Janusz Korczak was born Henryk Goldszmit on July 22nd, 1878 to an assimilated Jewish family in Warsaw, Poland. He was an author, a pediatrician and a pedagogue.

When Korczak's father, a prominent lawyer and the sole source of income of the household, died after illness in 1896, the family was left without a source of income and Korczak became the sole breadwinner for his mother, sister, and grandmother. The family environment in which he grew up undoubtedly influenced his personal development and his awareness and sensitivity toward social problems.

In 1898 in a literary contest, he used for the first time the pseudonym Janusz Korczak, a name he took from the book Janasz Korczak and the Pretty Sword Sweeper Lady written by the Polish writer Józef Ignacy Kraszewski.

Between 1898–1904 Korczak studied medicine at the University of Warsaw and also wrote for several Polish newspapers. He specialized as a pediatrician and worked at the Children’s Hospital.

In 1905–1906 he served as a military doctor in the Russo-Japanese War. During the war he came to the conclusion that it was as an educator rather than as a doctor that he could really make a lasting impression and contribution to the world.

In 1908 Korczak joined the Orphans Aid Society. There, in 1910, he met Stefania Wilczyńska (Stefa), who would become his closest associate.

In 1911–1912 he became the director of Dom Sierot, the orphanage of his own design for Jewish children in Warsaw. He appointed Stefa to work with him as his Deputy Director and house mother. About one hundred children lived in the orphanage. He established a 'republic for children' with its own small parliament, law-court and newspaper and reduced his other duties as a doctor.

During World War I Korczak served as a military doctor in the Russian Army. And then during the Polish-Soviet War in 1919-1920 he served again as a military doctor, this time with the rank of major.

In 1926 Korczak started a newspaper for Jewish children, the Mały Przegląd (The Small Review) which was written in Polish. At the same time some of his books for children such as “King Matt the First” or “How to Love a Child” for adults, gained him literary recognition and a wide popularity and readership.

During the 1930s he had his own radio program which was widely broadcasted throughout Poland until it was closed down due to growing antisemitism in Poland.

In 1934 and in 1936 Korczak traveled to Palestine under the British Mandate, stayed in kibbutz Ein Harod and observed the educational system in the kibbutz. When the situation worsened in Poland, Korczak decided to immigrate to Palestine, and in 1939 met with Yitzhak Gruenbaum, a member of the Jewish Agency, to consult with him about plans for immigration.
In 1939, when World War II erupted, Korczak was going to volunteer for duty in the Polish Army but due to his age he stayed with the children in Warsaw. At the end of November 1939, the German authorities forced every Jew to wear a white armband with a blue Star of David. Korczak refused to wear the armband or remove his Polish officer uniform even though he was putting himself in danger by not doing so.

When the Germans created the Warsaw Ghetto in 1940, his orphanage was forced to move to the ghetto. Korczak went with the children even though he had repeatedly been offered shelter on the “Aryan side”. He always refused these offers saying that he could not abandon his children. During the ghetto period, Korczak and Stefa's highest concern was the children’s food. Korczak went from door to door and begged for food, warm clothes and medicines for the children. Despite his frail health and personal problems he coped with the reality of the ghetto and did everything to better the life of the children in the orphanage. In the ghetto, Korczak wrote a diary with notes, memories and observations; in it he portrayed his inner world and personal view on life in the ghetto. This diary was published in Poland in 1958.

On the 5th of August 1942, he boarded the train with the children to Treblinka where together with Stefa, about 12 members of his orphanage’s staff and around 200 children, all went to their deaths in the gas chambers.

Janusz Korczak's work with children allowed him to put in practice his educational views, but it was as a writer that Korczak had the greatest effect during his lifetime and in generations to come. He wished, and succeeded, to reach both adults and children and to make a deep and lasting impression on them. He wrote over twenty books, many of them about children's rights and child's life experience in the adult world. Among his most influential works we find: "How to Love the Child" (1921), "King Matt the Reformer" (1928), "The Child's Right to Respect" (1929) and, "Rules for Living" (1930).