

When Things Pass Away

Cross-Curricular Lesson Plan for Grades 1-5

Theme: "Understanding Loss and Building Empathy"
Based on the Story: *When Things Pass Away*

Lesson Goals

By the end of this lesson, students will:

1. Develop an understanding of loss and empathy through storytelling and reflection.
 2. Engage in creative arts to express emotions and ideas.
 3. Apply scientific and social understanding of life cycles and community connections.
 4. Practice math skills by analyzing patterns and problem-solving related to nature.
 5. Strengthen English Language Arts skills through reading, writing, and discussion.
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Lesson Breakdown

1. English Language Arts (ELA): Exploring the Story

Objective: Students will analyze the themes of *When Things Pass Away* and connect the story to their own experiences.

Activity:

- **Story Reading & Discussion (30 minutes):**
 - Read *When Things Pass Away* aloud or share a summarized version if the class is younger.
 - Ask guided questions:
 - "What happened in the story that showed loss?"
 - "How did the characters cope with those feelings?"
 - "Have you ever experienced a time when something changed in your life? How did you feel?"
 - Write down responses on a board to create a "Feelings Map."
- **Writing Reflection (15 minutes):**
 - Prompt: "Write or draw about a time something changed in your life. How did it feel, and what helped you feel better?"
 - Allow younger students (grades 1-2) to draw a picture and write a simple caption, while older students (grades 3-5) can write a paragraph or short story.

2. Science: Life Cycles and Change in Nature

Objective: Students will learn about natural cycles of change, such as seasons, plant growth, and animal life cycles, to understand the inevitability of change.

Activity:

- **Life Cycle Observation (30 minutes):**
 - Show visuals or videos of the life cycle of a butterfly or a tree (seed to tree to leaf fall).
 - Discuss how things change in nature and connect it to the themes of the story.
 - Example questions:
 - “How does a tree change over time?”
 - “Why is change important in nature?”
 - Create a **Life Cycle Poster**:
 - Divide students into small groups to illustrate a life cycle (butterfly, tree, or another organism). Provide art supplies for drawing or collage-making.

3. Math: Patterns and Changes

Objective: Students will practice identifying and analyzing patterns related to time, seasons, and cycles.

Activity:

- **Seasonal Pattern Activity (20 minutes):**
 - Show a visual of the four seasons (spring, summer, fall, winter).
 - Ask students to arrange the seasons in order and discuss how they repeat in a predictable pattern.
 - Grades 1-2: Use picture cards to match the season with an activity (e.g., “leaves fall in autumn”).
 - Grades 3-5: Create a bar graph or tally chart showing students’ favorite seasons and analyze the data.
 - **Math Problem-Solving (15 minutes):**
 - Create word problems around change and growth. For example:
 - “A tree grows 2 feet every year. If it starts at 5 feet, how tall will it be after 3 years?”
 - Younger students can use manipulatives like counters or cubes to solve simpler addition problems.
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4. Social Studies: Community and Loss

Objective: Students will explore how communities support each other during times of change or loss.

Activity:

- **Community Map Project (30 minutes):**
 - Discuss: “What happens when someone in a community experiences loss? How can others help?”
 - Students draw a map of their community, highlighting places and people that provide support (e.g., schools, homes, places of worship, or counselors).
 - As a class, brainstorm ways to show kindness to someone experiencing loss.
 - **Role-Playing Activity (15 minutes):**
 - Divide students into small groups and assign scenarios (e.g., a friend losing a pet, a neighbor moving away).
 - Students role-play how they can show empathy and support in each situation.
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5. Arts: Expressing Emotions Through Creativity

Objective: Students will use art to process emotions and express ideas related to loss and empathy.

Activity:

- **Empathy Poem Creation (30 minutes):**
 - Introduce empathy poems (see Session 2 of the workshop plan).
 - Guide students to create a simple empathy poem using the structure:
 - “I see...”
 - “I hear...”
 - “I feel...”
 - Allow students to illustrate their poems.
 - **Collaborative Art Project (30 minutes):**
 - Create a “Healing Tree” on a large poster board.
 - Each student decorates a leaf with a word or drawing that represents kindness, healing, or hope. Attach the leaves to the tree to symbolize growth and community.
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Assessment

1. Review students' writing and artwork for understanding of the themes (loss, empathy, community, and change).
 2. Observe participation during group discussions and role-playing activities.
 3. Evaluate math and science worksheets for accuracy and comprehension of patterns and life cycles.
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Extensions

- Create a class book of empathy poems and illustrations to share with families or the school community.
 - Plant a class tree or flower garden as a symbol of growth and healing, tying it back to lessons on life cycles.
 - Partner with the school counselor to create an "Empathy Corner" in the classroom with resources for students to reflect and share feelings.
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This lesson plan integrates storytelling, hands-on activities, and meaningful discussions to engage students across subjects while fostering emotional growth and understanding.