



Forgiveness Garden

Overview

Explore the courage it takes to seek and share forgiveness by reading *The Forgiveness Garden*, by Lauren Thompson.



45 minutes



All Ages



Newcomer Friendly

Aims & Objectives

Reading this story and wondering together will provide an opportunity to introduce the concept of forgiveness.

Reading List

Sparkling Still provides tools for teachers of children ages 3-12. Included are sample lessons, a master lesson plan, ideas for building classroom community, an introduction to wondering questions and more.

Sparkling Still provides useful instructions on:

- Creating the circle and other components of your time together: pages 5-22
- Reading out loud with children: pages 16-17
- Wondering with children and adults: pages vii-xi and 6-7
- Individual Art Responses: page 7
- Art Supplies: pages 20-22

Credits: Anne Collins, Sally Farneth, Susan Hopkins,
and Erika Mittag, Exercise Authors

Materials & Setup

Book: *The Forgiveness Garden* by Lauren Thompson ([link to purchase: http://tinyurl.com/jf6jzex](http://tinyurl.com/jf6jzex))

Video: 7 minutes (password = deepen) ([video link: https://vimeo.com/183926508](https://vimeo.com/183926508))

Summary of the Story

The people of two villages hated one another for a very long time. Finally, after a young girl was badly hurt, she realized that hating was destroying her. She found the courage to stop fighting and to create a garden in which people could learn to talk to one another: a Forgiveness Garden!

Background

There is a Forgiveness Garden that was created by the priest of St. Paul's Chapel, located directly across from the site of the World Trade Center in New York City after the September 11, 2001 attacks. The church provided food and shelter for the survivors and rescue workers. The church helped family members of lost loved ones plant an olive tree for peace in the Garden of Forgiveness.

Note on the names: The names are drawn from the Sanskrit language.

Vayam - [vaj-yahm] "Us"

Gamte - [gahm-tay] based on Graama Tayofi "Village of Them"

Sama - [sah-mah] based on Ksama "Forgiveness"

Karune - [kah-roon] based on Karunya "Kindness"

Suggestions for reading for teacher spiritual preparation before exercise/lesson

Luke 6:31 Do for others just what you want them to do for you. (Good News Bible)

Worship in Song, A Friends Hymnal

#322 The Peace Round

#218 God's Love is a Light

#266 This Little Light of Mine

#102 Be You to Others Kind and True

Materials Needed for Activity Response

For Individual Art Response:

- drawing paper
- crayons, markers, or pastels
- other supplies

If creating a garden, needed supplies:

- space and/or containers
- soil
- tools
- plants

Take Home Notes (one per family)

Note for children to take home after exercise/lesson or to email to parents during week prior to this lesson:

Today we read *The Forgiveness Garden*, by Lauren Thompson. We learned about forgiveness. In the story, the people of two villages hated one another for a very long time. Finally, after a young girl was badly hurt, she realized that hating was destroying her. She found the courage to stop fighting and to create a garden in which people could learn to talk to one another: a Forgiveness Garden!

Instructions

Welcome the children to the circle. Be sure to introduce everyone, if visitors are present.

Invite children and adults to go around the circle sharing one or two pluses and minuses from their day or week. It helps to ask for 2 items only, either 2 of one or one of each. Children are comfortable with a limit, unless another person's comment sparks another one for an individual child.

Sing a centering song, such as "God's Love is a Light," hymn #218, *Worship in Song, A Friends Hymnal*, and/or one of the songs previously suggested under Materials. In addition, or instead of, use breathing or other exercise to center the group. The simplest way is to breathe deeply three times. Adding lifting arms up and down with the breath or holding tummy during deep breaths can help.

Show the cover of the book, read the title and author's name. Ask the children a question that invites them to wonder about the story.

"Our story is about two tribes who have hated one another for a long time. Let's see what happens."

Read the story, holding the book so all can see. Depending on reader's comfort level with the children, allow comments during the story, especially from younger children.

After reading the story, invite the children to wonder about the story with you.

Wondering Questions

I wonder what part of the story you liked best?

I wonder what part of the story is the most important?

I wonder where you are in the story or what part of the story is about you?

I wonder if there is any part of the story we can leave out and still have all the story we need?

After the children have finished wondering and are ready to go to the next activity, introduce the option for Individual Reflective Art Response or a Teacher-directed Activity.

Individual Reflective Art Response

Children choose from a collection of attractive art supplies and work individually for about 15 minutes to create something of importance to the child. It may or may not be a direct reflection on the story they just heard and wondered about

Options for Teacher-directed Activity

Go outside and sit by our meeting garden

Make a Forgiveness Garden, have a bench to sit on.

Find rocks to build a wall

Act out the story

Closing

Provide a 5-minute warning before the children need to clean up. After clean up, gather the children in a circle and ask them to name one thing for which they are grateful. Sing songs while waiting for their parents to pick them up, or before joining the adults after the rise of Meeting for Worship.

If the children join their loved ones while Meeting for Worship is still in progress, before you lead them back to the meeting room, invite them to remember how they still themselves and some things about the morning that they may want to think about during the final moments of Meeting for Worship.

Hand out the Take Home Notes, if using, as parents pick up the children in the First Day School room, or after the rise of Meeting for Worship, if joining loved ones in worship.