

Sukhomlynsky News



From *I will tell you a story...*

The following reflection appears in the opening pages of *I will tell you a story... Philosophy for children*.

Children meet each other every day at school, in the corridors, in the classrooms. They look each other in the eye, share secrets, argue, enjoy each other's company, get upset, sometimes fight, nursing injuries great and small. Sometimes in our daily work we lose sight of the subtleties of these human relationships. Dear educators, do not forget that understanding these human relationships is your first responsibility. How each of your pupils views other human beings, what they discover in them, what they impart to others, and what remains in their hearts from others—this is a hundred times more important than whether or not they have completed today's homework. In essence, education is a lengthy process, taking many years, that prepares young people to realise the essential truth that human beings are of supreme value. This is a realisation not as a consumer, not in a selfish sense, but in an altruistic sense, with a concern for others. One of the most subtle aspects of educational skill is the ability to foster in our pupils a need to relate to other human beings in this way.

In this connection we need to reflect on one very important aspect of the extremely complex process of education. In education two things are in sharp contrast: affirmation and condemnation (negation). We are always trying to affirm something or to condemn, to overcome something. The wisdom of our educational approach depends on the interrelationship between these two things. When affirmation predominates, creative work and mutual trust reign. Teachers and parents breathe easily, and the children being educated obey their educators. When our relationships with children consist mostly of condemnation, as we strive to overcome their vices, school life becomes a burden, and it is unbearably hard for teachers and parents.



Children's relationships with each other

Dear reader,

I hope you are keeping well.

*This month's newsletter contains more previously untranslated stories from **I will tell you a story... Philosophy for Children** and some of Sukhomlynsky's thoughts on the importance of relationships in the education process.*

Children's attitudes to life are in large part a product of their relationships with their peers, and Sukhomlynsky considers the quality of these relationships to be far more important than whether or not they have completed their homework.

Relationships with the adults who guide children are also important, and Sukhomlynsky suggests that in these relationships there should be far more affirmation of the positive than condemnation of the negative.

I hope you enjoy this month's newsletter.

Best wishes,

Alan Cockerill



Stories from *I will tell you a story...*

The lark and the sun

A clod of grey soil lay in a field, covered with snow. The sun shone down, and the snow melted. A cloud drifted over the field, sprinkling raindrops. One drop of rain, heated by the sun, fell onto the grey clod, and it turned into a grey bird—a lark.

The lark soared high into the sky. He tried to sing but it sounded terrible, so he flew up to the sun, and asked, 'Dear sun, dear golden sun, teach me to sing beautifully.'

The sun replied, 'Take this ball of golden thread, and stretch it all the way to the earth.'

The lark took the ball of golden thread and flew right down to the earth. The finest of golden threads stretched behind him, and an enchanting song filled the air.

Since that day, every morning at dawn, the lark flies up to the sun, and the sun gives him a golden ball of thread. The lark stretches the thread over the fields and brings divine song to the people below. The blue sky sings; the golden wheat sings; the whole world sings. It is beautiful!

The snail

Under a raspberry bush lives a little snail. He is an amazing traveller. He lives in a little bony house, squeezes out through a tiny little window, sticks out his soft little horns, and looks around with his tiny little eyes. If there are no magpies or horny bugs around, the snail slowly crawls under the raspberry bush, taking his house with him. He climbs up onto a leaf, finds a sweet berry, and eats it. But if he senses danger, he hides in his house and waits. As long as he is in his safe little house, he is not afraid.

A tree for our unknown friend

Spring arrived. The children in grade one were learning how to read and write. Their teacher said to them, 'Let's plant some trees so we will always remember our childhood. There are thirty students in our class, and each one of you can plant your own tree.'

The children happily set to work. They dug holes, poured some water into them, and brought compost. Then some fir tree saplings were delivered. The teacher dug a hole for herself. But why did she dig an extra, thirty-second hole?

'This is for a boy or girl that may come to our school from far away,' explained the teacher. 'We will plant an extra tree for our unknown friend.'

The children planted thirty-two fir trees and took care of them, watering them during the summer and covering them with snow to keep them warm during the winter. The trees grew magnificently, with spreading branches.

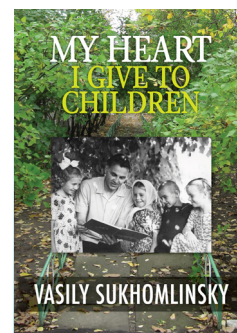
Time passed. The children completed grade two, then grade three. They were already in grade four, but their unknown friend had still not appeared. Not a single new student had come to the village. Even when the students were in their final year of high school, there was still no sign of a new student.

The fir trees were now graceful, with spreading branches. Just before their graduation, the young people visited their fir tree alley. They came to muse about their unknown friend. 'It cannot be that we will never

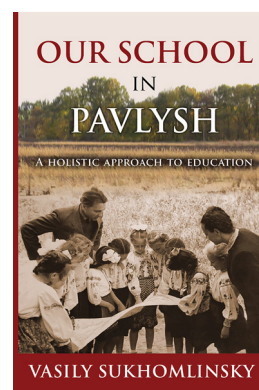
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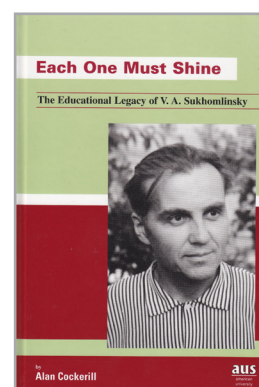
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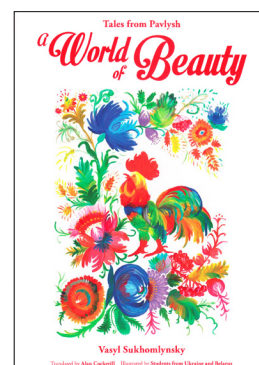
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meet our unknown friend,' they thought. 'Surely the thirty-second tree will not remain forever alone.'

Somewhere in the meadow

Somewhere in the meadow, a bird calls anxiously. Why is its call so sad? I look up at the sky and see a flock of cranes. Perhaps, somewhere in the meadow, a crane with an injured wing has been left behind. He cannot fly south with his brothers, and is desperately crying out, 'Why are you leaving me behind?'

By a solitary pond, a little flower shows off its bright colours. It is a wild chamomile. A bee flies over to the flower. She lands on it, settles there for a while, then takes off and circles above it, buzzing anxiously. She also misses the summer.

Where are the swallows flying?

In the autumn, swallows gather in long lines on the local telegraph wires and quietly chirp to each other. They are discussing something. They keep looking first at the green meadow and then at the horizon.

Gradually, the grass in the meadow turns yellow and the nights grow longer. The sun rises later and sets earlier. Silver gossamer threads float in the air. From beyond the forest, from beyond the primeval forest, Grandma Winter comes with her white blizzards, followed by Grandpa Frost. It is time to fly to warmer lands.

The swallows end their discussions and fly far away to warmer lands, to warm lakes with green banks. Huge, bright flowers bloom there, like our sunflowers. The swallows fly above the banks of a warm lake, but they are sad. Why? Because it is not their native land.

A wasp is tapping at the window

It was the beginning of the school year. It was hot and stuffy in the classroom. The deep blue sky of an Indian summer could be seen through the windows. The young teacher was talking about wasps, and how they float out from their nest and fly from one flower to another, collecting honey.

Little, dark-eyed Fedko was sitting near the window. He wanted to listen to the teacher and follow what she was saying, but it was more than he could do. He looked out the window. The teacher's words droned on, like the wind in the ash trees that grew in the school yard.

Suddenly, something tapped on the windowpane. Startled, Fedko looked with bated breath. Near the window, was a wasps' nest. Wasps were crawling into it, one after another. But one wasp was tapping at the window, buzzing, as if crying.

'Fedko, why aren't you listening?' the teacher asked.

Deeply moved, Fedko excitedly told his teacher,

'Look, there's a wasps' nest outside, just above the window. And this wasp ... It's buzzing and buzzing, tapping at the window ...'

The class fell silent. All that could be heard was the wasp's buzzing.

'You're right. The wasp is tapping at the window,' whispered the teacher. 'Open it for her, Fedko.'

Sunray and Winterbell

At the bottom of a deep well lived a tiny girl of ice named Winterbell, the daughter of Mother Winter and cold Father Wind. She was born on the first bitterly cold day of winter. Mother Winter and Father Wind lowered her into the well and said, 'Make sure the water is cold even in summer.'

Winterbell spent her entire life sitting in the water and keeping it cold.

One hot summer day, Sunray came dancing by the well. He jumped playfully into the water and met Winterbell, who opened her eyes wide in amazement. 'Who are you? You are so bright and beautiful!'

'I am Sunray,' he answered. 'A ray of sunshine! Why are you sitting down here? Come and see the sun!'

So, they went out to look at the sun. For the first time in her life, Winterbell could see blue sky and the flowering orchards. She looked, then started crying and ... melted. She turned into a tiny puddle. But she did not regret it because she saw the sun and the blue sky.

The first bee

The spring sun was growing warmer and warmer. The bees grew restless in their hive. It seemed the time was ripe to fly out and begin their work, and one bee said, 'I'll fly out and see if there are any flowers yet.'

The bee flew out. The field was grey with patches of snow here and there. On the edge of the forest, she spotted a blue flower. It was a squill, one of the first spring flowers. The bee flew over to the flower and sampled its juicy nectar. However, a cold draft was still blowing from the forest. The bee returned to the hive and told her sisters, 'Let's wait a little longer and let the sun warm the earth a little more.'



Why was Brisk worried?

Little Nadiika had a true friend, a dog named Brisk.

One hot June day, Nadiika and Brisk went swimming in the river. As soon as Nadiika entered the water, Brisk jumped in after her. He swam around her, whining anxiously. Then he swam up to her and pushed her with his paw, as if trying to tell her, 'You shouldn't be swimming!'

Surprised, Nadiika stopped swimming, got out of the water, and sat on the riverbank. Still barking anxiously, the dog disappeared. In the blink of an eye, he was back with Nadiika's mother.

Now, Brisk splashed into the water. Playing, swimming, even being a bit naughty, he swam over to where Nadiika was sitting, as if inviting her to join him for a frolic in the water.

The brave gosling, the hawk and the tadpole

A gosling was making his first splashes in the water. He had just hatched and looked like a fluffy yellow ball.

High in the sky, a hawk was searching for prey. He spotted the gosling and plummeted down. Fearing that his short life was coming to an end, the terrified gosling dived down into the water. The hawk crashed into the water and died instantly. The gosling rose to the surface and could not believe his eyes: the hawk was dead.

A tadpole was swimming nearby. He saw how the gosling escaped and thought that he had dived on purpose to kill the hawk. 'How brave you are, gosling!' exclaimed the tadpole.

The brave gosling swam proudly round the pond, quacking loudly. It was saying, 'I'm not even afraid of an eagle now!' But the tadpole thought, 'It is wiser to hide in the murky water.' And that is what he did.

The bullfinch's song

After a dreary, rainy autumn, winter arrived. Snow covered the ground with a white blanket, and snowdrifts were piled up everywhere. Rivers and streams froze over. Miraculously, one tiny lake remained unfrozen amidst the white snowdrifts. Somehow Grandpa Frost missed it.

A bullfinch flew over to the lake, sipped some water and started singing joyfully. He was happy because at last winter had arrived, children could ride their sleds, and woodpeckers could peck on the frozen trunks of pine trees.

Grandpa Frost heard the bullfinch's song. He crept up and leaned over the lake. As the bullfinch sang, the lake froze over. The bullfinch's song also froze, and the bullfinch flew away. Grandpa Frost

returned to the forest, and everything fell silent.

A little girl came to the frozen lake. She found a frozen icicle and brought it home. The icicle melted, and the girl heard a joyful song. The bullfinch's song was frozen no more!

How the squill woke

A mighty old oak lived in the forest. Its spreading branches were covered with snow caps that covered its withered leaves, for the oak refused to surrender its leaves until the spring arrived.

At night, it was still frosty. In the morning, the sun rose, and the snow started melting. One little icicle that hung from a snow cap also started melting. A drop of water fell onto a snowdrift below, then a second and a third. It was as if the droplets were chasing one another, creating a narrow hole in the snow. The droplets reached the ground and the grass under the snow. In this grass, a squill, one of the first spring flowers, was sleeping. It sensed something unusual and thought, 'Spring has come!' It raised its head, washing its petals with the drops of water that were falling from the oak, climbed up a blade of grass, looked up out of the hole and saw blue sky above. 'It's spring, it's spring!' happily exclaimed the squill. Its slender stalk rose high above the blanket of snow. Its tiny blue head looked all around and fell silent in fear. 'Oh, no!' it thought. 'What will happen now? It is still winter! There is snow everywhere, and I have woken up!'

But the water kept on dripping. The squill was frightened and happy at the same time. As it watched on, the snowdrifts grew smaller and smaller. The soil drank the water, winter retreated into the ground, and the spring woke all the other squills.

Chicks

A hen was sitting on her eggs. It was not much fun sitting for such a long time. Finally, her chicks began to hatch. One by one their shells started cracking, tiny yellow heads peeped out from the holes in the shells, and the chicks came out cheeping, 'Cheep, cheep.'

'Cluck, cluck,' called the mother hen, 'Follow me!'

She led them to the backyard. The chicks ran after her, looking for all the world like rolling yellow balls. The chicks looked all around in wonder. 'Oh! How big the world is!'

'You think this is the whole world?' said the mother hen. 'No, there is also the vegetable garden, where there is some millet growing, and beyond that there is some burdock, and beyond the burdock there is a huge field of wheat.'