**Leisure time**

- What do you usually do in your leisure time?

- Unfortunately, as I have not had much free time this year, I have done my best to spend it wisely. It is known, that people can do all kinds of things in their spare time. They go shopping, play football, collect records or stamps. Of course, some of the time activities, like visiting relatives or taking driving lessons, may not be fun. In big cities people spend their free time by going to the theatre, cinema, museums, art galleries, concert hall, fitness or disco clubs. When I have some free time I can choose any of them. But when the weather is fine, I like to go for a walk along the boulevards and streets of the city with my friends, enjoying its architecture.

- A re you fond of collecting anything?

- No, I am not. I have not enough time to collect anything. My friend collects coins. His collection is rather rich. Coins of different countries are gathered there. Moreover, he has a lot of books devoted to numismatics and albums picturing the coin collections of different museums.

- What do you think about it?

- Everyone has the right to collect various, even the most unusual things, if it gives sense to his or her life. People collect paintings, stamps, match boxes, bottles, cans, buttons, books, etc. I know that girls are fond of collecting dolls. Some of them do not give it up even when they are of age. In their spare time people can read books, listen to their favourite music, invite their friends to a cafe or a park, or watch TV. Watching TV is also a popular leisure activity. Sometimes it is pleasant to be entertained without leaving the apartment. But excessive TV watching deprives a person of his initiative. Very often TV addicts are governed by television.

- Do you have the same problems?

- No, I don't. We turn on our television to watch only selected programmes. In my leisure time I read books, go to the theatre or cinema.

- Do you like to go to the theatre?

- Yes, I do.

- Do you often go to the theatre?

- No, I do not. I do not often go to the theatre. If I have a chance, I prefer to go to the Bolshoi Theatre, Mali Theatre or Art Theatre. I like conventional rendering of the classical ballets, op eras and plays. The tradition of Russian realist theatre was exemplified in the work of Konstantin Stanislavsky of the Moscow Art Theatre. The leading theatre companies of ballet are the Bolshoi in Moscow and Mariinsky in St. Petersburg. Russian ballet had a formative role in Western dance through a number of figures, such as Sergey Diaghilev and Vaslav Nijinsky.

- Do you like ballet?

- Yes, I do. Once saw a ballet "Giselle". The performance with its beautiful music, designs and cast was perfect. My concentration and enjoyment were intense. I also saw some new ballets with music from "outerspace", with dancers resembling mysteriously lit sculptural images, and severely geometrical de signs, and I can not say that I delighted in them. I prefer classical performances.

- What do you expect when you go to the theatre?

- When I go to the theatre I expect more than just fun of it. I want to see some actors I've heard of or a new version of the classical play. Recently I've seen the theatrical adaptation of Oscar Wilde's "Picture of Dorian Gray". It is excellent. If you want a thought provoking evening at the theatre, that's the one you want to see. But most of all like to go to the cinema.

- Is it your hobby?

- Yes. It is one of my hobbies.

- What kind of films do you like to see?

- I delight in seeing all kinds of films: comedies, love-stories, thrillers, westerns, war films, and cartoons. I like films if they are exciting. I do not like horror films because of their frightening moments even if they are superbly made and the acting is marvellous.

- What are your favourite films?

- One time I liked films directed by James Cameron. When I was younger I saw his heavy-metal Sci-Fi "Terminator" and "Terminator 2" several times. The special effects were wonderful and important to the success of the films. I took pleasure in ferociously exciting "Aliens". I liked his "Titanic" too. "Titanic" was no mere disaster movie. It was an epic love story. Cameron's 'Romeo and Juliet' on a sinking ship became an international sensation.

- What other films have impressed you?

- I was really impressed by two movies - "Gladiator" and "Pearl Harbour". "Gladiator" is a very amazing movie. Well photographed and directed it is really the best movie of the past decade. It is really magnificent. The fight scenes were great, and the characters were well developed. The screenplay is excellent. It is a sweeping story of courage and revenge. Russell Crowe is fabulous as Maximus. His portrayal of the major character is superb. His leadership, confidence, skill and heart are persuasive. In the first minutes, I completely realized the utter devotion that Maximus secured from his men, and his Caesar. I am actually keen to see it again, just to catch those things I missed while trying to keep up with it all. I would love to see all those sweeping views of Rome and the wonderful statues through the city. As for "Pearl Harbour", unfortunately it tried to be a war movie and a love story at the same time, and whilst "Titanic" knew when to stop with the love story and focus on the tragedy, "Pearl Harbour" was not capable of achieving the same distinction. It does not mean that I did not enjoy "Pearl Harbour". I want to say that the movie had the potential to be so much more than it actually was.

- Do you like to read books?

- Yes, I do. I am fond of reading books.

- What books do you like to read?

- I am fond of science fiction.

- When did this form of fiction develop?

- This form of fiction developed in the 20th century. It deals with the impact of actual or imagined science upon society or individuals. This term is used to refer to any literary fantasy that includes a scientific factor as an essential orienting component.

- What does such literature consist of?

- It consists of an extrapolation of scientific facts and principles, or it incorporates absolutely contradictory facts and principles. In either case, likelihood based on science is a requisite.

- Who were the precursors of the genre?

- In the 18th century they were Voltaire with his "Micromegas", Jonathan Swift with "Gulliver's Travels". In the 19th century the precursors of the genre were Mary Shelley with her Gothic novel "Frankenstein", Robert Louis Stevenson's with his "Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde".

- When did science fiction begin?

- Science fiction began at the end of the 19th century with the scientific romances of Jules Verne, whose science was rather on the level of invention, as well as with the science-oriented novels of social criticism of H.G. Wells. They pioneered what may be properly termed science fiction.

- When did science fiction emerge as a mode of serious fiction?

- With the publication of stories and novels of such writers as Isaac Asimov, Arthur C. Clarke, and Robert A. Heinlein, science fiction emerged as a mode of serious fiction. Such writers as Aldous Huxley, C.S. Lewis, and Kurt Vonnegut, who were not de voted exclusively to science fiction, also added much to it.

- Whose works became paperback best-sellers during the postwar period?

- The works of such science-fiction writers of notable merit in the postwar period as A.E. Van Vogt, J.G. Ballard, Ray Bradbury, Frank Herbert, Harlan Ellison, Poul Anderson, Samuel R. Delany, Ursula K. LeGuin, Frederik Pohl, Octavia E. Butler, and Brian Aldiss became paperback best-sellers. These writers' approaches included predictions of future societies on the Earth, analyses of the consequences of interstellar travel, and imaginative explorations of forms of intelligent life and their societies in other worlds. Radio, television, and motion pictures have reinforced the popularity of the genre.

- What were the aims of the science fiction writers?

- Since the days of Wells's "Time Machine" and "Invisible Man", the aims of science fiction were didactic. The works of contemporary writers opposed the utopianism that Wells built on the potentialities of socialism and technology. Aldous Huxley's "Brave New World" showed how dangerous utopianism could be, since the desire for social stability might overlook techniques that would destroy the fundamental human right to make free choices. Toward the end of his life Huxley produced a cautious Utopian vision in "Island", but the dystopian horrors of his earlier novel and of his "Ape and Essence" remain more convincing. Orwell's "Nineteen Eighty-four" showed a world in which a tyrannic unity is imposed by a collective solipsism, and contradictions are liquidated through the constant revision of history that the controlling party decrees. Anthony Burgess' "Clockwork Orange" and "Wanting Seed" portray ghastly futures that extrapolate, respectively, philosophies of crime control and population control out of present-day tendencies that are only potentially dangerous.

- Are there any science-fiction books without prophetic or warning intent?

- The fantasist who fantasizes without prophetic or warning intent is rarer, but works such as Nabokov's "Ada", Tolkien's "Lord of the Rings" cycle, and "Christine Brooke-Rose's Out" rep resent legitimate and heartening stretching of the imagination, assurances that the novelist has the right to create secondary worlds, as well as characters, of his own.

- Who created secondary worlds?

- Only three masters became architects of a complete secondary world. The vast Middle Earth trilogy "The Lord of the Rings", by J.R.R. Tolkien, was not written for children. It reworks many of the motives of traditional romance and fantasy. It is essentially a structure of sheer invention. Tolkien's fellow scholar, C.S. Lewis, created his own otherworld of Narnia. It is more clearly Christian- allegorical, more carefully adapted to the tastes of children. The seven volumes of the cycle are exciting. And the final scenes of "The Last Battle" are deeply moving. The third of these classic secondary worlds is in a sense not a creation of fantasy. The four volumes about the "Borrowers", with their brief pendant, "Poor Stainless", ask the reader to accept only a single impossibility, that in a quiet country house, under the grandfather clock, live the tiny Clock family: Pod, Homily, and their daughter Arrietty. All that follows from this premise is logical, precisely pictured, and carries absolute conviction. Many critics believe that this miniature world so lovingly, so patiently fashioned by Mary Norton will last as long as those located at the bottom of the rabbit hole and through the looking glass.

- Is it difficult for a person to have a hobby?

- No, I don't think so. I can say that there are a lot of ways of spending one's free time. I always have a lot to do in my leisure time. It is great to have some free time and do what is really pleasant.