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National Russian Holidays

Задание: прочитать текст, понять содержание, перевести устно, ответить на вопросы после текста письменно.

Russians enjoy their holidays and celebrate them with a lot of food, presents and in big companies of relatives and friends. There are three types of holidays in Russia: family holidays, state or public holidays and religious holidays.

Family holidays include birthdays, weddings, anniversaries and other family celebrations. Different families have different traditions of celebrations. State or public holidays in Russia include Constitution Day, New Year's Day, the International Women's Day, May Day, Victory Day and Independence Day. State organisations, banks and companies do not work on these days. People spend holiday time with their families and friends; they go to theatres or exhibitions, or go to city centre where there are usually folk festivals and concerts in the open air and celebrate with other people.

Russian religious holidays include Christmas, Easter and some others. There is also a pagan holiday - Shrovetide or Pancake Day.

New Year's Day is the major family holiday for many Russians. It is a national holiday in Russia, on which most businesses and public offices are closed. Schools and universities are closed as part of their winter holidays at this time of the year.

New Year's dinner usually starts late on December 31 and includes Russian salad, dressed herring, sparkling wine and other national food. Five minutes before the clock strikes midnight people watch the president's speech on TV and raise a toast to the chiming of the Kremlin clock. After that Russians congratulate each other and exchange presents. Some people go outside to play snowballs, make a snowman or light fire crackers.

Some Russians celebrate this day at their friends' houses or attend the fireworks displays in their city. Celebrations for children include a decorated fir tree and Grandfather Frost, the Russian equivalent of Santa Claus who is believed to bring presents. Grandfather Frost often comes with his granddaughter, Snegurochka (Snow Girl).

Victory Day celebrated on May 9 is a very important historic holiday which marks Germany's surrender to the Soviet Union in 1945, ending one of the bloodiest wars in Russia's history. Public offices, schools and most businesses are closed for the celebrations. There may be changes in public transport routes due to parades and street performances.

A lot of people attend a local military parade and watch the fireworks display at night on this day. The biggest parade is in Moscow's Red Square, showcasing Russia's military forces. Veterans wear their medals as they head to the parade or an event organised by local veteran organisations. Another tradition is to give red carnations to veterans and to lay wreaths at the war memorial sites. Schools usually have concerts and performances, sing wartime songs and read poetry. At home, families gather around a festive table to honor surviving witnesses of World War II and remember those who passed away.

Orthodox Christmas is both a national and religious holiday in Russia so banks and public offices are closed on January 7th. Russians celebrate it by having a family dinner, attending a Christmas liturgy and visiting relatives and friends.

For many Russians, Christmas Day is a family holiday but it is not as important for many families as New Year's Day. Many people visit friends and relatives, as well as give and receive presents. Prior to Christmas Day, there is Christmas Eve, which marks the start of an old Slavonic holiday, Svyatki, during which young women used a mirror and candles to see the image of their future husbands.

Maslenitsa, also known as Pancake Week or Shrovetide, is a Russian pagan holiday celebrated during the last week before Great Lent (the seventh week before Easter). Maslenitsa is an ancient Slavonic holiday, dating back to the pagan culture. This is a festival, celebrating the

approach of the spring, warmth and renovation of the nature. During the week Russians eat pancakes, have celebrations and every day of the Pancake Week has its own name and traditions.

For example, Sunday is called the Forgiveness Day when everybody should ask for forgiveness. Young married couples usually visit their relatives, give presents to parents and friends, pay visits to their godparents to give presents to them, too. When asking for forgiveness people usually bow and normally hear the reply, God will forgive you. All the food that is left needs to be eaten up, followed by a piece of rye bread and salt, as a reminder of the upcoming Lent. This is also the last day of the week when pancakes are eaten.

Sunday evening is the time when Maslenitsa straw doll has to be burnt; after it has turned to ashes, young people walk over the fire, marking the end of the Maslenitsa festivities.

Nowadays foreign celebrations are becoming more and more popular in Russia. The most popular ones are Halloween and St. Valentine's Day.

At Halloween some clubs organize parties and masquerades, people dress up in costumes and may get access to some clubs for free if they come dressed-up. However, this celebration is banned in public schools.

St. Valentine's Day is mostly popular with teenagers and young people. They usually buy small presents for their girlfriends and boyfriends such as chocolate or sweets and make greetings cards in the shape of a heart.

As for me, I don't mind foreign celebrations, but I think that people of different countries should not borrow traditions and celebrations from other nations, even if they are interesting and fun.

My favourite family holiday is New Year's Day. A week before the celebration my mother and I decorate a New Year tree with colourful glass balls and toys. My family usually has the New Year dinner in the evening, long before midnight and just before the New Year comes, we have snacks, caviar and sparkling wine. When the clock strikes midnight, we give each other presents. Later, we watch TV and relax and go outside to watch fireworks displays.

Another celebration which I like is my birthday. It is in spring and usually my friends and I get together, have a party either at my flat or in a cafe and then go' for a walk. I like getting presents and having fun. Once we went to the central park and rode on a big wheel. It was great! I also remember my birthday when my family and I went to a water park and spent a lot of time there swimming and sliding on waterslides of various shapes and sizes!

I think that holidays are important because they connect people and give them an opportunity to have fun and enjoy themselves.

QUESTIONS

1. What holidays do the Russians have?
2. What are the three types of Russian holidays?
3. What days are included in family holidays?
4. What celebrations are state or public?
5. What do religion holidays include?
6. When is New Year's Day celebrated?
7. What are the most popular traditions on this day?
8. How do you usually celebrate New Year's Day?
9. What is Victory Day and why is it important for the Russians?
10. When is it celebrated?
11. What are the traditions and activities on Victory Day?
12. When is Christmas celebrated in Russia?
13. What are the Christmas traditions?
14. How do you usually celebrate this holiday?
15. What is Maslenitsa? What other names does it have?
16. What are the traditions of this pagan holiday?
17. What foreign celebrations appeared in Russia?
18. What's your opinion about them?

19. Do you celebrate any of them?
20. What are your favourite Russian holidays?
21. Why do you like them?
22. What do you and your family usually do on these days?
23. Do you think holidays are important? Why (not)?

Напишите о вашей самой любимой традиции, которую вы соблюдаете. (5-7 предложений)