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«Единство в Различии: Россия и Англоговорящий Мир.

Время для Равных Возможностей»

Тема: **Сила традиции: 5 o'clock и русское чаепитие**

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Command essay contest

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

**Topic: The power of tradition: English “Five-o’clock tea” and Russian Tea
ceremonies**

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The power of tradition: English “Five-o’clock tea” and Russian Tea ceremonies

1. We depart from reality. No luggage, please, only your imagination is required!
2. Welcome to England of the XIX century! We sit and relax in the living room next to the fireplace. But then we get invited to drink some tea along with eating delicious English food. Do not forget about the etiquette rules and to keep up with the guests’ conversation.
3. Our next destination is Russia. We see a strange Russian teapot called samovar and fill our stomachs with the exotic Russian food. After the samovar’s song is over, we take a sip of the Russian tea with the great herbal taste.
4. Our imagination carried us to the past but what is happening now? The tea traditions have either changed or vanished despite the fact that it is still one of the most consumed beverages in the world. However, some enthusiasts successfully recreate the atmosphere of old English tea parties
5. Tea still occupies an important part in the folklore of different countries. It helps us realize that the cultures of Great Britain and Russia are not that different after all.

Do you think you have a good imagination? We will find it out now...

Close your eyes, free your mind and imagine old good England. What does it look like? (Picture 1) XIX century. A warm and cosy living room. There is a lot of light and air. The deep colours of the interior create the feeling of comfort and you already want to stay here for a while. You can see the furniture of black wood with luxurious upholstery, lovely porcelain trinkets and, of course, the fireplace with ornaments and intricate adornment which is the main element of the living room. These features create the atmosphere of tranquility, serenity and harmony. Cracking of smoldering firewood, the warmth of the home hearth warms your thoughts. In front of your eyes there are shelves with favourite books, your mind slides on the pages of already known story. The plot fascinates you and the old characters come to life in your memory and you are not able to turn away... We have completely forgotten about the time, but the old clock with a heavy pendulum reminds us that it is 5 o'clock and it is time to drink tea. The hospitable hostess invites everybody to the table. (Picture 2) The table looks festive, the white tablecloth droops almost to the very floor. The napkins are perfectly selected for the tablecloth to match. There are tea pairs, a teapot with tea, a pitcher with hot water, a milk jug with milk and cream, a tea strainer, a sugar bowl with white and brown refined sugar, tongs and teaspoons. Generous delicious food take up most of the table. Our sight is focused on the high stand. The lower tier belongs to the appetising thin finger sandwiches with cream sauce, cucumbers and freshly baked traditional British scones. Home jams and thick melted Devonshire clotted cream make their taste unforgettable. The next tier is occupied by crumpets with dairy butter and honey. All this abundance is supplemented with large amounts of pastry: a fruit cake, a Victorian cake, a chocolate cake, ginger bread, finger biscuits and baskets with fresh fruit. We also should not forget about Russian tea, there is a small plate with thin lemon slices prepared specifically for it. Wait, do you feel it?.. This deep, yet delicate and enchanting aroma of freshly made Ceylon tea. Tea leaves

have not yet opened but their tart taste has revived in your memory. It is too hard to resist but we should not gorge on the tea, let's preserve this magic and follow all the etiquette rules. It is a general rule to hold the cup with three fingers: the big, index and middle ones, while the ring and pinky fingers are clasped to the center of the palm. If you drink tea sitting at the table you only raise the cup from it. If the tea party takes place when guests are sitting in the comfortable armchairs or on the couch, you hold the cup with the saucer at the level of your chest. We have quenched our thirst and it is time to proceed to the key component of every English tea party – the conversation. The central place in this ceremony is assigned to the talk; the responsibility lies on the hostess's shoulders. She has to maintain the conversation and keep the ball rolling.

Can you imagine that far from here in Russia, on a spacious verandah the conversation over a cup of tea flows, free from all hustle and bustle. (Picture 3) Gentle summer sun sets illuminating the apple orchard with its rays and allowing us to appreciate the magnificent view at its best. The relaxed home atmosphere is conducive to a long heart-to-heart talk. A large family has gathered at the strong oak table to taste some tea. (Picture 4) There are generous treats as a nice addition: bagels, pancakes with caviar, honey, raspberry jam and lemon slices. In the middle of the table there is a large tin samovar - a symbol of hospitality and well-being of the family. Many of them are genuine masterpieces of Russian arts and crafts. The samovar is ignited with coals and any experienced hostess knows the secret of really fragrant tea: to add fir cones or fruit trees' slivers (cherry or plum) to the coals so that the tea gets a pleasant aftertaste. Do you hear that sound? A whistle like the crickets one behind the stove is a real "song" of the samovar and it is a sure signal that it's time to make tea. The hostess is proud of her tea set just like she is proud of her samovar. Fine porcelain cups, saucers, silver spoons and coasters, sugar bowls, crystal decanters and sherbet glasses for jam are beautiful ornaments of the table. The caring hostess is pouring sweet tea into large mugs. Herbs of mint and

chamomile have already been added to a small pot to give the drink delicious taste. At last the guests turn to the tea cups upside down or just put the cups on the saucers. And of course the Russian tea ceremony cannot do without a spiritual and openhearted conversation.

Unfortunately, our journey through time is coming to an end. We touched two different cultures, traditions, nations. Each of them has its own characteristics but they have many similarities, one of which is the enjoyment of the tea ceremony. The trip was entertaining but it's time to return to reality. And what happens now? Today the tea ceremony is gradually fading. It is generally believed that the kingdom of tea in England has come to the end. Due to the stress and bustle of everyday life modern people seek for fast food meals and do not want to spend a lot of time. Therefore today more than 90% of consumed tea in Britain and Russia is tea from tea bags. With this method of making tea both the water can cool down quite quickly and you can remove the bag ahead of time. The Japanese writer Kakuzō Okakura once said, "Tea is a work of art and needs a master hand to bring out its noblest qualities", but in today's world it is not about the art, it is about the preservation of time. Sometimes British people as well as Russians host a traditional tea break, gathering friends and family members together and following all the rules that have survived to our times since the XIX century. Tea traditions retained today in London either in a very secular and expensive or ordinary form. Each location offers its own atmosphere: from the rustic-classic with soft sofas, a fireplace and candles, to the Art Nouveau style with dancing. In many places you can find a pianist and soft relaxing music accompanied with light tinkling of spoons in exquisite plates and cups. The most famous one is the tea at the Ritz hotel. Nevertheless people in Britain drink more tea than any other nation in the world. They drink it in a bed in the morning, next to the fire on winter afternoons and out in the garden on sunny summer days. There are two kinds of tea: 'afternoon tea' and 'high tea'. 'Afternoon tea' takes place between three-thirty and four-thirty. Henry

James once said in his book “The Portrait of a Lady”, “There are few hours in life more agreeable than the hour dedicated to the ceremony known as afternoon tea”. Families which do not usually have late dinner have ‘high tea’ between five-thirty and six-thirty. When people drink tea together there is always a lot to talk about.

Despite the fact that the tea tradition is gradually fading due to the accelerating pace of life, tea occupies an important part in the folklore of different countries. As we know the language of the nation is the main feature of human culture. The traditions of Russian tea differ from the aristocratic English but in each of these cultures we find the reflection of these traditions in the brilliant manifestation of creative people - proverbs. Some of them have similar equivalents in both languages while others do not. There are some examples which you can see in the table below. Moreover, today we have a special contest for you.

English proverb	Meaning	Russian equivalent
“The man with no tea in him”	Person who is callous and insensitive to feelings of other people	
“Not somebody’s cup of tea”	Not belong to somebody’s sphere of interests	“Это не твое дело”
“Not for all the tea in China”	Do it no matter what	“Ни за какие коврижки”
“To take tea with somebody”	Have relations or affairs with somebody	
“Read the tea leaves”	Try to predict something at random	“Гадать на кофейной гуще”

As you can see, some slots for the Russian equivalents are empty. They are empty on purpose, as we want for you - tea and proverbs fans to get involved in finding the alternative expressions in Russian. Do not miss it, today and only today is your lucky chance! And you will be the person to put the last piece into this English-Russian cultural puzzle.

From our today's experience, we have learnt quite a lot. What we envisioned in our imagination was not just a dream, it was the reality which was very tangible only a couple of centuries ago. Despite the fact that Russia and Great Britain have many differences, the tea is something that can make us come together, even if for a short amount of time. Both countries have their own history and traditions connected to it, but they do not contradict. We should all remember that our cultures are unique in their own ways and that is the reason to find out more about each other rather than fight and argue. Because of globalisation and other factors, we do not use samovars or always follow the etiquette rules anymore, but we do not reject our history. The proverbs are a way to remind us that time is not the limit because their value is not lost.

Resources

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Appendix

Picture 1. An English style living room with a fireplace



Picture 2. A table with English snacks and tableware for drinking tea



Picture 3. A Russian family drinking tea on a verandah



Picture 4. A table with a samovar and famous Russian treats

