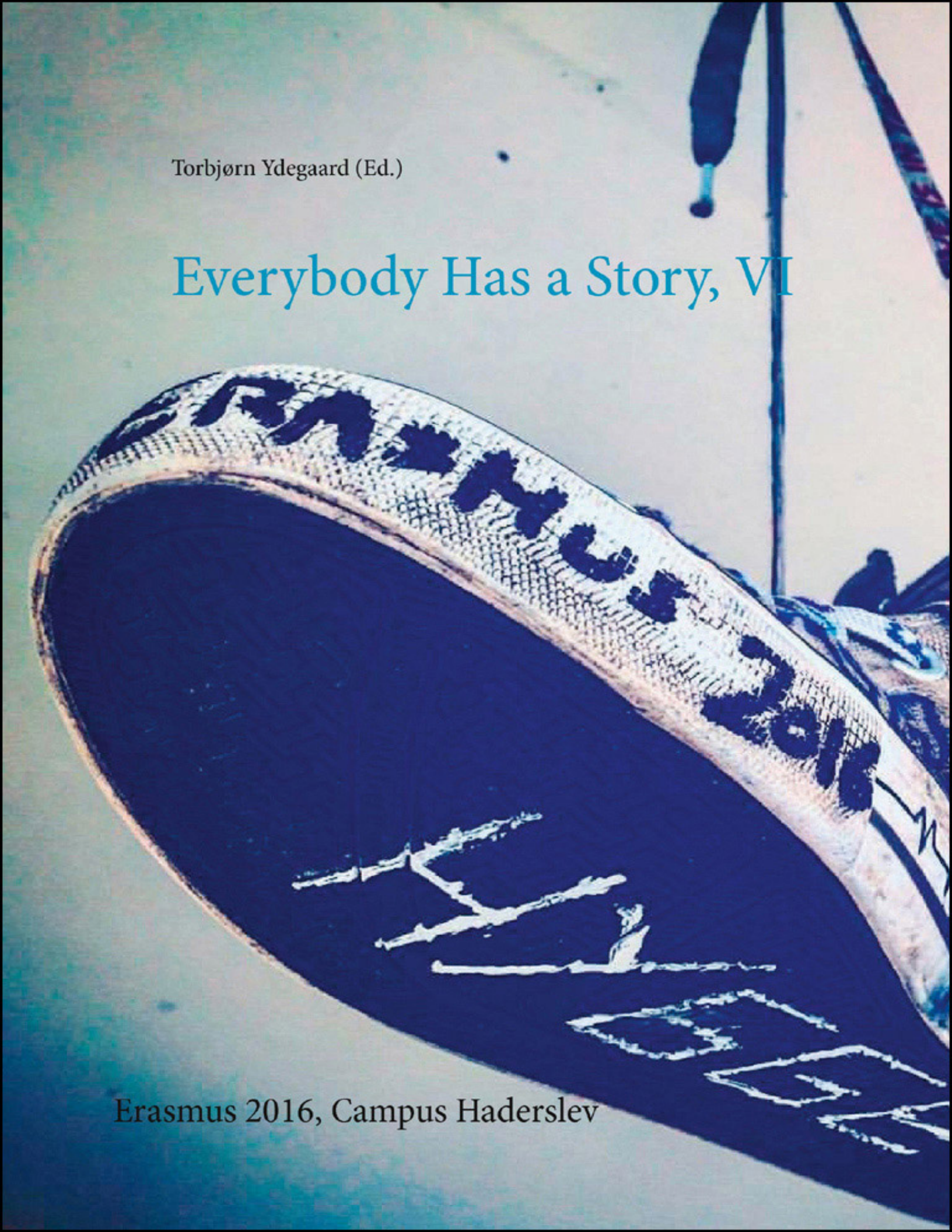


Torbjørn Ydegaard (Ed.)

# Everybody Has a Story, VI

Erasmus 2016, Campus Haderslev



Related books:

- *Alle har en historie. Esbjerg Karateklub*
- *Everybody Has a Story. Erasmus 2014. Campus Haderslev*
- *Everybody Has a Story III. Erasmus 2015. Campus Haderslev*
- *Alle har en historie, IV. Pædagogik med Freedom Writers*
- *Alle hare en historie, V. Læreruddannelsen Haderslev*
- *Reflections and interpretations – the Freedom Writers' teaching methodology*

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## Introduction

The ways and methods of the Freedom Writers as a pedagogical concept are not tied to theories but to practice and to practical life in the classroom. It therefore has more to do with tools than with books – and the most significant tool in the Freedom Writer pedagogy is *the narrative*.

But even in a very practical world tools can be reflected on – and have to be reflected on in order to give us an idea about what is going on. So it is with narratives, too.

Narratives are about lived lives, as Hanne Moltke and Asbjørn Molly explain it in their (Danish) book *Systemisk coaching*. As such stories are first and foremost individual, personal narratives that ascribe meaning to the life told about. And as individual, personal stories the narratives are constructions of the described reality including the storyteller, persons told about and the circumstances surrounding the persons in the story. And more than that; all narratives hold two sides. One is the story itself, the construction as it is, word by word. The other side contains the values and significant insights of the storyteller. By looking for this second side of the narrative, you will learn a great deal about the storyteller – and if you as a storyteller can read your own values out of your own story, you will even learn something about yourself.

Being given the chance publicly to tell one's story, as it happens in this book, is furthermore a way to grab the right to define one's own life. In the words of the French philosopher Michel Foucault it can be understood as a way to take or regain *power* over one's life. Therefore, the narrative is a pathway to *empowerment*.

The power of the narrative lays not only in its ability to construct a story, giving it meaning and empower the storyteller. It also has the ability to *deconstruct* the (negative) ruling stories in the surroundings – stories that often are imprinted also in the mind of the storyteller. By putting words on feelings, experiences, treatments and mistreatments some of the ruling stories that suppress the storyteller – by always claiming he or she is dumb, fat and ugly or even beautiful, smart and fit – might lose their power and give way for better and more sustainable life-stories. Stories to grow on as human beings, not to wither by as dried flowers.

By reading the narratives or by listening to the stories being told the story-teller will experience forms of recognition that foster in him or her a feeling of self-confidence, self-esteem and self-appreciation – feeling that many have not been granted with until now.

Of course there are dangers, too, in telling our own narrative, as it, according to Shakespeare, can seduce us; “Beware of the stories you tell yourself, for you will surely be lived by them”. But then again, maybe we should run that risk, as John C. Murray once said: “There is danger in reading bad books, but also greater danger in not reading good ones.”

This book is an account of a *Freedom Writer-course*, where practical writing- and art-exercises are ‘warming up’ the students – making them confident with the situation, each other and the published media – in order to write their own narrative.

You are welcome to copy the methods – or even better: to develop them into something appropriate to your own class-room!

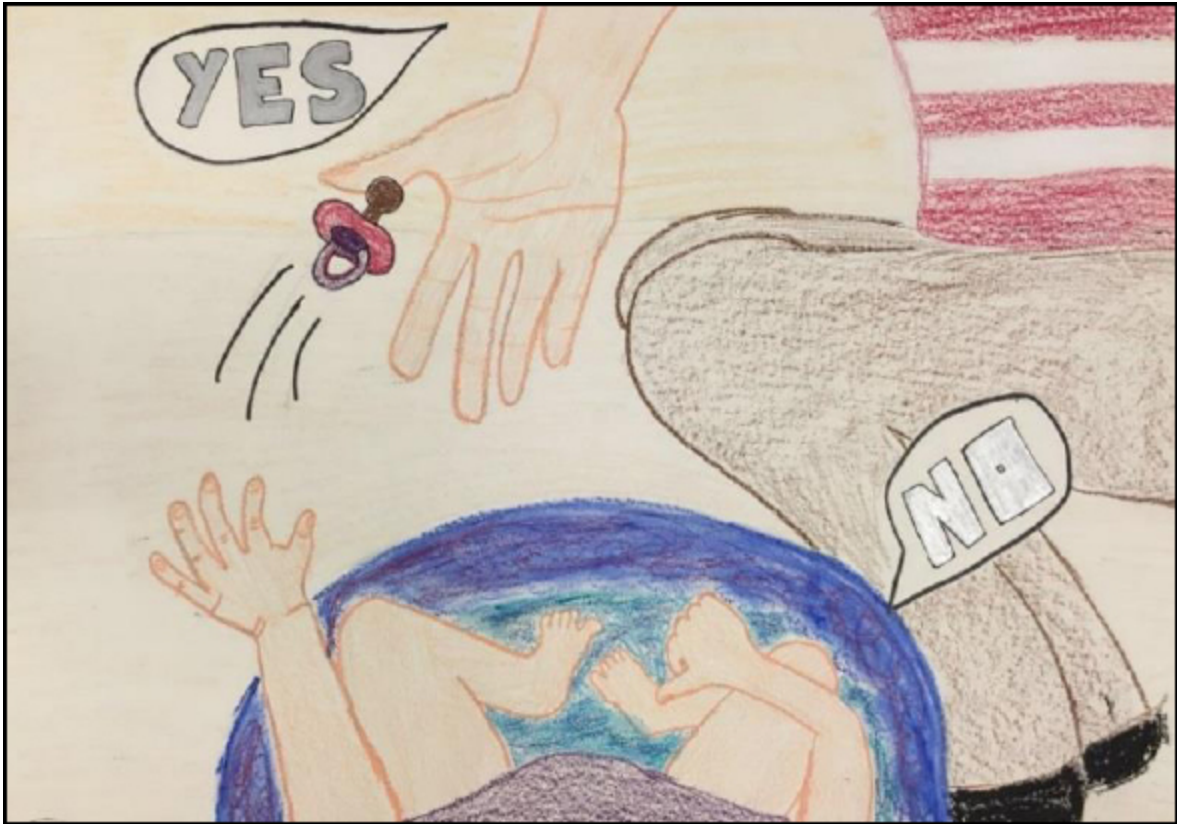


## Wall of Early Memory

A Walls of... is a simple exercise to motivate for writing personal narratives and to show students, that writing short stories about themselves is an easy task and it even feels good to do so!

Each participant gets a Post-It size A5. On this they are asked to write according to the theme, which can be anything: early memories, sad memories, joyful memories etc. Or it can be their pre-understanding of a theme they are about to start studying in order for the teacher to get a glimpse of what they know about it.

The stories are written anonymously and randomly put on a flipover board turned backward to the class. In that way the narratives are kept anonymously – as they also are in this book.



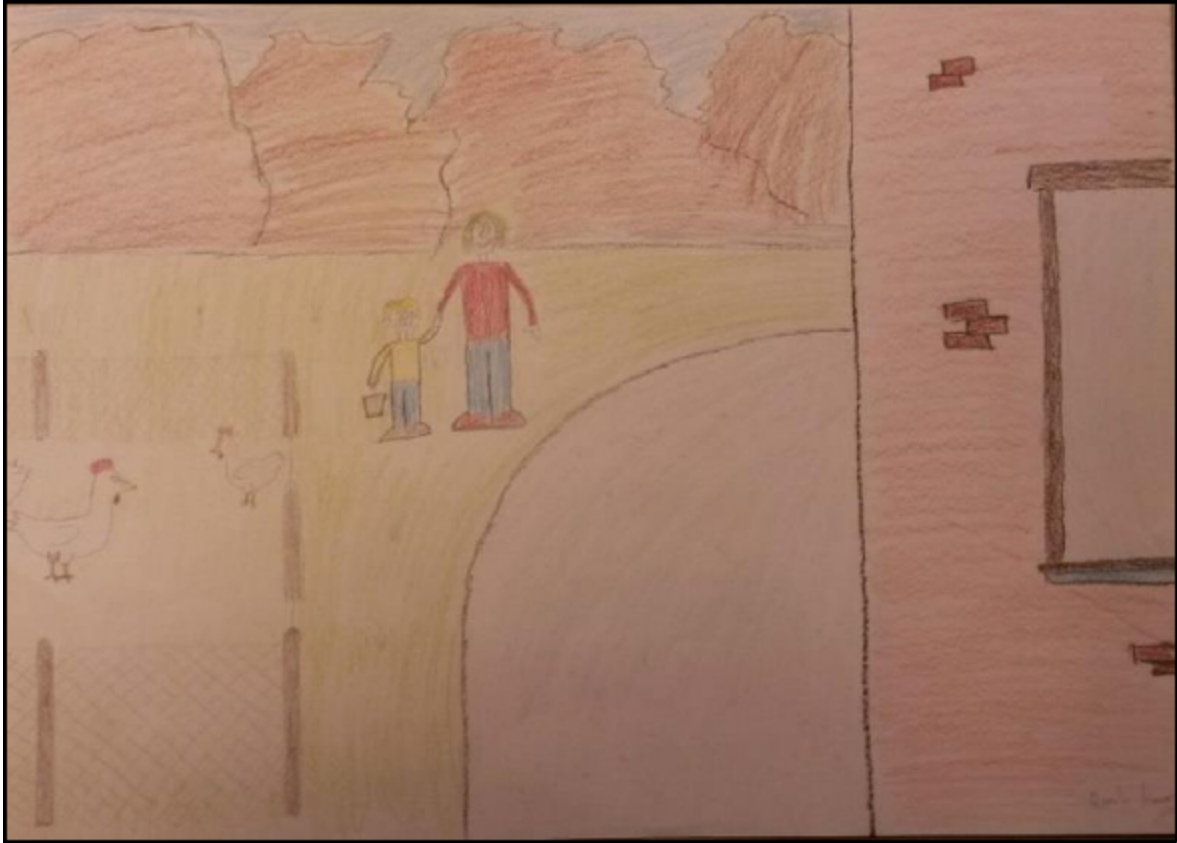
- It was very dark around me. I was probably less than a year old. I could feel that I was full and it was nap time for everybody. Every day in kindergarten you were supposed to take naps from 3pm to 4pm. I never liked the suckers, instead I would always stick my thumb in my mouth.

One of the teachers from the kindergarten was new and she didn't know that I was the only baby there who didn't like the sucker.

She tried and tried to put it back in my mouth but I was always throwing it away until one of the other teachers came, my savior, and took it away from me. I finally had a pleasant nap.

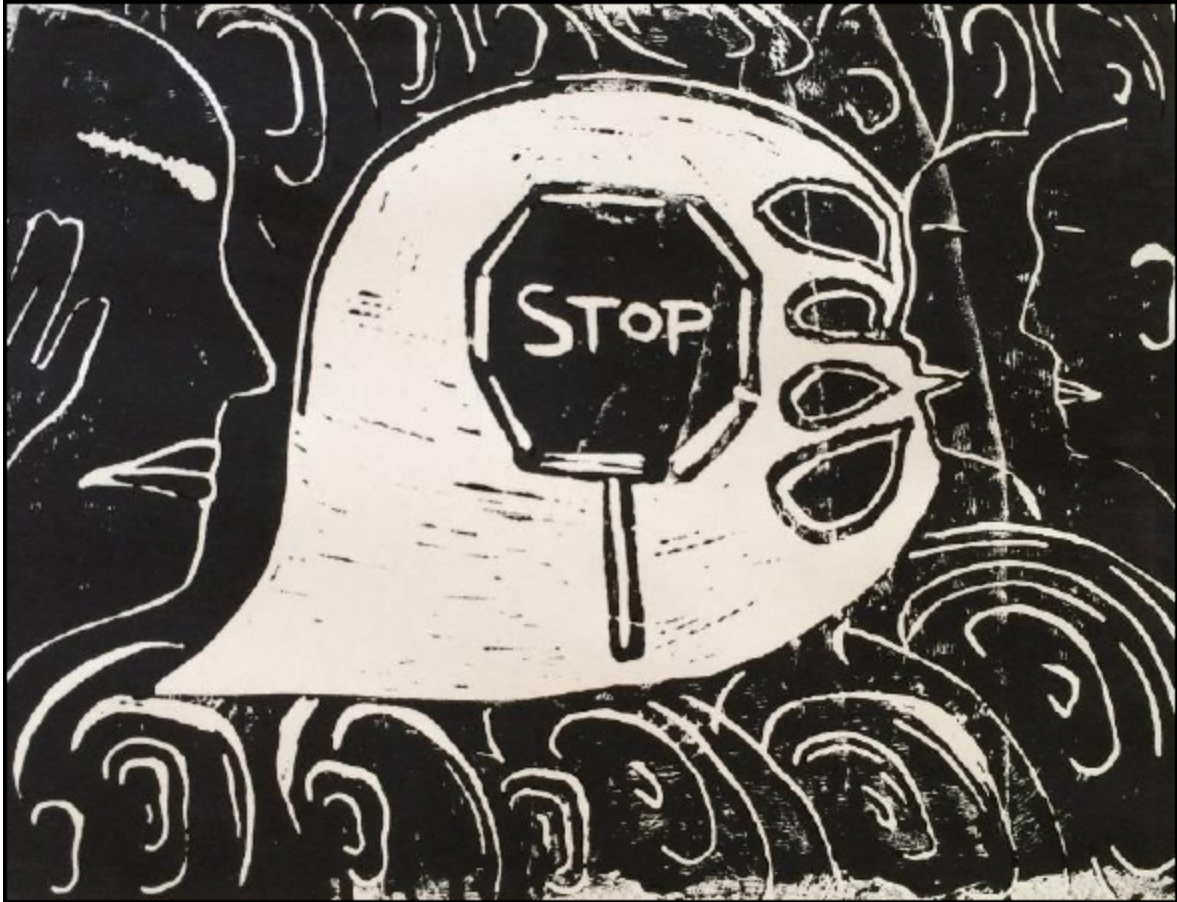


- My first memory was in Tunisia, Africa. I was 6 years old, and I went with my family on holiday. I can't remember everything about this tour, but there is something I will never forget. I love the pirate's ships and one day we were in the ocean watching fishes and one of these marvelous and beautiful ships came to us. I was excited, I imagined all the pirates dancing, and singing and I wanted to be with them.

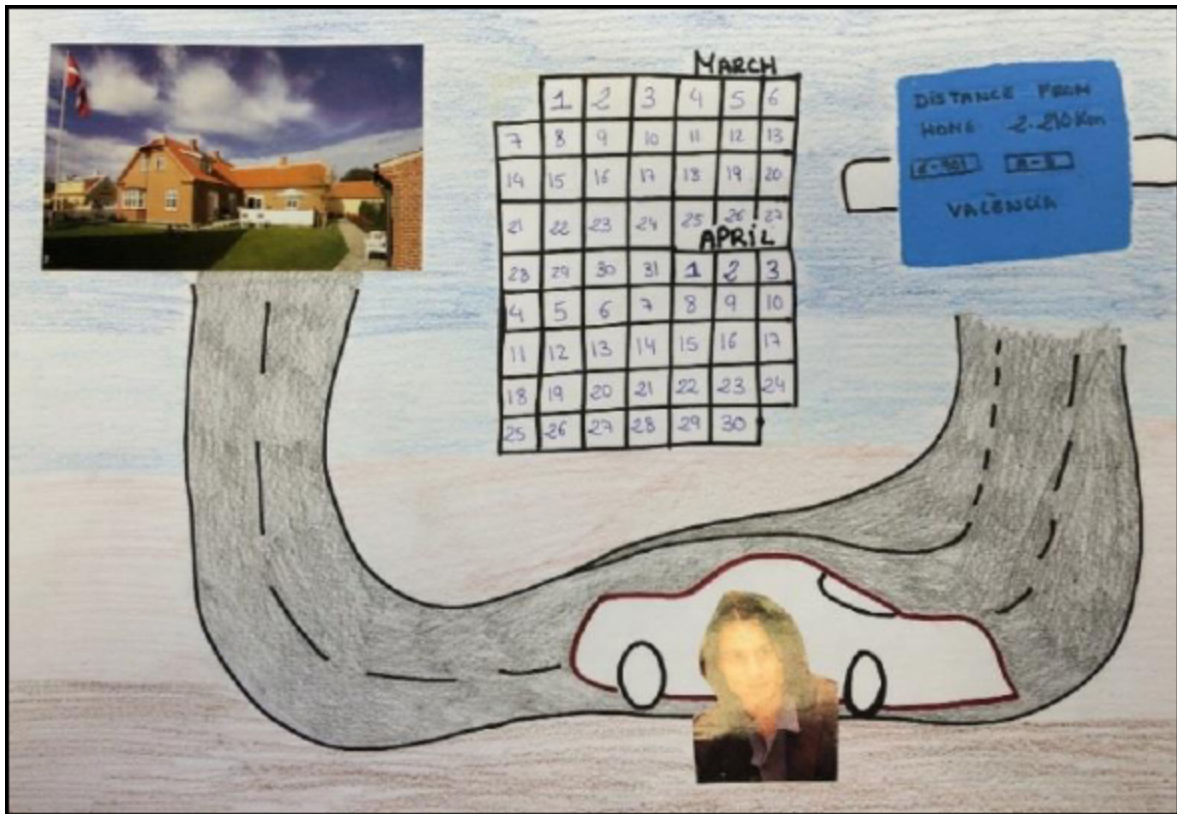


- Back when I was three or four, my grandparents had a very big house far from mine. I used to go there pretty often, and I remember that I really enjoyed helping to take care of the chickens and playing in the huge garden. It didn't completely change my life, but I still remember that time fondly.





- When I was in kinder-garden, I had an important experience, which still means something to me today. My best friend and I were putting on dresses, playing around and having fun. At a certain point, our pretended game got out of control and a little louder than supposed to. After the first warning from our teacher, I stopped fooling around, but still kept laughing and smiling about my best friend's actions. At that point our teacher sent me out and scolded me for my friend's actions and didn't let me explain my point of view. I felt really upset and was sad about the non-communication. Therefore, I think it is really important to hear every side of a story and try to understand the difference perspectives. So listen!



- When I was little my dad never was at home for long, because he had to travel for work. Therefore, every time he was at home, I never let him alone for a minute. I didn't like to be that far from my dad.





- A long time ago I remember being ill. I had a grave fever. I was hallucinating. I still have the hallucinating image of a train, and steam coming out of it. However, what I remember the most, is my sister. We are only a year apart and we are complete opposites. She takes a lot of place and it's not easy to find room for myself. We fought a lot when we were little, but that day it was different. She took care of me, bringing me water, staying at my side. I'm sure that if I had asked her anything I wanted, she would have done it for me. Therefore, when we fight, I look back to that moment and remember her good side and see how beautiful and genuine she can be. I'm lucky to have such a great person in my life.
- One of my first memories is when I was telling to my teacher that my mother was very sick and had to puke every morning. Turned out she was pregnant with my

little sister. We made a present together for my little sister.



- I don't remember how old I was at that time. Maybe in a kindergarden? I was playing memory-card with a friend. In the middle of a game, everyone else went out of the room (I can't remember why) and I was left alone. At that moment, I flipped the cards and memorized the pictures. After a while they all came back to start the game again. This was my first cunning, as far as I remember.



- When I was little, like 6 or 7 years old, we celebrated my birthday at home with my grandmother. The two of us always went for a walk. One time we were lost, so we walked for hours. I still remember this, because the time spent with my grandmother is very precious. I remember some talks, the road, people we met during the walk...



- My earliest memory is hiding because I dropped a plate. I knew I'd be whipped with the belt if he found me and my back was still bleeding from the previous time. I remember hiding behind the sofa hoping that he would be in a good mood when he found me so that I wouldn't be hit so hard. I can remember hearing him talking and walking around. Then he started calling my name and the longer I stayed behind the sofa the louder and angrier he got. He was screaming my name when he found me.
- My earliest memory, that formed to be the person I am today, is probably taking care of my brother. I was only 20 months old he was born. From that moment on, I kind of followed my mother's lead and looked after him. I dried his nose when he had a cold; I changes his diapers and so on. This feeling of responsibility for others was with me throughout my life and probably the reason I decided to become a teacher.



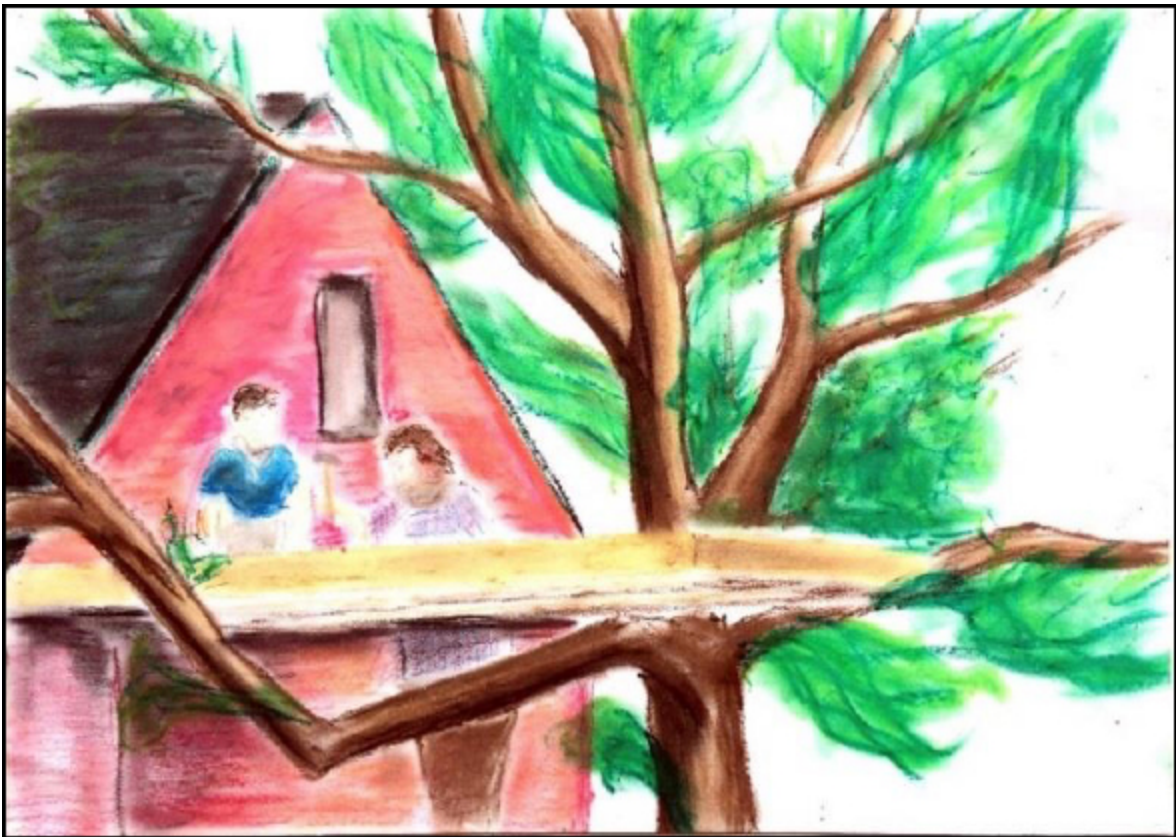
- If I try to remember as far back as I can, I just see my mother holding my hand. She is dropping me off in the kinder-garden. There, I used to draw and I wasn't able to respect the lines but I didn't care because I was sure I was good at drawing. I also remember some moments in a car with my farther playing Latin music and singing out loud.



- We were with one of my sisters at my grandparents' place at Lake Balaton in a village called Szigliget. It was summer and we learned how to play poker. My grandpa' taught us and later he also played a lot with us. Form the moment we learned poker, we were playing it all the

time. It is a very nice memory because it reminds me of how awesome it was to spend the summers at my grandparents' place with my sister. Every summer I was looking forward to visit my grandparents and to spend time in, to me, the most peaceful place in the world.

- I can imagine looking in the mirror when I was about 4 years old. I imagined how I would look like in the future. The strongest image is how I watched the outlines of my face and how it would change.



- One of the best childhood memories was making a treehouse together with my grandfather. We spent hours and days together working on it. He taught me how to hammer nails, glue wood and use a saw. Maybe this was the beginning of a very close relationship with my grandparents, which I still have today. After finishing the treehouse, there followed more lessons in



woodworking. Today the treehouse is no longer there, but the relation with my grandfather got even stronger. The teaching has become the other way around; I'm now teaching my grandfather sometimes in making things. I think that's the most beautiful thing about teaching – that you can learn from each other.

- Before my family moved away from our first house, I was between the age of one and four and a half years old. I remember I was at home, sick with some sort of flue. My older brother and I were watching TV down in the basement and I began to vomit uncontrollably (this was the first time I can remember throwing up). I could feel nearly all my energy begin to drain out of my body and I didn't seem to have the strength to walk up the stairs to go to the bathroom. Therefore, with lightning speed my older brother hooked his arms under my armpits and dragged me up the stairs as I continued to vomit. I spewed my guts all the way up the stairs. The thing that really stuck with me are the helplessness that I felt and the way my brother acted. He was the type of big brother people dream about and the type of brother I want to be.



- Some years ago, I needed help and my sister spent her time to help me. In that moment I realized how important her help is to my life and that I can always count on her help. Moreover, since it happened I have demonstrated to her that I'm here to help her when she needs it, too.
- It was my first day at primary school and I remember all these happy kids that came together with their parents. I was also happy to start school, but different to all the other kids. I had to come with my grandmother and my Godfather's family. Nobody realized the difference, but I felt it.



- Every year I went to a small village with my grandparents and my cousin to go to the fancy fair over there. I remember it as very joyful moments because my cousin and I could eat a lot of ice cream and play with the other kids. After that, we went to my great grand aunt to eat delicious cakes, made in the local bakery. I still remember the taste as if it was yesterday. For me that was a taste of joy and cozy family meetings.



- One of my earliest memories, as I was a very young child, is eating a strawberry ice cream. By my third bite, there was a wasp on the ice cream, and I got stung two places in the mouth before I was able to spit it out. I had an allergic reaction and was rushed to the hospital because my throat was closing. Until this day, I can't eat strawberries or stand being near bees or wasps.
- I remember in kinder-garden I was with a friend named Morgan. We both wanted to be like superheroes and had the idea of jumping from the top of the slide to ground. We didn't think about the danger we put ourselves into every time we jumped, but we had so much fun and truly believed we were superheroes.
- When I was a kid, my mother always told me that it was Santa Claus, who put candy into my Christmas sock. One faithful morning I woke up earlier and pretended to

be asleep as my mom walked into my room and put some candy in my Christmas sock... From that day on, I didn't believe in Santa!



- One day my mother came late to pick me and my sister from kinder-garden. The teachers were worried and called the phone. However, there was no answer. My sister was worried that my mother had forgot about us. Me on the other side was distracted by the fishbowl with two gold fish, one arrange and one black. Every time the teacher turned away, I tried to catch one of them but they were too fast. On that day, I learned catching with your bare hands is very difficult.
- I remember being six years old, asking my mom when I would turn five again. She obviously responded by telling me I wouldn't. Then I realized right at away that

you can never relive anything and that we are all going to die.



