

Reviews

Andrew Jameson
Reviews Editor

LANGUAGE MATERIALS

Навигатор – Practical Materials for the Advanced Study of Russian.

Michael Ransome, Katya Solovyova, Maggie Bowden, Christopher Cooke, Steven Hogan, Rachel Smith, Diana Swain, Claire Jenkins and Nadia Taylor.

Bramcote Press, 2009. CD-Rom containing MP3-format recordings in Russian, PowerPoint presentations, and written materials for students and teachers. £150 for schools and colleges.

ISBN 978-1-900405-17-1

Navigator has been designed and written by Michael Ransome and other practising teachers and examiners specifically for the demands of the new AS/A2 A level examination, and following on from the popular A level textbooks *Tranzit* and *Kompas*. This comprehensive set of materials comes on CD, covering all the topics prescribed for the new examination as well as offering plenty of practice in all four language skills. Texts and listening tasks (mp3-format recordings, all with transcripts) have graded levels of difficulty, allowing for individual schemes of work to be created. There are many tasks that teachers will find useful for training their students for the examination: the new style AS oral, prose translation and discursive and creative essay writing for the A2. The wide range of texts could easily help inspire pupils in preparing for their research-based essay. Grammar, whilst not exhaustive, is nevertheless often explained through Powerpoint presentations and exercises.

It would perhaps be helpful to include a section for teachers with authors' answers to comprehension and prose tasks. However, as a full-time classroom teacher I find it is a great relief to have such relevant and up to date materials at my fingertips. There has never been so much choice! As all the materials are on CD, they are fully adaptable to suit the teacher's style or pupils' needs, and this makes for a good deal of flexibility on the teaching front! This versatile resource will work in many different spheres of teaching. The price is reasonable, as the purchasing organisation may do unlimited printing from the one CD. A disk of specimen materials may be borrowed on approval from the publisher before purchasing the full version.

The Bramcote Press website (<http://www.bramcotepress.co.uk/news.htm>) gives further details about the conditions of sale: schools and colleges may subscribe to the project for £150.00 per institution and in return will be granted a licence to make as many copies as they like from the CD for themselves, their colleagues and their students.

PAULA LIMBERT

James Allen's Girls School, London

RUSSIAN HISTORY AND RUSSIAN STUDIES

Sarah Biller of St Petersburg. A Sheffield teacher in 19th Century Russia

John Dunstan

York, William Sessions, 2009, £8.99

ISBN 978-1-85072-399-8

Sarah Kilham (1788–1852), later Mrs Biller, was a remarkable woman; and this excellent, richly illustrated paperback does her proud. If you are a Methodist, or a Quaker, or a teacher, or a nurse, or from Sheffield, interested in Russian history, or simply attracted by adventurous people and their stories, there is more than a little in this book for you. I have no doubt that when the Russians find out about it, they'll be interested in it too.

In the early nineteenth century many middle-class people with a conscience were increasingly realising that education for the masses was of vital importance. A strong Christian conviction led them to believe that 'ragged little beggars' could be saved from destitution, degradation and vice if only they were educated. The trouble was, this was going to cost far more money than they had: but Bell and Lancaster invented the system of 'mutual instruction', the 'monitorial', Lancastrian, or Lancasterian method, whereby a master (later mistress, as we shall see) taught the monitors, who then passed on what they had learned to younger children. Hundreds of children could thereby be taught by one teacher. It was cheap, and as a way of introducing the poor to education, a revolution. Though the popularity of the system soon waned, education – and not only in Britain – has never been the same since.

It is hard for us today to understand the passions aroused by the idea of education for the poor. William Pitt would have passed a law to ban Sunday schools (they were 'promoting Methodism' – horror, horror!) if Napoleon had not been so much of a nuisance as to distract his attention. Fears that the workers would get 'ideas above their station' terrified the ruling classes. The British and Foreign School Society was formed to promote Lancasterian schools all over the world, but they were Quaker and non-conformist and believed strongly in non-sectarian education; and a National Society for the Education of the Poor in the Principles of the Established Church was soon set up by militant Anglicans to rival them. In their view, religious education should be sectarian – Anglican.

Sarah Kilham had to face this sort of obstruction in Russia too, where the Orthodox Church asserted that it had an absolute right to control religious education. But I am ahead of myself. John Dunstan's book recounts Sarah's early life, her first educational venture with her stepmother in Sheffield, her not entirely explicable decision to go to Russia in 1820, where both the British expatriate community and the Russians were starting and supporting Lancasterian schools in St Petersburg and elsewhere. Once she had learned Russian she certainly made an impact, as her Lancasterian school, along with that of James Heard, became a 'model' school for the Empire and survived long after her death, and after the government had closed all Lancasterian schools by law. Her work in running the Grand Duchess Alexandra Nikolaevna Memorial Hospital is also recounted.

John Dunstan has written an extremely readable account of Sarah's life and work; he has tramped the country seeking out obscure archives and tapped many Russian sources too, and found out things no-one knew previously. Though his style is popular, anyone who knows John's writing will not be surprised that all the footnotes are there, telling us exactly where he got the information from – you cannot ask more of a scholar. This reviewer, on reading the book, has been inspired to get out of the drawer his papers on James Heard (1799–1875), Sarah Kilham Biller's male colleague and counterpart, who started the very first Lancasterian school in Russia in 1819. Expect the results in a couple of years' time. Meanwhile, read this book!

JAMES MUCKLE
Ilkeston, Derbyshire

Moscow Heritage at Crisis Point

Edmund Harris, Editor-in-chief

MAPS/SAVE Europe's Heritage, 2009, updated expanded edition, 301pp. Large format, fully illustrated, index. Available for a suggested donation of £10 from Adam Wilkinson, SAVE Europe's Heritage, 70 Cowcross Street, London, EC1M 6EJ. Cheques should be made payable to 'SAVE Europe's Heritage'.

ISBN 978-0-905978-59-8

This stylish campaigning volume has a panoramic view of the centre of Moscow on its front cover. In the foreground we have part of the fenced-off wreck of the 'Rossiya', behind it the Kremlin and Red Square, beyond them mixed historical styles of all types, and at the back but overshadowing all, huge high rise blocks, for all the world like alien invaders. The first edition of this book created a big impact in May 2007 and has resulted in more public awareness and support for Moskomnaslediye (the city government's building conservation body). Its energetic head, Valery Shevchuk, has made public the list of protected buildings and some action has been taken against offenders. However this only indicates the mountain still to be climbed by conservationists.

This second edition of the book lists a few successes, as well as the types of threat to the Moscow cityscape, and raises the fundamental question of authenticity – what actually constitutes preservation? The rest of the book describes, period by period and style by style, what makes Moscow architecture unique, and what is happening to each of them. Further chapters are on actual losses, buildings under threat, building conservation law, direct action, sham replicas, thorny issues, sustainable re-use and restoration today. The book concludes with a small (but hard-hitting) 15 pages on St Petersburg. The text throughout is in bilingual columns, with illustrations on most pages with bilingual captions. The useful index at the back is similarly bilingual.

What makes the Moscow cityscape unique is the organic way the city has evolved, the special mix of uniquely Russian and European, styles, the fact that Moscow was the cradle of 'modern' architecture in the 1920s (what could be more modern than the Lenin Mausoleum?), moving on to the Stalinist period with its landmark skyscrapers (which are praised in this book), and finally the present second wave of modernism. The chapter '10 Threats to Historic Moscow', however, shows how difficult it is to preserve what is valuable from the past against the pressures of modern wealth and power. To mention just one example, the developer Leonid Kazinets has declared that '70% of the buildings in the centre (of Moscow) are of absolutely no interest'.

The debate rages as to what constitutes restoration and who should be allowed to do it. One article in the volume discusses the authenticity of the modern replicas of the

Cathedral of Christ the Saviour, the Kazan church and Resurrection gates on Red Square, where no parts of the original fabric were available or used. The rebuilding of the Andreevsky and Aleksandrovsky halls in the Kremlin are equally *ersatz*, but they are internal and represent an enhancement, and a return to the original glories of the building. The disaster that has overtaken the Bolshoi Theatre is described: when renovation was begun in 2005, three underground spaces were opened up under Teatral'naya ploshchad before the main building had been underpinned. The main technique used in 'restoration' is demolition of all except the outside walls, rebuilding inside, the insertion of underground car parks and shopping malls, the addition of fake-old or blindingly modern extra stories on the top. Despite the ignorance and vandalism displayed, nonetheless some restoration schemes are complimented. There are examples of good practice, and Moscow and world architects are now observing and monitoring most of the important sites, so the situation is not as bad as it was, though it is still bad enough. Anyone who cares about the old Moscow they knew and loved will be fascinated, and horrified, by this book.

Those with further queries are invited to contact Clementine Cecil at clem@maps-moscow.com or Adam Wilkinson at adam@savebritheritage.plus.com.

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RUSSIAN LITERARY CRITICISM

Russia and the Classics. Poetry's Foreign Muse

Zara Martirosova Torlone

Duckworth, 2009, 254pp. Illustrated, notes, bibliography, index.
ISBN 978-0-7156-3717-3 £18.00

This is an unusual topic in Russian literary studies, where the subject is often Russianness versus European influences of various kinds. Studies of the role of the Classics (as we know them) in Russia are not common, yet their significance in the building of the pre-Soviet Russian Empire is considerable. The students of two academies, one in Kiev and one in Moscow, had to study not only Church Slavonic but also Greek and then Latin for a full education, but the study of Greece and Rome did not enter Russian culture until Peter the Great. For Peter this was mixed in with Roman martial achievement and the beginnings of a Russian Empire, and he adopted the terms *Imperator* and *Pater Patriae*. The father of classical influence in Russia was the Ukrainian Feofan Prokopovich, who had studied in Rome and became an enthusiastic supporter of Peter's reforms. Catherine the Great encouraged Latin learning and sent several young men to Oxford and Cambridge to become Latin teachers. The classical and Christian legacies became entwined, as

mastering Eastern territory was seen as reinstating the Eastern Roman Empire and the re-taking of Constantinople. Some Crimean towns were given artificial Greek names. As Georgia and the Caucasus were added to the Empire, this world too was firmly connected with classical myth and Mediterranean classicism. The new Russian Empire was ruled from St Petersburg, a capital replete with neo-Classical architecture. Catherine's great tribute to Peter, the Bronze Horseman, bears the legend 'Petro Primo Catharina Secunda'. Where Europe had taken centuries to integrate Classical culture, in Russia the process was compressed into 50 years, and this must have played a part in the reaction and the search for a native Russian literature which followed.

Paradoxically, it is to Classicism and the training that this gave in different poetic genres that we owe the work of Russia's poetic genius, Alexander Pushkin. As detailed evidence in this book shows, Pushkin was not actually a very good Latin scholar but, nicknamed 'Француз' by his fellows at the lyceum, he absorbed large amounts of classical culture through the medium of French. The classics appear at several crucial stages in Pushkin's life, first in his southern exile, where he identifies strongly with Ovid, also exiled to the Black Sea region. Later Herodotus supplies him with the story of Arion, which Pushkin uses to describe his involvement with the Decembrist uprising. On the third occasion Pushkin writes his own extraordinary poetic epitaph (*Я памятник себе воздвиг нерукотворный*) – a translation/ adaptation of Horace's *Exegi monumentum*.

Five further writers are given the same amount of attention as Pushkin: these are Vyacheslav Ivanov, Innokentii Annenskii, Osip Mandelstam, Marina Tsvetaeva and Joseph Brodskii. The description of their works, lives and fates is equally interesting, and I must pay tribute to the Notes at the end which are not mere references, but valuable and interesting expansions of the themes of the book. It is noteworthy that the author's father was a friend of Joseph Brodskii and this lends further interest. Unfortunately space does not allow further consideration of these writers in this review, but the book provides an interesting introduction to a group of Russian writers not often discussed in the West.

Andrew Jameson
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Brief Lives: Leo Tolstoy

Anthony Briggs

Hesperus, 2010, 115pp, £7.99
ISBN 978-1-84391-911-7

Tony Briggs is a well-known figure in Russian studies, one of our most charismatic lecturers and an enthusiast for the humane values of literature. He was the ideal person to work on a modern revised translation of *War and Peace*,

and this was published by Penguin in hardback in 2005. This volume in the Hesperus 'Brief Lives' series follows on from his earlier achievements in the cause of bringing the special qualities of Russian literature to a wider audience. He challenges the pedestrian factual biographies of former times by concentrating on Tolstoy's mental and moral development, while not omitting the necessary detail. Leo Tolstoy's incredible appetite for life, sex and gambling brought him endless feelings of guilt in later life, which might not have been so unbearable, had he not let into his life 'three appalling individuals who wrought an irrevocable and malign influence'. The thoughts with which we all live, the unexpressed fears and dreams we all have, became so unbearable in Tolstoy that life became torture. Where Tolstoy differs from us is that (with time at his disposal, not having a career to follow) he wrote and reasoned out these thoughts and fears, and made them explicit for all of us to see. Do not think that this account is all doom and gloom, however, there were many happy times such as his and Sofya's early married life and their mutual work on *War and Peace*. In his quieter moments Tolstoy was of huge influence in international politics and social reform, and his writings were responsible for Gandhi's doctrines. In a remarkable feat, Tony Briggs has got to the essence of Tolstoy's troubled mind, which yet was driven to create the most remarkable works of Russian literature. Who were those three appalling individuals? Read the book and see.

Andrew Jameson
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being a plain checklist of authors' addresses, this is a volume of miniature essays on the significance of many different writers and their works in Russian literature.

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Literary Russia. A Guide

Rosamund Bartlett and Anna Benn

Overlook Duckworth, 2007, 494pp. Illus., maps, £20.00

ISBN 978-0-7156-3622-0

If, like me, you have wondered exactly where a particular writer lived or where a particular literary episode took place, then this is the book for you. The title is, in my view, misleading. This is not a guide to the literature of Russia – it is rather a list of addresses all over Russia, with descriptions of who lived there, and what happened there. Each article, however, is large enough to include actual quotations from the works, and asides on other matters, which makes the work pleasantly browsable, as well as being a useful reference volume. The scope of the book is remarkable, covering Moscow and Moscow Region, St Petersburg and Leningrad Region, European Russia, the Caucasus, Siberia and Ukraine. The Ukraine section is the smallest and covers just a few of the best known Russian writers. The book has a short foreword about literary developments in Russia after 1991, and an introduction describing the 'rules' of the compilation – streets are almost always given with their original names, not their Soviet ones, for example. Far from



The Russian Committee of the Association for Language Learning is pleased to announce

FIFTH UK RUSSIAN ESSAY COMPETITION 2011

КОНКУРС СОЧИНЕНИЙ НА РУССКОМ ЯЗЫКЕ 2011

Students learning Russian at schools, colleges and universities in the UK, including heritage and adult learners, are invited to participate in the Russian Essay Competition 2011, organised by the Russian Committee of ALL in collaboration with the Russian Teachers Group UK.

Visit the RUSSIAN ESSAY COMPETITION website

www.resources4russian.co.uk/essay

for more detailed information on this year's
topics / prizes / categories / criteria for judgment / deadlines

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