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Collection of Children's Letters in the A.M. Gorky Archive of the A.M. Gorky Institute of World
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Abstract

The article is devoted to the review of one of the sections of the A. M. Gorky Archive of the A. M. Gorky Institute of World Literature of the Russian Academy of Sciences (AG IMLI RAN). The

section contains a large collection of children's letters addressed to the "great proletarian writer." The archive stores letters from children dating from 1899 to 1936. There are about 3000 children's letters in the collection. Systematic and information methods have been used to study the collection; based on the principle of comprehensive study of documents, they have permitted to consider documents as elements of one system and to study the content. Source analysis has made it possible to study the internal and external features of documents and also helped to develop the basis for their classification and systematization within the archival collection. Typological and historical-functional research methods have made it possible to classify letters and consider them in the changing socio-cultural contexts. The collection of children's letters at the AG IMLI RAN is diverse and extensive. Most of it has not been subjected to detailed scientific analysis. The relevance of the research topic is due to the need for detailed consideration and comprehensive understanding of the materials of the collection. Scientific and practical significance of the research lies in the possibility of using its results in a variety of scientific aspects: historical, biographical, source studies, textual, literary, cultural, etc. The reason for the study is insufficient knowledge of the collection of children's letters stored in the archive, which are of scientific interest. The purpose of the study is to describe and to study the collection of children's letters to M. Gorky, to introduce interesting material into scientific use and to provide its preliminary analysis. When using typological analysis, three groups of letters have been identified: individual, collective, and those from adults. The same method has made it possible to divide letters by social, age, geographical principle. The genre-thematic analysis has helped to divide the letters into subgroups united by common formal, substantive, and functional features: letters of request, letters of thanks, letters containing reviews, letters containing feedback on Gorky's artistic and journalistic works, letters with reports, letters of greeting, letters of invitation, letters of complaint. The archive also contains drawings, illustrations, postcards, photographs of children, and children's writings (poems, fairy tales, short stories, plays). Content analysis of the materials allows us to conclude that children's letters contribute to the study of social history, literary process, and epistolary heritage of the first half of the 20th century; they are able to provide new information for those who study the history of pedagogy, textual criticism, literary criticism. Systematic analysis of the collection allows us to consider children's letters in the historical and literary context of the era. Drawing on the analysis of archival documents, the conclusion is made that Gorky initiated the correspondence and stimulated children's writing. The letters demonstrate that the writer was perceived by his young contemporaries as assistant and defender, his works and public activities were of great educational value. Some letters in the collection contain Gorky's notes, showing his attitude to the text. Children's letters supplement the knowledge of the personality of M. Gorky and his addressees. An important result of the comprehensive study of the archival material is discovery of information opportunities and source studies potential of the collection of children's letters in the AG IMLI RAN.

Keywords

Historical sources, source studies, children's letters, letters, Gorky, archival fonds.

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