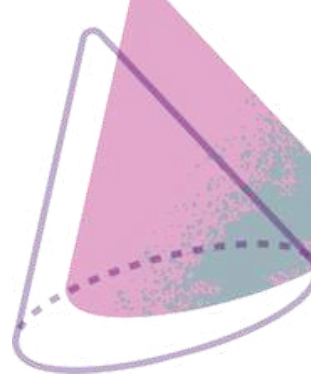




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Stories of inspiring women in STEAM:

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Prepared by GoINNO



Project Title

STEAM Tales – Enhancing STEAM education through storytelling and hands-on learning (KA220-HE-23 -24-161399)

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Ángela, guardian angel of nature



Nature is the best playground

Once upon a time in a land far, far away, there lived a girl named Ángela, whose name meant “the one who was given by angels”. She was born as a ninth child to a big, simple family of farmers who did not have much, but they all loved and supported each other. She lived in what seemed to be a piece of heaven; surrounded by farm animals, beautiful mountains, colourful plants, and clear waters. Together with her many sisters and brothers, she loved exploring forests, hills, valleys, and rivers in her surroundings – all these beautiful places were her childhood playground.





Question for children:

Doesn't that sound nice? Do you prefer playing in the forest, by the river or in the meadow?

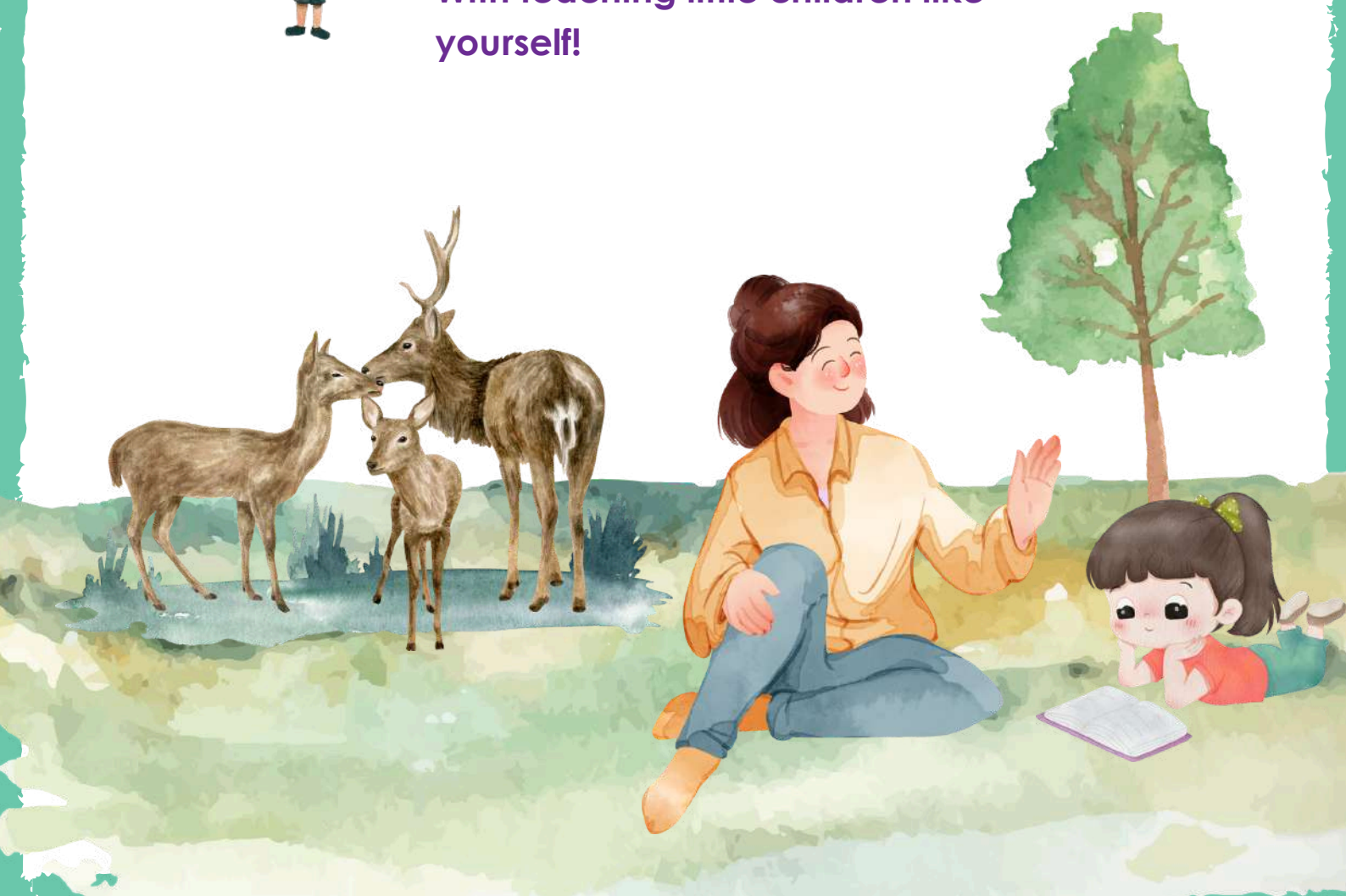
Surrounded by all of this charming nature she very soon realized she wanted to know as much as she could about it and try to protect it so that children (like you) who come after her can also experience this unspoiled beauty that nature has to offer.

Ángela was a very bright little girl who did very well at school. She wanted to continue studying because there was just so much she wanted to learn and explore. Because her family did not have a lot of money, she had to earn money herself.



Question for children:

**Do you know how she earned it?
With teaching little children like
yourself!**



Studying nature

But there was another obstacle besides money on her way to studying. Girls at that time, which was more than 100 years ago, were not allowed to study at university, at least not everywhere. She searched very hard to find a school that would allow her to study.



Question for children:

Do you think that she managed to find a university that allowed girls to study? Yes, she did!

When she was 24, she moved from her beloved village to the big city of Vienna where she studied what she loved the most – biology; the study of all living things!

After a few years of hard studying, she achieved the highest degree from her university, the doctorate. At first, it looked like she would not be allowed to study just because she was a girl, and look at her now – achieving something that not even all boys achieved! She worked hard, never gave up, and followed her dreams with all her heart. She showed everyone (and herself) that no matter if you're a boy or a girl, or where you come from, you can go far if you believe in yourself and never stop trying.

She was 28 years old when she wrote her thesis – a big final work that proved she gained a lot of knowledge – about moss.



Question for children:

Can you imagine, writing in such length about something seemingly so simple as moss? That is quite impressive!

A little girl from a big farm was one of the first Slovenian women with a doctorate in science, who would have thought?



In search of a job



Ángela was now on her way to becoming a real **scientist**. But first, she had to find herself a job. She lived in very confusing times when new countries were being established. Ángela was born in a small village that was, at the time of her youth, part of a large empire called the Austro–Hungarian monarchy.

Right when Ángela was looking for a job, something very big happened; the huge empire she lived in, which was made up of many different people and places, broke apart. Suddenly, her little village became part of a new country called Austria. To make things even more complicated, she and her family, like most people living in the Koroška region, were Slovenians by nationality. Austrians were very protective of their language and culture and were not particularly fond of Slovenians living on the border of their new country. Because Ángela cared a lot about her Slovenian roots and was very proud of her culture, she wasn't allowed to work in Austria. But that did not stop her, and she moved to Ljubljana, the capital of Slovenia, where she started working at a **museum of nature**. Amongst other things, her job was to look after the museum's herbarium, a collection of dried plants arranged in a particular order, similar to the library, just that instead of books, they had plants.



Ángela was a fun person to be around; she had many friends and she loved talking to them. But because she was a girl, it was expected that she only had girl friends. Friendship between boys and girls was considered strange at that time, except if they were to be married. But marriage was not something Ángela ever wanted, she wanted to be able to talk and have fun with her friends, no matter if they were boys or girls, as long as they got along. Having boys for friends, talking to them, going on trips together, or even having a simple cup of coffee, was so unusual for that time and to people around her that they started talking behind her back and making some not-very-kind observations.

Question for children:



Just because something seems unusual at first or strange to some people that does not mean it should be made fun of. Being made fun of is not a good feeling and can really hurt a person. But do you know what Ángela did?

She thought for a moment about what to do and then decided to keep her head up and not let rumours affect her life.

Dark cloud

Although Ángela already faced many obstacles on her way, the biggest was yet to come.

As we already know, Ángela was a very active young woman and we also know that she lived in a very turbulent time when some very bad people tried to rule the world and for a short time a dark cloud came over the sky and covered the sun above Europe. Like many, many people who did not agree with these dark forces that ruled the world, Ángela was taken to prison. This was a women's prison far away from her country where women from all over Europe were imprisoned. In the darkest hours of imprisonment, Ángela tried to find some consolation in memories of her happy childhood. She thought about hellebores that were just starting to blossom in forests near her home village, and about beautiful heathers on the hillsides of her beloved valley that were radiating in vivid colours in her memory.

She and her fellow prisoners were often experiencing hunger because there was not enough food given to them.





Question for children:

And can you imagine what Ángela did, to help her and her friend ease this hunger?

She did not have any food, but she started to collect recipes from her fellow prisoners. They all dreamed about what they would eat if they were at home and she started to write this down and arrange it in a cookbook! She also risked her life doing this because all forms of paper were forbidden, and if the guards found out she had this book, they would undoubtedly punish her.



Question for children:

Do you think that bad people found this hidden treasure? They did not! And you know what else? Dark forces were defeated, the war finally ended and all the women that were left in prison were released to freedom!

When Ángela came back from prison, she was very thin and not feeling well. But little by little, she started to get better. She rested, ate good food, and slowly grew strong again. Before long, she was ready to get back to work and do what she loved.



After all these hard trials, she could finally work in the field she had studied for, becoming **the principal of a natural history museum** in Ljubljana. Ángela, who held nature very dear to her heart, wanted to do everything in her power and try to protect it. That is why she founded a **Mountain guard** – a guard that protects plants, animals, rivers, and mountains. But she did not stop there, she helped establish **Triglav National Park** – the only natural park in Slovenia to this day!

During her life, she managed to protect many beautiful natural places. Because of her and the laws she established, many places remained the same, beautiful and unspoiled, for us to enjoy.

Angela was so important for the conservation of nature in Slovenia that the award was named after her! In 2018 also a park in Ljubljana was named after her; something she probably would not mind.



Question for children: do you agree? A little piece of green nature in the city - she would probably love that!



Happy years

After Ángela's difficult start and the first part of her working life, which was full of unfairness and doubt from other people, she still managed to have a full and happy career. But even with all the good things she did in her work, she never really fit what people expected from women at that time.

Ángela never got married or had children, but she grew up to be a kind, brave, and strong woman. She didn't follow all the old rules that people expected of her - she made her own path! Even in her older years, she did not lose her sense of humour: when she celebrated her 80th birthday, she was asked what her plans for the future were.





Question for children:

Do you know what she answered? To get married!

She never let expectations of others stand on her way to happiness. Because happiness does not mean the same thing for all people and she knew exactly what it meant to her.

A little girl from a big family came a long way from her family farm and succeeded against all odds. At the end of her life, she was given an important award for her life's work in conserving nature and she gave all of the money that came with the award away and distributed it amongst her many relatives.

She always stayed true to herself, always working hard, and was unstoppable when it came to protecting nature. We can still, to this day, see the results of her work; the beautiful nature that surrounds us is unspoiled also thanks to Ángela, and although she joked that she was given by the angels because of her name, we can say that she was a true guardian angel of nature.





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