

FOR A & Z

The magical storytellers
»Please, tell me a story!«

Storytelling in digital
times with children

Connect

—

Create

—

Share

—

THE MAGIC TYPEWRITER

and the Storytellers

For children
only !!

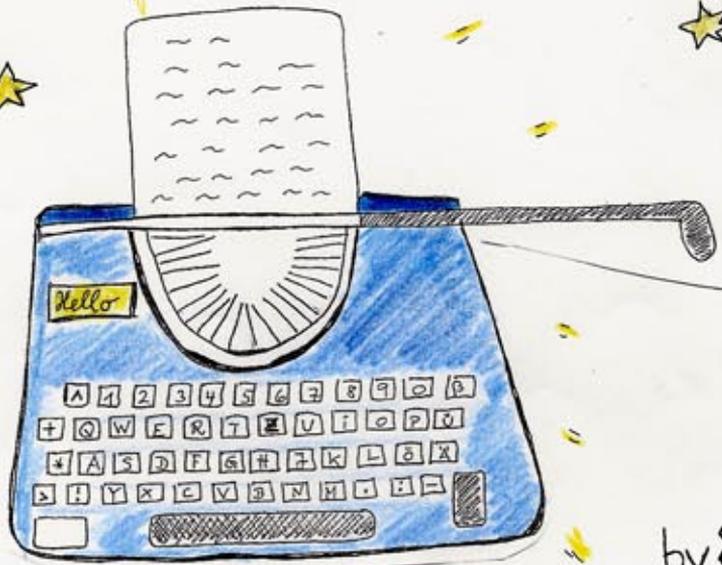


by: Jadaly

THE MAGIC TYPEWRITER

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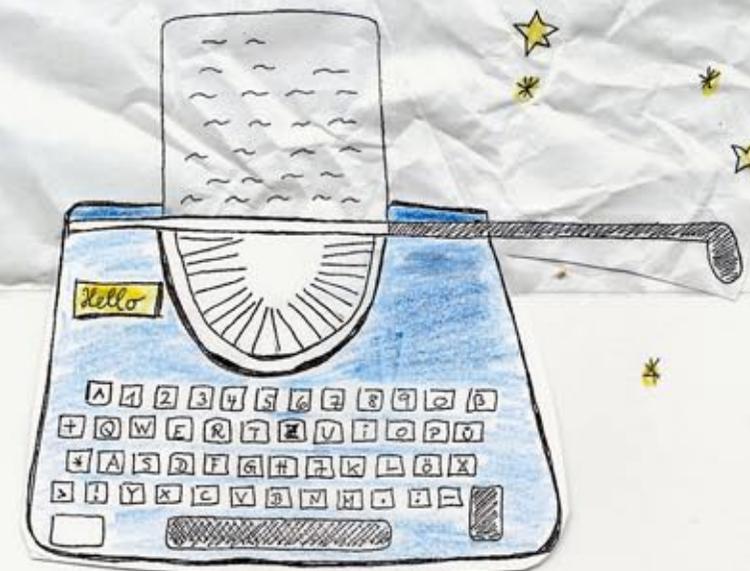
Many years ago ...

„It is better to give this typewriter away!“ said grandfather Ben. „Oh, no! This typewriter is my all and everything!“ answered grandmother Bella with a sad voice. „Please, we can keep it in our house, we can hide it in the little safe in the wall. Nobody can find it there“, she said. „Yes, you are right. This is a good idea - nobody will find it. Don't be sad, darling. I know how much you love her and one day ...“

Grandfather Ben embraced her and wiped her tears away.

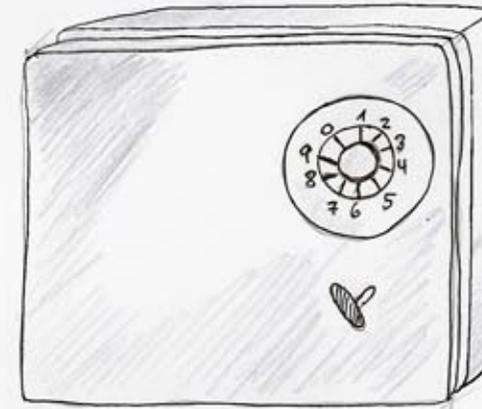
The grandparents Bella and Ben put me in a little, dark room in the wall and hang a picture over it - so nobody could find me there.

It was dark and lonely. And I waited ... and waited ... and waited ...



It was really dark inside the safe. I had no idea what happened. I may leave this dark room again?

Then - one day - I heard a noise. UUUHH - what was that? It sounded as if the house is going to break apart. The door opened slowly and light came in!



"Yes, she is back, finally!" was my first thought. But instead of Bella, my dear Bella, who typed so many stories with me- I saw a little girl. She looked like Bella but as a child!



Oh, what is this???
What kind of machine is this? I have never seen something like this before, is it a computer?

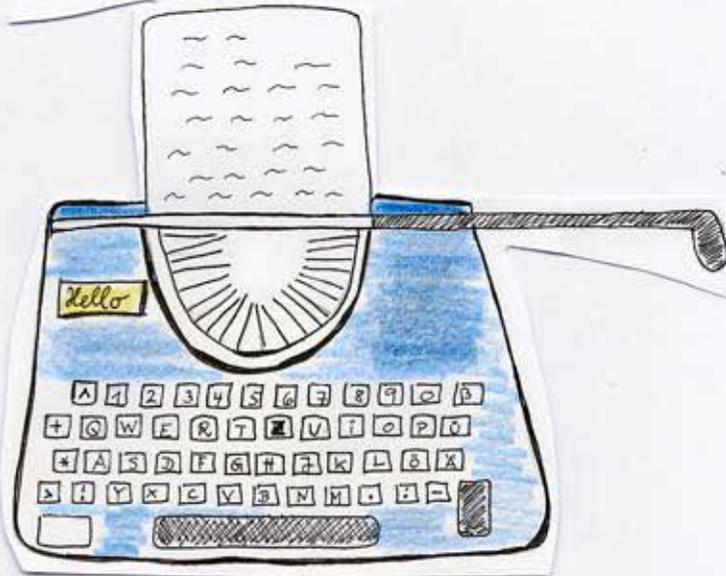


I was so excited! The times in the darkness were over ...

I understood now - a long time has passed. The little girl must be the granddaughter of Bella and Ben!

Hello!
Thank you little girl.
I am so happy that you
found me!

You can speak?
Who are you?



Yes, sure.
I can speak.

I am
a typewriter.
t-y-p-e-w-r-i-t-e-r

What is
a typewriter?

Do you
not want
to tell me
your name
first?



Oh,
I am sorry.
I was so surprised
that you can speak!
My name is LEELA.

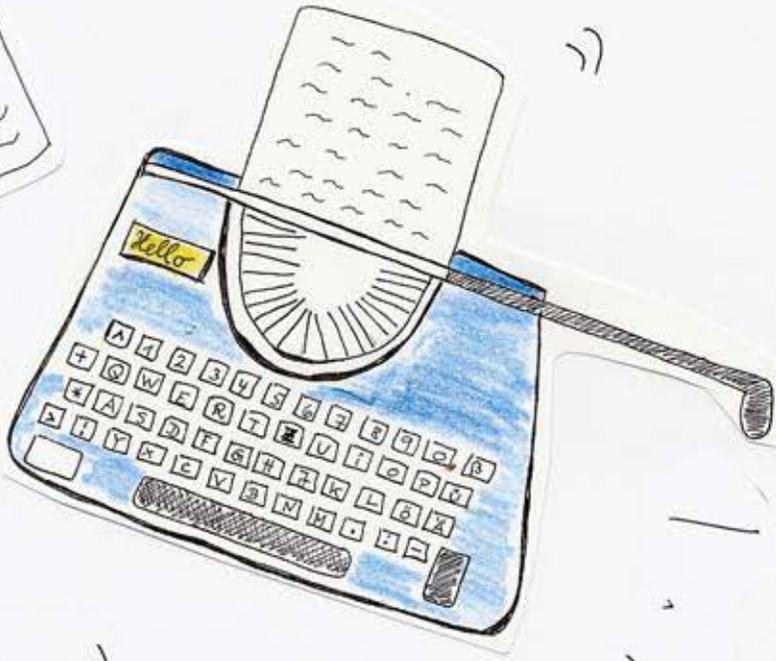
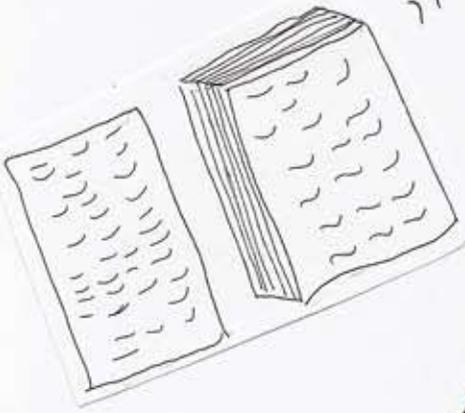
But now,
please tell me -
what is a
typewriter??



I was
made to
type your
stories. So,
please, tell
me your story,
litte Leela!

And I started typing every word Leela told me ... I typed a lot ...

Wow!
What you said,
it IS true!



Are you all alone at home?
Where are your parents?



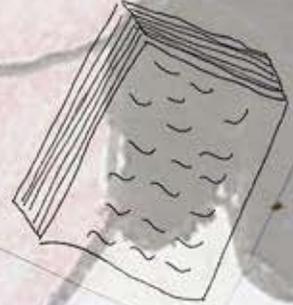
But why?
What happened?

I continued typing everything she said.

If you want me to stop typing -
just say: STOP IT!
And I will stop immediately.

Yes, it is so boring.
We cannot go to school.
We cannot meet our friends.
Not our grandparents.
All day we are at home
by ourselves. Since so
many long months...

I don't know! They don't
tell us. It is because of
health issues. Something
dangerous. It is out there
and our parents are afraid.
But I miss my friends
and grandparents so
so SO MUCH!





Dear typewriter, I got an idea!
I want to connect you, with our
computer and the internet!



What is
"the Internet"?

I don't understand
what you are talking
about...





It was fantastic and exciting to be connected with all these cables!

I was so happy to type again, to type for Leela and her friends!



Leela and her friends could connect and communicate with these cables. They told their first story and I was typing it for them - typing everything they said or thought - it appeared not on paper but on a computer screen.

They met every day for some weeks and told a beautiful story about a boy and a dog. This dog was not a real dog but I will not tell you more of this story. You should read it yourself.

One day Leela told me that it was allowed to meet again with her friends. It was a great day.

Leela and her friends painted pictures and made a film out of it and a book with pictures.

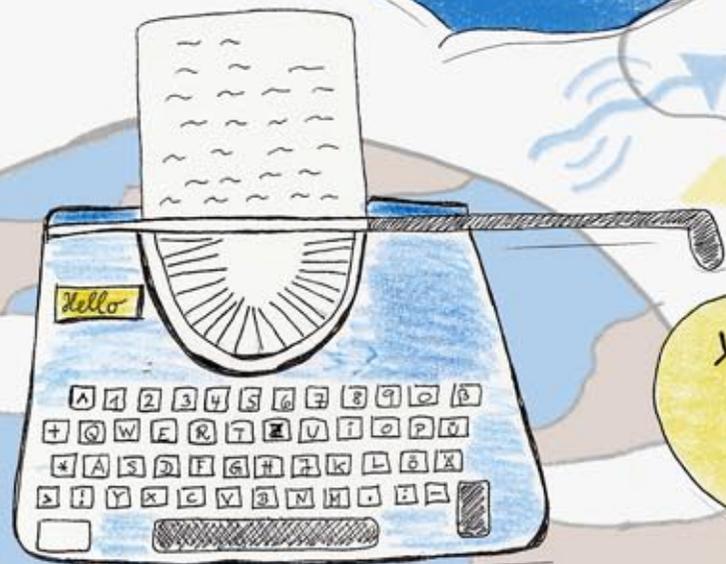
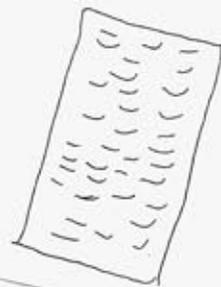


Leela and me had still our own evening conversations and I was typing only for her.

What are we going to do with the story?

Why don't you send it around the world with that funny thing "Internet"?

Yeah! What a good idea! You are great, my dear typewriter!





I am leaving now,
my dear friends.
Now you don't
need me anymore.
You can write
your stories now
without me.
Bye-bye!



Thank you,
dear typewriter!
We will miss you!



Erney

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Credits – Thank you!

1.

INTRODUCTION

Winter 2021 in Berlin, Germany – if you have ever been to Berlin in winter you know how it feels – grey, cold, dark, gloomy weather and no sunlight for months. Winter 2021 was even worse – people were isolated due to the Covid restrictions. A national lockdown forced everyone to stay at home – for days, which became weeks, which became many, many long, long months.

Schools were closed, children had to study at home with their parents or on their own – it was called »home-schooling« and for most it was a completely new experience and the majority were not prepared at all for such a situation. Teachers, educators, parents were overwhelmed by the experience of isolation and being cut off so suddenly. Not seeing their grandparents or friends, not going to school anymore, some of their parents worked at home, others lost their employment. Nearly all parents became co-teachers and educators for their children.

The world had changed so fast. People had to wear protective masks, bought loads of toilet paper, soap, and noodles and we were no longer allowed to touch each other. We washed our hands continuously as we sang the birthday song (twice) to ensure that we were suitably clean. We maintained distance from others in public spaces – as far as the length of a pony. It was indeed a new, scary, crazy, isolating, and isolated daily life that arrived so suddenly like a big, huge, and dark wave that washed over all of us.

BACKGROUND — PARTICIPANTS AND THE INTENTION

During these times, I had the idea to create for (and with) children a virtual room where they could meet and connect with their friends and become creators themselves by telling stories. Children would offer their stories as gifts to others who had to be isolated too. Storytelling is a powerful and creative tool to process, to connect.

In January I went to a public school in Berlin and made the offer to organize and run a new project »storytelling online for children« The school accepted, and the adventure began by the end the same month! It remains an exciting journey full of joy, and new insights for children and adults. I have seen the most amazing, courageous, kind, and creative kids. They were like rays of the sun. And their stories are growing and growing and growing ...

Please, dear adult reader, this part of the zine is made for you, if you would like to run a similar digital storytelling project with children, you could use it as an inspiration or even a kind of framework. Let yourself be surprised by what comes out of it. You can adapt it in whatever ways feel right and simply trust in the children, the process, and the magic of storytelling!

This is a national project delivered in a public school in Berlin-Kreuzberg with 40% of children having an international background and 22% being raised by a single parent. We wanted to invite and connect them all – those of German and non-German backgrounds. We had a group of 10 children between 8 and 10 years of age. Later in the project they brought their friends or siblings to join the virtual get-togethers. At peak times, we had up to 14 children attending the storytelling-gatherings.

Our intention: Give children the space and a virtual room to process their daily experiences, to kindle their imaginations, to learn how to structure a story and how it feels to be another character or participant in a story. This is a place for creating, connecting, exploring, and sharing. We hoped to give children an opportunity to be a creation and a creator in this world all at the same time.

Connect

—
Create

—
Share

Tell stories and give them as a gift to those who are also separated, isolated, or far away and dearly missed.

THE PROCESS – WHAT HAPPENED AND HOW!

We sent out weekly invitations and reminders, established a virtual Zoom-room and a padlet (I will describe this later in detail) and the ZOOM-journeys were ready to take off!

The meetings were scheduled one day a week, Fridays, at 3 PM for 60 minutes.

We quickly found out that the children wanted to be in the Zoom room together, telling stories collectively – not in little breakout sessions which we also offered. I could feel this longing to be together again – to simply connect.

As an prompt, I offered the children a first sentence to start with and the children – one after the other – told one sentence of the story and so it grew slowly and steadily. I was typing their story on the whiteboard for them – so they could see their own story growing – like magic it appeared on the screen. It was me, the adult, typing what the children said, but digitally it seemed as though their invention just appeared on the screen. As the only adult in the Zoom-meetings, I stepped back to give them more space to explore and create themselves – as you can see in the children's section – the adult is an anthropomorphized typewriter! Now and then I gave little hints or asked questions if the process was stuck or encouraged them if some were a bit shy at the beginning. Mostly I got out of the way.

I did not interfere at all in the process and flow of their stories. They were their own.

The others listened attentively and during the waiting time they got some free space on the whiteboard to make drawings on 1/3 of the screen. We saved the whiteboards as screenshots and some of them were really beautiful and creative. It turned out also to be training in media skills – how to use technology and digital devices, how to conduct research on the internet and how to connect virtually. During those meetings, the children could see themselves on the computer screen and they could see and observe their own interactions and social behavior. Finally, they used these skills to negotiate with each other ideas for their stories.

After 60 minutes, often at the most interesting and exciting moment, I stopped the Zoom session with an announcement that only 5 minutes remained. We had a natural cliffhanger for the next session. Everyone wanted to know how the story would develop and so the group was growing together. Attendance at subsequent sessions was very high.

In between meetings, I occasionally sent them little surprises by post: fortune cookies for children in little golden boxes, hand-painted animal postcards with personal messages, and something to smell like curry, roses, cinnamon, and so on – to stimulate the human senses and get a fuller experience. The children loved the surprises.

COMMUNICATION IS KEY

We only used email at the beginning. I sent an email to them after each session and another one right before the next session which included the Zoom link and other information. I used a child-friendly font – Comic in 14 pt in dark green and a childlike layout. But our most important tool was the »padlet« where the children could also contribute, comment, and see their story grow as I posted the screenshot of the whiteboard every week in addition to necessary news about the project or inspirations and impulses.

The information on the padlet was growing through the contributions of the children. It was not only a communication tool, but also was used for documentation and evaluation.

EMAIL – INVITATION

Hallo !

Heute treffen wir uns wieder um 15 h.

Mit euren Geschichten und einer Überraschung.

Hier ist der Zoom-Link

<https://zoom.us/j/94350553430?pwd=dEE2Mk12NUtPSFVpVWVlV2t5b1ZjZz09>

Kommt gerne schon 5 Minuten vorher.

Heute braucht ihr wie immer Papier, Buntstifte und eine Schere.

Ich freue mich auf euch!

Herzliche Grüße
Jasmine



5.

CONNECTING THE DOTS AND SHARING WITH OTHERS

We invited friends from Taiwan into these sessions and the children learned 3 Chinese words in 30 minutes – moon, man, and mountain. At the end of the project, they told us it was one of the highlights for them. We also received emails with stories and videos created by young German learners in India who also came to the final event – the presentation of the story.



6.

THE STORY AS AUDIO FILE AND STOP MOTION FILM

»Out of the house! Into the infinite adventure!« – the title of the story of Johanna (a dog) and Leo (a boy) was told over 8 weeks by the children. We met only twice in person and the children painted the pictures for the stop motion film and we recorded the story as an audio file which can be listened to on its own.

They also did the stop motion film with the help of an adult. The editing and music composition was done by our friend Iman, a composer and editor.

On the final day we had a digital screening of the film and invited families and friends from all over the world. Only the virtual popcorn was missing.





The film is available on the school's website. QR-code to watch the film.

OUTLOOK AND FINAL WORDS

The children want to continue telling stories online – so we are continuing to work on these projects.

In the summer of 2021, we did a project with them about where the internet and technology come from and where it might go. The typewriter evolved as the symbol for the beginnings of machine written texts to computers and printers and now more and more to videos and an increasingly paperless world. They told stories using various software applications and created a theater play about time travel into the past and the future. Their vision of the future was golden and full of hope.

We just started a new round of digital storytelling with new children as well as some who had participated already. We realized that other digital tools could be integrated such as action bond, book creator, Spotify for the audio files and an intelligent and creative audio system »Tonie Box« to distribute the stories to shelters, nursery homes, or other places. A vision: One day these stories can travel around the world to help to create new images and connect across generations and borders, giving a broader and wider view of the world without the need to travel physically. We hope many more children will tell their own stories, their own views, which can be collected in a digital archive on the internet. We imagine a digital story garden which is growing and growing and growing ... just as their endless stories.

CREDITS – THANK YOU!

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. Sally . Min-Chi & Kajal . always You

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By Jasmine Ghandtchi
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