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## Introduction

Mankind is a narrating creature. People have always told stories, trying to preserve their knowledge of the world and pass it on to the next generations. At first, stories took the form of pictures on the walls of caves; then, they were coded in a complex system of knots and beads, or they were spoken or sung by folk-tale narrators. Finally, after people invented writing, stories started to be preserved in a form that could endure for thousands of years. Creating stories, myths, fairytales, rituals, etc. is our natural need – the need to mark our presence in the world, to leave a trace in our environment, to express our feelings and emotional tensions, to form relationships with others, and to build a community of meanings, beliefs and appreciated values. These include great and little stories, large and small narratives:

- The great ones include stories about events that are important for a given community, texts of culture such as myths, fairy tales, legends or parables, which, in a fantastic, symbolic or allegoric form, ask universal questions concerning mankind: the meaning of the world and human existence, the beginning and end of existence, absolute truths and values, the purposefulness or randomness of human fate. These great stories do not give us direct answers, but, on the contrary,

The meanings included in them may be interpreted in many different ways, and the models of behaviour they recommend are heuristic rather than algorithmic. And this is one of the things that make them great. Because of their being heuristic and ambiguous, they often raise doubts, hunger or even objection. Their important role seems to be inspiring people to deeper reflection, encouraging them to interpretation, activating their conscience and motivating them to look for the truth about their lives against a broader background of meanings. (Straś-Romanowska 2010: 33)

- The small ones include the narratives that reflect the everyday problems of a person – the attempts to interpret what happened to him or her and to make their existence meaningful. Such stories are tools to get to know oneself and the world, to understand oneself and what surrounds us. They enable us to name and understand not only what is happening in the external world, but also what is experienced by us and other people – their ways of thinking, intentions and motivations. Verbalizing their own experiences and giving them a form of a consistent, structured story is an important instrument used in building one's identity.

In a child's life, these great and small stories mingle and interact with one another, making his or her mind rooted in a narrative scheme. In this way, the child learns to perceive the world in feature categories and to create their own stories, which, as has been proven by psychological research, include a person's most important though "not studied cognitive resources" (Dryll 2004: 10).

This issue of our journal encourages the reader to look at stories present in a child's life from the didactic, developmental, therapeutic, and everyday perspectives. It presents great and small stories: those created for children, by children, and with the active participation of children. And let us assume that the motto and signpost of this collection of articles is the statement by Olga Tokarczuk (2019), who says that the world is made of words and stories:

[I]t is a fabric we weave on a great loom of information, discussions, films, books, gossip, and anecdotes. Today, the scope of work of this loom is huge – because of the Internet, almost everyone can participate in this process, responsibly and irresponsibly, with love and hatred, for good and for evil, for life and for death. When this story changes, the world changes, too. In this sense, the world is made of words. Thus, what we think about the world and how we talk about it is very important. If something happens without being described, it stops existing and dies. Not only historians know this, but also (or above all) all kinds of politicians and tyrants. The ruler is the one who has and tells a story.

Enjoy reading our articles!

## Bibliography

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