

OPENING UP COMMUNITY

Editor Fiona Moss

learning from religion

Primary RE



RE Today
Services
ISSN 1759-8990

WHAT CAN BUDDHISTS LEARN FROM THE WORLD AROUND THEM? WHAT CAN WE LEARN?

For the teacher

This unit focuses on some simple messages from the Buddha's teachings, known as the Dhamma or Dharma. Many Buddhist texts use vivid imagery, similes and metaphors to help people learn from the natural world. This unit takes some of these ideas and helps young children to think about, talk about and explore these ideas with their bodies.



The simple messages from Buddhism include:

- be kind
- have a calm mind
- let go of greedy thoughts
- get rid of angry thoughts and feelings
- speak kind words to others.

Using the pages

There are several ways to use the resources in this unit:

- **explore one page at a time**, following the instructions at the top of each page
- **explore one image at a time**, taking the image from page 3 and the corresponding instructions from pages 4–7
- do a **combination** of the two, selecting some images rather than using all eight.

You will need to photocopy, laminate and cut up several sets of the cards from pages 3–4, one for each group of children. All the instructions needed can be found on each page.

The following resources are available for subscribers to download from the RE Today website



- Learning from nature: image cards (page 3)
- Learning from nature: matching (page 4)
- Learning from nature: use your body (page 5)
- Learning from nature: lessons from Buddhism (page 6)
- Learning from nature: taking it further (page 7).

See: www.retoday.org.uk/supplements

What can children do as a result of this unit?

This article supports children working within the Early Learning goals outlined below and the pupil friendly 'I can' statements for level 1 and 2 describe what older or more able pupils may achieve through this work.

Early Learning goals

These activities help young children to

- develop respect for different beliefs
- use language to imagine and create roles and experiences
- use talk to organise, sequence and clarify thinking, ideas, feelings and events
- respond in a variety of ways to what they see, hear, smell, touch and feel.

Level 1

I can . . .

- **recognise** three things Buddhists learn from looking at the world around them
- **talk about** what I think is good about being kind and calm.

Level 2

I can . . .

- create two examples from nature that would show what Buddhists believe about being kind and calm
- talk about how we can use our bodies to learn about how to live.

A final creative activity

After engaging the children with the images, teaching and activities, use this creative activity to capture some of the children's learning.

Ask children to

- suggest some other things from nature and lessons we might learn from them. Some could link to the Buddhist teachings; some could be children's own ideas for how we should behave.
- **choose** two of these creatures or objects from nature for themselves.
 - one can be the kind of person they already are.
 - one can be the kind of person they would like to be.
- **create** a drawing or painting of the two creatures/objects they have chosen. Alternatively, **for writers**, a simple writing frame could help:

I am like a . . . because . . .

I want to be more like a . . . because . . .

A (e.g. stream) is (lively). I am/am not like this.

Learning from nature: image cards

All of these images draw on Buddhist scriptures.

Give groups of children a set of images each and talk with them about what they can see. Ask them to come up with a simple caption for each picture, then share the captions listed opposite.

(They may have better titles than these.)

1. Cool glass of water
2. Deep calm lake
3. Greedy fat pig
4. Silly monkey stuck on tar
5. Fragrant flower
6. Bowl of water
7. Hen sitting on her eggs
8. Bee taking nectar



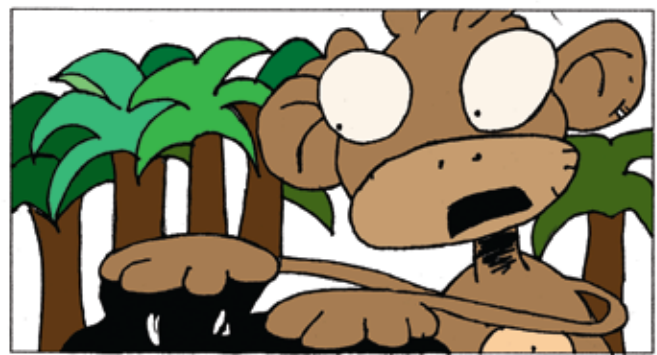
1



2



3



4



5



6

© i-Stock



7



8

Learning from nature: matching

Read one card at a time to the children and ask them which image the words connect with.

- **Ask** children to hold up the image from their set.
- **Ask** them why it matches.

There may be different links, so accept different answers, but the ones this unit is drawing out match the placing of the images in the grid on page 3.

When they have made a connection with an image, you might like to try the 'use your body' activity from page 5.

Refreshing!

Peaceful and still

Lazy and sleepy

**Foolish – caught in
a sticky trap**

Smells so lovely!

Still and clear

Being patient

**Taking nectar but
doing no harm**

Learning from nature: use your body!

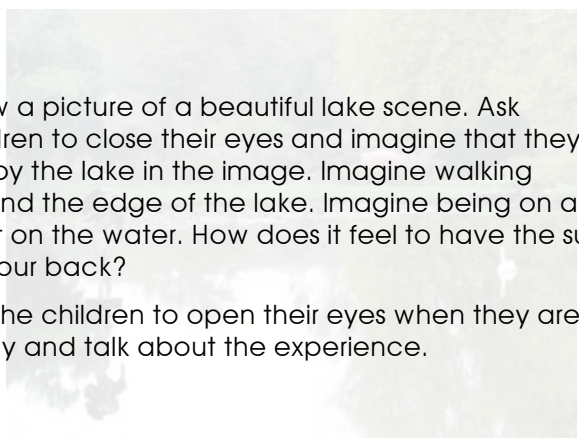
The Buddhist teachings ask followers to learn something from nature. These activities help to make the learning exciting and fun, making a link with children's own experiences. If they **act out** some of these ideas, they will be better able to understand the Buddhist teachings from page 6.



Act out this picture. Pretend it's a really, really hot day. How does it feel? How do you act?

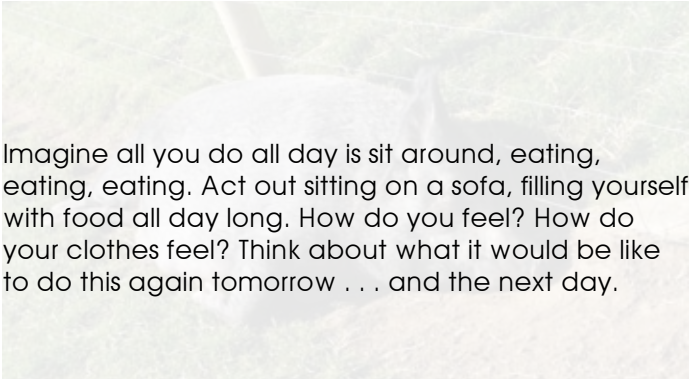
You're hot and really thirsty. Someone gives you a cool glass of water. The ice chinks against the glass. Drink it down. Feel it cold on your teeth . . . down your throat . . . into your stomach. Ahh!

Why does this feel good?



Show a picture of a beautiful lake scene. Ask children to close their eyes and imagine that they are by the lake in the image. Imagine walking around the edge of the lake. Imagine being on a boat on the water. How does it feel to have the sun on your back?

Ask the children to open their eyes when they are ready and talk about the experience.



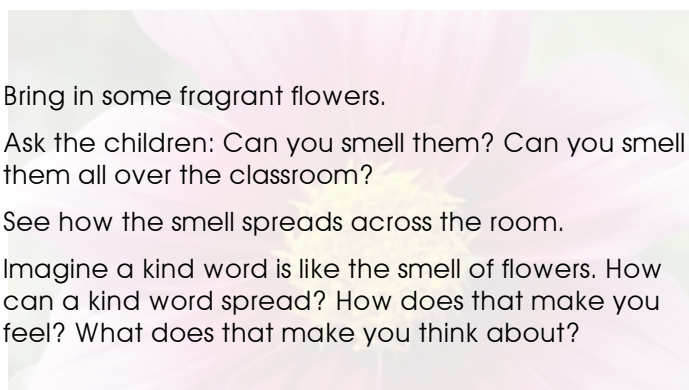
Imagine all you do all day is sit around, eating, eating, eating. Act out sitting on a sofa, filling yourself with food all day long. How do you feel? How do your clothes feel? Think about what it would be like to do this again tomorrow . . . and the next day.

Ask children to act out this story:

Now, a monkey sees some sticky tar and puts one paw into it. He thinks, 'That's ok, I can pull it out using my other paw.' So he puts his second paw in and it gets stuck too.

He thinks, 'That's ok, I can pull it out with my foot.' So he puts his foot in . . . and that gets stuck as well.

He thinks, 'I'll pull myself out using my other foot.' But that gets stuck. 'I'll use my mouth . . . ' Guess what happens? Stuck there, whimpering, he cannot escape when the hunter arrives . . .

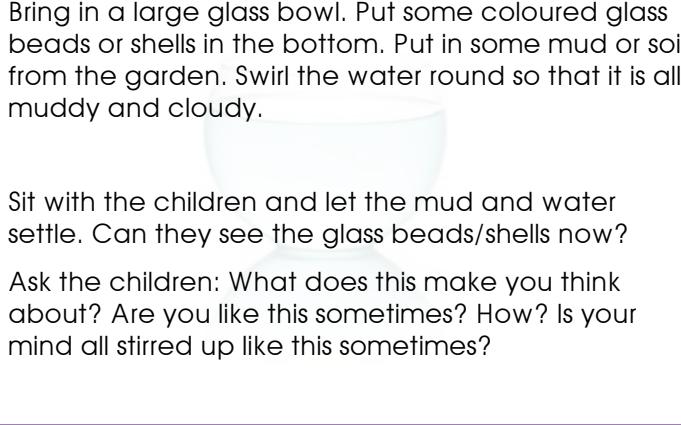


Bring in some fragrant flowers.

Ask the children: Can you smell them? Can you smell them all over the classroom?

See how the smell spreads across the room.

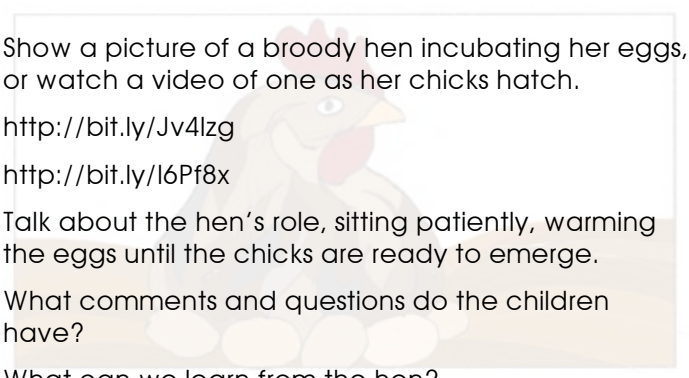
Imagine a kind word is like the smell of flowers. How can a kind word spread? How does that make you feel? What does that make you think about?



Bring in a large glass bowl. Put some coloured glass beads or shells in the bottom. Put in some mud or soil from the garden. Swirl the water round so that it is all muddy and cloudy.

Sit with the children and let the mud and water settle. Can they see the glass beads/shells now?

Ask the children: What does this make you think about? Are you like this sometimes? How? Is your mind all stirred up like this sometimes?



Show a picture of a broody hen incubating her eggs, or watch a video of one as her chicks hatch.

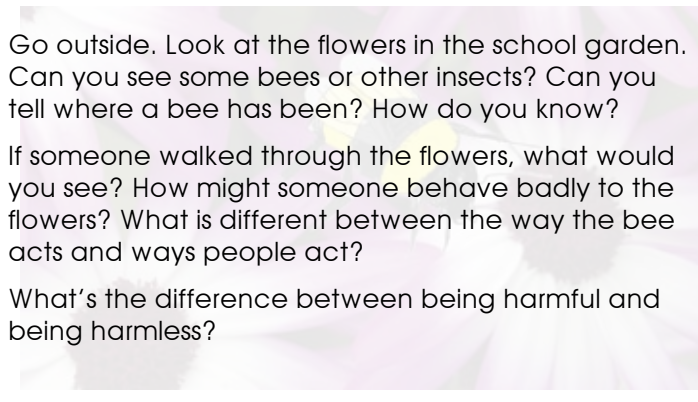
<http://bit.ly/Jv4lzg>

<http://bit.ly/l6Pf8x>

Talk about the hen's role, sitting patiently, warming the eggs until the chicks are ready to emerge.

What comments and questions do the children have?

What can we learn from the hen?



Go outside. Look at the flowers in the school garden. Can you see some bees or other insects? Can you tell where a bee has been? How do you know?

If someone walked through the flowers, what would you see? How might someone behave badly to the flowers? What is different between the way the bee acts and ways people act?

What's the difference between being harmful and being harmless?

Learning from nature: lessons from Buddhism

These sayings are simple versions of what Buddhist scriptures say.

You might read one out and ask children to say which image from nature, and which 'use your body' activity, connects with it. The boxes on page 7 give some extra information and ideas to help you discuss these teachings.

You should refresh other people by bringing love and kindness to everyone.

from Milindapanha 22.7

Listening to the words of the Buddha can bring you deep peace.

from Dhammapada 82

You cannot learn wise living if you are lazy and sleepy all the time.

from Dhammapada 325

Your mind is easily trapped by being greedy and angry. You should not get caught in these traps! Think clearly about what is happening to you!

from Samyutta Nikaya 47.7

A kind word is beautiful to others. It does good to other people.

from Dhammapada 51

Take time to be still and calm your thoughts. It will help you to think more clearly.

from Dhammapada 34

Be patient. Do the right thing. Good can come.

from Majjhima Nikaya 53

Do not harm any living beings.

from Dhammapada 49