

Russian Language & Culture: Second-round Sample Tasks for the Open Doors Master's and Doctoral Tracks

This sample test comprises 43 tasks, including 25 entry-level tasks with a single correct answer (each correct answer is assigned 1 point), 15 intermediate-level tasks with multiple correct answers (the correct answer is assigned 3 points), and 3 advanced-level tasks requiring a detailed answer (the answer is assigned 10 points depending on its correctness and completeness).

For advanced-level tasks requiring a detailed answer, assessment criteria and a sample answer are provided.

Field of Science 1. Russian language and languages of the peoples of Russia

Task 1

Entry level (1 point)

What is the minimal unit of spoken language?

- a) Paragraph
- b) Text
- c) Sound**
- d) Speech measure

Answer: c

Task 2

Entry level (1 point)

Which words are synonyms?

- a) Water and liquid**
- b) Young and old
- c) City and village
- d) To run and to walk

Answer: a

Task 3

Entry level (1 point)

When did stylistics emerge as a separate academic discipline?

- a) the 18th century
- b) the 19th century
- c) the 20th century**
- d) the 21st century

Answer: c

Task 4

Entry level (1 point)

Which of the sentences is an example of publicistic style?

- a) The following data were obtained as a result of the experiment
- b) Rare species of birds inhabit this forest
- c) Russian literature experienced its golden age in the 19th century
- d) Dear friends! You cannot remain indifferent to this issue!**

Answer: d

Field of Science 2. Theoretical, Applied and Comparative Linguistics

Task 5

Entry level (1 point)

Which feature makes language a system?

- a) Linearity of the sound sequence
- b) The presence of a strictly ordered structure and hierarchy of levels**
- c) Versatility of use
- d) Constant updating of the lexicon

Answer: b

Task 6

Entry level (1 point)

Which function of language is aimed at reflecting reality and accumulating knowledge?

- a) Regulatory
- b) Emotive-expressive
- c) Pragmatic
- d) Cognitive**

Answer: d

Task 7

Entry level (1 point)

A research team aims to explore how the syntactic structure of a sentence and the complexity of the text affect the ability of schoolchildren to remember information from that sentence.

Which area of linguistic research would be the most relevant for this project?

- a) Studying the frequency of linguistic units
- b) Improving algorithms for speech recognition and natural language processing
- c) Studying the influence of language structures on information perception**
- d) Studying linguistic universals

Answer: c

Field of Science 3: Russian and Slavic Literature

Task 8

Entry level (1 point)

Which functional-semantic type of speech involves a consistent presentation of thoughts, judgments and conclusions on a specific topic?

- a) description
- b) narration
- c) description with narrative elements
- d) reasoning**

Answer: d

Task 9

Entry level (1 point)

Which type of literary character is characterized by exceptionality?

- a) romantic hero**
- b) realistic hero

- c) “a little man”
- d) main character of a short novel

Answer: a

Task 10
Entry level (1 point)

Which of the following is a literary movement?

- a) romanticism**
- b) personalism
- c) evolutionism
- d) egotism

Answer: a

Task 11
Entry level (1 point)

Which famous Russian artist painted the “Barge Haulers on the Volga”?

- a) Ilya Repin**
- b) Vasily Surikov
- c) Vladimir Tropinin
- d) Vasily Perov

Answer: a

Field of Science 4. Literary Theory and Literary Criticism

Task 12
Entry level (1 point)

Which type of thinking is the literary text indicative of?

- a) Critical
- b) Abstract
- c) Figurative**
- d) Analytical

Answer: c

Task 13
Entry level (1 point)

Which type of literary character is characterized by low social status and a lack of remarkable qualities?

- a) “a little man”**
- b) “a superfluous man”
- c) a quirky man
- d) a wanderer

Answer: a

Task 14
Entry level (1 point)

Who does the archetype of “a superfluous man” refer to in Russian literature?

- a) a character who actively participates in public life
- b) a character whose talents and abilities are not much needed by society**
- c) a character whose personality fully corresponds to the ideals of his time
- d) a character who actively fights against injustice

Answer: b

Task 15
Entry level (1 point)

Which term fits the definition below?

... is an artistic and philosophical movement that emerged in the late 19th and early 20th centuries and possessed the following characteristic features: a break with the past and the search for new forms of expression.

- a) **modernism**
- b) proletarian culture
- c) popular culture
- d) romanticism

Answer: a

Field of Science 5. Mass Communications

Task 16
Entry level (1 point)

Which of the following is an example of a dialect?

- a) speech of a presenter of a scientific TV program
- b) official correspondence between companies
- c) **speech of the Vologda region residents**
- d) use of the words “lol” and “kek” in a chat

Answer: c

Task 17
Entry level (1 point)

What is typical of a publicistic style?

- a) **use of evaluative language**
- b) use of introductory words and phrases indicating the coherence of the narrative
- c) use of complex sentences with conjunctions
- d) use of indefinite personal sentences

Answer: a

Task 18
Entry level (1 point)

Which religion is predominantly practiced by the Tatars and Bashkirs?

- a) **Islam**
- b) Christianity
- c) Buddhism
- d) Hinduism

Answer: a

Task 19
Entry level (1 point)

What is the main object of study in the theory of intercultural communication?

- a) **differences in the characteristics of culture and communication among representatives of different peoples, racial and ethnic groups**
- b) languages and dialects
- c) appearance and clothes
- d) national cuisine

Answer: a

Task 20
Entry level (1 point)

What is the term for the feeling of confusion and uncertainty experienced by individuals or groups when they encounter a new or unfamiliar cultural environment?

- a) culture conflict
- b) culture explosion
- c) culture saturation
- d) culture shock**

Answer: d

Field of Science 6. Cultural Studies

Task 21
Entry level (1 point)

Which of the following scenarios is the best example of cultural adaptation?

- a) A family of immigrants gradually begins to adopt the language, customs, and traditions of the new country, while abandoning parts of their own culture code.
- b) A fashion brand copies Egyptian hieroglyphs for prints on T-shirts and bags without consulting Egyptologists or local artists.
- c) A student who enters a foreign university quickly masters the new curriculum and makes friends with local students.**
- d) A famous musician performs reggae, wears dreadlocks, and calls them his "signature style", without referring to the Rastafari movement in Jamaica.

Answer: c

Task 22
Entry level (1 point)

Which of the following is not a feature of text?

- a) expression
- b) demarcation
- c) structure
- d) emotionality**

Answer: d

Task 23
Entry level (1 point)

Which literary movement marked the emergence of the “little man” archetype in Russian literature?

- a) classicism
- b) romanticism
- c) realism**
- d) modernism

Answer: c

Task 24
Entry level (1 point)

Which literary movement is characterized by the perception of the world as chaotic?

- a) classicism

- b) romanticism
- c) realism
- d) modernism**

Answer: d

Task 25
Entry level (1 point)

What is the traditional Russian painting style used to decorate the object in the picture below?



- a) Khokhloma painting
- b) Mezen wood painting
- c) Gorodets painting
- d) Gzhel painting**

Answer: d

Field of Science 1. Russian Language and Languages of the Peoples of Russia

Task 26
Intermediate level (3 points)

Find three examples where homogeneous parts of the sentence are used.

- a) I like tea and coffee.**
- b) A friend came, and we went for a walk together.
- c) The car turned right, and a village appeared in the distance.
- d) The path led through the forest and the field.**
- e) It started to rain, and the sky darkened.
- f) The room was quiet and cozy.**

Answer: a, d, f

Task 27
Intermediate level (3 points)

Which of the following functional styles of the Russian language and their substyles are classified as bookish styles? Select all that apply.

- a) colloquial
- b) style of official documents**
- c) scientific**
- d) publicistic**
- e) everyday
- f) popular-colloquial

Answer: b, c, d

Task 28

Intermediate level (3 points)

Which of the following constitutes the stylistic coloring of a language unit?

Select all that apply.

- a) **shades of meaning, additional to the expression of the main nominative meaning**
- b) **expressive properties of a unit**
- c) **functional properties of a unit**
- d) history of a language unit
- e) aspects of translating a language unit into a foreign language
- f) aspects of using language units within one paragraph

Answer: a, b, c

Field of Science 2. Theoretical, Applied and Comparative Linguistics

Task 29

Intermediate level (3 points)

Which of the listed words [think about their Russian equivalents] were borrowed into the Russian language? Select all that apply.

- a) **Milk**
- b) **Scheme**
- c) **Poet**
- d) Water
- e) **Fruit**
- f) Pike

Answer: b, c, e

Task 30

Intermediate level (3 points)

Which of the following are Finno-Ugric languages?

- a) **Mansi**
- b) Urdu
- c) **Mari**
- d) French
- e) **Hungarian**
- f) Swedish

Answer: a, c, e

Task 31

Intermediate level (3 points)

Select the examples that illustrate the notion of scenario in the context of applied linguistics.

- a) “happiness” and “sadness” are emotional states
- b) “table” – wooden, rectangular, large
- c) **“to go to the store” – to choose a product, to pay at the checkout, to leave**
- d) **“a subway trip” – to buy a ticket, to wait for the train, to get off at the station**
- e) “height” and “length” are parameters that can be measured and described
- f) **“appointment with a doctor” – appointment, waiting, consultation**

Answer: c, d, f

Field of Science 3: Russian and Slavic Literature

Task 32
Intermediate level (3 points)

Which of the following are characteristics of the epic as a literary genre?
Select all that apply.

- a) portrayal of people's life**
- b) the hero's exceptionality
- c) characters being representatives of the people**
- d) characters being individuals
- e) the plot that depicts events of national historical scale**
- f) the plot that depicts the fate of an individual hero

Answer: a, c, e

Task 33
Intermediate level (3 points)

Identify the central themes explored in Ivan Bunin's short story "The Gentleman from San Francisco."

- a) the meaning of life**
- b) rebellion
- c) the power of money**
- d) freedom
- e) loss of spirituality**
- f) crime

Answer: a, c, e

Task 34
Intermediate level (3 points)

Match the titles of the paintings with the names of their artists.
Select all correct answers.

- a) Moscow Courtyard – Vasily Polenov**
- b) Major's Marriage Proposal – Pavel Fedotov**
- c) Troika – Pavel Fedotov
- d) Major's Marriage Proposal – Vasily Polenov
- e) Troika – Vasily Perov**
- f) Moscow Courtyard – Vasily Perov

Answer: a, b, e

Task 35
Intermediate level (3 points)

Which of the following are types of literary portraits depicting characters?
Select all that apply.

- a) laconic
- b) expository**
- c) ambiguous
- d) recurring**
- e) unambiguous
- f) psychological**

Answer: b, d, f

Task 36
Intermediate level (3 points)

Which of the following literary devices are NOT compositional?

Select all that apply.

- a) antithesis
- b) grotesque**
- c) symmetry
- d) hyperbole**
- e) mirroring
- f) personification**

Answer: b, d, f

Task 37

Intermediate level (3 points)

Which of the following are characteristic features of ancient Russian culture?

Select all that apply.

- a) anonymity**
- b) focus on antique models
- c) religiosity**
- d) monumentalism**
- e) romantic duality
- f) verisimilitude

Answer: a, c, d

Field of Science 5. Mass Communications

Task 38

Intermediate level (3 points)

What are the substyles of the publicistic style?

Select all that apply.

- a) Brief news item**
- b) Reportage**
- c) Interview**
- d) Abstract
- e) Report
- f) Statement

Answer: a, b, c.

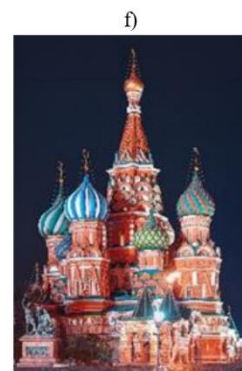
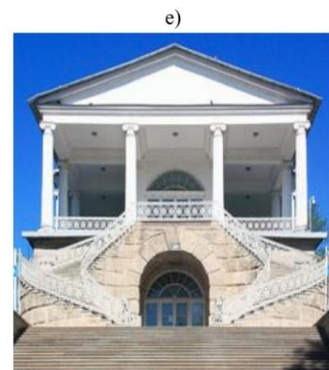
Field of Science 6. Cultural Studies

Task 39

Intermediate level (3 points)

Which of the following buildings are examples of the classical style in architecture?

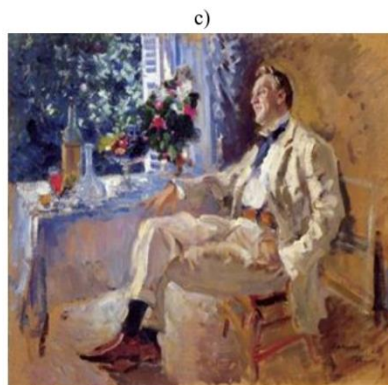
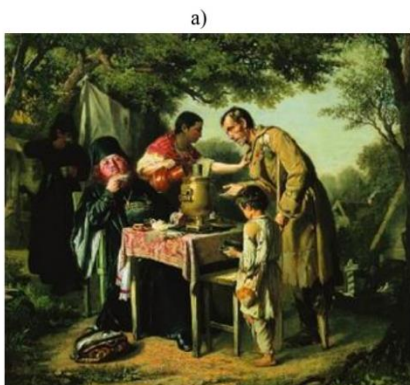
Select all that apply.



Answer: b, d, e

Task 40 Intermediate level (3 points)

Which of the paintings below are by Boris Kustodiev?



Answer: b, e, f

Field of Science 2. Theoretical, Applied and Comparative Linguistics

Task 41 Advanced level (10 points)

Elaborate on the concepts of diachrony and synchrony, used in philological studies, and indicate their main difference; provide arguments and examples to support your point of view. Write a response of 500–800 characters.

Note: A complete solution must include your reasoning. Providing the final answer alone will not suffice.

Answer

Diachrony is an approach to language study that examines its development and changes over time (e.g., the evolution of phonetics, grammar, and vocabulary).

Synchrony is an approach that studies language as a functioning system at a specific, fixed point in time (e.g., the analysis of grammatical relations and the lexical system "here and now").

The key distinction lies in the fact that diachrony explores the **vertical dimension**—the dynamics of language across centuries (for example, how the sound [ɸ] changed to [e]), while synchrony focuses on the **horizontal dimension**—the static state of language during a particular period (for example, the case system of contemporary Russian).

Thus, diachrony traces the temporal evolution of linguistic elements, identifying patterns of historical change, whereas synchrony concentrates on the systemic relationships and functioning of all elements within the language at a given moment in its existence.

Assessment criteria

Criterion 1: Subject matter knowledge: terms, conceptual framework, theoretical foundations (max. 4 points): The answer demonstrates a deep understanding of the theory. All key terms (diachrony, synchrony, evolution, vertical/horizontal section, dynamics, static state, systemic connections, functioning) are defined precisely and completely. The fundamental difference in the approaches (development over time/analysis of a system at a point in time) is clearly stated.

Criterion 2: Breadth of outlook: facts, examples, argumentation (max. 3 points)

Two relevant examples are given to illustrate the theory: the historical change of the sound [ɸ] → [e] (diachrony) and the analysis of the case system of the modern language (synchrony). The examples cover different levels of the language and confirm the stated principles.

Criterion 3: English language proficiency: clarity, understandability, accuracy (max. 3 points).

The ideas are expressed clearly and logically; the answer is well-structured. There are no language errors, and the text complies with the standards of scientific style.

Field of Science 3: Russian and Slavic literature

Task 42 Advanced level (10 points)

Read the text and provide a philological analysis, addressing the questions listed after the passage. Present your analysis as a coherent, well-structured text (700–800 characters).

Nikolai Gogol. The Overcoat

The modest Akaki was quite taken aback by his harsh manner; however, he made an effort to recover his composure, and to relate how his cloak had been stolen, but did not do so without encumbering his narrative with a mass of superfluous detail. He added that he had applied to His Excellence in the hope that through his making a representation to the police inspector, or some other high personage, the cloak might be traced.

The Superintendent found Akaki's method of procedure somewhat unofficial. "Ah, sir," he said, "don't you know what steps you ought to take in such a case? Don't you know the proper procedure? You should have handed in your petition at the chancellery. This in due course would have passed through the hands of the chief clerk and director of the bureau. It would then have been brought before my secretary, who would have made a communication to you."

"Allow me," replied Akaki, making a strenuous effort to preserve the remnants of his presence of mind, for he felt that the perspiration stood on his forehead, "allow me to remark to Your Excellence that I ventured to trouble you personally in this matter because secretaries—secretaries are a hopeless kind of people."

"What! How! Is it possible?" exclaimed the Superintendent. "How could you say such a thing? Where have you got your ideas from? It is disgraceful to see young people so rebellious towards their superiors." In his official zeal the Superintendent overlooked the fact that the titular councillor was well on in the fifties, and that the word "young" could only apply to him conditionally, i.e. in comparison with a man of seventy. "Do you also know," he continued, "with whom you are speaking? Do you consider before whom you are standing? Do you consider, I ask you, do you consider?" As he spoke, he stamped his foot, and his voice grew deeper.

Akaki was quite upset—nay, thoroughly frightened; he trembled and shook and could hardly remain standing upright. Unless one of the office servants had hurried to help him, he would have fallen to the ground. As it was, he was dragged out almost unconscious.

But the Superintendent was quite delighted at the effect he had produced. It exceeded all his expectations, and filled with satisfaction at the fact that his words made such an impression on a middle-aged man that he lost consciousness, he cast a side glance at his friend to see what effect the scene had produced on him. His self-satisfaction was further increased when he observed that his friend also was moved, and looked at him half-timidly.

Questions

1. Identify the main theme of the passage.
2. Determine the genre of the text.
3. Which literary movement is represented by Nikolai Gogol's *The Overcoat*?
4. Provide examples of expressive language or stylistic devices used in the passage.
5. Interpret the meaning of the phrase "high personage" as used in the text.
6. What type of discourse is exemplified in this passage—narration, description, or argumentation? Justify your response.
7. Which character evokes more sympathy or interest in your view? Explain your reasoning.
8. What other works of Russian literature feature the "little man" archetype? Explain your choice(s).

Note: A complete solution must include your reasoning. Providing the final answer alone will not suffice.

Answer

This passage depicts the encounter between Akaki Akakievich and the general. The text belongs to the genre of the short story and is representative of the literary movement of critical realism. The passage contains expressive means such as epithets (e.g., harsh manner) and lexical repetition

(“Don’t you know what steps you ought to take in such a case? Don’t you know the proper procedure?”), which emphasize the oppressive tone of the dialogue. The phrase “high personage” refers to a figure of authority who uses their position to assert dominance and humiliate subordinates. The passage is primarily narrative in nature, as evidenced by the use of action verbs in the author’s speech (e.g., exclaimed, replied), which indicate a sequence of events. Akaki Akakievich elicits sympathy as a classic example of the “little man” archetype—an ordinary individual subjected to systemic indifference and social injustice. Similar characters include Marmeladov from Dostoevsky’s *Crime and Punishment* and the “thin man” from Chekhov’s *Fat and Thin*, both of whom embody the vulnerability and marginality typical of this literary type.

Assessment criteria

Criterion 1: Subject matter knowledge: terms, conceptual framework, theoretical foundations (max. 4 points).

4 points: At least 4 terms are provided (critical realism/realism, story, lexical repetition, epithet); the type of speech is determined: narration AND/OR At least 3 terms are provided, and the features of narration are named (perfective verbs conveying a sequence of actions).

Criterion 2: Breadth of outlook: facts, examples, argumentation (max. 3 points)

3 points: The contestant provides arguments to support his/her answer. Examples from other works of literature are provided (“little men” in other works). Erudition and independent thinking within the topic are expressed clearly.

Criterion 3: English language proficiency: absence of errors that impede communication (max. 3 points)

Field of Science 6: Cultural Studies

Task 43

Advanced level (10 points)

Look at the reproduction of the painting by the Russian artist Isaac Levitan and write a detailed answer based on the questions below:



Questions:

1. What is depicted in the painting? Identify the genre of the painting (portrait, landscape, or still life) and provide a reasoned justification for your choice.

2. Which colors did the artist employ, and what might be the purpose or effect of this color palette?
3. What overall mood or emotional atmosphere does the artwork convey?

Note: A complete solution must include your reasoning. Providing the final answer alone will not suffice.

Answer

The reproduction of the painting by the Russian artist Isaac Levitan depicts nature: a clear sunny day, snow everywhere, trees are visible in the background, and there is a horse harnessed to a sleigh in the center. On the right, one can see the wall of a two-story wooden house. The artist used different colors: blue, yellow, white and green. Combinations of such colors helped the artist to convey the changes that occur in nature with the approach of spring. The sky becomes clear, blue and transparent, the snow is no longer completely white, but in some places blue, dark or melted. The whole picture is filled with sunlight, glare of the sun is everywhere. The genre of this work is landscape, since nature is the main subject. This reproduction of the painting conveys a joyful mood: one can feel the anticipation of spring and the onset of warmth, sunny days after a long winter.

Assessment criteria

Criterion 1: Subject matter knowledge: terms, conceptual framework, theoretical foundations.

The response demonstrates an accurate understanding of relevant terminology, conceptual framework, and theoretical foundations. The genre of the painting is correctly identified as landscape, and the subject is clearly described as nature. Appropriate descriptive terms are used (e.g., in the foreground, in the background), key color choices are noted, and the conveyed mood of the painting is explicitly stated.

(max. 4 points)

Criterion 2: Breadth of outlook: facts, examples, argumentation. The response includes a comprehensive description of the main visual elements in the painting, such as the sky, ground, trees, building, and animals. At least two specific examples of colors used by the artist are identified. Additionally, the mood conveyed by the painting is clearly stated and supported by relevant observations.

Criterion 3: English language proficiency: clarity, understandability, accuracy (max. 3 points).