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**«Единство в различии»**

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**«СХОДСТВА И РАЗЛИЧИЯ НАРОДНЫХ СКАЗОК РАЗНЫХ СТРАН  
КАК КУЛЬТУРНОЕ ОТРАЖЕНИЕ МОРАЛЬНЫХ ЦЕННОСТЕЙ И  
ОТНОШЕНИЯ К ЖИЗНИ»**

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Group essay contest

«Unity in Diversity: Russia & The English-Speaking World»

Research work (essay)

«SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES IN DIFFERENT COUNTRIES’  
FOLK TALES AS A CULTURAL REFLECTION OF MORAL VALUES  
AND ATTITUDE TO LIFE»

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## **Theses**

1. The folk tales play an important role in the transmission of cultural heritage to the next generations.
2. Social demands of every culture affect the tales' interpretation.
3. The folk tales all over the world vividly express common values including kindness, honesty and justice.
4. The universal values such as dreaming and believing in one's own strength can also be found in the folk tales of different countries.
5. The folk tales of most countries touch upon the theme of friendship, peace and harmony.
6. Moral values in the folk tales can be revealed in a slightly different way due to cultural traditions.
7. The folk tales of different countries can help us understand the peculiarities of value perception in different cultures.

*Every country's folk tales are a unique cultural treasure,  
showcasing the diversity of moral values  
and attitudes towards life.  
Dalai Lama*

When we reflect on our childhood, we can all recall the various folk tales we heard. These stories had different kinds of effect on us, inspiring, confusing, or teaching us important lessons. Have you ever pondered how diverse cultures convey their wisdom through folk tales? Today, let us start our captivating journey to delve into the enchanting kingdom of folk culture from different countries. We will explore the imagery and traditions portrayed in different folk tales.

Throughout history, stories and folk tales have played a crucial role in transmitting our cultural heritage to future generations. It is widely believed that these tales not only reflect society but also have the power to shape it. Each culture interprets these stories in its own distinct manner, adding or removing elements to suit their specific social requirements. [5] Consequently, a folk tale in the United Kingdom will differ from the same tale told in Asia. These cultural variations highlight the dynamic nature of storytelling and its ability to adapt to diverse cultural contexts.

Folk tales are the keys to the heart of every nation, opening the door to a world of wisdom and imagination, serving as a significant cultural reflection of societies across the globe. While each country has its unique set of traditions and values, there are often remarkable similarities and differences in their folk tales. These tales offer a glimpse into the moral values and attitudes towards life that shape each society, no matter what language or country they are told in.[2]

The similarities between different countries' folklore show that the culture of all nations began to develop equally. The similarity between moral values and attitude to life is a clear confirmation of this idea. Fairy tales often transmit

universal values and moral principles which are relevant for all cultures and nations.

During the research process we managed to define three groups of similar moral values:

a) moral values including assistance to others, kindness, honesty, justice.

In the Russian folk tale “Geese–swans” all the characters’ actions demonstrate this group of values: an apple tree, a river and a stove help the little sister to save her brother from the evil Baba-Yaga. But the girl first does a good deed and as a reward the fairy tale characters hide them from the Swan Goose.[4]

The other example is the Dutch folk tale “The Neighbours” telling a fascinating story about a family and steppe men. The other people are sure that steppe men are angry but all the family members treat these steppe men with respect and as a result steppe men help the family in difficult situations.

When comparing folk tales from different countries, it becomes evident that certain themes and lessons are universally valued. [3] For instance, the concept of good versus evil is a common theme in folk tales worldwide. Regardless of cultural background, societies tend to emphasize the importance of kindness, honesty, and loyalty, often rewarding these virtues in their tales. These stories highlight the universal human desire for justice and the preservation of moral integrity.

b) self-confidence values teach children not to lose heart, to have their own dream, hope and faith in their own strength.

The Chinese folk tale “Malyan with the Magic Brush” can serve a brilliant example for this category of values. Malyan has been hardworking since his childhood. [7] Though he doesn’t have parents and has to work a lot he still is dreaming of becoming an artist. And overcoming different obstacles he starts painting for simple people.

The French folk tale “Magic Whistle and Golden Apples” narrating about a brave young man who is courageously going to his goal and finally gets married to a princess.[1]

Thus, folk tales even from different continents show many heroes being able to overcome the most incredible obstacles and become winners. Their behaviour shows the opposition between hard work and laziness, good and evil, bravery and cowardice.

c) social values – importance of true friendship and maintenance of peace and harmony.

The German folk tale “Town Musicians of Bremen” teaches us that you can overcome any trouble, never to be discouraged, and to support each other in a difficult situation. It is always possible to find a way out of even the most difficult situation. [6]

The Russian folk tale “Ivan-Tsarevich and the Grey Wolf” is another vivid example showing how important it is to have friends. After all, true friends will never leave you in trouble and will always come to your aid.

Folk tales all over the world develop these three basic value groups. Difference is in the features of perception of this or that group of values that depends upon the country. For example, if we analyse the first group, moral values which include kindness, we can see that it is sometimes revealed in a slightly different way in the folk tales of various countries. Being a kind person in most Russian tales means being open-hearted and always willing to help others. Jack Frost in Russian folk tale with the same title is kind himself and helps the main heroine to do a good deed. On the contrary, Scottish tale “Good housewife’s night assistants” shows that kindness should have limits and a person should not forget about himself. It is closely connected with British customs and traditions. British cultural traditions often differ from the usual ideas that dominate in Russian culture. “My house is my castle”, a famous proverb says. [3] The British love silence and solitude. It is important for a

British person not to forget about private space. The same aspect is touched upon in the folk tale “Three little pigs” which refers to English folklore of the nineteenth century. Its plot is also about the inaccessibility of private life, but at the same time kindness when it is necessary.

Differences in perception of the second group of values also deserve our attention. A famous folk tale “Cinderella” is undoubtedly a perfect example of depicting diligence. Here we see a very hardworking young lady who becomes happy at the end of the story. Cinderella has a docile character which reveals a typical image of a woman from Western Europe. [1] On the contrary, we can analyse Azerbaijani folk tales. Diligent women from these tales as a rule have an amazingly strong character. It can be a reflection of the mentality of this country. The folk tales “The magic ring” and “The clever wife” are examples of persistence and faith in own strength.

Thus, the folk tales of every country show all the richness of its cultural heritage. As we know, everything is relative. This includes many varieties of folk tales, this is the richness of language in the nature of fairy tales and attitude to different moral values. By showing how instructive the meaning of any folk tale is, you can find answers to all the questions in our life. Stories about the most incredible, fantastic events have a deep vital meaning, their implausibility serves as a more vivid, memorable expression of their instructive meaning and ideas. Historical development of the country has an influence on its customs and traditions. It is probably one of the main reasons of difference in perception of moral values in various countries all over the world.

However, there are more similarities than differences between different countries' folklore. The moral values and attitudes towards life shape each society without defining people on the basis of their religion and nationality. Thorough analysis of various folk tales led us to this conclusion.

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## Attachment

### *Illustrations to the folk tales*

The German folk tale “Town Musicians of Bremen”



The West European folk tale “Cinderella”



The Scottish folk tale “Good housewife’s night assistants”



The English folk tale “Three little pigs”



The Russian folk tale “Jack Frost ”

