



JOURNEY IN... YEAR TWO THE NATURE OF GOD DRAMA

This lesson's Big Ideas:

- Our Unitarian Universalist faith asserts that each individual has a capacity for and birthright to an original experience of God. We seek no intercessors, no dogma, no special assignation of grace or salvation. God is immediately available to everyone.
- Prayer and meditation are ways to interact directly with God.
- There's a big difference between direct experience and indirect understanding.

Lesson Materials

- Animal masks
- Construction paper
- Scissors
- Markers
- Yarn
- Paper and pens for writing lines
- Videocamera and media for recording

TEACHER REFLECTION AND PREPARATION

🕒 Ahead of time

Let me admonish you, first of all, to go alone; to refuse the good models, even those which are sacred in the imagination of men, and dare to love God without mediator or veil. Friends enough you shall find who will hold up to your emulation [...] Thank God for these good men, but say, 'I also am a man.' Imitation cannot go above its model. The imitator dooms himself to hopeless mediocrity. The inventor did it, because it was natural to him, and so in him it has a charm. In the imitator, something else is natural, and he bereaves himself of his own beauty, to come short of another man's.

- from R.W.Emerson's *Divinity School Address*

Our age is retrospective[...] It writes biographies, histories, and criticism. The foregoing generations beheld God and nature face to face; we, through their eyes. Why should not we also enjoy an original relation to the universe? Why should not we have a poetry and philosophy of insight and not of tradition, and a religion by revelation to us, and not the history of theirs? Embosomed for a season in nature, whose floods of life stream around and through us, and invite us by the powers they supply, to action proportioned to nature, why should we grope among the dry bones of the past, or put the living generation into masquerade out of its faded wardrobe? The sun shines to-day also [...] There are new lands, new men, new thoughts. Let us demand our own works and laws and worship.

- from *Nature* by R. W. Emerson

Believe nothing, no matter where you read it, or who said it, no matter if I have said it, unless it agrees with your own reason and your own common sense.

-Buddha

Reflective question for teachers:

Where in your life have you sought and perhaps found an "original relation to the universe? What are your experiences with prayer and meditation?

TIPS FOR A SUCCESSFUL LESSON

- When you're working with the youngest groups, put non-readers into the improv group without making them feel inadequate. Ask your 1st and 2nd graders, "Is anyone in here still working on becoming a reader? If so, the improv group is a perfect fit for you." You can also ask, "Does anyone in here just really, really love reading? If so, you'll probably enjoy working with a script."
- Ask who REALLY loves reading out loud and give that child the role of NARRATOR.
- Feel free to read the stage directions out loud yourself.

CHECK-IN

🕒 5 minutes

Allow the Journey Guide to lead the group in a name game, an icebreaker, a get-to-know-you questions or a simple 'How are things?' moment.

PRIMARY ACTIVITY ONE SKIT: FINDING OUT FOR YOURSELF

🕒 30 minutes planning and rehearsal plus performance time.

Performances may be video recorded for review.

One way to think about the difference between doctrinal religion and Unitarian Universalism is through the metaphor of scripted theatre versus improvisation. Doctrine is like a play with a script. Unitarian Universalism asks each actor to listen, respond – attentively improvising our personal theologies. For a Christian or a Muslim, the story of God is not unfolding, but is written down in a book – the Bible or the Quran – and elaborated on through hundreds of years of human-crafted doctrine that interprets that story for believers. A Unitarian Universalist might claim core truths about God the same way that an improv troupe has a basic shared premise; together, the troupe bounces ideas off one another, listening and learning about the story as it unfolds.

- Divide the class into two groups by having them draw lots from a hat. One group will be highly directed by the teacher and given a script for a play that they will read aloud. The other group will have to invent their skit themselves. The script and the skit will both retell the main story from the Story Workshop, *The Sound the Hare Heard*. Each group will spend their 15-minute rehearsal period very differently.
- **The scripted group** will be assigned parts by the teacher. The play will be blocked and directed by the teacher. Rehearsal will simply be going over the script as many times as you can in 15-minutes.
- Read **the improv group** this prompt (if they haven't had the Story Workshop yet – if they have, ask a student to recount the story.)

This story takes place in a forest. A rabbit is sitting under a coconut palm, when suddenly, a coconut falls to the ground with a thud. The rabbit doesn't investigate but runs through the forest yelling that the world is coming to an end. Most of the forest animals believe the rabbit and panic, too. The stampeding herd finally meets the Lion, King of the Forest, who points out how foolish they were to run from a coconut.

They have up to 15 minutes to work things out on their own. They also have to make their own props. They should decide

**YOUR FIELD
EXPERIENCES:
FEEDBACK AND
NOTES**

who's playing which role and what they'll say. Encourage them to be flexible and efficient and remind them that while thoughtful ideas and a good effort are expected, perfection is not. They'll have 5 minutes to tell their story. After the 20-minute rehearsal period, they should be ready for a quick performance.

- Feel free to video tape both performances and review them.

GATHERING AND REFLECTING

🕒 5-10 minutes

Leave plenty of time to discuss the experience with questions like these:

- I wonder how the groups' experiences were different?
- I wonder who had more fun and why?
- I wonder how the final skits were different? The same?
- I wonder which group had it 'easier'?
- Was it better to be in one group or the other, I wonder?
- There are many churches that give their people a kind of script to talk about God. The church sort of tells people what lines to say when talking about what God is like. I wonder if you've ever heard anyone talking about God like that, with lines that someone else told them to say? What are some good things about that way of doing church? What are some problems with doing church like a script?
- Does our UU church tell people what to say about God? What are some good things about that? What are some problems about how we have to figure out our own things to say about God?
- How is the plot of this play like thinking about God?

CLOSING AND LEAVE-TAKING

🕒 2-5 minutes

Let's not use someone else's prayer this time. We can make up our own.

On the first Sunday of this cycle, the guide and teacher should allow the children to create a closing prayer for each other, one that encourages the kids to remember to trust their own direct experience of God and to remember each other as fellow travelers on the path.

"What can we say to each other and to the whole Universe when we leave this group to encourage each other to be courageous and trust our own hearts and minds to figure God out?"

Ask for some ideas and come to a consensus; be sure to write down the words for next week so that the group can have a set closing.

SCRIPT: THE SOUND THE HARE HEARD

Characters: (Your teacher will assign these roles)

NARRATOR

Animals:

HARE

MONKEY

TIGER

ZEBRA

BUTTERFLY

FROG

LION

PROP MASTER

NARRATOR: Long, long ago, a hare lived at the bottom of a tall coconut palm. One day the hare lay under the palm tree, thinking,

HARE: If this earth were destroyed, what would become of me?

[PROP MASTER drops a coconut.]

HARE: Aaaah! The earth is collapsing!"

[The HARE runs offstage and back on, where he meets MONKEY, who has just stepped onstage.]

MONKEY: What's wrong, Hare?

HARE: Don't ask! Just run!

[The MONKEY and HARE run offstage and back on, where they meet TIGER.]

TIGER: What's wrong?

HARE and MONKEY (together): Don't ask, just run!!

[HARE, MONKEY and TIGER run offstage and back on, where they meet ZEBRA.]

ZEBRA: What's wrong? Why are you running.

HARE: The earth is collapsing!

ZEBRA: What are we waiting for? Run!!

[All the animals run offstage and on again, where they meet BUTTERFLY.]

BUTTERFLY: Where are you all going so fast?

ALL: The earth is collapsing! Run!!

[All run off stage and on, where they meet FROG. No words are exchanged.]

ALL: Aaaah!

FROG: Aaaah!

[All run off stage and stay there while the NARRATOR reads.]

NARRATOR: Their fear was contagious. All the animals were swept up in the running stampede. They all cried, "The earth is collapsing!" and they believed it. Finally, the stampede ran headlong into the king of the forest, Lion.

LION (roaring): STOP!!!! **[all the animals stop]**. What's wrong?

ALL: The earth is collapsing

LION: Who saw it collapsing?

FROG: The Zebras know all about it! Ask them!

ZEBRA: The Tigers know!

TIGER: The Monkeys know!

MONKEY: I don't know! The Hare knows, though! This one told us!

LION: Is it true, Hare, that the earth is breaking up?

HARE: Yes, sir, I heard it.

LION: Where were you when you heard it?

HARE: I was lying under a palm in the forest, thinking, 'If this earth were destroyed, what would become of me?' At that very moment I heard the sound of the earth breaking up and I ran.

NARRATOR: From this explanation, the lion realized exactly what had really happened, but he wanted to experience the truth for himself before showing it to the other animals.

LION: I will take the hare and go to find out whether or not the earth is coming to an end where he says it is. Until we return, stay here."

[All the animals leave. The LION and HARE go offstage and come back on.]

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NARRATOR: Placing the hare on his back, he raced to the hare's tree. Then he put the hare down and said, "Come, show me the place you meant."

HARE: I don't dare, my lord

LION: Don't be afraid.

HARE: Over there, sir, is the place of the awful sound.

[The LION goes over to where the coconut is lying. The LION looks up, looks around and looks at the coconut. The LION and HARE go offstage and then return with all the animals.]

NARRATOR: The Lion and Hare returned to the told them what he had found and said, "Don't be afraid. If you had gone to look for yourselves, you would have seen the coconut that fell to the ground with a THUD. Calmed, the animals went back to business as usual.

**SCRIPT: The Sound the Hare Heard
FIRST AND SECOND GRADE VERSION**

Characters: (Your teacher will assign these roles)

NARRATOR

Animals:

HARE

MONKEY

TIGER

ZEBRA

BUTTERFLY

FROG

LION

PROP MASTER

NARRATOR: Long, long ago, a hare lived at the bottom of a tall tree. One day the hare lay under the tree, thinking,

HARE: If this earth were destroyed, what would become of me?

[PROP MASTER drops a coconut.]

HARE: Aaaah! The earth is breaking up!"

[The HARE runs offstage and back on, where he meets MONKEY, who has just stepped onstage.]

MONKEY: What's wrong, Hare?

HARE: Don't ask! Just run!

[The MONKEY and HARE run offstage and back on, where they meet TIGER.]

TIGER: What's wrong?

HARE and MONKEY (together): Don't ask, just run!!

[HARE, MONKEY and TIGER run offstage and back on, where they meet ZEBRA.]

ZEBRA: What's wrong? Why are you running.

HARE: The earth is breaking up!

ZEBRA: What are we waiting for? Run!!

[All the animals run offstage and on again, where they meet BUTTERFLY.]

BUTTERFLY: Where are you all going so fast?

ALL: The earth is breaking up! Run!!

[All run off stage and on, where they meet FROG. No words are exchanged.]

ALL: Aaaah!

FROG: Aaaah!

[All run off stage and stay there while the NARRATOR reads.]

NARRATOR: Everyone made one another feel afraid. All the animals ran. They all cried, "The earth is breaking up!" and they believed it. Finally, the animals ran into the king of the forest, Lion.

LION (roaring): STOP!!!! **[all the animals stop]**. What's wrong?

ALL: The earth is breaking up.

LION: Who saw it breaking up?

FROG: The Zebras know all about it! Ask them!

ZEBRA: The Tigers know!

TIGER: The Monkeys know!

MONKEY: I don't know! The Hare knows, though! This one told us!

LION: Is it true, Hare, that the earth is breaking up?

HARE: Yes, sir, I heard it.

LION: Where were you when you heard it?

HARE: I was lying under a tree in the forest, thinking, 'If this earth were destroyed, what would become of me?' Right then, I heard the sound of the earth breaking up and I ran.

NARRATOR: Listening to the hare, the lion knew exactly what had really happened, but he wanted to find the truth for himself before showing it to the other animals.

LION: I will take the hare and go to find out if the earth is coming to an end or not. We will go to his tree where he heard the sound. Until we come back, stay here."

[All the animals leave. The LION and HARE go offstage and come back on.]

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NARRATOR: The Lion put the hare on his back and he raced to the hare's tree. Then he put the hare down and said, "Come, show me the place you meant."

HARE: I don't dare, my king. I am afraid.

LION: Don't be afraid.

HARE: Over there, sir, is the place of the awful sound.

[The LION goes over to where the coconut is lying. The LION looks up, looks around and looks at the coconut. The LION and HARE go offstage and then return with all the animals.]

NARRATOR: The Lion and Hare returned to the told them what he had found and said, "Don't be afraid. If you had gone to look for yourselves, you would have seen the coconut that fell to the ground with a THUD. Calmed, the animals went back to their lives.