

When Things Pass Away

Cross-Curricular Lesson Plan for Grades 9-12

Theme: "Exploring Loss, Resilience, and Human Connection"
Based on the Story: *When Things Pass Away*

Lesson Goals

By the end of this lesson, students will:

1. Critically analyze the themes of loss, resilience, and human connection in *When Things Pass Away* and apply these concepts to their own lives.
 2. Connect literature to real-world issues through research and discussion.
 3. Engage in cross-disciplinary activities to explore emotional resilience through STEM, the arts, and social studies.
 4. Develop empathy and emotional intelligence through creative expression and collaborative learning.
 5. Use problem-solving and analytical thinking to deepen understanding across disciplines.
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Lesson Breakdown

1. English Language Arts (ELA): Literary Analysis and Personal Reflection

Objective: Students will analyze the deeper meanings in *When Things Pass Away* and connect them to universal themes of grief and growth.

Activity:

- **Literary Analysis (40 minutes):**
 - Assign students a key passage from *When Things Pass Away*. In small groups, they will:
 - Identify the themes (e.g., loss, healing, and community).
 - Analyze the author's use of literary devices such as imagery, tone, and symbolism.
 - Each group creates a thematic map or infographic connecting quotes from the book to real-world experiences.
- **Personal Reflection (20 minutes):**
 - Individually, students respond to the following prompt:
 - "Describe a time when you or someone you know experienced loss. How did you process it, and what lessons did you take away?"
 - Optionally, students may share their reflections in a class discussion.

2. Science: The Biology of Stress and Healing

Objective: Students will explore the physiological effects of grief and the role of resilience in physical and emotional healing.

Activity:

- **Interactive Lecture (20 minutes):**

- Discuss the science of stress and grief, including:

- The body's fight-or-flight response.
- The impact of cortisol on the brain and body.
- How resilience practices (e.g., mindfulness, community support) promote healing.

- **Lab Activity (40 minutes):**

- In groups, students design and test a simple stress-reduction experiment, such as measuring pulse or breathing rates before and after a calming activity (e.g., deep breathing or listening to music).
- Groups present their findings and discuss how these practices could help someone experiencing loss.

3. Math: Data Analysis and Visualizing Loss and Recovery

Objective: Students will use data to understand patterns in recovery and resilience following societal losses (e.g., natural disasters or economic downturns).

Activity:

- **Case Study and Analysis (30 minutes):**

- Provide data sets related to recovery after major events (e.g., rebuilding communities after a hurricane, unemployment trends after a recession).
- Students calculate growth rates, identify trends, and create visualizations (e.g., graphs or charts).

- **Discussion (20 minutes):**

- Students present their visualizations and answer:
 - "What does the data show about recovery and resilience?"
 - "How do these patterns relate to personal or societal healing after loss?"

4. Social Studies: Community Responses to Loss and Change

Objective: Students will examine how communities and societies respond to crises and rebuild after loss.

Activity:

- **Research Project (45 minutes):**

- Assign students to research a historical or contemporary event where a community faced significant loss (e.g., 9/11, the COVID-19 pandemic, Hurricane Katrina).
- Each group creates a presentation addressing:
 - The cause and impact of the event.
 - How the community responded and rebuilt.
 - Lessons learned for future resilience.

- **Class Discussion (15 minutes):**

- Reflect on the role of empathy, leadership, and teamwork in helping communities recover.

5. Arts: Creative Expression of Loss and Resilience

Objective: Students will use artistic mediums to explore and express themes of loss and healing.

Activity:

- **Creative Writing: Empathy Poems (30 minutes):**

- Guide students to write an empathy poem from the perspective of a character in the book or someone experiencing loss.
 - Use prompts such as:
 - “What do they see?”
 - “What do they feel?”
 - “What do they hope for?”
- Encourage students to use metaphors, vivid imagery, and emotional depth.

- **Visual Arts Project (30 minutes):**

- Students create a symbolic piece of art (e.g., a painting, collage, or digital design) representing the journey from loss to healing.
- Optionally, display the artwork in the classroom or school gallery as part of a “Resilience Exhibit.”

Assessment

1. Evaluate literary analysis and reflections for depth of understanding and personal connection.
2. Review lab reports and group presentations for scientific reasoning and collaboration.
3. Assess math visualizations for accuracy, creativity, and interpretation of patterns.
4. Analyze social studies research projects for thoroughness and insight.
5. Review creative writing and art projects for originality, emotional depth, and connection to themes.

Extensions

1. **Community Action:** Partner with a local organization supporting grieving individuals to create a collaborative project (e.g., writing letters, sharing artwork).
2. **Debate or Socratic Seminar:** Host a discussion on the role of resilience in overcoming personal and societal challenges.
3. **Capstone Project:** Students create a multimedia presentation summarizing their cross-curricular exploration of loss and resilience, tying it to their own lives and communities.

This lesson plan provides high school students with meaningful, interdisciplinary activities that foster critical thinking, emotional growth, and creative expression while connecting to the themes in *When Things Pass Away*.

