

# INTERVIEWING A WRITER

On Friday 2 February 2018, Mrs Evi Tsitiridou Christoforidou visited our school. Mrs Tsitiridou is a Kindergarten teacher and a writer of books for children. She stayed with us for an hour and we learned a lot about her and her books! The pupils of the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> grades, read 6 of her books, "Byzantine Constantinople", "A walk in the Byzantine times", "The Alphabet of Ayia Sofia", "Adil has got a country", "Evita's treasure" and "The Alphabet of poems".

Here is our interview.

**Q:** What have you studied?

**A:** I studied at the Pre School Department of the University of Athens and I work as a Kindergarten teacher in Nea Smyrni. Later I had Postgraduate studies on Management of Cultural Units.

**Q:** We have read that you always dreamt of becoming a writer. What motivated you to start writing?

**A:** I've been reading books since I was very young. When I was still in Primary school, I used to keep a diary. Later, at the age of 12, my mother gave me the book "Alexis Zorbas" written by Nikos Kazantzakis, the famous Cretan author. I was on holidays in Crete, my mother's birthplace. It took me just one day to read the book and when I finished reading it, I knew that I wanted to be a writer.

**Q:** What inspires you to write a book?

**A:** I'm inspired by whatever I see, I live or I dream. Little things that don't carry any importance or meaning. In my maturity years, I write stories about what we live and we dream. History is a great source of inspiration for me. Of course the pleasure of communicating my thoughts with others is also a motive.

**Q:** How many books have you written so far?

**A:** I have written 25 books and at the moment I'm working on 3 new ones.

**Q:** Why did you write books about the Byzantium?

**A:** When I was a student, I didn't like the Byzantine history. I had a great difficulty in remembering dates, names and events. My husband comes from Istanbul. When I met him, I wanted to learn more about the place he comes from and that's how I started studying the Byzantine history. Later, I visited Istanbul and other places in Minor Asia. So, I decided to write books for

children about my experiences. Pupils often tell me that they prefer my books about the Byzantine History than those that they are taught at school.

**Q:** The hero of your book "The Alphabet of Ayia Sofia" is called Nikiforos. Who is Nikiforos?

**A:** The names I choose for my heroes are symbolic. Nikiforos is my son's name. In the book, Nikiforos is a young explorer who uses the letters of the alphabet to guide us in Ayia Sofia. However, some letters are missing, there's no text for them, and the pupils are asked to fill the text. My books aren't just literature. They are written for children so there are a lot of activities in them. Some of them have been awarded though in the beginning editors didn't want to edit them. They couldn't find what category they belonged in.

**Q:** What inspired you to write "The alphabet of poems"?

**A:** The book contains 25 poems. The Greek Alphabet has got 24 letters. The 25<sup>th</sup> poem explains what the book is about. I used a nickname to write this book and it was awarded in the Women's Literary Team.

Α (Ακρογιάλι = beach): I wrote the poem on the beach 3 years ago. I was on holiday and my son's activities on the beach gave me the idea of writing it.

Δ (Δασκάλα = a woman teacher): I am a teacher. So, I wrote the poem to pay homage to all teachers around the world who sometimes suffer bullying by parents and Ministries of Education.

Ι (Τριαντάφυλλο = rose): I love roses! When I was young, I used to watch them growing in our garden. I thought that their life is just like the cycle of our life.

Ω (the last letter of the Greek alphabet = o): In Greek we express a lot of feelings with this letter, instead of using words.

**Q:** What's the message you want to give in "Evita's treasure"?

**A:** In the book, Evita is searching for the world's most important treasure. This is love, patience, persistence and faith in values and our families! I wrote the book when I was 22 years old, right after graduating the University. The book was edited 25 years later. The characters in the book are animals. The children can take out some characters and add theirs, change the story with words or paintings.

**Q:** What inspired you for your book "Adil has got a country"?

**A:** My grandparents were refugees from Euxeinos Pontus. My grandfather was separated from his family when coming to Greece as a refugee and he found only his father in Athens many years later. During the 2<sup>nd</sup> World War, he was exiled in Germany. After the end of the war, he came back to Greece again. He settled in Nea Smyrni and started his life as a builder.

My husband's family comes from the island of Imvros and Istanbul. They were also refugees. So, I had the strong feeling to write about what a refugee child feels deep inside his soul. I started writing the book at 03:30 in the morning. I wanted the reader to be in Adil's shoes. Each one of us can be a refugee! When my editors read the book, they were excited!

In the end, we offered Mrs Evi Tsitiridou Christoforidou a bunch of flowers and some paintings we drew about the stories of her books. She told us that we'll be in touch and offered to help us with the writing of our story. We really enjoyed the interview!

Thank you Mrs Tsitiridou for the great experience you offered us!

The pupils and teachers of classes 4 and 5

