

We Are All Connected

7th Principle Butterfly Creepy Crawlies

Religious Education Lessons

©Stefani Scott
Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Stony Brook, New York

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Introduction by the Author

As you know, some children come willing to Religious Education (RE) and some do not. Almost all children love nature and animals though, including butterflies, but many do not like the other creepy life like worms or spiders. However, their curiosity is great, they love adventure, and I truly believe each and every child is born with a spiritual nature. Adults, who are often so overwhelmed with their daily lives, often don't nurture their own spiritual selves. Children have the beautiful capacity to look at life in the most extraordinary ways and by doing so, bring us back to our own spirituality. If you can catch any child's enthusiasm for the wonder of nature, they will have a love of learning that will last them a lifetime. They will always find solace in nature when times are the most difficult for them.

I have been a science/interdisciplinary curriculum writer for over 30 years in grades K-12 and since 2003 have been writing summer RE lessons for the UU Fellowship of Stony Brook (UUFBS). I am dedicated to the 7th Principle, which I believe encompasses all of the other Principles. These lessons were developed from science lessons into RE lessons for elementary-age kids, but the older "kids" will enjoy them as well. I know this because I have had 17-year-old high school science students jump up and down with joy when they found a praying mantis in the Wildlife Garden at my school. Each year for the past 10 years, my high school students have enjoyed being the "teacher" to 2nd grade children while I looked on. They grew in self esteem as they showed the younger children about creepy crawlies; so I think it is worth a try to get your YUuth's help in teaching the younger children. (See Lesson 7 for another summer suggestion for your YUuth's 9-12.)

The Seventh Principle

We, the member congregations of the Unitarian Universalist Association, covenant to affirm and promote....

Respect for the Interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part.

Goals

The goals of the Butterflies/Creepy Crawlies lessons are:

- To help children feel welcome and an important part of the group
- To help children see that they have creative gifts they can share while they are having fun learning.
- To nurture the spiritual selves of the children
- To encourage children to practice the 7 Principles with emphasis on an understanding that we are connected to *all* of Good Earth's "children"
- To help children take responsibility for taking care of all life

Settings

Begin by putting Children in Worship Circle.

This is really important for three reasons:

1. Some of these lessons are based on myths from the Native Americans who sit in a circle at meetings because they believe in equality and the democratic process (UU Principles 2 and 5). Everyone is allowed to have their say and by sitting people in a circle no one individual is at the head, although the RE teacher is the leader.
2. Circles make every one feel like they belong and this gives them a feeling of worth (UU Principle 1).
3. It will begin with quiet and this will help to center the children in the lesson and have less distractions.

In the middle of the children's Worship Circle at UUFBSB, we have a box covered with a cloth, which was made and decorated by the children with symbols of all religions. On the table there is a chalice, candle, matches and bell or chime, because many of our lessons start out with the Sounding of the Bell and the Lighting of the Chalice. Usually the "birthday" child lights the chalice with the help of our RE director, Linda Volkersz.

At the end of each lesson, before refreshments or snack, the children can be called back to the circle for closing words and to extinguish the chalice or to share thoughts.

Activities

There is an activity for each lesson, which may involve Language or Literature, Music, Art, Science, a game, and/or "Principles in Action".

Some of the lessons, especially **Principles in Action*** activities, might require more than one Sunday to complete, and could even take an entire summer if extended, but you can easily shorten any lesson.

Wildlife Habitats

Encourage the adults in your congregation to help the children build a wildlife habitat.

One of the most important Eco-Social Actions (Principles in Action) your UU Congregation can do to teach the children and youth about stewardship and to demonstrate how as adults we also practice the Principles, is to build a wildlife habitat together.

*Go to: <http://www.nwf.org/schoolyard/> for information or See the Pre-Lesson, Lesson 2, To Feed a Butterfly and Lesson 6, The Little Blue-Green Creepy Flyers, which include information on how to make small container wildlife gardens and a wetland as small as a toddler's swimming pool.

Lesson Tactics

Use recycled materials.

Another way to show children you care is to use recycled materials for art activities. UUFBSB uses recycled paper, cloth and other materials from the Materials Resource Center on Long Island in Ronkonkoma, NY for many of its art projects and bulletin boards. There may be similar nonprofit organizations in your area or just look around your home. I have made many butterflies from magazine photos of flowers and skies glued to cut out cereal box cardboard.

Collect Plants and Animals Responsibly.

We are teaching children to care for creation; so it is very important if you use live creatures for any of these activities that you return them back to nature. I have a license for collecting animals for educational purposes. You need to check your own state laws.

Be passionate, engaged, or even silly.

When reading a story or doing a lesson, it is important that the lesson become part of “*uu*” if possible. When reading a story, read it several times out-loud. Rehearse it to get the right emphasis and pacing. If possible, tell or act the story from memory (get your congregation’s YU^Uth involved). It helps if you can “see” the characters and “movement” of the story in your mind’s eye. If you want the children to do art, make a garden or dance, etc...you must be willing to also do the activity even if you aren’t really gifted that way. Youth and older children will feel less uneasy if you as an adult are “silly” and show them you aren’t afraid to experiment.

Use materials and copyrighted materials responsibly.

I made bulletin boards, posters, and other visuals to use for these lessons from images gathered from the Internet, old Audubon, National Geographic, Ranger Rick magazines and old books that were either bought at yard sales or gathered from trash left on curbs. I used lightweight corrugated plastic (the same material used in sign making) to make the bulletin boards so they can be stored and used over and over again. I tried my very best not to use copyrighted material in the lessons or on the bulletin boards. You must only use the material in these lessons for educational purposes. Some references have been lost over 30 years of teaching. I highly recommend that you make informational butterfly and caterpillar, ladybug, spider, or hermit crab posters, etc...because as you do them, you will learn about the animals and have information in your brain to expand the lessons.

What if you don’t know the answer?

Children are always so curious and asking questions about animals. Unless you are a science teacher like I am and somewhat knowledgeable, or just are interested in knowing facts like “Where do butterflies go in the winter? Or, “How do you know if a horseshoe crab is a male or female?”, you just don’t know the answers to all their questions. Almost all the answers are at your fingertips now because of the wonderful world of the Internet. So you can always say: I don’t know, but I will try to find out. Also see the Resources chapter at the end of this book.

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Pre-Lesson: It Is The Season For Beginnings

Timing: Ideally, this lesson is done in the late spring. See Lesson 2 as a substitute lesson.

Class Preparation

Read the summaries of the stories below.

Choose which one to use for your class. The one you choose may depend on which one you can find in your library.

Materials

1. Paper cups with holes punched in bottom
2. A shallow pan to hold the cups and plastic wrap or bags to cover the cups (or recycle the clear plastic lettuce/salad containers from when you buy salad greens or cherry tomatoes)
3. A small creamer is just the right size for watering the cups each week.
4. Wildflower seeds (Suggestions: sunflower and milkweed flower seeds are large and easy to grow for the youngest. I collect milkweed seeds from pods in the late spring along the roadside. You can find information on the best butterfly wildflowers at your library or doing a search on the Internet. There are also many experts on this subject within your own community or perhaps within your own congregation.)

Directions

1. Opening the Circle with Sounding of the Bell

Allow one of your children to ring a Chime, Bell, or Triangle and ask the children to concentrate on the sound until it can no longer be heard.

2. Opening Circle Words to Light a Chalice

“This light stands for the 7th Principle which shows us that all life on Earth is connected so we should practice peace, treat everyone and everything with kindness, be accepting of one another’s beliefs and care for the Earth.”

3. Read one of these books out loud to the class.

The Garden of Happiness by Erika Tamar, *Miss Emma’s Wild Garden* by Anna Grossnickle Hines or *Lily’s Garden* by Deborah Kogan Ray.

The Garden of Happiness is a beautifully illustrated book and a tribute to the pride found in multicultural neighborhoods all over the world. This story takes place in New York City. When Erika goes to plant in the neighborhood garden, there isn’t any room left. She plants a seed in a crack in the sidewalk, having no idea what kind of plant it will

grow into. The growth of the plant is watched over by the whole neighborhood and makes differences in their lives, demonstrating that the contributions of one person can make a difference. This book demonstrates the importance of the inherent worth of individuals and encourages children to think about the value of working together to solve community problems as well as help the Earth. It also shows the importance of diversity.

Young Chloe in *Miss Emma's Garden* notes that her neighbor's garden is not like her father's, who grows things very symmetrically. Miss Emma's garden is wild, and things grow any way they please. This is a wonderful intergenerational story as well as a nature lesson. And can lead to wonderful relationships between the elder members of your congregation who like gardening and the young. Have one them read it to the class. The website <http://www.aghines.com/missemma.htm> has coloring pages and many suggestions for expanding the lesson. Click on "Things To Do" at the bottom of the page.

Lily's Garden is colorfully illustrated and has anecdotal information on the things Lily is doing in her garden (there is a short history of oranges, how to make maple syrup, and different kinds vegetables in Lily's Garden.) Lily's garden grows and changes month-by-month so the joys of the seasons and the excitement of gardening can be seen. Lily's grandma is involved so again this is an excellent intergenerational story.

4. After reading one of the books, discuss the story.

Have students describe how the story made them feel. Ask them how growing things make people happy. Was giving involved?

Other questions for discussion:

- Ask how the neighborhood in *The Garden of Happiness* was made better by what the people did by making a garden.
- How was Chloe, Lily or Erika made into better people because of growing things?
- How do plants and animals depend on each other? How do we depend on plants and animals?
- What happens to the animals when we cut down forest to build roads, shopping centers, housing developments and parking lots?
- Suppose you were one of the wild creatures in Miss Emma's garden or a flower or vegetable in one of the other gardens. Which one would you be? And WHY?

5. Tell the children that they are going to begin to make a garden for butterflies and other creepy crawlies

Plant some flowers (and/or vegetables) just like one of the children did in their gardens because that is one way we can care for the Earth and its animals. The flowers will become part of your butterfly garden or containers for summer lessons (Lessons 2 and 5).

6. Have the children plant wildflower seeds in paper cups.

(I would not label with names in case some don't grow. After all, it is a community effort. That is why I like the plastic lettuce containers which are great for sowing lots of seeds and have their own covers.)

- Punch a few holes in the bottom of a paper cup.

- Put potting soil (use potting soil instead of compost to avoid microorganisms that could damage the seeds) into the cup until it reaches about 1 ½ inches from the top.
- Plant a seed by laying it on top of the soil in the paper cup. Cover the seed lightly with about another ½ inch of soil. Do not pack the soil down.
- Add enough water to the soil to make it moist, but not wet. Cover with plastic wrap or put the cup into a plastic bag and place in a warm sunny place.
- The seed should sprout in a few days to a week. Check each week and water.
- When the flowers become seedlings and have their own leaves you may plant all of them in a larger container or in a sunny spot outside. You can garden in any space even if you only have a small window box.

7. *Gather the children back into the Circle*

Use these Unison Closing Words (based on Song, *From You I Receive*) or sing them.

From the Garden we receive,
To the Garden we give.
Together we share,
By this we live.

Another closing song which is perfect for this lesson is by Malvina Reynolds *Let It Be*
<http://www.wku.edu/~smithch/MALVINA/mr089.htm>

8. *Suggested snack for this activity*

Fruit and sunflower seeds. You may also try to plant some of the seeds from the fruits. Sometimes they sprout and make nice house plants, especially citrus like oranges, limes and grapefruits.

Note from the author:

*At UUFSB the children plant seedling flowers in May for the Butterfly and Rainbow Gardens at UUFSB, and this year we hope to plant some vegetables and harvest them for the local Food Kitchen. We just started a compost pile. I plant herbs on my deck each year in terracotta pots and other containers. I do not use any pesticides or herbicides (go to www.grassrootsinfo.org or www.audubon.org for pamphlets to give out to your children's parents about pesticide risks for children and wildlife. Jerry Baker's book, called **Giant Book of Garden Solutions**, has 1,954 natural ways to solve gardening problems. See also the website: www.jerrybaker.com.*



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Lesson 1: Do UU know How Butterflies Came to Be?

Class Preparation

Read through all the Directions and the Lesson.

Read the Story found at the end of this lesson. The story was adapted by Stefani Scott from a very well known myth of the Papago People of the Southwest.

Materials

1. Flute or recorder
2. 2 opaque pillow cases of the same color, age, etc...
3. Green leaves and pine needles
4. Bright colored flowers
5. Yellow corn meal
6. Construction paper* butterflies. (Use Stefani's Butterfly Pattern)
7. Colored markers
8. Clear tape

**You can also use any "used" paper from wallpaper books, greeting cards and the colorful envelopes recycled from greeting cards can be used instead of construction paper for backing. The children can color the one of the sides.*

Before class

Hide one pillow case with the construction paper cut outs in the shape of butterflies near a window.

Directions

1. Opening the Circle with Sounding of the Bell

Allow a Child to blow a recorder or flute and then ask the Children to concentrate on the Sound until it can no longer be heard.

2. Opening Circle Words to Light a Chalice

We light this chalice because we believe in having respect for all living things and searching for the truth. (Or you may use the same words from the pre-lesson.)

3. Read or tell the story.

Read “How Butterflies Came to Be” found at the end of this Lesson. Telling the story is better. Or you can get Older Children or the YUUth in your congregation to act out this story for the younger children.

4. At one point in the story you will stop (it is marked in the story).

Mix the following into one of the bags in front of the children (this is called the “bag of molecules from stardust” in the story): leaves and pine needles, bright colored flowers, yellow corn meal and shake the bag. (Most living things have Carbon, Hydrogen, Oxygen and Nitrogen –CHON- for you non-biology teachers. You can make this comment: We are all made of stardust. We even have elements in us that were once part of dinosaur molecules. That statement really gets them interested.)

5. Then walk the bag to a window (or some light source).

Say now we will let the light shine on the bag (even if it is raining there will be some outside light coming through a window.)

6. Now ask this Essential Question: How does seeing a butterfly make you feel?

Let all children answer who want to share.

7. Finish the story.

Return to the window and make the switch for the other bag and say “Let’s see what’s in our bag?” Let all the butterflies “fly”. (Many of the older children will of course understand the trick. I like a little theatrics, but I do confess the trick if the children ask. I say I was just trying to act out the myth... This sometimes leads to the question on “What is a myth?” I use all kinds of examples from all religions including Christianity to explain what a myth is if asked.)

8. Color the butterflies

The children can pick up the butterflies and use markers to color their faces on the plain construction paper side. Tape the butterflies to the window with the story.

9. Now ask this question. How do spiders make you feel?

Do you feel the same way about spiders as butterflies? Again, let all children answer who want to share.

10. Read this statement.

Our 7th Principle teaches us that we are all connected and dependent on each other. (What does this mean?) We receive so many gifts from all animals, including creepy crawly insects, and even spiders. Human beings have created images about animals based on

whether or not a particular animal is beautiful or endearing to them. Animals have not evolved in their appearance or behavior to appeal to humans, but to survive. When it comes to our appreciation of animals, "beauty is in the eye of the beholder and truth is only revealed when we look beneath the surface." (1st and 4th Principles).

There are about 200,000 individual insects for every one human being. Scientists are estimating that because human beings are cutting down forests (deforestation) at an alarming rate and are filling in wetlands (What is a Wetland? We will find out in later lessons), that we are losing 1000 species each year.

Living in balance means RESPECTING all life, using only what is needed, conserving what we use and recycling as much as we can. (Reduce, Reuse, Recycle and Respect) Giving thanks to complete the circle of giving and receiving is also important.

11. Unison Ending Words (before snack)

Gather the children back into circle and All Read Together the words printed on a poster and then one child blows out the chalice:

All things in this world

Have souls or spirits.

The sky has a spirit,

The clouds have spirits:

So have animals, trees, grass, water stones,

Everything. ----- *from the Hidatsa Native Americans*

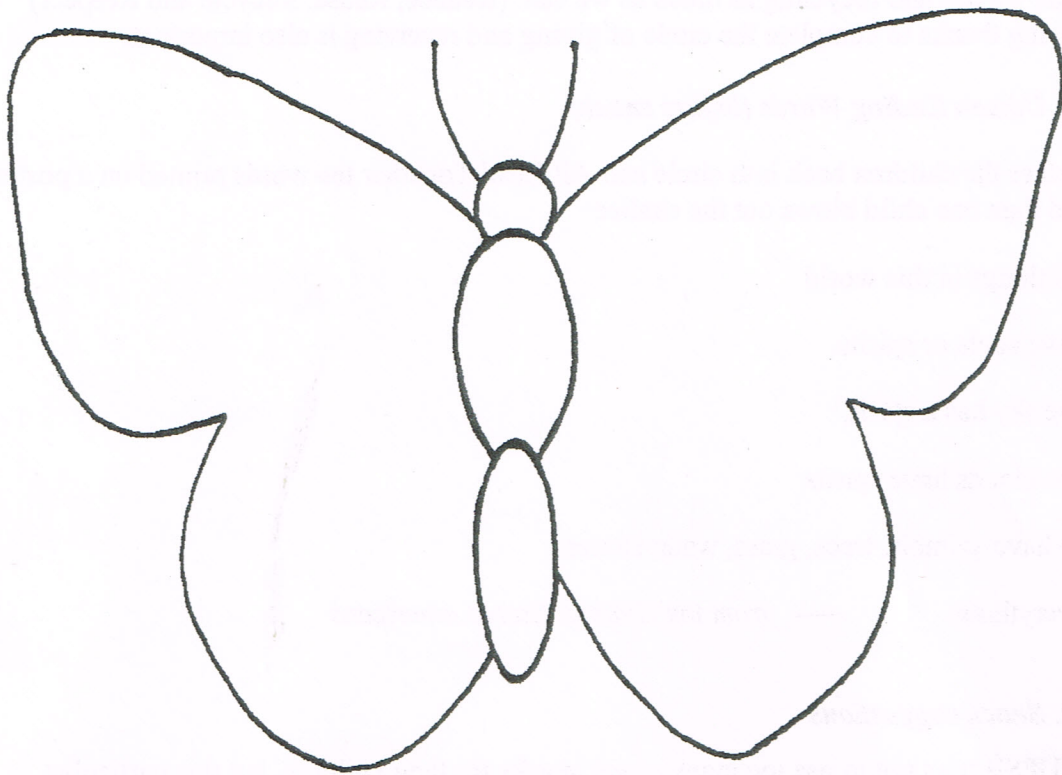
12. Snack suggestions

UUFSB tries not to use too many sweet snacks for their children, but this particular lesson calls for gummy worms (caterpillars) or bugs. Perhaps a dedicated teacher would be willing to make a carrot cake in the shape of a butterfly. For most of the lessons there will not be snack suggestions. Your congregation may not even have snacks for RE classes.

13. Principles in Action Extension

Ask the children to start saving plastic jar tops for Lesson 2, and greeting cards and colorful envelopes to bring in to use for other projects. You can even start making a recycled materials resource closet. In clear bins, start collecting "junk" like buttons, tops of drink bottles for making eyes, yarn, and ribbon from packages.

Stefani's Butterfly Pattern



(UU can get other patterns from birding.about.com/library/blclip-butterflies.htm)

How Butterflies Came to Be

(Adapted into a story by Stefani Scott
from Papago Southwest Native American Myth)

One day, after the Earth was made from the molecules found in the stars, Earth-Creator was sitting and watching the rain in a village, and saw the children playing in the mud with joy.

Earth-Creator saw all the new life, the trees and wild flowers blooming, that came with the rain.

But then Earth-Creator realized that all of these things would change. He knew that the children would all grow old someday. The leaves would change colors and fall from the trees, and the beautiful flowers would wither and die.

The days would grow short and the nights would become cold.

Everything would sleep for a while and it would be lonely.

Earth-Creator's heart grew sad.

As he watched the mothers of the children grind cornmeal and watched the wind make the tree leaves dance in the golden sunlight, he said, "I will capture some of this joy to make children's hearts dance forever. The children will remember today when they become sad, and they won't be sad anymore."

So, Earth-Creator took out a special "bag" made from stardust with all its magic and began to gather blue from the sky, and the yellow from cornmeal and the sun. He took the green from the tree leaves like pine needles and oaks. He gathered the color from the flowers that grew wild in the fields.

And, last, Earth-Creator put in the songs of birds flying around him. Then he shook the bag and laid it in the sun to get warm.

(Stop here and mix your ingredients in the bag, place it in the sun, and now ask the Essential Questions before continuing the story)

He called the children together. He told them to open the bag and there would be a surprise for them.

So they opened the bag, and beautiful Butterflies flew out and danced in the wind!

They were the colors of the flowers, sun and sky. They flew all around the children, and the hearts of the children and the Earth-creator soared.

Then, the butterflies began to sing the songs of the birds as they flew.

But then the song birds were sad. They flew onto the Earth-Creator's shoulder and said to him 'We were given the songs and it is fine with us that you gave them bright colors like us but it is not right that you also gave them our songs.'

Earth-Creator said, "You are right. I made one song for each of Earth's birds, and I must not give them away to any other." So butterflies were made silent, and to this day they are still silent.

But their beauty brightens the day of all the People, and brings out songs from their hearts.

And that is how it was meant it to be.

The End

