

JOURNEY IN... YEAR THREE

THE NATURE OF GOD

DRAMA

This lesson's Big Ideas:

- God is the Great Mystery
- While our hearts and minds help us to collect clues about God, part of God will always remain unknowable.

Lesson Materials

- Copies of script for The Greatest Mystery Ever (attached)
- Copies of character and Clue idea sheet (attached)
- Mystery props (magnifying glass, notebook, pen)
- Video camera for grades 5 & 6
- TV / patch cords for grades 1 & 2

TEACHER REFLECTION AND PREPARATION

🕒 Ahead of time

As I plunge deeper, in fits and starts, seeking to penetrate the mystery of life and God, the mystery grows. It grows in wonder, power, moment, and depth. There are times, many times, when God is not with me, times of distraction, fragmentation, alienation, and brokenness. But when I open myself to God, incrementally my wholeness is restored. Perhaps that which I call God is no more than the mystery of life itself. I cannot know, nor do I care, for the power that emanates from deep within the heart of this mystery is redemptive. It is divine. Without hoping or presuming to understand it, opening myself to it, I find peace.

- Rev. Forrest Church

Wisdom and deep intelligence require an honest appreciation of mystery.

- Thomas Moore

The insight into the mystery of life, coupled though it be with fear, has also given rise to religion. To know what is impenetrable to us really exists, manifesting itself as the highest wisdom and the most radiant beauty, which our dull faculties can comprehend only in their most primitive forms - this knowledge, this feeling is at the center of true religiousness.

- Albert Einstein

When I was young, I said to God, 'God, tell me the mystery of the universe.' But God answered, 'that knowledge is for me alone.' So I said, 'God, tell me the mystery of the peanut.' Then God said, 'Well, George, that's more nearly your size.'

-George Washington Carver

Questions for reflection:

- How do you define your experience of and your relationship to Mystery?
- Where does 'what I know for sure' leave off for you and the unknowable pick up?
- Do you love to read and watch mysteries? Why?

TIPS FOR A SUCCESSFUL LESSON

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YOUR FIELD EXPERIENCES: FEEDBACK AND NOTES

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GATHERING AND FOCUSING

🕒 2-3 minutes

What is a mystery? Can anyone name a play or a movie where characters are acting out a mystery?

Who are some characters you nearly always see in a mystery play? How about a detective? Everyone act like a detective for five seconds. A suspect? Everyone act suspicious for five seconds. Witnesses? Act like someone witnessing something amazing and weird that they can't figure out. Does the detective have a helper? How do they go about solving the mystery?

PRIMARY ACTIVITY ONE
SKIT: THE GREATEST MYSTERY EVER

🕒 20 minutes for planning, 15 minutes or so for performance, 10 minutes for discussion

Attached to this lesson is an introductory script and some guidelines for a short skit about the Greatest Mystery Ever. FIFTH AND SIXTH GRADE CLASSES should record their skit on video so that during the weeks when 1st and 2nd graders have the Drama Workshop, they can enjoy watching another group's version as a tool to clarify and inspire.

The Detective and Wonder Kid set the scene for the Mystery. The Wonder Kid wants to know the answers to all the unanswerable questions. He or she wants to know about God.

The two characters will proceed to interview their classmates, each of whom will assume a character role and share a clue about the Great Mystery.

The improvisation begins as the Detective and Wonder Kid interview each Clue Finder about things they've noticed or discovered about God or the Universe.

The Detective and the Wonder Kid will have to figure out how to end the play without a solution to the mystery.

Wondering Together:

- I wonder how God is actually like a mystery play?
- I wonder if people would go see a play or movie about the Mystery of God?

TIPS FOR A SUCCESSFUL LESSON

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- Have you ever seen a play or movie where the mystery didn't get solved?
- I wonder if everyone shared all their ideas about God if we'd solve the Mystery?
- I wonder how you feel when you think about not ever solving the Mystery about God?

CLOSING AND LEAVE-TAKING

🕒 2 minutes

Invite the class to sit in a circle for the closing. You can read the lines of the closing below and the children can respond in unison:
It's a mystery!

Where did the Universe come from?

It's a mystery! (repeat after each question)

Where is the Universe going?

What is God?

Why does my brain keep wondering?

Why is it a Mystery?

THE GREATEST MYSTERY EVER

Detective (Homer/Holly) Sapiens

Sophie/Sonny Wonder (aka, The Wonder Kid)

Lots of Clue Finders (each has his or her own interesting personality)

Props: Magnifying glass, notebook,

Detective: Come in, come in! Sapiens is the name, mystery is my game. I'm a top-notch detective ready to solve the most serious cases. Got something unsolved on your mind?

Wonder Kid: Well, yeah. I've been noticing something weird going on for a while. Something mysterious. It's kind of cool and exciting, but I think it needs looking into. Something is for sure going on.

Detective: Exactly my sort of thing! [gets out notebook] Okay, let's start at the top. What have you noticed that's so weird? What's going on?

Wonder Kid: [seriously] Everything.

Detective: Excuse me? What did you say? Did you say, 'everything'?

Wonder Kid: Yeah. Everything. Have you noticed how stuff just keeps happening? How there are so many weird cool things? Why? Why is there anything? Where did it come from? Why can I even think about it? Why do I wake up every morning? Why is the sky blue? Why do I have a baby sister? Why do plants grow? Why aren't there any more dinosaurs? How come I have fingerprints? Why do people do mean things? Why, why, why?

Detective: Wait a minute. Stop there. I've heard about this case.

Wonder Kid: You have?

Detective: Oh yeah. It's a big one, been unsolved for a LONG time. It's called The Great Mystery. Someone a long time ago gave it the nickname 'God'.

Wonder Kid: God? God is a mystery case?! How are we ever going to solve it? I'm gonna go crazy if I don't get some answers.

Detective: Well, kid, I'm not sure we can solve it, but that doesn't mean we can't get any answers. We just have to get ourselves some witnesses and some clues. Let's go.

This is where the improvisation starts!!

The Detective and Wonder Kid will interview each of the Clue Finders. Some of their lines might be:

- “Excuse me, we're hot on the trail of a mystery. Mind answering a few questions?”
- “What do you know about something or someone named God? We suspect there's been some kind of involvement in something.”
- “Have you seen or heard anything that made you suspicious that God might have been involved?”
- “What were you looking at just now? It may be a clue in our Mystery.”

Each Clue Finder character will get a chance to answer. Pick a type of character to play and then pick or think of a Clue that this character might have discovered in the Great Mystery – the question WHAT IS GOD?

We'll try to have each Clue Finder say at least three things about their Clue.

The Detective and Wonder Kid might ask each Clue Finder more questions like:

- “When have you noticed this happening?”
- “What seems so mysterious about that?”

In each scene, the Detective and the Wonder Kid can take turns doing the investigating. Remember to do stage business like writing down notes, looking for things with a magnifying glass and collecting evidence in plastic bags.

After all the Clue Finders have been interviewed, the Detective and the Wonder Kid will have to end the play – probably without solving the mystery. How will the play come to an end?

**PICK A CHARACTER
(OR MAKE UP YOUR OWN!)**

- Brainy professor
 - Whiny, cranky three-year old
 - Elderly person
 - Mad scientist
 - Person from France
 - Rap musician
 - Person who's been spinning in circles too much
 - Hippie person
 - Snobby person with too much money
 - Regular, friendly kid
 - Person who doesn't speak English and needs the help of a friend who translates
 - Cowboy
 - Bodybuilder
 - Person from Australia
 - Interpretive dancer
 - Very, very shy person
 - Nature expert
 - Someone who can't help but talk in rhymes
- Any other character you can think of!
Everyone on the planet has clues about the Great Mystery!

Make sure your characters have kind attributes and not ones that would hurt anyone's feelings – that's not how Unitarian Universalists are with each other.

**PICK A CLUE IN THE
GREAT MYSTERY
(OR MAKE UP YOUR OWN!)**

- There are millions of stars like our sun
- People do nice things for each other
- Animals take care of people and people take care of animals
- Egyptians knew how to build pyramids
- No two snowflakes are the same
- There's a tingly feeling I get when I discover something new.
- People have been brave enough to risk their lives to help other people
- Lots of religions have the same kinds of stories even if their followers lived on different continents
- People know how to make beautiful music
- Seeds know when to grow
- People sometimes feel like they've known each other for years, even if they've just met
- Spiders know how to make webs without ever being taught
- Once, when I was very quiet, I heard something inside my head, like a voice or like music.
- Parents can love their kids no matter what happens
- People are smart enough to figure things out like that there were dinosaurs on earth thousands of years ago
- Life can happen even in really weird places, like the bottom of the ocean and the ice in the Arctic
- All the great religious teachers say the same thing: Love each other and treat one another kindly.
- When I grow up, I can have children and create my own family
- There are thousands of different kinds of flowers
- Tadpoles can turn into frogs
- My best friend sometimes knows what I'm thinking or feeling
- The sunrise and sunset are sometimes really beautiful
- People who come to this church are all looking for answers about God, too

What clues have you found that lead you somewhere in the Great Mystery that is God?

