

## **A presentation of “Children’s Stories” and “Glass, Wooden, Paper and Other Stories”**

**By Maria Michaelidou  
Inspector of Primary Education**

Dear Book Lovers,

I am delighted to present these two books, by the same author and in the same literary category. Both publications belong to the type of children’s literature that we refer to as Short Stories.

Their author, Elli Peonidou, needs no introduction. She has been recognized for the whole of her literary output, which comprises a large number of books that are of enormous value, having been read widely by adults and children alike. She has been honoured with awards and prizes and her work has been translated into other languages, adapted for the stage and anthologized in educational manuals and literary collections.

Elli Peonidou has enjoyed a long and prolific presence on the country’s literary scene, with her books for adults as well as her literature for children and young people. She made her publishing debut in 1964 but it was not until 1979 that she emerged as a major figure in Cypriot literature for children and young people, at a time when this genre was badly lacking in terms of the number of books available, their design and illustration, and the variety of literary forms.

Since then she has written continuously and one book has followed another, mainly short stories and novels. She has also written many fairytales and children’s plays. She has been recognized and honoured by the Ministry of Education & Culture, the Association of Greek Writers, the Cyprus Association of Books for Children and Young Adults, the Women’s Literary Association and the International Theatre Institute for Children.

The first book, entitled “Children’s Stories” comprises 19 short and concise stories that take their inspiration from the daily life of two children who are the main characters and who play, talk together, read, quarrel, experience both joy and sadness, and get up to all sorts of mischief like all children of their age.

The writer succeeds admirably in making the characters think, feel and express themselves like real small children, with naïveté, brevity and immediacy, and they behave in every way with a truly childish outlook. The topics she deals with are many and full of meaning. She enables the young children who will listen to or read her stories to get to know the world, to develop an interest in and a love of nature, to come into contact with social, national and global problems and to learn good habits and approach the world of values.

In these 19 gently-paced stories, the writer almost imperceptibly touches on a large number of topics and helps children develop their depictions and images of real, everyday life and lets them get to know this life via the values and principles that should guide it. Moreover, she offers children a stimulus for knowledge, learning and dialogue with their parents and teachers. The lives of the heroes are entirely those of children and this makes it easier for her young readers to identify with them.

The writer successfully intersperses the short stories with more lengthy texts in the form of fairytales which reinforce the children's interest.

In the second book, with the very original title "Glass, Wooden, Paper and Other Stories", the stories revolve around objects and instruments made of glass, wood or paper. Teaching experience tells us that these objects, which are found in a child's immediate surroundings, can keep the child company, talk to him/her and be answered, they can become friends, resemble people and have a soul. The child can then converse with them as animate beings and, as a result, can deal with difficult situations, learn to socialize, and overcome his/her fears and phobias.

All 18 stories in the collection are interesting from the standpoint of their subject and structure. They are told briefly, with rapid plot development, simplicity, clarity and immediacy. Each one delivers a specific message, disguised by means of literary mastery that transforms it into a fine example of writing.

Glass and porcelain dishes, musical instruments, objects in daily use, clothes and other form of dress and decoration, flowers and plants, furniture and ornaments, coins and bedding, books and school things, games, food and sweets, cleaning items and machines are all brought to life. They turn into people, their voiceless presence awakens in the family or their natural environment and, filled with joy at their unexpected good fortune to have been given souls, minds and feelings by the writer's generosity of spirit, they behave like people. Full of the joy and vitality they have been given thanks to Elli Peonidou's literary inspiration, they become main characters and the equals of other living things, they talk and interact with the heroes, children and adults alike, they live, think and react in a human manner.

I believe that in these 18 charming short stories, Elli Peonidou has come closer than ever to the child's pureness of spirit. She has fully understood the infant's psychological make-up and she speaks directly to the emotional and awareness level of the age group for which the stories are written. This book received an Honourable Mention from the Association of Greek Writers.

To summarize the virtues that I have found in these two books, I shall end by noting the five points which, in my view, underline their literary value and make them texts that deserve to be read again and again.

(a) The content, which covers a broad range of topics always easily understood by children and which is invariably interesting, thereby pleasing and entertaining them.

(b) The values that underpin every chapter. Presented at a gentle pace and without preaching, these values are timeless and essential for a child's sociability and for taking him/her away from his/her innate egocentric nature.

(c) The style which is so simple, concise and immediate and which, sometimes with humour and at other times with seriousness, characterizes each of the stories in these two collections which are such a pleasure to read.

(d) The language which, simply and accurately, speaks straight to the hearts of children through lively dialogues, brief sentences, a quick pace, sometimes offering hints, and is a superb complement to the language lesson.

(e) The lack of didacticism and preaching in the texts in the narrow sense and the instruction, education and life learning that these short stories offer to young, innocent children.

I warmly suggest these books to be used at schools and Kindergartens as useful and pleasant material for the teachers.