

NEWS IN BRIEF

COLLECTING ACTION “SCHOOL LORE 2018” EXCEEDED ALL EXPECTATIONS

The all-Estonian school lore collecting action took place from 24 February to 24 May 2018, with a record number of participants: answers to questionnaires were sent by 3717 respondents and additionally material was collected in the form of ‘pupil to pupil’ interviews. Answers were expected from the pupils of the 4th to 12th grades (incl. those from vocational schools), and most of them answered electronically. In addition to Estonian- and Russian-language schools in Estonia, some answers were also sent from Estonian schools abroad (mainly Finland).

The patron of the project, initiated by the Department of Folkloristics of the Estonian Literary Museum, was the Tartu City Writer Mika Keränen, and “School lore 2018” was recognised as an event of the European Year of Cultural Heritage. The pilot phase in December 2017 yielded over 300 filled questionnaires. The main stage was geared up in March 2018 with a training day for schoolteachers, under the heading “Killer clowns, protective angels, and YouTubers: School lore 2018”, which gave an overview of the current situation and discussed why and how school lore should be collected.



School lore collectors at the Estonian Literary Museum. Photograph by Alar Madisson 2018.

In both the pilot and main phases, schoolchildren were more prone to answer questions about names (nicknames, pets' names), leisure time, fandom, as well as fears and protective beliefs. Questions about celebrating various holidays yielded shorter answers. The main phase offered a good overview of today's humour use (e.g. through materials from meme creators and -fans). Several traditional joke models were revised in somewhat updated format (e.g. the blonde jokes, three-nation jokes, etc.).

As could be expected, the most popular holidays in Estonian homes are Midsummer Day and Christmas; birthday celebrations tend to decline in importance. The descriptions of school traditions involved fascinating local traditions and intertwining with older lore.

In the answers about games played, many past favourites were highlighted; however, in comparison to the previous collection action in 2007, the importance of computer games had considerably increased. As a new form of play, imitating the plots of computer games or TV-series was mentioned.

The fears brought out were a mixture of psychological, real life, and supernatural fears, with strong media influence as could be expected, involving killer clowns, darkness, spiders, UFOs/aliens, and ghosts. Additionally, a number of respondents admitted they believed in the existence of aliens, yet did not express fear for them.

The general atmosphere of the material was friendly and positive. Although pupils described several fears, they were also aware of either realistic or supernatural ways for fighting them (with the help of protective spirits and items, charms, positive auto-suggestion, supportive kin). So the obtained material yielded a vivid picture of today's youngsters' thoughts, feelings, and beliefs, resulting in an expressive document of the era, offering valuable material also to future researchers.

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POLAR READINGS 2018 ON BOARD THE KRASIN ICEBREAKER

On 27 and 28 April 2018, an international conference under the heading "Polar Readings 2018: Technology in the history of the Arctic development" was held aboard the icebreaker Krasin. The conference was held for the sixth year, before the annual Icebreakers Festival on the River Neva, organized by the Museum and Exhibition Center for Technical and Technological Development of the Arctic (Arctic Museum and Exhibition Center) and the department of the Museum of the World Ocean at Saint Petersburg, "The Krasin Icebreaker". Scholars representing different scientific disciplines, museums, and archives, as well as public figures and any concerned participants gathered in the historical interior of the famous ship.

The exact subject of Polar Readings changes every year; in 2018 it was titled "Practices and equipment in Arctic exploration". The aim of the conference was to summarize the historical experience concerning the topic. The organizers declared a wide range of