

JOURNEY IN... YEAR THREE

THE NATURE OF GOD

MUSIC

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 and the Great Mystery, unsolvable.

Lesson Materials

- CD player
- CD of samples of musical instruments
- Blackboard or flip-chart to write out the words for "Gathered Here" or copies of sheet music
- Rhythm instruments to accompany singing.

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

🕒 5-10 minutes

Start with a quick check-in or get-to-know you question.

Begin the class by asking if anyone likes to watch mystery movies. In the really mysterious parts of the story, what kind of music is usually playing in the background? How does it make you feel?

We'll have a few tracks of mystery music ready to play on CD. Ask for emotional responses to the music.

Is the idea of mystery scary? Why or why not? Does searching for clues or not having an answer always have to be scary?

Would this music be the right music for a movie in which the characters were trying to solve the mystery of "What is God?"

**PRIMARY ACTIVITY ONE
MYSTERY INSTRUMENTS**

🕒 20-25 minutes

This activity will explore what we know and how comfortable we are with what we don't know. We'll listen to samples of several musical instruments and guess, both individually and as a class, what instruments we're hearing. The tracks on our CD should begin with very easy instruments and then continue with instruments that are hard to guess. The last few instruments even the teacher may not know, but we might have some ideas about what it's like.

Wondering Together

- Which instruments were easy to guess? Why did we know the answers?
- What sound clues helped us guess the harder instruments?
- How does it feel to not know what some of the instruments are? Is it okay with you that we let them remain a mystery?
- What things are easy for you to guess about God? Are you sure God exists or is that a mystery to you, too?
- What are some things about God that seem mysterious to you?
- Do you think anyone can ever solve the Mystery of God? Do you think that maybe you can?

TIPS FOR A SUCCESSFUL LESSON

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**PRIMARY ACTIVITY TWO
SINGING: THE MYSTERY OF THE
HOUR**

🕒 10-15 minutes

This lesson is a good opportunity to teach the well-loved round, “Gathered Here.” The words refer to the ‘mystery of the hour,’ the feeling of seeking and wonder that brings us together in Unitarian Universalist worship.

Younger kids may not be able to sing this in a round. We’ll have a recording of the hymn being sung on tape or CD available; this way the class can sing a part together against the counterpoint of the recording. Older kids may be up to the challenge of singing in a round.

Wondering Together

- Unitarian Universalists often open our worship services or gatherings with this round. I wonder what things about the hour that we spend together have anything to do with mystery?
- Do you ever think of the hour at church as part of a mystery?
- I wonder, does the mystery end after our hour of shared worship? Where and when can kids and families continue to enjoy seeking for clues about the Great Mystery outside of worship?
- Is the part that says ‘struggle and power’ about God’s Mystery or about something else?
- Do you feel like the Mystery is easier to think about when we gather together or when you’re alone?

**PRIMARY ACTIVITY TWO
GAME: SOMETHING’S MISSING! A
SOUND-MYSTERY!**

🕒 10-15 minutes

Have each child select one instrument from the room. Familiarize the class with the sound of each instrument by taking turns around the circle sounding your instruments for a count of five, each. Select someone to be “IT”; that child will sit in the center of the circle, eyes closed. Now, select someone to be the “mystery instrument” – that child will NOT sound his or her instrument during this round of the game. Go around the circle and have every child sound their instrument briefly, one at a time, *except the “mystery instrument”*. See if “IT” can name which instrument didn’t get played (or which child, if they don’t remember the name of the instrument or can’t describe it.) Use a blindfold if necessary.

For 5th & 6th graders, consider playing an advanced round where all the players (except the mystery instrument) sound their instruments gently at

the exact same time. Can they tell which instrument isn't there? This will be really hard!

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- How did you know which instrument was missing? Is it easier to know when something is there or not there?
- How do you know what's still missing from what you know about God? How do people know what they don't know?
- Do you feel like the Mystery is easier to think about when we gather together or when you're alone?

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?