

# FIRST LANGUAGE RUSSIAN

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Paper 0516/01

Reading

## Key message

To do well in this paper:

Candidates should pay careful attention to the wording of each question and limit their answers accordingly.

In **Part 1** candidates should give just short, straightforward answers to the questions, generally without lengthy comments, apart from **Question 1(j)**.

In **Part 2**, candidates should produce extended response(s) extracting only relevant information from both texts and avoiding retelling the stories (Text 1) or presenting merely a list of events (Text 2).

## General Comments

Both texts seemed to be rather inspirational for the majority of candidates and yielded some very interesting responses. Questions requiring simple and straightforward answers – **1(a)** – **1(g)** were generally done well, while the answers to more stretching **Questions – 1(h) – 1(j)** needed to contain more explanation. In general, the clue for the length of an answer should be the value of the question which is expressed through its mark: a higher mark normally implies a more extended answer. **Question 2(b)**, which required to demonstrate analytical skills as well as language skills, appeared to be more challenging for the majority of candidates.

In some cases, the quality of the candidate's handwriting made the script difficult to read. Candidates should remember that only output which can be read can be credited. Candidates are also reminded to consider timing when tackling the exam.

## Comments on specific questions

### Task 1

#### Content

- (a) Many candidates could not distinguish between 12 and 12<sup>th</sup>.
- (b) 2 marks were awarded only to those candidates whose answers contained comments on the following three points: a ship, the power of the storm and the captain's role.
- (c) The majority of candidates managed to answer this question correctly, avoiding copying the text.
- (d) The key word in this question was 'why': 2 marks were awarded to those candidates who not only described the captain's straits but managed to connect those with Gray's dream.
- (e) Some candidates lost a mark because they confused '*Gray was dressed LIKE a girl*' with '*...AS a girl*'.
- (f) The overwhelming majority of candidates produced the correct answer to this question.
- (g) The best candidates picked up the captain's attitude as 'злорадство' and expanded on the reasons.

- (h) The majority of candidates gave the right answer to this question describing Gray's resistance to difficulties and his will power in pursuing his goal as the reasons.
- (i) Weaker answers contained merely mentioning of the fact that Captain Gop started teaching Gray navigation and other skills, whereas the stronger answers contained mentioning Gop's respect towards the boy, which had to be worked out from the context.
- (j) The general response to this question was rather good as the majority of candidates managed to avoid repetition of the previous answers and got all 4 marks. Weaker answers were characterised by a tendency to generalised comment rather than describing Gray's concrete actions.
- (k) (i) Only a few candidates managed to interpret the phrase and to work out a poetic comparison with a wave.
  - (ii) Most candidates were able to answer (ii) correctly. A few candidates provided a more sophisticated answer to this question about the sea as Gray's desirable profession.
  - (iii) The majority of candidates answered this question well.

## Language

The quality of language produced in Part 1 was quite good. Candidates are reminded to avoid lifting i.e. copying Text 1 without any paraphrasing and to pay attention to punctuation in complex sentences.

## Question 2

### Content

- (a) The majority of candidates demonstrated a good level of comprehension of both texts.

In **Question 2**, candidates had to identify between 8 to 10 steps from Text 2 in order to access the full range of marks for content. Answers where candidates either misinterpreted the task or wrote about their own thoughts without making any references to the text could not be credited.
- (b) This question required candidates to do some analytical work as well as to apply their writing skills. Candidates had to rework Text 1 in relation to Text 2, which appeared to be rather challenging for the majority of candidates. The best answers were those where candidates managed to paraphrase the text in their own words successfully while preserving the author's ideas.

Some candidates produced a step-by-step analysis of Text 1 in comparison to Text 2, others – its summary with a comparative element. Both were equally acceptable as long as they supported their views with examples from Text 1.

Stronger candidates analysed all Gray's actions supporting their opinion with examples and evidence and employing 10 recommendations described in Text 2. Some candidates related the same actions from Text 1 to different steps from Text 2; such answers were credited as long as candidates could justify their point of view.

A few weaker candidates expressed irrelevant general speculations and only general ideas without making any references to evidence from Text 1. Candidates should be reminded to avoid merely repeating the same answers already given for **Question 1** and/or simply retelling Text 1.

### Style, Organisation and Language

Majority of candidates coped very well with **Question 2(a)** following the order of the 10 steps and the structure from Text 2. **Question 2(b)** required candidates to apply their own structure and style.

Only the strongest candidates demonstrated a very high level of linguistic competence this year. Weaker candidate are encouraged to focus more on punctuation in complex sentences, prepositions, spelling, formal and colloquial registers /styles. It is also worth mentioning that those candidates who paid attention to distinct paragraphing and clear handwriting benefitted more.

# FIRST LANGUAGE RUSSIAN

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Paper 0516/02

Writing

## Key message

To do well on this paper, essays should be accurate, use a wide range of vocabulary and structures, be well organised and coherent, with well-developed ideas.

In **Section 1** discussion should be logical, consistent and may require complex arguments. In **Section 2** the Descriptive tasks need well-developed ideas and images, using vivid details. The Narrative tasks require a gripping opening, careful development and a well-thought-out ending.

## General comments

Paper 2 consists of two sections: **Section 1: Discussion and Argument** and **Section 2: Description and Narrative**. Candidates are required to write two compositions, one from each section. In the first section four argumentative/discursive titles will be set, from which candidates choose one. In the second section four titles will be set (two descriptive and two narrative) from which candidates choose one.

In successful answers, the candidates will have read all the titles carefully before choosing the ones on which they wish to write. Writing out the task title and underlining key words will help candidates focus on the question being asked and avoid writing irrelevant material. Before writing the essay candidates should spend time planning their essay to avoid repetition and achieve a logical structure.

Most candidates wrote between 350-500 words for each composition; the compositions were divided up into paragraphs. Very short answers due to lack of time or skill affected their overall result for the paper; careful, logical argument focusing on the main points, can achieve an excellent answer without excessive length.

The best candidates carefully constructed their writing to ensure clarity of expression and fluency of style. The best answers in Discussion and Argument were able to call on a wide range of vocabulary that was clear and which conveyed exact meaning; in Description appropriate vocabulary was especially important, in order to create images in the reader's mind; in Narrative a wide vocabulary helped to achieve particular effects, and added to the enjoyment and entertainment of the writing.

In Discussion many excellent responses contained well-developed paragraphs without repetition, supported by the use of appropriate connectives, with detailed, clearly structured, sequenced arguments on either side of the debate; they keep the title in their mind throughout the writing, using the beginning or the end of each paragraph to state how the content of this paragraph supported their arguments. Candidates need to avoid informal or colloquial style in the argumentative essay; also they need to avoid describing personal matters but focus on specific question asked. Candidates are also reminded to develop detailed and balanced arguments in order to achieve high marks.

Many successful responses in Description created some wonderful, imaginative, often heart-rending scenes, focusing attention on details, which reflected the emotions of the narrator. Some candidates needed to emphasize description rather than narrative. Many excellent stories in Narrative were well structured, with a gripping beginning, climax and effective ending. Others needed to plan their stories carefully, using straightforward narratives, character development and an interesting ending.

The quality of the handwriting was on the whole very good, and many candidates had prepared well for the examination. The majority of candidates wrote in fluent, correct Russian; handled syntax and lexis very well; used appropriate, consistent, complex sentences, which were varied and sophisticated, with ambitious vocabulary. They should pay attention to using participles (active and passive), gerunds (imperfective and perfective), right punctuation, including commas, capital letters and speech marks, with correct spelling. Candidates are encouraged to spend time on checking through their work before submitting their essays.

## **Comments on specific questions**

### **Section 1**

#### **Discussion and Argument**

##### **Question 1**

- (a) Новый век требует новых профессий. Порассуждайте на эту тему.

New age requires new skills. Speculate on this topic.

The best responses showed consistent analysis, a clear and sometimes sophisticated style, logical, relevant, complex arguments, linkage between the paragraphs and sequenced sentences within paragraphs. The answers firstly noted that the 21st century is characterized by a large number of innovations in various areas of human life; and that there occurs a rapid development of information technology, areas of service delivery and universal distribution of labour; therefore professions of the new age are formed.

Candidates then continued to say that the main feature of many new jobs is that they do not require great skills as there is a greater division of labour duties that require more specialisation (for example, modern managers have almost no other skills than managerial skills); different areas of new technologies create new kinds of occupations, from the creators of websites to those who promote and advertise them. The key feature of new professions is that they engage human brain more than anything else.

Candidates then continued that, on the other hand, not only in the new age but through the ages, some professions will disappear, others will appear; this is due to the changing requirements of life and the development of society, and now also due to the advancement of technology; but professions in teaching, medicine, border security and the judiciary, will always remain.

Candidates should carefully plan their essays to avoid repetition and long explanations. Candidates are encouraged to focus on the question and avoid very long descriptions of these occupations as well as general and irrelevant personal speculations. Discussion should include facts, reasons, explanations and relevant examples.

- (b) «Беречь и сохранять традиции – наша обязанность». По-вашему, это верно?  
Аргументируйте свой ответ.

“It is our duty to protect and preserve our traditions.” In your opinion, is this true? Explain your answer.

Many excellent essays were developed. Stronger candidates demonstrated logical structure and good linkage of ideas, made complex arguments using fluent and accurate language with a wide and consistently effective range of vocabulary. Many essays began with an introduction that traditions are passed from generation to generation. Such a transfer occurs always and everywhere, in all areas of society: family: cultural, moral, personal, industrial, labour.

Statements in support of this argument focused on the ideas that protection of traditions has made us what we are now: our families, people and history have been preserved by it. Our education, training, outlook on life, life principles and morals depend on traditions.

The contrary views stated that traditions include not only positive, but also old and obsolete elements: religious intransigence, sexism, racism, and political constraints.

Then followed a popular conclusion: traditions perform informative functions: all new positive experience of a previous generation becomes traditional when it is passed as a valuable asset to the next generation; traditions reflect continuity in development, transitional times, and entire eras. This is manifested in the fact that the new always grows out of the old. In denying the old the new allows further development of all the achievements of the previous development; and therefore,

traditional can be seen as being progressive. Some candidates also noted that we do not have to stick to patterns and collective opinions but instead have our own world outlook.

- (c) «Популярная музыка вытеснит в будущем классическую». Насколько вы согласны с этим утверждением? Обоснуйте свой ответ.

“Popular music in the future will replace classical music.” How far do you agree with this statement? Justify your answer.

The very best essays were extremely well argued and logically organised, and produced unique and sophisticated analysis. Stronger candidates set out their points of view and gave their reasons: popular music will never replace classical music because popular music is about today’s problems, while classical speaks about eternal questions that do not lose popularity today. Classical music has very strong roots, so it is timeless, while popular music constantly changes. Popular performers do not linger too long; children in schools are taught classical and not pop music; it is easier to transition from a good classical education into pop, rather than vice versa; when people grow up, they often return to classical roots.

Then candidates gave reasons why popular music will be dominant in the future: by popularity pop beats classical, especially among young people; the emergence of new genres and their disappearance is natural; people want to dance and have fun, and classical music requires concentration and hard work. Some argued that pop music has already replaced classical music.

Some candidates noted that today a mix of genres exists: pop penetrates into classical, and the other way around, classical music is often used as a soundtrack in modern movies and theatrical performances; also, some musicians blend pop and classical.

Candidates need to understand that in this type of question they should focus more on how far they agree with the allegation that popular music in the future will replace classical. Candidates should avoid general conversation about types of pop music, classical, rock and jazz, etc., as this is not relevant to the question.

- (d) «Лучше горькая правда, чем сладкая ложь». Вы согласны с этой пословицей? Аргументируйте свой ответ.

“Bitter truth is better than sweet lies.” Do you agree with this proverb? Explain your answer.

This was the most popular essay title and produced a wide range of performance from candidates. The best answers demonstrated good linkage and orderly grouping of ideas with well-focused, excellent expression and appropriate, complex vocabulary.

Many candidates started with a statement that almost every person had to face a choice at least once in their life: to either tell the truth or to lie in order to turn a particular situation in their favour. Candidates gave responses that one of the most common types of lie comes from trying to protect the feelings of other people and that disappointment is an indispensable companion of any lie. Some candidates noted that in spite of everything it is preferable to know accurate information rather than to enjoy pleasant but false information. When we mislead our dearest and closest people, we wish them well, but perhaps condemn them to backfire with disappointment, hurt, and sad thoughts. Pleasant delusion can only help for a while, but it does not allow vital energy to be realised with full force, which means people are at risk of missing what is most important.

The contrary view stated that in most cases we prefer to take a sweet lie than a bitter truth; lies are everywhere - on television, in print, in politics; many believe that success can not be achieved without lies; most people lie (one candidate writes that this can be “at least fifty times per day”); everyone is ready to be deceived for the sake of comfort or happiness, or in order to avoid problems, or to receive some benefits; it is easier and more comfortable to live with sweet lies; the attempt to change a world full of lies is not easy; and moreover, that the world will remain full of them, regardless of any efforts to change it. Some candidates rightly point out that there are also white lies, meant for the good and capable of saving the lives of many people.

Some excellent essays used a lot of Russian proverbs and expressions, such as: *Шила в мешке не утаишь* (“Murder will out”); *Тайное всегда становится явным* (“Secret always becomes

obvious"); *Ложь во спасение* ("White lie"); *Ложь – религия рабов, правда – Бог свободного человека* ("Lies are the religion of slaves, truth is the God of a free man"), etc.

Candidates should avoid long description of their personal issues.

## Section 2

### Description and Narrative

#### Question 2

- (a) Вы попали на самый многолюдный и богатый рынок в далекой стране. Опишите этот рынок, его атмосферу и свои ощущения при посещении.

You've come to the most populous and richest market in a faraway country. Describe the market, its atmosphere and your feelings when visiting.

Candidates visited a lot of markets all over the world: Morocco, China, Saudi Arabia, Singapore, Tokyo, Moscow, Green Bazaar in Almaty and even an ancient market of the year 1415. There were many excellent responses that showed well-developed ideas and images, described feelings and thoughts by using an effective range of vocabulary in sophisticated, complex sentences.

One excellent essay described Straw Market, the most famous market in a country. The essay started from the description of the place: it is located on the ocean front, and the wind there brings a fresh smell of salt and seaweed, and delivers sand, creating miniature dunes under the counters. Then followed the description of the market itself: once you lower your foot on the mat at the entrance, you dive into the ocean of smells and sounds. People talk loudly in different languages, vendors tout buyers, dogs bark; people are in a hurry and run in all directions, walking steadily and thoughtfully, or stand, frozen, with raised heads to the cloudless sky; they laugh and cry, argue and persuade, call and evict; tourists with red, charred skin do not take their faces off their camera lenses. Then the essay continued that on the shelves there are arranged goods: silk, cold and smooth, and flowing as sea water; jewellery, shining under the sun with hundreds of iridescent reflections; fruit, looking so helpless under the scorching rays of the sun.

The candidates finished their essays with a description of his/her feelings of being surrounded by new faces, exotic and unusual crafts products; a feeling of almost childish delight about something new and unknown that is coming; that as soon as you get out of the shadows of the mosaic market, the magic of this place would be lost, getting away from the sense of belonging to this little world with an inexplicable feeling of excitement and anticipation. The essays contained a creation of an atmosphere of gaiety, gladness, joy.

The best candidates gave a range of details: the smells of sweat and spices hung in the sun-warmed air as thick dope; people in brightly coloured robes scurried around like ants keen in their studies; the heat was such as if you accidentally hit hot jelly; the fabric of a variety of patterns and colours, tubes, spices, carpets, and hats was seen; in a "Floating Market" in Thailand, a long pointed boat floated along, loaded with coconuts, apples and mangoes, so full of goods that the water almost overflowed inboard.

Candidates are reminded that the descriptive task should focus on description, not storytelling. Many good essays described the market, its atmosphere and feelings it all provoked when visiting. Candidates are reminded to plan their essays in order to avoid repetition.

- (b) Вы провели месяц в летнем лагере отдыха. Опишите ваши чувства и размышления в последний день в лагере.

You have spent a month in a summer camp. Describe your feelings and thoughts on the last day in the camp.

This was a popular title and gave rise to some imaginative responses. There were many well-structured essays with a good selection of interesting ideas and images, a range of details, lively writing, forming a clear picture, with wide, effective range of vocabulary and accurate grammar.

Typically, successful applicants compared their feelings with a description of nature. On the first day of all the fun and joy, nature rejoices too: pine wood, the smell of pine needles, forest lake, beach, hillside, sun, no clouds in the sky. Some camps were regular (“Levkovo” in the Moscow region, for example), others “thematic” (e.g. “Robinzon Crusoe”, where one is not allowed to use any gadgets and must learn to survive; or “Sea” on the Black Sea). The last day is always sad, many people want to cry, and others are crying. The weather frowns, the sun is gone, sad moon rises in the sky, there is rain, and even storms. Sometimes children are sent to the camp against their will. They feel very bad, because they do not want to leave their friends, do not like camps, or are just shy.

On the last day of the camp candidates realise how much the camp has given them: they have learned how to light a fire, cook, to speak publicly, etc.; they are well rested, they have learned a lot, and most importantly, have gained best friends. One essay about the last day was especially excellent: the boy finds himself alone in the camp, because everyone has already left. A deserted camp, cold hopelessness, only a sleeping dog and strong wind on the beach; he is walking on the sand, and water washes away the tracks.

Candidates should be aware that this essay should focus on description, not storytelling or just writing how much they love the camp. The most common mistakes were repetition, lack of cohesion and clarity, not sticking to word limit, poor grammar, spelling and punctuation.

- (c) «Недавно со мной произошел случай, перевернувший все мои представления о животных». Вставьте эту фразу в короткий рассказ.

“Recently I had an experience that changed all my ideas about animals.” Insert the phrase in a short story.

Predictably, the most popular themes were about smart dogs and cats: dog rescues a man; dog kicks cat out of the house with a stick; dog pulls out a woman out of an office and saves her life; cat protects his kitten as a man would; cat rescues family by smelling a gas leak; cat rescues a child when a dog attacks him on a road, etc. Very popular themes were about safari in Africa, describing the behaviour of animals in the wild as being similar to human behaviour.

Many candidates were able to bear in mind that to create a narrative, it is important to think about content that has some originality, creates tension, produces effects to engage a reader’s attention, and provides necessary and appropriate details. The best responses were balanced, candidates’ stories had an intriguing beginning, a real climax, an unpredictable surprising punch line, were funny and exciting. Candidates are encouraged to use language appropriate to a narrative.

- (d) «Рано утром раздался громкий звонок». Продолжите историю или ее часть.

“Early in the morning a loud bell rang.” Continue the story or part of it.

This topic proved to be the most popular. The responses varied from simple tales to balanced, tense stories, with a carefully managed climax, well developed characters and appropriate details.

The most excellent responses started from the description of a place and an atmosphere after the sentence: “Early in the morning a loud bell rang.” One essay continued: “...through a hole in the door, made by my dog named Vector, the silhouette of a woman was visible. To my surprise, behind the door was my math teacher. In the nine years of teaching, she had never come to our home.”

Another example from an essay: “I slowly opened my eyes and looked at the black ceiling, the translucent curtains and further out into the familiar world of *Eguldena*, with its night lights and the quiet hum of alien life. I looked at the clock, put on a white bathrobe and went down the stairs. At the door, I saw a little boy, smudged with dirt and tears up to the ears. Opening the bolt on the door, I let him into my life forever.”

The places described ranged from Moscow, Almaty, a Siberian village, village Talezh to the mystical place Konoha or Eguldena, etc.

Then followed a representation of the characters, for example: mysterious strangers, psychiatrist, ex-wife, rusty robot, someone called Sasuke, man in uniform, office worker, fishermen, three clockwork boys, a voice on the phone, a black cat dressed in a neatly tailored jacket, yellow with red polka dots, etc.

Candidates gave a lot of detail to build up their characters: woman in a veil, dressed all in black, with a bag over her shoulder and an umbrella under her arm; girl with frightened eyes, white as snow; Peter's hair was a light brown golden colour, and for this reason, the combination of white and gold fitted him; eyes shrouded in a dense web of wrinkles, poignantly gleamed from under her thick black eyebrows.

The sequencing of sentences provided clarity and engaged the reader in events and atmosphere of the stories.

There were a lot of excellent, unexpected endings in these essays, for example, a fashionably dressed talking cat invites the girl to The Royal Bal. Other interesting examples include: "Every time when they would meet, two people would make a bet, but in the last meeting both were killed. Something interesting is going on in the estate, but it is not yet known what." "It is necessary for me to prove his innocence in the arena battle, now it is the third time, and I can hardly go for fear of death." "Tell everything to the police, violate the rules of medical confidentiality, and destroy the lives of Ephraim, because the killer is now my patient." "What have I done to Napoleon?" (a cat named Napoleon clawed the character of the story; he sat on a Napoleon cake; an alarm clock played the French anthem, as he was late for the French language exam); the pursuer turned up to his dad and said: "Now will you do the dishes?"

The climax of one particularly amazing story was: "Once a year, on this night, our world meets the parallel world, and we are able to see each other. And the appearance of these incredible people-ghosts, stars-reptiles, makes my insides compressed. They say, sometimes you can feel them, sense the touch, maybe even talk to them; and then the dust will blow their tracks without trace..."

These examples show how candidates were able to invent details and happenings that could catch a reader's attention.