

2. For English Learners

Introduction

Culture is a difficult subject to discuss. This universal subject is multifunctional and has many aspects. It covers numerous phenomena: qualities of a person, ways of doing things, communication and a variety of miscellaneous things.

There are many definitions of culture and not one of them is complete and comprehensive.

The unique feature of culture is considered to be language. With the help of our mother tongue we perceive and study everything around us. With the help of foreign languages we learn about new and different things. Through language we compare and expand our experiences. We broaden our horizons, enrich our own culture and even change our values.

You have before you a unique collection of teachers' works of the Department of Foreign Languages at Pomor State University, Archangelsk, Russia. The choice and presentation of material about the Russian North is innovative. It is presented in five Languages and aimed at both Russian and foreign readers.

- It is easy and enjoyable to read.
- The material is interpreted with the help of the authors' feelings, hobbies and interests.
- There are elements of novelty and cultural charm.
- Each topic is autonomous and can be omitted.
- The asset of this edition is that it is presented in five languages.
- It is aimed at raising awareness of our country and region.
- All the tasks are interactive and aimed to promote understanding.

The course-book contains material of regional interest: the Solovetsky Isles, history of Archangel, the city emblem and painting, etc. The texts offered are of a different genre: fairy-tales, interviews, historical reviews, excursions, descriptions of some rites, etc. The pre- and post-text activities help the reader understand the contents in a variety of ways: language differences, historical features, uniqueness of culture and literature and differences in style.

This course-book is to facilitate the development and education of under- and post-graduate students as well as those keen on foreign languages, history, literature, painting, geography, icon-painting and the fortunes of celebrities.

The materials offered can be used for independent and class-based studies in the discipline of Foreign Languages.

2.1. ***How Archangel Town Appeared***

1. Read the first part of the fairy-tale and answer the questions.

How Archangel Town Appeared

(After Mikhail Popov's fairy-tale)

Since time immemorial the Dvina river has been carrying its waters to the White Sea. The forests that surrounded it teemed with animals and birds. The river itself was full of fish. Therefore, people used to settle on the Dvina river banks. So they lived there, free and brave, working hard, raising their children and praising their God being afraid of neither wood-goblins nor demons nor even of the ring leader of all the evil spirits. That outraged the Devil.

He brought together his entire winged host and gave them his menacing order to do away with the Dvina river people. So spread the evil host its wings and rushed across the sky gathering the boulders from all the nooks of the universe. Then it brought that entire dark stony heap to the Dvina river banks and threw it down into the river mouth.

The Dvina people were frightened. Their hard times began. The Dvina river, their mother came out of its banks and flooded the meadows and the fields. Soon the water reached the houses. It really seemed that the Devil had decided to be the death of these people.

- 1) Why did people settle along the Dvina river banks?
- 2) What kind of people were they? (lazy, brave, kind, industrious, cowardly, wicked, independent, cruel)
- 3) Why and how did the Devil decide to do away with the Dvina river people?

2. Think of a possible continuation of the fairy-tale using the hints:
to pray, help, sinless, Archangel Michael, army, brothers-giants, the Devil, heaps, to scatter, the way to the sea, the river bed.

3. Read the second part of the fairy-tale and compare it with your variant. Is there anything in common?

So the Dvina river people began to pray to God asking for help. The Lord heard their prayers and as those people were pure and sinless, He sent the Archangel Michael to rescue them. The Archangel Michael spread his white wings and blew his trumpet. On hearing His call His pure army got together, rushed to the Dvina river banks, came down to the ground and turned into giants. The Devil thought that no one would move his heaps of stones away but not only did the giants move them but even scattered them.

How happy was the exhausted Dvina River when the way to the sea was freed. Soon it returned to its bed. Birds and animals came back to their dwelling places and after them people came. Everyone was happy that the danger had past. The people bowed to the giants. When the giants turned into 'angels of light' the people crossed themselves and saw the angels off to the heavens.

Little by little the people began to settle returning to their usual order and tenor of life. However, they did not forget about their miraculous salvation. Being grateful to the God and in honour of the holy warrior - the Archangel Michael - they erected the cloister of Archangel Michael, which later on grew into the town.

4. Do you think this fairy-tale sounds like the truth? Read the last part of the fairy-tale.

We are reminded of that past time by the town itself and by its coats of arms on which the Archangel Michael defeating the Devil is depicted. However, there exists other evidence – the stones, which were scattered by the brothers-giants. The one that was thrown by the youngest brother is now called Mudiug – an island that towers not far from the Dvina river mouth. The one that was thrown by one of the middle brothers went to several smaller pieces – these are the Solovetski Isles. Another one got stuck in the mouth of the White Sea – this is Morzhovets. Still another cramp-shaped boulder is Novaya Zemlya. And also – Kolguev Island, Medvezhii Island, the Grumant Archipelago, or Spitzbergen as it is called now... All these scattered stones can be seen on the map.

If you want to see the wonderful salvation with your own eyes, go to the Dvina river embankment and look at the river itself flowing so wide, at the islands that divide its mouth into so many arms.



5. Do you know any other fairy-tales, bylinas, fables, and parables about your native places? Who wrote or told them? What stories about your native places were you read to or told by your parents, grandparents or friends? Retell them.