

# NIKOLINA MARJANOVIC UIT BOSNIA-HERZEGOVINA

Bearing in mind that Bosnia and Herzegovina have a specific educational system with three different school programmes, namely a Bosnian, a Serbian and a Croatian one, history teacher Nikolina Marjanovic tries to enhance critical learning during her classes by encouraging students to start discussions and taking the initiative to ask questions. What do her lessons look like?



Hoe wordt geschiedenis onderwezen in andere landen? Kleio-redacteur **Lisa Oskamp** gaat op onderzoek en bevraagt collega's over de hele wereld.

## NAME? AGE? TEACHING EXPERIENCE?

**Nikolina Marjanovic.** Twenty-six years old. Two years in primary and secondary school.

## CAN YOU DESCRIBE AN AVERAGE HISTORY LESSON?

*In the beginning we usually talk about the previous history lesson and the events regarding the topic that will be taught that day. I'm usually in the lead and direct the learning process. I always insist on the students' maximum involvement during classes by encouraging discussions and asking questions. For example, when we deal with the*

*Industrialization of the nineteenth century, we have a debate about the positive and negative influence of technological advance. When we study the period of First Yugoslavia (1918-1941), we work in small groups where students critically analyse and discuss certain topics of this period. When we talk about the Ottoman culture and its impact on our region, we go into the city centre, where typically Bosnian houses were built in the nineteenth century during the Ottoman Empire. So a history lesson depends on the topic at hand.*

## WHICH TOPIC DO YOU PREFER TO EXPLAIN IN A LESSON? WHY?

*I like to teach social history, especially about the life of ordinary people in each historical period – for example how technological changes in a certain period have affected the life of ordinary people and society in general or how children and women have been treated through time. I like to explain these subjects, because I want to develop the empathy among my students for these social groups, since history is full of rulers and commanders and most of history's curriculum is dedicated to them. Besides that, I've got a feeling that these subjects*

*are very interesting to students as they can identify with these characters and they always foster discussions about social justice and discrimination, topics that are very important nowadays.*

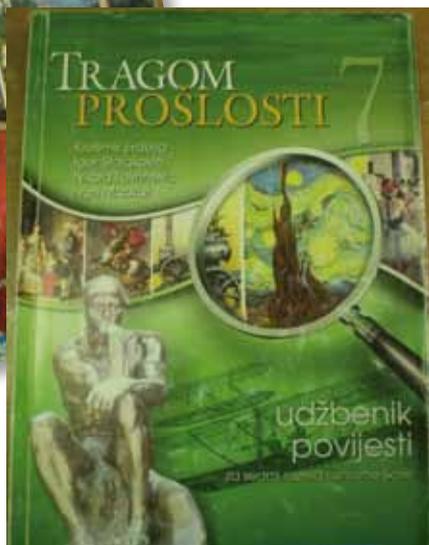
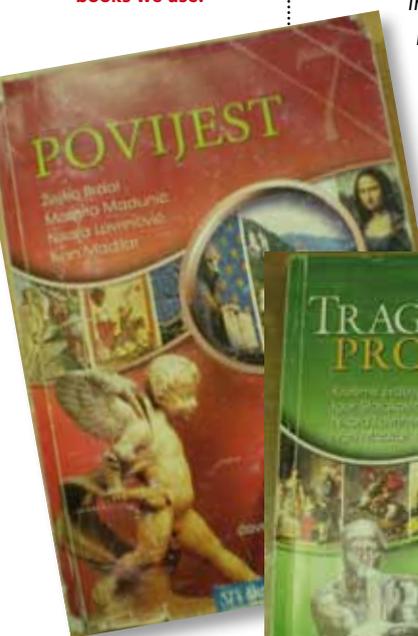
## WHICH TOPIC IS THE MOST FAVOURITE ONE TO THE MAJORITY OF YOUR STUDENTS?

*If you ask the male students, they will most likely answer that their favourite topic is World War II. In general, war topics such as the Crusades or the Ottoman conquests, are mostly liked by my students. There are also lively discussions when we talk about the role of the church in a certain period (positive and negative) or about our local history. But, my rule is: when I'm enthusiastic and do my utmost to present a certain topic, my students will most likely get interested too.*

## WHAT'S YOUR OPINION ON THE IMPORTANCE OF HISTORY AS A SUBJECT?

*Teaching history has a crucial importance on the development of critical thinking of children and that's why history classes should have a very important place in the school's curriculum. At a time when our society is faced with so many challenges and threats, history classes give students the opportunity to learn about*

One of the text-books we use.



similar periods in the past and they will consequently analyse the processes that had led to certain events and consequences society is faced with and they will most likely use that knowledge to analyse the current problems in society.

It is important to teach history to students, especially those living in Bosnia and Herzegovina with its many political and economic problems, can see that something beautiful can be made even after the worst situations. At the same time history classes also offers students the opportunity to learn about many historical persons who have used their positions to manipulate people. So learning about them will raise the feeling of social responsibility, tolerance, critical thinking on totalitarianism and cult of personality.

#### WHAT IS THE CONTENT OF THE HISTORY CURRICULUM IN YOUR COUNTRY?

We have school plans and programmes with the obligatory topics that must be taught and teachers don't have any special influence on that. When we talk about the content of the history curriculum it includes general world and national history that should both be taught together. At primary schools, history is taught chronologically: in the 6th grade we teach Pre-history and Antique period, Middle Ages is taught in 7th grade, in 8th grade we examine the events of the 17th until the 19th century, and in 9th grade we mostly teach 20th century history.

This same system is taught at high schools. Bosnia and Herzegovina have a very specific educational system where we have three different school programmes: a Bosnian, a Serbian and a Croatian one. Thus we have schools that operate according to these three different

programmes. Generally, schools which operate according to the Bosnian school programme are usually attended by Bosniak students, whereas their Serbian peers from the same city attend schools that operate according to the Serbian school programme. I, for example, work at a school that operates according to a Croatian programme, but around twenty percent of the pupils are Bosniaks and it works very well, without any disagreements. The educational system is organised in that way that it has influence on history curriculum/programme too, because there are three different history programmes that are similar, but the amount of topics about national history and their interpretation in each of them can be very different.

#### IS THERE A SUBJECT WHICH IS CONSIDERED CONTROVERSIAL TO TEACH IN YOUR COUNTRY?

Because of the very specific political situation in our country and many unsolved topics from the past there are many controversial subjects that are very difficult to teach since there is no consensus among historians about them. Consequently these topics are taught differently at different schools, depending on which textbooks each teacher uses. Topics such as Islamisation after the Ottomans conquered Bosnia in 1463, the Assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand by Gavrilo Princip in 1914, political repression during socialism period, the period of the last war (1992-1995) are often taught in very different, even opposed, ways, depending on which programme someone teaches.

#### WHAT IS THE AVERAGE SALARY OF A FORTY-YEAR-OLD TEACHER WHO WORKS FULL-TIME?

It is about five hundred euros a month.

#### HOW MANY STUDENTS DOES AN AVERAGE CLASS HAVE?

Around twenty two, but it differs from region to region. The number of students has been decreasing rapidly in the last couple of years, especially in the last three years, so schools have less students than before.

#### HOW MANY HOURS DO YOU TEACH WHEN YOU WORK FULL-TIME?

Twenty one hours per week. I teach sixteen hours at primary school and five hours at high school – as we don't have enough classes at the primary school where I work which is common in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

#### WHICH TRAINING IS REQUIRED TO BECOME A HISTORY TEACHER?

A master's degree in history.

On site learning.



#### DO YOU HAVE AN IDEA FOR A NICE HISTORY LESSON?

Students should take the initiative and look for answers themselves. They have to examine original historical sources, analyse historical maps individually, search for additional sources, cooperate with other pupils and independently create and discover historical stories. I use these methods in my class, but because of a time limitation, it's not possible to include all steps, so the teacher is the one who has the initiative and it's difficult to have an individual approach for each student in these conditions. Also, it would be nice to have more on-site history lessons – that would be my favourite actually. ■