

# FIRST LANGUAGE RUSSIAN

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Paper 0516/01  
Reading

## Key messages

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. Also, candidates should first look through all the questions in **Part 1** and **Part 2** in order to avoid any repetition while answering.

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

In **Part 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

Texts A and B were connected by the common theme of the Changing World They were adequately accessed by the majority of candidates, despite the more challenging vocabulary of Text A.

The overall quality of the responses was good. There were, however, fewer performances at the outer edges of the mark ranges than in previous years. Happily, there were fewer candidates whose handwriting impeded the marking process this year, but the number of candidates who complied with the word limit requirement in **Question 2** could have been higher.

## Comments on specific questions

### Question 1

The majority of candidates gave answers of appropriate length and managed to avoid lifting from the text, where their own wording was required. Also, the majority of candidates paid attention to the mark allocation for each question, which helped them to cover all necessary points. However, the interpretation of the idiomatic expressions still appeared to be challenging.

- (a) The overwhelming majority of candidates made a brilliant start by selecting the word *затопление* rather *потоп* from the same word family.
- (b) Nearly all candidates answered successfully.
- (c) All the answers that conveyed the idea of clearing the area before flooding, including the aim of burning down the cemetery, were credited with one mark.
- (d) The key to success in answering this question was not to lift from the text. Almost all candidates got one mark, having produced a wide range of synonyms to *anger*. The second point was more challenging as candidates had to pick up a *threat* to the workmen.
- (e) This question seemed to be easy but, in reality, it required from candidates to demonstrate their deep understanding of the author's depiction of the character. Only those candidates who managed to pick up a subtle difference between positive and negative connotations of the synonyms to the verb 'command' in the context and conveyed Vorontsov's superior attitude towards the villagers were credited with one mark.

- (f) This question required paraphrasing of the text, which the majority of candidates did and got two points, i.e. one for Zhuk's work being hard (its 'quality'), and the other for the high frequency of his talks with villagers ('quantity').
- (g) The strongest candidates managed to reveal the real reason behind Zhuk's confidence, i.e. the power of 'decrees' and 'law orders' issued by the authorities that the villages had to follow, from his point of view, unquestionably.
- (h) This question required the candidates to demonstrate their ability to elicit 'arguments/facts' from Darya's speech while ignoring her 'opinions' or 'attitudes'. All candidates got at least one mark out of the possible three.
- (i) For one mark, the majority of candidates identified Vorontsov's attitude towards the village as *indifferent*, or similar. In order to get the second mark, they also had to explain the reason why. For that, the strongest candidates managed to successfully convert Yegor's direct speech into indirect and not to fall into the trap of calling Vorontsov 'a tourist'.
- (j) (i) While answering this question, some candidates demonstrated a profound insight into the author's idea of the whole text, i.e. the power of the villagers' consolidated resistance to the authorities' actions.
- (ii) There was a wide range of evidence in the text to illustrate the above idea. These sub-questions were treated independently. Those candidates who selected the quotes demonstrating the actions of the villagers, not of the authorities, were credited with two marks, even if they responded to **Question (j)(i)** incorrectly.
- (k) (i) The most successful candidates didn't explain this idiom through any other one, but used their own wording instead. They also took into account the relevant context, producing a negative statement, rather than a question, e.g. 'no decent man would have done that', which was meant by Daria.
- (ii) This idiom yielded a wide range of explanations but only a few candidates managed to convert the physical features into personality traits, like 'making himself more important', which was expected for one mark.

## Language

The quality of language produced in **Question 1** was generally good. The top mark was awarded to those candidates who produced more complex structures with correct punctuation, a wider range of vocabulary and avoided lifting where the citation was not required.

## Question 2

### Content

This question required candidates to compare the characters' attitudes towards the changing world in *both* texts. Those candidates who made a summary of one text only were disadvantaged, but, luckily, such responses were in the minority. The most successful candidates managed to include a few, or even, all of the characters, having analysed their actions as well as speech and illustrating their points with relevant evidence from the texts, which brought them more marks. Some strong candidates also gave a brilliant comparative analysis of the language used by the characters, relating that to the corresponding periods in Russian history, which contributed to the overall quality of their summaries. In the best responses, candidates avoided repetitions of their responses already given for **Question 1**.

It should be stressed that for the highest mark, candidates had to focus on comparing the characters' *attitudes*, not the texts as such. Besides, those candidates who were merely retelling the events or sharing their own ideas, though on the same theme, could not be credited with maximum points, either for the content or style and organisation.

### Style, Organisation and Language

The majority of candidates demonstrated quite a good level of linguistic competence. Some candidates used rather complex syntax and a wide range of vocabulary, including various connectives and time markers.

However, compared with the previous years, there were not many outstanding responses that demonstrated a higher level of literacy and knowledge of figurative language.

There has been a slight improvement in spelling this year, though punctuation still needs to be worked on. The bulk of punctuation errors fell on lack of commas after or before subordinate clauses or introductory words.

Candidates used either simultaneous or consecutive format for comparing the two texts. Both were appropriate, providing all other assessment criteria were met. Some candidates preferred to write a plan separately, which didn't affect their marks but, apparently, helped them structure their responses. Regrettably, only a few candidates used proper paragraphing, but they certainly benefitted, having been awarded a higher mark.

A few candidates included a stylistic analysis of the characters' speech, which contributed to their deeper understanding of the theme and brought them extra marks.

# FIRST LANGUAGE RUSSIAN

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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 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 are required to write two compositions, one from each section. In the first section, four argumentative/discursive titles are set, from which candidates choose one. In the second section, four titles are set (two descriptive and two narrative), from which candidates choose one.

In general, successful candidates will have read all of the titles carefully before choosing the ones on which they wish to write. It is important that they take time to choose the titles best suited to their knowledge and powers of expression, and allocate their time equally between the two compositions. Writing out the task title and underlining key words can help candidates to focus on the task and avoid writing irrelevant material. Before writing their compositions, candidates should spend time planning, to avoid repetition and achieve a logical structure.

Most candidates wrote between 350–500 words for each composition; very short answers due to lack of time or skill affected their overall result. 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**, 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 the writing, using the beginning or the end of each paragraph to state how the content of this paragraph supported their arguments.

In **Section 2**, successful descriptive compositions 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 compositions 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 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.

## **Comments on specific questions**

### **Section 1: Discussion and Argument**

- (a) Обсудите преимущества и недостатки обучения в частных школах.

Discuss the advantages and disadvantages of studying at private school.

Many excellent essays were well developed, logical, gave strong complex arguments, demonstrated clear sequence and good linkage and used fluent and accurate language. These answers began with an introduction such as 'It is a hotly debated topic today: what are the advantages and disadvantages of private schools and state schools?'

The pro-statements argued that class sizes are much smaller at private school, with a much better teacher to student ratio; pupils get much more time with teachers and much greater personal attention may be given to an individual student's particular academic needs; safer environment; access to better resources and technology; academic excellence: higher standards are set for the students which results in students wanting to achieve more; high achievement; a higher rate of students who apply to college than state schools.

Moreover, some candidates argued that there is also often a greater amount of support for specific educational needs such as dyslexia and other reading difficulties. Alongside smaller class sizes, discipline also improves accordingly; this in turn translates to more quality teaching time and greater time for personal academic attention to be given to individual students. Some mentioned that religious parents choose a private school because it belongs to a particular denomination and their children will regularly attend services. Many private schools offer an excellent range of sporting, musical and dramatic extra-curricular activities.

The argument that students usually have to wear uniforms may be an advantage as well as a disadvantage depending on whether the student likes fashion or not.

The contrary views stated that private schooling is very expensive; students have to pass an entrance exam to be admitted; less diverse choices in subjects; limited social exposure: many modern parents are concerned with the breadth of their children's social experiences, and feel it is important for them to mix and socialise with others from all cultural backgrounds from a young age. They feel strongly that meeting and befriending young people from all cultures, religions and economic backgrounds is essential to creating a fair, unprejudiced outlook on life.

Then followed the conclusions: students and their parents should think strongly about what type of school to choose, private or state.

Candidates should avoid conversation about the history of private schools, detailed stories of famous schools, their own experience, etc., as this is not relevant to the question.

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

- (b) «Гаджеты – лучшие друзья человека». Обсудите разные точки зрения.

'Gadgets are people's best friends'. Discuss all points of view.

This was the most popular essay title and students exhibited wide-ranging levels of performance. 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 started with the introduction, e.g.: 'I believe that gadgets are people's best friends, because they allow us to live longer and better than ever before'; 'I have made a friend who over the years has become my best friend, it is none other than my hi-tech gadget'.

Discussion was supported by careful analysis: gadgets are a best friend because they give easy access to information; facilitate everyday life; give advice for all occasions; help patients; provide comfort, accessibility, mobility; make life easier. Technology has had an impact on relationships in business, education and personal life. Services like Skype create new possibilities for relationships between students and teachers. Many people use social networks to make new friends and find people who share common interests; these developments can be extremely positive.

On the other hand, gadgets may be our enemy, because the availability of new communication technologies, it can also have the result of isolating people and discouraging real interaction. Many young people choose to make friends online rather than meet their friends in the real world, and these 'virtual' relationships are a poor substitute for real friendships. Gadgets can be used for bullying, terrorism, may be a danger to children; be a threat to privacy; you can get sucked into the virtual world, it can lead to addiction.

Then followed the conclusion: 'I really believe that modern technology is our friend, but it could become our enemy if we become so dependent on it that we can't function without it.' 'It provides so many benefits that help us. It can continue to be our friend if we use it correctly.' 'Real friendship is forged between people or between people and animals, not with gadgets'.

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 facts, reasons, explanations and some examples about gadgets as a best friend, an enemy or both.

(c) «Будущее планеты в руках моего поколения». Согласны ли вы с этим утверждением?

'The future of the world is in the hands of my generation.' Do you agree with this statement?

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 organised, and produced a unique and sophisticated analysis. They agreed with the statement that 'The future of the world is in the hands of my generation'. As every new generation begin their lives, they always leave something behind; with the passing of time, each generation forgets something but also creates something new; our generation is a group of strong-minded, strong-willed, assertive people with the potential to change the world, even if they don't act immediately.

They reasoned that we have a difficult inheritance: the planet is deteriorating; deforestation is irreversible; global warming and terrorism; there is real danger of a third world war; new viruses may appear; the depletion of natural resources; the threat of hunger and lack of drinking water, etc. There are several ways we can impact the future: we can speed up processes that could benefit the future; our economy tends to grow every year, and this suggests that if we make society wealthier today, this wealth will compound long into the future; new technologies have reached an unprecedented level today.

Candidates set out their point of view that our future is in trouble; the planet has deteriorated so much that neither our, nor the next generation will be able to fix it; we have to try to do something. This argument is the most important today.

Some candidates noted that our generation might make other irreversible changes, which could either be positive or negative, for example genetic engineering might make it possible to fundamentally change human values, and then these values would be passed down to every future generation; this could either be very good or very bad, depending on your moral views and how it was done.

On the other hand, candidates pointed out that our generation will use every skill to solve all problems; we will create paper without deforestation; find new sources of energy; overcome national, religious, political differences; we could precipitate the end of civilization, perhaps through a nuclear war, run-away climate change, or other disasters. This would foreclose the possibility of any future. It seems like there are things the current generation could do to increase or decrease the chance of extinction.

Conclusions included the following thoughts: even if you're not sure how to help the future, then you should at least focus on helping the people around you today. This is a part of the global priority of our generation; we will not be able to solve all problems completely but set the tone for future generations. There is a small but real possibility that civilization will end in the next century; and this would not only be terrible for the present generation, it would permanently remove the possibility of any future; we need to reduce the risk.

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 as this was not relevant to the question.

- (d) «Кинофестивали это напрасная трата времени и денег». Согласны ли вы с этим утверждением?

'Film festivals are a waste of time and money.' Do you agree with this statement?

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 cinema is the most democratic art: it uses the most appropriate language for audiences and can be accessible almost everywhere because of the internet; film festivals can consolidate and maintain democracy, peace and freedom; film festivals are a vital link in the chain of global film culture; in the twenty-first century we need festival diversity, they encourage a breadth and a variety of views; film festivals are helping at polarized world: speaking multiple languages, they give us the ability to hear a rich diversity of voices from areas of conflict; discussions around movies and the film industry can be had and plans for the future can be forged.

Candidates noted some very important details: festivals popularize documentary films; film festivals exist to inspire audiences and keep the excitement alive in the cinematic experience; the glamorous festivals of red carpets and dress codes remain in our nostalgic golden past. Festivals should be all about extraordinary experiences: sharing energy, emotions, and enjoyment. Moreover, any 'business' that gets done at the festival is secondary, but a growing area for festivals; also film festivals have an important role to widen the range and selection of films on the silver screens. One important purpose of film festivals in the twenty-first century is that they play a significant role as an alternative distribution channel for non-commercial films. Film festivals can create a needed platform for meaningful discussion.

On the other hand, some candidates thought that film festivals divide society, more obvious is the division between celebrities and others, rich and poor; it would be better to support young film makers without funding; it costs a lot of money, wastes human resources; there are unsolved problems more important for humanity than film festivals; beautiful movies do not give a true picture of real life.

The conclusion was that film is a very democratic way to approach and contextualize stories about the world and other people; it doesn't require you to be able to read or have certain knowledge before watching it. Film festivals have many roles in the twenty-first century – discovering great films, making films accessible, curation of films for audiences, opportunities for industry. Increasingly, the main purpose of film festivals is enhancing the viewing experience for audiences through events; involving spectators in the festivals; one of the most important purposes of film festivals in the twenty-first century is to facilitate discussion through media.

Candidates should avoid general conversation about films and its importance for people, description of famous festivals, biographies of film stars, etc. as this is not relevant to the question.

## **Section 2: Description and Narrative**

- (a) Вы попали в удивительное место, которое всегда вызывало большой интерес путешественников. Опишите это место и свои чувства и мысли при посещении его.

You are at a wonderful place that has always attracted great interest from travellers. Describe it and your feelings and thoughts when you visit it.

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.

Some candidates gave a detailed plan of the essay.

The wonderful places included: the Pacific Ocean, Bermuda, the ruins of the ancient Aztec pyramid, Central Park in New York City, Turkey, Greece, Russia, Finland, Malta, New Zealand, a forest, an unnamed city, the place of the living stones, ancient settlements in the rocks and even Atlantis.

One excellent essay described Neuschwanstein: you are greeted by a heavy gate; it has a shield on it with the proud coat of arms of the castle; behind it stood the slender white towers and somewhere high, flags fluttered; from afar it looks like a proud white swan; I'm standing in front of the door in a long-forgotten fairy tale.

Then followed the description of the castle from the inside with a lot of amazing details: this place reminded me of the past, of the glorious acts of their brave hosts; the wind fills the flags on the towers; the air smells like flowers, pines and for some reason like apple pie.

There were a lot of descriptions of nature, for example: the sun almost completely disappeared beyond the horizon and the gloom fell rapidly on the forest; the wind was getting cool.

Most importantly, then followed the detailed description of the writer's feelings: the bells rang in the village under the mountain to show the tenth hour. I have to go, I thought; looking out into the dark castle with a farewell glance, I sighed; I really did not want to leave this place, which my imagination has already inhabited with brave knights and beautiful ladies.

The candidate finished the composition in an especially excellent way in its sense of place and the feelings it evoked: 'But the path ahead was sinuous and long; in my thoughts I said goodbye to the castle and without looking back began my descent. The sun has set. I descended the stony path, hearing the clatter of hooves and the squeaking wheels of luxury coaches which passed on this road hundreds of years ago. Probably, there are still ghosts here who protect the castle from secret enemies. Even so, I thought, I am lucky that there is no one here except me at this hour'.

Many candidates provided a range of excellent details, for example: I was in the jungle where there is no gravity; when we emerged from the waterfall we were waiting for the treasure: ancient weapons, jewelry, paintings, but surprisingly there was no dust on the pictures; a diamond knife, I could not lift it; it seemed drawn to the ground; geysers on which you can prepare a lunch; we are trapped here forever because new technology makes Atlantis inaccessible for people, for the world; a rocky island surrounded by a bottomless ocean; as if the artist had neatly poured watercolour paint into the centre of the picture; dozens of skyscrapers in even rows surrounded this wonderful oasis of fragrance; there is a picture of an impregnable castle; patterns on the stones intertwined with each other, moonlight reflected in clear blue water, etc.

Typically, successful applicants described the place and their feelings and thoughts when they visited it, for example: green hills nestled the tiny houses for hobbits and here you feel like a giant; you believe that little people live here; you really fly like a bird; it's amazing how people could build this; there is nothing more beautiful than harmony with nature; we fly close to the tops of trees, it seems that you can touch them; you feel the vastness of the world - and everyone flies to the sun; the moss grew directly on the ancient stones, how many years they have seen during their long existence on our planet; I stopped before leaving the cave and turned around, except for me no one will ever see these miracles; I said goodbye to the stones, they smiled back at me; you understand the true beauty and value of life, etc.

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

**(b)** Вы на одном из зимних праздников. Опишите его атмосферу, ваши эмоции и чувства в это время.

You are on one of the winter holidays. Describe its atmosphere, your emotions and feelings at this time.

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, e.g.: New Year is one of the most celebrated days in the world and is my favourite holiday; the day is shaped by different customs and traditions; each culture celebrates this holiday in its own unique way. The festival preparations start from middle of December and the streets are decorated with toys, posters, flags, garlands and lights. Fairy-lights are the latest decorative items that you can find during Russian New Year celebrations. People have started decorating shops with ice sculptures, snowmen and Father Frost figures.

They gave the description of New Year celebrations in Finland, the village of Levy, Africa, Vakayda, Bujansk and of course in Russia: in Ufa, Tumen, St. Petersburg, Moscow.

Then followed the description of the New Year Tree, the unique tree having a million small needles and staying green throughout the year; the New Year Tree, which is one of the most exciting things for children and adults, is the object that you can see in every house during the holiday; the whole family takes part in decorating a tree, with toys, candies and different New Year's lights; children consider a tree to be magical, because Russian Santa Claus hides the presents under this tree.

Then followed the description of New Year's Day; it is a family holiday for many Russians; dinner usually starts late on December 31st; traditional meals include Russian salad, herring and sparkling wine; a pre-recorded address by the country's president appears on TV, listing the achievements of the past year; at 11.55 pm local time in each of Russia's time zones; many people watch his address and raise a toast to the chiming of the Kremlin clock; the Russian national anthem begins at midnight and people congratulate each other and exchange presents; some people go out to make a snowman or light fire crackers in their backyards. Celebrations for children include a decorated fir tree and Grandfather Frost, the Russian equivalent of Santa Claus, who gives presents. Father Frost often comes with his granddaughter the Snow Maiden.

Among all the other customs one of the most famous beliefs is that Russians make a wish on New Year's Eve. The Russians feel, if any wish is made on this eve it would surely be fulfilled. For this reason, people wait for the clock to strike 12. They write their desires on paper and burn them with a candle. Then the ash is mixed in a glass of champagne and they drink it.

The best candidates gave a range of details, for example: the smell of tree needles just like in my childhood; in these moments I truly enjoy life; Gothic buildings, a square with a statue of the emperor in the centre; the crowd picks up, so that it is not possible to see much; unpleasant grey jelly shakes pitifully; on the table there are pieces of something incomprehensible; New Year's Eve salad 'herring under a fur coat' which looks like a purple-red fire - but I'm happy, I'm with the family; I'm walking slowly on a slippery stone which lines the path of our garden; In some places covered with snow, tracks are clearly visible; snow is a good helper of hunters; graceful deer vainly hoofs on the frozen lake trying to get water – poor deer, etc.

The very best essays were extremely good in the description of feelings: a chiming clock, broad smiles, the smell of a festive meal, a Christmas tree, multicolored lights, all the same, I love the New Year; despite the disgusting guests, the president's annual speech the message of which does not change from year to year, fatty salads, a sense of despondency and boredom I was very pleased see at my family full of happiness and energy; their warmth fills my heart.

Candidates should be aware that this question asks them to describe an album with old photos and their feelings; the task can focus on description, not storytelling; candidates should avoid repetition.

(c) «У нас была традиция...» Продолжите этот рассказ.

'We had a tradition...' Continue this story.

The sequencing of sentences provided clarity and engaged the reader in the events and atmosphere of the stories: 'We had a tradition...' to organize a race in the taiga for 50 km; to take the boys on horseback to the gorge and leave them there alone; to meet in Vancouver Park once a year; we are street artists and meet once a year on the streets of Berlin; during the full moon we escaped from the orphanage to take a walk in the garden; after the closing of trading, we go to the bar on the 5th floor of our office 'Goldman'.

Candidates provided some convincing necessary details, for example: we are graduates of the Physics and Mathematics Faculty of Moscow State University; a whole horde of exhausted analysts were here; everyone in the elevator kept a box of stationery, posters, office documents and all was silent; the cubs stopped, then they ran after us at the same speed as our cars; we met every year for 41 years in the centre of the park, only when he died did I find out the truth, etc.

This example shows how candidates were able to invent details and events that could captivate the reader's attention: after 5 minutes they transformed a street wall into the Sistine Chapel; the policemen caught up with us I was overwhelmed with fear and delight; the dark figures of buildings grew out of nowhere; he disappeared, as if he had never been here; I could not take my eyes off the trickle of red liquid; in the darkness the lights were approaching closer and closer.

Most of the candidates managed to clearly identify the climax of their stories, for example: although the mountain seemed at first like Everest, we still climbed this mountain; wolves surrounded us and we had to climb a tree. The climax of one amazing story was: all who quit before this day were agents of the FBI.

There were a lot of interesting endings to the essays, for example: on the TV it was reported that a local banker shot himself in the temple on the same day; there was a clean lake and a hot meal waiting for us; I had to spend the night in a tree, salvation came only in the morning; after a furious chase across all of the city, my friend said: 'You know, we just need to run'.

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

**(d)** «Кругом был густой белый туман, и вдруг громкий крик нарушил тишину...» Вставьте эту фразу в рассказ.

'A thick white mist surrounded us, and suddenly a loud cry broke the silence...' Insert this phrase into the story.

This was the most popular essay title and gave a wide range of performance from candidates. Mostly, the stories were written in the horror genre, but sometimes there were comic stories.

The places were all different: the country of the Lilliputians; Berlin Zoo; Tumanka, Matera and other villages, a small provincial town and other country places; Rome, Marseilles, Everest, Seoul, Saint Petersburg, Krasnoyarsk, Moscow, North Russia, Siberia, Kiev, Oxford, the Canary Islands, Malaysia, a forest, space, the planet Saturn, taiga, a country house, a fishing place, anomalous zones, mountains, a nightmare in a hospital, a film-making area, a campsite, Loch Ness.

The times were also different: the year 1943, 1946, 1971, 2309, even 3195 or an unclear time; The Second World War; the nineteenth and the twentieth centuries.

The best essays started the story with an intriguing beginning: good evening, I'm Sherlock Holmes; Diego slept badly, he dreamed of a murdered girl; I was lost in the woods; it was a scream of a player, numbers began to pop up: 4, 7, 2, 0, 1, one sixteenth; President Singman Ri was in danger, it was all his fault, etc.

Then they continued the story: I howled like a wolf and I was answered by real wolves; she planned to enter the University of Fine Art, then open her gallery, but then tragedy struck; I woke up realising that I am at school, the floor is strewn with fragments, in the cabinet are gas masks, I feel like someone is watching me; suddenly I heard a cry 'Lie down!', there was an explosion, someone covered me with his body; his father was stolen by a mutant; a huge naked human torso drags him away; a lot of incidents have been described in the database, they happened a lot in this area; I went into the cave, not knowing what was waiting for me but ready for anything; two twin brothers are suspected of murder, each of them says he is the killer; cautiously stepping on the sometimes uneven and slippery ground, I held my breath, trying to hear any rustling.

The very best answers represented the characters through detail; bombs exploded all around, but I wasn't scared, I was at peace, because there was Nika sitting next to me; I was called a witch for my red hair and bright green eyes, and I was the witch; it was a heavy man of about forty, lover of ketchup and hot dogs as evidenced by the stain on his shirt, etc.

Candidates provided some convincing necessary details, for example: white thick fog like the mud in the swamp swallowed all the screams; the forester was trapped; I walked and walked not paying attention to the cold, the water became deeper and deeper; something dug into me and dragged me into the depths; Erast Petrovich Fandorin, arrived from the nineteenth century through a worm hole; I walked along the road alone, feeling the icy wind that penetrated to my very bones, flapping my light dress. The fog was sometimes unexpected or sometimes very common to the place.

Most of the candidates managed clearly to identify the climax to their stories, for example: the boys still managed get into the car of the Lilliputians and return home; appointed by him, his beloved Prime Minister was a traitor and head of the conspiracy; they opened the door and hooted into the abyss; the loud cry was often human, sometimes that of animals or birds – it was a raven screaming, a peacock shouting, it was the cry of a bear.

The climax was often the end of the story: their paws were strong with sharp claws, they did not let go, I realized that this is the end; it was a rooster cry; it was not blood, but tomato sauce, so my friends had tricked me; and I realized that I am now a grown up; it's him, I swear it's him, repeated Diego; it was a dream, inspired by work by Boris Akunin.

In the majority of stories, the phrase 'A thick white mist surrounded us, and suddenly a loud cry broke the silence...' was in the middle or even at the end of the text, which allowed for intriguing development of the plot. But some of the stories started with that exact phrase, for example: 'It was late at night, there was thick fog all around and suddenly, a loud cry broke the silence. Maybe this is something I was looking for all my life, someone I was looking for.'

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

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.