ПРАВИТЕЛЬСТВО САНКТ – ПЕТЕРБУРГА КОМИТЕТ ПО ОБРАЗОВАНИЮ

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Невского административного района г. Санкт -Петербурга

Адрес: пр. Елизарова, д.7, литер Б

Телефон/факс 417-27-18, e-mail school329@spb.edu.ru

ПРОЕКТНО- ИССЛЕДОВАТЕЛЬСКАЯ ДЕЯТЕЛЬНОСТЬ

**ТЕМА ПРОЕКТА**

CAT’S SIEGE OF LENINGRAD

Руководитель проекта

Агеева М.Л.

Учитель английского языка

Работу выполнила

Быкова Алёна Андреевна

Класс 8

г. Санкт - Петербург

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**Introduction**

I chose this topic because I really love cats. I want to learn more about cat’s siege of Leningrad and everything that happened there in 1941. I also want to learn more about how the cats helped people to survive.

The German siege of Leningrad lasted 900 days from September, 1941 to January, 1944. During that time 800,000 people, nearly a third of the population at the siege’s beginning, starved to death. Roughly one in three. Many of them in the streets.

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**Cats helped to save people's lives in besieged Leningrad.**

On the 27-th of January, 1943, the blockade of Leningrad was completely called off. And several days ago in the Russian Internet there were lots of articles about cats of blockaded Leningrad published. But what’s so special about them? That’s the very thing you’re going to find out now.

There are two monuments commemorating cats: first one is a bronze monument commemorating Elisey cat and the second one is commemorating his friend, Vasilisa cat. They were fixed up 16 years ago and since then they were satisfying the eye of tourists and city’s inhabitants. There is a belief that if you throw a coin onto the Elisey’s monuments it will bring you happiness and plenty of luck.

One would think, how sweet of them, people of Saint-Petersburg fixed up several monuments commemorating their favorite pet… but it turned out to be that the cats themselves deserved that.

September 8, 1941, the city was besieged and the blockade lasted for 900 days. Soon enough there was no food in the city at all and the inhabitants began dying of hunger. During the terrible 1941-1942’s winter dwellers of the city ate everything they could and even pets were eaten (and that saved many peoples’ lives.) But if people are dying – rats begin to proliferate.

A few months later there were literally tens of thousands or even more rats prowling about the city and terrifying all the citizens. No weapon could do any harm to these monsters whether it was bombing or fire.

The beasts ate even the smallest bits of food, all the provision remnants that were left in the city at the time. Moreover, because of rats the city was under the threat of epidemic diseases.

”In spring of 1942 my sister and me were going to the kitchen garden planted in the stadium in Levashevskaya street”, says Zoya Kornilievna, the siege

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survivor. “All of a sudden, we saw grey mass approaching us. Rats! When we reached the kitchen garden, all its vegetables had already been gobbled up by rodents”.

And then the government put a fabulous idea through, they decided to gather cats all over Russia and send them to the city where they were right in place.

Altogether, during the blockade period more than 5000 cats from Omsk, Tyumen, Irkutsk and some other cities were sent to Leningrad and completed they job well – the city was cleared off.

There was another cat, his name was Maksim and he was one of the least cats which lived through the blockade. Some 15 years ago, a woman who owned the cat told this story to one of Russian newspapers.

The family had cat Maksim and a parrot which was called Jack. Almost every day, their uncle that lived together with them wanted to make a meal of the cat and each time the rest of the family went out they always locked the cat into the storeroom. As time passed by, the cat began growing malnourished and sicky because of poor food. Once, Maksim managed to jump onto the cupboard and opened the cage where the parrot Jack lived in. Family thought that the cat would eat Jack, but instead of doing so two pets huddled up to one another for warmth and fell asleep. After that, the uncle didn’t try to make anything bad to the cat.

Soon after the parrot died but Maksim survived and happened to be one of the few cats that lived through the blockade. Maksim died in 1957. Of old age.

One other woman wrote in her diary, "My grandmother always said that she and my mother only survived the heavy blockade and starvation because of our Vaska, the cat.

If was not for that red-haired Vaska, my daughter would have died of starvation as many others. Every day Vaska went hunting and brought home mice or even big fat rats. My grandmother cooked them in the cauldron. The stew was

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very good, especially from rats. The cat always sat nearby and waited for food, and at night Vaska warmed our other two cats with his warmth when they all were lying under one blanket. Vaska always felt the bombing before us and before the bomb raid alert. He began to spin and meow plaintively. So my grandmother knew the bombs was coming and had time to collect important things, water and Vaska and ran out from the house. Vaska was lucky that he was never eaten. My grandmother always was carrying him with her to the bomb shelter and treated him as a family member.

Vaska was hungry and skinny. All winter until spring my grandmother gathered the crumbs for the birds, and at spring she went out with the cat to hunt. Grandma poured the crumbs on the ground and sat with Vaska in ambush for any bird that came close. His jump was always surprisingly fast and accurate. Vaska was starving with us, and his strength was not enough to hold on to a bird when it was caught. He grabbed the bird and my grandmother ran out from the bushes to help him with the bird. So from spring to autumn they caught birds and even spruce. When the blockade was lifted grandma always gave Vaska the best piece when it was time to eat. Stroking it gently, saying - you are our supporter. Vaska died in 1949 and my grandmother buried him at the cemetery. She put a cross up and wrote "Vasily Hillocks".

Children from Children Dunes Rehabilitation Center learnt about this story from their Art teacher Alexander Milyukov and offered to erect a monument to a cat-winner.

They submitted to the teacher about 50 drawings-projects for the future monument. ”This monument can be erected in any city neighborhood, but the best area is where warehouses for flour were located”’ Milyukov says. “The monument should be little, in height of a child. Maybe, when passing it the granny will tell her grandchildren: “You wouldn’t have been born if this cat hadn’t saved your great-grandmother’s life by protecting the bread supplies from rats". Historians still argue if the story of cats in the besieged city is true or not.

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**Conclusion**

Someone argues that the legend - saying that there is no documentary evidence that cats brought to Leningrad. Someone reasonable objection: but how, then, after a siege in the city were a cats, because they ate! And someone just believe: yes, all true, yes, cats in Leningrad really fought with rats and won!

Myself i believe that cats helped people to survive in this terrible and difficult period of blockade Leningrad.

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