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# ALTERNATIVE GRAMMAR ACTIVITIES

# A boy from the 13th century preserved his homework on birch bark

Modal Perfect B1

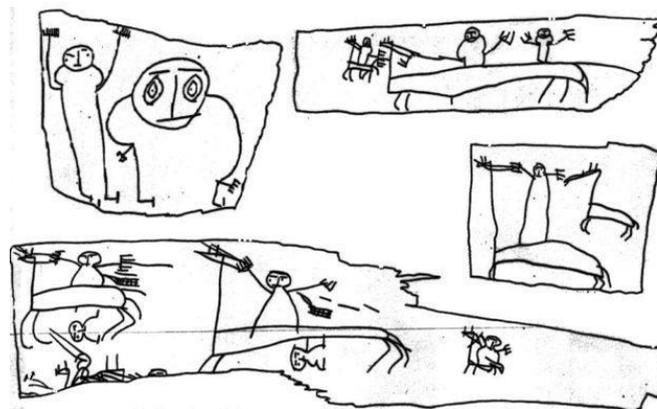
from [thevintagenews.com](http://thevintagenews.com)

Onfim was an ordinary boy who lived in Novgorod, in Russia, during the 13th century. As was common practice at the time, he wrote letters and drew pictures on birch bark with a sharp stylus. Accidentally, Onfim created fascinating archaeological data which was discovered centuries after he lived. This unintentional time capsule has provided a unique insight into life in Medieval Novgorod.



**Birch bark letter no. 202: spelling lessons and drawings**

Onfim was a six or seven-year-old boy who preserved his personal messages, love letters, shopping lists, syllables, notes, and homework in the clay soil of Novgorod. He also kept his drawings which depicted everyday experiences such as fights between him and his teacher. Onfim's notes are valuable because of their childish honesty which describes the life in Medieval times impartially and can be studied as social history. Most records of the past are the writings of politicians, theologians, and historians, but children's preserved work tells more about the life of "actual" people.



The collection consists of seventeen birch bark items of which twelve are illustrations with text, and the remaining five contain only text. Scholars have studied the amusing collection and analyzed Onfim's work. In one of them, he had illustrated a knight on a horse, stabbing someone on the ground with a lance and it was concluded that Onfim drew himself as a knight.





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