

# Sukhomlynsky News



Panel on education in Ukraine. United Nations, September 2025

## Spare a thought for teachers in Ukraine

Nataliya Bezslova, who co-translated *I'll Tell You a Story ... Philosophy for Children*, has reported that her friend Natalia Hutaruk has just given a speech at a forum at the United Nations headquarters in New York. Natalia Hutaruk is an English language teacher working in Zaporizhzhia, Ukraine. The city is only 30 kilometres from the frontline, and her school is now located in an underground bunker, due to the frequent bombardments. The following is the slightly edited text of her address:

*'We cannot choose the time or place where we are born. But we can choose what we do with it. I chose to stay, to teach, and to serve my country. And I am not alone, because I am with amazing colleagues who do their best and leave no room for doubt. Today the strength of a teacher is to hold the world for children, when everything is shaking and collapsing. Every day I see my children grow wise beyond their years. They learn to recognise the sound of drones and missiles before they start to write. Every day they exchange some of their precious childhood for the wisdom most gain as adults. Our students need to fight every day for what is taken for granted by others: the right to go to school, the right to dream about the future, the right to be children, to love, to play, to be carefree. I travelled here today with my daughter, not because it was pre-planned, but because I have a fear of leaving her behind and never seeing her again. And I would like to highlight one thing. These children are not just pictures in your newsfeed. Not just statistics. Not the backdrop of the war. They are the beating heart of our shared future. And you have the power to decide, will they learn, will they bloom, will they share their talents with humanity. Or will they disappear in the flames of war. I am a teacher from Ukraine, and I want books, not bombs, for my students.'* A video of the address can be viewed here: <https://www.instagram.com/reel/DPB7YS9gp-V/>



## International recognition for translations

Dear reader,

*I hope you are well.*

*In recognition of my translations of Sukhomlynsky's works, the International Federation of Translators (FIT) has awarded me an honourable mention for the Aurora Borealis Prize for Outstanding Translation of Non-fiction Literature. The award is presented every three years, and this is the second time an honourable mention has been presented along with the main award. I hope this award will help to draw attention to Sukhomlynsky's legacy. More information about the FIT awards can be found here: <https://en.fit-ift.org/awards/>*

*On 2 October, a round table discussion of Sukhomlynsky's legacy will be held at the V. Sukhomlynskyi State Scientific and Educational Library of Ukraine in Kyiv. The theme for the round table is 'Ethnocultural traditions in the creative and epistolary legacy of V. Sukhomlynsky'. Scholars in Ukraine are showing amazing resilience in continuing their work in horrific conditions. While preparing to participate in the round table, I learned that a leading Ukrainian language educator in Australia, Ivan Broznychkyj (1909-1991), followed Sukhomlynsky's articles with interest and wrote a letter to him.*

*Best wishes,*

*Alan Cockerill*

# From *I'll tell you a story ...*

## Worse than a snake

A man had a faithful friend, a dog. For some reason, the man did not want his dog anymore and decided to sell him at the pet market.

The market was far away, and they had to walk through a forest. The man grew tired, and the dog kept looking into the man's eyes and whining pitifully, 'Why don't you like me anymore? Why are you selling me?'

The man did not respond. He sat down to have a rest, then lay on the grass and fell asleep. A snake slithered out from under an old tree stump. It wound itself around the man's neck and bared its fangs, ready to strike. Just then, the dog rushed at the snake, pounced on it with his paw and held it down.

The man woke up and realized that the dog had saved his life. But what do you think happened then? You would think that the man would have turned back home and thanked his saviour. But no, he took the dog to the market and sold him.

When the man handed the dog over to his new master, the dog whimpered pitifully and said, 'Someone who sells his friend is worse than a snake.'

## The stork and the frog

The spring sun was shining brightly, butterflies were fluttering in the air, a cuckoo was cooing in the forest, and swallows were soaring in the clear blue sky.

A little green frog crawled out of the warm swamp. She climbed onto a stalk, took a deep breath, filling her lungs with air, and started singing. The tiny bladders behind her ears turned into huge bubbles, creating the mysterious music of the swamp, as if someone was striking a huge copper bell with a wooden mallet, and the sound was reverberating over and over ...

The frog sang about the bright sun and the butterflies, about the cuckoo and the swallows.

Nearby, a stork was standing on one leg. He stood motionless, without breathing. He was deeply moved by the frog's song.

'What beautiful music!' he thought. He was so touched by the frog's song that a tear dropped from his right eye into the water. Overcome by emotion, the stork leaned towards the frog, opened his beak, and swallowed it whole. A second tear rolled from his left eye and dropped into the swamp.

## Thousands of people in the world die every day

A young man in his early twenties was striding along the road towards a small town in the steppes. On the outskirts of the town, he caught up with an old man, who was also travelling on foot. For a few minutes, they walked together, in step with each other, but then the young man began to outpace the older man.

'Where are you off to, in such a hurry?' asked the old man.

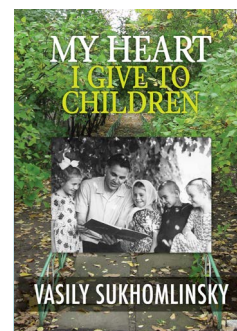
'I'm off to meet my fiancée. Tonight, at six, we are holding our engagement ceremony,' said the young man.

The old man started walking faster, keeping pace with the young man. As they entered the town, they heard a bell ringing. A few minutes later, they met a funeral procession. The old man stood by the side of

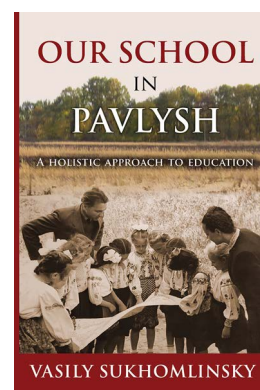
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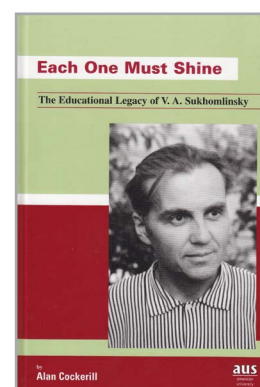
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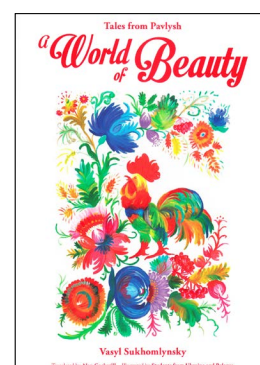
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the road and took off his hat. The young man said good-bye to the old man and kept on walking.

'Why don't you stop for a moment and pay respect as well?' the old man asked.

'What's the point?' the young man asked, with a shrug of his shoulders. 'Thousands of people die in the world every day ... You can't pay respect to everyone ... If you spent a minute grieving for each one, you wouldn't have time for anything else.'

'What can I say? Go and meet your fiancée, then,' replied the old man.

The young man arrived at his fiancée's house. Her neighbours told him that she had died the previous day. The funeral procession the young man had seen was for his fiancée.

### **Is this a happy world?**

Myshko was walking home from school, when he saw his father by the store. His father was drunk and had been kicked out of the store. He was leaning on the fence, muttering to himself, and gazing at the road with vacant eyes.

'Come on dad, let's go home,' said Myshko. He took his father by the hand and led him home. The father followed his son obediently.

They crossed the road and reached a gravel path, when his father suddenly tripped and fell. He lay on the ground, unable to get up. Myshko stood beside his father and wept.

People passed by and looked at the father and at the son. Some shook their heads, some came over and gave a sigh, and then left in silence, and some looked at Myshko with such pity that the boy cried even more bitterly.

Somewhere in a field, a tractor was rumbling. The sun was shining, and a lark was singing in the deep blue sky. Close by a girl was singing happily. Children were laughing and playing in the kindergarten.

It seemed that the world was a peaceful and happy place.

But it only seemed that way, because no one in the world could truly be happy while Myshko was standing and crying next to his drunken father, who was lying in the mud.

### **The birth of an egotist**

Andriiko is his parents' only son. His mother and father are extremely proud of him. So are Andriiko's grandmother and grandfather.

'You are so handsome,' says his mother.

'You are so clever,' says his father.

'You are so lucky,' says his grandmother.

'You are good at everything,' says his grandfather.

They took Andriiko to school. The teacher led the children into the classroom and began to assign desks to them. She wanted to seat Andriiko in the second row, but he cried so loudly that she quickly changed her mind and sat him in the front row.

The first lesson began. There were four windows in the classroom. Andriiko's mother watched from the first window, admiring the way he sat at his desk. Andriiko's father watched from the second window, admiring the way he raised his hand. His grandmother watched from the third window, admiring how Andriiko opened his mouth. His grandfather watched from the fourth window, admiring how Andriiko counted to three.

Andriiko looked around, and it seemed to him that the whole world revolved around him. It seemed to Andriiko that he was an eagle, and all those around him were just insects. Their lot was to crawl over the earth, while he soared in the sky.

And nobody thought of how this eagle would come crashing to earth from his heavenly height, crippling himself and bringing grief to others.

### **The tree stump that did not care**

In the forest stands an ancient tree stump, covered in moss, warming itself in the sun. One day a hedgehog made its home under the stump. It fussed about in its burrow, while the stump narrowed its eyes, groaned and warmed itself in the sun.

'You and I will be friends, all right, stump?' asked the hedgehog one day.

'All right,' answered the stump, as if it did not really care. And it narrowed its eyes, yawned and warmed itself in the sun.

On the other side of the stump a sneaky snake made its home. 'You and I will be friends, all right, stump?' asked the snake one day.

'All right,' answered the stump, and it narrowed its eyes, yawned and warmed itself in the sun.

But then, one day the hedgehog noticed that a snake was living next to it. It attacked the snake and defeated it in a bloody battle. It struggled onto the stump and lay there resting.

'What was all that noise?' asked the stump.

'That was me killing the snake,' answered the hedgehog.

'All right,' answered the stump, as if it did not really care. And it narrowed its eyes, yawned and warmed itself in the sun.



## Seat me next to Petryk

Three students in grade two, Petryk, Oles and Natalia, were walking to school. On their way, they came to a small lake. It was already covered with ice. Petryk stepped onto the ice. It was thin and started cracking. 'Oh, Petryk, please come back. The ice is about to crack!' Oles cried out in fear. But Petryk did not listen to him and kept on moving across the ice. Natalia followed Petryk. Oles walked around the lake. The three friends met up again on the other side of the lake. All three of them were silent.

They came to school and took their seats. Natalia shared a desk with Oles, while Petryk sat alone in the back row. Natalia raised her hand.

'What is it, Natalia?' asked her teacher.

'Could you seat me next to Petryk?' asked Natalia quietly.

'Why?' asked the teacher in surprise.

Natalia did not reply, and just lowered her head.

Oles lowered his head, and his face turned red.

Petryk also lowered his head, and his face turned red.

A silence fell over the classroom.

## You must not speak without permission

In grade one, there was a lively, active, and very talkative little boy named Vasylo. Very often, unable to tame his excitement and enthusiasm, he would burst out with something he had to say. The teacher would patiently explain to him, 'If you need to say something, please raise your hand. If I give you permission, you can stand up and speak.'

Vasylo understood that rule very well, but he forgot all about it as soon as something exciting happened. One day, during a mathematics lesson, the teacher was explaining a problem, when suddenly Vasylo's excited voice rang out, 'Mariia Ivanivna, look at the butterfly on the windowpane!'

All the children turned their heads towards the window. A huge and very beautiful butterfly had settled on the windowpane. The children forgot all about their maths lesson and gazed at the butterfly. Mariia Ivanivna gave a deep sigh, frowned, and sternly asked Vasylo, 'Do you understand that you must not speak without permission during the lesson?' Vasylo understood that perfectly, but he was not able to tame his thoughts and feelings.

The next day, right in the middle of the writing lesson, when everyone was focused on their work and silence reigned in the classroom, the children almost jumped out of their seats when they heard Vasylo's anxious whisper, 'Mariia Ivanivna, there is

somebody's diary over there, on the well.'

'Goodness gracious,' thought the teacher. 'How on Earth did he spot that diary on the well?' But out loud she said, 'Come out and stand by the blackboard for a little while, Vasylo. Perhaps then you will learn that you must not speak without permission.'

Vasylo came out to the blackboard. His eyes were full of surprise and embarrassment. He lowered his head and stood by the blackboard until the end of the lesson.

Two days later, the teacher was at the blackboard explaining how to create new words from letters. When she finished her explanation, Mariia Ivanivna turned to the class and looked at her students. Vasylo had raised his hand, and his eyes were full of tears.

'Why are you crying, Vasylo?' asked the teacher.

'Because I am not allowed to speak without permission,' said Vasylo.

'Then quickly tell us, what's the matter,' the teacher said, beginning to worry.

Vasylo turned his head towards the window and his voice shook with emotion, 'There's a kitten ... There's a tiny kitten in the middle of the school yard. And it's really scared, because that dog is going to attack it.'

'Run quickly and rescue the kitten,' said the teacher.

In a moment, Vasylo was back, holding the kitten in his arms.

## The frog who sang like a crane

A frog liked the way a crane sang. She sat in her swamp, listening to the crane's song, and thought to herself, 'I will learn to sing like a crane. It will make me stand out, and all the other frogs will admire me.'

It took a long time for the frog to learn to sing like a crane, but in the end, she was successful. Now, when the other frogs spoke to her, she seemed not to understand what they were saying and replied to them in crane language. The other frogs were angry with her and told her, 'You're a frog, just like us, so why don't you want to speak frog language?'

The frog replied, 'Perhaps I'll grow wings and fly like a crane as well.'

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