

# Erasmus+ project „The Children of Sheherazade“

## Germany – Storyteller’s Summary

**School: GGS Düppelstraße, Aachen, Germany**

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Three years with a class, 30 times in a school year and the children and I get to know each other. I become aware of their virtues and failings, notice their progress and their changes and see their potential. To me always a miracle, no matter how often it happened throughout the 25 years.

But this class differed from all others insofar as we started during the Corona pandemic. I did not see the kids faces for almost a year, just their eyes and hair. When the masks fell shortly before summer 2022 I did not recognize them. My imagination had probably picked different faces. We laughed about it. „Draw me the way you thought I looked!“ a few asked me. But I declined, telling them words are more my virtue. I was able to tell without a mask as I could keep a distance of 4 metres and we had an dehumidifier in the class room.

So the first year an extra challenge: for 2 countries I did not have a wonder tale in my repertoire. South Sudan and Vietnam. The other obstacle the missing faces! I change my stories according to their mimic. Those tell me if they comprehend the language, are able to decipher the content, their feelings: frightened, bored, unable to foccus. Then I alter words, content, change description, feeling and action until all are within the story again. So it was fantastic to witness their reactions at the end of the year. Then I always take one session to go through all the tales I told. Just one specific gesture, a certain mimikc, a refrain, the first words of a song are needed to bring the tale behind it to life, at least to my understanding. And I was proven right! 90% of the children remembered the tales in detail and could tell them. They heard the tale once and it was stored in their memory. And not only their national story but all the others of the class. Proudly did they bind their collected pictures into a booklet. Choosing their own title and the front cover page.

The second year was also surprising as they chose themes I have not encountered before. An older child had joined the class. He, in the beginning, had a leader function due to his age. He wanted „Halloween stories“ and the theme was picked besides Christmas tales and giants and witches of the world. I then told my class that Halloween was the American version of „Samhain“. They were fine with hearing celtique mythology and the origin of Samhain. Again a novelty for me. At the end they created three booklets with their various titles. „Now I have 4 books in my shelf!“ some children told me. A few others entrusted me with the information that those are the only books they have at home.

Year three was anticipated with some dread by my teacher as she was very aware of their limited knowledge of German. The two Corona years where they were at home, not exposed to German were very noticeable in their vocabulary and their grammar. But from the beginning they mastered the different methods, had fun and improved dramatically. One chose to sing her first little tale without making one grammatical error. Normally she was not able to form one correct German sentence. They created a story about brain worms. It was formed into a booklet and performed as a theatre piece. The highlight was when each of them wrote an own story according to three words they made up. The method: to take some prefixes and nouns, combine them at random thus creating new words. A method from the Dadaists. They invented „Halbtisch = Half table“, „Anhouse = Added house“, „Zerrtuch = destruction fabric“. Thus the titles.

They wrote stories that moved us (the children, the teacher and myself) to tears. Here we saw the work of the three years. Imagination in abundance, responsibility towards nature, awareness of others and tolerance of newness, curiosity towards unknown worlds. Yes, Sheherazade – your strength and creativity to safe yourself and countless others through telling tales proves to bear fruits:  
Your children are born!