



JOURNEY IN... YEAR ONE DIVINE WITHIN SCIENCE

This lesson's Big Ideas:

- All human beings are a union of flesh and spirit. There are many words and metaphors that help us talk about the soul as *enfleshed* or flesh as *ensouled*.
- Within every human being, there is something of the Divine. **All** bodies and minds house a holy spark.

Lesson Materials

- Magazine photos of various things, living and inanimate, affixed to card stock and cut out
- Regular latex party balloons (check for latex allergies)
- Mini-trampoline
- Spirometer
- Microscope
- Prepped slides of human blood
- Blood cell coloring sheet

TEACHER REFLECTION AND PREPARATION

🕒 Ahead of time

Understand, I am always trying to figure out
what the soul is,
and where hidden,
and what shape
and so, last week,
when I found on the beach
the ear bone
of a pilot whale that may have died
hundreds of years ago, I thought
maybe I was close
to discovering something
for the ear bone
is the portion that lasts longest
in any of us, man or whale...

and (I) thought: the soul
might be like this
so hard, so necessary
yet almost nothing...

though our eyes have never seen
it,
nor can our hands ever catch it
lest we would sift it down
into fractions, and facts
certainties
and what the soul is, also
I believe I will never quite know.

Though I play at the edges of knowing,
truly I know
our part is not knowing,
but looking, and touching, and loving,
which is the way I walked on,
softly,
through the pale-pink morning light.

- from "Bones" by Mary Oliver

"...God formed man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life and the man became a living being." (Genesis 2:7)

TIPS FOR A SUCCESSFUL LESSON

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YOUR FIELD EXPERIENCES: FEEDBACK AND NOTES

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Note: This science lesson is a series of many short activities. It will require attention to skillful transitioning between activities; the series of metaphors will help. Do as many activities as you can manage while still leaving plenty of time for wondering together (it’s okay if you don’t get to all activities). In larger groups with enough teachers, split up the class so kids aren’t waiting so long to use materials.

GATHERING AND FOCUSING

🕒 10 minutes

Part 1: Alive or Not Alive?

Engage the kids in the Big Ideas with this quick sorting activity. Sort a pile of images on cardstock into categories of Alive and Not Alive. Ask the kids how we know the difference. Older kids might know the scientific criteria for living organisms: (1) self-bounded (discrete, requiring nutrients from an environment), (2) self-generating (grows), and (3) self-perpetuating (reproduces).

Are there any grey areas that the kids know of?

Part 2: Voting

On a chalkboard or flipchart, have your class (alone or in combination with the results of prior classes) vote on which idea they like best for the idea of aliveness or the Divine Within us? What’s inside every human being? Is it...

1. the breath of Life?
2. a spark of Life?
3. Life flowing in our veins?
4. other? (explain)

**PRIMARY ACTIVITY ONE
SOUL AS BREATH**

🕒 10 minutes

- Some people, including Christians, believe that human beings came alive when God the Creator breathed the breath of life into their nostrils.

SAFETY TIPS

- Watch for balloons that pop, clean up and discard of pieces immediately.
- For more info see CPSC guidelines: <https://www.cpsc.gov/s3fs-public/5087.pdf>

Wondering Together

- What do you think of this idea?
- Is breathing what makes us alive?
- Can humans be alive without breathing? Are there other organisms that can live without breathing?
- With younger grades, have each teacher inflate a latex balloon as big as they can (without popping it). Keep inflated balloons.
 - Is the size of one's balloon a measure of how alive one is?
 - Can we measure our soul?
- With children over the age of eight (typically 5th-6th graders), give a balloon to each kid to inflate (*the CPSC recommends that parents and guardians do not allow children under the age of eight to play with uninflated balloons or inflate balloons*). Keep inflated balloons.
 - Is the size of one's balloon a measure of how alive one is?
 - Can we measure our soul?

**PRIMARY ACTIVITY TWO
SOUL AS GODSPARK**

🕒 12 minutes

- Show the kids the image of The Creation of Adam from Michelangelo's ceiling of the Sistine Chapel. Ask questions about the image:
 - Who do you think the images in the painting are supposed to be?
 - What's going on, in your opinion?
 - If a scientist were trying to guess how this man was being brought to life, what do you think they would guess?
- This unit in Religious Education, we're talking about bodies and spirits. Some people think of the soul or spirit as a spark of something bigger. Some use the word godspark to describe what's inside us.
 - What words have you heard people use to talk about what makes our bodies and minds alive?
 - Do people have sparks in them? Have you ever felt electric?
- Experiment with the human body's ability to hold an electrical charge with these two activities:
 - Use friction to create a charge with an inflated latex balloon. Older children may understand that electrons have positive and negative charges. Rubbing separates the two forces, attracting lots of negative charge to the surface of the balloon. Negative ions on the balloon are attracted to the positive ions on your body, so we can make the balloon stick to us.
 - Allow children to shuffle sock-footed around a mini-trampoline, building a static charge. When they touch the fingertips of a classmate, as in the fresco, they will likely feel a spark of energy. This will only work in dry rooms.

Wondering Together

- I wonder why people have some electricity in them?
- I wonder what you think makes people come alive?
- What do you think a human soul might be made of? Do you like the idea of a spark of God? What other ideas come to mind?

PRIMARY ACTIVITY THREE

SOUL AS LIFEBLOOD

🕒 15 minutes

- Share the following bit of UU history with the children, using words you think they'll understand:
Michael Servetus, one of the earliest Unitarians, lived in Europe in the 16th century. He was a doctor and theologian. Servetus, as a scientist and spiritual person, believed that the soul of a human being was in the blood. According to the Biblical tradition, the soul was infused by God into man's nostrils through the breathing. Since the breathing has the purpose of purifying the blood, Servetus understood why the Hebrew tradition postulates that the soul is in the blood. Servetus thought that, if the soul is in the blood, the best way to understand its journey through the human body was to study the blood circulation
- from www.miguelservet.org

Wondering Together

- I wonder why people need blood?
 - Can we live without blood?
 - What happens to us if we lose blood?
 - Does Michael Servetus' idea make sense to you? Why?
 - Have you ever looked at your blood?
- Using prepped slides, give the kids a chance to look at blood under a microscope. Waiting children can color in the blood cell coloring sheet.
 - Do you see anything you recognize?
 - Do you see anything that makes you think of the human soul?
 - If Michael Servetus had a microscope, do you think he might have changed his mind about blood?
 - What kind of scientific instrument would you invent to help us learn about the human soul?

CLOSING AND LEAVE-TAKING

🕒 3 minutes

Teach the children the greeting word, *namaste* (pronounced evenly: nah-mah-stay). This Pali word translates as, "The Divine within me sees and greets the Divine within you." Generally, the word is spoken with a gesture which the Thai culture names *wai*: the hands, pressed together, are held just above the heart and the head is bowed to meet the tips of the fingers.

Give the children time to say goodbye to each other and their Guide with this beautiful gesture.