

VALUING LIFE

Objective: To stimulate awareness of the importance of life in all living things. To consider the process of growing from young to old and how people's needs change.

Key Words: amazement, boom, coppice, creak, fascinated, gales, knarled, munch, withstood

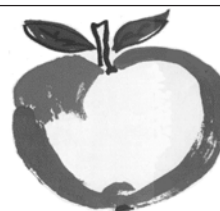
Curriculum Links: Citizenship and PSHE at KS1: 1a,b,c. 2a,c. 3d; Literacy: Drama

Materials needed:

- The Manual or copy of lesson plan
- Silent sitting exercises from the 'Introduction' Manual
- CD player
- CD 1 track 27 (music for silent sitting) or Silent Sitting CD track 5
- CD 2 track 2, or CD M1 track 6, for the song
- Copies of the drama script
- Cereal or shoebox for creative work

QUOTATION/THEME FOR THE WEEK

**GREAT OAKS FROM
LITTLE ACORNS GROW**



Discuss what this means.

What other big things grow from small things?

SILENT SITTING

Steps 1, 2 (See pages 19/20 or page 36 of the 'Introduction' Manual)

Step 5: Imagine you are in the park on a lovely summer's day ...

The sun is shining and you feel happy ...

Look at the trees, how strong yet gentle they are ...

See the squirrels playing in the branches ...

Think of all the good things trees give us ...

Fruit to eat ... shade on a hot day ...

wood for furniture ... air to breathe ...

Thank the trees for these gifts ...

Be happy that we have beautiful trees ...

Send out loving thoughts to all the trees in the world ...

Step 6.

STORY TELLING

THE OLD MAN OF THE TREE

by Pauline Young

One day young Percy walked towards the stile over the farmer's fence that led into the dense woodland near where he lived. He walked slowly along his regular route and passed by a large fallen oak tree that had withstood the heavy winds for hundreds of years but had been brought down by last winter's high gales.

"I wonder what little creatures there are living in the hollow of the tree now?" he questioned. Retracing his steps a little, he climbed up onto the large tree trunk and walked its length, inspecting every nook and little hiding place to see what he could find.

He found that the whole tree was full of different living things, from the smallest insects to a large rabbit that had been hiding under one of its branches. It shot out so fast when he approached that Percy nearly fell off the tree with fright.

"Silly rabbit," he said, picking himself up. "I wouldn't hurt you."

After a while, looking at the wood beetles, scurrying in the undergrowth beneath the tree, he lay down on his front, his hands under his chin. He was fascinated watching a community of ants co-operating in their efforts to move a dead insect. The squirrels ran up and along the adjacent tree, keeping a wary eye on him.

Feeling a little hungry, he sat down on the trunk and reached into his pocket for an apple. As he sat munching away in the sunshine, he heard a low voice. He jumped up and looked around, but couldn't see anyone.

"That's strange," he thought. "That sounded like someone talking."

"It was me," the voice boomed. "Look beneath your feet."

Percy looked down and to his amazement, the old tree moved.

"Ahh!" he cried in fright, jumping off the trunk and leaping across the clearing to hide behind another tree. "What is happening?"

"It's only me. Don't be afraid. I can't harm you," said the old oak tree.

"But you are dead," cried Percy, look out from behind the other tree. He looked at the fallen oak. A huge face appeared at the top of the trunk where the creepers had wound their way up through the branches.

"No, not yet. Every day I do get weaker though," said the oak.

"What happened to you?" asked Percy.

“I have stood here for many hundreds of years and I was always able to stand against the force of the winds that battered at my branches.” The oak gave a long sigh. “Over the years, as I got older, my inside became hollow and that took away my strength and each storm I found harder to withstand. The last one was so fierce that I was overcome and fell down.”

“Oh, I am sorry to hear that. But isn’t that a normal thing to happen to a tree, especially one that has stood for so long.” Percy felt very wise for his twelve years. Now he didn’t feel so afraid and approached the old oak. “Can I climb up on your trunk?”

“Oh yes, please do. I have enjoyed children climbing on me over the years.”

“You must have seen a lot of interesting people come and go. Have we changed much?”

“Children are much the same, except nowadays they don’t sing so much as they used to. Children used to sing beautiful little songs and I would relax my branches and just enjoy their company. Children don’t seem as happy now as they were in the old days. They are much noisier too. I have many tales to tell. At one time in the old days, the King of England used to ride near here and he sometimes came and sat under my branches to eat a meal. For many years I have watched people walk past under my branches. The woods were not so dense as they are now. The woodsmen used to coppice the trees. At one time the king ordered a lot of trees to be cut down to make ships. That made me nervous, but for some reason I was spared.”

“What will happen to you now? I mean to YOU? Your body will continue for a long time on the ground, that is, if nobody cuts you up for furniture or firewood. Already you are a comfort to the small insects and things which hide inside you. But where will YOU go?”

“Very soon I will move on to my next life, but till then, I will continue to enjoy the company of my little friends who live in me and around me. They talk to me and tell me what is happening to their families.” His face creaked as he smiled.

Percy looked at the old gnarled face on the tree. He knew he had accepted that his time as a tree would soon be over and all the things he had seen over the years had been part of the lessons he had to learn and part of the fun he had come to experience. “May I ask one more question before I leave?”

“You may. I will answer if I can,” replied the kind old oak.

“Have you any family of your own?”

“Look all around the wood,” replied the old oak tree proudly. “Not only the oak trees of different ages nearby, but also many further afield which grew from acorns carried by animals and children who picked them up to play with before tossing them aside. Many of my acorns grew into trees miles from here. They send me messages from time to time and I can feel when they are well or when anyone hurts them.”

Percy looked around at all the oak trees nearby and they rustled their leaves at him as if in greeting. He waved goodbye to the tree, and set off home. He felt thrilled that he actually had a conversation with a tree. Of course, though, he didn't tell his mother and father. Neither did he tell his friends. Well, they probably wouldn't have believed him, would they!

QUESTIONS:

1. What name would you give this story?
 2. What was it like in the woods?
 3. Describe what life was like for the old oak tree.
 4. How do you think the old tree **felt* about his life now it was ending?
 5. What do you think Percy **felt* towards the tree:
when he spoke?
when he told his story?
when he knew he wouldn't be a tree much longer?
 6. Which bit of the story did you enjoy most?
 7. How do you think trees are useful and helpful to us?
 8. How did you **feel* when you heard the story?
 9. Did the story remind you of anything in your own life?
- * fear, curiosity, great love, understanding, gratitude, appreciation, unity*

GROUP SINGING

THERE IS BEAUTY

(music by Stuart Jones lyrics by Nicky Gilbert)

In every flower and tree that grows,
In every gust of wind that blows,
In every star that brightly glows.
There's beauty everywhere.

And with each loving word we say
Within us each and every day
Awareness, love and joy all play,
Creating beauty everywhere.

*Chorus: There is beauty to be found,
If you see it, if you know it.
There is beauty to be found,
If you feel it, if you show it. (Repeat chorus)*

(Repeat all)

Beauty to be found
(Repeat x 6)

GROUP ACTIVITY

1. DRAMA

THE OLD MAN OF THE TREE

The scene is set in a farmer's field.

Cast: *Narrator*
 Percy
 Old Oak Tree
 Younger oak trees
 Squirrels, Rabbit, Bluebottle, Spider, Wood beetles and Ants

Narrator: One day, a young boy called Percy decided to go for a walk.

[Percy enters from stage left and is ambling along a path on the edge of a farmer's field. He whistles to himself as he is walking.]

He climbed over the stile in the farmer's fence near his home, that led into a dense wood, and then walked slowly along his regular route until he came to a large fallen oak tree. The grand old oak tree had withstood the heavy winds for hundreds of years, but it had finally been brought down by last winter's strong gales. Percy decided to have a closer look at it.

Percy: I wonder what little creatures are living in the hollow of the tree now?

[Percy looks closely at it. Then climbs up on to the large tree trunk and walks along its length, looking into all the tree's little hiding places to see what he can find.]

Percy: My goodness! This tree seems so full of so many different living things. There are insects of all shapes and sizes! There's a bluebottle! There's a spider, spinning her web between the branches. And oh...there's a rabbit!
[Percy jumps as a large rabbit darts out from where it had been hiding, under one of the branches. He is so surprised he nearly falls off the tree.]

Percy: Silly rabbit! *[picking himself up]* I wouldn't have hurt you!
[He then lies down on his front, with his hands under his chin, to watch the wood beetles and ants scurrying to and fro.]

Narrator: Percy was fascinated by the wood beetles and the ants scurrying to and fro, and was amazed at how well the ants co-operated with each other in removing a dead insect. The squirrels, running along the branches, were also keeping an eye on him.

Percy: I'm hungry *[sitting up and reaching inside his pocket.]*
I wonder if I've got anything in here. Oh yes, that's good. I've got an apple.
[producing it from his pocket and starting to eat it].

Old Oak Tree: [clearing his throat, loudly] Ahem hum. Ahem hum.

[Percy jumps up and looks around].

Percy: Who's there! Who is it? Show yourself! [then to himself, more quietly] That's strange. I'm sure I heard someone.

Old Oak Tree: [booming voice] It was me. Look beneath your feet.

Narrator: As Percy looks down at his feet, the tree moves!

Percy: [frightened] Ahh! [jumping off the trunk and leaping across the clearing to hide behind another tree.] What's happening?

Old Oak Tree: It's only me. Don't be afraid. I can't harm you. And I love children.

Percy [looking out from behind the other tree]: But you're dead!
[a huge face appears at the top of the trunk].

Old Oak Tree: No, not yet. Every day I do get a little weaker, though.

Percy: What happened to you?

Old Oak Tree: I have stood here for many hundreds of years, and I was always able to stand against the force of the winds that battered at my branches [sighing]. But over the years, as I got older, my inside became hollow and that took away my strength and so each storm I found harder to withstand. The last one was so fierce that I was overcome and fell down.

Percy [feeling braver now and coming out to approach the tree.]
Oh, I am sorry to hear that. But isn't that a normal thing to happen to a tree, especially one that has stood for so long? Can I climb up on your trunk?

Old Oak Tree: Oh yes, please do. I have enjoyed many children climbing on me over the years. It's one of the great pleasures of being a tree!

Percy: You must have seen a lot of interesting people come and go. Have we changed much, over time?

Old Oak Tree: Children are much the same, except nowadays they don't sing so much as they used to. Children used to sing beautiful little songs and I would relax my branches and just enjoy their company. Children don't seem as happy now as they were in the old days. They are much noisier too. But I have so many tales that I could tell.

Percy: Oh, do tell me one! Please!

Old Oak Tree: Well, once upon a time, in the old days, the King of England used to ride near here and sometimes he came and sat under my branches to eat a picnic. For many years I've watched people out walking pass under my branches. The woods were not so dense as they are now. The woodsmen used to coppice the trees. At one time the king ordered a lot of the trees to be cut down to make ships. That made me nervous, I can tell you. But for some reason I was spared.

Percy: What will happen to you now? I mean to YOU? Your body will continue for a long time on the ground, that is, if nobody cuts you up for furniture or firewood. And already you are a comfort to the small insects and things that hide inside you. But where will YOU go?"

Old Oak Tree: Very soon I will move on to my next life. But until then, I will continue to enjoy the company of my little friends who live in me and around me. They talk to me and tell me what is happening to their families [his face creaks into a smile.].

[Percy looks at the tree thoughtfully.]

Narrator: As Percy looked at the gnarled old face of the tree, he knew that the tree had accepted that his time as a tree would soon be over, and that all the things he had seen over the years had been part of the lessons he had to learn, and part of the fun he had come to experience.

Percy: May I ask one more question before I leave?

Old Oak Tree: You may. I will answer if I can.

Percy: Have you any family of your own?

Old Oak Tree: Look all around the wood, not only at the oak trees of different ages nearby, but also many further afield. These trees grew from acorns carried by animals and children who picked them up to play with them before tossing them aside. Many of my acorns grew into trees miles from here. They send me messages from time to time, and I can feel when they are well or when anyone hurts them.

[Percy looks around at all the oak trees nearby, and they rustle their leaves at him as if in greeting. Percy waves goodbye to the tree, and sets off home.]

Narrator: As Percy walks back home, he feels so thrilled that he actually had a conversation with a tree. Of course, though, he didn't tell his mother and father. Neither did he tell his friends. Well, they probably wouldn't have believed him, would they? But after watching this play, if Percy came to tell you about his meeting with the tree, would you believe him? I hope so!

QUESTION:

How did you *feel when you heard, saw or acted in the drama?

* *fear, curiosity, great love, understanding, gratitude, appreciation, unity.*

2. DISCUSSION

Divide the class into groups to discuss:

What things do I need to be happy?

What things do parents, or older people, need to be happy?

What things do grandparents, or much older people, need to be happy?

3. CREATIVE WORK

The following activities can be linked to science studies and the needs and lives of wood-lice, worms, beetles, ants, etc.:

a) Build a home for mini-beasts (See RSPCA brochure)

Use a cut-down cereal box or shoebox or just a card base with a rim to build an area - use imagination as to what your pet mini-beast might enjoy.

When you have finished, select an outdoor area to site your 'home' and observe it to see if any real mini-beasts move in.

b) Making compost.

Observe decomposition of fruits, vegetables, etc.

Close the lesson: If the teacher wishes, the lesson can be closed by asking the children to form a circle and say, "Let us keep ourselves happy by valuing the life and the beauty of nature around us."