

History Competition

All the tasks are for schoolchildren of all ages: everyone can choose what he/she likes; it is sufficient to do well (not necessarily completely) two tasks out of the first ten or to point out correctly at least ten errors in tasks 11 or 12 (one has to make a list of erroneous statements and indicate the correct time, place and participants of these events — or why they could not have happened at all.

Tasks marked by the asterisk (*) are harder; they will be marked by higher scores.

1*. Invent and construct a short chain of links — “Teacher→Pupil” — starting with David Hilbert (1862–1943) and ending with yourself. Explain what the teacher in every link did teach his pupil. If the pupil used a book written by the teacher, please indicate its title, date of publication and contents with as much precision as possible.

2. Who held the title of Prince of Moscow/Prince de la Moskowa in 1812? What were the major achievements of this man in 1812 and later? What was his education and job in his early years and how did his life end?

3. One of Shakespeare’s characters was the first ruler to introduce one pound and one shilling coins. In which of the Shakespeare’s plays does this character appear and what is his name? What coins were used in England before that?

4*. Wehrmacht’s plans of attack in 1942 included taking over the resources of the South of Russia and Northern Caucasus down to Baku. Who was the author of the idea of attacking Stalingrad and what was it for? What earlier mistake of the Russian leaders was thus unknowingly repeated by the Germans? What were the consequences of this mistake? What was the part that Zhukov and Vassilevski did play in this fiasco? Who were their German counterparts in 1941 and 1942?

5*. Among the discoveries of historian and philosopher L. N. Gumilev was the developmental cycle of any big ethnos and ethnic state that lasts roughly for four hundred years. If you believe this theory, please provide two or three well-known examples of such ‘repetitions’ in Russian or World History. If you do not subscribe to Gumilev’s theory, please provide an example to the contrary and explain your reasons accordingly.

6. Five hundred years ago Niccolo Machiavelli wrote his masterpiece *The Prince* and it began to circulate about in manuscript form. What monarchs and princes of old and new times did Machiavelli include as examples to be followed by his contemporaries and descendants? Which of the later monarchs consciously emulated Machiavelli’s characters?

7. The anniversary of death of Saint Hermogenes/Germogen was celebrated in February 2012. What was he famous for? Who were his closest colleagues, allies and enemies?

8*. It is well-known that the city Constantinople was named after the emperor Constantine. But which Constantine was named after the city of Constantino ple? Who did give the boy this name, when and what was it for? What was the outcome of this project?

9. Khalif Harun al-Rashid presented Charlemagne with an elephant. But Charlemagne was at war with Moslems so often! How do you explain this discrepancy?

10. According to some historians the 1150th anniversary of Russia should be celebrated this year (2012). What event in their opinion is the starting point of the History of Russia? How do we know the date of this event and how accurate is it? Why do some Novgorod historians claim that the town did not yet exist in the 9th century, whereas others insist that Novgorod history starts as early as in the 8th century?

11. The following text contains many errors. List as many errors as you can: explain which event mentioned in the text must have happened elsewhere, or in another time, or with other participants, or could not have happened at all?

You went around me first...

On a bleak day of 1520 in autumn the last surviving ship of the Spanish-Portuguese expedition entered its native harbour Lisboa. Thirty exhausted sailors brought back old “Victoria” to victory, sailing round the fearsome cape of the Tempest and peaceful Cabo Verde. The sailors were so glad to see two familiar statues there: that of Bartolomeu Dias, pointing the way to India for Europeans and that of prince Henrique Braganza — where the African coast turns to the north after crossing the equator. And now the sailors were greeted by Saint Sebastian, patron saint of the captain of the survived “Victoria”...

Alas, the chief of great expedition was not on board! Don Gonsalvo Magellan had perished in a casual skirmish with a local wild tribe at the foot of the Mau na-Kea volcano on the previously unknown island of Mindanao. This absurd death of the commander turned victory into defeat: the discord between Castilian and Portuguese crew members divided the ships and they didn’t sail further north to the country of China ruled by descendants of Kublai Khan. The ships separated instead. Proud Castilian Juan de Cartagena led “San Antonio” back to Panama by the familiar route and Portuguese Sebastian El Cano decided to make his way around Turkish dominions in India. The sons of Lusitania were lucky and now captain El Cano was hoping to be received by his monarch in the Valladolid palace.

The meeting did take place, but with different participants. King Manuel I the Fortunate had died last year and throne passed to his son Joao, who became king John III. He didn’t approve of the seafarers and did not believe in the imperial ideal. Deprived of Portuguese support at sea, Carlos I of Castile became embroiled in European affairs. He was currently fighting the French in Italy and hoping to enter Rome and receive the crown of the Holy Roman Empire from the hands of the Pope Leo Medici. The Spaniards had just captured king Francis II

after the Spanish artillery destroyed the best French knights under the walls of Padua shooting at close range. It was clear that Spanish king had no more interest in naval expeditions. Old admiral Colon was dead too, he died soon after he had seen Magellan's ships off on their voyage to the western seas.

So who of the European monarchs will support the overseas expansion of seamen from the Pyrenees? Germans are busy with religious confrontations; French and Spaniards locked together stranded in Italy, Venetians and Austrians busy restraining Turks on land and sea. Only England is free of continental problems. Will the young king Henry VIII help the old sailor Sebastian to repeat Magellan's feat and then to reach by sea the countries that Marco Polo had visited by land route? King Henry must be persuaded! And it does not matter which statue will meet sailors in Shanghai's harbour: that of emperor Zhu Di, that of king Henry Lancaster or that of captain El Cano. The most important thing would be that the statue has some sailors to greet!

12. The following text contains many errors. List as many errors as you can: explain which event mentioned in the text must have happened elsewhere, or in another time, or with other participants, or could not have happened at all?

Cunning Old Fritz

One warm day in August of 1773 old king Fritz received important tidings from the East: the troops of his best pupil — Sophie Anna von Anhalt-Zerbst — forded Danube and overcame the Turks near the lake Kagul. Excellent news! Tsar Peter's femal successor has decided to subjugate the Black Sea to her power as well as the Baltic that was previously mastered by Tsar Peter himself. But Peter could not vanquish Denmark, and so the straits connecting the Baltic Sea to the Atlantic Ocean lay open to Russian ships only by permission from London. However William Pitt did not grant such a permission, his merchants not wishing to let lots of cheap Russian goods inundate all European markets. England gets goods and raw materials enough from her American colonies; she is happy to strangle France by sea blockade, at the same time taking over the French overseas colonies. . .

Oh, how foolish was king Fritz ten years ago to start his European war without settling the question of dividing Poland and Baltic countries with the Russians first. In that time young Sophie Anna had no power yet and her aunt Elizabeth was flirting with France, hoping to make London more manageable. As a result Russian troops did not help the Prussian army to divide Poland and Germany, on the contrary they impeded it. Russian cossacks even paraded through Berlin. Old Fritz will not forget this sight till his dying day and will do everything to ensure that in the future this kind of parade will be confined to Warsaw, Vienna and Istanbul!

To fulfill this plan Berlin needs to form a strong coalition with St. Petersburg. Old Fritz had already made the first step by letting the mathematician Euler go to Russia. But this was not enough for the new czarina: she also invited Voltaire and Diderot to her court to outdo France in Enlightenment. Well done, German-born Russian monarch! Fritz himself did act like that in his

young days — and that's how Prussia has got her well-educated nobility. When Russia gets that, then Russian troops may enter Paris. A pity, that Friedrich will not live to see the day!

In the meanwhile Sophie Anna was asking him for plenty of German migrants to colonize the Volga region and thus dilute cossacks and Greeks there. Wise precaution: cossacks were as good at overthrowing their rulers as were the Turkish janissaries. So all enemies of Russia dream about cossacks' mutiny like the one in the Time of Troubles (Smuta). . . Could sly Pitt from London be orchestrating such an intervention already? And weren't the French agents working on a counter-intervention in the rustic settlements of America? Both things may be possible although far from being farsighted. Once cossacks revive the independent Ukraine, their state, united with Crimea, will bring ruin to Poland before they turn to Moskovia.

And once American colonists sever their ties with London, their example will inflame Huguenots in the South of France. So the French South may confront the North as it happened in the times of the Hundred Years' War! Then Paris was saved from chaos by Breton warlords and a girl seer from the German border. What if next time Paris would be saved by Corsican warlords? And the cossacks' mutiny would be tamed by a German colonel in the Russian service? Such wonders did happen in the times of czar Peter!

Alas for the old king's youthful imagination running away with him! Little does he know that awful reality might beat his most picturesque fantasies. The leaders that will crush Prussia 10 years after the death of Old Fritz have been already born in Corsica two years ago! And their future victors (on the battle fields of Borodino and Waterloo) do already serve in the Russian or Prussian armies, little imagining the part they are going to play in future history.