

Sukhomlynsky News



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

The fir tree and the linden tree

Autumn arrived. The leaves turned yellow and withered. The linden tree was sad, because it was about to shed its bright leafy gown and sleep till spring. An evergreen fir tree grew just beside the linden tree. The linden tree knew that the fir tree would remain green throughout the winter, so it asked its neighbour, 'Please, dear fir tree, when spring comes, tell me what the winter was like. I'll be asleep and will not see it... The woodpecker told me that the winter is beautiful and the colour of silver. Is it really so beautiful?'

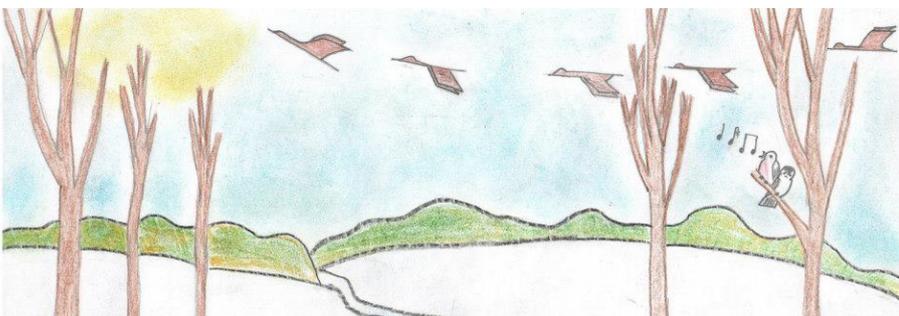
Winter came. The linden tree slept, but the fir tree admired winter's evening stars and its white blanket of snow.

Spring arrived. The snow melted, and springs, streams and brooks filled the air with the sound of running water. A lark trilled high in the sky. The linden tree woke up and asked the fir tree, 'Dear fir tree, tell me all about the winter.'

The fir tree was silent for a while, then it sighed and quietly said, 'Can you hear the sound of the babbling streams?'

'Yes, I can,' answered the linden tree.

'Their song is a recollection of winter.'



New subtitled video footage

Dear reader,

I hope you are keeping well.

When I was in Ukraine in 2009, I was given some video footage taken at Sukhomlynsky's school during the 1960s. Some years ago, I added subtitles to a small part of that footage and uploaded it to YouTube with the title 'Sukhomlynsky lesson'. It can be viewed at:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eCksMOPYzas&t=13s>

A few days ago, with assistance from Nataliya Bezsalo, I added subtitles to another video clip and uploaded it under the title 'Video clip from the movie "Teacher"'. It can be viewed at:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jtBrS2gBYyE>

*I would like to thank Nataliya Bezsalo for her help in transcribing and translating the language in this video clip, and also for her continuing work helping me edit our translations of the stories in ***I will tell you a story: Philosophy for Children***.*

This month's newsletter contains more of those stories. I hope you enjoy them.

Best wishes,

Alan Cockerill

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

The flower and the snow

It was wintertime.

Vira, a grade one student, was tobogganing. On the way home she found a broken twig next to a lilac bush.

Vira picked up the twig and brought it home. She poured some water into a jug and placed the twig in it.

A few days later some buds opened, and green leaves appeared.

One day Vira looked at her green twig and clapped her hands with joy. Between the leaves a violet-coloured flower had blossomed.

The girl placed the jug with the green twig on her windowsill.

It seemed to her that the twig was looking at the carpet of snow with fear.

Vira looked very attentively at the flower, and then at the snow, and became sad.

A stick from an elder tree

During the summer, Grandpa Ivan and his grandson Ivasyk were grazing a herd of cows.

Ivasyk found a stick from an elder tree lying on the grass, and said to his grandfather, 'I can tie a rope to it and make a whip for herding the cows.'

His grandfather took the little branch in his hands, examined it carefully, and said, 'We can make something better than that with it.'

'What?' asked Ivasyk.

'Something that will stir your soul!'

And with that stick from an elder tree, Grandpa Ivan made a beautiful sounding folk pipe.

Why the rooster has a comb

Our rooster has a red comb. At night, as soon as the hens settle on their roost, he takes his comb and brushes his colourful tail. That is why his tail is so magnificent. He brushes his tail and puts his comb back on his head. Then, during the day, he walks around, proudly showing off his tail.

Little Rain and Thunder

Little Rain was sleeping on a warm cloud. (He is a little bird, like a cockerel.) Little Rain was sleeping quietly.

Thunder crept up to him. (Thunder is a wild animal, with shaggy hair.) Thunder crept up to Little Rain and rumbled loudly. Little Rain was frightened, woke up and started crying. Many tears fell pitter-patter to the earth.

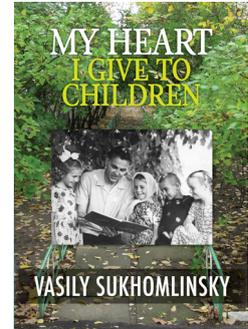
And people said it was raining. The fields and meadows were washed clean. The wheat and the cabbages were washed clean.

Little Rain finished crying, and the rain stopped.

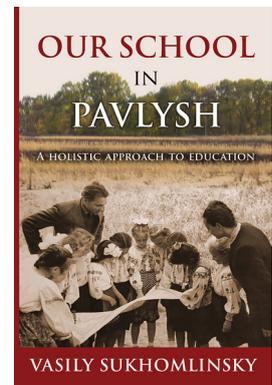
Autumn has brought golden ribbons

Two birch trees, tall and slim, with white bark, grow by a pond. Their long green hair hangs down. The wind blows and combs their hair. The birch tree leaves whisper quietly, talking about something.

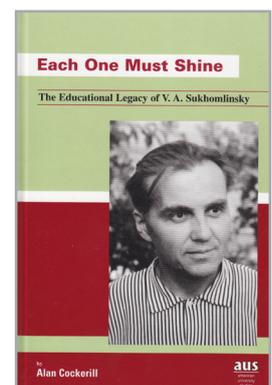
One night it turns cold. White crystals of ice shine on the grass. Autumn comes to the birch trees, bringing them golden ribbons. The birch trees plait the ribbons in their green hair.



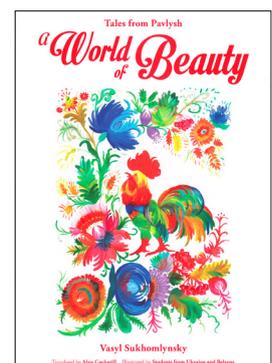
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The sun rises, melting the crystals of ice. He looks at the birch trees and does not recognise them, with the golden ribbons in their hair. The sun laughs, but the birch trees are sad.

How the ant crossed a stream

A little ant was running along a forest path. She was looking for food as she had little children at home.

Suddenly the path was cut by a trickle of water. On the other side of the water lay some sweet-scented grains. How could she reach them?

The ant saw a tall blade of ryegrass growing by the water. The ant cut down the blade of grass with her teeth, which were as sharp as knives. The blade of grass fell across the water.

The ant crossed over to the other side and gathered the sweet-scented grains. 'I'm coming, children,' she called. 'I'm bringing you some food!'

When the poppy opens its petals

In the evening a poppy flower closes its petals. The poppy sleeps all through the night. The day begins, the sun rises, but the poppy keeps on sleeping, without opening its petals.

Suddenly a hairy bumblebee flies out of an apple tree. It buzzes as it flies.

The flower hears the bumblebee approaching and opens its petals. The bumblebee flies up and lands between the petals. The poppy flower is happy. Now it will have a full boll of poppy seeds. That is why the poppy flower waited so long before opening its petals. It was waiting for the bumblebee.

Dewdrops on a flower

A red poppy was in flower. During the night, dew fell. The flower woke in the morning and saw dewdrops on its petals. 'Who are you?' it asked.

The dewdrops answered, 'We are born from the warm night winds. We are dewdrops.'

The flower was surprised. It watched to see what the dewdrops would do. They just sat on its petals. The sun rose, and a little sun appeared in each dew drop.

As the sun rose above the earth, the dewdrops grew smaller. Then they began to disappear one after the other.

'Where are you going?' asked the disappointed flower.

'To the sun, to the sun!' answered the dewdrops.

How the hamster prepares for winter

A grey hamster lives in a burrow deep under the earth. His fur coat is soft and fluffy. The hamster toils from morning to evening, preparing for the winter.

He runs from his burrow into the field, looking for ears of wheat, shaking the grain from them and collecting it in his mouth. He has little sacks for grain in his cheeks. He brings the grain to his burrow and empties it from his little sacks. Then he runs back to the field. People have not left many ears of grain in the fields, and it is difficult for the hamster to prepare enough food.

Eventually the hamster fills his pantry with grain. Now he need not fear the winter.

They cut down the willow

The willow grew by a pond. On quiet summer mornings, it gazed into the water. Its leaves neither stirred nor whispered. But when birds landed on the willow, its leaves trembled. That was because it was surprised. 'What bird has landed on me?' it thought.

One day a man came to the pond with an axe. He went up to the willow, took aim and struck. Wood chips flew. The willow shook and even groaned, and its leaves anxiously asked each other, 'What is that man doing?'

The hewn willow fell. The pond fell silent, the reeds were still, and a bird called anxiously. A grey cloud covered the sun, and everything around became sad.

The hewn willow lay stretched out, and its leaves whispered to each other and asked, 'Why are we lying on the ground?'

Where the axe had cut through it, the willow began to weep. Pure, transparent tears fell on the earth.

The autumn oak

On the edge of the forest stands an ancient oak. It can see the spreading linden trees, the thickset elms and the singing maples. It can see an open field and a tractor ploughing.

All the trees have already shed their leaves. Only the oak stands at the edge of the forest, still clothed in its many-coloured garment. It is proud of its crimson, yellow and scarlet leaves. A woodpecker settles on a branch of the oak tree and asks, 'Dear oak, why have you still not shed your leaves? Winter is almost upon us, and it will soon be snowing.'

The oak answers, 'I do not wish to part with my beautiful clothes. I would like winter to see me dressed in my finest.'

Soon winter comes from beyond the mountains and spreads a white carpet of snow over the earth. The oak still stands in its festive attire. At first even winter is surprised, but then it just admires the oak's luxurious coat of many colours.



Go and graze under the poplar

Early in the morning, as soon as the sun rises, Hryts and his mother set off for the fields. They cross a dew-soaked meadow. Every blade of grass in this meadow is covered with dewdrops that sparkle and gleam under the sun. Mesmerized, Hryts stops.

‘Mum, look at all the crystal beads!’

His mother stops too. It is very quiet in the meadow. All you can hear is the song of a nightingale.

A grey calf emerges from under a poplar. It starts munching on the grass, and the crystal beads begin to tremble and disappear. It seems to Hryts that they are tinkling plaintively. Quietly, so as not to spook the nightingale, Hryts approaches the calf and scolds it, shouting, ‘Go and graze under the poplar!’

The calf ambles over to the poplar. There are no crystal beads there.

The lark descends from the sun

It was a clear summer morning. My father and I were crossing a field in a small cart. The sun rose. A golden wall of wheat surrounded our cart. I lay on the sweet-scented, freshly cut grass in the cart, and gazed at the sky. I saw a little bird. Now folding, now spreading its wings, its little body trembled as it sang.

‘What bird is that?’ I asked my father.

‘It’s a lark,’ my father answered, and stopped the cart.

We stood there for a long time, listening to the lark’s song. I seem to hear it even now. It was as if a bee were playing on a stringed instrument. I asked my father where the lark had come from, and he told me a story about how this enchanting bird descends from the sun.

I will never forget that morning, that song, and that story about the lark descending from the sun.

In the middle of the steppe in July

Endless fields. A light breeze stirs up waves in a sea of golden wheat. I stand on top of an ancient burial mound, gazing at my home village, the steppe, and a blue band of forest on the horizon that looks like an enchanted river.

The song of a lark rings out in the blue sky. It is hovering above its nest, singing to its chicks. ‘Look, I am very close to the sun,’ it sings. ‘Very soon, you too will fly as high as me, and the sun will bathe you in its rays.’

Blue cornflowers are all around. From the top of the burial mound, I can smell the bitter scent of wormwood. Somewhere in a grove, in a green

meadow, a turtledove coos. A poplar is growing beside the road. Next to it is a little wild rose bush, covered in white flowers. Above one of the flowers, a bee is buzzing, and it seems to me that the flowers are singing, that the whole field is singing, and that the sun is playing on a violin.

When the trees wake up

Little Varochka went outside for a walk. She had been sick for a long time, so she was especially curious about everything around her.

It was a sunny February day. The little girl walked into the garden. Everything around her was silent. It seemed to her that the motionless trees were listening to something very remote.

Varochka looked at the snow under the trees and caught her breath: the shadows of the trees were as blue as the winter sky! Then Varochka noticed that the trees’ branches were trembling slightly. It seemed to her that the trees were looking closely at their shadows so that they could admire their own beauty on that warm winter’s day.

Many years later, the girl realised that at that moment one of the life’s greatest mysteries had unfolded before her very eyes: the trees were waking up from their winter sleep. Spring was still far away, but the trees were already waking up and admiring their beauty.

The river and the pond

A small, swift-flowing river runs through the steppe. In spring, it bursts its banks, spreading across meadows and visiting people’s gardens. Once it even visited the dairy farm, reaching the door of the cowshed, peeping inside, and returning to the meadow.

In summer, the river narrows, but it never dries out. One day, I walked along the riverbank until I found a quiet place where the river seemed to hide between two hills. The hills were covered with bushes, and I could see water gleaming deep down in the gully below. I clambered down to the river and discovered clear water streaming from the ground. It was a spring. So that was what was feeding the river!

In the village, the river flows into a wide pond. All its banks are lined with weeping willows that lean over the water’s edge, touching it with their long branches. The water is still, undisturbed by waves or ripples. The pond is like one huge mirror, and everything surrounding it—the sun, the willows, and the village—is reflected in it.

