

Sukhomlinsky News



How children learn

Dear reader,

I hope you are keeping well.

Once again, I am offering translations of stories from Sukhomlinsky's *Ethics Anthology*.

All of this month's stories come from a section of the anthology entitled 'Journeys to the wellsprings of thought'. This section contains stories that prompt reflection on school life, child psychology, and how children learn.

Some of the stories have a humorous element to them. Sukhomlinsky seems to have placed a higher value on qualities like courage and independence than on obedience and submissiveness, and to have enjoyed children's high spirits and love of mischief. I hope you find the stories meaningful.

Best wishes,

Alan Cockerill

Stories from *An Ethics Anthology*

I asked Grandma

Pavlik is a lively and mischievous grade four student. His grandfather died fighting on the frontline. At home, his grandmother keeps his grandfather's medals and awards in an old chest.

Not long ago, a portrait of Pavlik's grandfather was painted and hung on the classroom wall next to Pavlik's desk. Pavlik's eyes shone with pride when he saw his grandfather, as if still alive, his chest covered in medals and a red star on his military cap.

But soon his joy turned bitter, as people began to use the painting to reproach him. If he did not complete an assignment, his teacher would say, 'You should be ashamed of yourself. Your grandfather was a hero, and you are sitting next to his portrait.'

One day Pavlik brought a fragment of glass to class and began to refract the sun's rays to make patterns on his desk. Alyonka, who sat next to him, and was leader of his Pioneer troop, whispered, 'How can you behave like that during a lesson? Do you think your grandfather would have played with lightbeams?'

Pavlik felt bitter and depressed.

On Saturday the teacher said, 'We are going for a walk in the forest today. Run home with your books and quickly bring some food to eat.'

Pavlik went over to the open window, jumped out, and was about to run home when he saw his teacher walking towards him. How she had managed to get there so quickly he could not imagine. She reproached him. 'Is that how Pioneers behave? Ask your grandmother if your grandfather ever jumped out the window.'

The next day Pavlik raised his hand and said, 'I asked grandma...'

'What about?' asked the teacher, who had forgotten what she had said.

'I asked if grandpa ever jumped out the window.'

'And what did your grandmother say?'

'Once, when grandpa had to stay back after school, he climbed out through the chimney.'



Stories from *An Ethics Anthology* (cont.)

How could they all be here without me?

Arinka was seven years old. Tomorrow she would start school. Her mother opened the wardrobe and spread out Arinka's dresses, going through them and wondering which one would look the smartest.

Then, amongst her dresses, Arinka spotted a tiny smock, a little bigger than her mother's hand, and a little smaller than her father's.

'That was your first smock,' explained her mother.

Arinka clapped her hands.

'Was I that small for long?' she asked.

'No, only for about a week.'

'And before that?'

'Before that you weren't here at all.'

The little girl looked at her mother in amazement.

'What do you mean, I wasn't here at all? But the trees and the flowers and the doves and the cat—were they all here?'

'They were all here.'

'How could they all be here without me?'

Her father's alphabet book

Mum and dad were still in bed. It was still dark outside, but little Sonya had already woken up. Today she was going to school for the first time. Today she was a student.

The night before, Sonya had packed her school bag with textbooks and exercise books, but for some reason her father had not given her the alphabet book. He had said, 'I'll give it to you tomorrow, when you are going to school.'

Sonya washed and dressed. She went into the garden and picked some asters. All the children would be bringing flowers today. Her mother and father had also got ready. They wanted to accompany Sonya to school.

'Dad, can I have my alphabet book?' asked Sonya.

Her father opened the cupboard. She thought he would give her the new alphabet book that her mother had recently bought at the shop, but the book in his hand was quite different. It was also an alphabet book, but an old one, with a different picture on the cover.

'This is my alphabet book,' said her father. 'I learnt to read from it. If you want, Sonya, you can learn to read from it too.'

Sonya took her father's alphabet book in her hands and turned the pages. The drawings and letters were the same as in the new book, but not quite the same, because her father had learnt to read from them.

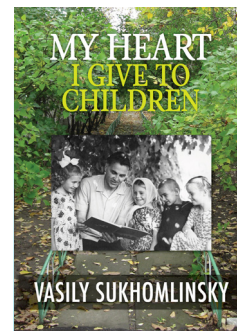
'I don't need the new alphabet book,' said Sonya. 'I'll learn to read from your book...'

She put her father's alphabet book in her schoolbag, and they all went to school.

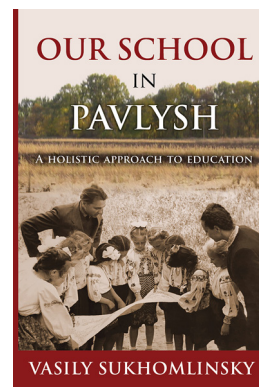
I'm sorry I'm late, children

It was a frosty morning. A penetrating wind blew from the north and snowflakes swirled in the cold air. We arrived at school early. It was warm in the classroom, and we took off our boots and warmed our feet by the heater.

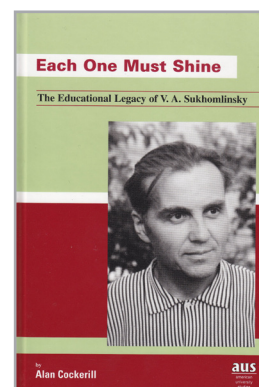
The bell rang and everyone sat at their desk. A minute passed, and then another, but the teacher did not appear. We sent Nina, our monitor, to the staffroom to find out why there was no teacher. She came back a minute later and told us that Ivan Petrovich was not well. The principal said we should all go home.



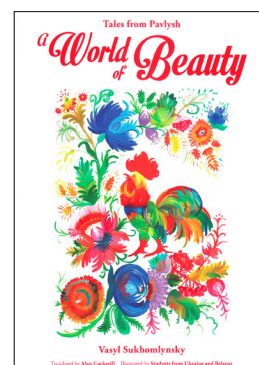
AUS\$24.95 (special price)



AUS\$34.95



AUS\$34.95 (original hardback)



AUS\$14.95 (original edition)

'Hooray!' we shouted. 'Hooray! There are no lessons today. The teacher is sick.'

Suddenly the door opened, and Ivan Petrovich came into the classroom, covered in snow and looking tired. We all froze in surprise, sat down and lowered our heads. Ivan Petrovich walked over to his desk. 'I'm sorry, children,' he said quietly. 'I was a bit sick, but I decided to come to school after all. That is why I am late.'

He took off his coat right there in the classroom, sat at his desk, and looked at us. But we were too ashamed to raise our eyes.

A gentle hand

Andreika's grandfather died. For a week the boy did not come to school. When he did come to school, it was with a heavy heart. He could not forget for a minute that his grandfather would never again tell him a story and would never again caress him.

Andreika sat silent and sad. Andrei Efimovich came into the classroom, put his diary and a pile of exercise books on his desk, and began to check the homework. When the teacher reached Andreika, the boy quietly said, 'I haven't done my homework today.'

Andrei Efimovich put his hand on the boy's head—a gentle, tender, kind hand.

'But I will do it all tomorrow, Andrei Efimovich.'

'That's fine,' said the teacher softly.

How a little girl offended her alphabet book

A little girl started going to school. Her mother gave her a bright new alphabet book, with colourful pictures. The little girl soon learnt to read and left her alphabet book under a pile of old newspapers. The alphabet book felt hurt.

One day the little girl came home from school, put her school bag down, and had some dinner. Then she opened up her school bag, took out a book with a picture of a red sail on the cover, and started reading. Suddenly she heard a tiny little voice, like a small child, saying, 'Why have you forgotten all about me, little girl. I was the one who taught you to read.'

The little girl was amazed that her alphabet book should start talking to her. She took it out from under the pile of old newspapers. She felt sorry for the alphabet book. She wiped the dust from its cover and said, 'Forgive me, alphabet book. I will always remember that you taught me to read.'

The little girl put the alphabet book on her bookshelf, and ever since it has stood next to her most interesting books.

The book and the sweets

A mother collected a big bundle of old newspapers and said to her sons, 'Take these newspapers and hand them in for recycling. With the money you get, you can buy some sweets or toys. Buy whatever

you like.'

Nikolai and Andrei took the newspapers to the reception point and received a whole rouble in return.

'Let's share the money,' said Nikolai, who was in grade five. 'Then we can each buy whatever we want.'

'All right,' said Andrei, who was in grade three. 'Fifty kopecks for you and fifty for me.'

The boys went to the shop. They walked from counter to counter for a long time, trying to decide what to buy. Nikolai bought some sweets and started eating them. He gave one to Andrei and asked, 'Will you buy sweets too, and share them with me?'

Andrei thanked Nikolai for the sweet and answered, 'I'm going to buy a book.'

Andrei bought a book about the mysteries of the sea. He walked home with the book, admiring the pictures of unusual fish. Nikolai ate up all his sweets, but Andrei could not tear himself away from his book. He read it through and then read it again. Nikolai read the book as well. A beautiful, magical, amazing world opened up before him.

The book about the mysteries of the sea is still lying on the table. Every time Nikolai sees it, he remembers the day when he ate sweets, while Andrei read his book.

Where does your father work?

Maria Mikhailovna sits at her desk with the class journal in front of her. She is asking each grade one student in turn, 'Where does your father work? Where does your mother work?' The children answer, and Maria Mikhailovna writes the information in her journal. She has already written down where the parents work for Vitya Artemenko and Valya Belokon.

In the second row from the back sits Petrik Yagoda. As soon as he hears what the teacher is asking the children, he turns pale. How is he going to tell Maria Mikhailovna, 'I don't have a father...?' Forty pairs of eyes will look at him in surprise. During the break, children will ask him, 'Why don't you have a father?'

Petrik wants so much to be home with his mother.

But the teacher keeps asking the children out one after another, questioning them. She seems in no hurry at all.

Petrik Yagoda is the last child on the list.





Stories

Big and small

A cow named Lyska gave birth to a calf. He was still wet but was already jumping around. He bumped his head against his mother's udder and drank his fill of milk. Then he felt like going for a walk.

As he was walking around the yard, he saw a little animal. He touched the animal with his mouth, and its fur was as soft as can be.

'Who are you?' asked the calf.

'I'm an old mother rabbit,' said the little animal.

'You mean to say you already have children?'

'Yes, lots. Happy, fluffy little bunnies. And who are you?'

'I'm a calf. I have only just been born.'

'Amazing! Just born and so huge,' said the rabbit in surprise.

'And you are old, and have children, and you are so small,' said the calf, who was also surprised. And he thought to himself, 'It is strange how everything is arranged. The old are small, and the babies are big. Life is truly amazing and incomprehensible.'

Four sheets of gold paper

On the table lay four sheets of gold paper. Two boys and two girls came to the table. One boy had black eyes and the other had blue eyes. One girl had blonde hair and the other had black hair. The black-eyed boy looked at his piece of gold paper and exclaimed joyfully, 'Oh, what a beautiful round loaf of bread!' He picked up his scissors and cut a loaf of bread from the gold paper.

As soon as the blue-eyed boy saw his piece of gold paper, he joyfully exclaimed, 'That's a rooster flapping its wings. It is just about to start crowing!' The blue-eyed boy picked up his scissors and cut a rooster from the gold paper.

When the blonde-haired girl saw her piece of gold paper, she exclaimed joyfully, 'Oh, what a warm and tender sun!' She picked up her scissors and cut out a warm and tender sun.

When the black-haired girl saw her piece of gold paper, she exclaimed joyfully, 'Oh, what scary lightning!' She picked up her scissors and cut out a scary, fiery, golden flash of lightening.

That is how the gold paper revealed its secrets to clever hands.

Don't be sad, dad...

Kolya came home from school and said, 'Dad, today there is a parents' night at the school...'

That night, Kolya's father went to the parents' meeting, while Kolya sat down and did his homework. He finished his lessons and wanted to go out to play, but before he could, his father came home from the school.

His father sat down next to the table with his head bowed. Kolya's mother looked anxiously at the father, who seemed sad. Kolya stood by the table, looking out the window.

'What did they say at the meeting?' asked the mother.

'They said that Petrik is very good at solving problems. Mishko wrote a poem. Mariika and Natasha are good at drawing. You should have seen the beautiful drawings the teacher showed us! Stepan carved a nightingale from wood... Vasilko is really mischievous. He climbed up a drainpipe onto the roof and crawled across it from one side to the other...'

'Did the teacher say something about Kolya?' asked the mother in alarm.

'He didn't say anything about Kolya,' answered the father quietly, and sighed.

'Don't be sad, dad,' said little Kolya. 'He'll soon say something about me. Tomorrow I'll climb to the top of the tallest tree at school!'

