

## Bios for Vasyl Sukhomlynsky

### **2-line Bio:**

Vasyl Sukhomlynsky (1918-1970), a prolific writer, was an influential Soviet educator who developed a holistic system of schooling during his 22 years as principal of a school in rural Ukraine.

### **Short Bio:**

From a school in rural Ukraine, where he was principal from 1948 until his death in 1970, Vasyl Sukhomlynsky's influence spread throughout the Soviet Union and beyond. In dozens of books and hundreds of articles, all based on his own practical experience, Sukhomlynsky describes a holistic approach to the education of children.

### **Medium Bio:**

From a school in rural Ukraine, where he was principal from 1948 until his death in 1970, Vasyl Sukhomlynsky's influence spread throughout the Soviet Union and beyond. In dozens of books and hundreds of articles, all based on his own practical experience, Sukhomlynsky describes a holistic approach to the education of children. Sukhomlynsky suffered great personal tragedy during the Second World War, nearly dying on the battlefield, and losing his young wife and child. He responded to the inhumanity of war with an outpouring of love for all the children in his care, dedicating his life to educating a generation who would be incapable of inhumanity.

### **Long Bio:**

Vasyl Sukhomlynsky (1918-1970) was the most influential Soviet educator of the post-war period. He was a school principal, a prolific writer, and a corresponding member of the USSR Academy of Pedagogical Sciences. He had an extraordinarily difficult life. He was born in the middle of a civil war, lived through the famine that accompanied the collectivization of agriculture, and nearly died on the battlefield during the German invasion of the Soviet Union in 1941. Around the same time that he was wounded, his young wife and their newborn son were murdered by a Gestapo officer in his rural homeland in central Ukraine.

After Ukraine was liberated from German occupation, Sukhomlynsky returned to his homeland to work as an educator in rural schools. From 1948 until his death in 1970 he was principal of Pavlysh Secondary School, which also incorporated a primary school. He described his work as a principal and teacher in dozens of books and hundreds of articles. His school was visited by thousands of educators from the length and breadth of the Soviet Union and beyond. His books were read by millions, and continue to be read by teachers in Ukraine, Russia, and China, where his popularity has grown steadily since the 1980s.

Educators worldwide have been inspired by Sukhomlynsky's description of a system of education that addresses all aspects of a child's development, and educates curious, empathetic, creative and responsible citizens. Sukhomlynsky responded to the inhumanity of war with an outpouring of love for all the children in his care, and a determination to educate a generation that would be incapable of inhumanity.

Sukhomlynsky's most famous work, *My Heart I Give to Children*, was first published in 1968 in a German translation, with an afterword that describes the impact of the war on his life. In this book Sukhomlynsky describes his work with a group of thirty-one children during an experimental preschool year, and the subsequent four years of their primary schooling. He describes how he helped to restore a childhood to these children, born at the end of the war, how he helped to strengthen their physical and emotional health, how he fostered their curiosity and sense of wonder at the natural world that surrounded them, and how he helped them take their first steps on the road to knowledge.

In another major work, *Our School in Pavlysh*, Sukhomlynsky describes the holistic system of education that evolved at his school during the twenty-two years that he was principal of Pavlysh Secondary School. Sukhomlynsky was interested in far more than teaching his students reading, writing and arithmetic. He taught them how to empathize with others, how to read the eyes of those with whom they came in contact. He taught them the value of simple work, carried out in the service of others. He looked to uncover the 'golden vein' in each student, the unique talents that would lead to the unfolding of their personalities. And he made great efforts to ensure that all the teachers at his school worked creatively and shared their experience with each other.

Sukhomlynsky is also recognised in Ukraine as a writer of stories for children. *I'll Tell You a Story ... Philosophy for Children* contains over 800 of his miniature stories, accompanied by reflections on values education.

Sukhomlynsky's writings demonstrate a great capacity to see the world from a child's point of view. His prolific output of writing, especially when he knew he did not have long to live, is a testimony to his concern that future generations should not repeat the horrors that he had witnessed during his lifetime.

#### **Speaker Introduction for Alan Cockerill, Sukhomlynsky scholar and translator:**

Alan Cockerill is teacher, translator and researcher. He has a background in Russian Language studies and was awarded a Ph.D. in 1994 for his study of the educational legacy of Vasyl Sukhomlynsky, the eminent Ukrainian educator. His book about Sukhomlynsky, *Each One Must Shine*, was published by Peter Lang in New York in 1999, and has since been republished in Australia and South Korea. He has published several journal articles and book chapters about Sukhomlynsky, and his translations of two of Sukhomlynsky's most famous works, *My Heart I Give to Children* and *Our School in Pavlysh* have also been published by EJR Publishing in Brisbane. His most recent translation, *I'll Tell You a Story ... Philosophy for Children*, was a joint project that involved collaboration with two other translators: Nataliya Bezslova and Berta Karaim.

Alan has made it a personal mission to make Sukhomlynsky's legacy better known to English-speaking educators, in the belief that Sukhomlynsky's example will inspire others to develop holistic approaches of their own. He believes that the education of a global outlook is crucial for our future peace and prosperity.