



**Psy
Tales**

White Paper: Best Practices & Analysis Report



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Introduction to the White Paper

The PsyTales project set out to explore how storytelling can support the development of well-being and emotional resilience among primary school pupils. Building on the creation of pedagogical resources and a collection of tales, the project placed a strong emphasis on real-life implementation, testing these materials in diverse educational contexts across Europe, in the partners' countries (Ireland, Belgium, France, Greece, Lithuania).

This white paper brings together the key outcomes of this process. It combines the analysis of PsyTales activities carried out in partner countries with a collection of best practices identified in the field. By presenting both qualitative and quantitative insights, it aims to highlight what works in practice, under which conditions, and for whom.

We hope that you will find this white paper insightful, and we wish you an enjoyable reading.



**Psy
Tales**

Best Practices Report



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Introduction

PsyTales has been an ambitious project focused on channelling the power of storytelling into well-being education for primary school pupils, aged 9–12.

The PsyTales consortium came together and combined their efforts and expertise to create 33 tales and several pedagogical resources (a pedagogical guidebook, an online course, a report on European practices, and a booklet on how to introduce well-being in the classroom).

Of course, we could not stop at simply creating these tales and resources; it was also important to try our approach in real-life settings. We therefore carried out PsyTales activities in the partners' countries (Belgium, France, Greece, Ireland and Lithuania).

In total, we organised 28 activities with 557 children and 27 educators, which brought us invaluable feedback on what was working well and what could be improved.

The activities focused on three of our tales: "The Secret Power of Stress", "The Compassion Circle" and "China's Pot of Optimism".

This "Best Practices" section aims at analysing and documenting the best practices we observed during the real-life setting activities.

By "best practices", we mean to describe how the most successful activities were planned, prepared, carried out and discussed with the participants. The current document therefore aims at helping any willing teacher or educator to grasp our methodology, learn from our experience and use our tales (extensively) with their own pupils.

The activities that were carried out allowed the consortium to better identify similarities and differences in the regional approaches of the participating organisations.

We identified and will comment the following best practices below:

- Individual Reading and Class Discussion
- Stress Management Activity
- Using Story Circles to Promote Empathy and Emotional Resilience
- Discussing Emotions and Empathy Through Story Reading
- Using Embodied Experimentation to Understand and Regulate Stress
- Combining the reading of the tale with a card game and drawing activity
- Integrating discussions and oral activities to develop students' compassion and stress management through the use of stories

Best Practice 1: Individual Reading and Class

Discussion

By RCSI and IPPN, from Ireland

Title of the practice	Individual Reading and Class Discussion
Tale	China Pot of Optimism
Duration of the activity	N/A
Type of activity (teamwork/discussion...)	Warm up activity with new definitions, followed by reading time, group discussion and closing activity with whole class talk.
Main Objective(s) (short sentence or keywords)	Main objective for children to learn about optimism and pessimism and relate to those feelings.
Extra material needed	N/A

Objectives and Rationale

The intention behind utilizing this story this way has to do with introducing new terms into the children's lives. These new terms will help verbalize emotions, something closely associated to well-being.

Description

Warm-up: Brainstorming, preparing the children to read the story, addressing new vocabulary.

The teacher provides the background and explains new words: optimism and pessimism. Help children give examples from their lives.

Activity:

Children read the story individually and then discuss in small groups. They are given instructions to pick instances of optimism and pessimism.

Closing activity: Class discussion: Which boy is more positive in his life?

Observed Effects and Impact

Two out of the 11 Irish teachers who participated in this project used “China’s pot of optimism” in their lessons.

Given the anonymity status of this survey, we are not able to determine which student attended the described lesson.

However, from the responses obtained in the students’ survey, it can be observed that the majority of students enjoyed reading the story, a moment in the story, or the learning behind this story *“The story was very good and interesting to read and I would read it again.”* (Student P215). Another positive popular comment related to this story is related to the discussions that were triggered during this lesson *“just learning about the story and the discussion”* (Student P524).

To analyse the impact this lesson had we can observe the responses children gave about the actions that they will implement for their wellbeing:

Yet again, the majority of responses are positive and related to the new concepts learned. We can find the following quotes: *“I will try to be more positive and look on the bright side of life”* (Student P207) or *“being optimistic like for example someone said the jug is half empty I could say it’s half full being the optimistic way”* (Student P218).

Testimonies

Although the majority of the responses obtained mention they wouldn't make any changes to this story, we find 18 different suggestions (out of 48 responses).

The majority of responses are related to **the story**:

These are responses that address the content, length or complexity of the tale. With comments such as *"I would recommend a new story with girls and not boys, and make harder words more understandable"* (Student P203) or simply *"Pictures"* (Student P205).

The recommendation from the teacher who implemented this lesson is to make sure facilitators have questions for each part of the lesson: Pre-reading, while reading, and post-reading. Additionally, they also expressed the need to implement these lessons on a regular basis to create long lasting impact. *"Provide some teachers questions for pre-reading, opportunity to stop in the middle and ask questions and then provide some open-ended questions at the end"* and *"One lesson does not impact much on a child's wellbeing! This could be used as part of a larger, long-term investigation into children's outlooks in order to provide meaningful change and improvement in wellbeing."* (Educator E021)

Other Reflections and Recommendations

The above is a clear example of what can be achieved when there is a teaching plan with clear goals and objectives, and these are effectively communicated to students. In this case, the lesson began with an introduction that prepared students for learning by clearly outlining the new concepts they were about to read about and explaining their relevance.

Students enjoyed engaging with the reading and later participated in group discussions. Their understanding of new concepts is evident as it is observed through their responses (actions towards their wellbeing) where the majority of answers are coherent and aligned with the objectives of the lesson.

Any additional recommendations have to do with implementing strategies that create a more inclusive environment for students on one hand, and on the other hand an extra recommendation of an activity that could make this lesson last through the year:

-Role-playing situations that demonstrate optimistic and pessimistic behaviours can be an effective strategy to get that physical output to students who need it most whilst also creating a safe space for laughter and enjoyment.

-Painting and drawing activities can invite students to imagine how optimism might look on a page. For example they can explore whether optimism is represented through a specific colour. Encouraging students to talk about their creations provides opportunities for reflection and self-expression.

-Creating a story thread together:

Students collaboratively build a story, with each participant adding a sentence that reflects either an optimistic or pessimistic action. This encourages creativity, active listening and discussion. "May went to the shop... **BUT** the shop was closed, and she thought her day was ruined...**HOWEVER** she decided to visit a new store that opened recently in the neighbourhood...**BUT**...."

-Optimism Jar:

After the first lesson when the new concepts of optimism and pessimism are introduced, the class can decide together to create an optimism jar for the classroom. The teacher can explain the purpose of the jar as a place to collect hopeful, positive and encouraging thoughts. "I felt disappointed when I didn't do well in the exam, but I reminded myself I can try my best in the next one". Children can add to this jar anytime they feel they have something to share. Contributions can be written or drawn.

During circle time, the teacher can choose to read a few notes from the jar to remind the class how optimistic thinking can help them cope with challenges and celebrate positive moments.

These are only a few examples of how concepts can be explored from different angles. Approaching them in varied ways encourages deeper reflection and understanding which can in turn promote more meaningful and insightful discussions.

Best Practice 2: Stress Management Activity

By RCSI and IPPN, Ireland

Title of the practice	Stress Management Activity
Tale	The Secret Power of Stress
Duration of the activity	N/A
Type of activity (teamwork/discussion...)	Story + Class Discussion
Main Objective(s) (short sentence or keywords)	Main objective to use story to talk about feelings and how to overcome when they feel overwhelmed.
Extra material needed	N/A

Objectives and Rationale

The objective for this lesson in particular was to give children space to talk about situations and incidents they regularly find themselves in: Whether they are feeling stressed about a test, overwhelmed, or worried; and provide strategies to help overcome these feelings.

Description

This story was used by 8 out of 11 teachers who participated in this project in Ireland. There is no detailed description of what the lesson consisted of, but an overall description of utilising the tale as the Kickstarter of the lesson, to talk about feelings and how to overcome challenges that make them feel overwhelmed.

Observed Effects and Impact

165 student respondents read this story during their lesson (we are unable to define precisely which ones participated in this specific lesson) but we can give a general overview of responses.

From the data obtained it can be observed students related with the character in the tale and his feelings, and that they also enjoyed engaging in conversations about it in class, they expressed *"what I enjoyed most about this lesson was how it helped me feel less stressed now than before"* (Student P162) and *"the thing I most enjoyed about this lesson was the way that he could talk to his mother and his mother had strong impacting words that were useful and helped me realise that method may work, but overall the story can be realistic"* (Student P176) or *"I enjoyed hearing all of the opinions from everyone and learning how to deal with stress"* (Student P159) or simply *"it was fun"* (Student P152). The teacher supports these comments by saying *"they were very engaged - participated in the discussion + used examples from their own lives that were similar"* (Educator E025)

Responses gathered about the future actions students will take for their well-being are mostly related to breathing techniques and understanding stress in a different light, which give us some understanding of the impact the lesson had in the children.

The responses show the positive impact the story and discussions had in them.

Responses include *"I will breathe and talk to my parents when I start feeling stressed with homework. I think it will also do that next when I start feeling stressed when doing homework in secondary school next year."* (Student P188) and *"deep breaths before and after reading to the class or going on a stage I just have to take deep breaths and try not to be as nervous about it"* (Student P198) and also *"From now on after the lesson, to support my wellbeing is that I will be less afraid and more open and confident if its a maths test, english test etc."* (Student P162).

Testimonies

As stated before, the teacher leading this lesson didn't make suggestions.

Other teachers who implemented this story in Ireland highlighted the need for more interactive or visually engaging elements to better support students' understanding and engagement. Their responses included comments such as: *"Video interviews with characters and a toolkit of strategies that shows how to best implement."* (Educator E020) *"Maybe an interactive story with a video"* (Educator E023)

Student suggestions of changes to the lesson are related, on its majority to the length of the story. Some of them requested it to be shorter, *"I think that it was pretty good but it doesn't have to be that long"* (Student P180), others requested it to be longer, *"I think the story should be lengthened out a bit more."* (Student P188). Another comment from a student reads: *"I would suggest maybe explaining the negative side effect of stress a bit more just for others to be aware of what stress causes to our well being."* (Student P233) another very detailed comment suggests *"the story was great and everything, however I felt it was bit short and just focused on one thing, all though it was a great story and showed a real life problem for many kids and lots of ways to help and understand what is happening and at the end of the everything will be alright."* (Student P193).

Additionally, several comments make the suggestion of the inclusion of role-play activities *"splitting people into groups and acting out the scene"* (Student P277) *"act out different stress scenes and on how to manage stress"* (Student P278).

In addition, other students suggest the need for a space for class discussion *"Get people to talk about times when they felt stressed or why they felt stressed and what did they do to fix it and how they felt"* (Student P163) and *"More talking and expressing how we felt at some time and we can learn how to control being sad, angry, and being stressed from our peers."* (Student P171). Evidently, the children in this instance participated in a different lesson plan (and not the one presented by this teacher specifically). However, it is relevant to highlight the need to create such space when working with emotionally moving or sensitive lessons.

Other Reflections and Recommendations

Although it can be observed that the majority of students have had great reactions to this story, one particular class had a significant adverse reaction to it.

While there are limited details about how the lesson was delivered, it can be inferred that the story did not suit the needs or emotional readiness of that specific group.

This highlights the importance of carefully observing and evaluating classroom dynamics before introducing reflective material.

One teacher in the programme (outside of Ireland) shared that she intentionally chose a story that addressed themes she felt were missing in her classroom.

By tailoring the material to her students' needs, she was able to create meaningful discussion and engagement, and the results were outstanding.

Understanding the individual needs, experiences and emotional maturity of a class is essential when selecting stories or discussion topics.

Additionally, to create an engaging and relevant lesson tailored to your classroom, we can suggest activities that are aimed to relieving stress: Breathing techniques are an effective starting point, as they help children regulate their emotions and refocus.

Taking the class outdoors can also be beneficial. An important aspect of understanding stress is recognising that one size does not fit all. While breathing techniques can work well for some children, colouring, playing sports or reading a book can work for others. Perhaps the most significant element in this lesson is providing a space for children to find their own way of strategies for relieving stress. This lesson will be done over a few weeks.

Every lesson the teacher decides on a different technique: One day the whole class journals, another day they all do breathing techniques, they take a stroll in nature, observe the clouds; and another day they can colour or draw.

That way, children will be able to evaluate what they enjoyed the most.

At the end of each of these lessons, the teacher can provide time for discussion where children express how they felt and if they think this could help them relieve stress.

Best Practice 3:

Using Story Circles to Promote Empathy and Emotional Resilience

By Kaunas Education Innovation Centre, Lithuania

Title of the practice E.g. "Using Story Circles to Promote Empathy"	Using Story Circles to Promote Empathy and Emotional Resilience
Duration of the activity	45–60 minutes (one lesson)
Type of activity (teamwork/discussion...)	Storytelling, guided discussion, individual reflection, group sharing (teamwork)
Main Objective(s) (short sentence or keywords)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Emotional awareness• Empathy and compassion• Self-reflection• Normalisation of mistakes• Strengthening peer support
Extra material needed	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Printed or read-aloud story "<i>The Circle of Compassion</i>"• Notebooks or reflection sheets• Pens or pencils• Calm classroom setting (circle seating recommended)

Objectives and Rationale

The main objective of this practice was to support pupils' emotional development by helping them recognise, express, and normalise difficult emotions related to making mistakes.

The practice was designed around storytelling because stories provide a safe emotional distance: pupils can first reflect on characters' experiences before relating them to their own lives.

The activity was implemented to encourage self-compassion, reduce fear of failure, and strengthen empathy among peers.

By combining a narrative with guided discussion and reflective writing, pupils were given multiple ways to process emotions according to their individual comfort levels (listening, speaking, writing).

Description

This practice was tested using the tale *"The Circle of Compassion"* during a classroom lesson focused on emotional education. The story was read aloud by the teacher and followed by a structured discussion and reflection activity.

The practice was implemented in Lithuania, with two primary school classes (50 pupils) and two teachers facilitating the activity.

In one lesson, reading the story was integrated into the Lithuanian language lesson, while another lesson was entirely devoted to the analysis of this tale.

Implementation Steps

1. Preparation

The teacher prepared the classroom environment by arranging seating in a semi-circle to encourage openness and equality. Pupils were informed that the lesson would focus on feelings and experiences and that there were no right or wrong answers.

2. Storytelling

The teacher read the story aloud, using pauses and expressive intonation.

At key moments, pupils were invited to reflect briefly on the characters' emotions.

3. Guided Discussion

After reading, the teacher facilitated a discussion using open-ended questions, such as:

- How did the characters feel after making mistakes?
- What helped them feel better?
- Have you ever felt like one of the characters?

The discussion focused on empathy, shared experiences, and the idea that mistakes are part of learning.

4. Individual Reflection

Pupils were invited to write about a mistake they had made and what they learned from it, following the example from the story. Participation was encouraged but not forced.

5. Group Sharing (“Circle of Compassion”)

Volunteers shared their reflections. The teacher reinforced rules of respect and non-judgement. This step helped pupils realise they were not alone in their struggles.

6. Follow-up

The teacher concluded by highlighting key messages: kindness to oneself, mutual support, and learning through mistakes. Pupils were encouraged to use this approach in future situations.

Observed Effects and Impact

Qualitative feedback from observation and pupil responses indicated that this practice had a strong positive emotional impact.

Observed outcomes included:

- Pupils were more open in expressing emotions during and after the lesson.
- Several pupils who are usually quiet participated voluntarily.

- Pupils showed increased empathy toward classmates.
- The atmosphere in the classroom became calmer and more supportive.

Teachers noted that pupils were more willing to talk about difficulties in later lessons. Pupils also expressed feeling relieved and understood after the activity.

Testimonies

After the lessons, the teachers said that the analysis of these stories:

"It allowed children to get acquainted with how any problem can be solved in community and that it is important to talk. Students at this age (9–10 years) often experience stress before tests (although they do not name this state).

The tale helped them understand their experiences, understand that they are not the only ones experiencing such a state, they learned that feeling stress is normal and can be controlled to some extent. We made stress management memos, extracting the main stress management methods from the tale. We listened to the advice of a child psychologist on how to manage stress. (Olympic Week materials).

"The children practically tried the "Circle of Compassion" method of mutual aid."

"Students actively discussed, shared experiences. Everyone read the fairy tale individually on their computers. They actively participated in the discussion, provided examples from their own experience."

"Most of the children participated quite actively in the activity."

Other Reflections and Recommendations

This practice proved to be highly effective due to its simplicity, emotional safety, and flexibility. It can be easily adapted to different age groups, class sizes, or cultural contexts.

Recommendations for future implementation:

- Repeat the activity regularly (e.g. once a month) to strengthen emotional literacy.
- Allow alternative forms of expression (drawing instead of writing for younger pupils).
- Integrate the “Circle of Compassion” into class routines or well-being programmes.
- Provide follow-up activities linking emotions to problem-solving skills.
- Some pupils suggested they would like more time for sharing, indicating that extending the activity across two lessons could further deepen its impact.

Best Practice 4: Story Reading with discussion and reflection breaks to foster Emotions and Empathy

By Les Apprimeurs, France

Title of the practice	Story Reading with discussion and reflection breaks to foster Emotions and Empathy
Duration of the activity	1h15
Type of activity (teamwork/discussion...)	Guided reading, group discussion, individual reflection
Main Objective(s) (short sentence or keywords)	Develop emotional awareness, empathy, and respect for emotional diversity
Extra material needed	Projected or printed tale; classroom arranged in a circle

Objectives and Rationale

The objective of this practice is to help pupils recognise, name, and understand emotions—both their own and those of others—through collective reflection based on a narrative.

The practice is grounded in philosophical discussion methods adapted for children, where the tale acts as a neutral starting point for exploring sensitive topics such as fear, sadness, compassion, and emotional needs. This approach was chosen to encourage active listening, equal participation, and the understanding that emotional experiences vary between individuals.

Description

Preparation:

This practice was tested in France, at École Léo-Lagrange (Trignac), in a CE2 class of 24 pupils aged 8–10, facilitated by one teacher.

The tale tested was *The Compassion Circle*.

Facilitation:

The teacher guided a discussion linking the story to concepts previously addressed in class (philosophy, emotions). Pupils identified themes emerging from the text and discussed how emotions can be recognised in others. The full tale was read aloud with pauses for discussion, including activities such as:

- identifying emotional reactions to shared situations,
- comparing individual responses to the same event,
- discussing consent in physical comfort (e.g. touch),
- reflecting on personal emotional needs.

Follow-up:

Pupils were invited to imagine a moment of emotion and identify what kind of support they would need (listening, distraction, shared experience). Some pupils chose to express these needs to a peer.

Observed Effects and Impact

The practice led to high levels of engagement and sustained attention. Pupils demonstrated an improved ability to name emotions, acknowledge differences in emotional reactions, and express empathy. Teachers observed increased participation from pupils who are usually less vocal and noted the quality and depth of discussions for this age group.

Testimonies

"I learned that if I have a problem, I can talk to people close to me." (pupil)

"Pupils tried to understand the story, to understand themselves, and to connect with emotions." (educator)

Other Reflections and Recommendations

This practice is particularly effective when the teacher is comfortable facilitating open discussions. Maintaining the circle format and allowing enough time for silence and reflection are key success factors. A short written or drawing activity could be added for pupils who prefer non-verbal expression.

Best Practice 5: Using Embodied Experimentation to Understand and Regulate Stress

By Les Apprimeurs, France

Title of the practice	Using Embodied Experimentation to Understand and Regulate Stress
Duration of the activity	1h
Type of activity (teamwork/discussion...)	Storytelling, physical activity, group discussion
Main Objective(s) (short sentence or keywords)	Understand stress responses and develop self-regulation strategies
Extra material needed	Open classroom space

Objectives and Rationale

The objective of this practice is to help pupils understand stress as a physiological and emotional response and to provide them with concrete tools to manage it. By combining storytelling with physical experimentation, pupils can directly experience bodily sensations linked to stress and observe how regulation techniques, such as controlled breathing, affect these sensations. This approach was chosen to demystify stress and reinforce pupils' sense of control.

Description

This practice was tested in France, at **École Léo-Lagrange (Trignac)**, in a CE2 class of **20 pupils aged 8–10**, facilitated by **one teacher**.

The tale tested was *The Secret Power of Stress*.

Implementation steps:

- **Preparation:**

Pupils were seated in an arc and informed that the tale would be read aloud with pauses for comprehension and discussion.
- **Facilitation:**

After identifying the main elements of the story, pupils explored the character's stress and discussed emotional and physical signs of stress (heart rate, breathing, tension). The teacher then led a short physical activity session (running in place, jumping jacks) to provoke similar sensations, followed by a breathing exercise to observe calming effects.
- **Follow-up:**

Pupils shared personal stress-management strategies and discussed techniques such as controlled breathing, muscle relaxation, and positive visualisation.

Observed Effects and Impact

Pupils quickly understood the link between physical sensations and emotions. The activity reduced fear around stress and reframed it as manageable. Teachers observed increased confidence and enthusiasm, and pupils retained the breathing technique as a practical tool for future stressful situations.

Testimonies

"(I can) drink water and if I am angry I put an ice pack on my forehead" (pupil)

"It is also important to remind pupils that a treasure hunt, a match, a work of art, and school are not about 'winning' or 'succeeding', but about learning, playing, sharing, and expressing." (educator)

Other Reflections and Recommendations

This practice is highly effective but requires clear facilitation and sufficient space. Explicitly linking the exercise to everyday school situations (tests, speaking in class) helps transfer learning. Repeating the breathing exercise regularly could strengthen long-term impact.

Best Practice 6: Combining the reading of the tale with a card game and drawing activity

By Logopsycom, Belgium

Title of the practice	Combining the reading of the tale with a card game and drawing activity
Duration of the activity	1h
Type of activity	Small group discussions and individual work
Main Objective(s)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage pupils to reframe negative thoughts into positive ones • Help Pupils to understand the concepts of Optimism and Pessimisms, benevolence, acceptance of imperfection, emotion management
Extra material needed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cards with negative sentences and their positive rephrasing • Leaflets with the text of the tale and space for pupils to draw specific ideas and concepts. <p>Both are available for the French versions of "China Pot of Optimism" and "The Secret Power of Stress" on the project website</p>

Objectives and Rationale

The activity was designed to give pupils the opportunity to learn more about the concepts of optimism and pessimism, with hands-on activities.

The card game intended for them to have a space to understand and discuss why and how it can help to turn a negative thought into a positive one, in specific situations (e.g. turning a “I will fail everything” into a “I will do my best, and that’s already good”).

The drawing activity intended to give time for pupils to ponder the important moments and concepts in the story, asking them to make specific drawings at specific places in the tale leaflet that was prepared for the activity.

Description

The activity took place outside of school, in a public library in Mons (Jemappes), Belgium.

Teachers actively participated, but the activity was prepared and managed by an educator from LogoPsyCom, as decided by the school and the public library.

Several activities were prepared for a total of 4 classes (i.e. 77 pupils aged 9 to 12), with the participation of 8 teachers and educators. The activities were all structured and prepared similarly, but with small variations. The most successful activity, according to the students’ surveys, seems to be with a small class of 15 students in their last primary school year (11–12 years old). We will focus more on this particular activity for this best practice description.

The tale that was chosen for this class by their teacher was “The China Pot of Optimism”, for which a summary as well as the full text are freely available on PsyTales’ website: <https://psytales.eu/tale-card/china-pot-of-optimism/> .

The activity was prepared as such:

1. Preparation of the activity plan
2. Preparation of a leaflet for students. The leaflet contains the tale's text, as well as spaces for pupils to draw (the cover, the trigger element scene, the boys' reaction and the end of the story with its moral), and additional questions.
3. Preparation of 5 decks of 40 cards: 20 orange cards with negative thoughts written on them (e.g. "everyone will laugh at me if I make a mistake", "I feel useless when I make mistakes", "they will think I'm weird", etc.) and 20 green cards with their positive counterparts (e.g. "everyone makes mistakes; it's normal and not a big deal", "mistakes are part of the process and lead to progress", "being oneself is OK", etc.).

The activity unfolded as such:

1. Quick emotional weather activity. Everyone stated their name and their emotional weather (e.g. "sunshine" means they feel well, "rain" indicates they might feel sad). We allowed students to keep their emotional weather to themselves, if they wanted to.
2. Brief explanation of how the activity was going to unfold.
3. Interactive reading of the tale "China Pot of Optimism". The educator read the tale to the class, with strategic pauses to ask questions to the pupils and keep them engaged. For example:
 - a. "In your opinion, what do you think will happen?", when Charlie and Jack are playing and just before they break the teapot
 - b. "In your opinion, why does Jack remain so calm, while Charlie seems to be panicking? What could this tell about their personalities?"
4. Round-table and discussion about the tale that was just read (China Pot of Optimism), with questions such as "What is the moral of the story?", "What does the repaired teapot represent in the story?". The goal of the discussion was to encourage children to:
 - a. see mistakes not as inevitable, but as opportunities to learn and grow.
 - b. understand the importance of trying to correct one's mistakes.

- c. Identify and understand the major well-being concepts of the tale:
 - i. Optimism,
 - ii. Resilience,
 - iii. Acceptance of imperfection,
 - iv. Managing emotions (guilt, shame, fear of judgement),
 - v. Values: family love, mutual support, kindness
5. Drawing activity. Students were asked to try and draw one of the main themes covered or imagine and draw the cover page. Followed by a round-table for pupils to share and explain their drawings with their peers.
6. Card activity. We made 5 groups of 3 pupils and handed each group a deck of positive and negative thoughts. They were asked to choose a negative thought that struck them or that they might have had in the past. We asked them to find the positive reformulation. They were encouraged to discuss their own ideas.
7. Wrap up of the activity. We asked them their thoughts on the activity, and encouraged them to understand how and why positive reframing can help them in their day-to-day life.

Observed Effects and Impact

Students reported that they enjoyed the reading of the tale (10/15 agreed or strongly agreed with the statement "I enjoyed reading the tale", the rest neither agreeing, nor disagreeing) and indicated they also enjoyed the activity and discussions associated with the tale (9/15 agreed or strongly agreed with the statement "I enjoyed the activity or discussion associated with the tale", 5/15 neither agreed nor disagreed and 1 disagreed). A majority of pupils also reported that the tale told them something useful (10/15 agreed or strongly agreed with the statement "I found the tale taught me something useful").

Testimonies

Teacher testimonies:

- "The card game is great to use because it's fun, but above all, some pupils recognise themselves in certain [negative] sentences that are written down because they have already said them to themselves. So it's good to be able to read positive sentences that counteract these negative thoughts."
- "To be continued throughout the school year for maximum effectiveness. I will use the cards in class to revisit the topic and thus enable the children's well-being to develop further (a very nice activity, as well-being at school is one of our main objectives)."

Student testimonies when asked what they enjoyed most about the lesson:

- "The drawing to express myself. Many things, actually. I liked everything."
- "One needs to repair one's errors"
- "I liked to discuss flaws like stress"

Other Reflections and Recommendations

Teachers and pupils alike seemed to enjoy the tale and the related activity overall.

The idea of asking students draw the important concepts of the tale and have them discuss in groups about negative and positive thoughts seemed to have been a working strategy.

While this best practice activity proved to be successful, it's also important to realise it was only a 1h activity.

As participating teachers pointed out, for it to be truly effective it should be accompanied by other well-being activities throughout the school year. We therefore recommend to treat this kind of activity as part of a longer set of lessons about well-being, not as an isolated activity.

Best Practice 7:

Integrating discussions and oral activities to develop students' compassion and stress management through the use of stories

By the Regional Directorate of Primary and Secondary Education of Western Macedonia, Greece

Title of the practice	Integrating discussions and oral activities to develop students' compassion and stress management through the use of stories
Duration of the activity	2h
Type of activity	Discussions, group and pair work
Main Objective(s)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• To support pupils' emotional well-being by helping them develop compassion and learn ways to deal with stress.
Extra material needed	Digital tools for creating activities (e.g. wordwall.net)

Objectives and Rationale

The aim of the two lessons is to support pupils' emotional well-being by helping them develop compassion, empathy and learn ways to deal with stress.

More specifically, the lessons aim to:

- Help pupils understand well-being as something that includes emotional, mental, and social health.
- Encourage pupils to recognise and name their feelings, especially when they make mistakes or face difficulties.
- Support the development of self-compassion, so that pupils learn to be kinder to themselves instead of being overly self-critical.
- Strengthen empathy and positive social behaviour by guiding pupils to respond to their classmates with understanding and care.
- Help pupils build resilience and healthier ways of coping with challenges, including anxiety.

Description

The stories "The Circle of Compassion" and "The Secret Power of Stress" were implemented in three Greek schools with a total of 99 pupils and five teachers. The sequence of activities was the following:

a. Pre-reading questions – Brainstorming – Recording ideas on the board

Indicative questions: What is well-being? What is compassion? What does the word "stress" mean?

Explicit statement of the lesson's goal: "Today we will talk about how to deal with mistakes / stress"

The teacher reads the story to the class.

b. Post-reading discussion: Comprehension questions on the stories.

The questions can be discussed orally or, alternatively, in the form of a multiple-choice quiz on Kahoot.

c. Discussion – Connecting the stories with the students' personal experiences.

This activity is completed orally as a whole-class discussion, coordinated by the teacher.

Indicative questions:

-Have you recently made a mistake or something wrong?

-How did you feel about it? Did someone help you overcome it? When a friend or classmate makes a mistake, do you respond with compassion?

-What makes you most anxious at school or at home? What can you do to calm down?

The teacher guides the discussion so that it becomes clear that anxiety is normal and can help us (e.g., to prepare better, to try harder).

d. Role play in pairs "The random wheel": "What would you do if...?"

<https://wordwall.net/el/resource/98930715>

During this activity, the pupils come in front of the class in pairs and randomly select a situation from the "random wheel".

They act out the situation with one of the pupils acting out the role of the child who has made a mistake or has been involved in an embarrassing situation, while the second pupil responds in a way that shows compassion.

Indicative situations: "One of your classmates makes a spelling mistake on the whiteboard and feels ashamed", "During the rehearsal for the school play a classmate forgets his/her lines and feels embarrassed", "During the school break, a child misses a goal at football or loses at chasing and feels he/she is not good enough".

A similar question game was also used with a wheel for stress.

e. Conclusion – Discussion

Indicative questions: What did we learn today? If you make a mistake again, what will you think? If a classmate makes a mistake, how will you react?

Would you like to create a "Circle of Compassion" in our class?

As a group, the conclusion is formulated:

"Stress is not always bad; it can help us try harder, if we learn how to manage it."

The students complete a short sentence:

"I learned that stress..." or "When I feel stressed, I will try to..."

Observed Effects and Impact

The implementation of the lesson had a clearly positive effect on the pupils and on the general atmosphere in the classroom. During the discussions, most pupils felt comfortable sharing personal experiences about mistakes and difficult moments, even introvert ones. They were able to talk more openly about how they felt and why they reacted in certain ways. This showed an improvement in their ability to recognise and express their emotions.

The role-play activities were particularly effective. Pupils practised using kind and supportive language and showed greater understanding of their classmates' feelings.

The lesson also had a positive impact on the classroom climate. Pupils seemed less afraid of making mistakes and more confident that they would be supported by their peers. This helped create a more trusting and cooperative environment, where pupils felt safer to participate and express themselves.

Overall, the lesson helped pupils develop important emotional and social skills, such as empathy, resilience, and self-compassion. These skills supported not only their well-being but also their learning and their relationships with others, highlighting the value of including well-being education in everyday classroom practice.

Testimonies

Testimonies from Students

- I liked the story, the discussion, and the game, and I also appreciated the fact that I was able to speak.
- I liked that we talked about our problems and awkward moments, and I liked that we played the “random wheel” game.
- I would like such lessons to take place more frequently.
- I will not think negatively or feel ashamed. I will think that someone will come and tell me, "It's okay."

Testimonies from Educators

- The students' participation was impressive, with most of them showing great enthusiasm to actively participate in the discussions.
- I believe that stories will be a useful tool for promoting mental balance and resilience.
- The children showed keen interest in the discussion. Even introverted children, who usually remain silent, participated actively.

Other Reflections and Recommendations

Teachers stressed the importance of working with school psychologists and social workers, especially when stories raise sensitive issues or difficult questions. This collaboration is seen as essential for ensuring that students receive appropriate guidance and that teachers feel supported.

Teachers also suggested integrating stories into the classroom environment by creating a “well-being corner” where key messages can be displayed through drawings and posters. Visual support is considered particularly important, with teachers recommending illustrated versions of the stories to engage younger pupils and visual learners. Finally, they emphasized the value of familiar characters, clear introductions with key-words for each story, and simple guidance to help adults and children make meaningful use of each story.

Conclusion

The real-life setting activities have confirmed the strong potential of storytelling as an engaging and meaningful tool for well-being education among primary school pupils aged 9 to 12.

Across the five partner countries, the implementation of three selected tales allowed educators to address emotional themes such as stress, optimism, mistakes and compassion in a safe and accessible way. The feedback gathered from 557 children and 27 educators provided invaluable insight into what makes these activities successful.

Overall, the best practices observed highlight the importance of careful preparation, emotional safety, and active pupil involvement.

Activities were most effective when stories were introduced with clear objectives and key vocabulary, followed by interactive reading, guided discussion and reflective spaces. Combining storytelling with creative and hands-on activities (such as drawing, role-playing or card games) also proved particularly impactful in helping children to express emotions and connect the tales to their own experiences.

At the same time, partners' experiences underline that well-being education cannot be reduced to a single session. Teachers noted that PsyTales activities would have the greatest effect when integrated into longer-term classroom routines, revisiting key concepts throughout the school year.

To conclude, we strongly encourage readers to make the most of this report on the PsyTales activities to get the best possible use out of the tales, tailored to their students for a lasting impact on their well-being education.

The background of the top half of the page is a photograph showing a person's hands writing on a white sheet of paper with a blue ballpoint pen. The person is wearing a white long-sleeved shirt. In the foreground, there is a stack of papers, including a document with a circular hole punch and some text. Another hand holding a green pen is visible in the lower right. The entire scene is set on a light-colored wooden desk.

Analysis Report



Co-funded by
the European Union

Quantitative Data Analysis

Teachers

Demographics

Overall, 27 teachers and facilitators across 5 countries conducted 28 lessons in the testing phase. The testing phase captured a diverse sample of teachers of various ages, genders, and institution sizes. For details, please see Table 1.

Table 1

Teacher demographics by number, age, gender, and institution size

	Belgium	France	Greece	Ireland	Lithuani	Total
					a	
Number	7	2	4	11	3	27
Age						
≤30	2			1		3
30 – 39	3			6		9
40 – 49	2	2	3	3	1	11
50 – 59			1	1	1	3
60≤					1	1
Gender						
Male	1		1	4		6
Female	6	2	3	7	3	21
Institution Size						
Less than 50				1		1
51 – 150			3	2		5
151 – 300	1	2	1	2		6
301 - 500	1			3	1	5
More than 500	4			3	2	9
How often have students engaged in activities focused on their wellbeing to date?						
Never	1					1
Rarely	4		2			6

At least once a month	2	2	3	1	8	
At least once a week			7	1	8	
Daily			1	1	2	
Tale						
China Pot of Optimism	5		2		7	
Compassion Circle		1	2	1	2	6
The Secret Power of Stress	3	1	2	8	1	15

* Institution size only has 26 total teachers, as the question did not apply to one of the teachers conducting the lesson

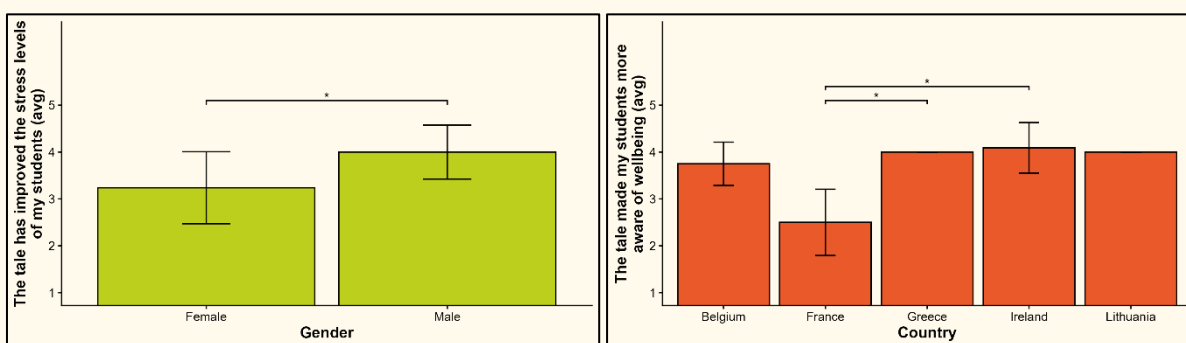
* The tale section has 28 total tales based on the 28 lessons that were conducted (1 tale per lesson)

* Wellbeing Activities in Belgium are limited to 5 out of 7 teachers, as the question did not apply to two teachers

Findings

In the following findings, please take into consideration that the answers from both teachers and students were rated on a 1 – 5 scale (1 – Strongly Disagree, 2 – Disagree, 3 – Neither Agree nor Disagree, 4 – Agree, 5 – Strongly Agree). As such, the higher the bar, the more the participants agreed with the statement.

Two findings in the teachers' data were significant. Firstly, male teachers agreed more that the tale has improved the stress levels of their students. The testing phase involved only 6 male teachers and 21 female teachers, so this gender imbalance needs to be considered.



Secondly, the two French teachers disagreed that the tales made their students more aware of wellbeing compared to the Greek and Irish teachers.

The French teachers found the tales to be of lower quality, but this finding might also be because our tales are targeted at students aged 9 to 12, and the majority of the French students (27 out of 34) were 8 or younger.

One of the two French teachers disagreed that the tales were age-appropriate, while the second one agreed. These results highlight that age targeting is an important factor, especially in the ages between 8 and 13, as reading skills and themes develop and change quickly throughout this stage of development.

In terms of stress improvements, in the 28 lessons conducted as part of the testing phase, the teachers were split exactly in half as to whether the lesson improved the stress levels of the students.

The rest of the comparisons between educators were non-significant. For detailed comparisons between teacher ages, countries, genders, and tales, please see the appendix.

Pupils

Demographics

In total, 557 students took part in the testing phase across 5 countries. Most of the students were girls and were 10 to 12 years old. The most commonly used tale was the Secret Power of Stress.

Table 2

Student demographics by number, age, gender, and institution size

	Belgium	France	Greece	Ireland	Lithuania	Total
Number	77	34	98	248	100	557
Age						
8 or less		27			12	39
9	2	6	15	2	53	78
10	46	1	31	24	35	137
11	25		42	103		170
12	4		10	115		129
13 or more				4		4
Gender						
Male	37	15	46	78	42	218
Female	36	15	46	163	46	306
Prefer not to say	4	3	6	5	9	27
Other		1		2	3	6
Tale						
China Pot of Optimism	56	1		48	21	126
Compassion Circle		19	37	35	50	141
The Secret Power of Stress	21	14	61	165	29	290

* One pupil in France incorrectly marked that they read the China Pot of Optimism tale

Findings

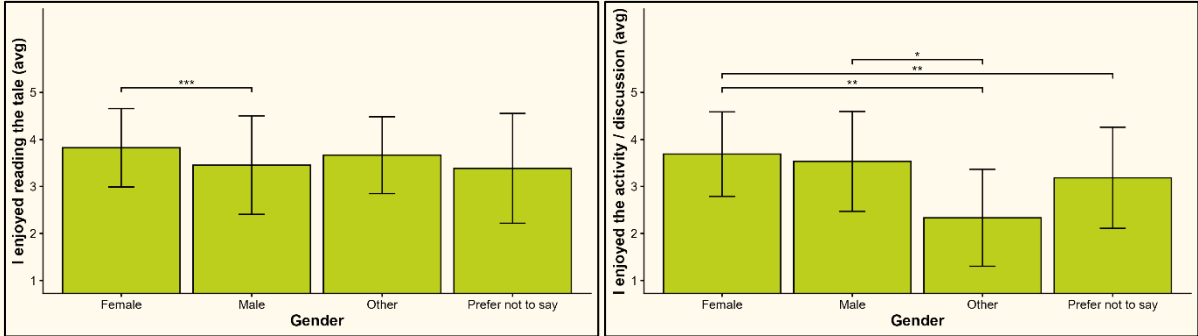
Gender Differences

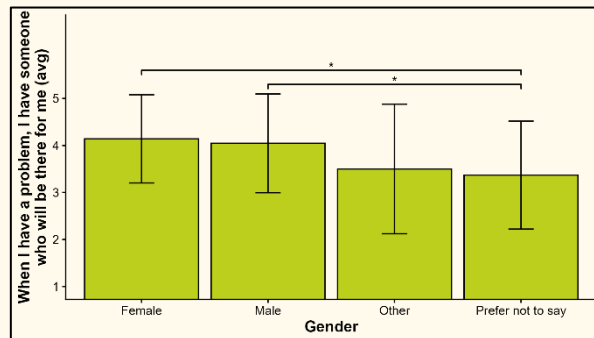
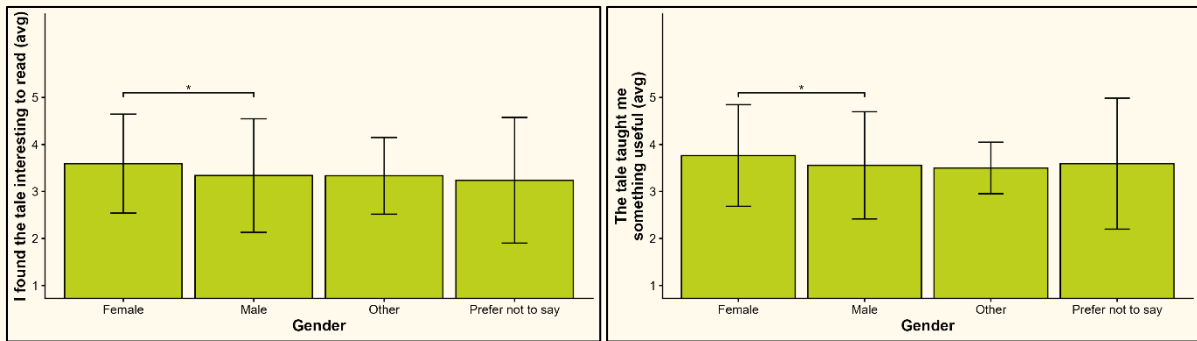
The most common gender difference regarding the tales was that girls enjoyed reading the tales the most, enjoyed the associated activities and discussions, found the tales interesting and found that the tales taught them something useful.

Our findings reflect the broader research literature, where girls often outperform boys in reading and writing skills [1], enjoy reading more, and are more confident in their reading skills [2].

These findings indicate that boys might need more support to alleviate these gender imbalances. The way to improve these imbalances and motivate boys to read is by improving teaching quality at an early stage through focusing on language competencies, appropriate pacing, classroom management [3], providing male role models, and offering teacher training regarding the issues young boys face [2].

In terms of connectedness and support, boys and girls reported that when they have problems, they have someone who will be there for them more than the students who preferred not to share their gender. From our results, it's not possible to assess reasons why 27 pupils chose not to share their gender, and 6 marked their gender as "other". However, assuming this reflects gender diversity to some extent, our finding aligns with previous research showing that gender diverse youth experience lower levels of social and school support [4]. Shining a spotlight on these students might prove invaluable in finding out why they lack support.





Country Differences

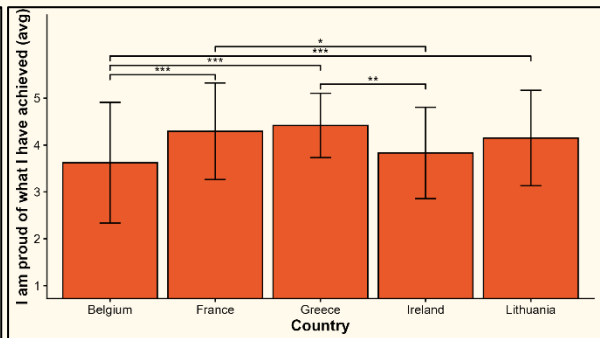
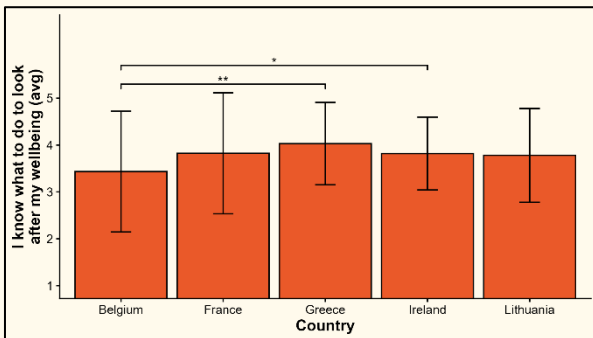
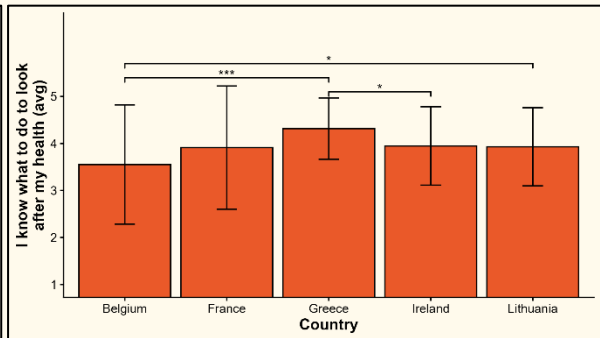
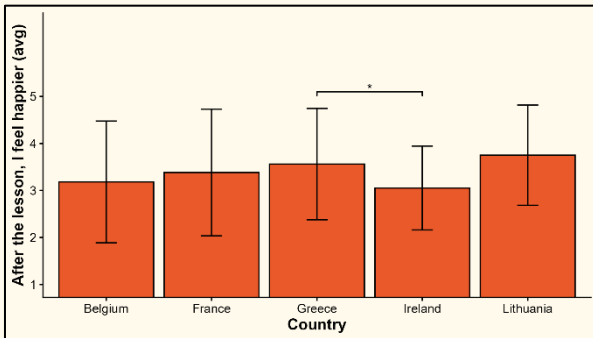
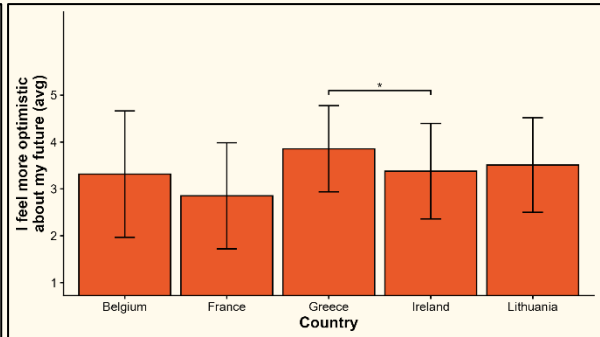
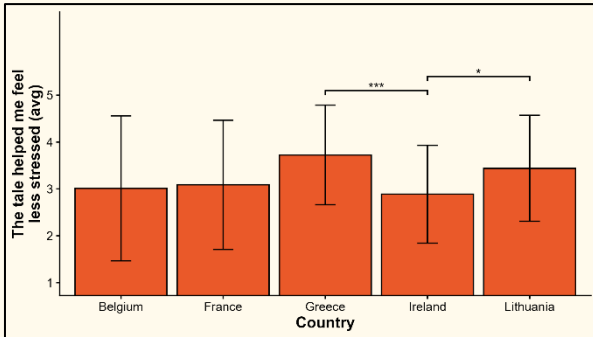
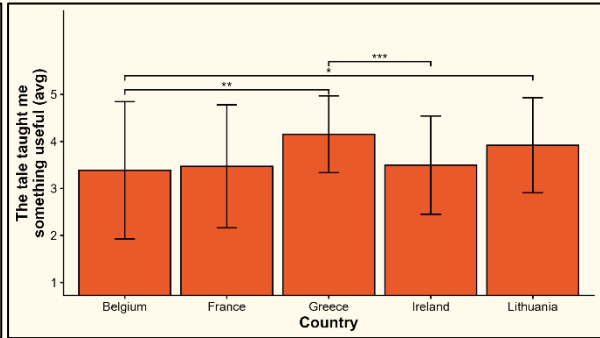
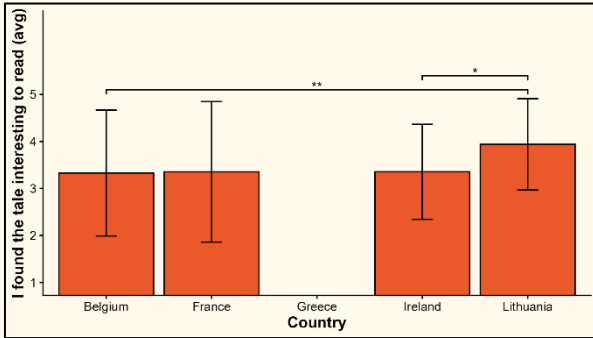
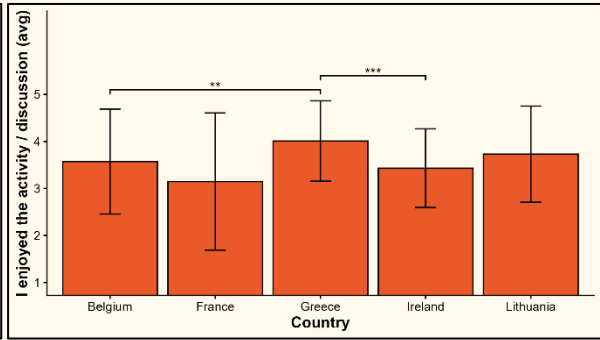
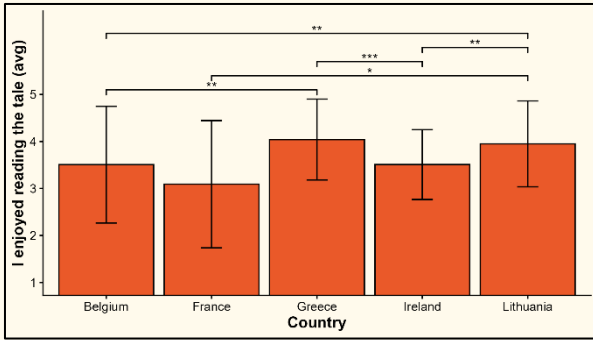
Differences between countries were the most common and significant differences in our research.

Overall, Greek and Lithuanian pupils stand out in how much they enjoyed reading the tales, enjoyed the activities and discussions, found the tales interesting to read, and found the tales useful.

They also reported that the tales helped them feel less stressed, and overall reported higher levels of optimism, happiness, sense of achievement, and knowledge of their health and wellbeing.

While the EU Report from the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study ^[5] shows that differences in reading performance between EU countries do exist, these differences are difficult to compare to our findings, especially with large differences in the number of pupils tested in each country.

It is likely that these outcomes are related to the individual teachers and lessons conducted, and as such, the qualitative data analysis section of this report might be more insightful.



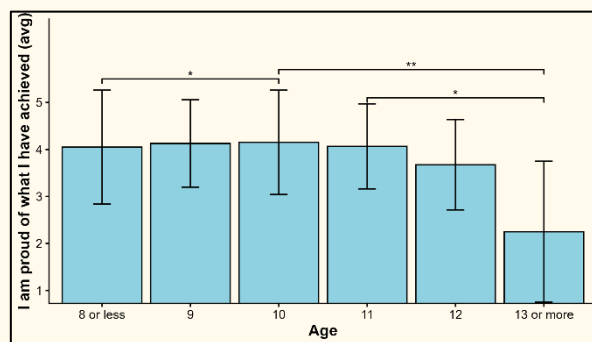
Age Differences

The only significant differences in age cohorts were found in 10- and 11-year-olds, who were more likely to report being proud of what they had achieved.

It is important to note a severe limitation that these differences were found in comparisons with pupils aged either 8 or less (39 pupils) or 13 or more (4 pupils), which were the smallest cohorts in our testing phase.

Moreover, most of the pupils aged 8 or less were from France, and all four of the 13 or more aged pupils were from Ireland.

As such, it is difficult to interpret whether these differences are truly differences in age, country, or statistical anomalies based on a small sample size.

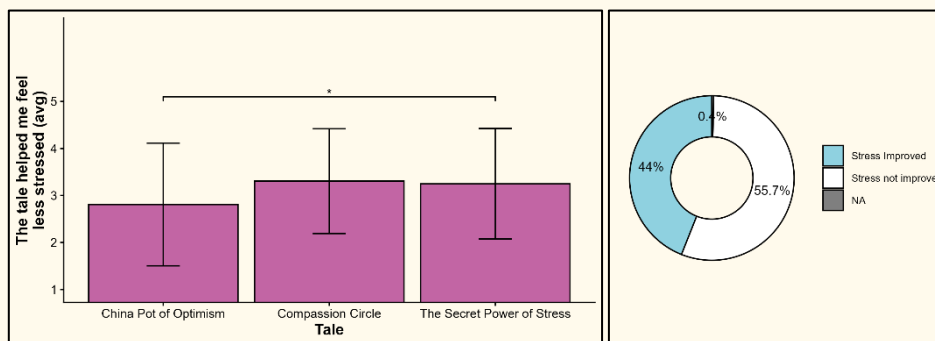


Tale Differences and Stress

The only significant difference between tales was that pupils found “The Secret Power of Stress” to help alleviate stress more than the “China Pot of Optimism” tale.

However, 55.7% of pupils said that their stress had not improved after the lesson.

The teacher feedback in the qualitative data analysis shows suggestions that reducing stress would require multiple repeat lessons involving these tales and discussions, rather than just the single session in our testing phase.



Conclusion

In summary, our findings reflect wider research literature on girls engaging with reading more than boys. Pupils in Greece and Lithuania reported the most benefits from these tales.

The findings overall show that while there might be some small benefits to a single session of reading and discussing topics of health and wellbeing, the most reliable approach for long-term sustainable impact would be to have regular sessions.

Moreover, one respondent specifically expressed their decision to choose a specific tale to match particular needs within their classrooms: *"I selected this story considering the needs of my students specifically..."* (Participant E014)

Responses related to student engagement also supported these findings. Even amongst teachers who did not explicitly link the pedagogical relevance of the story to students' lived experiences, their descriptions of classroom participation revealed a strong sense of resonance. Teachers reported that *"everyone was invested and related to the story"* (Participant E018) and that *"They could relate to it in their own lives and situations"* (Participant E023) and *"They were motivated because the subject resonated with them"* (Participant E009).

Chosen to be read in their lessons by 15 teachers (54%), "The Secret Power of Stress" was the most popular tale amongst teachers. Out of these 15 teachers, 80% (n=12) mention positive student engagement: high levels of relatability (students engaging with content), emotional learning (teaching stress, emotions, wellbeing) and active participation from students who *"...were very engaged, participated in the discussion and used examples from their own lives that were similar."* (Participant E025).

Other quotes from teachers mention *"Everyone was invested and related to the story"* (Participant E018) or that they *"...actively participated..."* (Participant E002); *"... enjoyed listening to the story..."* (Participant E022) or that they *"...showed great enthusiasm."* (Participant E015). It is worth highlighting that this tale also received the only negative comments (n=2) regarding engagement with one teacher stating her students were *"...not overly enthused"* (Participant E019).

Out of the 25 responses on student engagement, 100% of male teachers (n=7) made references to the great level of engagement from the majority of their students. Responses that support these findings relate, again, to the ability of their students to empathise with the stories and actively engage with discussions.

Respondents stated *"they enjoyed listening to the tale and could relate to the content"* (Participant E026) and *"Class was very engaging, answered questions throughout story and also had their own questions when the story finished. They were able to sympathise with Leo and relate with examples of feeling stressed"* (Participant E020).

When asked for suggestions and improvements, 16 teachers made suggestions. The most popular suggestion was shared by 50% of the respondents (n=8) who mentioned the need for the tales to be accompanied *"...with relevant illustrations..."* (Participant E015) and that this *"...would be particularly useful for younger children or to reinforce the interest of students with a visual learning style, so that they can see the pictures while listening to the story."* (Participant E014).

Upon further analysis, and widening our scope to also include *"other feedback or suggestions"*, it can be observed that 21 out of the 42 response lines recorded across these two questions refer to the need to complement the stories with additional materials, strategies or professional support. This represents 50% of the responses, contributed by 11 teachers, emphasising the importance of fostering *"...cooperation with school psychologists and social workers in order to resolve students' questions more effectively."* (Participant E014). Another teacher mentioned *"I think there's something missing that would help children grasp the concept. Have you ever been in a similar situation? Do you often feel pessimistic? What could you do to be more optimistic? Please note that some children may not understand the words 'optimistic' and 'pessimistic'."* (Participant E004). These quotes were amongst other pedagogy-related suggestions.

As expected, these responses suggest that the story alone is insufficient to generate the level of impact needed to make meaningful improvements in the students' wellbeing, highlighting the need for complementary strategies before and after the tale.

These responses suggest that teachers perceived the stories as more effective when accompanied by additional pedagogical strategies such as guided discussion, follow-up activities, or professional support.

Teachers referred to the value of structured pedagogical support, to *“Provide some teacher’s questions for pre-reading, opportunity to stop in the middle and ask questions and then provide some open questions at the end”* (Participant E021) or *“Follow up tales to describe how stress still occurs and interactive content about strategies.”* (Participant E020). Additionally, respondents also noted that these strategies should be *“...continued throughout the school year for maximum effectiveness.”* (Participant E009)

Pupils’ Perspectives

A total of 557 pupils responded to three open-ended questions. There were 1588 lines of responses obtained, which were analysed in NVivo and then systematically coded. Several themes and patterns were identified from within.

The open-ended questions gathered information related to pupils’ thoughts on the tale and/or the wellbeing lesson. The first question addressed what they enjoyed most during the lesson; the second question asked for suggestions, changes and areas to improve in the lesson; the last one addressed which actions pupils would take to support their wellbeing after the lesson.

The most frequently occurring theme (31%, n=174) was enjoyment of the story itself. The second most occurring theme, with 21%, was answers mentioning they enjoyed something related to teaching strategies (n=122).

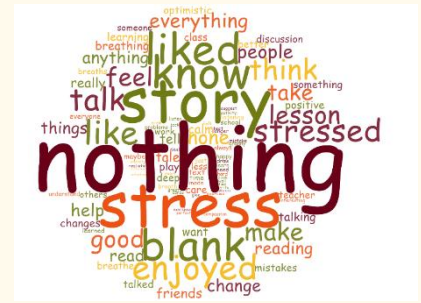
Many pupils expressed general enjoyment of the story, often simply stating *“I liked the story”* (Participant P291) or *“liked the story itself”* (Participant P460). Others (n=52) highlighted specific moments that resonated with them, such as *“when they talked about their problems”* (Participant P84) or *“Leo breathing during his maths test”* (Participant P173).

As previously mentioned, the second most common theme (21%, n=122) related to teaching strategies used during the lesson. These answers provide insights connected to decisions made by the teacher or facilitator of the lesson. Did they read the tale, or was it read to them? Did they play an activity afterwards, or did they have group discussions? Were there more activities included in the lesson? Many responses referred to the enjoyment of reading or listening to the story.

Also, students mentioned they enjoyed playing a game, *"The game we played, the wheel of fortune."* (Participant P305), or the fact that they enjoyed using a computer, *"using the tablets"* (Participant P134) or even drawing something.

It is worth highlighting that there were many (n=69) lines related to talking and discussing in class *"I liked the discussion because we shared our problems and now we won't be so stressed."* (Participant P290) and *"I liked the discussion because we talked about stress and how we can feel better. I also get stressed about tests, like Leo."* (Participant P312) or *"Talking in between about how we feel"* (Participant P146) and *"That we talked about something we feel"* (Participant P333). The high number of references to discussion suggests that opportunities for students to share their experiences were an important component of the lesson. Several pupils highlighted the value of talking about their own feelings and stress, indicating that the discussion element helped them connect the story to their personal experiences.

It is worth highlighting that the pupils who read *"The Secret Power of Stress"* mostly reported appreciating the opportunity to learn coping strategies (n=53).



Word Frequency Analysis on Q2: What changes would you like to suggest to the lesson?

Many students expressed clear satisfaction with the lesson (n=262), with comments such as *"Nothing, it was so good"* (Participant P10) and *"I wouldn't want to change anything"* (Participant P388). This suggests that a substantial proportion of students perceived the lesson as engaging and effective in its current form.

Suggestions concerning the story primarily focused on modifications to the narrative or its language (n = 101). Some students proposed adjustments to make the story more inclusive or accessible, for example: *"I would recommend a new story with girls and not boys, and make harder words more understandable"* (Participant P203). These responses indicate that while the story was generally well-received, some students felt that changes to the characters or language could improve its relatability and clarity.

From the remaining 55%, one third of responses (n=95) addressed wanting different or additional activities during the class. Responses in this group vary greatly: Some of them focused on specific activities, *"It should have more games"* (Participant P343), or *"A drama activity to show what's happening"* (Participant P265). Other responses focused on different content or ways to address its content: *"I would suggest maybe explaining the negative side effect of stress a bit more just for others to be aware of what stress causes to our wellbeing."* (Participant P233). And then, other participants suggested additional activities that could be considered coping strategies by themselves such as *"Go outside and take a walk around the place and refresh my brain"* (Participant P161) or *"Get people to talk about times when they felt stressed or why they*

felt stressed and what did they do to fix it and how they felt." (Participant P163) and "act out different stress scenes and on how to manage stress." (Participant P278).

For our third question: what action will you take to support your wellbeing? The most popular responses fell under the category of "actions" (n=288). Notably, the largest subgroup within this category involved students committing to specific strategies related to emotional regulation and stress management (n=110). Unsurprisingly, this response was most frequent among readers of "The Secret Power of Stress" (n=96). We can find answers such as *"Take deep breaths when I am stressed"* (Participant P266); *"deep breaths before and after reading to the class or going on a stage I just have to take deep breaths and try not to be as nervous about it"* (Participant P198) *"I will try think of positives before spiralling and try change my mindset a bit"* (Participant P237).

Amongst the other responses coded as actions, we found responses related to Self-confidence and Self-compassion.

Overall, these responses indicate that many students not only engaged positively with the lesson but were also able to identify practical strategies they intend to apply in their daily lives, suggesting a degree of internalisation of the wellbeing concepts presented.

Conclusion


When comparing and contrasting the responses obtained from both teachers and students, we can observe the following findings:

Most teachers believed the stories were pedagogically relevant and could address students' needs. Pupils, on the other hand, generally mentioned enjoying the tales. They enjoyed the story itself, some moments in the story and learning from it. Some appreciated being able to relate to the characters' challenges. Although many responses were brief, several comments suggest that students valued opportunities for emotional reflection, empathy and shared discussion. *"I liked that we could find a calming place"* (Participant P423); *"I liked showing compassion to others"* (participant P355), *"I liked the discussion because we shared our problems and now we won't be so stressed."* (Participant P290) *"That we all talked together and shared our problems"* (Participant P373).

Both teachers and students suggested that the stories were most effective when accompanied by additional activities, strategies, or even professional support in the classroom. However, whilst teachers' suggestions are closely related to visual material by adding pictures and videos, pupils made a wider variety of recommendations more aligned to the inclusion of activities, games, group discussions, and, in a much smaller number, illustrated material. The lesson design and strategies need to be closely aligned with the learning objective, and the students in the classroom as well.

Overall, the findings suggest that the stories were not met with indifference; rather, many students reported feeling engaged, inspired, or emotionally affected by them, while a smaller number expressed less enthusiasm. This diversity of responses highlights the need for flexible and responsive pedagogical approaches when implementing wellbeing-focused storytelling activities. There are a few crucial lessons from this analysis:

First, there is a great need for more intentional planning around the activity to ensure that its implementation is structured, purposeful and aligned with the learning objectives and classroom dynamics.



In addition, these lessons should be sustained over time. Ongoing exposure is necessary to create a more meaningful impact.

Finally, the materials and activities used should be adapted to the specific developmental stage, needs and dynamics of each classroom. Tailoring these elements can help maximise relevance, accessibility and engagement for a diverse range of students.

References

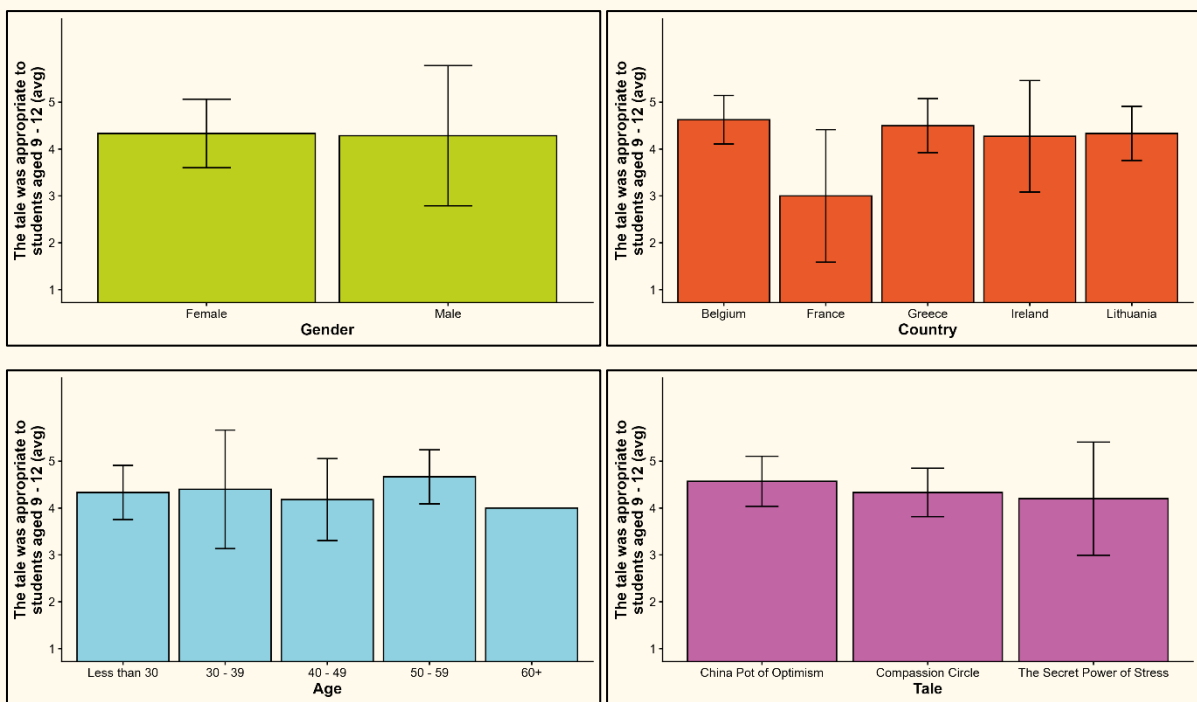
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Appendix

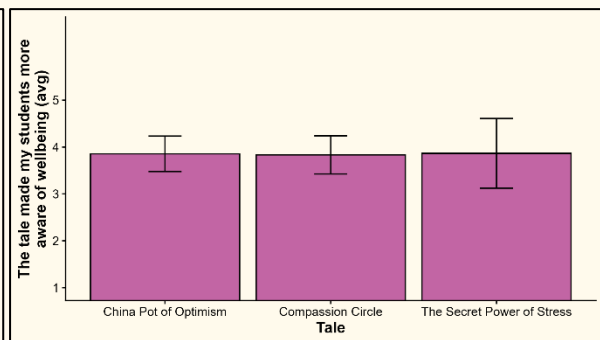
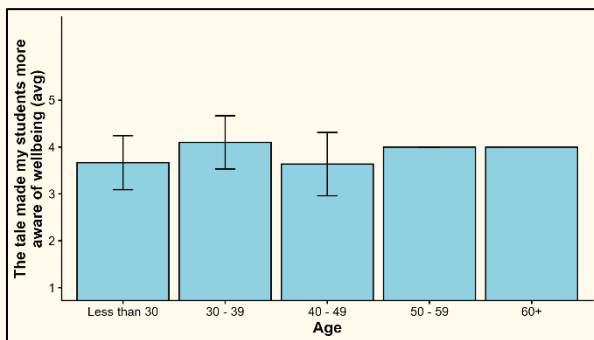
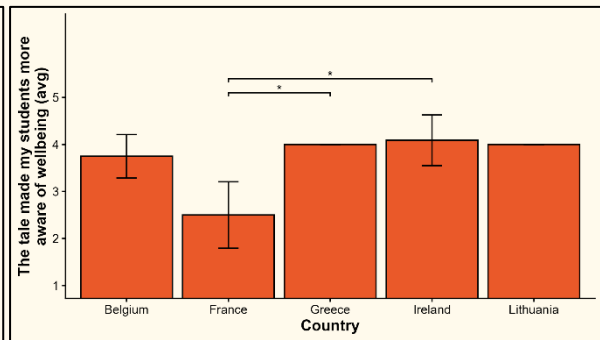
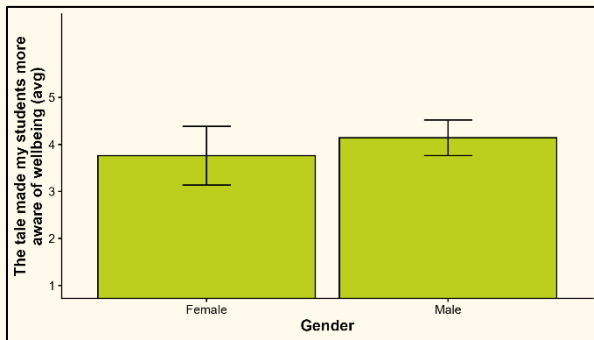
The questions were rated on a 1 – 5 scale (1 – Strongly Disagree, 2 – Disagree, 3 – Neither Agree nor Disagree, 4 – Agree, 5 – Strongly Agree). As such, the higher the bar, the more the participants agreed with the statement. Significant comparisons are noted as follows: * ($p < .05$), ** ($p < .01$), *** ($p < .001$). Error bars represent standard deviation.

Teachers

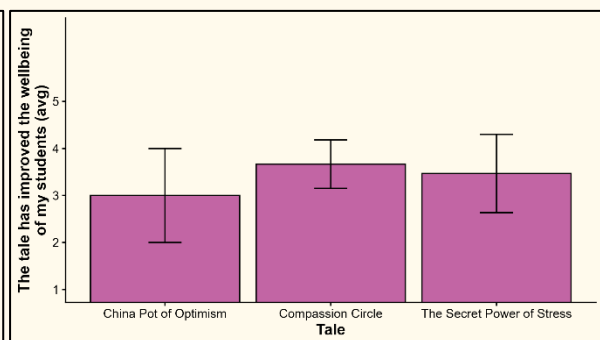
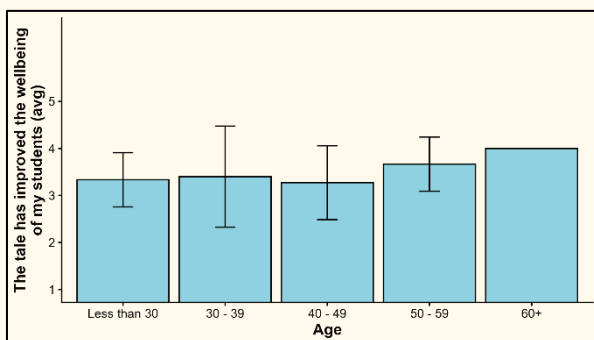
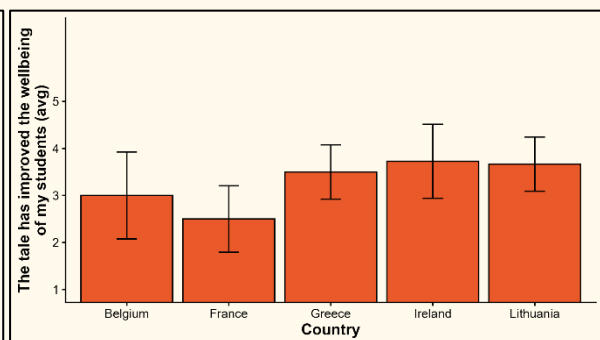
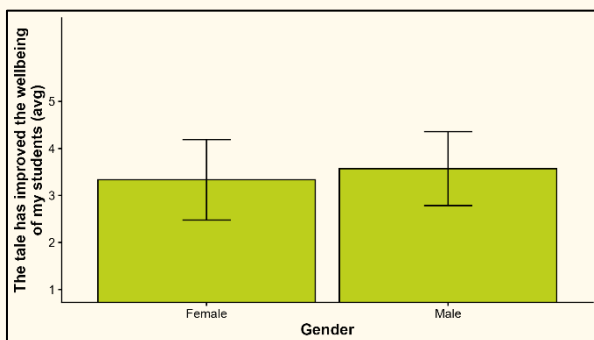
Tale Age Appropriate



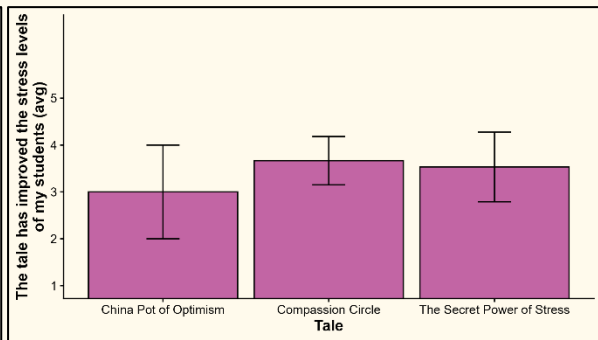
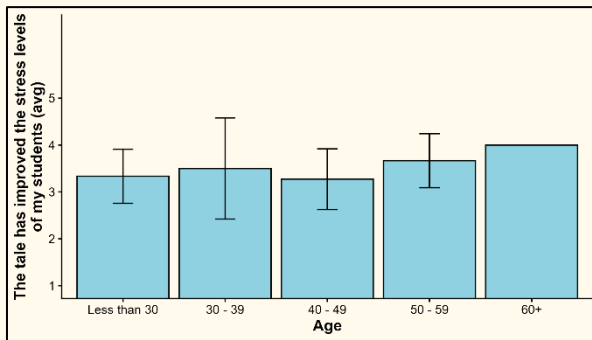
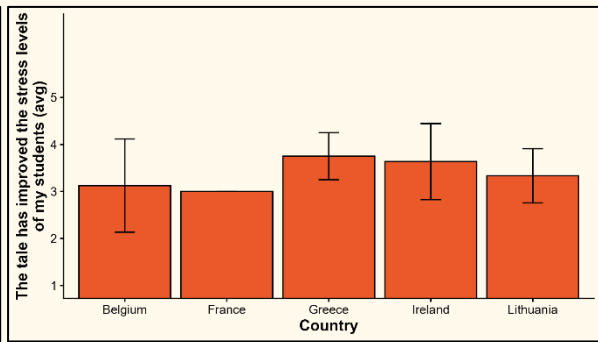
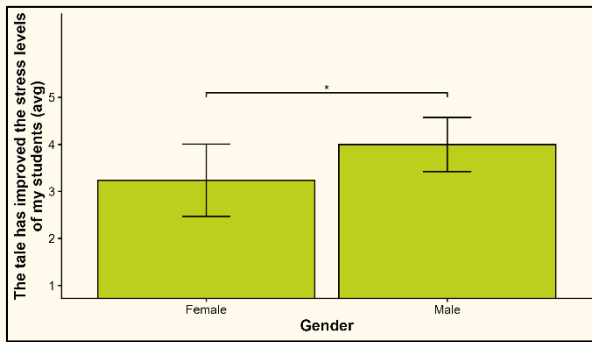
Student Wellbeing Awareness



Student Wellbeing Improvement

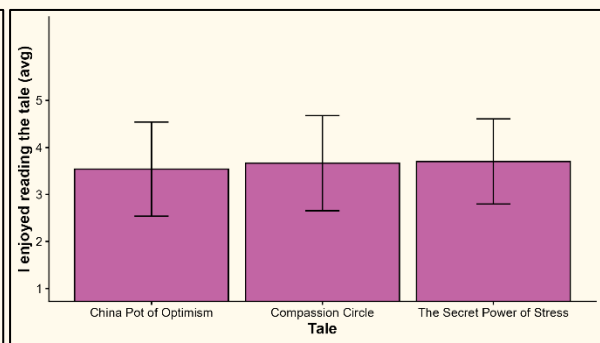
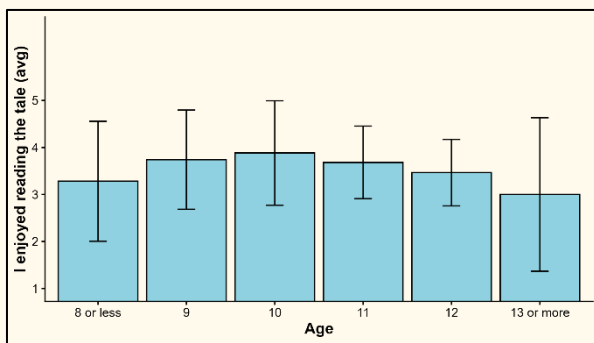
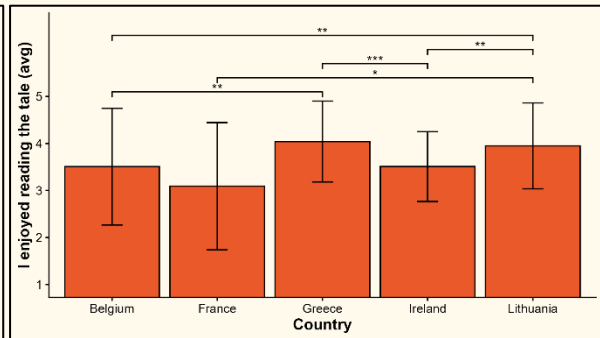
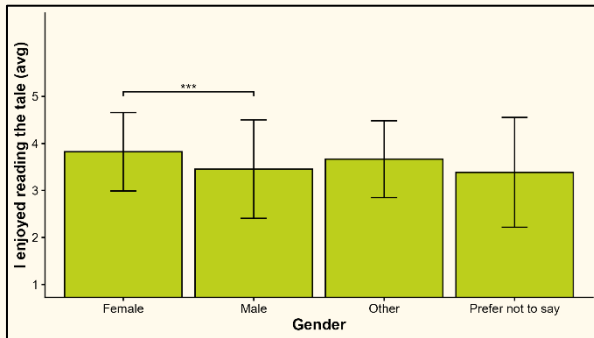


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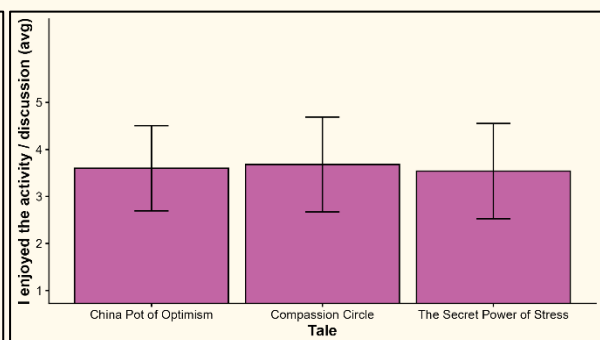
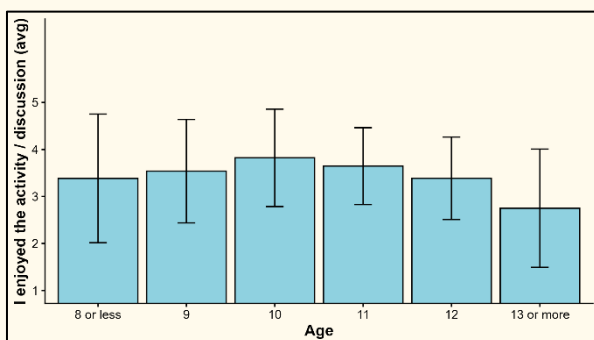
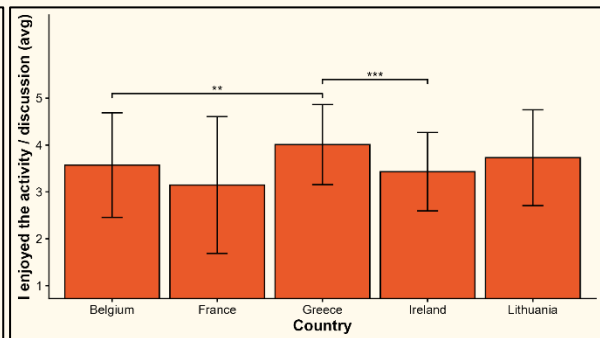
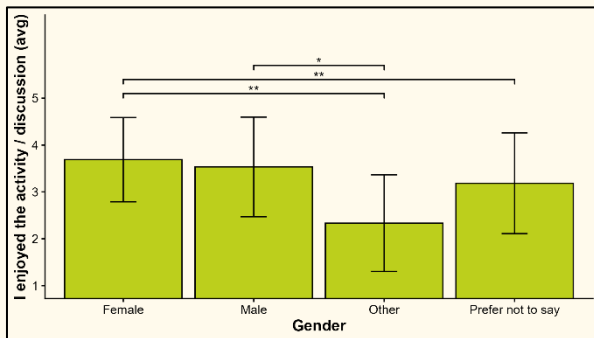


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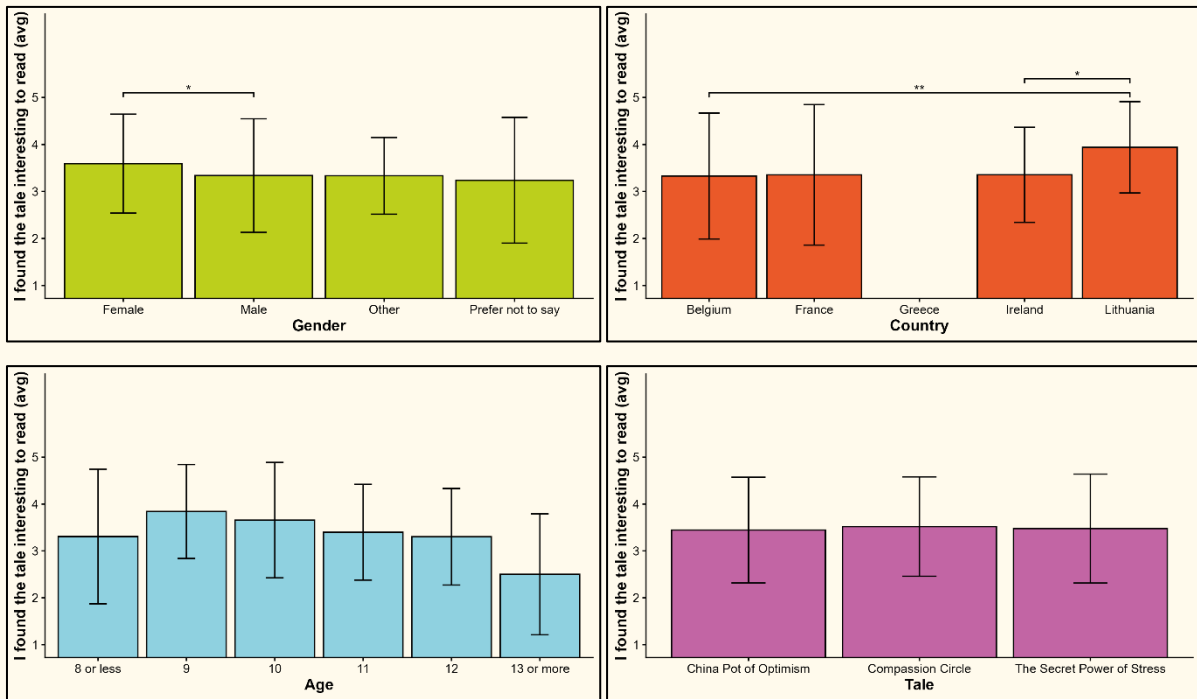
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Activity Enjoyment

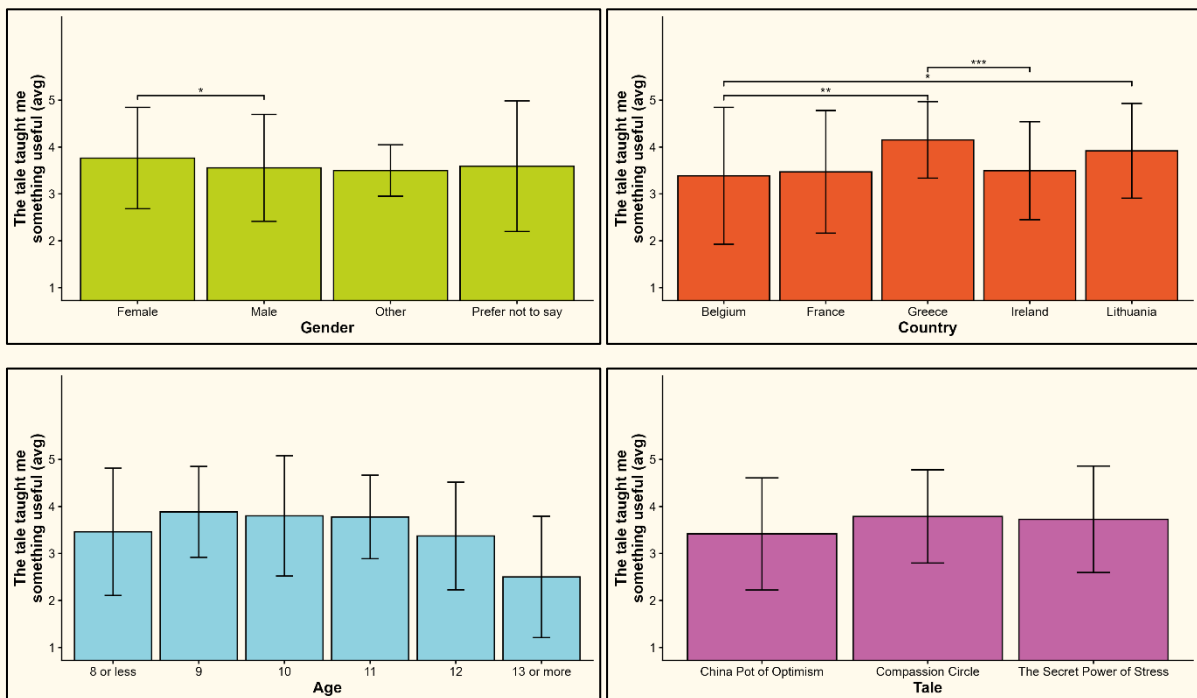


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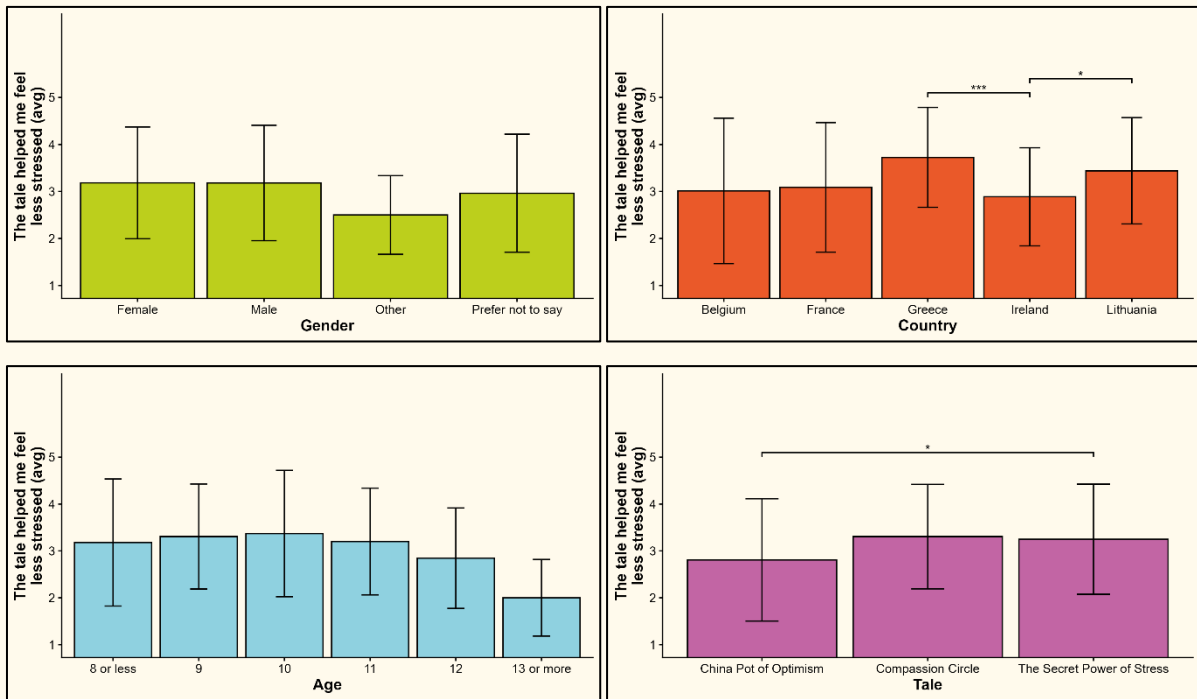


* The data from Greece for this specific question are missing, as there was a mistake in the Greek online questionnaire

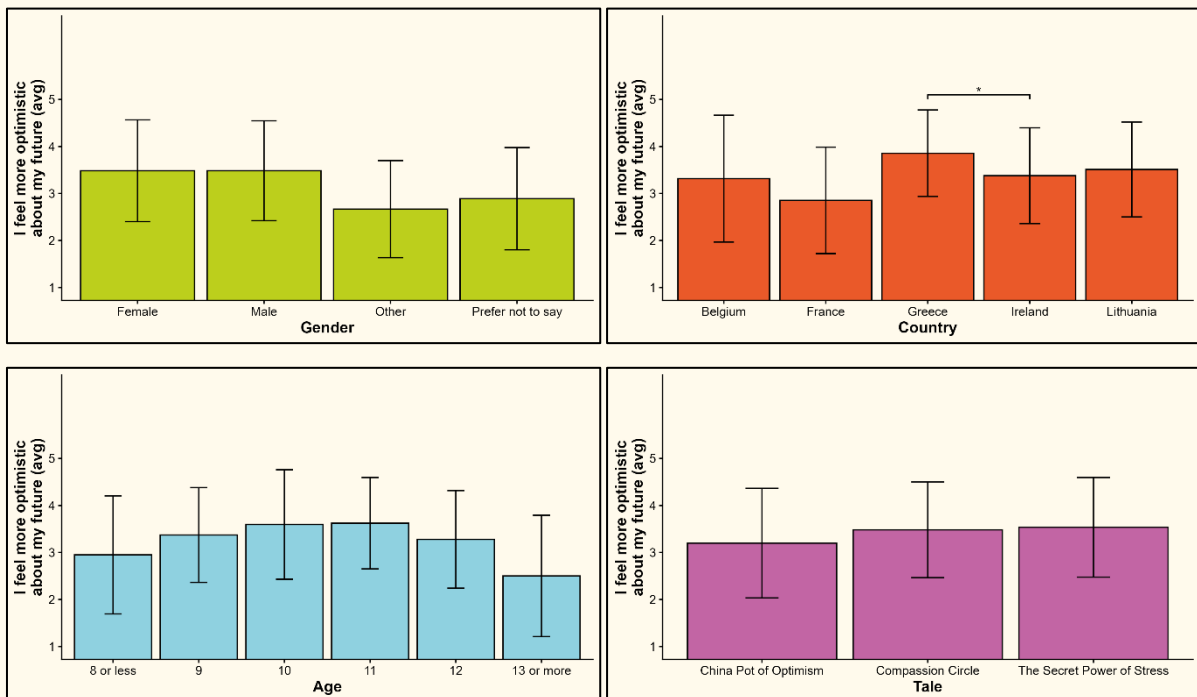
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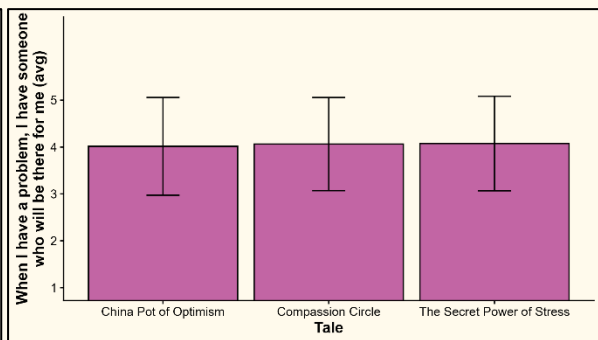
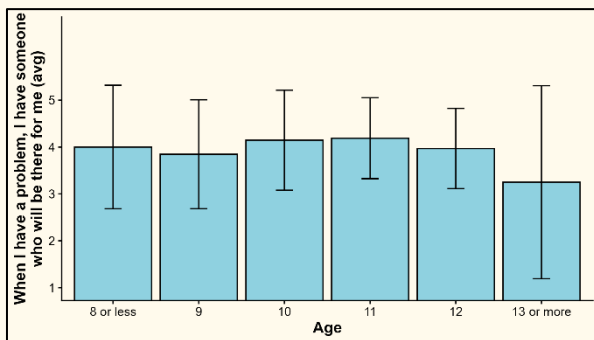
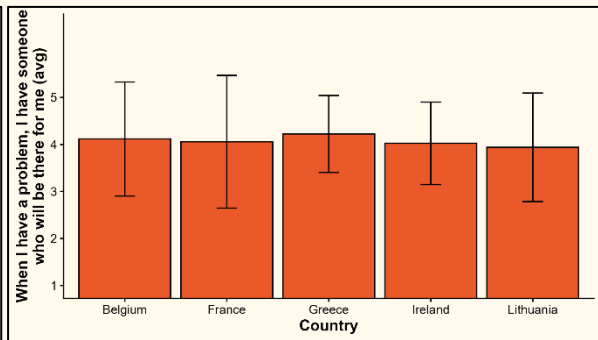
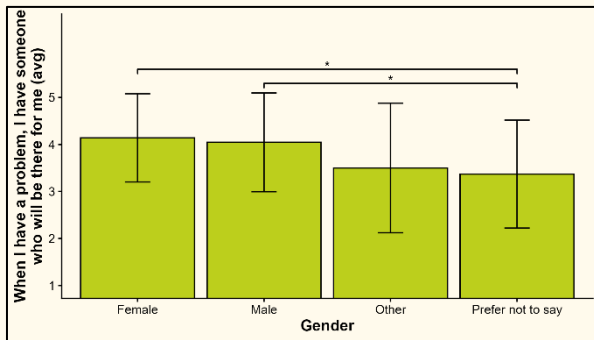
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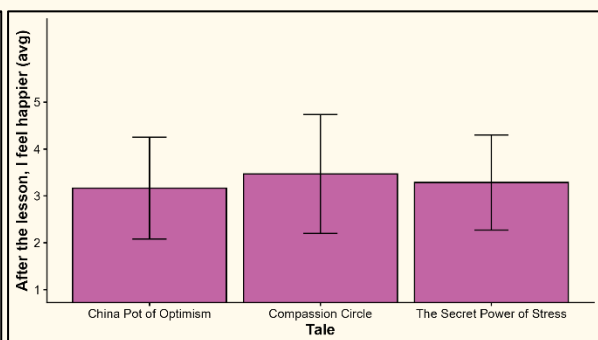
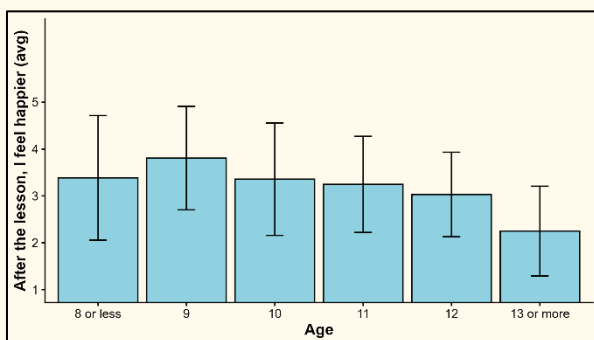
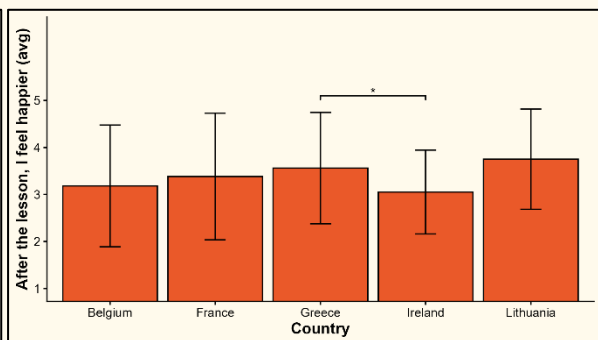
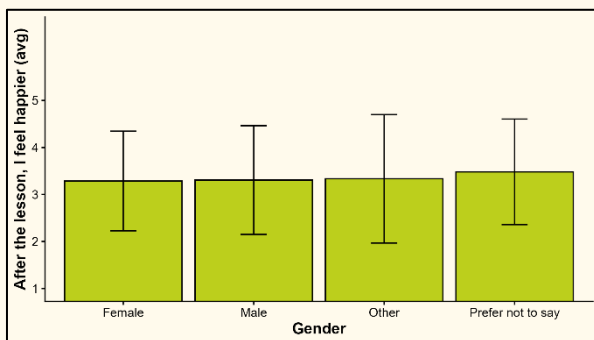
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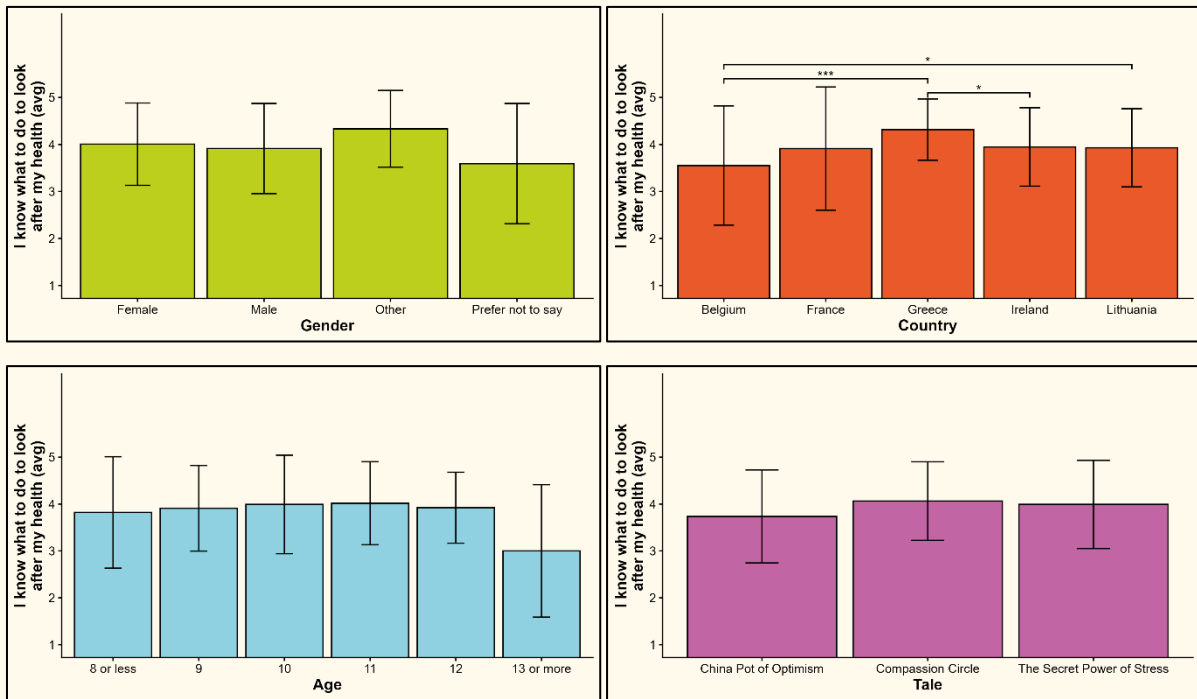
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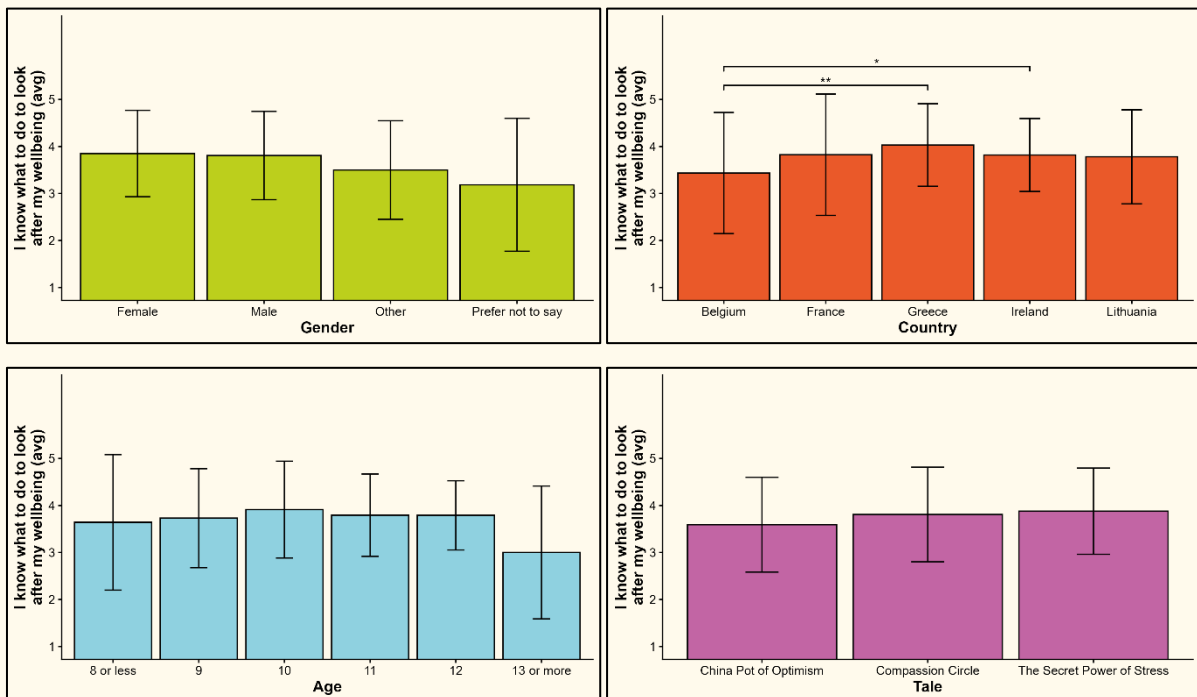
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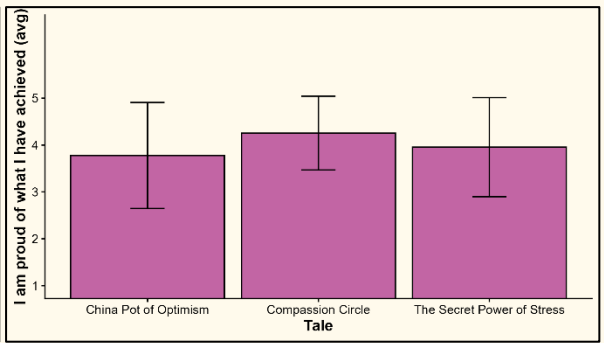
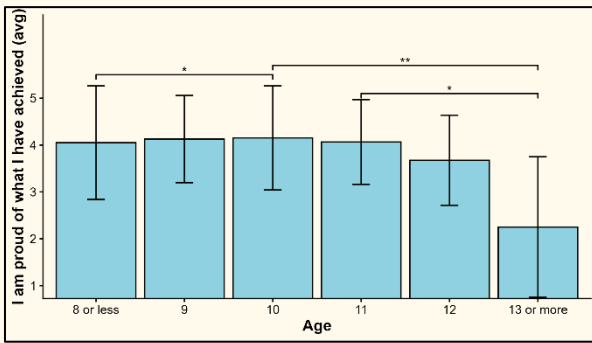
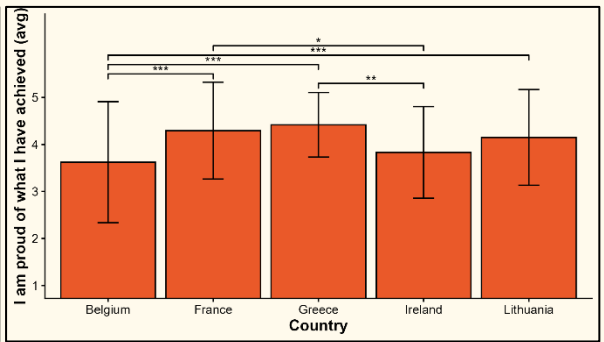
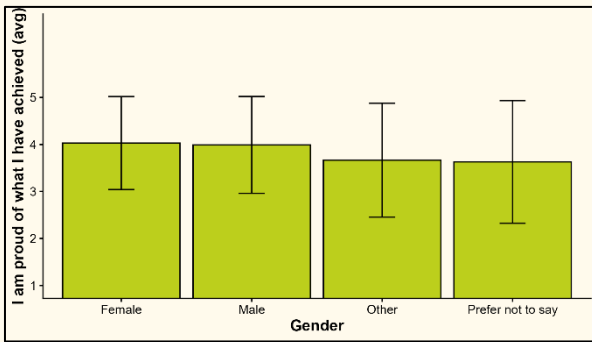
Health Knowledge



Wellbeing Knowledge



Achievement





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