



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

🕒 10 minutes

Allow one of the teachers to lead the group in a name game, an icebreaker, a get-to-know-you questions or a simple 'How are things?' moment. Spend more time if the group seems eager to connect with each other. Light the chalice and say:

We light this chalice as a symbol of our faith, the light of truth, and the warmth of love.

COVENANT

🕒 3-5 minutes

Review the discussion of how the group wants to be together. Update the notes, if necessary. Save the covenant for future classes.

- Share this document on your screen, if you can.

PRIMARY ACTIVITY ONE SKIT: FINDING OUT FOR YOURSELF

🕒 15 minutes

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.

- Plan with other teachers ahead of time whether you want to work with a script or let the kids create their own, then you will talk afterwards about what it would have been like with the other starting point. The group can be highly directed by the teachers and use the script at the end of this lesson (shared on screen by a teacher who will scroll as needed to see the next lines). Or the kids can invent a skit themselves. The skit will retell the main story from the Story Workshop, *The Sound the Hare Heard*.
- **If scripted**, a teacher will assign parts. Rehearsal will simply be going over the script as many times as you can in 10-minutes.

**YOUR FIELD
EXPERIENCES:
FEEDBACK AND
NOTES**

- If improv, ask a student to recount the Story lesson or read this:
This story takes place in a jungle. Hare is sitting under a tree, 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. The forest animals believe the rabbit and panic, too. The stampeding herd finally meets the Lion, King of the Jungle, who points out how foolish they were to run from a coconut.
Give them 7-10 minutes to work things out. They should decide who's playing which role and what they'll say. Encourage them to be flexible and remind them that while thoughtful ideas and a good effort are expected, perfection is not.
- Either way, encourage them to make sounds with their hands or voices for running feet. After the rehearsal period, have them do a quick performance. Let them change their screen names to match their roles.

GATHERING AND REFLECTING

🕒 5-10 minutes

Save time to discuss the experience with questions like these:

- I wonder if this experiences would have been different if we had (a script/improved) instead of doing it as we did?
- I wonder if would have been more fun or if we would have learned more the other way?
- Some churches give their people a kind of script to talk about God. The church sort of tells people what lines to say when they talk about what God is like. I wonder if you've ever heard someone talk about God like that, with lines from another person or a book? Are there good things about that way of doing church? Are there 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 figuring out our own things to say about God?
- How is the plot of this play like thinking about God?

CLOSING AND LEAVE-TAKING

🕒 3-5 minutes

On the first Sunday of this cycle, the group created 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. Use the words you saved so that the group has a consistent closing. Repeat this closing each week of the first unit, hands joined in a circle (by having everyone hold their hands up at the edge of the view of their camera).

Unlight the chalice, saying these words: Though we extinguish the light of the chalice here, we know that the light of truth and the warmth of love go with us in our hearts.

SCRIPT: THE SOUND THE HARE HEARD

Characters: NARRATOR
HARE
MONKEY
TIGER
ZEBRA
BUTTERFLY
FROG
LION
COCONUT NOISE MAKER

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

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

[Make a sound like the thud of a coconut falling on the ground.]

HARE: Aaaah! The earth is collapsing!"

[The HARE "runs" and meets MONKEY.]

MONKEY: What's wrong, Hare?

HARE: Don't ask! Just run!

[The MONKEY and HARE "run" and meet TIGER.]

TIGER: What's wrong?

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

[HARE, MONKEY and TIGER "run" and 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" and meet BUTTERFLY.]

BUTTERFLY: Where are you all going so fast?

ALL: The earth is collapsing! Run!!

[All "run" and meet FROG. No words are exchanged.]

ALL: Aaaah!

FROG: Aaaah!

[All go quiet while the NARRATOR reads.]

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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 tree, thinking, 'If the earth was destroyed, what would happen to me?' That's when I heard the sound of the earth breaking up and I ran!

NARRATOR: From this explanation, the lion realized what had really happened, but wanted to experience the truth 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."]

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."

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 "return" to the other animals.]

NARRATOR: The Lion and Hare returned to the others and told them what they had found. The lion 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.