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Coronavirus as an (Anti)Hero of Fairy Tales and Guides for Children

Abstract

Nowadays, preschool and school children develop, are raised, and learn in a new reality for them, caused by the coronavirus pandemic. Including the assumptions of the connectivist paradigm as a novelty in the didactic activities of teachers, remote e-learning, computer games, board games, e-books, audiobooks, and multimedia programs fill free time and are becoming a way of learning and teaching in the digital age. The literary genre introducing children to the world of the contemporary threat of COVID 19 is the new fairy tale and therapeutic children's story, thanks to which events and characters struggling with the prevailing pandemic around the world are presented. The purpose of the article is to analyze and interpret innovative proposals for e-books of fairy tales which explain to young children what the coronavirus pandemic is, how to guard against it, what is happening in Poland and around the world, how to behave, and what actions to take to prevent the

spread of viruses. In their discussion, the authors emphasize the psychological, sociological, and therapeutic aspects of the presented content of fairy tales, which are most often related to experiences, emotional sensitivity, anxiety, a fear of something bad, an identification with the characters, and overcoming any difficulties in this situation which is trying for all.

Keywords: coronavirus, children, parents, fairy tale, learning and distance learning, connectivism

Introduction

In March 2020, due to the unprecedented situation of declaring a state of pandemic caused by the coronavirus referred to as COVID-19, a period of home isolation was ordered in Poland. The world was stopped as a result of simply applying a hand brake, which abruptly reversed the current order of things. Most institutions and workplaces were closed, including educational establishments like preschools and schools. The global scope of the epidemic has become difficult to understand for adults, and even more for children, whose lifestyles also changed overnight. In addition, the need to stay at home, the inability to meet friends and teachers, and various restrictions, such as the obligation to disinfect hands or wear masks, all had the potential to create a sense of danger among young children. To make matters worse, the same feelings also accompanied parents. In the absence of comprehensive emotional support for children from official state bodies and institutions – not only in Poland, but also in most European countries – this form of assistance was offered by children's book publishers, publishing the first guides, stories, or fairy tales about the coronavirus as an antihero or villain, against which the whole world began to fight. In addition to these activities, there were also grassroots initiatives, where ordinary citizens, parents, and teachers, together with writers and psychologists, created various stories addressed to the youngest generation, with the same goal: to provide help and support in the difficult time of home isolation. This is an example of social concern for the wellbeing of children during a pandemic, but also proof that humanity, in times

of danger, can act for the common good by taking up completely unexpected initiatives. The authors' intention is to present selected books for children on the subject of the coronavirus in the style of either a guidebook or fairy tale. In addition to works by famous writers, there will also be amateur ones written by psychologists and educators.

A child in a remote and connectivist sphere during the pandemic

During the threat of the coronavirus pandemic, all schools and preschools have closed their buildings. Education has moved online and both teachers and students – and often their accompanying parents, as well – participate in classes via computer. In the period of introducing remote teaching and learning, it was difficult for children to find themselves in this technological system and with this multi-directional technological information. Parents felt the same way. Each family is different; children of different ages and levels of education exist within them, have diverse temperaments, preferences, and interests, and present unique feelings and reactions to real-life, preschool, school, and peer-like situations, etc. Functioning in this model over the last few months, social media, parents, and literature have introduced the subject of the coronavirus to the world in a variety of ways, justifying the role of the existing threat to health and life, precluding a harmonious rhythm or a designed daily schedule and separating people from their environment, and thus from direct contact with their peers. At some point, children were confined to the space imposed by their parents, which they should actually develop themselves according to their particular childlike ideas. They entered a period rife with difficult relationships, stormy emotions, misunderstandings, and conflicts and poorly organized home educational environments to discover a new reality for themselves. The interesting and creative initiatives from some parents for their children has become a salve and a chance for families to find each other, and above all to understand this unique period. Others, on the other hand, nervous and

irritated by the growing problems, have tried to find effective methods of coping with this diverse and quite complicated e-science. Access to education, including high-quality education, is a right under the Convention on the Rights of the Child. A preschool, school, or other educational institution attended by a young person is a space where they feel at ease and know that they will receive proper care and support. Today, when these institutions are closed and education has moved online, it is extremely important that all the elements that guaranteed a child's sense of security and support are introduced into this new educational system.

The situation of remote learning has introduced children, teachers, and parents to the assumptions of the collectivist paradigm, which is not yet well-known in Poland. In our view, connectivism is the concept of "learning in the network" or "building a learning community," which not only uses modern, digital resources of knowledge collected on the Internet, but also offers a "community of learning minds" as a forum for knowledge exchange, discussion, and critical evaluation of existing educational resources/ideas. The connectivist thesis therefore assumes that human knowledge does not have to be all in the head, but that the necessary and current knowledge for the performance of a specific task is available in devices and information resources. Information should be searched for, obtained, collected, and then processed, used, and applied (Gregorczyk, 2012, p. 8). In light of this paradigm, knowledge is perceived as sub-symbolic, its meaning resulting from interactions and a set of connections. Its essence is to constantly create and maintain connections with new information sources. The use of the Internet (network) is the central idea of the learning process here. A network is understood as creating and continuously developing new connections between various nodes; modern learning from an early age consists of creating discussion groups, exchanging views and experiences, having contact with experts, participating in online courses, or creating social groups. This type of experience exchange forum is a response not only to the new needs of contemporary entities – students, teachers, and parents – but also to the changing conditions of their operation. In the era of the "information age" and building the "knowledge society," teachers are required to prepare

students to cope with a world that opens up to new areas, is more and more mobile, and in which reality becomes as important to them as virtual reality.

Connectivism as a theory of learning is open to these types of challenges; it is a response to cultural realities that provides full individualization and the possibility of making unlimited choices, introduces the student and educator to the digital world, creates an environment for the competent and active analysis and processing of specific information, and teaches participation and fosters emancipation. Family, preschool and school as social institutions should ensure the creation of an inspiring virtual territory which will become a field for training skills, creativity, learning, and getting to know oneself. With regard to fairy tales about the coronavirus, connectivism as a paradigm – in our opinion – is based on the conviction that the purpose of children obtaining information and reading and interpreting e-books is to learn critical thinking and to develop inquisitiveness and cognitive curiosity which can introduce them to dialogue, discussion, and multidirectional communication. The learning environment is primarily about building a kind of support for learners, giving them opportunities to develop rapidly and seek answers to the changing reality. It is a synergistic learning platform that consists of three components: physical, which includes the preschool and school space with its material equipment and infrastructure; social, which takes into account the relationships between participants of the educational process, being a source of inspiration and mutual motivation; and virtual.

Our deliberations on the social dimension of connectivism and the teaching community in the COVID-19 era will apply to children, teachers, and parents for whom learning through connection and connection through learning to create a new space of social interaction in which digital wisdom, innovation, and progress is still relatively unknown. We assume that the connecting element is the social nature and use of the community tool – the Internet.

In its assumptions, collectivism as a model of learning takes into account the mutual relationships of people connecting and cooperating within a network. Its semantic determinants are considered to be social

networks and communities (they lead to a portable, changing identity); a network of interactions (creating target groups); an autonomous learning center; the diversity of networks (multiple perspectives and technologies); and the network as an open phenomenon of interconnection and interactivity (Downes & Siemens, 2006). The diversity of the participants in this network, and its openness and ability to ensure interactions between them, allow them to realize their potential. The learning process stands for a network node – interactions with other teachers, ideas, resources, and events. The operation of the network consists in connecting groups, systems, and nodes into an integral whole. They create a variety of interaction relationships. The community of learners, the community of activities, is a group learning process of individuals cooperating virtually with each other – exchanging views and ideas, looking for solutions, creating knowledge, and establishing interpersonal contacts.

By transforming “I” into “we,” we build a social network, develop space and an active field of cooperation, using tools to jointly create and edit association networks, project notes, and final works and allowing for a non-linear presentation. Children develop online through interactions. They join a community of communicating minds. Their active minds seek dialogue and discourse with other minds. Every day new resources appear on the Internet. Knowledge is available outside of us in nodes and connections in the network; all one needs to do is use it competently. Children and adults, being active participants of several networks, immerse themselves in the sea of information and relationships, broaden their knowledge, improve their work methods, build their own connections to various relationship resources, and travel through the existing networks, analyzing, selecting, evaluating, processing, and searching for information with their partners. Connectivism in the meaning of connecting within the network allows for community-based, cooperative conversations between peers on the subject of “Covidian” fairy tales and the pandemic that changed their existence over the last year. Through systematic remote meetings analyzing the issues of available e-fairy tales, children help each other to understand this surrounding “closed” world, which is far from playing together, spending time outside the home, having close

relationships, and playing backyard games. Living in such a difficult time, they become closer to each other through network “nodes”; they learn what a virus is, why they cannot meet friends or their grandparents. Thanks to e-fairy tales, they learn to persevere in a pandemic, to expand information, and overcome problems and difficulties. The magic of learning with peers online through contact with fairy tales allows them to have specific reflections, distinguish good from bad, feel emotions, question the existing reality, consider various ways of acting, and get to know their causes.

The positive layer of the connectivist paradigm and distance learning is presented above. There are also negative aspects. It should be emphasized that neither is a panacea for the ills of modern child education. The world of adults, stopped violently, turned out to be extremely egocentric in a pandemic situation. Statistics about cases or predictions of the economic and social consequences of quarantine have dominated media reports. It was wondered how the necessity of isolation would affect the psyche, primarily of the adults forced to work remotely or to use up their leave. In this context, it was recommended how to work, how to stay fit, and how to deal with children who – after all – have had their freedom restricted. It was advised on how to protect children, but not how to inform them, with the assumption that they do not need the information. Governmental institutions and organizations in Europe have not made children an equal recipient of the aid programs being offered. It is significant that most of the guides from the early period of the pandemic – which were available on the official websites of state institutions in Poland and elsewhere – concerned organizational matters of social life related to the need to change everyday behavior and adapt to the requirements of the pandemic. The approach was completely different in New Zealand, where, apart from guidelines regarding hygiene and social isolation, care was taken for the mentality and emotions of their citizens, while the youngest residents were given separate support.

By the order of Jacinda Ardern, the Prime Minister of New Zealand, a conference was held in early March, addressed to children and young people and made widely available in various media; the goal was to provide comprehensive information about what is happening as a result of

COVID-19 and to ensure that the New Zealand government does everything to make their family or school situation as little worrisome as possible. The aspect that made this initiative special was that it did not fail to refer to the linguistic image of the child's world, adapting its message to different age groups of young citizens. Not infantilizing the content, but assuring the children about her care and professionalism, Jacinda Ardern herself said that she cooperated with the tooth fairy and the Easter bunny so that nothing would disturb Easter. This is hard to imagine for representatives of the governments of the European Union. Another important initiative was the recommendations directed towards educational institutions, whose main task was to support the student community, which is why most of the remote classes were of an educational and therapeutic nature, where conversations with students and shared games on the Internet prevailed over educational content. The New Zealand government also made available on its websites various types of tools and teaching aids, including informative books and guidebooks for children.

***Coronabook* as the first guidebook for children during the pandemic**

The first guide for children, entitled *Coronabook*, was published on the English-language market. Its authors, Elizabeth Jenner, Kate Wilson, and Nia Roberts, together with the well-known illustrator Axel Scheffler, prepared a book for children which on the one hand provides necessary and professional information, consulted with Professor Graham Medley of the London School of Tropical Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, and on the other hand provides emotional support. In a short time, the book was translated into 47 languages. In Poland, it was published by Poradnia K and made available in the form of an electronic e-book. The Polish version appeared with additional scientific commentary by Polish virologists Wojciech Feleszko and Paweł Grzesiowski.

The authors explain in an accessible way what the coronavirus and COVID-19 is. Without demonizing the virus, but also not downplaying the

pandemic, the authors explain why it is important to adhere to the recommendations and what might be the risk of not doing so. The narrator addresses the child reader directly, creating a situation of dialogue in an atmosphere of trust. In addition to the narrative, illustrations are an important part of the content, which is often of an anecdotal nature. The language of the narrative is simple and understandable, with numerous phrases and colloquial terms (e.g., a virus can be “caught” or “missed”). The strategy of fighting the virus is shown in relation to the potential of the human body and its guards, which are useful bacteria or antibodies. The authors also do not avoid difficult topics, such as the threat to the patient’s life and the need to stay in the hospital or to connect to a respirator. The aspect of difficult emotions that people feel in this situation is also continually raised. The narrator points out that such feelings are typical and common to all people in isolation. “The adult or adults who look after you may also be worried. Sometimes they may be worried about work. Sometimes it can be difficult for them to buy the things they need, and they can worry about it” (Jenner et al., 2020, pp. 9–10), explains the narrator, referring to the economic consequences of the pandemic and at the same time encouraging openness, and sharing insights with loved ones. “If you are worried, talk about your worries with the adults caring for you” (Jenner et al., 2020, pp. 9–10). The persuasive strategy in *Corona-book’s* narrative relates primarily to building a child’s awareness of being part of a community: family and friends, colleagues, teachers, or neighbors. Thus, it still indicates that the coronavirus is a common enemy, but in the fight against it people are stronger through joint action. Children are also assured that, despite their age, they are not defenseless or left to rely on others to fight the coronavirus. Moreover, the narrator also points to the agency of the child reader, explaining that he is already helping greatly by staying at home. The narrator continues:

But you can also help by being extra careful and making sure you don’t catch the coronavirus or pass it on to anyone. Another important thing you can do is be kind to the people you live with. Everything will change and it will probably be difficult for

you. ... If you live with adults, you can help them by doing what they ask of you or by hugging them. (Jenner et al., 2020, p. 12)

The authors of the book, show this new and difficult situation of restrictions during a pandemic as temporary, and at the end they show the world after the epidemic, although without simple optimism.

One day, soon, although no one knows exactly when it will happen, you will visit loved ones who do not live with you, you will go back to school and do a lot of things that you love to do, although now you are not able to do them. (Jenner et al., 2020, p. 15)

These assurances are accompanied by illustrations in which a child hugs his grandmother, a group of children are playing together, and the inscription above them says that "one day this strange time will end."

Children's storylines with coronavirus as the "villain"

Fairy tales seem to dominate among the books written by Polish authors for children during a pandemic, understanding their genealogy as any book directed towards the youngest readers. In the Polish language, we use the concept of a fairy tale as a text which is addressed to a child up to 6 years of age, because later – as a pupil – he/she has the opportunity to gradually learn new literary genres, and by the fourth grade of primary school he/she can understand the genealogical differences between a fairy tale and a fable. For the purposes of this article, however, we will abandon semantic considerations, adopting the fairy tale as a common concept for the texts in question. Another reason is that, apart from the recognized writers, these stories were created by people without literary experience, using a fairy-tale plot and the language characteristic of one as the starting point in the description of the worlds they present.

The most popular fairy tale during the epidemic in Poland has been a picture book for children entitled *You have this power!* and made available in the open domain section of the website of Olesiejuk Publishing House. Another of the pro bono authors was the well-known children's book writer, Agnieszka Frączek. The others are Ewa Podleś, Alicja Bender, Baltazar Fajto, Patrycja Herbut, Monika Kalinowska, Joanna Wasilewska, and Natalia Zalewska-Domitrz. The consultants include psychologists – Ewelina Krupniewska, Ewelina Opałko, and Agnieszka Wilaniemc-Hermas – and doctors, Beata Kupak, Justyna Laskowska, and Wiktoria Mełges.

You have this power! was appreciated by journalists and readers in a short time, as evidenced by the positive comments on the forum and on readers' blogs. The fairy tale has also been translated into several European languages. The unseen enemy, as depicted in the narrator in the book, was captured by scientists under a microscope and shown to children under magnification as a yellow and spiky antihero. The narrator explains eagerly that

it looks like it is wearing a crown, and who knows, maybe even the coronavirus feels like a king? Because it is so brazen about the world. In addition, it multiplies very quickly, so there are more and more of these little villains. (Frączek, 2020)

Coronavirus is referred to here as a "rogue," "a villain" who "rules," is "fast and mobile," and "wanders briskly around the world" (Frączek, 2020).

However, he is not invincible, although he is trying to secretly enter the human body, and his enemy is soap and thorough hand-washing. The narrator encourages the reader to fight the coronavirus the only known way so far: "to chase them away, you should soap your hands and scrub them for no less than 20 seconds – that's more or less how long it would take you to sing the song 'Soft kitty' (Frączek, 2020). As the title suggests, the narrator assures the little reader that he has the power to defeat coronaviruses and encourages him each time he is washing his hands to imagine what the face of the coronavirus will look like, "how the virus flies away, where the pepper grows" (Frączek, 2020). Let the child

follow a similar attitude, according to the narrator, when applying other rules, such as sneezing into the crook of their elbow, avoiding touching their eyes and mouth, wearing a mask and maintaining the necessary distance from strangers. All this power in the fight against coronavirus, and each subsequent day can bring the final end to a pandemic. The child is assured that by doing all of this he is fighting the virus and protecting his loved ones, especially his grandmother and grandfather or the gray-haired neighbor. The child becomes a positive hero and a guardian who cares about the welfare of others like a fairy-tale character, "because the coronavirus is particularly dangerous for the elderly!" (Frączek, 2020).

The authors of the book also deal with various false information that has appeared in the media, such as news about the threat of coronavirus from pets. "Remember about your pet and take care of it as usual. Someone said that you can get a coronavirus from a dog or cat?" the narrator asks, urging the reader to crack down on these accusations. "Don't worry, it's just a rumor!" (Frączek, 2020). The therapeutic aspect of this fairy tale is the authors' concern for the emotions of the children readers, which is why the narrative emphasizes that they are not alone and can always count on other people who love them. "Knowing that you can always count on the support of parents and other adults will surely help," the narrator emphasizes. This message was also strengthened in the final part, where next to the child as a superhero with the crossed-out image of the coronavirus on his chest, there is an inscription in large font: "You too can become a coronavirus conqueror! You have this power!" (Frączek, 2020).

Zofia Stanecka and Maria Oklejak, the authors of the popular series of stories for children about the adventures of Basia, devoted one book in the series, entitled *Misiek Zdzisiek and the Stupid Virus* (2020), to the subject of pandemic. Balancing between joking, seriousness, and anger at the virus, the authors explain to their young readers about this "very strange time now" (Stanecka, 2020) that has touched everyone, even the book's heroes. Basia does not go to preschool and Janek does not go to school as before; they cannot visit their grandmother and grandfather living in the countryside. Everything has changed. Basia's teddy bear, as the narrator, tries to understand what has happened. "Now the teachers come to

[Janek]. Or rather to my parents' computer. And not entirely them, but only talking heads" (Stanecka, 2020). The toy notices the boy's rebellion, the mother's dissatisfaction, and Basia's sadness, who has to play in a makeshift sandbox on the balcony. The girl washes her hands obediently (more often than usual) and makes sure that her toys also have clean hands.

The teddy bear-narrator, as a confidant of Basia's secrets, helps child readers to accept their difficult emotions and questions like those appearing in the head of the book's hero. Teddy bear does not give advice, but you can hug him and hug other household members with him. This is a tip for the audience – we should look for support, be nice, and give support to others. The need to isolate is difficult, but just like Basia you can write or call your beloved grandparents or other loved ones whom you cannot visit. You can also paint a picture or sing a cheerful song, because all this gives respite, according to the authors. It is important that we are not alone, and all we have to do is wait. In the cycle *Tales of Aunt Doroci*, the song "A Fairy Tale About the Evil King Virus and Good Quarantine" has appeared for the duration of the pandemic on the website of its author, Dorota Bródka, a psychotherapist and mediator. Unlike the texts discussed so far, this one was intended for preschool-aged and younger children, taming foreign-sounding words circulating in the media and in the public opinion. Built on the antinomy of the good Quarantine and the evil King of the Virus, the world presented in the fairy tale also tames the child to a new reality, in which it is not the need to isolate that becomes an object of blame, but the usurper Coronavirus.

The fairy-tale presentation presents to the child the world of four kingdoms: Fragrant Apples, Lavender, Red Tomato, and Forest Mushrooms, where everyone – including kids, who do Children's Things, and adults who do Adult Things – live happily and peacefully. The plot is triggered by the arrival of the Virus that wants to rule over the four kingdoms. The author describes it as "monstrously large" with "a whole lot of soldiers" who introduce the color gray wherever they go, bringing disease instead of joy. The kings, surprised by the attack, did not find a solution themselves, but took a joint conference, as a result of which they began to fight the invader.

The book skillfully addresses many difficult issues, not only for children, such as the ongoing media debates, the initially predominant pessimistic tone of reports on the incidence rates, and statements of scientists and doctors about the lack of effective measures to combat the virus. In the fairy tale, all these gentlemen and ladies from television debate with other characters. The narrator, on the other hand, assures the reader that such cooperation between all kingdoms is the best way to build, as he says, a “wall of resilience,” and for this you need a “good Quarantine.” Everyone, even a small reader, can help now, explains one of the heroes of the fairy tale:

The Wall of Resilience is being built one brick at a time in own home, and as we all do, it will become strong and stop the King Virus. Everyone adds a brick. And Quarantine is a time which supports the wall in becoming strong. (Bródka, 2020)

Home fairy-tale therapy and fairy-tale creativity of parents in the era of coronavirus

A similar initiative as Dorota Bródka was later taken by others, often writing for their own children and publishing their texts online. Most of these amateur stories were aimed not so much at getting used to the subject, but at shaping the attitude of acceptance towards a new situation for children, which limited many of their previous activities. Fairy tales appeared in various forms as forum posts on social media, as e-books or animations posted on YouTube, usually enjoying great interest, which shows the great demand for this type of content. Mostly, they were songs for young children with attached proposals for play, drawings, and topics for conversation with adults. Their anonymity and altruism in making it available for free download are also characteristic. Sometimes we can guess that the authors are pedagogues, as in the fairy tale entitled *A Story About Maks and His Aunt Quarantine from the Country of Polland*, which was made available by the Pedagogical Library in Skawina, or the collection of games

entitled *Stas and Jadzia Pętelka Stay at Home*, posted on the website of the Zielona Sowa Publishing House. Fairy tales for the time of the pandemic have also been written by bloggers, for example, *About the Coronavirus that Wore the Crown*, published as a post on the popular website www.dzieckiembadz.pl. Rarely do the authors of these fairy tales appear under their own name, as with the psychologist and Polish teacher Marta Mytko, providing her fairy tale entitled *Jezyk Bartek Stays at Home* with a letter to parents in which she indicates how they can use the fairy tale to talk to their children and try to explain the unusual situation of home isolation. A valuable addition here is the proposals for games prepared by psychotherapist Aleksandra Salwa, and the possibility of answering children's possible questions about the future and the expected end of the epidemic. The fairy tale, together with the therapeutic commentary, enjoyed great interest among teachers – not only early school teachers – and was published on many official school websites.

It is worth mentioning here the joint initiative of experts and parents from 104 countries as part of the Interagency Reference Group project of the Standing Committee for Mental Health and Psychosocial Support in Crisis Situations, who studied the needs of children and their parents in a pandemic by means of a survey diagnostic tool. The study covered 1,700 children and their parents. As a result of this research, a book in the form of fairy tales was created. *You Are My hero! How Children Can Fight Covid-19*, by Helen Patuck, is available with a free license from Creative Commons. The book has been translated into over a dozen languages, including Polish. In the introduction, the author recommends the mediation of adults when reading it, also pointing to potential difficulties in conversations with the child.

The book by H. Patuck uses a different narrative strategy than those discussed so far. Here we are dealing with a classic omniscient third-person narrator, who does not belong to the world depicted but accompanies the adventures of the children-heroes. The main character in the story is Sarah, who does not feel like a hero, despite her mother's assurances that she can be because her actions matter. The girl asks the mysterious figure of a dragon Ario and flies to other children around the

world to help her fight the virus. In turn, they visit children in various places, testified to only by their names, such as Salem, Sasha, Leila, and Kim. Sara and Aria talk to them about what the new situation is about and why staying at home is necessary and they ask the children how they deal with these special circumstances. Some of them were sick, like Kim, whose family had to be hospitalized.

The fairy tale constantly emphasizes the community of experiences regardless of one's latitude as well as emphasizing the unity of human efforts during a pandemic, giving new meaning to the title phrase "You are my hero!" Children share their experiences and insights that seem exceptionally mature but are invariably accompanied by the hope that the entire quarantine and pandemic situation is temporary. At the end of the story, a specific mission was emphasized: being a hero for other people, because "we can all be heroes every day" (Patuck, 2020).

Books as a support in the time of the "new normal"

Most of the above-mentioned books for children emphasized the temporary nature of the difficult situation of quarantine or home isolation and the need to actively fight the coronavirus, assuming that this fight will not be long if we act together. At the same time, another need arose, namely, to reassure children when returning to preschool after such a long period of staying at home. Currently, among Polish-language children's books, there is only one fairy tale on this topic – a book by Joanna Kochańska entitled *Return to Kindergarten: A Therapeutic Fairy Tale*.

In the introduction, the author makes parents aware of the emotional situation, even if they did not observe any disturbing signals. She explains why a fairy tale should be accompanied by a conversation with parents. The author refers to the process of fairy-tale therapy, i.e., from the situation of identifying with a fairy-tale hero, through the universalization of the situation (which will help to understand that the quarantine was a shared difficulty), to *catharsis*, i.e., ridding oneself of these difficult emotions. Although she avoids the use of bibliotherapy terms, she refers

to these stages when discussing the need to face the child's emotions. As a model for parental behavior, she indicates the character of Tom's mother, who listens rather than advises and who does not try to name or suggest her son's emotions. In this context, this work can be considered a fairy tale/instruction for parents, where a model conversation based on the fairy tale being read is shown. Joanna Kočańska, as a child psychologist, showed not only sensitivity to the potential difficulties of a child in these new circumstances, but also coaching skills, accurately pointing to the potential practical application of her fairy tale by parents who usually do not have pedagogical training. Its protagonist, Tomek, longed for preschool, but he had already gotten used to being with his parents all the time. He supposedly missed his teacher and the other children and he had even cried about it, but now he was afraid of going back and what it would be like. In any case, Tomek has been often sad lately. It was only when he said all this aloud with the loving attention of his mother listening to him that he felt as if his worries were leaving him, and in their place appeared a desire to return to preschool again. The role of the parent, in this case the mother, was to lead the boy through all these emotions, even the most hidden ones, all in order to get them out. In fairy-tale therapy, such a conversation may even be accompanied by a tangible collection of thoughts on papers, then crumpling them up and throwing them into the trash. The author rightly noted that after a period of social readiness in the collision with the threat of coronavirus, a new period came – perhaps more difficult than the previous one – because it forced them to live in other circumstances than before.

Conclusion

The coronavirus pandemic has radically changed the lives of all of society in the world. Let us hope that we do not have to experience the same events again, but let us also remember them and draw conclusions from them. Following good hygiene rules, such as hand disinfection, is a good habit for the future. It is important that during this time we learn

to live according to a new pattern of everyday life. Let the skills we have acquired and our personal insights help us in the future. It is important that we continue to spend as much time as possible with our loved ones and remember to help children, people with disabilities, and the elderly. The educational process, although different, does not mean that it is bad. Thanks to this mode of work, we also learned to be responsible for our education and realized that we should expand our knowledge, acquire skills, and look for hidden talents and interests. Although at the beginning many of us had various fears and felt uncertain, at some point there was a full mobilization of strength and positive energy. A time like this has triggered many different emotions in children and adults, which have changed as the pandemic has progressed, because it is actually a process that is still going on. However, the most important thing in this difficult situation is to preserve "humanity," to be able to notice the other person, support them and help them not to lose the sense of life and be able to function at every minute and hour. This time could not be wasted by just sitting and waiting, doing nothing useful for yourself and others. Most of the people did it very well, and in a way, it was a crucial test for all of us. However, it is very important not to forget too quickly how difficult the time was, how we helped each other then, what we promised ourselves, and how we appreciated everything bad or good that happened to us every day. May we not lose this joy and great attachment to life, love for people and the world, and constant appetite for life regardless of the circumstances, and may we benefit from all the advantages that resulted from the pandemic for a long time.

From the analysis and interpretation of the innovative e-fairy tales on the subject of the coronavirus presented herein, it should be stated that both children and their parents "get lost" in this existing and long-term threat. Through conversations, networking (connectivism) with colleagues, and literary texts, the youngest ones understand what COVID-19 is, where it comes from, why it is dangerous, and how to follow the rules of preventative health care. Coronavirus as an antihero in children's minds is perceived as a villain, that is, negative, evil, wickedly acting, dark, harmful, a symbol of destruction, mourning, or death, with which there is still

a long global struggle and no one knows when it will end. At the time of writing this article, little is still known about returning to the time before the coronavirus, nor is it certain that Polish children will return to preschools and schools. The experts still do not have unequivocal answers as to whether we can count on the end of the pandemic or whether the coronavirus will return with renewed force this fall. All of these questions preoccupy adults, as do the negative consequences of isolation. This, in turn, has had an impact on children, who always receive some form of these messages and who sense their parents' anxieties. Most of the restrictions in Poland have been lifted and some children have returned to preschools, although it is not as it was before. Now the groups are smaller, and the teachers wear masks or visors. Children also spend their free time differently; they still have to remember many different rules resulting from the safety rules during the epidemic. They may feel tired or discouraged that nothing is changing and they are still not allowed to do something. They may also feel anxiety or fear, they may be worried that not all their friends have returned to school. Adults use the term "the new normal" and for them it is probably somehow unclear, maybe even disturbing, because it suggests that they need to get used to these new rules for longer, if they are to be part of the "normal" functioning at work, at home, or in a public space.

How can we reassure children in such circumstances and prepare them for a different functioning than before? Fairy tales about fighting the bad coronavirus may turn out to be insufficient, and the need for further efforts may be difficult, all the more so because it cannot be concealed from the child that the epidemic is still ongoing, since they cannot go on a previously planned holiday or visit their relatives. In the era of common media and their tendency to scandalize and dazzle with catchy slogans, it is also difficult to avoid the penetration of certain information into children's consciousness.

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