



JOURNEY IN... YEAR ONE ENDINGS DRAMA



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This lesson's Big Ideas:

- Change—a mix of beginnings and endings—is an inevitable part of existing in this universe.
- Change brings big feelings: sometimes it feels good, sometimes it's painful.
- Change is necessary for growth.

Lesson Materials

- Stick puppets of the following characters:
 - Sun
 - Grass
 - Field Mouse
 - Snake
 - Hawk
 - Ants
 - Flies
- Slips of "scene change" ideas in a bowl
- Prior arrangements with preschool classes to bring 3-4 children each week as an audience toward the end of class.

TEACHER REFLECTION AND PREPARATION

🕒 Ahead of time

When I was green, everyone loved me. Bees crooned my sweetness: butterflies made me their own. But then something called time began to drag me away and I became curled up and brittle and brown.

These lines you read are what an oak leaf wrote, following a storm that dragged it over the snow—complaining and kicking. "I don't want to forsake my tree. Help! Where did my sisters go?"

When spring comes, a whole new cast will have the stage and I will huddle where winter threw me away, but wherever I am the soil will be bitter because I remember how lonely it was when I tried to stay.

This farewell comes from a forgiving leaf that skipped with the others and then found a lucky storm that brought me here. Listen—hold on as long as you can, then thrust forth: make truth your home.

— William Stafford

One day as I was about to step on a dry leaf, I saw the leaf in the ultimate dimension. I saw that it was not really dead, but that it was merging with the moist soil in order to appear on the tree the following spring in another form. I smiled at the leaf and said, "You are pretending." Everything is pretending to be born and pretending to die, including that leaf.

— Thich Nhat Hanh

TIPS FOR A SUCCESSFUL LESSON

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YOUR FIELD EXPERIENCES: FEEDBACK AND NOTES

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To every thing there is a season,
and a time to every purpose under the heaven:

A time to be born and a time to die;

A time to plant and a time to reap;

A time to kill and a time to heal;

A time to destroy and a time to rebuild;

A time to cry and a time to laugh;

A time to mourn and a time to dance;

A time to cast away stones and

a time to gather stones together;

A time to embrace and a time to refrain from embracing;

A time to get and a time to lose;

A time to keep and a time to cast away;

A time to rend and a time to sew;

A time to be quiet and a time to speak;

A time to love and a time to hate;

A time of war and a time of peace.

- Ecclesiastes 3:1-8

GATHERING AND FOCUSING

🕒 5 minutes

We'll play a quick round of "Monkey See, Monkey Do". Stand in a circle. The teacher assumes a pose and everyone imitates it. Then, we take turns, going around the circle and each actor changes ONE thing about the pose we're in. They might lift one knee or tilt their head to the side. We go around the circle until everyone has changed one thing about our pose. Each change makes the game more challenging!

**PRIMARY ACTIVITY ONE
THE EVER-CHANGING SKIT**

🕒 25-30 minutes

- This skit will be an improvisational piece about a birthday party—sort of. We'll start out with a birthday party, with everyone playing along in their roles—birthday child, guests, parents – but the teacher will keep announcing changes as we draw slips of paper from a hat. The slips of paper are cut from the attached sheet of game ideas. Some changes are realistic, others are plain silly.
- Introduce the birthday party skit by explaining that birthdays mark important changes in our lives; they are milestones of growing up. Have kids pick roles, encouraging a few kids to remain in the wings because they might have to make an entrance as you draw changes

out of the hat. You'll need a birthday child, a parent and a guest as a basic cast. If you have a very big group, you'll need to swap actors in and out by tapping waiting children on the shoulder during the "freeze" and asking them to tap an actor on the shoulder; the new child takes over for the actor, who sits and watches for a while.

- Let the improv skit get rolling, giving the actors a chance to get into the groove. When you're about to announce a change, you'll ring a chime and everyone onstage must "freeze".
- Draw a slip out of the hat and announce the change. Let the kids decide how to enact it. You may need to decide who the "someone" of the prompt is in order to facilitate things. Ring the chime again to resume play on the stage.
- Do this for 20 minutes or as long as the group remains engaged. Take 5 minutes to process the game with questions like the following:
 - Life is full of changes. Was this game pretty much like life or different from real life in its changes?
 - How often do changes happen in your lives?
 - Were some changes easier to fit in the play than others? Which changes were hard to work into your skit?
 - What are some changes happening in your real lives right now? Are they happy or difficult? How are you fitting them into your life?
 - Would you enjoy a play where *nothing* changed on the stage? Where the characters didn't change at all? Why?

PRIMARY ACTIVITY TWO

PUPPET THEATRE—"AND IT IS GOOD"

🕒 20-30 minutes

- We'll use puppets to retell the story of "And It Is Good", found in the book *A Lamp in Every Corner*. If a group has had the Story workshop already, they'll have heard this reading. If not, you might want to read it through once before grabbing the stick puppets, so that it's not a cold staging. You can find out if a group has already been in Story by consulting the calendar.
- The characters are as follows:
 - Sun
 - Grass
 - Field Mouse
 - Snake
 - Hawk
 - Ants
 - Flies
- With the younger group, you might need to narrate the story yourself. With 5th and 6th graders, two or three of the kids can assume the role of narrators, reading from the book. Your classroom will be equipped with two sets of stick puppets in case your group is so large that you need to split into two performing groups.
- Fit everyone behind the puppet stage and equip them with puppets. As the story is read, encourage them to act out the events with the stick puppets.
- If enough time remains and your group of kids feels confident, invite a small audience from one of the preschool rooms to come and watch the show. Send a responsible child to the preschool rooms with an invitation for three or four children and a teacher to come. You might even offer to "take the show on the road" and visit the Spirit Play classroom with the performers.

GATHERING AND REFLECTING

🕒 5 minutes

Wondering Together

Ask the players and their audience how the changes in the story made them feel.

- Is this play about happy or sad changes?
- What if one of the changes didn't happen?
- What if the snake didn't eat the field mouse – what then?
- If they had to take the place of one of the puppet show's characters, which one would they take?
- If a person got put in this play, where would they fit in?

CLOSING AND LEAVE-TAKING

🕒 2 minutes

Gather in a circle, take each other's hands and speak these words:

Just as the seed holds the beauty that the flower later shares,
and just as the acorn holds the strength that the tree later provides,
we, too, hold in our hearts the growth of our many gifts.

May we offer our gifts to each other and everyone.

Let's change the world with our kindness,
let's bless each other with compassion,
and let's grow, with all things, in love.

Amen.

- Bill Neely

Someone at the birthday party suddenly starts to cry.	The lights suddenly go out and no one can see anything.	Someone tells the birthday person that it's their own birthday, too!
The cake starts on fire.	Someone suddenly gets the hiccups and can't stop them.	The birthday person decides to go to bed.
Someone says that you have to do everything all over again because they forgot to take pictures with their camera and they missed everything so far.	Someone suddenly has to leave because they forgot to turn their stove off at home.	The police show up at the door and say that they found the family's dog at the park. The dog is <i>covered</i> in mud.
The parents of the birthday person announce that this will be their last birthday party ever.	Someone looks at the calendar and discovers that it's NOT actually the day of the person's birthday.	A water pipe bursts and suddenly water is everywhere.
A bird gets into the room and starts flying around.	The birthday person decides to give everyone one of his or her presents.	There's a tornado warning.
Someone's contact lens falls out and everyone has to look for it until it's found!	Someone discovers that they're allergic to ice cream.	The birthday person discovers that one of the presents is three sizes too small.
The parents of the birthday person announce that now that they're __ years old, they have to get a job.	Suddenly everyone at the birthday party starts to laugh — except the birthday person, who doesn't know why everyone's laughing.	Suddenly, it changes from summer to winter.
Suddenly, the guests hear on the radio that aliens have invaded earth.	Someone at the birthday party announces that they're moving to Alabama next week.	Someone at the birthday party loses their tooth.