



ATHANASIA GAITANIDOU

# The Golden Balloon

Illustrations by

MARY LAMPADARIOU



Athanasia Gaitanidou was born in Korinos Pierias, Greece. She has graduated from the Zarifeios Primary Level Education Academy of Alexandroupolis and has completed her master's thesis on "Management and Administration in Education" (Roma Tre University). Today she lives in Kavala with her family and works as a principal in the 4th primary school. She does not forget the first years of her professional career, when she taught at the Roma encampments of Haideftou and Chrysoupolis, Kavala in Greece. Those "special" kids provided her with the incentive to continually search for ways that would lead to an education of equal opportunities to all children.

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Translation from Greek:  
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*How is it  
That birds share so justly  
The blue kernels of the sky*

MARY LAMPADARIDOU POTHOU

(From the poetry collection  
“I collect my belongings”  
Wounded voices)

**T**here were once in a warehouse ten beautiful shiny, full of colour balloons, all of the same round shape! They were inflated and tied up with cords fastened to a base. They were so beautiful! They even admired themselves in the mirror of the warehouse!

- How pretty we are! Look at all these colours!!
  - I heard we are going to be decorating the party of a boy.
  - We'll surely dazzle the children that will be there!
- One of the balloons looked down and saw something that attracted everyone's attention.
- Hey, who are you? shouted the balloon to what it could see but could not make out.
  - I'm a balloon too! it said from where it was, lying on the floor.

It was really different from the rest of them; long in shape and very thin, with a colour unlike the others, that of almost gold. It was inflated and abandoned on the floor.

- Ha, ha! Listen guys, it's a balloon! answered one of the tied balloons and the rest of them burst into laughter.
- And what kind of balloon are you, all long and thin like this? How will the kids hold you and play with you?
- But I...
- Surely, the clown that inflated us moments ago made a mistake and that's why he abandoned you. You must be the only one in the world with such a shape. Tough luck kid...

The balloon became very sad. It coyly looked one more time at the balloons hanging directly above it and felt discontent. Why should it have been created so different from the others? It started thinking that it was really ugly as well. It is unfair it thought, being a balloon that didn't have a nice colour and could not be used in anything... There must have been a mistake at the manufacturing plant.

- And what kind of colour is this? It's the first time that we have seen such a colour, went on mocking the round balloons.





Suddenly the door opened and the clown entered the warehouse once again!

- Here we go, he said loudly as if he was talking to the balloons. He took the tied balloons in one hand and with the other he took the long one from the floor. Shortly before closing the door he turned back, got a pouch with something colourful in it and went on. He put the tied balloons in one corner, to decorate the party and he left the long balloon and the pouch on the table alongside other stuff he had brought.

The kids had arrived early. There was loud music, a mouth-watering buffet and presents scattered everywhere for the boy who had his birthday.

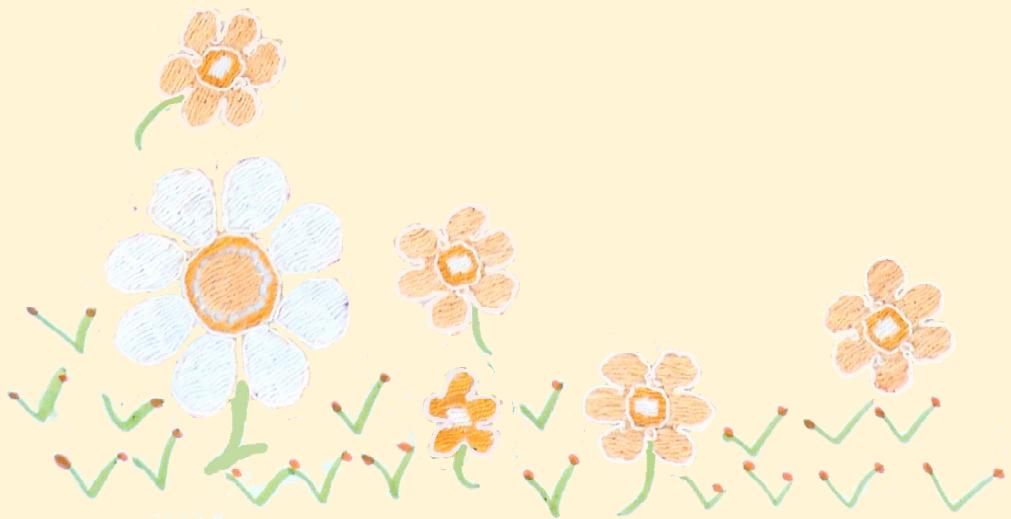
The clown took hold of two drums and in a funny way he hit them in order to attract the children's attention!

- So, my dear kids! Since I know how much you like games with pirates, I have a surprise for you. We'll make swords and pirate hat balloons for everyone!



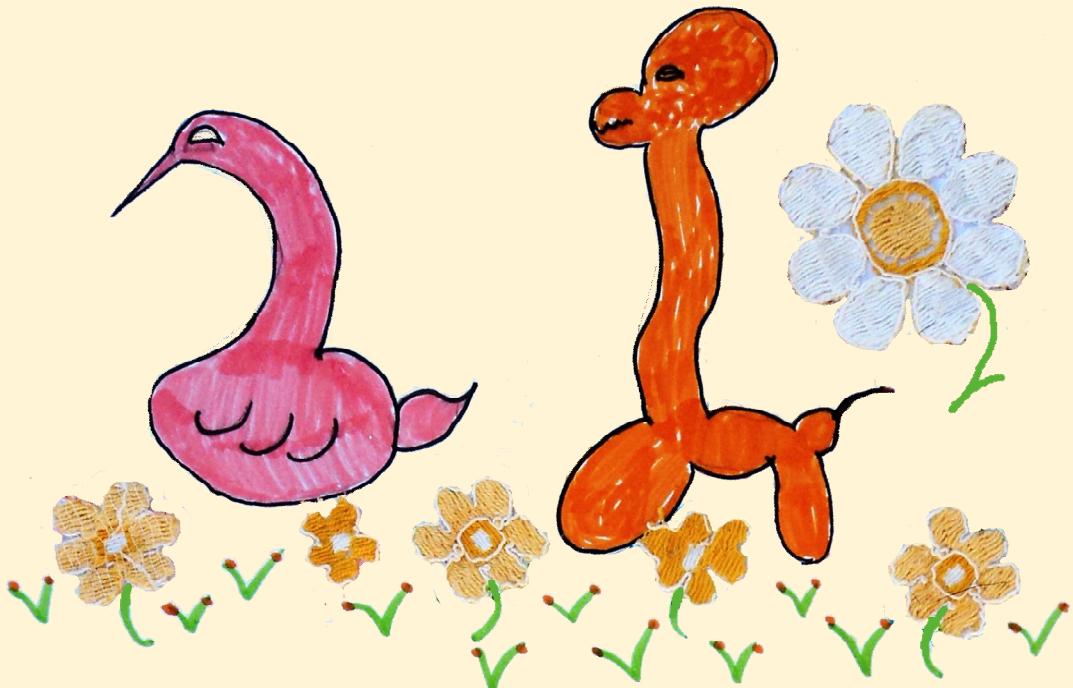
- But, how? wondered the round balloons and looked at one another.

The oblong balloon was watching as well, puzzled. The clown took the pouch and started taking out uninflated balloons; blue, red, yellow, green and a whole bunch of other colours. With a special machine he slowly began giving them shape. The important thing is though, that they were exactly like the balloon lying on the warehouse's floor some time ago.



- I'm not alone! There are others like me! Look! shouted the golden balloon happily!

The rest of the balloons could not believe their eyes. Then, the clown bended them with skilful moves, and gave them beautiful shapes. Hats, belts and swords for boys, flowers and puppies for girls and anything else every child wanted.





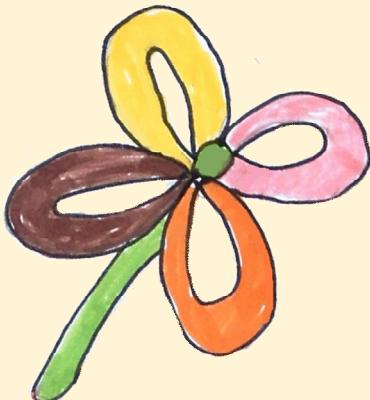
- Finally, said the clown,  
this special golden balloon,  
will be the sword of the  
pirate leader who has his  
birthday today!



The golden balloon not only understood that it was not alone, but also it was the most important of them all, the most special one.

- I wasn't as insignificant as you thought after all! it said to the balloons that were looking at it, regretting talking to it so badly.

We are sorry, they said looking as if they really meant it.



All the kids were playing happily. Suddenly one stopped and interrupted the game to ask for something.

- And what about those useless balloons? Can we pop them mister clown?

- Of course! said the clown.  
Since you want to!





Once the balloons heard what was going to happen to them, they got scared! They realized how unfairly they treated the oblong balloon. On the clown's cue the children ran to pop them. However, the kid with the golden sword stayed back. As he had it in his hands, he looked at how beautiful it was and thought it would be a shame if they popped its friends.

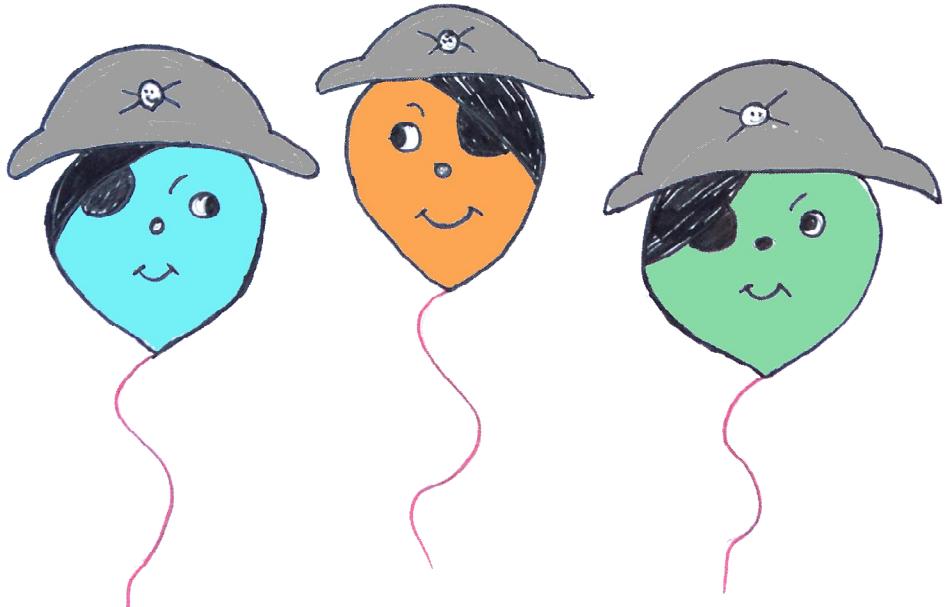


- Stop! he shouted really loud so that they would hear him. Nothing is useless! Even those balloons can be used for something. Look! We'll get markers and draw faces on them. This way they can personate the prisoners in our pirate ship!
- Yay!!!! shouted the kids!



A heap of funny faces sprang at once; blue pirates, green and yellow seafarers, pink and red princesses, captives of pirates. The game and imagination of kids know no bounds.

The balloons felt a great deal of relief and had a very good time. In the end, the kids took them to decorate their own rooms. Before saying goodbye, the round balloons thanked their golden friend because due to him they had a value again! That was an unforgettable party to everyone.





Remember kids  
that every single  
one of us is unique  
and is worth a lot!



And how let the  
kids be up!!!

1) What the balloons realized is that anything thought of as unimportant, can somehow be made into something important. The balloons were transformed into imaginary friends of the kids with the help of markers. Can you think of some other things that may seem useless, but we can utilize them to create something nice?

2) Shown below is a cylindrical cardboard core of a toilet paper roll.



See what you can make it into with the help of the following images. They are constructs that we have created using a little imagination and simple materials. It's your turn now, time for action!



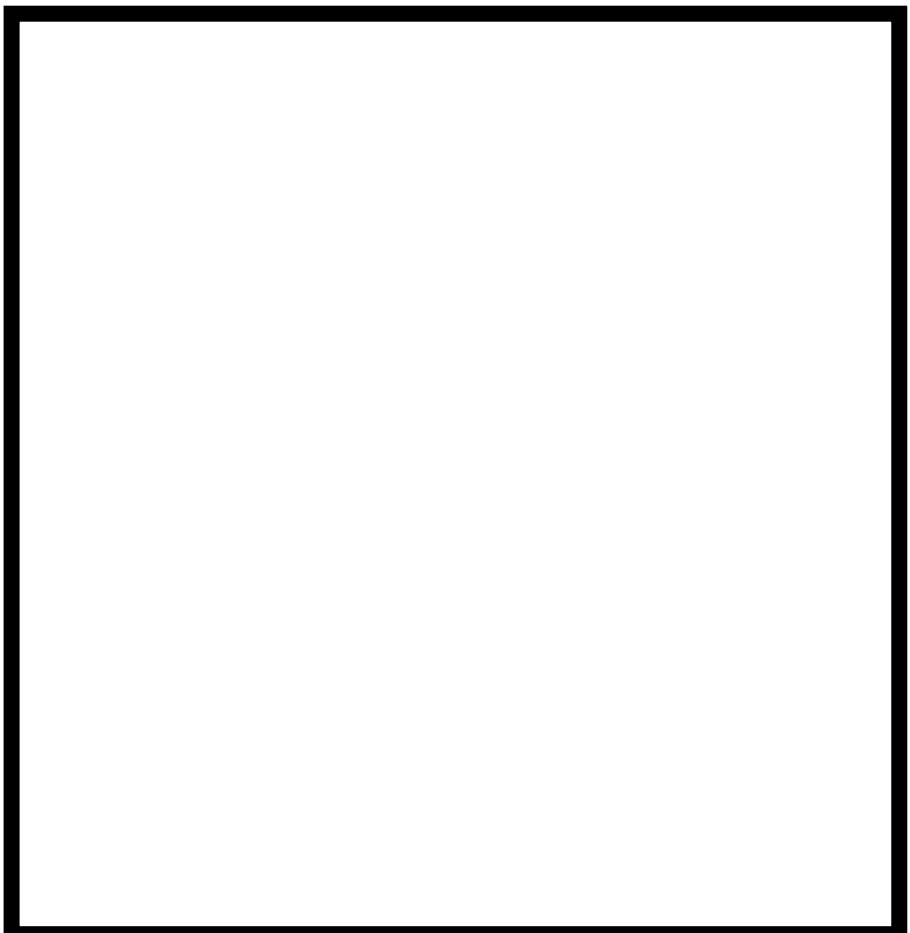


3) We split into teams of two. We have 5 minutes at our disposal. We tell a short true story to our partner that made us feel proud or special. Once we have both done it, each one of us has to present the story they heard to their classmates.

4) Try to find as many adjectives as you can in order to describe the “balloon”. It can be big, yellow, shiny...

5) With the adjectives you thought of a moment ago, we are going to make up an imaginary story. This time, our hero will not be the balloon but something else. You can let your imagination run free or use one of these: ship, fish, pencil, carrot, witch, and tree! The story that we'll make can consist of a big problem that in the end is solved thanks to our hero. Don't forget those adjectives!

6) Can you draw something that will be unique? Something strange, that does not exist in reality. To achieve that use elements of different items, animals or humans. What would you say for example about a creature that its head resembles that of a puppy, has long blond hair and bicycle wheels for legs?



My unique creature!

7) It's time to give a different dimension to the fairy tale that we have just read.

- In fact, what would happen if, instead of balloons, there were vegetables in our story? Or, perhaps, if our story was talking about real kids? Choose something from the original fairy tale, change it and continue the story.





\* \*The materials used for the illustration come from fabrics, old clothes and curtains (for the balloons), jeans (for the clown's outfit), leather handbags (for the clown's shoes) etc. Once every image had been designed, the fabrics were cut and glued in the right places. Lastly, the outcome that you saw was created with the help of a computer...  
It's a small reason for everyone to realise that nothing is useless. Even if it seems to be, it could be useful someplace else!!



Mary Lampadariou was born in Katerini, Greece in 1961. Graduating from the Merchant Marine Academy of Aspropyrgos she travelled all across the world as a sub lieutenant in an ocean liner, until the time she became a mother in 1988. Since then she has been engaging in creations that are related to wood, wax, glass, and fabric decoration. Most of the time, she knits handicrafts and is also an amateur illustrator and painter. She enjoys surfing the web and getting in touch with her friends on Facebook.





The idea of Saita publications emerged in July 2012, having as a primary goal to create a web space where new authors can interact with the readers directly and free.

Saita publications' aim is to redefine the publisher-author-reader relationship, by cultivating a true dialogue and by establishing an effective communication channel for authors and readers alike. Saita publications stay far away from profit, exploitation and commercialization of literary property.

The strong wind of passion for reading,  
the sweet breeze of creativity,  
the zephyr of motivation,  
the sirocco of imagination,  
the levanter of persistence,  
the deep power of vision  
guide the saita (paper plane) of our publications.

We invite you to let books fly free!

- But I'm a balloon just like you, it said hesitantly to the round balloons that were looking from up high and were laughing at it. It was different from the rest, with a rare, almost gold colour. It had every right to be proud of its appearance but it had yet to realise how beautiful and special it was.

All of this though, up to the point that...

