

Anna Byrkanova from Russia

According to Anna Byrkanova from Russia it is very important that students have historical knowledge. Teachers must take care of that and therefore they always have to develop themselves. What do her lessons look like?

How do they teach History in other countries? Editor of Kleio **Lisa Oskamp** tries to figure that out and interviews colleagues from all over the world.

Name, age, teaching experience?

Anna Byrkanova, 59 years old, 37 years of teaching experience.

Could you describe an average history lesson?

My usual way of getting ready and conducting a lesson is like this: when I am preparing a lesson I review all the necessary material and look through lesson plans of the previous years, I consider what ways and methods of teaching will suit the lesson so that my students understand and absorb all the material. It goes without saying that history is the most interesting subject of a school's curriculum. Both students and their teacher digest a lot of new information every day. Our life is not static, but dynamic as new facts of life in the past are discovered, modern techniques of teaching are applied to

our way of teaching. So, if a teacher wants a lesson to be conducted on a high level, (s)he must educate her- or himself. I try not to repeat my lessons year after year, but I always add new information, apply new methods of teaching or find another way of organizing work during the lesson itself. My students are allowed to work in groups or pairs, study historical documents on their own, have a discussion or even debate disputable questions. As we know, there are many facts in history which can be assessed in different ways. All in all I can say that I always try to be creative, that is one of the main reasons I love my profession. Let's take Medieval History for example. One of my favourite topics in the 6th form is 'A glance from a medieval town'. This year four of my students made a project The way people presented the Earth in medieval times. They

had drawn it on paper and presented their idea during the lesson. It was concluded how little is known about the world during those times. Their fellow students liked the project and the authors themselves were really satisfied and they all got high marks.

Which subject is your favourite subject to explain in a lesson? Why?

I just love Ancient World history. It gives me much pleasure to tell about Ancient Egypt, Ancient Greece or Ancient Rome. Besides, I love travelling. Some years ago I visited all these countries and since that time my stories about them have become even more emotional and colourful. I'm also interested in the history of Medieval Europe where I have travelled a lot of times. As for the history of Russia I prefer Russian history of the 19th-20th century.

What is the content of the history curriculum in your country?

The content of the history curriculum is as follows:

5th class – Ancient World History

6th class – Medieval History and History of Motherland in Medieval Times

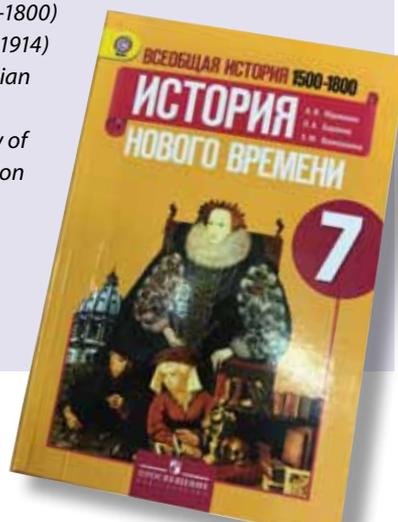
7th class – New History (1500-1800) and Russian History (1500-1800)

8th class - New History (1800-1914) and Russian History (1800-1914)

9th class – The Newest History (1914-up to our times) and Russian History (1914-up to our times)

10th-11th class – A profound revision of all the course of History of Russia from Ancient times up to our times and profound revision of Latest Foreign History.

Though we have got a program of teaching history, a teacher can choose the number of lessons he or she wants to devote to a certain theme.



Which subject is the favourite subject to a lot of students?

If you ask my students of the 5th-6th forms, they unquestionably favour the history of the Ancient World or Medieval History. This has been proven by lots of surveys. As for senior students, they are mostly interested in the 20th century and the role of Russia in the modern world.

Do you use ICT applications? In what way?

Of course, I use ICT applications when I need them. We have all the necessary equipment at school to use ICT. The computers in every



classroom are connected to modern full screen TVs. So it gives us an opportunity to show all kinds of projects made by our students. We have access to the internet and my students and I use the internet every day to search for information. I sometimes show films during my lessons. In my classroom there are 23 documentaries on the history of Russia at the beginning of the 20th century. Sometimes we watch feature films on history themes, but in this case we watch them after classes. I'm happy that all my students stay at school to watch them, as we do not do it very often and I always choose films which are worthwhile to see. For example, we watched Pavel Lungin's film *The Tzar* about the times of Ivan the Terrible. When we study foreign culture of the 15th -16th century, we always watch *Romeo and Juliet* by Franco Zeffirelli.

What is your own opinion on the importance of the course history?

Cicerone said: 'History is the teacher of life', and I fully agree with him. Our Russian historian V.O. Klutchevski added: 'History doesn't teach, but makes us learn and punish those who don't follow her lessons'. One of my main goals

is to show this to my students. The history course in our country allows us to know about the whole world and our Motherland, the past and the present of many nations. And without this you can't be an educated and intelligent person. For example, if you know the history of Europe and visit these European countries as well, you feel confident and the citizens of that country will treat you with respect if they see that you know and appreciate their history. So the knowledge of history makes the people all over the world feel close to each other.

What is the average salary of a forty-year-old teacher who works full-time?

The salary of teachers in Russia does not depend on the age of a teacher or on how many years he or she has been teaching. It all depends on the category of the quality of teaching you have. There are three main categories. If you want to get any category of teaching, you must show that you use the best practices of teaching, your best knowledge in the subject of teaching, and that you are a good educator and your students know your subject enough and love you as a teacher. I not only have got the highest category payment, but I also receive extra

payment for the rank 'The best in profession'. I think the average salary in Russia is 4000 euro a year.

How many students does an average class have?

There are usually 25 students in a class, but there might be more or less.

How many hours do you teach when you work full-time?

I teach 18 hours every week; there are three lessons a day as we work six days a week (not on Sunday).

Which training is required to become a history teacher?

To become a history teacher you need five years of training in a Pedagogical Institute or University on the Faculty of History.

If we want to learn something about the history of your country, which book would you recommend?

If you want to learn the history of Russia, I strongly advise you to read the book of N.M. Karamzin *The History of the Russian State* (9th-18th century).

Is there a subject which is considered controversial to teach in your country?

It is difficult to discuss themes of the Russian history of the beginning of the 20th century with having three revolutions, one after the other. It is also difficult to discuss the Civil War 1918-1920.

Do you have an idea for a nice history lesson?

An ideal history lesson is the lesson where students not only listen to the teacher but have some practice, too. When we study Stalin, times and years of repression in the USSR, we always go the museum devoted to victims of these times. It was set up by people who survived them and it is located not far from our school. You just can't stay indifferent when you listen to all these stories and look at objects of these times. In March 2017 my students of the 9th form and I are planning to go to Saint Petersburg. Visiting this place will let us feel the times of Peter the Great and it can't be substituted by any lesson conducted in the classroom. ■

