

2. EARTH IS OUR HOME

This Lesson's Goals

- » *To present the point of view that we are joint tenants of God's creation, along with plants and animals*
- » *To relate and promote love of home and love of the Earth*
- » *To associate "Mother Earth" or "Mother Nature" with good family relationships*
- » *To apply observation and discernment skills*
- » *To accept responsibility for Earthcare globally as well as locally*

Sample Agenda

Posting a simple agenda can help both the teachers and the children stay on track. Pick and choose which activities work best for your group.

- 1. Opening:** Silent Worship, Song, Scripture
- 2. Small Group Activities**
- 3. Closing**
- 4. Sharing of Take-Home Materials**

Opening [15 min.]

Use your own familiar pattern to begin your class.
Center in silent worship.

Use the songs, word games, and Scripture to introduce the theme of the lesson, being at home on the Earth.

Songs

All God's Critters Got a Place in the Choir
Ancient Mother
The Earth is My Mother
Earth was Given as a Garden
God of the Earth, the Sky, the Sea
This is My Father's World
This Pretty Planet

Scripture

Psalms 104: 13-18

From thy high pavilion thou dost water the hills;
the Earth is enriched by thy provision.
Thou makest grass grow for the cattle

and green things for those who toil for man,
bringing bread out of the Earth
and wine to gladden men's hearts,
oil to make their faces shine
and bread to sustain their strength.
The trees of the Lord are green and leafy,
the cedars of Lebanon which he planted;
the birds build their nests in them,
the stork makes her home in their tops.
High hills are the haunt of the mountain-goat,
and boulders a refuge for the rock-badger.

Job 12:7-10

New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)

7 "But ask the animals, and they will teach you;
the birds of the air, and they will tell you;
8 ask the plants of the earth,
and they will teach you;
and the fish of the sea will declare to you.
9 Who among all these does not know
that the hand of the LORD has done this?
10 In his hand is the life of every living thing
and the breath of every human being.

Scripture Reflection

- » What did you understand from the psalm and the passage from Job?
- » What does God do or provide for people and for animals?
- » What animal homes are mentioned in this psalm?

Small Group Activities

Select three or four activities from those listed, giving consideration to the age and size of your group, season and weather, and space and materials needed.

1. Word Connection [5]

Materials: Paper and Markers

Make a list of words the children connect with "home." Try to accept all responses. Make sure everyone has contributed something. You may want to make lists to go with "nest, den, hive, or house" for comparison.
Examples: family, food, gardening, bed, hugs, home plate, homework, safe,.

2. Building Houses [15-20]

Materials: Lego® sets, wood blocks, Lincoln Logs®, 3x5 index cards and tape, or other building materials

Form groups of 3-4 for a cooperative building project. Supply them the materials

above and invite them to build houses.

Debrief: How did you decide what kind of house to build? What makes a good house? What makes it a home?

3. Animal Homes [10-15]

Materials: Pictures of animal homes and various human habitation, paper and markers

Look at the pictures. Discuss how they are both similar and different. What are common elements of good places to live for different species? What do animals need in their "homes" to thrive?

Have students respond to this aloud and record their ideas on an "animal needs" chart. Answers could include: Access to water, shelter for danger and weather, a place to raise a family, ample space to find food.

There is
enough for
everyone's
need, but
not for
everyone's
greed.
– Gandhi

4. Habitat Lap Sit [5-10]

Explain how the different parts of the environment work together to create an optimal living space or home for animals. Have students stand in a tight circle in a large open space to perform the "Habitat Lap Sit" (from Project WILD.)

Randomly assign students to be water, food, shelter, or place to raise young within the circle. Ensuring that the students are spaced close together, instruct the students to sit at one time. Hopefully, the students will end up sitting in one big circle upon one another's laps.

Instruct the students to all stand at the same time and remove one group from the circle, such as the food kids.

Then again instruct the remaining students in the circle to sit down. The students will attempt to sit down again. Ask the students to explain what happened. Students will respond about why the circle sit didn't work the second time.

Review why it is important for animals and people to be able to have all these "elements" in their homes. What can we do to protect all these elements?

5. People [and Animals] in My Home Tableaux [10-20]

Ask a child to name the people who live in their home and then help that child pose other class members in a tableau, or living still picture, of a home scene. Family pets may be represented as well. Every child should get a turn.

As time allows, let the children give each of the characters a line to say or an action to do and then bring each frozen picture to life. You can discuss themes or issues, such as Friends testimonies, that may be seen in the tableaux or use this to begin a serious relationship role-play.

6. Special Plot [5-10]

Visit the plot of ground your group previously selected [see chapter 1]. Look to see what animals and plants make that place their home. If your group didn't start this activity in an earlier lesson, add it here so you can see how your special plot changes with seasons and weather.

7. Share a Story about Earth as Home [10-30]

There are number of books and films which would spark a good conversation about our home, Earth. *Born with a Bang* by Jennifer Morgan is a children's introduction to the science story of the Universe.

The Everything Seed by Joy Troyer is excellent and has a Power Point presentation for purchase that is also wonderful.

Other options include: *Dear Children of Earth: a Letter from Home* by Schim Schimmel, *Our Planet* by Lionel Bender and *The Lorax* by Dr. Seuss (also in video).

Snack ideas

Serve something that smells like home to you. It could be rice pudding, jam tarts, applesauce with cinnamon, hot cocoa, or chocolate chip cookies. Ask what other foods smell like home.

8. With Whom do We Share Our Meeting? [5-10]

Materials: Paper and markers.

Look around the Meeting House. Ask, "Who else calls this home? What animals live there?" (Don't forget microbes, bugs, underground dwellers, and animals that may pass through in their migrations.)

Together make a site "map" of all the other things present. Include plants, animals, rocks, soil, pavement, etc.

9. Hello, Earthlings [5-10]

Materials: Poster-sized paper and makers.

Imagine that you encounter a visiting extra-terrestrial. Brainstorm responses to these questions:

- » What aspects of your home planet would you most want to show?
- » How would you explain the idea of home to an alien?

Make a large set of concentric circles on a poster size piece of paper. With the children's participation, invite them to answer the alien who asks, "What is home?", naming the different levels and meaning of home: (center circle) our personal homes (houses or apartments, etc.), (2nd circle) our town or city, (3rd circle) our state, (4th circle) our country, (5th circle) our continent, (6th circle) our hemisphere and (7th circle) the planet.

Reflect on how the earth is home to everyone. Place them on the map.

What seasons of the year have the children chosen to describe? How much will the outside area change from season to season? How will that change who lives there? Consider ways we can care for the homes of our non-human neighbors.

This could be followed by an art period where we draw our responses, or by creating skits in which we act out the encounter with an alien who asks, "What is home?"

10. Mandalas of Home [10-15]

Give each one a sheet of drawing paper. Use concentric circles [a target] to describe the meaning of "home." A plain paper plate also works. You could think of this as a graph with each circle having a different value. In the center, each person writes or draws a meaning of "home." In the second circle, go the senses from home: things to smell, touch, hear, see, and taste. In the outer circle, put activities that take place in and around home.

Discussion: Ask questions that will help the children to think about home.

- » What smells or tastes do you associate with home?
- » What is the difference between a house and a home?
- » What do people mean when they say they feel at home in nature?

Closing

Join hands to form a circle. Have each person express thanks for a part of the natural world that helps make our homes.* Possible items: oak trees for sturdy tables,, human builders, cotton plants, trees for paper used in books. Close with silent worship.



Coloring Your Home

Color and discuss what comes to mind when you think of these parts of HOME.



Sharing Your Home

With whom do share your home?

Look around the outside of where you live. Make a list of who else calls this place "home". What other animals live here? Don't forget microbes, bugs, underground dwellers, and animals or birds that may pass through in their migrations. What might you do to be sure all your "neighbors" have food, water and shelter?

Now make a drawing or "map" of where you live and mark where each living thing you identified calls home. Also include plants, rocks, soil, pavement, etc. Place these neighbors on your map.