

Heart of Stone

*Waldorf Curriculum
Preschool Newsletter*

June 1, 2005

ACTIVITIES

As you well know, spending time with children is always rewarding. It can help you to see the world around you in a whole new way and to value things that you may take for granted or consider perfectly ordinary. On the other hand, when you are entirely responsible for their care, even small children can be intimidating. Just what do you do with them all day? This newsletter is here to help – whether you're a parent, grandparent, babysitter, caregiver, neighbor, or anyone acting as a substitute teacher and spending the day with a preschool-aged child.

The following sections will give some suggested activities for this week's theme as well as methodology and ideas for preparation.

Opening Verse

The Waldorf method places a strong emphasis on establishing rhythms throughout the day to give a comfortable sense of order and security to a child's life. One of these is to start your day (or your time together) with a short meditation called an opening verse. Choose a place which is clean and orderly; children are deeply sensitive to their environments and are unable to feel calm in the midst of chaos. Lighting a candle while you say the verse is customary, as this helps to establish a reflective atmosphere. Even if you choose not to do light a candle, the opening verse will be a transition for the child into your care. After you declare yourselves to be "ready now for work and learning", you can blow out the candle and begin your day!

Opening Verse:

In the morning at the sunrise
When the light of day doth break,
Children's souls, by angels guided,
Sleep from rested body shake,
Ready now for work and learning,
Happy, steady, and awake.

Stories

On My Beach There Are Many Pebbles

Everybody Needs a Rock

Mouse Soup

Stone Soup

The Donkey and the Rock

Sylvester and the Magic Pebble

by Leo Lionni

by Byrd Baylor

by Arnold Lobel

by Marcia Brown

by Demi

by William Steig

Story Activities

- Gather a collection of rocks and sort them by characteristics
- Following the directions given in Everybody Needs a Rock, go find a rock that speaks to you
- What does a stone see? Lie flat on the ground and describe the view
- Make "Stone Soup" – either literally, by following the directions given in the story, or by completing a group project such as a beach sculpture where everyone brings just one piece (shells, driftwood, seaweed, etc.) and the whole created is greater than the sum of its parts
- Have another great idea? Share it with the group by sending an email to waldorfcriculum@yahoogroups.com

Art

The number of art projects which would fit in with this theme are endless and, again, feel free to share your suggestions with the group. Some ideas:

- Consider finding rocks with interesting textures, dipping them in paint, and stamping the textures onto paper.
- Or, place the paper over the rock and rub it with a crayon to transfer the texture and create patterns.
- You can also create a sculpture with a number of interesting rocks you have found and place it in your garden or display it on a mantel, windowsill, or Nature table. The sculpture can be free form or you can work together to create an animal shape, such as a turtle or bear.
- If you find a rock which bears a striking resemblance to an animal all by itself, consider painting the features of the animal on to it, such as in this example: http://www.homestead.com/petarock/howto_brown_rabbit.html

Nature Game

Complete a series of texture rubbings (see directions above) and mount them on cards. Write a description of the rock which produced each texture on the back of the card to use as your answer key; then set up a matching game, challenging an outside person to correctly match each rock with its texture rubbing.

Science

A rock tumbler is a wonderful way to demonstrate how rocks age over time. If the child is very interested in erosion, you can carry the discussion further by gathering some samples of sand from the beach. Closely examine it to see what may have been broken up to create the sand you have found.

Rhyme: London Bridge is Falling Down

London Bridge is falling down,
Falling down, Falling down.

London Bridge is falling down,
My fair lady.

Take a key and lock her up,
Lock her up, Lock her up.

Take a key and lock her up,
My fair lady.

How will we build it up,
Build it up, Build it up?

How will we build it up,
My fair lady?

Build it up with silver and gold,
Silver and gold, Silver and gold.

Build it up with silver and gold,
My fair lady.

Gold and silver I have none,
I have none, I have none.

Gold and silver I have none,
My fair lady.

Build it up with needles and pins,
Needles and pins, Needles and pins.

Build it up with needles and pins,
My fair lady.

Pins and needles bend and break,
Bend and break, Bend and break.

Pins and needles bend and break,
My fair lady.

Build it up with wood and clay,
Wood and clay, Wood and clay.

Build it up with wood and clay,
My fair lady.

Wood and clay will wash away,
Wash away, Wash away.

Wood and clay will wash away,
My fair lady.

Build it up with stone so strong,
Stone so strong, Stone so strong.

Build it up with stone so strong,
My fair lady.

Stone so strong will last so long,
Last so long, Last so long.

Stone so strong will last so long,
My fair lady.

Closing Verse

Use this verse to end your time together on a high note, striving to go forth and made the rest of the day a good one. Like the opening verse, lighting a candle is customary and provides a sense of closure. When the candle is blown out, you will go forward feeling positive about the next thing to come your way.

The golden sun so great and bright
Warms the world with all its might.
It makes the dark earth green and fair,
Attends each thing with ceaseless care.
It shines on blossom, stone, and tree,
On bird and beast, on you and me.
So may each deed throughout the day,
May everything we do and say
Be bright and strong and true,
Oh, golden sun, like you!

OTHER IDEAS

Cooking

No specific cooking activities are suggested because many children and families have restricted diets such as vegan or vegetarian, gluten-free, kosher, etc. However, cooking is always a wonderful activity for a child to participate in. Bearing in mind any food allergies, and common-sense kitchen safety, consider preparing a simple recipe with the child. Children love to wash vegetables, measure and mix ingredients, and set the table for a meal. Preparing and eating a snack is always popular!

Play

Don't forget the many benefits of unguided imaginative play. You need to stay nearby for safety's sake, if the child is in an unfamiliar environment or you aren't certain what should or should not be childproofed. All children need daily time to play. In the preschool years, play is the WORK of the young child. Prepare an appropriate play space and then stay out of it as much as you can; give the child the simplest and highest quality toys you can find such as large pieces of cloth, blocks, dolls, and materials from nature (such as pinecones, feathers, or shells). Avoid plastic toys. Consider a basin of water and some measuring cups or add some dish detergent and give the child a whisk. The more open-ended a material, the more of the child will be brought forth in playing with it. The more structured a material, the less will be required of the child – and the less he will grow and develop when playing with it. As a simple test, try playing with the toys yourself. If you find you tire of a thing quickly, so will a child!

Helping

Helping around the home is an essential part of any Waldorf curriculum. It is not necessary to put a child in front of the television while you do the dishes or sort the laundry into lights and darks; let the child help you. Even if you have an automatic dishwasher, a child can help by rinsing the dishes before they are loaded. Children love to do work that they know is truly helpful and all young children thrive in situations where they are allowed to imitate an adult. Washing the dog, washing the car, sweeping or dusting, repotting houseplants, feeding the cats, setting and clearing the table... all of these are wonderful activities to do with a preschool-aged child.

PLANNER

Activities: highlight the activities you would like to do

Opening Verse

- candle

Stories

Story Activities

Art: supplies as needed for intended projects such as

- rocks
- paint
- crayons
- paper
- glue

Nature Game

- rocks
- crayons
- paper
- cardstock

Science

- rock tumbler
- rocks
- sand & magnifying glass (optional)

Rhyme

Cooking

Play

Helping

Closing Verse

- candle

PLANNER

Book List:

list the books you will be reading
feel free to substitute other books you may have on hand
which relate to this theme

Materials:

list all materials required for your chosen activities

Please feel free to contact me at any time at waldorf_curric@yahoo.com.