



Story Changers: Enhancing Pupils' Social Skills and Enriching Teaching Methods Through Storytelling and Virtual Reality

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Table of Contents

Title of the Story	3
Basic information on the Story	3
Primary Topic	3
Secondary Topic	3
Learning Outcomes	3
Other relevant information	3
Technique used for the creation of the story	3
Story	3
Main heroes	3
Setting	3
Summary	3
Story Text	4



Title of the Story

The carob tree

Basic information on the Story

Primary Topic

Resilience

Secondary Topic

Limits

Learning Outcomes

To learn how to be brave to do the next step and find the courage to find a purpose in life.

Other relevant information

Technique used for the creation of the story

Brainstorming

Story's Main Elements

Main heroes

The carob tree

Seagull

Setting

City

Harbour



Summary

Story Text

Once upon a time there was a young carob tree. A Carob tree is a tree that keeps its leaves all the year round. It can become as tall as 18 meters and it lives almost for a span of 100 years. Carob trees prefer to grow on rocky waterless land, close to the sea and each tree bears a relatively large distance from the other. The name "Carob tree" comes from its fruit full of sounding resonant seed and it has the appearance of wooden horns! (Xylo- keraton in ancient and up to date Greek).

People prefer to plant carob trees in the city centre, also in the pavements because of the thick shade they offer all around them; moreover because they are trees that need a little water and the least possible effort to grow.

The tree in our story was a tall, healthy and strong female carob tree. Her trunk did not have many wrinkles as yet. After all she was only twenty years old, and as we know trees live for a long long time. Her branches had a fair brown colour that in some parts changed into deep brown and purple-grey shades. Carob trees as you may know have big green circular leaves with some shades of grey on them and these leaves are thick and rough in texture.

It was springtime and the carob tree was full of leaves at this time of the year. Also, her precious seeds had started to grow. Maybe you have already heard that in ancient Greece people used the seed of the carob tree - due to the fact all of them have more or less the same weight (0,2 gr) that is a Carat, a word produced from " keration " - as a reliable unit in order to sell and buy gold and precious stones like emerald.

But the seeds of the carob tree are also very precious for human nutrition and nonetheless as animal food. People eat carob seeds as a sweetener, as coffee substitute, they make a kind of



flour out of them, also a kind of honey which they call carob-honey and finally a chocolate substitute called carob choco. All of the trees' precious fruit are full of calcium vitamins, proteins and metals.

But now let's go back to our tale's carob tree. This carob tree lived alone in the centre of a big city near the sea, pressed between huge blocks of buildings. She was trying hard day after day to grow taller and taller, she managed with difficulty to peep through the buildings and see the sun, although nobody was watering her roots anymore. But whatever her efforts were, it became exceedingly difficult to achieve her goal.

The grey buildings surrounded her day by day even closer and she felt like a prisoner in her own home. She could barely glimpse at the sun from the spot she was living. And her roots were cramped between the cement blocks that stood all around her.

Not only was she abandoned by the sun, but also she was alienated from the city people. None came to water her roots, and trim her branches. Nor did anybody come by to crop her precious and healthy seeds. Only mice lived close to her roots eating her carobs. The tree felt all alone in this dark gray city. She could not see any green colour anywhere and no other plant grew close to her. Though she was trying hard every day to survive in this seemingly unfriendly place, she almost failed to do so... That's why our little tree was not at all happy living there.

Every day she was dreaming of her life in a different place, in the big forest or in a green meadow. Together with many other green trees or even better, with sweet carob trees like herself living around her. The air would be fresh and she could enjoy the sunshine all day long. There would be fresh water for all the trees and people would take care of them and harvest them and be grateful for the carob trees' treasures and show their gratitude to the happy trees. She lucidly dreamed of herself and all the other trees living in nature's embrace!

But she couldn't be cut off from her roots, no way! It was not only that the trees were difficult to move and change places, but at the same time that place was Home to her. It was the place



where she was born. What would other carob trees say if they knew that she thought of abandoning her birth place! The place that all her ancestors used to grow? Deep ancestral roots as deep and long as their history that lied in the past.

Her ancestors once warned her: If you try to leave, your roots will rot, and you will die!

One day, a seagull with his big white wings, one that travelled all over the world, saw the young carob tree and decided to pay her a visit. The carob tree explained why she was so sad and shared her dream with him, her wish to leave her ancestral crib. After listening to her the seagull told her that she was free to do whatever she wanted. "None but us know what is best for us", he whispered kindly in her ear.

The carob tree was more frustrated than ever. Following, she found herself in a big dilemma; should she remain on the family primordial grounds or should she leave and follow her dreams? She was isolated and wanted to travel, to discover herself anew and also she wanted to avoid the pollution of the city.

Decision making part (1a decision: she stays there/ 1b decision: she leaves. If kids choose decision a, it will lead them automatically to decision b.)

1a decision:

A big wave of fear overtook her. A small voice whispered in her wooden ear: "*Trees must stay in place, or they'll die*". So, she decided not to go. Fear and sadness led her into a long sleep. Then she dozed off and she dreamt that she never left the city in the first place, she grew old there. Time passed by.... Day after day, she saw herself without her leaves and fruit. Even the mice that used to feed on her carobs, abandoned her. The sun was banished from her side, the great buildings grew taller and taller and the streets were full of trash cans and rubbish. She tried to stretch her weak roots, but the land was dry and was giving off a hideous stench. Life was nowhere around to be seen. Everything was automatic, metallic and mechanized. The deafening



silence was interrupted only by the shrieking sounds of the wind blowing through the deserted alleys of the colourless city.

In front of her there was a small pit of muddy water, but it was clear enough for her to be able to mirror herself in it. And so she did. She saw her branches withered and lifeless, the colour of her trunk was not the same bright brown that she remembered it to be, but now it was a deathly yellow, the colour of sickness. Its shape was not the same as before, but it was full of cracks and it had begun leaning forward in a wretched manner. The carob tree was one step from falling to the ground, one little step from experiencing her death.

Suddenly, black clouds filled the sky and it started raining. She felt her roots hydrated from the rain drops and... she woke up! The pit of water was there, but it was full of fresh, clear water. She took a glimpse of herself in it and she suddenly realized that she was no longer a lifeless tree, but the young, strong self she remembered herself to be and ever more embellished. "Ufffff...luckily it was just a nightmare", she exclaimed to herself in relief.

She looked up in the sky and the seagull was there. "So? What's your decision, lovely?"

1b Decision:

She looked at the sun from a very small gap between the buildings. The sun shone with his radiant rays, then smiled at her and exclaimed; "Don't be afraid, I'll be by your side. You will feel my reviving existence and understand my words having my warm rays enlightening you". Suddenly, this kind gesture made her realize something very important; Every existence around us is important! So, she wanted to see the sun shining everyday upon her head. She wanted to feel his burning glory on her cheeks, to feel his warmth rolling down her veins giving her strength and perseverance.

"I am leaving!", she said to the seagull. "I have to visit other skies, to smell new smells, to breathe fresh air streams, to be part of new environments, to go for new adventures and.... to be renewed by visiting new lands!"



“Oh, then you are so lucky! A boat is departing in a while for Cyprus. You should try and catch it! The deck is not far, follow the sun... he'll lead you!”

“Great! That's what I'm setting out to do. Thank you!”

So, the carob tree started to move her roots a bit. In the beginning the movement was difficult and seemed impossible. She felt numb, she dragged her limbs slowly and in a tortured manner, but she was determined not to give up. She felt the weight of the pavement upon her roots. But little by little she managed to take her roots off the ground. And she started moving slowly, around the city.

After a while, step by step, she got used to “root walking” and she started to enjoy her journey! She exited the city and moved to reach the deck, as the seagull told her! On her way, she passed by the countryside. Never had she seen such beauty, so many colours! There were other trees there with flowers on their branches, birds were singing and both small and big animals welcoming her! She felt warmth in her heart and for some seconds she stood there, mesmerized by the view. But as she stood, she felt her roots sinking in the ground! “I love this place, but I have to move! Either that, or I'll stay here forever” she thought and moved forward.

After a while, the sun led her to the city where the deck lied. But as soon as she entered the city, she heard some weird noises coming from the bottom of a trash bin! She reached the point where the bin was, opened it and.... out of a sudden, she saw a little kitten!

“Please help me!”, said the kitten. “I'm so thirsty!”.

The tree stood there for a bit wondering what to do! The clock was ticking! She didn't have much time! So, she decided to ask the sun for help:

-Hey, sun, what should I do?

-You can either help the cat, by giving it some water or not! *Kids, what would you do if you were the tree?*

Decision making part (2a decision: she doesn't help the kitten/ 2b decision: she helps the kitten. If kids choose decision a, it will lead them automatically to decision b.)



2a decision:

She does not help the kitten and leaves it lying there thirsty. "I can't stop right now", she thinks to herself! "I have to catch the boat! Besides, I'm afraid that if I stop now, in this beautiful place, maybe my roots will stay here forever. No, I have to move!". So, she continued walking.

In less than an hour, she finally saw the ship on the deck! A noisy crowd of animals and people was moving up and down. Some of them were boarding while others were disembarking. She started running but then, the most unexpected thing happened! A great hasty crowd cut her off from the embarkation deck and swirled her back in front of the meowing thirsty kitten, which now was giving out heartbreaking cries, impossible to misinterpret! "That's a sign!", she thought to herself and finally she decided upon helping the poor animal.

2b decision:

"I'll help you, don't worry", said the tree and in a glimpse of an eye, she found a water tap. Then she helped the kitten drink: she splashed the tap water on her flexible branches and then let the water stream down straight into the kitten's widely opened little mouth!

-Thank you so much! Who are you?, said the kitten.

-You're welcome! I'm the carob tree! I used to live in a dirty place like this, but I left and now I'm going on an adventure journey! Do you want to come with me?

- I would love to!, said the kitten, and jumped up in her branches! Together, they managed to reach the port just in time.

As they were boarding, the tree realized something very strange! She had stayed too long near the trash bin, so her roots got dirty and...full of mice!

Now, a big muscular seaman stands in her way.

-You're not allowed to embark on the boat due to your (he looks down on her roots)... mice cargo!

-That's not a problem!, said the kitten who burst out of her branches. At the right time her little friend had saved her, sending away the mice, so finally the two of them got on top of the boat.



And the trip to Cyprus began ! As the carob tree stood quietly at the prow, enjoying the fresh salty wind, a strange passenger came and stood in front of her. He was short and he wore a green hat and a big orange coat that was a bit too big for his little body. Looking with his googly eyes up to her branches, he seemed intrigued by the view.. After examining the tree carefully he said:

- What is this? A tree on a boat?!

The carob tree felt insecure once again!

“What if they kick me out of the boat? Trees may walk, but they could never swim! I’ll be just floating here and there for the rest of my life!”, she thought to herself.

Then, she turned her head to the sun, that was always by her side, and asked;

-Sun, what should i say?

-You could either tell the truth, and face his reaction or, you could lie...and face the consequences of your lie... Are you ready for either of the two?

Decision making part 3 (3a decision: the carob tree tells the truth. / 3b the carob tree lies)

3 a Decision: The tree tells the truth.

- I am a carob tree. Well don't you see my locusts playing music hitting each other?

- Yes but I am stunned because I know that trees cannot move.

Then, the tree opened the leaves of her heart and said...

- People say that trees cannot move. But that is not true. Everything is possible if you have faith in your inner self and the Universe. My purpose is to travel, to gain experiences and my roots won't bother me at all in achieving this! I used to believe that I was stuck firmly to the ground, but that was just an illusion...I don't feel like that anymore.

- So, if a tree can do that, so can we?

- Of course! The only thing you need is to follow your dreams! Farewell now, I have to go! I will tell you something that someone wiser than i once told me: When you want something very much the whole universe plots/conspires so that you get it. The only thing you have to do is to continue trying...til the end!



After that, everyone gathered around the carob tree. They laughed and sang songs and told stories until the big ship horn sounded! They have arrived in Cyprus.

-Farewell my friends!, said the carob tree. It was a pleasure meeting of you all!

One by one, all the passengers hugged the tree and got off the boat. Last but not least, the tree with the kitten in its branches, disembarked and continued their adventure!

3b Decision: The tree decides not to tell the truth and she pretends to be something different.

- No, I am not a tree; I am a clothes hanger!

- Ah great! I needed one! Let's hang our coats on you!

So everybody starts hanging clothes on her. And the tree is taken to different spots all around the deck... Like this she realizes that pretending to be someone else was not a good decision. And then she decides to tell the truth. She threw away all the coats and clothes from her leaves and said loudly:

- Hey everyone! Look at me! I'm not a clothes hanger, I am a carob tree. Well don't you see my locusts playing music hitting each other?

- Yes, but I am stunned because I know that trees cannot move.

Then, the tree opened her leaves and from the bottom of her heart she said...

- People say that trees cannot move. But that is not true. Everything is possible if you have faith in your inner self and the Universe. My purpose is to travel, to gain experiences and my roots won't bother me at all in achieving this! I used to believe that I was stuck firmly to the ground, but that was just an illusion...I don't feel like that anymore.

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Decision part ending (4):

4a. She reaches her destination.

She found herself in an open field really close to the sea. So close that the sound of the waves caressed her branches. The sun was shining above her head touching her with his rays. Around her she saw other trees that looked very much like her. She remembered the image of herself reflected in the waters of a puddle. When she saw the other trees, she realized that they had the same branches, the same leaves, the same fruits, the same roots, the same will for life.

To her surprise, her ancestors lived peacefully on this island. She could not believe in her eyes. Was it a dream? Could all this be real? She shook her branches a bit as that'll f to wake up from dreaming. She was shivering. The emotion went through her roots and she felt a numbness that reached from the bottom up to her branches.

Only then did she realize that she had reached the end of the road. Everything she had experienced on this great journey and all the creatures she had met along the way came to her mind: the meeting with the seagull that urged her to follow her dream, the sun that always was her royal fellow, the misty dark buildings of the city that made her realize which life she really wanted for herself. She also remembered the little cat who happened to be in need of her help, the big boat of the journey to Cyprus and the co- traveller who made her reflect on the deeper meaning of her journey. Each and everybody ultimately all helped her reach the point she found herself at that very moment. Had all those people, animals and celestial bodies not appeared in front of her in her sunny consciousness, she wouldn't have been able to escape the dullness of her surrounding city. She wouldn't have been able to reach this sunny meadow, where her kin of carob trees lived happily in ancestral wisdom .



She has learned a lot from her journey. Everything has changed because she has changed; she became wiser and learned how to appreciate her reality in a different way. She found out how to be in harmony with her surroundings, herself, and the environment. She is still living there, keeping her poise, her composure, succeeding in helping others grow wiser:

- Feel the earth
- Smell the moist soil.
- Open your branches and let them free to move windwise
- Enjoy the sun
- Listen to the sea- breeze and to all of the sea sounds
- Stretch your roots free and feel the energy of the earth!
- Talk to the birds perched on your branches
- Let your fruit play with sound, let them do so!

4b. She wakes up

She opens her eyes widely and sees herself standing by the same pavement that she used to call "home", surrounded by the same grey shabby buildings and she was being passed by the same reluctant impersonal people. "So about everything i experienced, were but a dream!?" she wondered" What a pity" she thought." How much i would like to have been living in a sunny meadow together with other carob trees my kin!".

" How very much i would wish i had met that traveler seagull who encouraged me to live my dream "

" How much i would like to have embarked on that big boatto have talked with the sun or the little kitten or even with my co- traveler! "

But why, why did I dream of all these? What is the meaning of this dream of mine?

Just then she started talking to the sun and she started feeling deep inside herself n the actual meaning of her dreaming...

" Maybe I can ameliorate my life here, without having to leave my home?"

From that day on she started to appreciate the warmth of the sun in her foliage, she began feeling her roots immersing in the moist ground... she began listening to the sound of the air



without fearing that the currents of air would break her branches, she stopped nagging to the birds eating her carobs ...and she also began playfully teasing passersby by throwing small carobs in their steps! They startled, would raise their heads upwards, would take a glimpse of her and would gift her with a smile. Until one day, by time and again smiling at her, a boy living in a neighbouring block of flats began speaking to her often and taking good care of her...In the end dreams become new realities!!

And they lived all happier ever after!