

Bios for Vasily Sukhomlinsky

2-line bio:

Vasily Sukhomlinsky (1918-1970), a school principal and prolific writer, was the most influential Soviet educator of the post-war period.

Short Bio:

From a school in rural Ukraine, where he was principal from 1948 until his death in 1970, Vasily Sukhomlinsky's influence spread throughout the Soviet Union and beyond. In 30 books and 500 articles, all based on his own practical experience, Sukhomlinsky describes a holistic approach to the education of global citizens.

Medium Bio:

From a school in rural Ukraine, where he was principal from 1948 until his death in 1970, Vasily Sukhomlinsky's influence spread throughout the Soviet Union and beyond. In 30 books and 500 articles, all based on his own practical experience, Sukhomlinsky describes a holistic approach to the education of global citizens. Sukhomlinsky 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:

Vasily Sukhomlinsky (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, Sukhomlinsky 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. He described his work there as a principal and teacher in over 30 books and 500 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 Sukhomlinsky's description of a system of education that addresses all aspects of a child's development in order to educate global citizens. Sukhomlinsky 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.

Sukhomlinsky'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 Sukhomlinsky 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.

Sukhomlinsky 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.

My Heart I Give to Children was many years ahead of its time. It addresses issues such as our relationship with the natural environment, how to nurture students' aesthetic development in the face of the sometimes negative influences of mass media, how schools can develop strong relationships with families, how children's brains function and develop, and how to foster an intrinsic love of learning.

Sukhomlinsky'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, Sukhomlinsky scholar and translator:

Alan Cockerill is an Australian school teacher, working in Brisbane, and an adjunct research fellow at Monash University. He has a background in Russian Language studies, and received his Ph.D. in 1994 for a study of the educational legacy of Vasily Sukhomlinsky, a holistic Ukrainian educator. His book about Sukhomlinsky, *Each One Must Shine*, was published by Peter Lang in New York in 1999. He has published articles about Sukhomlinsky in refereed journals, and his translation of Sukhomlinsky's most famous work, *My Heart I Give to Children*, has just been published by EJR Language Service in Brisbane.

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