The Ugly Duckling

Retold and illustrated by Heroica Books



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Where does this story come from?

The tale is by the Danish writer Hans Christian Andersen and was published in 1843 as "Den grimme Ælling". Many readers see in it something of Andersen's own life, as he was teased as a child. This is a shortened version for young children.

What is the moral of the story?

Everyone has their own time and their own way of being, and no one should be judged by how they look.



What if the hero of the next story were your child?

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It was summer on the farm, and a mother duck sat on her eggs by the pond. One by one the eggs cracked open: crack, crack! Out came fluffy little yellow ducklings.

But one egg, bigger than the rest, took longer to hatch. When at last it opened, out came a large, grey, clumsy chick. "What an unusual duckling!" said the mother duck. Still, she loved him just like the others.



The other farmyard animals were not so kind. The ducklings laughed at him, the hen pecked his feathers and the turkey puffed out his chest to scare him. "You're so ugly!" they all said.

The grey duckling sat alone in a corner, sad, not understanding why nobody wanted to play with him. One day he could bear it no longer and left the farm.



Autumn came, and the duckling lived alone among the reeds of a marsh. One golden afternoon he heard a sound in the sky and looked up.

It was a flock of huge, white, graceful birds with long necks, flying far away. The duckling's heart beat fast. "If only I were that beautiful," he sighed.



Then winter came, bitterly cold. The pond froze over, and the duckling shivered in the snow with nowhere to hide.

Luckily, an old farmer passing by with a lantern found him. He gently wrapped the duckling in his coat and carried him home to sit by the stove, where he spent the rest of the winter warm and safe.



When spring arrived, the sun grew warm and the flowers opened. The duckling went back to the pond and bent down to drink.

That was when he saw his reflection and could hardly believe it: he was no longer a clumsy grey chick. He was a white swan, with a long neck and beautiful wings!



The swans swimming on the lake came over and welcomed him warmly, like a brother. On the shore, children pointed: "Look at the new swan! He's the loveliest of all!"

The swan bowed his head, shy and happy. He held no grudge against anyone. He had been through hard times, but now he knew who he truly was. The end.

NOW IT'S YOUR CHILD'S TURN

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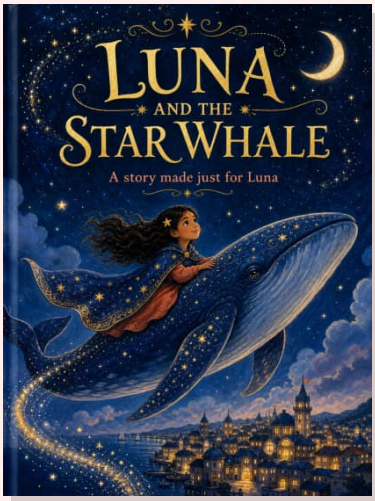

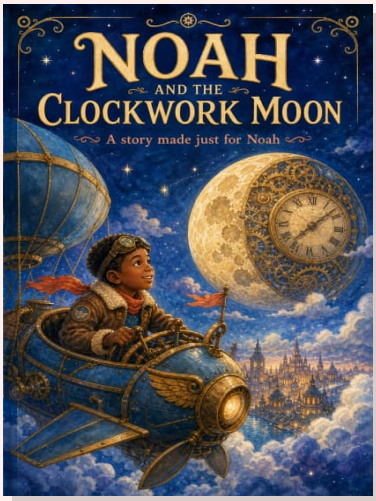



- A story written for your child's age, from 2 to 12
- Illustrations with your child's face, from a photo
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