

Sukhomlynsky News



The violet-coloured chrysanthemum

Every day in winter, children would bring a chrysanthemum from the greenhouse to the classroom. When peace and harmony reigned in the classroom, they would place a pink, red, blue, or turquoise flower into a tall, slender vase shaped like an ear of wheat.

In the greenhouse, there was also a very rare, violet-coloured chrysanthemum. Its flowers were the colour of a crystal-clear horizon in the evening steppe, just after sunset. The children very rarely brought a violet-coloured chrysanthemum to the class because it signified offense. If they put such flower into the vase, they were saying, 'Dear teacher, you have offended us.'

One day, their teacher, Vira Petrivna, came to her second lesson and found a violet-coloured flower on her desk.

The students were silent. Vira Petrivna gave them some tasks to work on independently. Then she sat at her desk, bowed her head, and thought to herself, 'What happened in the first lesson? How did I offend the children?'

She knew that the students respected her strict and fair attitude, and she did not understand how she could have hurt their feelings.

'The watch!' Vira Petrivna suddenly realized. 'I offended them by showing mistrust.'

The previous day had been her birthday. Her husband had given her a present, a gold watch. Today, during the first lesson, she took the watch off her wrist as usual and laid it on her desk.

During the break, she went to the staff room. Usually, she would leave her watch on the desk, and it would remain there throughout the day until the classes ended.

However, today, as she was leaving, for some reason the thought that the watch was made of gold occurred to her, and she turned back and put it on her wrist ... And now the violet-coloured flower had appeared in the classroom ... It had been two years since she last saw such a flower on her desk ...

Vira Petrivna quietly took the watch off her wrist and laid it on her desk.

During the second break, the watch was left on the desk as usual. When Vira Petrivna arrived for the third lesson, a pink chrysanthemum was standing in the vase.

Vira Petrivna gave a sigh of relief.



Round table discussion

Dear reader,

I hope you are well.

On 2 October, a round table discussion of Sukhomlynsky's legacy was held at the V. Sukhomlynskyi State Scientific and Educational Library of Ukraine in Kyiv. The theme for the round table was 'Ethnocultural traditions in the creative and epistolary legacy of V. Sukhomlynsky'.

One contribution that I found very interesting was Oleksandr Mikhno's presentation 'Ethnocultural practices at the Pavlysh school in the 1960s: The phenomenon of embroidery'. This presentation included many archival photos that I had not seen before. A couple of examples are given below.

Best wishes,

Alan Cockerill



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

He came to hate beauty

A mother had a three-year-old son. He was her only child, and she doted on him. Whatever her dear son wanted, she tried to immediately satisfy his desire.

Her son saw a flowering rose outside the window and asked, 'What is that?'

'That is a rose,' answered his mother.

'I want a rose,' demanded the boy. Not requested but demanded. The mother went outside, cut a rose, and brought it to her son. The boy held the flower in his hands, crushed the petals, and threw it on the floor.

The son saw a sparrow perched on the fence and asked, 'What is that?'

'That is a sparrow,' answered his mother.

'I want a sparrow,' demanded the boy. The mother went to see the children next door and said, 'If you can catch a sparrow for me, I will buy you a kilogram of sweets.'

The children caught a sparrow, received their kilogram of sweets, and the mother gave the little bird to her son. The boy took the sparrow, began to play with it, and squashed its neck. The little sparrow gave a cheep and fell silent. The son threw the dead sparrow on the floor.

One day the boy heard someone playing a folk pipe outside his window. He liked the music, and asked his mother, 'What is that?'

'That is a shepherd playing a tune on a folk pipe,' answered his mother.

'I want a tune. I want a tune because it is so beautiful,' demanded the boy.

The mother went to the shepherd and asked, 'Please come and play for my dear boy. He wants to have that beautiful tune.'

'No,' answered the shepherd. 'A tune is a thing of beauty. It cannot belong to any one person. It belongs to all people.'

The mother returned to her son empty-handed and told him the shepherd's reply.

From that time the son came to hate beauty and could no longer recognise and understand things of beauty.

What does the word 'congratulate' mean?

During a lesson in grade two, Galia raised her hand.

'What is it, Galia?' asked the teacher.

'Mariika's got a new baby brother,' said Galia, and she smiled as happily as if it was her baby brother. Mariika is her friend. They sit next to each other in the second back row near the window.

Thirty pairs of eyes turned and looked with interest at Mariika. The little girl blushed with embarrassment.

'Mariika's got a little brother ... Mariika's got a little brother ...' the whispers passed around the room. The teacher smiled, and all the children smiled.

'How wonderful!' said the teacher and went over to Mariika and gave her a kiss. 'We all congratulate Mariika's mother and father, and we congratulate you, Mariika, on the birth of your baby brother.'

Galia also kissed Mariika and gave her a hug.

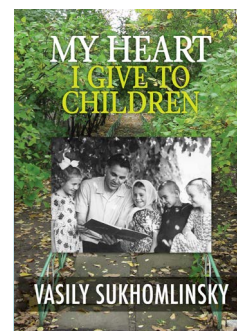
'What does "congratulate" mean?' asked Mykola.

The class became very quiet. Everyone listened to see what the

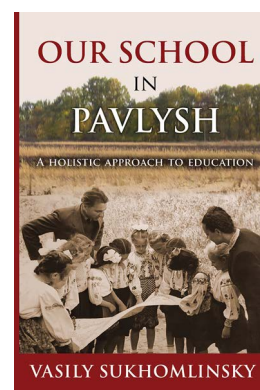


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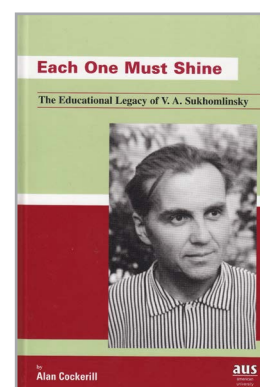
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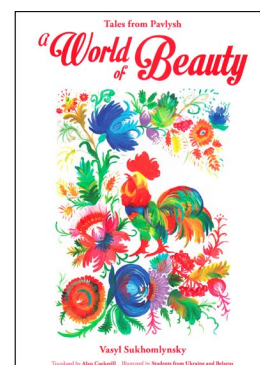
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teacher would say.

'It means that Mariika's mum and dad have reason to be very happy. A human being has been born. He has brought happiness to many people:

Mariika's mother has a son;
Mariika's father has a son;
Mariika has a brother;
Mariika's grandpa has a grandson;
And her other grandpa has a grandson;
Mariika's grandma has a grandson;
And her other grandma has a grandson;
Mariika's auntie has a nephew;
Mariika's uncle has a nephew;
Mariika's cousin has a cousin;
And we have a new friend.

Look how many people are happy. That is why we congratulate everyone.

Mariika's brother is the youngest among us. We say "congratulations!" because we share the joy felt by Mariika's mother and father, her grandparents, and her uncles and aunts.'

All the children joined in happily, calling out 'Congratulations! Congratulations!'

Why did the apples seem sour?

Two twin boys, Myshko and Dmytryk, wanted to secretly pick someone else's apples. One hot July day, the boys quietly clambered over their neighbour's fence. They climbed a spreading apple tree and started munching on the apples. The apples were still not ripe, but to the boys they seemed so sweet that they screwed up their eyes with pleasure.

They did not notice their neighbour, a gardener, enter the garden. He spotted Myshko and Dmytryk and said, 'Why are you hiding up there in the apple tree? Come down, pick as many apples as you like, and enjoy them!'

The boys were so stunned by the gardener's words, they did not even think to run away. They climbed down, their faces red with embarrassment, greeted the gardener, picked some apples, sat on the grass, and started eating them.

But now, for some reason, the apples seemed sour, so sour that the boys screwed up their eyes in disgust.

The boastful worm

Myshko was going fishing, so he went to look for some worms in a pile of manure. Every time he found a worm, he said, 'What are you hiding for? Aren't you fed up with living in manure? Let's go fishing!'

Myshko went to the pond and put his box of worms on the ground beside him. He baited a hook, cast a line, and waited for a fish to bite.

Just then, a tadpole came swimming by. He was very surprised to see a worm sticking its head out of the box, and asked it, 'What are you doing here? I thought you lived in a pile of manure and didn't go anywhere.'

The worm who was poking its head out of the box was not only curious and impatient, it was also very boastful, so it answered, 'We came here to go fishing!'

The tadpole rolled his eyes in disbelief. He was quite boastful himself, but he had never heard anything like that.

Boys having fun

A workman lives in a little house. He has to get up very early, at four o'clock, walk to the train station, work for several hours, and then return home.

It is eleven o'clock in the evening. Three youths are sitting on a bench not far from the workman's house. One of them has a radio that is turned up to full volume, playing music.

The workman comes out of his house and asks the boys, 'Please turn off your radio. I can't sleep.'

The boys laugh. One of them says, 'We are sitting next to our own house.'

The workman sighs, and says, 'You're savages.'

People who do not understand that there are other people living around them are worse than savages.

The truth can be worse than a lie

Serhiiko's mother sent him to their neighbours to get some salt. He was gone for a long time. The borshch was already boiling, but Serhiiko was nowhere to be seen. At last, he came back and brought the salt. His mother asked him, 'What took you so long?'

'I was having breakfast,' answered Serhiiko.

'What do you mean, "having breakfast"?' asked his mother in surprise.

'They invited me to have breakfast with them,' said Serhiiko.

'And what did you tell them?'

'Nothing ... I just sat down and had breakfast.'

'That was very rude, Serhiiko!' said his mother angrily. 'You should have said, "Thank you, but I'm not hungry."'

'But I was really hungry,' said Serhiiko. 'If I said I wasn't hungry, that would be a lie. Do you expect me to tell a lie?'

'Sometimes, the truth can be worse than a lie,' said his mother.

That gave Serhiiko something to think about. 'How can that be right?' he wondered.

The first day

It was the last day of August. The next day was supposed to be Petryk's first day at school, but he had to stay home because he was sick. It pained the boy to think that everyone would be going to school tomorrow morning, but he would be lying in bed.

The first of September arrived, and Petryk woke at first light. The sun rose, and Petryk could hear the excited and joyful voices of children heading to school. It made his heart ache.

Then the door leading to his room squeaked and somebody entered the room. It was Mariia Mykolaivna, the teacher who would be teaching him in grade one. She smiled kindly, walked over to Petryk's bed, and put a huge flower into a vase.

So, Petryk had a joyful first of September like everyone else.

Dmytryk's holiday

The school year ended. The students went for a holiday at a summer camp, and the teacher went to the seaside. The little village school building seemed lonely and forgotten.

Dmytryk, a little grade one student, was the only one not going to the summer camp. The teacher told Dmytryk that he needed to learn to read properly. Once he had learnt to read, he could have a holiday.

Dmytryk was very glad that he had not been sent away for a holiday. He did not understand why a school student needed a holiday. It was not as if he worked hard like his mother and father.

Every day Dmytryk took his reader and went to the school yard. He sat under a pear tree and opened his book. But how could he read, when all around him birds were singing, butterflies were fluttering, and bees were buzzing? Dmytryk sat under the pear tree for several hours and then went home.

On the third day, as he was passing the school building, he noticed the aquarium inside. He stopped and looked in through the window. The fish were lying on the bottom of the aquarium and seemed to be sleeping.

'They've forgotten all about them,' thought Dmytryk. He felt sorry for the little goldfish. He lifted out the window frame and climbed into the classroom. He found a little box of dry fish food and threw some into the aquarium. The fish hungrily attacked the food.

After that, Dmytryk came every day to the school building and tapped on the window. The fish heard

his quiet tapping and swam straight to the surface. Dmytryk took out the window frame, climbed into the classroom and fed the fish.

A month passed and the teacher returned. He immediately summoned Dmytryk. Dmytryk and the teacher went into the classroom. 'Sit down,' said the teacher. 'Open your book and read to me.' And he went over to the aquarium and admired the fish.

Dmytryk looked silently at the teacher, who had become very thoughtful, as if something was bothering him. The teacher turned his head and looked hard at Dmytryk, then came over and hugged him and gave him a kiss. Dmytryk was afraid to raise his head.

The girl with a hunched back

The children in grade two were solving a problem. Thirty-five students were bent over their exercise books. Somebody knocked quietly on the classroom door.

'Open the door and see who's there,' said the teacher to Yurko, a bright boy who sat in the front row. Yurko opened the door. The school principal came into the room, accompanied by a little girl—a new student. Thirty-five pairs of eyes studied the little girl. She had a hunched back.

With bated breath, the teacher turned to the class. He looked at the mischievous boys, and in his eyes the children read a plea: please do not let the little girl see surprise or mockery in your eyes.

The only thing shining in the children's eyes was curiosity. They looked into the eyes of the new student and smiled affectionately.

The teacher breathed a sigh of relief.

'This is Olia,' said the school principal. 'She has travelled a long way to come and be with us. Who will give her their place in the front row and move to the back row? You can see how small she is.'

All six boys and girls sitting in the front row raised their hands and offered to move.

Olia sat in the front row.

The class passed the test.

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