

FIRST LANGUAGE RUSSIAN

Paper 0516/01
Reading

Key message

To do well in this paper, candidates should pay careful attention to the wording of each question and construct their answers solely on the basis of the texts.

In **Question 1**, candidates needed to give short, straightforward answers to the questions, generally without lengthy comments, using their own words where required.

In **Question 2**, candidates should produce a summary in the format of a *comparative* essay extracting only relevant information from both texts and avoiding retelling the stories or merely presenting quotations from both texts.

General comments

Both texts were connected by a common theme of Work, and easily accessed by the majority of candidates despite the more challenging vocabulary in Text B.

The overall quality of the responses was good. Presentation was generally clear.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

The majority of candidates gave answers of an appropriate length and managed to avoid lifting from the text, where citation was not required. Also, the majority of candidates paid attention to the number of marks available for each question, which helped them cover all necessary points. Some candidates interpreted the metaphorical expressions in **Question 1(i)** literally, which indicates that, in future, more attention could be paid to learning idiomatic expressions.

- (a) The key was the word between 10 and 11. The majority of candidates were able to answer correctly.
- (b) The vast majority of candidates answered correctly. Candidates needed to note the regularity of the father's visits. Some candidates included 'harmless additions', which were disregarded by Examiners.
- (c) Candidates needed to give evidence of *why* the boy's stories were important for him. The mere fact that he was a dreamer or a simple description of his home town could not explain that. Some candidates gave answers based on evidence from elsewhere in the text, instead of the indicated paragraph, which could not be credited.
- (d) Some candidates managed to identify multiple reasons why the boy wanted to go to America.
- (e) This question was answered well.
- (f) Most candidates answered this correctly.
- (g) This question required candidates to analyse the text carefully. Only a few candidates managed to understand that Amirov was really scared, which was the real reason for his return home. Many candidates said that the reason was his father's visit or unfinished homework, not noticing that these were just excuses he gave to his friends.

- (h) This question gave an opportunity for candidates to express their own opinion, and they were not penalised for qualifying the same actions as either positive or negative. To get the full 4 marks, candidates needed to identify Nelgin's traits and support their opinion with evidence. It was important to give at least one positive and one negative aspect. Any extra statements were regarded as harmless additions.
- (i) (i) and (ii) Some candidates interpreted these literally, which was not a correct response.
- (iii) Most candidates answered this question successfully.

Language

The quality of language produced in **Question 1** was generally good. The best responses included complex structures and a wide range of vocabulary, while avoiding lifting directly from the text unless citation was required.

Question 2

Content

This question required candidates to analyse why the two journeys had concluded in different ways. Candidates needed to compare the texts based on criteria they identified themselves, related to success. Most candidates selected the aim, the level of preparation, the participants' age and their team work as the main criteria.

Those candidates who supported their analysis with appropriate evidence from the texts received high marks. The best responses focused right from the start on those differences between the two teams, avoiding describing their similarities, which was not necessary. Also, in the best responses, there was no retelling of the events or repetition of answers already given for **Question 1**.

Style, Organisation and Language

The majority of candidates demonstrated an adequate level of linguistic competence. Candidates should avoid using very colloquial expressions.

Some candidates used complex syntax and a wide range of connectives and vocabulary. The very strongest candidates demonstrated a higher level of literacy and knowledge of figurative language. Candidates should focus on accurate spelling and punctuation, especially on commas after or before subordinate clauses and connectives.

Candidates used either a simultaneous or consecutive format for comparing the two texts. Both were appropriate, providing all other assessment criteria were met.

Some candidates wrote a plan. Plans are not assessed, but can help candidates to structure their responses. The best responses were structured with proper paragraphing.

A few candidates included a stylistic analysis of the texts, which was unnecessary for this question.

FIRST LANGUAGE RUSSIAN

Paper 0516/02
Writing

Key messages

- 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/argument 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

Candidates write two essays on this paper, one from each section. In the first section they can choose from four argumentative/discursive questions. In the second section they can choose from, two descriptive and two narrative questions.

Candidates are advised to read all the questions carefully before choosing the ones they wish to respond to. It is important that they take time to choose the essay titles best suited to their knowledge and powers of expression, and allocate their time equally between the two essays. Writing out the task title and underlining key words helps 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 the recommended 350-500 words for each composition, structured in paragraphs. Careful, logical argument focusing on the main points can achieve an excellent answer without excessive length. Very short answers are generally self-penalising.

The best candidates carefully constructed their writing to ensure clarity of expression and fluency of style. They used a wide range of vocabulary that was clear and which conveyed exact meaning.

In **Section 1**, discussion/argument, 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 kept the title in their mind throughout their 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 the specific question asked. Candidates are also reminded to develop more detailed and balanced arguments in order to achieve high marks.

In **Section 2**, successful descriptive responses created wonderful, imaginative, often heart-rending scenes, focusing attention on details, which reflected the emotions of the narrator. Some candidates needed to emphasise description rather than narrative.

Many excellent narrative stories were well structured, with a gripping beginning, a middle with key events of a plot, including characters and climax, and, importantly, an interesting ending. Others needed to plan their stories carefully, using straightforward narratives, character development and an effective ending.

The quality of 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 correct spelling and punctuation, including commas, capital letters and speech marks.

Comments on specific questions

Section 1

Discussion and Argument

(a) Каковы преимущества и недостатки того, чтобы быть знаменитым?

It was pleasing to see that candidates devoted thought to the whole topic. Many excellent essays were well developed, logical, gave strong complex arguments, demonstrated clear sequence and good linkage, used fluent and accurate language.

These answers generally began on the same theme as an introduction: almost everyone wants to be famous, even small children wish to become famous in the future. For the most part, people see only the benefits of being famous, because famous personalities have everything in life. However, being famous has its own advantages and disadvantages.

The pro- statements argued that being famous generally means being richer; fame brings lots of fortune: luxurious homes and cars, fancy gifts, expensive clothes and other materialistic pleasures of life; celebrities are also known to own entire islands. Candidates continued, that famous people are recognised everywhere they go; this is an advantage because people often experience a massive ego boost when random bystanders recognise them; they get special treatment wherever they go, from special seats at theatres, special tables at restaurants and nightclubs, to being the preferred customers everywhere they go. Also famous people have fans; they send letters to them to tell how much they admire them; fan mail and other forms of appreciation that celebrities receive can be inspirational and motivational; it is interesting to have one's own fans, followers, and worshipers; in addition, when a famous people are sick, they most certainly have a private doctor and the best medical treatment.

Moreover, some candidates argued that many opportunities arise when people become famous, whether they are career related or not; he/she may be the face of famous firms and promote many brands or can afford to delve into new ventures like fashion apparel and perfumes simply because he/she is famous; being famous definitely opens many doors in life which would have remained shut had fame not been achieved.

The contrary views stated the point that famous people cannot do things that the average person can; they may be forced to live in their own little secluded world; celebrities have no privacy; they are often followed or harassed by phone, email, or mail by fans or followers and become obsessed and that can turn into threats and even physical harm. A celebrity status can attract too many fake friends; people constantly judge celebrities; tabloids, magazines, newspapers, blogs, and other forms of media constantly judge celebrities on their personalities, habits, bodies, and a lot more; fame also carries worry about your own safety and the safety of your family; there is always a danger that a crazy fan may try to kidnap or kill you or your children, so it is necessary to employ bodyguards. In addition, famous people often have quite lonely lives; some of them live in fear so their lives become even more stressful.

Then followed the conclusion: being famous might be wonderful in many ways but the fortune comes at great cost, although, there are people who are famous who take it all in their stride. As a result, some candidates concluded that they would prefer not to be famous because the benefits of being an ordinary person outweigh the disadvantages of being rich and famous. Maybe famous people's lives are better than ours but their problems are much bigger; famous people are financially secure and their lives are easier in many aspects but perhaps they do not feel safe; they have friends and fans but can never be sure if they like them for who they are or for their money. Generally speaking, people would choose freedom over fame.

Candidates should avoid conversation about biographies of famous people, what they look like, etc., as this is not relevant to the question.

Candidates must consider all of the subject matter and support their answers with analysis.

Weaker answers were characterised by a tendency to generalised comments, and were less well supported by analysis.

- (b) Приведите преимущества и недостатки общения в социальных сетях (Вконтакте, Одноклассники и других).

This was one of the most popular essay titles and there was a wide range of performance from candidates. 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. Many answers started with an introduction, such as: 'If you are like most people, you already use at least one social media platform, but you may still have some questions about social networking. Is social media helping or hindering your life? Is it safe? Is it simply a waste of time?' or 'No matter if you are searching for a former college roommate, your first grade teacher, or an international friend, no easier or faster way to make a connection exists than social media. Although Vkontakte, Odnoklassniki, Facebook, Twitter and others are probably the most well-known social networking communities, new websites are popping up regularly. What are the advantages and disadvantages of social networking communication?'

The pro- statements argued that you can make new friends, share information, relax, have fun; build business connections or simply extend your personal base by connecting and interacting with friends of friends, which can have a multiplying effect; you can find and interact with those who share your interest, ideas and information about hobbies, crafts, cooking, gardening and other activities; this is a great feature for teachers to use to facilitate classroom discussions and for candidates who no longer need to visit a library to conduct research; conference organizers use it to update attendees and business people use it as a means of interacting with clients or prospects; social networking connects you with other people all over the world. The biggest advantage of social media is its power to connect people; it has become a popular way for family and friends who live far away from one another to keep up with what is going on in each other's lives without the expensive cost of long-distance calling. Another great advantage for everyone is finding out what is happening around the world; through social networking sites people share what they know or what they see, so everyone can get access news in real time. Some candidates argued that the best recruitment platform for people who looking for work opportunities is not asking friends but using networks; even business owners and other types of professional organisations who have been able to connect with current customers, advertise and sell their products and would not be able to operate without social networking communication.

A huge advantage: social media groups can be lifelines for individuals suffering from a rare disease. Churches, synagogues and temples also use social media to reach out to members who may be unable to attend services.

Candidates considered all aspects of the question in a relevant way and devoted much thought to their writing, e.g.: increased speed of networking communications leads to increased speed of life; information through social networking spreads incredibly quickly and can spread like wildfire and people may react to it very quickly.

Candidates showed their ability to consider and judge alternative explanations. The contrary views stated the point that the digital age gave birth to a social phenomenon – cyberbullying; potentially offensive content is posted online, the amount of feedback can be excessive and is often brutal; this backlash can also have a long-term impact on a person's future; expose individuals to inappropriate contact, which can be especially true for teens and younger children.

Some candidates pointed out that a big disadvantage of social network communication is the risk of fraud or theft; if a thief successfully steals your identity, it could cost you dearly; social networking invites major corporations to invade your privacy and sell your personal information; comments are often more blunt than the statements would be if they were made face-to-face; people trust each other less.

The biggest disadvantage of the spread of social networking is that people often do not follow the rules of grammar and punctuation, use poor vocabulary, emotions are replaced by emoticons.

Discussion supported by careful analysis, how advantages sometime turn to disadvantages, e.g.: social networking is our present, without it life is unthinkable, but spending too long using social networks is dangerous for health, leading to internet addiction; the informative nature of the social networks is indisputable, but because of the abundance of readily available entertainment too, much time can be wasted; acquiring new friends through the internet is wonderful, but the skill of

real communication is lost, because people get used to communicating online; according to statistics, every fifth family in the world uses social networks, but there is also a downside to this familiarity: every third divorce is due to social networks, because of reading the correspondence of your partner with others.

Then followed the conclusion that social networking communication should complement life, and not be the basis of all activities. Social networks can bring many benefits but the abuse of these networks can lead to dependence, loss of attention, waste of time, alienation and stupefaction. Social networks are both good and bad. It is in our power to take from them only the good and weed out the bad. To ensure that social networks are not harmful to health and wellbeing, everyone should regulate their pastime in the virtual sphere.

Candidates should carefully plan their essays to avoid repetition, long, irrelevant explanations and examples from their own experience and the experience of their relatives and friends. Discussion should include reasons, explanations and some examples.

(c) «Лучший летний отдых – это туризм». Приведите аргументы за или против.

The best responses considered all aspects of the question in a relevant way and were supported with careful analysis. They demonstrated a good overall style with orderly grouping of ideas, good linkage, appropriate and accurate language. These answers started from the statement that tourism is a great thing to do, especially now, summer is a good time of year to start a new adventure or see new parts of the country and the world; “The world is a book; those who do not travel read only a page”; tourism does not have to be limited to where you live or what you read in a book, there are lots of exciting places to experience in the world; tourism and travelling is worth every penny you will spend because memories last forever; the reason why many people travel is because they love an adventure.

The advantage of being a tourist in summer is that wherever you will go, you will make memories of your adventure which will last a lifetime; you can relive the enjoyment again and again as you look back on the great adventure you had; many people travel for fun and enjoyment; when travelling, you get the opportunity to meet different people from different places. In life, one of the most important social skills we learn is how to interact and communicate with people who are different from us; travelling and interacting with a variety of people can help build or improve social skills with very little effort; it can actually boost self-confidence. Moreover, tourism exposes us to different cultures; learning about other’s lives and customs deepens our understanding of ourselves and of our world; it teaches us respect and is humbling in many cases; you tend to see different places that you have not seen before; for many people, the main reason for travelling is to see the world; it allows you to have adventures in new places and see things you never thought possible. The main advantage is spending time with your family.

Candidates argued that nowadays stress is a natural part of life and when we have too much stress in our lives, it can be dangerous to our health; there are lots of activities that can help reduce stress and tension. Tourism and travelling can be one of the best ways to remove stress, reduce tension and restore balance; tourism based recreation provides relief from the monotony of daily routine; a change of scenery and climate helps a tourist to recharge his mind, body and spirit.

Candidates noted some very important details: tourism can also be a source of problems too, especially if it is not managed correctly; a constant flow of visitors can, for instance, undermine the beauty, uniqueness, character, and social coherence of a tourist destination over time; tourists can easily present huge challenges and problems for many destinations, including transport, places to stay, policing, and maintenance.

On the other hand, some candidates thought that for tourism, especially abroad, you need a lot of money; there is a great danger of contracting a rare disease in other countries; after using energy exploring a new place you want to relax. Leisure trips are good for health, mind and body but hectic trips may cause stress and effect health.

The conclusion was to stay in a warm and soft bed or every day to get up early and run somewhere, do what you want and stay at home or bother with tickets, currency and passports – it is your choice. Do what you like and live happily!

Candidates should avoid general conversation about cities and countries they visited, stories about the relatives they visited and other irrelevant information.

(d) «Обучение в университетах должно быть бесплатным». Приведите аргументы за или против.

The best answers integrated formal description with convincing discussion of the context and the concepts. The very best essays were extremely well argued and logically organized, and produced a unique and sophisticated analysis. They agreed with the statement that education is so important today: university education does offer some external benefits to society; higher education leads to a more educated and productive workforce; countries with high rates of university education generally have higher levels of innovation and productivity growth.

The pro- statements argued that education should be free to ensure equality of opportunity; if students have to pay for university education, this may dissuade them; in theory, students could take out loans or work part-time, but this may be sufficient to discourage them from studying and instead they may enter the job market earlier. They reasoned that entrance to university should be based on your ability to achieve and not on your ability to pay; students are there for their talent, and nothing else. Candidates noticed: free education encourages students to continue studying; the state will receive more specialists in all sectors of economy; free graduates can contribute to high-tech industries; they can gain skills and awareness of civic institutions which offer intangible benefits to society; this includes better personal health and improved cognitive development in their children.

Some candidates noted that we must stay competitive and to have an educated workforce is an economic imperative; there is no better way to achieve this than with free education. More money can be earned by training foreign students.

Candidates showed their ability to consider and judge all alternative explanations: many graduates are now leaving university to take jobs which do not require a degree; therefore, it is a mistake to continue to fund the public expansion of university education because the economy does not need more graduates as much as other vocational skills. The rapid rise in university numbers means that greater pressure is being put on university resources. If universities can charge students, it will help maintain standards, quality of teaching and the reputation of universities. If people have to pay to go to university, you could argue that they would value the education more; if higher education is free, it may encourage students to take an easy three years of relaxation.

The biggest argument against free education is that it is not really free: money has to come from taxpayers who did not directly benefit from higher education. Candidates pointed out that if we spend billions on free university education there is a cost of higher taxes or less spending elsewhere. There is a greater social benefit from providing vocational training, so people could become plumbers, electricians etc.; these skill shortages are prominent in industries like building, health care, plumbing, social care and construction; the problem is not a shortage of graduates with art degrees, but lower level vocational skills; allow higher public spending to tackle more basic skill shortages.

Conclusions included the following thoughts: universities need the ability to receive more revenue from students, not to be hamstrung by limited government funding; the more money that is available to universities means a higher quality of education for students and the ability to teach more students. A free market for the universities would be preferable now; therefore there is a strong case for the government to provide different types of higher education. Paid higher education should exist provided certain standards are met and students are satisfied with its quality, as it forces universities to monitor the education services market constantly and improve their quality due to competition; without paying for education most universities can not survive. Paid education is the reality of the present, and the inevitable future.

Sometimes the question itself was not adequately addressed. Candidates needed to answer the question that was asked; those who provided an answer for a question they had prepared for, rather than for the question on the paper, were limited to low band marks.

In answering this question, candidates should avoid a long description of their personal issues in biographies of relatives and friends or famous people as this was not relevant to the question.

Section 2

Description and Narrative

- (a) Опишите атмосферу и зрителей во время представления в цирке.

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 a broad, effective range of vocabulary, and accurate grammar. The essay started from the description of the place: the circus was in a huge tent, which was decorated by colourful electric bulbs and tubes; they gave a charming sight; inside the tent there were long circular rows of wooden benches and folding chairs; after the break, the circus revived as if by magic and again everything was twirling and spinning by bright colours of merry madness.

Then followed the description of the audience: now let's look at the crowd – everywhere there were people of different ages, from different communities; the taste of candy floss in the air wanting me to just take a few bites of it; it has been attracting very large crowds; people who had seen the show were full of immense praise for the daring physical feats of men and women and the feats of the tamed animals.

Then the essay continued with a description of the circus actors and their performance: young gymnasts, both boys and girls, showed their physical feats, they twisted their bodies in many ways and we wondered whether their bodies were made of flesh or rubber; the motorcyclists ran their motorcycles simultaneously in a deep well, they called it the “well of death” and it was really so; the monkeys rode unicycles; the bear drove a motorcycle; the elephants saluted the spectators and played football; the girl with an umbrella in her hand danced on the thin wire-rope. One amazing act followed another: the clowns in colourful dress with cats and dogs; the riders on horseback, who galloped around the ring; the girls in blue-and-silver with two men on another trapeze – they kept on a trapeze, swinging and exchanging places, etc.

The best candidates gave a range of details, for example: a soft and gentle voice said through the tannoy: “I would like to welcome you to our circus performance. I hope you enjoy the show”; a spotlight zeroed in on a man walking towards centre stage, followed by a huge lion; using his whip to control the killer beast, the lion tamer made the animal run through hoops; again he cracks the whips to make the animal open up his jaws; the tamer shows his nerve by sticking his head into the lion's mouth; it was as if I came to the feast of a strange eccentric family consisting of clowns, bears, acrobats; at times the atmosphere was heated; every frenzy was accompanied by applause and occasionally by screams of horror; tigers recreated the atmosphere of rage and cruelty of their natural habitat; a woman appeared swinging gracefully on the trapeze, with no net to catch her if she should fall, one slip could endanger her life; the clown dressed beautifully with a hat made of bird's feathers on his head; he had a long nose and a pipe in his hand, just to look like the pied piper, etc.

The very best essays were extremely good in the description of feelings: as the show began there was pin drop silence; blood flows through my veins up my spine and the cycle starts all over again; I take a deep breath, hoping I would not die; I let out a big noise; children cover the ears because of loud surroundings booming in their head; I could feel the cold icy air tremble up my spine; now the show has ended, I can now sit down and relax; I was amazed to see them moving and bending their body like a rubber rod; I wished I could also make my body as flexible and elastic as the gymnast had; gasps can be heard all through the crowd; the two children cling to their parents afraid that something bad was going to happen to the lion tamer; not long after the tamer put his head in he took it out; cheers erupted from all over the crowd; the boy and girl let go of their parents and started jumping up and down amazed by the performance they had just witnessed; every person in the crowd was mesmerized by the flawless performance, gaping as each twist and turn was landed perfectly; she seemed to fly through the air; the children along with parents were amazed by the talent of the woman; to everyone in the crowd that night would be one they would never forget; the little boy and girl saw things they never thought were possible, and the parents saw happiness in their children's eyes; that night was perfect for everyone who came; during sword swallowing an especially impressionable young lady cried aloud; when the acrobats deliberately jostled and then fell, the whole hall cried out; roaring of animals, laughter of clowns and music make viewers freeze and come back to life after each number; suddenly the hall fell silent and rumbling drumroll sounded: “Death act!”; everybody is frozen.

Candidates should be aware that this question asks them to describe the circus, the audience during the performance and their feelings; the task can focus on description, not storytelling; candidates should avoid repetition.

(b) Опишите летний сад.

There were many excellent responses that showed well-developed ideas and images, described feelings and thoughts, included appropriate, sophisticated, complex sentences used to achieve a particular effect and were written with accurate language.

The best candidates describe the summer garden with a lot of appropriate amazing details started with the introduction, e.g.: 'You lie on the grass behind the old manor house. Over your head fly swift-sweeps. Nothing else bothers you anymore except this wonderful moment'; 'The garden like a patterned Tatar carpet stretched to the horizon. The summer sun of July bathed the garden with its rays. Somewhere in the cool shadow of trees was heard the morning song of the sparrows'; 'Like the house, we try to maintain the garden in the best possible way'; 'The sunlight blinded my eyes for a moment. From a white blanket of blindness in front of me began to loom outlines of trees, the fragrant scent of fresh grass filled the nostrils, mixed with the smell of pollen and fresh paint'. The description was usually set in the village of grandparents, in their native town, in Moscow, in the well-known St. Petersburg Summer Garden, in Kew Garden in London or in a fictitious place.

Then followed the description of the garden, e.g.: apple trees run through the centre of the garden; a lonely leaf drifts to the ground silently and carelessly, settling into its eternal rest; here the lilies nestle down, large, spreading, with velvety petals and a pleasant smell; we approached what were once lush peonies, which now dwindled dimly, spreading their petals and leaves on the ground; birds singing creates an orchestra of sound, cascades into the open spaces, ghosts fly through windows and into my sleeping dreams; butterflies flutter through the air with their velvet wings; I sit on the bench. I can see the sunlight chasing the crab-shadows of the apple trees across the steaming grass; if you breathe deep enough, scents register as a sweet mix of all the flowers, etc.

Many candidates provided a range of excellent details, for example: grass, like precious emeralds, poured into the sun, shining with the morning dew; here was a pavilion in the garden, made of a dark brown, almost crimson pine tree; among a variety of flowers and plants, the pavillion was distinguished by its colour and structure, but still was an integral part of the summer garden; trees growing in the garden, were a prime example of the greatness and beauty of nature; to the left of you is the track, no wider than a meter, made of white stone and sand; if you go along the path farther from home, the track will lead you to the shore of a small lake, around which grow weeping willows; night beauties awoke from the ground overnight. The aroma of roses percolated through the air; multi-coloured rainbows colorized the sky with fire and the light leaks into the garden; I can see cobwebs in the grass, glistening in the pond, they look like fishermen's nets.

Typically, successful candidates compared their feelings with the description of nature, for example: the summer garden was a solitude of peace and inner harmony; it was a delight and filled the soul with warmth and joy; overwhelming loneliness of the landscape sends shivers down my spine, wondering how anything could survive up there; I sit on the bench we made some time back and engage in my favourite past time; this garden is a quiet convent, a haven of peace and solitude; as I made my way back through the enchanted garden and towards the house, I have only one wish – to return here as soon as I can.

Candidates should be aware that this essay should focus on description, not storytelling or just writing about summer holiday. The most common mistakes were repetition, lack of clarity, too long or too short length of writing, poor grammar and spelling, punctuation.

(c) «Мой первый успех в жизни». Напишите рассказ с таким названием.

The most popular place was a hometown in Russia or in other countries. The majority of candidates describe their first success in sport: football, tennis, swimming, wrestling, judo, diving, etc.

The best essays engaged the reader in the events and atmosphere of the stories: 'I danced awkwardly, but I was so happy that I was taking part in dance group. Today in the opera "Phantom in the Theatre" I play a ballerina who wants to become an opera singer'; 'My father was a bandit

and traded in the local black market. I learned from him the sleight of hand. Father was a master of locks and could open any door. I, too, started quite cleverly to deal with locks'; 'I was offered work in a bar. At 7pm I set out and all of the way there I was haunted by vague alarm'; 'The competition hall was painted in an ice-green colour, which gave the event even more seriousness. At exactly 10 o'clock the draw was held. My rival was three-time winner of the competition 'Battle of the imagination'; 'I was in darkness and could not open my eyes. The soul was trembling, compressed under the pressure of "Styx". I was immobilized and chained like a plaster statue. I heard a bang'.

Most of the candidates managed clearly to identify the climax and the appropriate ending to their stories. The climaxes of amazing stories were the following: 'I spent 20 years in prison. When I was released, my wife was already dead, leaving my daughter alone. She is now 20 years old. I'm going to meet her'; 'My standard move is to think about how I play football. The ball slowly rolled in my direction. I panicked and the ball rolled even faster. I was already preparing to show gestures that I give up. Then I groped in my pocket for a chocolate bar. It was a rescue'; 'No matter how strange it may sound, I liked this cell. It was my very existence. I wanted to leave – and I wanted to stay. Suddenly the light came in sight. The light called me somewhere'.

This example shows how candidates were able to invent details and events that could captivate the reader's attention: 'The yacht was blue and white, with a sail carved from an old mother's skirt. The mast was pasted into the hole in the middle of the deck. On the second deck there is a hand wheel made of the clock wheel. On the sides there are stairs to the lower deck, between them is the entrance to the cabin'; 'The windows in the house rattled vigorously from the howling wind, as though they were about to fall out of the frames which were made from rotting wood being eaten away by wood worm. A few potted plants lay next to the door. I could not sleep. Hunting starts early tomorrow morning'; 'I attached the helmet to my head, it was a little crushed, but I had to concentrate on the task'.

There were a lot of interesting endings to the essays, for example: 'Unseen I was sitting in the hall, my adult daughter received a reward from the hands of the famous scientist. It was my success!'; 'There were 3 seconds left. I closed my eyes and imagined that we were playing soccer on the lawn with my parents. Then I felt light, I had taken off my helmet. My ball was in the gate of an opponent. This was victory!'; 'I rushed to the light and ran into the wall "Stinks water", poured into the direction of light. I jumped out of the dungeon and screamed with joy. It was a cry of victory, a cry of joy, a cry of the first success in my life! This was the moment of my birth'.

Not all stories had an intriguing beginning, a real climax, an unpredictable surprising punch line, were funny or exciting.

(d) «Я никак не мог заснуть, а вагон все несся в ночи...» Вставьте эту фразу в рассказ.

There were a lot of very interesting responses. The places were mostly Moscow or St. Petersburg (Leningrad), Rybinsk, Velikiy Ustyug, Lake Baikal, Ural Mountains, the small provincial town Uta, in space, in the middle of nowhere.

The best essays started the story with an intriguing beginning: 'I woke up early in the morning of May understanding that my life will not be the same again, in the best sense of this expression'; 'I worked in a bookshop. One day I got a book 'Shadow of the wind'. The first part described the childhood of a boy from Catalonia. All of the details were just like my own life; 'I decided to relax on the luxurious Oriental Express. How tired I am of all these crimes!'; 'Imagine Peru, motel, under the bed I found a dower chest, and a stone in it, painted with ancient hieroglyphics. I'm an archaeologist, so I immediately realized what kind of finding it was'; 'My father was a military man and at the same time a cook in the best restaurant in Leningrad. Not life, but a fairy tale'; 'We will have a journey that will change our life, nobody knows it for the worse or the better'; 'We go to Santa Claus in Veliky Ustyug'; 'I'm beaten up lying on a tight narrow bench. I looked at the door. It was now a little opened. A chill ran down my spine: here was the way to freedom'; 'Our train, that was made in space, made round-the-world travel possible at 7 times per second'.

Then they continued the story: 'I pressed the switch button and the bulb glowed with a dull yellowish light. A little time left before the train'; 'I met a girl who was also called Lisa. We fell in love and soon got married. Two days after the wedding, Lisa, like the heroine of the book, disappeared'; 'I entered the restaurant. The Chairman of the London Surgeons' Community, Mr. Jerome, came up, we sat at the table and ordered food. Suddenly one of the visitors began to lean in and a few milliseconds later sprawled on the floor'; 'I opened the newspaper and started reading

it with interest, as never before, because I knew that I am reading for the last time; 'I went to the right along the corridor. At the end of the corridor I saw some movement. A shiver went all over my body, but I overcame the fear and rushed to run in the opposite direction'; 'I met a speaking robot and we were walking around Moscow. In the 23rd century there are only two professions: production of robots and programming of robots' behaviour'.

The very best answers represented the characters through detail: 'A man with a military bearing stood before me. Steel eyes looked at me firmly, not blinking. He did not take his right hand from his pocket'; 'Suddenly I heard the clack of women's heels on the hallway. A girl of about twenty entered the compartment. She was in a black dress and with long golden hair. It seemed she did not understand where she was and how she had ended up here; 'My friend's parents were extraordinarily neat and picky. I had to wear stupid slippers and a buttoned up shirt. They ignored me and did not even offer me breakfast'.

Candidates provided some convincing details, for example: 'I was offered a job in Munich and I've always wanted to taste real Bavarian beer'; 'The salon was made of green leather and smelled of cigarettes. The customary air freshener in the form of a Christmas tree dangled from the rearview mirror'; 'Some obscure shadows suddenly appeared on the walls of the room and just as suddenly disappeared. It seemed to me that someone was following me constantly'; 'When we were fishing grayling a strong wind rose, the most dangerous of conditions on Lake Baikal. It picked up my cap and sent it to swim in the lake'; 'One thing was unchanged: I enjoyed my hot coffee, enjoyed its aftertaste. It must have been the longest cup of coffee of my life'; 'A disfigured face looked directly at me. In the gaps of his eyes a green light burned'.

Most of the candidates managed clearly to identify the climax to their stories, for example: 'Suddenly the whole train's lights went off. The train began to drop speed abruptly. There were footsteps heard, but nothing was visible. Then shots were heard'; 'I closed the door of the carriage. Suddenly I heard strange scratching sounds. I went out and looked between carriages. I remembered that I closed the door. Then I saw scratches on the floor'; 'As soon as I hid behind the bar counter, heavy footsteps were heard. Someone slowly approached my shelter. When the steps were already quite close, there was silence. My heart was beating, I was afraid to breathe. Then someone looked over at the counter'.

Candidates managed clearly to identify the appropriate ending, e.g.: 'So ended my escape up to Ukhta and back, accompanied by a policeman. At home father's belt was waiting for me'; 'When I returned to the compartment, the son said thank you. I fell asleep instantly'; 'The wight laughed. It got me out of the stupor. Twitching with my whole body, I shot. It was all over'.

The climax was often the end of the story: 'When I woke up, the train was already in the territory of Germany. 'Here they are, new opportunities' I thought'; 'That's why I decided to go to France and by all means seek out the author. So I was on the train'; 'I came back at the compartment. The carriage continued to run in the night...Another death, most likely murder. Crimes are a matter of my life. I got up and went to find out the details'; 'Armed men with lanterns rushed into the compartment. I thought it was the end. Yes, I was waiting for it'; 'And although I did not appreciate my life I understood, that if I turned around, my life will end'; 'It dawned on me: tomorrow I'll go to work and start developing a time machine, to go back to Earth'.

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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. They needed to use language appropriate to the narrative.