

Title:

What are the birch bark manuscripts and why are they important?

The text itself:

Throughout the entire human history, humans have used different materials to write on — stone, wood, leather, and many others, including birch bark. Manuscripts written on this incredibly fragile material (and dating all the way back to the 12th century!) have been preserved surprisingly well in the swampy lands of Novgorod, a city in Russia. Every year linguists and archaeologists venture out there and find even more birch bark writings; by now, over a thousand have been found in Novgorod alone! Saved by the city's climate, these manuscripts give us a unique opportunity to gaze into what life must've been long before us. Business deals, land purchases, even love letters — all of these manuscripts allow us to reconstruct the language of the old and add to our understanding of the linguistic quirks of the region. In this article, we will further delve into the history of the birch bark manuscript discovery and see what new knowledge we can derive from it.