

Stories Under the Magnifying Glass ANALYSIS OF STORIES



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Stories Under the Magnifying Glass

APPENDIX TO THE METHODOLOGY HANDBOOK

Practical Examples of Opening Challenging Social Topics Through Stories

In the Appendix to the Methodology Handbook, you will find a comprehensive analysis of several stories. This serves as a practical example of how to use storytelling as a tool for initiating discussions on sensitive and challenging social topics. The topic of bullying is elaborated in detail. The Appendix also includes worksheets and suggestions for further activities (or: further work) with the stories.

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1. Analysis of the Fairy Tale The Ugly Duckling

Do you know the famous fairy tale by H. C. Andersen about **The Ugly Duckling**? I shall tell you...

Note.: It is appropriate to deliver the text of the fairy tale in an experiential manner, utilizing suprasegmental features – stress, emphasis, pause, melody, tempo, and voice modulation.

On the old farmyard lived a duck family. Mother Duck was warming her eggs, from which, one day, six little yellow ducklings—fluffy balls of down—pecked their way into the world. Only one egg was larger than the rest. A strange grey duckling hatched from it. Mother Duck shook her head at the peculiar sight. "Where did I get such an ugly duckling!" sighed Mother Duck every time she looked at it.

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Finally, one morning at dawn, the duckling ran away from the yard. It stood on the bank of a pond where geese were grazing. "We have never seen such an ugly duckling," they cried out scornfully, chasing it away. The duckling wanted to return home but did not know the way. It wandered to a cottage where an old peasant woman lived. Since the woman could not see well, she thought it was a goose. She put it in a cage so it would lay her some eggs. But the ugly duckling

just wouldn't lay any eggs. "If you won't lay eggs, you will be roasted," grumbled the old woman.

One night, when the hostess forgot to close the cage door, the duckling escaped. It was alone again, flying as long as it could, and then settling down in a dense forest. "I will hide here forever, since no one wants me," it told itself. One morning, as soon as it opened its eyes after sleep, it saw large, magnificent birds flying in the blue sky. They were white, with long, slender necks and yellow beaks. They were migrating south, to warmer countries. "If only I could look like them for just one day," the duckling sighed. "Just a single day, perhaps someone would like me then."

Winter came and the water in the pond froze. The poor duckling set off to search for food in the snow. Exhausted from fatigue, it collapsed onto the frozen lake. A farmer happened upon it and put the duckling into his pocket. "Poor little thing, it's completely frozen, I will take it home to my wife and children; they will take care of it," he pitied. The duckling finally found love. It survived the harsh winter in abundance and warmth in the farmer's house. In the spring, the farmer said: "The duckling has grown, I will set it free so it can enjoy its liberty." The duckling flew off to the pond.

It landed on the water and instantly saw its reflection. "Is that really me?" it wondered. Just then, swans returning from warmer countries landed on the pond. The duckling immediately realised it belonged with them, and quickly joined the birds. "We are swans, just like you," they greeted it kindly. "Where did you winter?" they asked. "That would be a long story," the happy young swan replied, majestically swimming across the pond with its companions. "Look how

beautiful that young swan is," the children called from the bank. "It is the most beautiful of all." And the happy swan—the duckling—waved back at them cheerfully.

1.1. Analysis of the Story

The fairy tale "**The Ugly Duckling**" is an excellent and sensitive tool for addressing the topic of **bullying**. It explores the themes of **difference, ridicule, isolation**, and ultimately, **acceptance and self-acceptance**. The story provides an opportunity to facilitate an emotional experience connected with rejection and the feelings associated with it.

Key Method: After reading the fairy tale, we do not interpret it literally—we consciously translate it into parables and metaphors relating to real-life situations.

Motive in the Fairy Tale	Parallel to Bullying in Real Life	Possible Discussion Question
The duckling is different (different colour, larger, clumsy)	A child who differs in appearance, behaviour, or interests can become a target of ridicule.	Why do people notice differences? Why do they sometimes perceive difference negatively?
It is mocked by its siblings and the other animals on the farmyard.	Bullying often starts in the closest circle, where one should expect support.	How does a person feel when they are not accepted by their peers?
Feeling of loneliness and sadness, crying in secret.	Psychological impact of bullying—withdrawal, loss of self-confidence.	Why are people sometimes unwilling to talk about their problems? How can we help them?
Fleeing the inhospitable environment.	Victims of bullying try to escape the environment where they are	Where can you go for help if you have a problem?

	not accepted, either physically or mentally.	
Discovery of own identity (the swan) and acceptance into the group.	Everyone has their own value and potential that may not be apparent immediately.	How would the story have developed if others had accepted him at the beginning?
Conclusion – recognition and healing.	The importance of support, respect, and realising that a person's beauty and worth are not merely external.	What can we do to make sure no one feels like "the ugly duckling"?

1.2. The Ugly Duckling's Journey

The journey of "The Ugly Duckling" is a strong metaphor for the emotional world of a child or young person experiencing bullying or exclusion. A step-by-step analysis of its experience allows for the story to be connected with the real feelings of victims in everyday life.

Rejection → Loneliness → Seeking Help → Support → Acceptance → Healing

Stage in the Story	Emotional World of the Ugly Duckling	Connection to Real Life
Birth/Hatching	Joy of life, curiosity, hope, basic trust.	Starting in a new collective—desire and willingness to fit in, openness.
First Rejections	Confusion, sadness, helplessness, feeling of not belonging, not understanding what is wrong, shame.	Feeling different, insecurity, not understanding the rejection.
Repeated ridicule and rejection, escalation	Sadness, pain, growing loneliness, low self-esteem, crying.	Repeated attacks undermine trust in others, leading to a loss of self-esteem and self-worth.

Stage in the Story	Emotional World of the Ugly Duckling	Connection to Real Life
Rejection by the Group	Anxiety, despair, feeling of inferiority, loss of certainty.	Feeling of social isolation, withdrawal, anxiety, psychosomatic problems, feeling of hopelessness, seeking escape.
Escape and Solitude	Despair, loss of home, emptiness, loneliness.	Abandonment, depressive moods, avoidance of the collective.
Seeking Acceptance Elsewhere	Hope and fear, seeking safety, insecurity, repeated rejection.	Attempting to find new friends, trying to fit in somewhere, to belong somewhere, to find understanding, support, and acceptance.
Critical Phase (winter, exhaustion)	Feeling of exhaustion, apathy, hopelessness, questioning one's own worth and existence.	Can be accompanied by psychosomatic issues, fear, depression, self-destructive tendencies.
Help and Acceptance from Someone	Surprise, a new trust is slowly born, gratitude.	The experience of support and acceptance helps heal trauma, restoring a sense of trust and self-worth.
Acceptance, Self-Discovery	Happiness, joy of acceptance, recognition, discovery of one's true essence, beauty, and value.	Realization of one's own worth and beauty, renewal of self-respect and confidence, feeling of safety, new relationships.

The story of "The Ugly Duckling" shows that **bullying and long-term rejection fundamentally affect a person's inner world**—they disrupt trust in oneself, in others, and in the safety of the environment. Empathetic work with this story allows youth to not only recognize but also emotionally experience the parallels with the real-life

struggles of bullying victims, which forms a strong foundation for prevention and the promotion of inclusion.

1.3. Dismantling Prejudice and Stereotypes

- **Stereotype Identification:** "All ducklings must look the same".
- **Stereotype Deconstruction:** Showing that something surprisingly beautiful and valuable can emerge from the "different".
- **Analysis:**
 - ⇒ Why did the other animals think the duckling was inferior?
 - ⇒ What "labels" did they assign to it?
 - ⇒ What "labels" do we use in society today?
- **Critical Thinking:**
 - ⇒ Seeking parallels with real-life prejudices (against ethnicity, religion, social status, orientation, disability).
 - ⇒ What are the usual reasons for rejection, exclusion, and bullying?
 - ⇒ Discussion: How would the story have ended if the animals had known the truth from the beginning?

Key Message for the Topic of Bullying

- **Difference is not a flaw** – being different is natural and can be valuable.
- **Words hurt as much as actions** – mockery and ignorance can be very painful.
- **Support and friendship can change a life** – as shown by the farmer's family and the swans at the end of the story.
- **Self-worth does not depend on what others think of us** – the duckling was a swan from the beginning, but no one saw it.

1.4. Worksheet

For specific excerpts from the text, try to do a short analysis—possible feelings and experience of the character/s, reasons, causes and consequences of the behaviour, and find a parallel with real life.

<i>Excerpt from the Text</i>	<i>Analysis (feelings, experience, reasons, causes, consequences of behaviour, parallel with real life)</i>
<i>the duckling was not pretty</i>	
<i>it chased its brothers and sisters away from food</i>	
<i>it was clumsy</i>	
<i>the others didn't want to play with it</i>	
<i>it grew increasingly unhappy</i>	
<i>everyone mocked it</i>	
<i>it was very lonely</i>	
<i>why are you different</i>	
<i>the duckling felt worst</i>	
<i>it cried in secret</i>	



Excerpt from the Text	Analysis (feelings, experience, reasons, causes, consequences of behaviour, parallel with real life)
<i>no one but its mother loved it</i>	
<i>the duckling ran away from the yard</i>	
<i>they cried out scornfully and chased it away</i>	
<i>it was alone again</i>	
<i>I will hide here forever, since no one wants me</i>	
<i>if only I could look like them for just one day</i>	
<i>perhaps someone would like me then</i>	
<i>exhausted from fatigue, it collapsed</i>	
<i>the duckling finally found love</i>	
<i>it survived the winter in abundance and warmth</i>	
<i>I will set it free so it can enjoy its liberty</i>	
<i>instantly saw its reflection</i>	
<i>they greeted it kindly</i>	



<i>Excerpt from the Text</i>	<i>Analysis (feelings, experience, reasons, causes, consequences of behaviour, parallel with real life)</i>
<i>swimming majestically</i>	
<i>how beautiful that young swan is</i>	
<i>It is the most beautiful of all</i>	
<i>the happy swan – the duckling – waved back at them cheerfully</i>	

2. A True Story about Bullying from the Online Living Library

On the portals <https://www.onlinezivakniznica.sk/sk/>, you can find several storytelling tools to open up the topic of bullying. These are in the form of video stories, audio stories, or e-books. They contain stories and testimonies of specific real people:

- Testimonies of victims of bullying and cyberbullying,
- Testimonies of parents of bullied children,
- Case study of bullying and cyberbullying against teachers,
- Testimony of a bully (The well-known Slovak influencer Sandra Sviteková from the YouTube channel Dejepis inak shares her testimony about how she bullied her classmate),
- Testimonies of educators,
- Testimonies of experts – psychologists, social pedagogues

Methodologies on how to work with video and audio stories and e-books are also available there.

Dominika's True Story:

<https://www.onlinezivakniznica.sk/sk/video/dominika1>

Suggestions for Activities and Work with the Story

Introductory Activities, to Open the Topic:

Work with Emotional Cards – Select the card that best captures the word bullying for you. Share the selected cards.

Word Association - Write three words (each individually) that you associate with the word bullying. Then share the words and write them on a large sheet of paper (flipchart, whiteboard) – creating a word map related to bullying.

Group Brainstorming – Write all words that come to the group’s mind regarding the word bullying on a large sheet of paper (flipchart, whiteboard), creating a word map related to bullying.

Variation:

- Which card do you think best captures the word bullying for the bullied person,
- Which card do you think best captures the word bullying for the aggressor,
- Which card do you think best captures the word bullying for the witness to bullying,
- What words do you associate with this concept from these different perspectives.

(Individual work – everyone reflects individually on all four tasks OR work in three groups – each group reflects on one of the three actors in bullying + everyone looks for words related to bullying from the perspective of the actors in their task)

Share the selected cards. Share and record the words on three different sheets of paper (a separate sheet for the bullied person, the aggressor, and the witness to bullying). This creates three concept maps – allowing for comparison and discussion.

Work with the Video Story:

Video Intro – Today, we will introduce the true story of Dominika, who talks about her experiences with bullying. Dominika is 16 years old and played volleyball actively for 12 years – try to imagine her, what she might look like, what her daily routine is like – they can share their thoughts.

Before playing, give the instruction to write down any moments that they find important – anything that surprises, shocks, or deeply affects them...

Play Dominika's video story

Questions after watching the story:

- ⇒ *What are your feelings after watching Dominika's story? (Alternatively, select a card that captures your feeling)*
- ⇒ *How did your initial idea of Dominika differ from reality?*

Retelling the story – what we learned – feel free to write key points on paper (flipchart, whiteboard).

Open a discussion on the topic of bullying. Supporting questions for the discussion:

- ⇒ *What did her classmates do to her? Bridge to the different ways bullying can manifest, what else constitutes bullying – also write on paper/flipchart (this can be displayed later to help raise awareness about bullying).*
- ⇒ *How did she feel? Bridge to the feelings that bullying can bring – supporting empathy, sensitization.*
- ⇒ *Why did they do it to her? Bridge to what they think are the reasons for bullying.*
- ⇒ *What did they do to her in the online world? Open up the topic of cyberbullying – what the methods of cyberbullying can be.*
- ⇒ *How do you think Dominika felt when she lost volleyball? How would they feel if they lost their hobby for this or a similar reason?*

⇒ *What do you think her friend felt when she allowed herself to fail the exam? What distress must have preceded this decision, when she saw this as the only way out? Empathize with what bullied children experience (possibility to touch upon the topic that such experiences can lead to self-harm or suicidal thoughts).*

Activity: Divide the youth into 6 groups and assign them tasks:

Group 1: What can and should I do as a victim? (Group of girls)

Group 2: What can and should I do as a victim? (Group of boys)

Group 3: What are the perpetrators' reasons/triggers/causes, and what could help them stop? (Reflecting on the reasons and causes of bullying)

Group 4: What can classmates do?

Group 5: What can and should teachers do? (Both for prevention and in an acute case)

Group 6: What can and should parents do? (Both for prevention and in an acute case)

Each group writes the wording of their task on an A3 paper and records their ideas and answers on it. Afterwards, they present their results.

Conclusion...

Select a card that captures how a person who is being bullied feels – this encourages them to reflect again on the feelings of the bullied person.

Possible Outputs – Call to Action for Dismantling Stereotypes and Prejudices):

- ⇒ Create a poster with information about bullying and cyberbullying.
- ⇒ Write an essay, a story, or a creative writing prompt with the theme: How someone who is experiencing bullying feels. Then publish these as a brochure.
- ⇒ Proposal for a theatre script – dramatisation.
- ⇒ Draw a poster of symbols representing the feelings a victim of bullying might experience.
- ⇒ Artistic poster: A hero - a positive role model - with described qualities that they believe such a positive role model/leader/hero should possess (setting a culture of what we consider important and valuable).
- ⇒ In the music scene, we also have rappers who sing very inspiring and profound words in their songs – if you have such children in the group, they can try to create a rap song on the theme of bullying prevention – as a challenge, how not to be silent, how we can intervene, act, etc.
- ⇒ Create a short video or story on the topic of bullying and post it on social media.
- ⇒ Present any of these outputs on social media..

3. Analysis of Characters and Story Goldilock

Written by Karel Jaromír Erben (*Czech writer*) – his fairy tales are crueler, featuring an element of fate/destiny (fate cannot be escaped).

Once upon a time there lived a king who wanted to know everything. Old wisemen from all over the world came to teach him what they knew themselves. One day an old woman came to the king and brought him a snake in the basket. “If you eat him, you will be able to understand all of the animals in the world!”, says the old woman. The king liked the idea of knowing something others don’t. At once he ordered George, the cook, to prepare the snake for lunch. He warned him, if George took even just a little bite, the king would kill him. George respected his king very much and promised the king he would not have even one bite. But since he was used to tasting all of king’s food, he forgot all about his promise and tasted the snake. As soon as he swallowed the bite, he heard flies and birds talking to each other. George realized what he did and decided not to tell anyone. Then he took the meal to the king.

After the king finished his snake lunch, he took George out for a ride to make sure he did not take a bite of the magic meat. When their horses started talking to each other, George grinned. At that moment the king knew he wasn’t the only one who could understand the animals. Back at the castle, just when George was about to be executed for breaking the king’s orders, he saw two doves fighting over a lock of golden hair, which belonged to a beautiful princess. “Bring me that girl and I will save your life”, said the king. Although George didn’t know which way to go, he set off on a long journey to find Goldilocks – king’s new bride.

On his way he saw a bush caught on fire with ants crying for help underneath that bush. George managed to put the fire out in few seconds and saved the poor ants. “Thank you so much for saving us! Whenever you need help, just think of us and we will come and help you,” said the ants. After a long day of walking George came to a lake where he saw two fishermen arguing over a goldfish. “The fish is mine!” “No, I caught it, it is mine!” they shouted at each other. George felt sorry for the fish, bought her from the fishermen and threw it back in the lake. “Thank you George,” said the fish. “Think of me when you need help and I will come and help you.” The fishermen were very pleased with the money George gave them, so he told him about the beautiful princess who lived in a nearby castle.

On the way to the palace, George saw a fly trapped in a cobweb. He quickly freed it and just like the ants and the goldfish, the fly also promised to help him whenever he needed help. At the castle George told the king that he came from the neighbouring kingdom and his lord wishes to marry his daughter, the beautiful Goldilocks. The king said, “You can take my daughter if you fulfill my three challenges. First, my daughter lost her ring in the field, go and find it.” George went to look for the ring, but the grass was so high and the field was so vast that he thought to himself, “Oh, if only those ants could be here now.” Suddenly he heard: “We are here and here is the ring.” George was so happy and went back to the king, with princess’s ring in his pocket. “You did well with the first challenge, but let’s see how you do with the second one: “My daughter swam in the lake and lost her pearl necklace in the lake, go and find it.”

When he came to the lake, he thought of the fish he saved earlier that day and all of a sudden the fish appeared on the surface, with the pearl necklace in her mouth. George thanked her and ran back to the castle, where the third challenge

was waiting for him. “If you choose the right princess from all of those wailed women, you can take her.”, said the king. In a room, there were twelve women and all of them had a thick covering over their heads. There was no way George could pick the right one. Just when he was about to give up, he heard someone saying. “Choose this one, the one I am sitting on!” Just then saw George the fly he saved that afternoon from a cobweb. The king saw George fulfill all of his tasks and grudgingly gave his daughter away.

After a long journey back, they arrived at the castle and George showed the beautiful princess to his king. The king was amazed by Goldilock’s beauty and realized she was too young for him. He was a good king and decided to give George not only the princess but also half of his kingdom. And they all lived happily ever after.

3.1. Analysis of Characters and Story

3.1.1. Character Breakdown

- **The King** – an older man experiencing a mid-life crisis. He is emotionally unbalanced and immature. He demonstrates a great need for control and order, which may refer to Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder (OCD). His behaviour is likely influenced by a traumatic childhood. He prefers animals over people because they listen to him and do not threaten him. The King exhibits narcissistic traits; he wants everything immediately and without effort. He treats people as objects, which is also evident in his approach to Goldilocks, whom he wants to possess without asking for her opinion. In the story, he disposes of Jirka, whom he views as competition.

- **George** – he is optimistic, open, and communicative. He understands the King's nature but shows no respect for authority and wants to "get above the King's head" (challenge the King's authority). Like the King, he likes animals, but unlike the King, he actively helps them and secures their promise of assistance. Jirka doubts himself and is reluctant to take responsibility for his actions. This is evident when he promises to take Goldilocks to the King, even though he is not in love with her. He is willing to keep his promise even at the cost of betrayal.
- **Goldilocks' Father** – he is the only character in the fairy tale who acts maturely. He is humble and without prejudice, evident in the fact that he does not question Jirka's status or ask why he came. At the same time, he is too trusting and does not sufficiently verify the character of the person he sends Goldilocks away with. He tests George.
- **Goldilocks** – she is the embodiment of the passive female principle. She does not chase after Jirka and does not exhibit the so-called "saviour syndrome." She is de facto a foreigner, and the story raises the question of how she feels leaving her country and family. Goldilocks does not want to leave with Jirka and suggests they run away, but he insists on fulfilling his promise. Her love for Jirka is manifested even after his death when she insists on burying him and sprinkles him with the Water of Life.

3.1.2. Parallels with the Present Day

- **Crisis and Psychological Wounds** – the fairy tale offers strong parallels with contemporary mental health issues. The King, going through a mid-life crisis, is an example of a person with childhood trauma, low self-esteem, and a desire for recognition. His need for control, suspicion, and inability to deal with people

are common manifestations of psychological difficulties frequent in today's society.

- **Narcissism and Toxic Relationships** – the King, with strong narcissistic traits (wants everything immediately, without effort, treats people as objects), represents the type of toxic partner or boss we encounter today in both relationships and the workplace. His jealousy and possessiveness are part of toxic behaviour.
- **Passivity and Activity** – Goldilocks, who is passive in the story, and Jirka, who is active but not always responsible, can serve as examples of different approaches to life. Goldilocks accepts her situation, while Jirka tries to act but is constantly filled with doubt.
- **The Problem of Adulthood and Responsibility** – the King, who refuses to grow up and take responsibility for his actions, sends Jirka on a dangerous mission. This is a clear parallel with the present day, where many individuals avoid responsibility and prefer to transfer their problems onto others. While Jirka acts, he, too, doubts and struggles with responsibility..

3.2. Analysis of Thematic Areas with Parallel Overlap into the Present

Several thematic areas highly relevant to the present day can be identified from the story of Goldilocks:

- **Mental Health and Trauma** – the fairy tale reveals how psychological wounds, and perhaps childhood trauma, influence the King's behaviour. His desire for control, distrust, and fear of people are symptoms that can be studied today in the context of anxiety disorders, trauma, and Narcissistic Personality Disorder (NPD).

- **Toxic and Dysfunctional Relationships** – the relationship between the King and Jirka is full of manipulation and abuse of power. The King gets rid of Jirka because he is competition and treats him as an object. Similarly, his relationship with Goldilocks is based on a possessive and jealous approach, not on love and respect.
- **Personal Responsibility and Adulthood** – the story focuses on the lack of maturity and responsibility in the two main male characters—the King and Jirka. While the King avoids responsibility entirely, Jirka struggles with it but ultimately confronts it. This is a key theme for working with adolescents and young adults who are often transitioning from a world of carelessness to one full of responsibility for their actions.
- **Guilt and Fate** – Erben’s style places great emphasis on fatalism/destiny. The question of guilt appears in the fairy tale. Who is guilty? The King, who acted based on his trauma? Jirka, who could have run away? Or Goldilocks’ father, who was too trusting? The text concludes that guilt is not unambiguous. This opens up space for discussion on how our life circumstances, upbringing, and psychological wounds influence our actions, even if this does not entirely exclude personal responsibility.

This story is a very valuable tool for working with youth and adults. The character analysis reveals that fairy tales are not merely about black-and-white archetypes (good/evil) but about complex personalities with their own wounds, motivations, and weaknesses.

- **Depth of Characters** – the analysis of the King as a person with psychological trauma and narcissistic traits adds realism to the story and enables discussion on how similar traits manifest in real life.

- **Understanding Behaviour** – understanding that Jirka's behaviour is driven by a desire for recognition and self-doubt, or that the father's trust stems from humility and inattentiveness, allows us to abandon superficial judgments and focus on the roots of behaviour.
- **Overlap into Psychology** – the text offers direct references to psychological concepts such as OCD, narcissism, and trauma. These terms can be used as a starting point for expert discussion with adults or for a simplified explanation with youth.

3.3. Proposal for Practical Use of the Story

This story can be utilised in many areas with various target groups to achieve behavioural change, strengthen empathy, and develop critical thinking.

For Youth Work (14-18 years):

- **Bullying and Cyberbullying Prevention** – through the character of the King and his manipulative behaviour, themes of bullying, abuse of power, and toxic behaviour can be addressed. Discuss what leads a person to such actions (trauma, low self-esteem).
- **Strengthening Critical Thinking and Awareness** – challenge the traditional perception of good and evil and lead a debate on whether the King was truly "evil." Emphasize that no one is entirely "good" or "evil" and that every individual carries their own "guilt".
- **Development of Empathy** – by working with the character of Goldilocks as a "foreigner," address themes of adaptation, difference, and respect for other cultures.

- **Breaking Stereotypes** – through the character of Goldilocks, who is passive and waits for a prince, a discussion can be initiated about gender stereotypes in fairy tales and society.
- **Methods:**
 - **Discussion Circles** – lead guided debates on the characters' motivation and behaviour.
 - **Role-Playing** – students can try playing the characters and empathizing with their situation, for example, in the scene where Jirka takes Goldilocks to the King.
 - **Creating "Mental Mapping"** – collaboratively create a map of the characters with participants and link their behaviour to possible causes (trauma, childhood, relationships).

For Adult Work (Therapy, Mentoring, Coaching):

- **Self-Reflection and Inner Child Work** – the character of the King can be analysed with clients as a mirror for their own childhood wounds. Themes such as the fear of people and the need for control can serve as a starting point for therapeutic work.
- **Analysis of Toxic Relationships** – the story can be used as a model to understand the dynamics in dysfunctional relationships (whether romantic or professional), where one partner acts narcissistically and the other is manipulated.
- **Strengthening Personal Responsibility** – through the analysis of Jirka, work can be done on themes such as the importance of taking responsibility for one's actions and self-doubt.

- **Methods:**
 - **Coaching Questions** – use the fairy tale as a metaphor and ask questions such as: "Which character in the story are you?", "Where in your life do you act like the King?", "When did you act like Jirka and were afraid to stand up to authority?".
 - **Therapeutic Work** – using the principles of Jungian psychology and archetypes to understand the shadow aspects of personality through the characters.

3.4. Worksheets

Character Analysis

After reading the story and empathizing with the individual characters, choose one that resonates with you the most and try to analyze this character (examples of questions you can be inspired by are provided in the table next to each character, but you can also create your own questions).

King

<i>What are his main characteristics and motivations?</i>	
<i>Where in your life do you see someone who behaves similarly? Why do they do it??</i>	
<i>Space for your own questions.....</i>	



George

<i>How does his character evolve?</i>	
<i>When does he act honourably and when does he allow himself to be manipulated?</i>	
<i>Space for your own questions.....</i>	

Goldilock

<i>How do you view her role in the story?</i>	
<i>What can we learn about her, even though she speaks little?</i>	
<i>Space for your own questions.....</i>	

Secondary Characters (Animals, potentially Goldilocks' father)

<i>What is their role?</i>	
<i>What does their assistance to George symbolise?</i>	

<i>Space for your own questions...</i>	
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Seeking Parallels with the Present Day

Try to find parallels with the present day in the story (e.g., current societal events).

Example:

Narcissism and Power

How does the King's narcissistic behaviour manifest in today's society (boss, parent, politician)?

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Toxic Relationships

Which moments in the story resemble a toxic relationship? How can one escape them?

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Personal Responsibility

When did George have the chance to act differently and take responsibility? What discouraged him from doing so?

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Further Parallels

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Reflection and Personal Development

Which of the characters is closest to you and why?

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Which of the characters evokes the greatest resistance in you and why?

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What did the story teach you about guilt and responsibility?

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What did the story teach you about guilt and responsibility?

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Imagine you have the Water of Life and the Water of Death. What would you heal in your life (Water of Death) and what would you strengthen (Water of Life)?

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