



# JOURNEY IN... YEAR TWO ENDINGS DRAMA

## This lesson's Big Ideas:

- Death is an inevitable reality in our lives. We will all die someday. Everyone we love will die someday.
- If we face this knowledge with courage and grace, death can become a teacher. Death's inevitability has the potential to make our lives more meaningful.

## Lesson Materials

- Copies of the script of "Kisa and the Mustard Seed Medicine" for each child
- Miscellaneous props and costume pieces
- Highlighter pens to highlight lines
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## TEACHER REFLECTION AND PREPARATION

🕒 Ahead of time

The reality of death has become a definite part of my life; my life has, so to speak, been extended by death, by my looking death in the eye and accepting it, by accepting destruction as a part of life and no longer wasting my energies on fear of death or the refusal to acknowledge its inevitability. It sounds paradoxical: by excluding death from our life, we cannot live a full life, and by admitting death into our life we enlarge and enrich it.

-Etty Hillesum

"Trisha's grandma used to say that the stars were holes in the sky. They were the light of heaven coming from the other side. And she used to say that someday she would be on the other side, where the light comes from. One evening they lay on the grass together and counted the lights from heaven. 'You know,' her grandma said, 'all of us will go there someday. Hang on to the grass, or you'll lift right off the ground, and there you'll be!' They laughed, and both hung on to the grass. But it was not long after that night that her grandma must have let go of the grass, because she went to where the lights were, on the other side. And not long after that, Trisha's grandpa let go of the grass, too."

- Patricia Polacco, from *Thank You, Mr. Falker*

And I will show that there is no imperfection in the present, and  
can be none in the future,  
And I will show that whatever happens to anybody it may be turn'd to  
beautiful results,  
And I will show that nothing can happen more beautiful than death,  
And I will thread a thread through my poems that time and events  
are compact,  
And that all the things of the universe are perfect miracles, each  
as profound as any.

- Walt Whitman, *Starting from Paumanok*

**YOUR FIELD  
NOTES:**

**PRIMARY ACTIVITY ONE  
PLAY: "KISA AND THE MUSTARD  
SEED MEDICINE"**

🕒 45 minutes to stage and rehearse, 10 minutes to perform

- Distribute the script to the class. Read the entire play aloud so that the children can hear it from beginning to end.
- Distribute roles. They can be selected, assigned or drawn randomly from a hat. Small groups will have to double up on roles. With younger classes, invite a child who is confident in his or her reading skills to be the Narrator, as it has the most words. Kids who really dislike reading can direct or help with costumes.
- Have a seated read-through.
- Have a second read-through, inviting the director(s) to share ideas for staging.
- Spend some time memorizing short lines, if possible. It's okay to depart from the script a little, of course. The narrator can read aloud from the script.
- After a few rehearsals, perform the skit for younger children, older children, parents or the coffee hour audience.

**CLOSING AND LEAVE-TAKING**

🕒 2 minutes

Gather in a circle, assume a comfortable meditative position or take each other's hands. Read these words from Mary Oliver to the children. Teach or remind them that 'mortal' means 'going to die'.

To live in this world  
You must be able  
to do three things:

To love what is mortal;  
To hold it against your bones knowing  
Your own life depends on it;

And when it comes time to let it go,  
To let it go.

Grades 3-6  
Kisa and the Mustard Seed Medicine  
Adapted from Sophia Lyon Fahs

Roles:

Narrator  
Kisa  
Husband  
Neighbor One  
Neighbor Two  
Man On Street  
Buddha  
Villager One  
Villager Two  
Villager Three  
Villager Four

Director(s)  
Costume Designer(s)  
Properties Master(s)

**Narrator:** Kisa Gotami was a beautiful young woman with neither father nor mother to care for her. In the city market one day, a rich young man saw her as she stood in a booth selling flowers. He fell in love with her at first sight. Later he married her. Everyone in the village thought, “What a happy life Kisa will have!” It wasn’t long before Kisa and her husband had a child.

**Kisa:** Husband, we have a handsome, lively baby boy!

**Husband:** He will grow to be a clever, obedient son! What a joy this is!

**Narrator:** But one day, the boy became very sick.

**Kisa:** Oh, my husband! What shall we do? His body is hot with fever. He does not cry or move.

**Husband:** We have tried everything we know to do. What more is there to try?

**Kisa:** Surely, he will get well!

**Narrator:** But the baby did not get well. In fact, in a few days, the little boy died. Kisa could not believe it. She thought that surely her little boy was only asleep from the sickness. There must be a medicine that would wake him up. She wrapped the little boy in a blanket and carried the bundle to her neighbor’s door.

**Kisa:** Please my friend, give me some medicine that will cure my child.

**Neighbor One:** Oh, Kisa. There is nothing I can do.

**Narrator:** But Kisa would not give up. She went from door to door, begging for medicine, but each neighbor looked at the dead child’s face and shook their heads sadly.

**Neighbor Two:** Poor Kisa! She has gone almost crazy with sadness.

**Narrator:** Finally, Kisa met a man on the street who offered an idea.

**Man On Street:** Good woman, I cannot help you, but I know of someone who can. Go to the Buddha. He can always help people.

**Narrator:** So Kisa hurried to where the Buddha was teaching.

**Kisa:** Good Teacher, I am told you can help people in trouble. Please, please give me medicine to help my child.

**Narrator:** The Buddha looked tenderly at the anxious mother. He knew the child was dead. He knew he could not change that, but he also knew that he could help the mother to find peace and understanding.

**Buddha:** Good woman, you must help me find the ingredient for the medicine. Find me a handful of mustard seeds.

**Kisa:** Oh, this is an easy thing to find!

**Buddha:** Do as I tell you, but remember this: the mustard seed must be taken from a house where no one has ever known death. No one who lives there must have known the death of a friend or a family member or a pet. Otherwise it will be of no use.

**Narrator:** Kisa thought that the task at hand would be easy. She took the body of her child home and set out through the village to find the mustard seed.

**Kisa:** Friend, do you have mustard seed that you could give me?

**Villager One:** Of course, Kisa! I'll gladly give you a handful and more!

**Kisa:** But first, I must ask you a question: Has anyone ever known death in your house?

**Villager One:** Oh, dear, Kisa. Have you forgotten? Our dear grandfather died here not a year ago.

**Kisa:** Oh, then your mustard seed cannot help me. Good bye.

**Kisa:** Neighbor, do you have mustard seed that you could give me?

**Villager Two:** Of course, Kisa! I'll gladly give you a handful and more!

**Kisa:** But first, I must ask you a question: Has anyone ever died, that you know of?

**Villager Two:** Oh, yes, I'm sad to say. My spouse died ten years ago.

**Kisa:** Oh, then your mustard seed cannot help me. Good bye.

**Kisa:** Dear friend, do you have mustard seed that you could give me?

**Villager Three:** Of course, Kisa! I'll gladly give you a handful and more!

**Kisa:** But first, I must ask you a question: Does anyone in this house know death?

**Villager Three:** Yes, sadly, our oldest son died, many, many years back.

**Kisa:** Oh, then your mustard seed cannot help me. Good bye.

**Narrator:** And so, Kisa went hopefully from house to house, but at every door it was the same. At one house, finally someone asked:

**Villager Four:** Woman! How can you expect to find a house where no one has died? Don't you know that the living are few, but the dead are many? You have two jobs, now: feel the sadness of your loss and go on to find joy in living again.

**Narrator:** At last, Kisa, tired and discouraged, walked beyond the village and sat under a tree. She knew now that the Buddha could not give her a medicine. Nothing would bring back her child. Tears blinded her eyes. Even though it was the middle of the day, she felt as if the darkest night had fallen around her. As she sat weeping under the tree, she felt a peace in her heart. After all, she was not alone in her sadness. The whole village understood her grief. And she felt somehow that her little boy was not alone, either. Yes, the real little boy was gone, but many thousands of people had died before and she, his mother, would die someday, too. Kisa felt as though all people were together in dying. No one was ever alone. Kisa decided to talk to the Buddha again.

**Buddha:** Good woman, have you brought the mustard seed as I told you?

**Kisa:** No, teacher. There was not a house in the village where no one had ever died.

**Buddha:** Sit a while and talk with me. Our lives are short whether they last one year or one hundred years. We must all die. It cannot be avoided so we must accept it. If we can be at peace with death, we save ourselves much suffering. Accept each day, one by one, as a gift.

**Kisa:** Thank you, teacher, for this wisdom.

**Narrator:** And so Kisa, who knew now how much it hurt to be lonely and to suffer in the wasted fight to avoid death, began to comfort those around her. She brought food to the hungry. She played with the children of the village. In this way, she came to understand death, and life, and peace.

The End