

When Things Pass Away

Unit Title: Understanding Change, Loss, and Growth Through Storytelling

Grade Level: 6-8

Duration: 3 Weeks (15 Days)

Theme: *Exploring how personal, societal, and natural changes shape our world and how we respond with resilience and understanding.*

Essential Questions:

1. What does it mean when things “pass away”?
2. How do people, nature, and societies respond to change and loss?
3. How can storytelling, music, and art help us process and express emotions?
4. What can science and history teach us about adaptation and renewal?

Common Core Standards Addressed:

English Language Arts (ELA)

- **RL.6-8.1:** Cite textual evidence to analyze a text.
- **RL.6-8.2:** Determine the theme or central idea of a text.
- **W.6-8.3:** Write narratives that develop real or imagined experiences.
- **SL.6-8.1:** Engage in discussions on key ideas and themes.

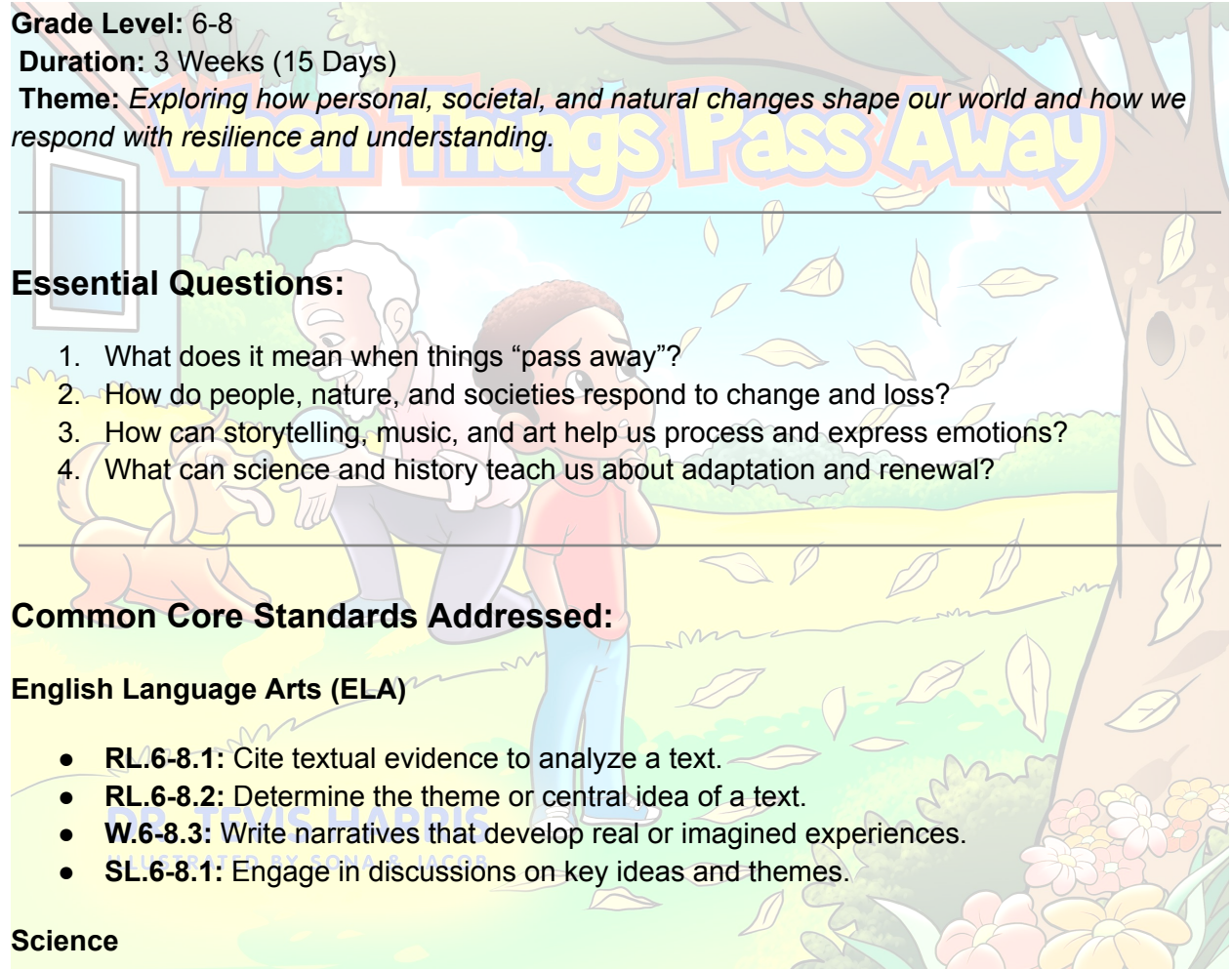
Science

- **MS-LS2-1:** Analyze the impact of environmental changes on organisms.
- **MS-ESS3-1:** Understand how natural disasters affect human societies.

Social Studies

- **D2.Civ.2.6-8:** Analyze how people address community needs and problems.
- **D2.His.1.6-8:** Understand cause and effect in historical events.

Arts & Music



- **Anchor Standard 2:** Organize and develop artistic work.
 - **MU:Cr1.1.6-8:** Use music to express themes and emotions.
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Week 1: Understanding Change Through Storytelling

Day 1: Story Introduction & Discussion (ELA, Social Studies)

Objective: Introduce students to *When Things Pass Away* and explore its themes.

1. **Read Aloud or Independent Reading:** Read the book, annotate key passages.
 2. **Discussion Questions:**
 - How do characters respond to loss and change?
 - What are universal emotions tied to change?
 - How does the story connect to personal experiences?
 3. **Exit Ticket:** Write one sentence summarizing the story's theme.
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Day 2: Personal Narrative Writing (ELA)

Objective: Write a personal story about a time they experienced change.

1. **Brainstorming:** Use graphic organizers to map out events and emotions.
 2. **Mini-Lesson:** Show examples of strong descriptive writing.
 3. **Writing Time:**
 - **First Draft:** Include sensory details and emotions.
 - **Peer Feedback:** Use a two-star, one-wish critique.
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Day 3: Empathy Poetry (ELA, SEL, Art)

Objective: Write an empathy poem from another perspective.

1. **Discussion:** What does empathy mean?
2. **Model Poem:**
 - "I am a falling leaf, drifting down, uncertain where I'll land."
3. **Writing Activity:**
 - **Choose a Perspective:** A person, animal, or object experiencing change.

- Illustrate & Share Poems.
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Day 4: Science & Nature's Cycle of Change (Science, STEM)

Objective: Explore natural cycles of change and adaptation.

1. **Interactive Video:** How forests regrow after wildfires.
 2. **Lab Activity:** Study plant regrowth by observing sprouting seeds in different conditions.
 3. **Discussion:** How does nature's resilience compare to human resilience?
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Day 5: Historical Change & Community Resilience (Social Studies, ELA)

Objective: Research and present on historical events where communities rebuilt.

1. **Group Research Topics:**
 - Hurricane Katrina Recovery
 - The Great Depression
 - Indigenous communities adapting to change
 2. **Presentation:** 3-minute summary of key lessons learned.
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Week 2: Adapting to Change & Growth

Day 6: Musical Interpretation of Change (Music, Technology)

Objective: Use music to explore emotions related to change.

1. **Listen to Songs About Change:** Discuss lyrics and meaning.
 2. **Activity:** Create a class playlist on Spotify or YouTube representing different aspects of change.
 3. **Technology Integration:** Students use GarageBand or Soundtrap to compose their own short musical piece.
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Day 7: Creating a Visual Storyboard (ELA, Art, Technology)

Objective: Visually represent change through a digital or paper storyboard.

1. **Instructions:**

- Choose a personal or historical change.
- Create a six-panel storyboard showing how change unfolds.

2. **Technology Option:** Use Canva or Google Slides.

Day 8: Role-Playing Change & Empathy (SEL, ELA, Social Studies)

Objective: Simulate real-life situations related to change.

1. **Scenarios:**

- A student moves to a new school.
- A community recovers from a natural disaster.
- A friend loses a loved one.

2. **Discussion:** What responses were most effective?

Day 9: Science Exploration – Human & Animal Adaptation (Science, STEM)

Objective: Explore how organisms adapt to environmental changes.

1. **Case Study:** How Arctic animals survive changing climates.
 2. **Hands-On Activity:** Create an “adaptation design” for a fictional animal facing environmental changes.
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Day 10: Reflection & Letter Writing (ELA, SEL)

Objective: Write letters offering advice and support.

1. **Choose an Audience:** Someone facing a challenge (real or fictional).
 2. **Write & Decorate Letters.**
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Week 3: Technology & Creative Expression

Day 11-12: Coding & Storytelling (Technology, ELA, STEM)

Objective: Create digital retellings of personal or historical changes.

1. **Use Scratch or Google Slides to create animated stories.**
 2. **Present Digital Stories.**
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Day 13-14: Photography & Writing (Art, ELA, Technology)

Objective: Express change visually.

1. **Photo Walk:** Take pictures representing change.
 2. **Write Reflections.**
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Day 15: Final Reflection & Showcase

1. **Host a Class Showcase.**
 2. **Discuss Key Takeaways.**
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Assessment:

- **Narrative Writing** (graded with a rubric)
- **Empathy Poem & Role-Playing** (peer and self-assessment)
- **Science Experiment Reflections**
- **Historical Research Presentations**
- **Final Creative Project** (Photography, Storyboard, or Coding Story)

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