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Review: *Pervyi Krug: Russian Full Circle*

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be integrated (in its entirety or in part, again depending on institutional context and student level) into a course on literature of the post-WWII period, the Thaw of the late-1950s-early 1960s, or 20th century Russian literature in general. There are very few readers available today that can be used as the main textbook for a course, either because they are single-story readers, or because though they may include a collection of stories, the supplementary material included in the volume is insufficient, requiring the creation of such material by the instructor. This superb volume is likely to appeal to instructors and students alike, for both its selection of stories and its approach to the material.

Cynthia L. Martin
University of Maryland, College Park

Donna Oliver with Edie Furniss. *Pervyi Krug: Russian Full Circle*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2013. 384 pp. \$85.00 (cloth)

Первый круг: Russian Full Circle is the first edition of a beginning Russian textbook that represents a contemporary communicative approach with an emphasis on grammatical and pragmatic competences. Additionally, it offers an open-source ancillary web site. The goals and objectives of the course are clear, challenging and feasible. The materials can be used in a traditional year-long language course or in an intensive summer language program.

The course consists of ten lessons consisting of vocabulary, grammar explication, conversation practice, and homework exercises. A unique feature of each chapter is the culture section that includes poetry, tongue twisters, and Soviet propaganda posters related to the chapter's theme. The slogans in the posters not only convey cultural knowledge, but also illustrate particular grammar points in an authentic and amusing way. Along with the posters, the book contains abundant popular Russian jokes, including contemporary political jokes, to provide the necessary element of fun.

Russian Full Circle includes the following features that make it stand out from most other elementary Russian textbooks: a full presentation of the grammatical system, authentic material from the Russian National Corpus, and a particularly high quality website. *Первый круг* presents each case's morphological and semantic paradigm in full within one chapter instead of fragmenting and dispersing the numerous case functions throughout the textbook, as is the case with other first-year texts. This systematic approach conveys important facets of Russian grammar in all their complexity at early stages, allowing learners to build their proficiency on a strong foundation. Moreover, it makes the book more accessible for review, as students can easily find information on a particular case in one place rather than searching through the entire volume.

One of the strengths of the book is the source of its mini-dialogues: the Russian National Corpus (ruscorpora.ru), which provides authentic speech patterns that are integrated in the speaking tasks that follow. In addition, the textbook includes fully glossed poems of classical Russian authors in each lesson to provide authentic reading practice.

In spite of the book's strengths, several significant elements are missing. The book lacks original listening comprehension exercises, though the web component of the book does provide links to other open sources with their own listening exercises. Moreover, pronunciation and intonation drills are absent, making that important aspect of Russian even harder to grasp for beginners. Instructors who adopt this textbook will likely need to supplement their courses with both listening exercises and pronunciation and intonation drills.

The ancillary web site is an entertaining component of the course, containing optional material appropriate both for classroom use and independent exploration. It is easy to navigate and immediately catches the reader's attention with a collection of relevant YouTube videos applicable to all levels of Russian learners, not only beginners. Unlike the illustrations in the textbook itself, the quality of which leaves a lot to be desired, the web site contains superb contemporary photos, authentic ads, menus, store signs, and so forth, used to promote reading proficiency in the exemplary PowerPoint presentations for each lesson. Students can listen to the pronunciation of all new vocabulary and textbook dialogues online. This supplementary component promotes independent work while

providing a rich contemporary cultural context. The absence of a traditional workbook makes *Russian Full Circle* more affordable. On the other hand, the number of homework exercises (around 20 per chapter) might be insufficient for the book's intensive and ambitious grammar coverage.

Notwithstanding the small number of shortcomings, *Russian Full Circle* provides an excellent compilation of lucid grammar explanations and practical exercises for the development of adult learners' language proficiency. The loose topical structure of the course allows for instructor creativity and easy tailoring of the material according to learners' needs.

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