org – URL: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Samuil_Marshak (accessed 16.12.2021). – Text: electronic.
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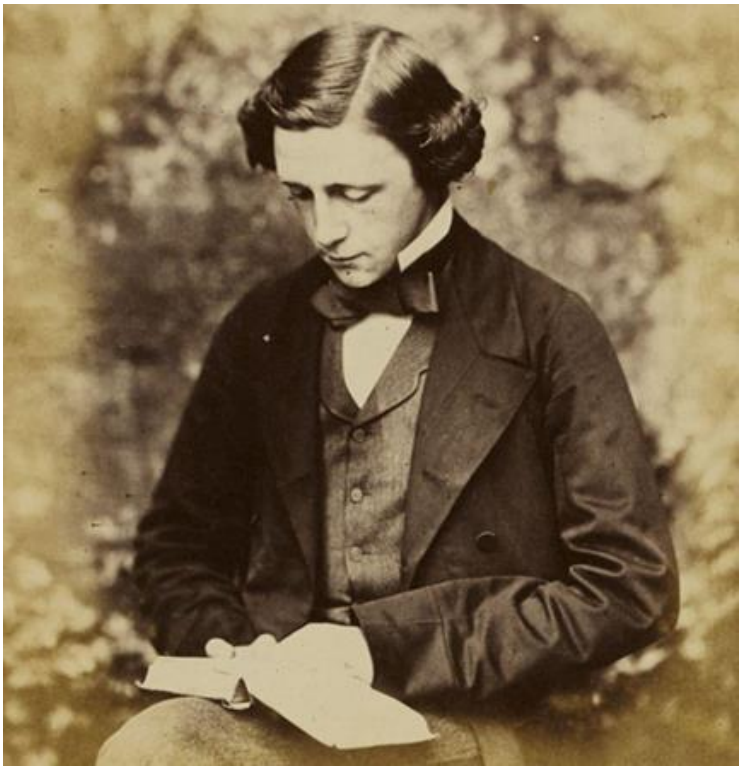
Annex

Pictures



Picture 1. Lewis Carroll, 1856. A photo was made by Reginald Southey, physician and inventor.

Picture 2. Samuel Marshak, 1954. A photo was made in Marshak's office.

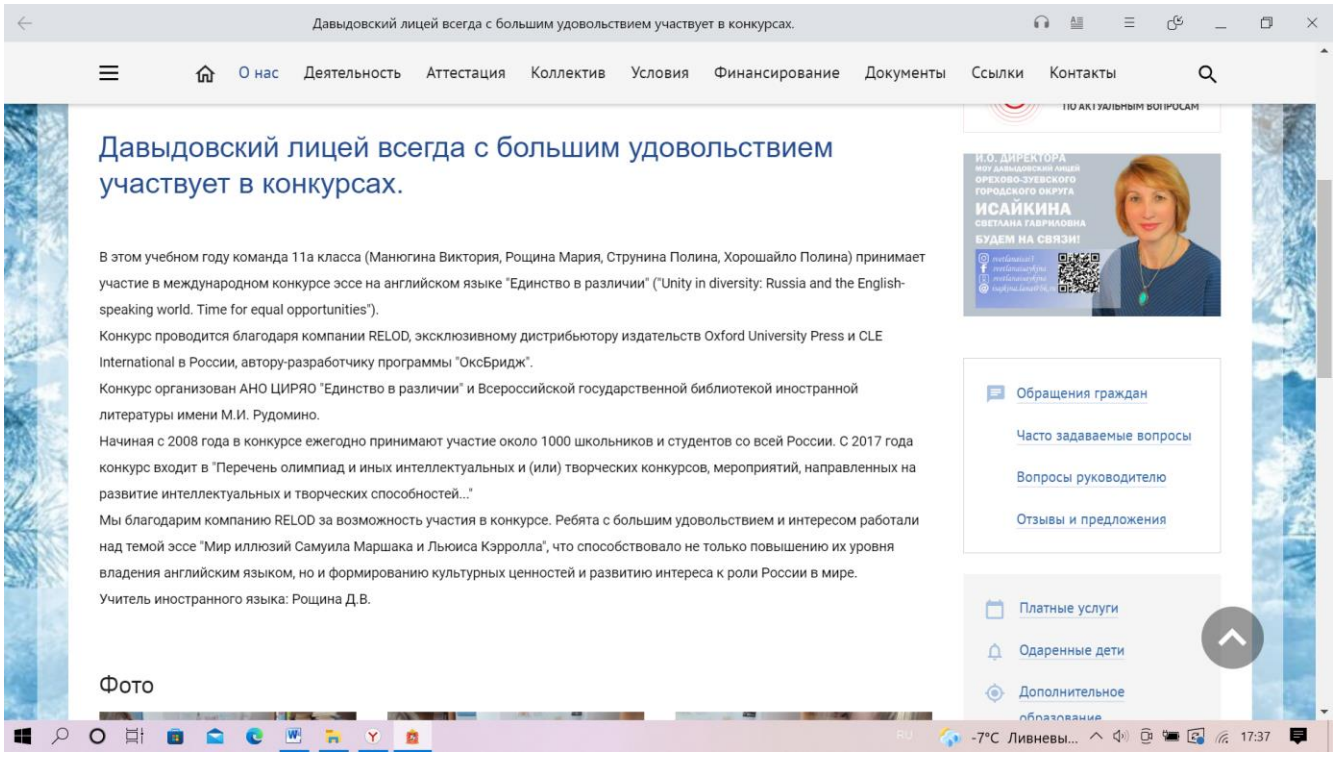

Picture 3. Illustration of Old Father William by Peter Newell, 1901.

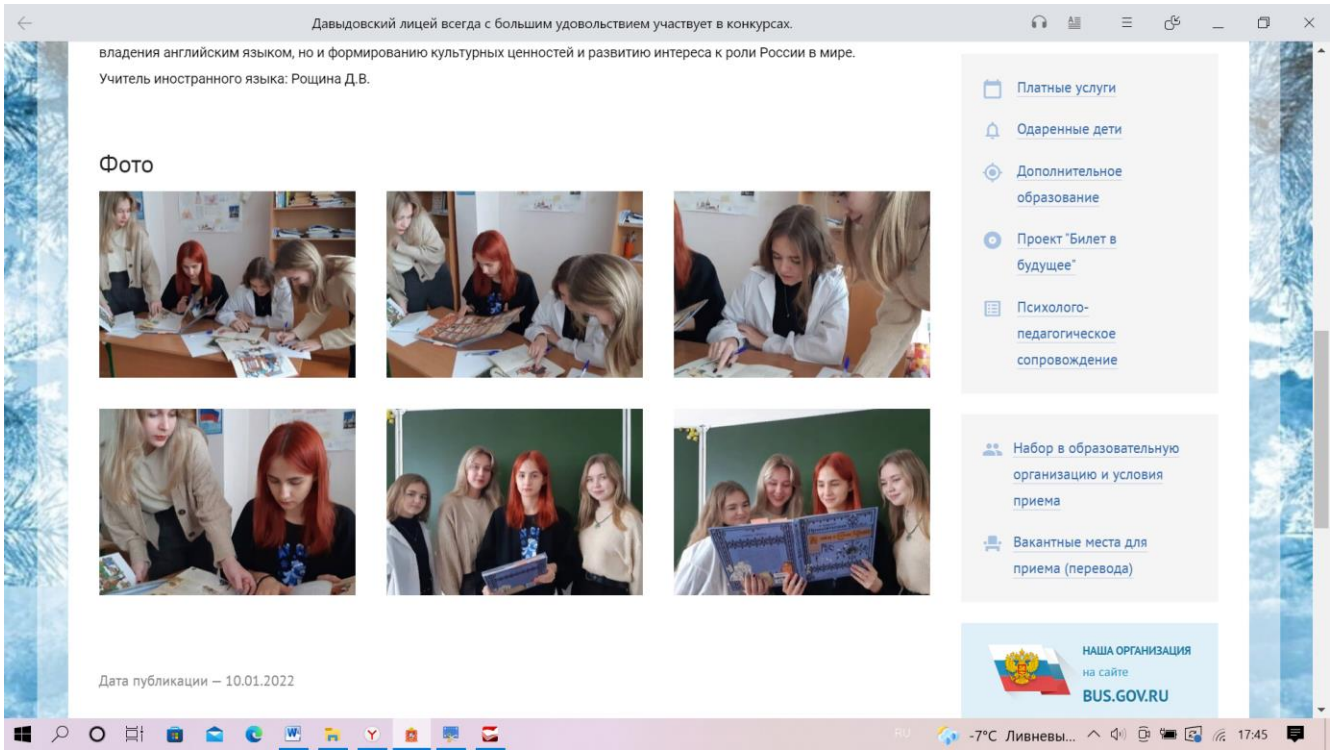
Picture 4. Alice with the Gryphon and the Mock Turtle, from “Alice's Adventures in Wonderland” by Lewis Carroll, published 1891, John Tenniel.

Mass media

1) Davydovo lycée official site

https://ozr-shkdavl.edumsko.ru/about/news/2113928



2) Davydovo lycée VKontakte

https://vk.com/shkola_bezopasnosti_dav

3) Davydovo lycée Instagram

https://www.instagram.com/p/CYhFzkKrw8N/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link