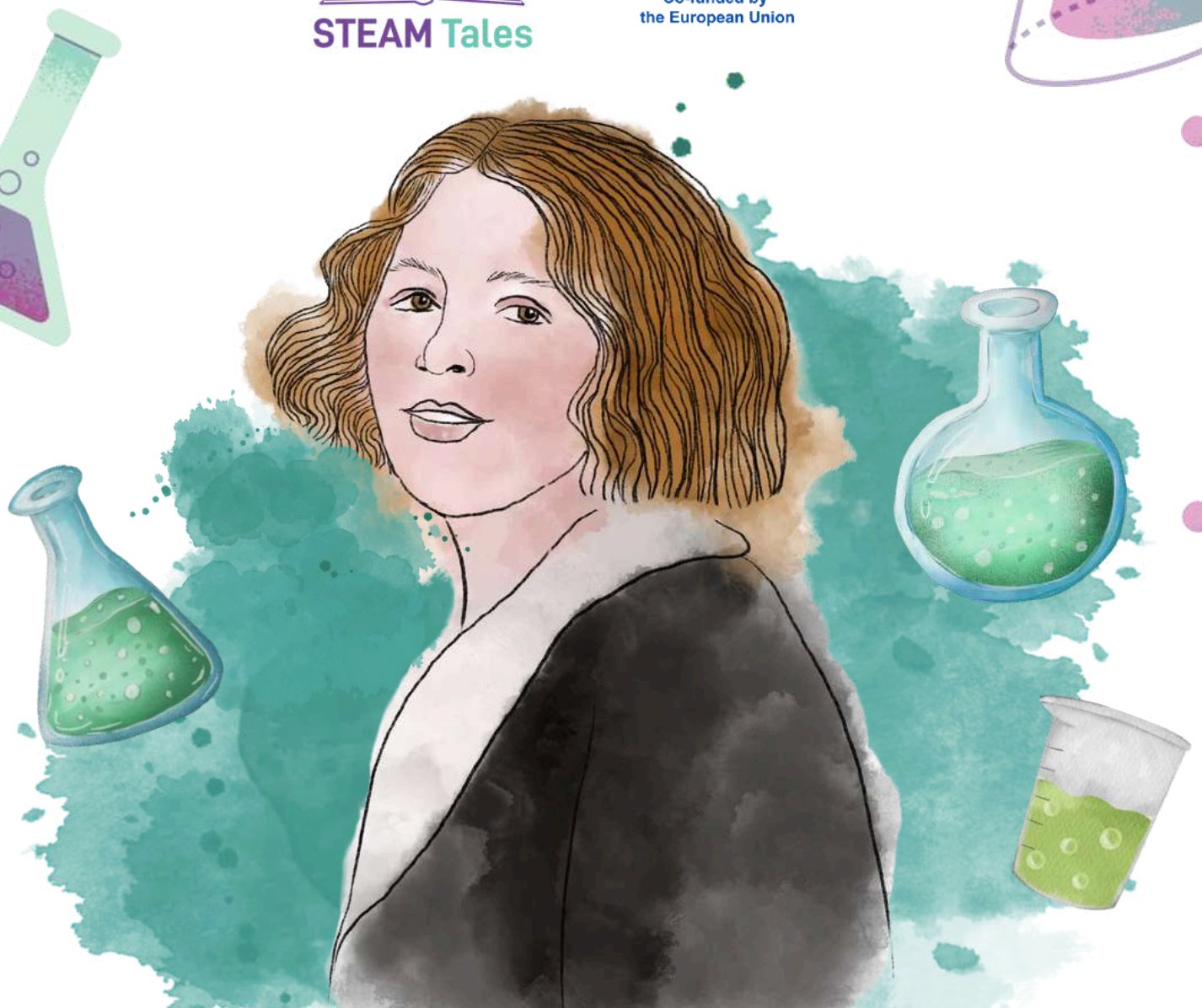




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Stories of inspiring women in STEAM:

Ana Mayer-Kansky

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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Ana, the brave ~~princess~~ scientist



A princess curious girl from the castle

Once upon a time, there was a little girl named Ana. She and her family lived in a castle – a real, actual castle! But Ana was no princess nor did she ever dream of becoming one.

Spending her days waiting for a prince in a tall castle tower sounded so boring to her that this princess' life was just not an option for her.

She was a curious little girl who loved running around and exploring her surroundings, finding out about animals, plants, and trees; everything that was somewhat interesting caught her attention.





Question for children:

Do you also like running around and exploring interesting things?

She had four siblings to play with and greatly enjoyed their company. Ana grew up in the period when girls' schooling was very restricted if not forbidden, but she was lucky enough because a new school had just opened that allowed girls to study. She was very good at studying, receiving compliments from her teachers about how bright and talented she was.

Even though she finished the first all-girls' grammar school with great success that was not enough to satisfy Ana's thirst for knowledge! She wanted more.



Question for children:

If you want something that much and you know you are good at it, what do you do? What did Ana do? Well, she just did not take no for an answer!

Unfortunately, Ana's grandmother got sick right at that time and sadly, she passed away. She loved Ana and all of her grandchildren very much and she would never hurt them if she could help it. That being said, she thought that too much education could harm a girl's future which was a very common assumption at that time, and wrong one of course, as we know it now.





Question for children:

Do you agree? It seems unusual to think that education could ever be a bad thing!

Nevertheless, Ana's father, who was torn between loving his daughter and pleasing his dying mother made a promise to Ana's grandmother that he would not let Ana continue with education. This was a very sad time for Ana, she was mourning her grandmother's death and was also sad because she was not allowed to continue studying.



Apricots can take you to university!



After the time of mourning had passed and life had returned to its old tracks, Ana's enduring desire for knowledge became evident to her father. Her father saw how eager she was to follow her dreams and after some consideration made a proposition to her. If she can organize the picking and selling of the apricots from their family orchard she could go to college in Vienna.



Question for children:

Do you know what Ana did?

What would you do?

Before her father was even able to finish his proposal, Ana was already at the door, calling all of her family and friends to come and help her with picking apricots. Before anybody knew it, apricots were picked and sold, and Ana was packed and on her way to Vienna; with money that she earned.



Ana in a big city

At last – she made it to college! And she achieved it all on her own, against all odds! Oh, what a joy!



Question for children:

How do you feel when you achieve something you put a lot of work into? When you wait a long time for something to happen, how do you feel when it finally does?

Ana, who was now 19 years old, felt like the happiest girl ever; she was able to study chemistry and physics in a city that was so full of life and so vibrant. She fitted in immediately; she made lots of friends and was very popular amongst them. Her brave and rebellious spirit continued to be her loyal companion; while all her girl schoolmates wore their hair in long braids, she cut hers, causing quite a commotion. This was very amusing to Ana. She also had many friends who were boys; with one of them, she often visited the Austrian Parliament and listened to important speeches. This was a very turbulent time in history with big changes on the horizon and Ana was almost in its centre. Then the First World War started...



Despite these unpleasant circumstances, her resourceful and cheerful nature helped her get through this period. Although there often was not enough food because of the war, she organized dinners for her friends with whatever she could find just to keep their spirits up.



Question for children:

Can you guess what Ana and her friends made especially often?

I am sure you also like it. Pancakes! And you know what, they made it in the science laboratory! Do you think they called them science pancakes and did they get any special powers eating them?



Ana in Ljubljana

Her time at college was coming to an end just as the war was also ending. That was good news for many people, but not for Ana's dreams of becoming a scientist. She loved chemistry and wanted to keep learning and discovering new things. She was more excited than ever about her future. But then, something happened. A new government took over after the war, and they decided that all Slavic students had to leave Vienna. That meant Ana couldn't stay and study anymore.



Question for children:

Oh no, how will Ana continue her career if she – once again – is forbidden to study?

But then an almost miracle happened – or maybe just a sign that fortune favours the brave. Right at that time a new school called the university was established in Ljubljana, the capital of Ana's country Slovenia! She moved to Ljubljana and met a chemistry professor named Maks, who immediately agreed to mentor her so Ana was able to continue studying. After a period of hard work and determination, she achieved a doctoral degree in chemistry – the highest possible degree in education at only 25 years old!





Question for children:

And you know what is especially interesting/fascinating?

She was the first person to ever achieve this degree in this new school called university; no men before her achieved this title!

Do you remember the prince from the beginning of the story? Ana did not meet a prince and she was no princess herself, but she did meet a lovely boy named Evgen and they got married soon after.

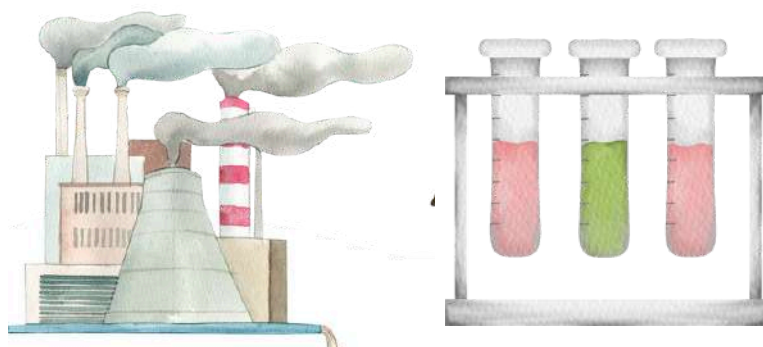
Evgen was also a scientist. After the wedding, a short period came where Ana was torn between choosing her path for the future.

After thinking about it for a while, Ana decided to leave university life behind. It was still very hard for women to succeed there. Instead, she chose to start a business, where she could use everything she had learned during her many years of studying.

Once she made this decision, she never looked back and regretted it.



Ana can have it all



She achieved everything that she dreamed of and more and now was the time for something different, for a new challenge. Just as she was the first to go to girls' grammar school and was the first person to ever achieve a doctorate in a new school in Ljubljana, she had the knowledge and self-esteem to know that she could do whatever she chose.



Question for children:

And you know what? Can you guess after whom the award for the best doctorate in Ljubljana University, the school that Ana went to, has its name? That is right! It is named after Ana, Dr. Ana Mayer-Kansky award! Maybe if you study as hard as Ana did, one day this (or a similar award) could be yours!

Question for children:

Do you know what the next step was for Ana? She built a factory!

Together with her husband, she became a pioneer – once again the first at something! – in establishing the first chemical factory while she simultaneously ran a successful company named after her. Together with her beloved husband, she started a family and had three children. At that time, it was still expected that a woman would take care of children and house duties.



Question for children:

**Do you think Ana will manage to do both?
Have a successful career while also taking
care of her three children?**

With the support of her husband and her resourceful nature that just would not take no for an answer once she saw a path for herself, she managed her family, social, and professional life with what seemed to be ease.

Although Ana and Evgen were no princess and prince, and her family castle was long in the past, they did, however, have a fairytale ending, and they lived happily ever after. A combination of luck, bravery, and resourcefulness, along with hard work and resilience to get over every obstacle that came her way, brought Ana great happiness. She was able to combine a happy family life with a successful career, something that her grandmother thought was not possible. She proved to herself and to women who came after her that you do not have to sacrifice one to get the other – with a little bit of help and inventiveness, you can have it all.





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