

Early in the Morning

*Waldorf Curriculum
Preschool Newsletter*

May 01, 2006

May Day

by Sarah Teasdale
(1884-1933)

A delicate fabric of bird song
Floats in the air,
The smell of wet wild earth
Is everywhere.

Red small leaves of the maple
Are clenched like a hand,
Like girls at their first communion
The pear trees stand.

Oh I must pass nothing by
Without loving it much,
The raindrop try with my lips,
The grass with my touch;

For how can I be sure
I shall see again
The world on the first of May
Shining after the rain?

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.

"Early in the Morning"

Early morning brings the promise of a new day. Show your child the joy of waking with the sunrise, a simple morning verse, and enjoying a walk outside followed by a nutritious breakfast. Some yoga in the morning, especially the sunrise salutation, is also healthful. May 1st is a day when young maidens traditionally wake up early to wash their faces in the May Day dew (this is supposed to ensure a fine complexion throughout the coming year). Other celebrations of this day include dancing around the Maypole; circle dances are especially appropriate for the first grade year. Find suggestions for celebrating May Day in All Year Round (or online such as at ehow.com http://www.ehow.com/how_8239_celebrate-may-day.html)

and please share your favorites with the Group: waldorfcriculum@yahoogroups.com.

A good read-aloud story to begin in May is The Little Grey Men which also takes place at the beginning of spring and tells enchanting stories about the world of gnomes.



One Room Schoolhouse:

- This topic also includes a focus on nature walks or simply sitting outside in the morning and observing the animals around you. Depending on the animals where you live, you may see more than the squirrels, birds, spiders and mice we read about. Have your child make a journal or scrapbook of the animal life around you. Even if you are in the city, there will be spiders! And you may have pets to observe as well.

- The Mouse Book, Miss Suzy, The Best Nest and The Little Mouse, the Red Ripe Strawberry, and the Big Hungry Bear are all good books for early readers, making this a good topic for first grade as well as preschool.

- Hearthsong used to sell doorknob baskets which were perfect for May Day. You can always weave a set of doorknob baskets, one for each member of your family or to give as gifts. Very pretty May Day Baskets can also be made of other materials:
<http://www.seedsofknowledge.com/holidays/maybaskets.html>

- We are having a Garden Party Saturday May 6th to celebrate moving into our new house. Instead of hostess/housewarming gifts we are asking everyone to bring a plant and we will have an enjoyable afternoon of gardening and then a picnic dinner outside to enjoy the fruits of our labor (a picnic is another traditional way to celebrate the beginning of May). Another party idea is a May Basket Party, found in Betty Crocker's Parties for Children. She suggests a variety of party games for older children:

- "Fruit Basket"
- "Party Clothes"
- "Candy Hunt"
- "Thread the Needle Relay"
- "Novelty Competition"
- "Choosing Colors"

and gives a simple spring menu.

Daily Schedule

7 am wake up, morning verse, get dressed, walk the dog
8 am breakfast
8:30 am outside play time

Morning Schooltime 10 – 11:30 am

❖ opening verse 10 am
❖ daily activity 10:05 am

Monday art (watercolor painting, dance)
Tuesday visit farmer's market, make vegetable soup
Wednesday visit library, choose books
Thursday bake bread & churn butter
Friday handwork project (beeswax modeling, coloring, seasonal crafts)
Saturday field trip (visit nature center, art gallery, museum, concert, dance)
Sunday housekeeping (waxing, washing, polishing, mending)

❖ circle time 10:45 am
❖ prepare lunch 11:00 am
❖ lunch 11:30 am

12 pm nap
2:30 pm snack

Afternoon Schooltime 3 – 4:30 pm

❖ story, puppetry, drama 3 pm
❖ independent play 3:20 pm
❖ clean up 4:10 pm
❖ closing verse 4:25 pm
❖ nature walk 4:30 pm

5 pm inside play time, prepare dinner, set table
5:30 pm dinner
6 pm bedtime routines
7 pm bedtime

Index Cards

When you follow this sample schedule, the only things you'll really need to plan in advance are

1. the daily activity,
2. circle time,
3. storytelling, and
4. a daily recipe (breakfast, lunch, snack, dinner or dessert).

Your entire planning can easily fit on a 3x5 index card. Make up a card for the day with notes on what you plan to do and simply carry it with you. Or, if you will have the child on a regular basis, sew a small pocket to keep the card in and hang it on the wall. The child will love to run to the pocket and take out each day's card to see what you'll be doing together. Make note of what resources you need to complete the activities, such as story books, cookbooks, a book of rhymes and fingerplays, craft books, etc.

The Waldorf Way

Some things about the Waldorf way of spending time with preschool children may be new to you. Here are some general notes; feel free to visit our website at www.waldorfcurriculum.com for more information and resource links for Waldorf education.

Verses provide rhythm, security, and a transition between one activity to another. They are an important way for your child to take the time to stop, rest, and center himself before beginning the next activity, and they also provide a moment of quiet thankfulness and gratitude for each part of the day.

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.

Cooking is always a wonderful activity for a child to participate in. Bearing in mind any dietary restrictions (such as vegan or vegetarian, gluten-free, kosher, etc.), 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!

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!

The Waldorf view of *Handwork* is different from the usual craft projects done with young children. Handwork must have an authentic context – it must be truly useful and must be completed slowly, deliberately, and with pride. As children grow, they benefit from the lessons learned in doing handwork – that taking your time, following all the steps, and doing your best work will result in a product of which you can be proud.

Process – not product – is the emphasis of *Art* time. Be sure that your child understands that art activities are for learning, for exploration, and not to be afraid to have fun! Even many adults in our society are afraid to experiment with art materials because “it won’t look right”; nip this attitude in the bud!

Storytelling is an important part of the Waldorf method. A wonderful resource we recommend is *Storytelling with Children* by Nancy Mellon. If at all possible try to learn more about storytelling and puppetry. If you just don’t feel comfortable telling stories orally, we provide suggestions for picture books you can read which go along with each topic. It will actually be more damaging for your child to experience an insincere story where the adult feels false and uncomfortable. Also, remember that storytime or puppet shows at your local library can be a part of your plans for the day but DO NOT take place of reading one-on-one with the child. This personal connection and quiet nurturing time is a very different experience than the social one of experiencing a story in a group.

What follows are my notes for lesson planning this week. We encourage you to share your own ideas; simply email the Group at waldorfcriculum@yahoogroups.com.

Monday – May 1

Get up at sunrise and walk around outside welcoming the new day!

Art: watercolor painting

paint the blue sky (or rain – April showers bring May flowers) and the yellow sunshine meeting and creating the fresh green colors of Spring

Circle Time:

make a Small Maypole for the Nature table All Year Round page 87

Storytelling:

Flip and the Morning

Snack:

Banana Bread

Tuesday – May 2

Visit Farmer's Market, Make Vegetable Soup

Circle Time:

sit quietly outside and observe what animals you can see and hear

Storytelling:

The Little Mouse, the Red Ripe Strawberry, and the Big Hungry Bear

Snack:

Strawberry Gelatins Everyday Food page 126

Wednesday – May 3

Visit Library, Choose Books

Circle Time:

sit quietly inside and observe what animals you can see and hear

"Little Grey Mouse" poem

http://www.4to40.com/poems/index.asp?article=poems_littlegreymouse

Storytelling:

Alexander and the Wind-Up Mouse or The Mouse Book

Dinner:

Glazed Radishes Everyday Food page 68

Thursday – May 4

Bake Bread & Churn Butter

Circle Time:

walk around inside your house looking for signs of animals that live there
what are their houses?

Storytelling:

Be Nice to Spiders

Dinner:

Pasta Salad with Broccoli and Peanuts Everyday Food page 138

Friday – May 5

Handwork Project:

begin flower fairies from Felt Wee Folk

Circle Time:

take a walk outside, gather acorn caps for felt wee folk

Storytelling:

Miss Suzy

Lunch:

Radish Tea Sandwiches Everyday Food page 66

Saturday – May 6

Field Trip:

visit roadside stand to buy flowers for our new garden

Garden Party 1:30 pm – 4:30 pm

Picnic Dinner 5 pm

Kentucky Derby: post time 6 pm

Circle Time:

walk around outside your house and look for signs of animals that live there
what are their houses? set out baskets of wool for birds building their nests

Storytelling:

The Best Nest

Breakfast (for tomorrow):

Canadian-Bacon Strata Everyday Food page 110

VERSES

Opening Verse

The Waldorf method places a strong emphasis on establishing rhythms throughout the day which 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.

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!

VERSES

Morning Verse for Preschool and Kindergarten

(start by bending over touching your toes)

I w-a-ke in the morning

I stre-e-e-tch to the light

(slowly stand up and reach tall with your arms extended above you)

I JUMP *(jump, keeping your arms up high)* **to the Sun**

I am ready to start my day

(bring your arms down to your sides)

Verse before painting

Now I take the brush so gently
In my hand with loving care
Watch the color flow so softly
On the paper clean and clear.

GROCERY LIST

Produce:

3 six ounce bags radishes
2 lbs broccoli
butter lettuce
roasted peanuts

Pantry:

whole wheat fusilli
aluminum foil
plastic wrap
hot sauce

Meat:

roasted chicken
10 slices Canadian bacon

Dairy:

whipping cream
8 oz cream cheese
5 oz shredded sharp Cheddar cheese
1/3 cup shredded Parmesan cheese
eggs

Bakery:

pumpnickel bread
English muffins

MATERIALS LIST

Small Maypole:

from All Year Round

40 cm lengths of narrow ribbon (about 0.5 cm in width) in 6 different colors

1 extra length in any color for tying the flowers

wooden stick – a piece of dowelling or a knitting needle about 30 cm long

glue

small paper or silk flowers

Nesting Baskets:

Simply fill small baskets with unspun wool and place them outside in a sheltered area.

You can also gather a collection of string:

“You'll need a little berry basket from the supermarket. Hang different lengths of wool yarn, cotton string, human and animal hair, and dried grasses through the holes in the basket. Robins and bigger birds may use strings that are a foot (30 cm) long, but smaller birds might like them cut shorter.

When you have filled the holes with nest-weaving goodies, tie the basket to a branch or clothesline where birds will see it. Some of them may stop by to snatch a string. And maybe later this spring you'll spot a nest with your stuff woven into it!”

from Ranger Rick March 1996

http://www.findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m0EPG/is_n3_v30/ai_18008112

Or, make a woolie gourd:

<http://www.gardeners.com/Woolie-Gourd/default/35-521.prd>

RESOURCE GUIDE

Waldorf Verses for Circle Time and Play

<http://www.waldorfhomeschoolers.com/VERSES.htm>

Activities

- All Year Round by Ann Druitt, et al.
- Betty Crocker's Parties for Children by Lois M. Freeman
- Felt Wee Folk by Salley Mavor

Stories

- Storytelling with Children by Nancy Mellon
- The Little Grey Men by Denys Watkins-Pitchford
- Flip and the Morning by Wesley Dennis
- The Little Mouse, the Red Ripe Strawberry, and the Big Hungry Bear by Don and Audrey Wood
- Alexander and the Wind-Up Mouse by Leo Lionni
- The Mouse Book by Helen Piers
- Be Nice to Spiders by Margaret Bloy Graham
- Miss Suzy by Miriam Young
- The Best Nest by P.D. Eastman

Recipes

- Everyday Food magazine May 2006

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