

# Sukhomlynsky News



## 13th International and 30th All-Ukrainian Pedagogical Readings

The 13th International and 30th All-Ukrainian Pedagogical Readings “Vasyl Sukhomlynskyi in dialogue with modernity” were held on 20 September, coinciding with the 105th anniversary of Sukhomlynsky’s birth. This year the readings were held online and were participated in by distinguished scholars and educators from all over Ukraine and abroad.

The themes covered included ‘humanistic principles of “protective” pedagogy’, ‘a teacher’s mission during crisis situations’, ‘literature about war and heroism’, ‘Sukhomlynskyi as the founder of parental pedagogy’ and ‘Sukhomlynskyi as a promoter of children’s reading’.

The readings were organised by the All-Ukrainian Vasyl Sukhomlynsky Association and the V.O. Sukhomlynsky State Scientific and Pedagogical Library, in association with the Ukrainian Ministry of Education and Science, the National Academy of Educational Sciences, and the Rivne State University of Humanities. The presentations were chaired by Professor Olga Sukhomlynska.



## More stories about the value of work

*Dear reader,*

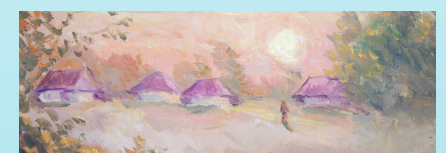
*I hope you are keeping well.*

*This month I have included a short report on an online seminar that was held on the 105th anniversary of Sukhomlynsky’s birth, 20 September. It was one of a series of annual Sukhomlynsky seminars that have been held every year for the past 30 years. For the past two years they have been held mainly online, because of the war.*

*The remainder of the newsletter contains more stories from Sukhomlynsky’s Ethics Anthology, from the section entitled ‘The harmony of work, happiness and duty’. All of these stories are about the value of work and of being responsible. The story ‘What will happen if time stops?’ is one of Sukhomlynsky’s gently humorous compositions.*

*Best wishes,*

*Alan Cockerill*



# Stories from *An Ethics Anthology*

## How Stepan filled a barrel with water

Stepan is already fifteen years old. He barely managed to complete seven years of study at school, but he was not promoted into grade eight because he had not learnt to read properly. If he could learn to read well over the summer, he would be promoted to grade eight.

Stepan liked to sleep a lot and get up late. When Stepan woke, his mother gave him dumplings for breakfast. Stepan would fill himself up with dumplings, and then he would not feel like going to school...

Summer came, and Stepan's mother said, 'That's enough sleeping in, Stepan. Tomorrow you can go to work on the collective farm.'

Stepan's mother woke him at five o'clock in the morning. He joined a work brigade, and the leader told him, 'Here is a cart with a barrel. You must cart water to the people working in the field.'

Stepan went to the well and began to pour water into the barrel. He drew ten buckets of water from the well, but the barrel did not seem to be filling.

'What a big barrel it is,' thought Stepan, and sat down to rest.

Stepan poured another twenty buckets of water into the barrel, but it was still empty. By now the sun was getting high in the sky, and was scorching hot, but Stepan was still standing by the well with his barrel.

The people working in the fields sent a girl to see what Stepan was up to. The girl came to the well and saw that Stepan was pouring water into the barrel, but that it was all flowing out through a hole in the side, because Stepan had not plugged it.

'Why didn't you plug the hole in the side of the barrel?' asked the girl.

'Does the barrel have a hole in the side?' asked Stepan in surprise.

## The ox and the gardener

A man and an ox were working in a field. The ox was harnessed to a plough and tilling the field, slowly dragging his legs over the earth. It was hard for him to pull the plough, but the ox was used to his master. He knew that if he stopped working his master would lash him with his whip, and that he would give him less hay to eat in the evening.

Nearby, a gardener was digging a small stony patch of ground with a spade, preparing it for some grape vines. The ox had overheard a conversation between the gardener and his master that morning. The gardener had said that this stony patch of ground would be too difficult even for an ox to till. And now the ox could hear the man digging the ground and singing. The sweat was pouring off him, but he was singing away, and his eyes sparkled with joy.

'Gardener, isn't that hard work?' asked the ox, when he drew level with the man.

'Oh, yes, very hard...' answered the gardener.

'When why are you singing and why are your eyes full of joy?'

'Because I can see this barren, stony patch already dug. I can see bunches of grapes growing on it. I can see the joy in the eyes of the people who will see the fruits of my labour.'

'How can you see all that?' asked the amazed ox. 'None of that exists.'

'If a man could only see what already exists, he would not be a man. A human being can see their future.'

'Teach me, gardener, how to see things that do not exist.'

'All right,' said the gardener. 'I'll free you from your collar.'

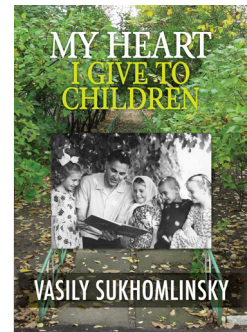
'But without a collar and whip I cannot work,' moaned the ox.

The gardener just shrugged his shoulders and thought, 'Someone

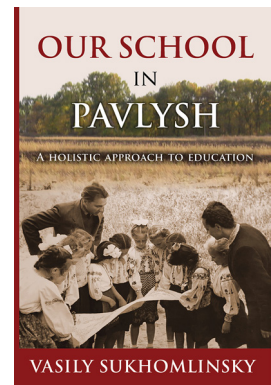
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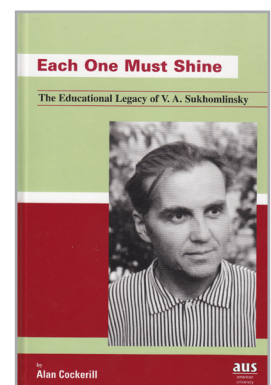
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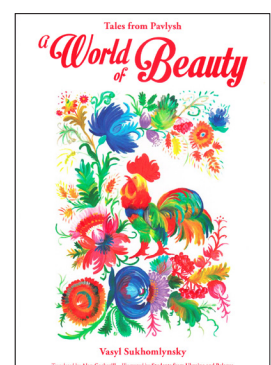
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who only works because they are forced to by a collar and whip cannot see the future.' He did not say those words aloud, because the ox would not have understood.

### **What will happen if time stops?**

Long ago, a boy named Vasilko used to study in a little village school. Only one teacher worked there, and all the children studied in a single classroom.

Summer came. Vasilko completed grade two and proudly told his mother and father, 'Now I am a grade three student.' He also told them that when the teacher left on holidays, he had entrusted a very important task to him. In a tiny room called the staffroom there was a little wall clock driven by weights. It ticked away merrily, counting out the seconds. Time passed, and a weight slowly descended on a long chain that came from somewhere deep within the clock. In the course of twenty-four hours the weight descended so far that the clock would stop if someone did not pull it back up.

'Here are the keys to the school,' the teacher had said. 'Come here every morning, unlock the door, come to the staffroom, and pull up the weight. If you forget to come, we'll be in trouble.'

'What sort of trouble?' asked Vasilko fearfully.

'Time will stop.'

Vasilko opened his eyes wide in amazement. He was not sure if the teacher was joking or telling the truth. Something told him it was just a joke... But perhaps time really would stop...

Vasilko started wondering, 'What will happen if time stops?' He tried to imagine what sort of trouble could occur, but his thoughts did not lead anywhere. Still, to avoid any misfortune, he got up early, came to school, went in, listened to the clock's even ticking, and joyfully reassured himself that time was still passing. Time had not stopped. Then he pulled up the weight, locked the school door, and returned home.

It was still early. The village was just waking up. Vasilko smiled. He knew that this quiet, joyful morning, the calm people going about their day, the frisky calf bursting out of its yard, — all this existed because he had pulled up the clock weight, and time, fortunately, had not stopped.

### **The man with a warm heart**

Two travellers were walking along a narrow path. On one side of the path lapped the blue sea, while on the other side grey mountains reached for the sky.

The travellers walked for a long time. They were seeking beauty. One of them was a man with a warm heart, the other was a man with a cold heart.

The man with the warm heart looked at the sea and his eyes opened wide with wonder and tenderness. He said, 'How mighty and eternal the sea is!'

The man with the cold heart said, 'Yes, there's a lot of water in it.'

The travellers came to a grey stone. The eyes of the man with the warm heart lit up with joy. 'Look, what a beautiful flower! This is the beauty we have been seeking.'

'Where do you see a flower?' asked the man with the cold heart, in amazement. 'That's just a grey stone. There's a crack in it, and it is covered in dust. It's just a stone...'

'Yes, it's a stone, but inside it there is a rose,' objected the man with the warm heart. 'We just need to expose it, and free it from its stone prison.'

For many days the man with the warm heart hewed and carved the grey stone, while the man with the cold heart sat and looked mournfully at the sea. Finally, from under the chips of stone, a rose of amazing beauty appeared. It seemed as if the world all around froze in wonder at the beauty the man had freed from its stone prison.

It seemed as if the very mountains reached higher. The ocean waves became calm, and the boundless sea became like a mirror.

Only the man with the cold heart was indifferent. He touched the wonderful flower with his finger, scratched it with his fingernail, and said, 'Yes, it's a strong old stone.'

### **The ploughman and the mole**

A ploughman was ploughing the land. A mole crawled out of his burrow and was amazed: a huge field had already been ploughed, but the ploughman kept ploughing and ploughing. The mole decided to find out how much land the man had ploughed and set out across the ploughed field. He walked until evening, but he did not reach the end of the field, and finally he returned to his burrow.

The next morning, he crawled out of his burrow, sat down by the path and waited for the ploughman to come, so he could ask him, 'Why have you ploughed such a vast field, and why do you keep ploughing?'

The ploughman answered, 'I am not just ploughing for myself, but for others.'

The mole was surprised. 'Why do plough for others? Let each person work for themselves. I dig a burrow for myself, and each mole digs their own burrow.'

'But you are moles, and we are people,' answered the ploughman, and he began a new furrow.

## **Borshch and fresh bread**

A mother had two sons, a hard-working one and a lazy one. One day the hard-working son drove to the field to plough, while the lazy son went to the orchard to lie under a pear tree.

The mother wondered, 'What could I make for my sons' dinner that would be nice and tasty?'

She made some borshch with fresh cabbage, sour cream, dill and beetroot. And to go with the borshch she made some fresh, delicious-smelling bread.

The mother sat by the table and waited for her sons. The sun was already setting, but the hard-working brother had not yet returned home. His lazy brother was not lying under the pear tree any longer, but he knew his mother would only serve dinner to the two of them together.

At last, the hard-working brother arrived. He washed, changed his clothes, and sat down to eat. The lazy brother sat down to eat with him.

Their mother poured borshch into two bowls and cut the bread into pieces. The whole house smelled of borshch and fresh bread.

The hard-working brother ate and thanked his mother. 'This borshch you have made is delicious,' he said. The hard-working brother ate up all his borshch and asked for a little more.

But the lazy brother ate one spoonful and frowned, ate a second spoonful and looked sad, and when he had had a third spoonful, he put his spoon down and asked his mother, 'Mum, why doesn't the borshch taste nice?'

'Go and work in the field tomorrow, dear,' answered his mother. 'Then the borshch will taste delicious and the bread will smell lovely...'

## **Someone else will do it**

Grade five was preparing for an excursion into the forest.

'We will be in the forest all day,' said their teacher. 'We will cook a meal and read a book and have a break.'

The children waited impatiently for Sunday to arrive. On Saturday they all stayed back after school, and the teacher reminded them what each child needed to bring:

'Bring some bread, some raw potato, lard, oatmeal... Put a bottle or thermos flask of water in your rucksack, and don't forget to bring a needle and thread...'

'Why do we need to bring a needle and thread?' asked Kolya.

'Anything can happen on a hike. Somebody's button might come off.'

That evening everyone packed their rucksacks. Each one thought, 'Why do I need to bring a needle and thread? Someone else will bring them... My

buttons never come off at home...'

Everyone gathered in the school yard before sunrise, and they set off for the forest. Everyone was in high spirits, both on the way there and in the forest.

Kolya climbed up a tree. He wanted to cut off an interestingly shaped twig. He did not climb down from the tree but jumped. As he landed, the button came off his trousers. Holding his trousers up with one hand, Kolya went over to some boys. He asked them something, but they just shook their heads and shrugged their shoulders. The teacher noticed that Kolya was concerned about something and asked him, 'What's the matter, Kolya?'

'Er... The button's come off my trousers.'

'Well sew it back on...'

'I haven't got a needle...'

It turned out that no-one had brought a needle. Everyone thought that someone else would bring one. So Kolya held his trousers up by hand until evening. He held them up all the way home...

## **Bread is work**

Nine-year-old Kolya took a piece of bread and began to throw it at a pear tree. He wanted to knock the ripe fruit from the tree. His grandfather came up to him and asked, 'What are you doing, Kolya?'

The boy hung his head with shame. He knew he was doing something wrong but had hoped no-one would see him throwing the bread.

'Pick up the bread,' ordered his grandfather.

Kolya picked it up. The bread was covered in soil.

'Do you have a clean handkerchief?'

The boy took a clean handkerchief from his pocket.

'Wrap the bread up in your handkerchief.'

Kolya wrapped the bread in his handkerchief.

'Now take that bread, wrapped in your handkerchief, home... Put it in a cupboard... Where you keep your valuable things. Keep that piece of bread until you grow up and have children of your own. Teach your children and grandchildren that bread stands for work, honour, and human life, and that to scorn it is a great evil.'

'Thank you for the lesson, grandpa,' said the boy quietly, and carried home the piece of bread wrapped in his handkerchief.

Kolya kept that piece of bread for many years. When his two sons were old enough to understand the meaning of work and honour, he told them, 'This bread is the most valuable thing. The grain from which it was made was grown by your great grandfather. Respect and care for bread. It is the result of human work.'