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ПРОЕКТНО – ИССЛЕДОВАТЕЛЬСКАЯ ДЕЯТЕЛЬНОСТЬ

**ТЕМА ПРОЕКТА**

**War Through The Eyes of Children**

**Восприятие войны глазами детей**

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**Introduction**

Current research is focused on the Great Patriotic War’s memory in minds of 12-15 year- old children, representing a new generation.

**The main goal** of the paper is to explore, point out and solve the main problem connected with the loss of teenagers’ interest in the history of our country in period 1941-1945.

**The objectives** **of this work** are a detailed study and a careful comparison of the results obtained by reference to the facts and messages from the media, books and other research works, as well as the data from our surveys of the students conducted in gymnasium # 293. In other words, we are going to analyze how exactly it has changed the attitude of children to the memory of the Great Patriotic War (the present and the post- war generations), as well as, children’s perspective on those events inside (the generation that witnessed those terrible events).

**The main research methods** in this paper are social surveys of students, personal interviews with the veterans and the witnesses to the war, the theoretical analysis of the findings, as well as information from other resources. Also we have used an inductive method which allows to draw a general conclusion from private judgments taken from personal materials as well as from other resources.

**Relevance of the current research** is focused not only on finding the "root of all evils", the paper also presents several solutions, which we hope will help the current generation not to forget the Great Patriotic War.

**Applicability of the work:** includes the possibility to use the findings in further and deeper study of global problems. The findings may be the subject of discussion in the lessons of History, Literature, English, school meetings or serve as a source of reflection.

**Structurally the work consists of** the introduction, the main body, the conclusion and the list of references. The introduction presents the aim, the urgency and scientific novelty of the work and the research methods of work. The main body is devoted to different generations of people in this country who have been the subject of our research. The theoretical analysis of the findings is presented in this section. The conclusion summarizes the results of this work.

**The object of our research** are students grades 6-9 of gymnasium #293, veterans and witnesses of the Great Patriotic War, those who were children at the beginning of the war and, of course, the general data of individual sources.

**The subject of the research** is the personal perception of the events of 1941-1945 and the memory of the Great Patriotic War in the minds of the younger generation.

**Children Lived In Time of War**

In this paper we study the life of children during the wartime.

One of the most tragic chapters in the history of the Second World War was the Siege of Leningrad lasted for 872 days. The winter of 1941-1942 was the worst period. That winter, working people received only 250 grams of bread per day, while clerks, old people and children got even less – 125 grams. Children, who had no strength to walk due to hunger, and not having got up from their beds for months, drew food: whole loafs of bread, opened cans, fresh fruit.

More than one-third of the population of Leningrad went to the front to fight against the fascists in 1941 during the Second World War. As a result, all the work in the city was done by women, and then – by children. There were nearly 600.000 women and children in Leningrad before the war. During the war they worked at plants, extinguished fires, helped clear the streets, learned how to fire guns and to provide medical aid, and were ready to defend their city. For kids childhood ended and older children grew up quickly (Application 1).

The main problem for Leningrad was besieged city children, defenseless, strangling the German aggression, children who did not understand anything. During the offensive of the Nazis there were 400000 children in Leningrad. The main objective of the city was to provide children with security, to make them as quickly as possible taken out from the city. Children had to endure cold, hunger, death of loved ones, but they held on to the end. Everything that was happening around terrified them as it was happening right in front of their eyes. What the war was children could not understand. They just had to go through something that was part of their everyday life in that time.

Tanya Savicheva was young Russian diarist who lived through the siege. Aged just 11 when the siege started Tanya joined her family in helping the war effort by digging trenches and putting out firebombs. After having burnt her diary to heat their home, on December 28th 1941 Tanya was given her missing-presumed-dead sister’s diary. In it she began to record her family’s toil. Everyday her mother would walk seven kilometers to work in an ammunitions plant, then donate blood before returning home. Every month of the diary holds a death, first was her second sister, then grandmother in January 1942, a brother 2 months later, followed by her uncles and then in May 1942 her mother. As an orphan Tanya was evacuated from the city in August 1942 to a village but died of illness in July 1944. Her heartbreaking diaries can be seen at the Rumyantsev museum (Application 2)

Children, as well as adults, were evacuated from the city across Lake Ladoga on the famous "Road of Life" (“Doroga Zhizni”). The "Road of Life" was the only route that connected the besieged city with the mainland. During the warm season people were ferried to the mainland, and in winter – carried by trucks that drove across the frozen lake under constant enemy bombardment. Many died, not having to go to the mainland. Someone died from a projectile hit the car, someone with hunger, someone from the fact that the car sank, some of hunger and cold. Many children were evacuated from Leningrad to the areas of the Leningrad region, but later 175.000 children were returned back (Application 2).

Despite the harsh environment of the front of the city, Leningrad lived on and continued education of children. Most students continued their studies and even passed finals. In late October 1941 60.000 students in grades 1-4 began their training sessions in shelters, schools and households. Classes were held in an unusual setting. Often during the lesson students could hear sirens and in that case they quickly went down to the shelter, where classes continued. For preschool children there were created special kindergartens - "hot spots" (Application 3). People went from door to door and collected orphaned children. There kids were fed not only with bread but also with porridge and grown-ups looked after them entertaining and educating them. Despite this kids were not smiling, were silent, sluggish. On the one hand they understood everything, on the other hand – nothing. The war remained an abstract concept for them. They realized what were darkness, hunger, sirens and explosions. But children did not understand why all that had fallen on people, where the food was gone and where were the closest. From the memoirs of the child, who was the survivor of the siege: "During the siege I went to the kindergarten on Stone Island. There my mother used to work. One day one of the boys shared his cherished dream with his friend – to have a barrel of soup. Mom heard and took him to the kitchen. There the cook burst into tears and told her: "Do not bring here anyone any longer. There is no food left. There is only water in the saucepan...". Many children in our kindergarten died because of hunger. Only 11 kids out of 35 managed to survive ".

For 5 months, 85 orphanages were organized in Leningrad, which were shelters for 30.000 orphaned children. The mortality rate among children under the age of 14 years was lower than adult mortality. Not coincidentally, many children survived only due to the fact that adults gave their bread and the last crumbs of food to kids.

Taking everything into account, the life of children during the war was full of sufferings and horror, children had to cope with many difficulties but at the same time they remained calm and indifferent to the deaths of loved ones, to losses. Most likely, it was the children's inability to perceive excessive grief, universal calamity that befell them, or perhaps it was a defensive reaction of fragile psyche.

**Post-war Children**

A lot of books have been observed to find out how children lived during that horrible period. According to the recollections of those who managed to survive and those who were born shortly after the war, people had to struggle with the difficulties associated with the restoration of the old life that was before the war, but at the same time, people were happy that the terrible period in their lives ended. The joy of victory was marred in families where fathers, brothers or sisters did not return. A lot of children did not have fathers, who used to be breadwinners, mothers had to work a lot to feed their families. There was a great number of children who were orphans. Devastation, coupon system did not mar childhood. Kindergartens and schools were quietly restored. The authorities organized children's parties, New Year parties, summer camps and country cottages for children. Tranquility peacetime passed on from parents to children.

We have addressed not only to books devoted to the Great Patriotic War but also some elderly people have been asked to tell us about their life. For example, one of the men whose name is Viktor Klaving, aged 66 shared with us his memories:

“I was born in 1949 in Leningrad. Like all children of that period my childhood is different from what we mean by this term now.

Our family lived in a shared apartment in the center of the city. One room for five people: our parents, my twin brother and I and our grandmother (Application 3). A shared flat was a common case for the residents of Leningrad of post-war period. All of us lived in the same conditions.

A lot of my neighbors did not have fathers as they were killed in war or maimed. We used to hear talks about war, on the streets we often met people mutilated by injures. At first I was scared when I saw one of them on the street. This entire situation affected my childhood.

The city after the Great Patriotic War was partly damaged. There was lack of products and the card system still existed. All our food was rather plain. We could afford to eat sweets only on special occasions as celebrations. I remember, on the New Year’s Eve the fir tree was decorated with sweets and we (my friends and I) were trying to steal them. There was also lack of clothes, everything looked similar. All the clothes were patched, as there was not enough money to buy something new. And our school uniform reminded a military style.

Life was difficult those days. My brother and I were brought up by our Grandmother. As she could not leave us alone at home we used to go shopping with her. One of my brightest memories is connected with the aquarium in one of the shops. There were different species of fish. I liked to look at them.

Most of my spare time I spent on the streets. Freedom was only there. There were also a lot of homeless orphans that ganged into the criminal groups. But we used to play with cartridge cases and of course one of the most played games was toy-war. Everything was permeated by spirit of war.

But we were growing up and our city rose with us from the ruins. All of us had the same aims: to help our parents, to live apart from them, to study and to keep peace in the world. We all had to reach everything by ourselves because everyone was in equal conditions and help was nowhere to wait from.

In spite of the fact that our childhood could not be compared with current generation’s childhood, I can tell that those who grew up in a family, nowadays have become worthy people!’

All things considered, we can state that post-war generation frankly does not know what exactly the war was but their childhood was full of Great Patriotic War’s memories. Children learnt about war from their parents, relatives, neighbors who participated in the war or witnessed that terrible time. They saw the consequences of that war and they made them be sure that those horrifying events should never happen again. They all had similar life conditions and possibilities and that is why there were no envy and malice. Despite a lot of fear in their childhood they still were just kids.

**Current Generation of Children**

   Being in constant interaction with our peers, we can conclude based on personal experience, that current generation, which does not know all the horror of the Great Patriotic War, lost not only fear of it, but respect for the memory of the war events as well. In this situation it is not worth talking about oblivion, because there are a lot of external factors, which are a constant reminder of memorable events. These factors include the lessons of History, school trips to the museums of military history, concerts and TV shows.

   Despite this abundance of different sources of information, the important thing is the personal initiative of pupils to learn more about those terrible chapters in our history. After conducting a social survey in the age range from fourteen to sixteen years, we have found that this generation of children has largely just a desire to know the general information from different spheres of military life. But just one desire is not enough. It is hard to say what is the cause of "memory loss", but we dare to suggest that the case in unstructured and even banal approach to problem solving. In this section of our study we would like to present our own view on this issue.

   Familiarity with the Great Patriotic War is better to start at an early age. The more often children are told about the events of the war, the greater the opportunity that further independent study will get into their habit. Only with the help of numerous discussions about the Great Patriotic War we can instill respect in the younger generation. Even if at first it is only on the subconscious level.

Our paper presents the results of the survey carried out among the teenagers to find out how well the current generation is familiar with the events of the Great Patriotic War. Here is the detailed description of it (Application 4).

On 12th December 2014, a survey was conducted among 50 students of the 6th - 9th form in St. Petersburg school #293. The purpose of that survey was to discover how much the present generation knows about the War of 1941-1945.

The survey was conducted by means of a questionnaire given to the students to complete. The questionnaire consisted of 6 questions dealt with the attitude of the current generation to the Great Patriotic War:

1. Are there any relatives in your family who witnessed or participated in the Great Patriotic War? If yes, specify who.
2. From what resources do you know about the event that took place in our county during the Great Patriotic War?
3. Is it interesting for you to learn about the events of those days? If yes, in what area.
4. Are there any traditions in your family connected with the maintaining the memory of the War of 1941-1945? Give a detailed response, please. If not, then write why.
5. What do you know about hero-cities? Name those ones that you know.
6. Give your assessment of the fact how well the current generation is familiar with the events of the Great Patriotic War and the exploits of the heroes of the day?

From the table of data, the most significant items are as follows. A large proportion of students confirm that they have relatives who took part in the Great Patriotic War or witnessed it. 78% of surveyed students say that they are interested in getting information about the Great Patriotic War while 22% are not interested in the history of this country at all. Only 38% of questioned people know half of hero-cities. However, the majority 62% could mention only one of the cities.

It was interesting to discover which resources are used by students for searching information about the Great Patriotic War. The results are the following:

Not surprisingly the first place takes the Internet – 27% of the children questioned. We live in the era of technological progress and most of the students have access to the Internet. On the second place is Mass Media – 19% of the students regularly watch TV, listen to the radio or read newspapers. History lessons and thematic literature are on the third place – 17% of those who filled in the questionnaire find it necessary to read books about the Great Patriotic War to be aware of the events of that time. In spite of the fact that there are several museums in Saint Petersburg devoted to the most tragic chapters in the history of this country, only 10% of the students questioned go to the museums to get the information about the war. And, unfortunately, parents and relatives take the fifth place, which is really disappointing. The majority of students acknowledge that parents or grandparents do not talk about the Great Patriotic War with them. They do not tell them about their relatives who survived the horrors of war, about the heroes who gave their lives for our freedom, though children wish this topic was discussed in their families. Nevertheless most of the pupils admit that they keep some traditions connected with the maintaining the memory of the War of 1941-1945. Some of them either go to the military parade on the 9th of May or watch a parade on TV with their parents. Some students congratulate veterans and give them flowers. Some students go to the cemetery with their families to honor the memory of loved ones who died during the war or in the post-war period.

If any conclusions may be drawn from the data, they are, perhaps, as fol­lows. The students’ interest in the Great Patriotic War is high but in fact the knowledge of details is not as pleasant as we thought despite the fact that every student has a relative who took participated in that war or witnessed it. The survey shows that the majority of those questioned are interested in the history of Russia, but some actions should be taken to maintain the interest in the study of history and preserving the memory of the war in teenagers’ minds. The survey indicates that a significant number of pupils do not know much about the hero-cities. It is possible to conclude that they may have gaps in knowledge in history and know little about those who defended our Motherland from invaders. The data obtained demonstrate that just a small number of students prefer to discuss the topic of the Great Patriotic War with the family members. The most likely explanation of the negative result is the fact that parents nowadays pay less attention to the patriotic education of children as most of them are obsessed with their own problems meanwhile the number of those people who took part in that war or witnessed it is becoming less and less. Last but not least the majority of those questioned state that the current generation is not familiar with the events of the Great Patriotic War and the exploits of the heroes of the day very well which gives us food for thought.

The findings of our research are quite convincing, and thus the following conclusions can be drawn: children's interest in history need to be encouraged and supported in every possible way including watching films, reading and discussing books, visiting museums and places of fame, but the most important thing is discussing the events of the Great Patriotic War in a family circle and if it is possible to talk to those who witnessed those events while they are still alive. One should remember: education must begin at home and we cannot agree with the wise saying of Sir Winston Churchill: "People, who do not remember their past, have no future."

**Conclusion**

The Great Patriotic War was certainly the most tragic period in the history of the Soviet Union. It was full of suffering and heroism. Most probably, there is hardly any family that wasn't affected by the war.

The subject of the research was the personal perception of the events of 1941-1945 and the memory of the Great Patriotic War in the minds of the younger generation. Having analyzed the children’s life during the wartime, the siege of Leningrad in particular, the life of children during the post-war period, views on the war of three generations of children, the periods of life of three generations and summing up the results, it can be stated that the attitude of children to the Great Patriotic War has changed. From the outcome of our investigation it is possible to conclude that the problem of memory loss is relevant and essential. This paper has clearly shown that the present generation of children has lack of knowledge about the Great Patriotic War. The possible solution to this problem is to increase awareness among the teenagers of the Great Patriotic War, the outstanding exploits of our ancestors, of those who devoted their lives for the peaceful future of this country. Children should be given recommendations what films to watch, what museums to visit, what books to read. This paper has clearly shown that the family plays an important role in educating the younger generation, which proves the fact that education must begin at home. Parents should remember that they are responsible for that. They should remember that first of all it depends on them whether their children will know the history of the country or not and the fact that the future of their children depends on how well they know and keep the history of their Homeland. Children must be interested in keeping reminiscences that serve as a tribute to the participants and eyewitnesses of that war’s events.

This work and the findings are of direct practical relevance. Its results can be readily used in practice as the material for classroom discussions and talks in schools on this topic, as well as on the lessons of History, English, Literature devoted to the pages of history of this country.

Also, in some individual cases, our study can serve as the basis, the foundation for further work in this area, since the topic is very deep and have extensive roots. Thus, after finishing our project, we have made important findings and have provide a systematic and generalized material for future research.

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**Application 1**

During the war children worked at plants.

**Application 2**

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Tanya Savicheva and her diary.



A group of Russian children, evacuated from Leningrad two years ago during the worst days of the siege, learn sewing, embroidery and other needlework while sitting outside at the collective farm where they found a new home, in the Kirov region of the USSR (1943).

**Application 3**



Lifelike dolls hold the interest of four Russian orphans whose parents were killed in the Leningrad siege.



Children in the besieged Leningrad.

**Application 4**



Children in the besieged Leningrad.



Children born after the war: Victor Klaving (on the left) with his twin brother.

**Application 4**



Current generation of 15-year-old children (Saint-Petersburg, Russia, 2014)