



Lesson 6: **Childhood's End** *

Ritual: "Remembering the Dead"

Scene 8: "Be Prepared"

Scene 9: "Stampede"

Scene 10: "The King Is Dead"

Note: * signifies sensitive issues; requires 2 trusted adults in class

Objectives:

- (1) To use a simple **ritual** at the beginning of class to help students come to **reverent acknowledgment of the emotions** of the previous session and to adequately prepare for the Death of the Father scene in the DVD segments we watch today.
- (2) To acknowledge that the "death" of a parent or other caregiving adult also pertains to those children for whom **divorce, parental illness, depression, alcoholism, or any other impediment** has impacted the child's experience of the caregiver.
- (3) To reflect on how **Childhood's End** is a kind of death, too, as are all times of passage from one stage of life to the next.
- (4) To see "The King Is Dead" scene with new eyes: The scene is also symbolically about the hero's forced passage out of childhood before he is ready. However, the **suffering** any of us might feel when a **life passage** is forced upon us can prepare us for greatness as our lives unfold.

Materials:

- whatever **objects are needed for the ritual** (candles, stones), plus a table and cloth that can serve as an **altar**. (The table might have to be large, or be supplemented, if the kids bring in a lot of objects.) Maybe some incense, too. Get creative!
- **chime or bell**
- *The Lion King* DVD and DVD player. Before class, **put Disk 1 to into the player and cue it up to Scene 8, "Be Prepared," then pause it.**

- CD player with speakers.
- Extra copies of the **Human Circle of Life** diagram.
- **Audio CD** of **soft instrumental music** to play during the Death Commemoration Ritual.
- **Audio CD** of **another kind of soft instrumental music** to play during the journal writing.
- **Grab-bag** stuffed with cut-up **discussion questions** printed (with pictures) from the end of this lesson.
- **The lock box with the journals**, plus extras for any newcomers.
- **Lots of pens, colored markers, and colored pencils.**

Goals of Commemorating the Dead Ritual:

- (1) To help the youth come to **reverential acknowledgment of the difficult emotions** that they and their peers may have felt thus far in the curriculum — and are likely to continue to experience.
- (2) To adequately **prepare for the Death of the Father** in the movie segment they will watch today.
- (3) To enable any child who has **experienced the death of a parent or other caregiver** to silently commemorate or openly acknowledge and speak about such a terrible, and rare, trauma.
- (4) To instruct that the “death” of a parent or other caregiving adult also pertains to those children for whom **divorce, parental illness, depression, alcoholism, or any other impediment** has negatively affected their family experience — and thus that those children, too, can participate in the ritual by symbolically commemorating a “death.”
- (5) In order for **all children** to feel that they can participate in the ritual, it will be important to let them know that they can commemorate **the death of a pet, the death of a dear friend or sibling, or even the impending death of their Childhood Self**, the “Explorer in the Garden,” as they prepare for their passage into “Thespian at the Oasis.”

ACTIVITIES: Ritual; DVD watching; open discussion; silent reflection; journal-writing



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Pre-class preparation – by PHONE or EMAIL:

*[Send an email or leave a phone message for **any child who was absent from the previous lesson**, and thus who missed the instructions for what to bring this time.]*

For this coming Sunday's class, we will begin with a **simple ritual** to honor and acknowledge the deaths of **people or pets** important in our lives. We will do this before we begin watching the DVD. So if anyone wants to **bring in any sacred reminders**, including photographs, of the people or pets who died, remember to do that, so you can place it on the altar.

During the ritual, nobody *has* to say anything if they prefer to remain silent. **We will all sit in silence together**, while just those who *do* want to acknowledge the dead get a chance to go up to the altar and place an object of memory, or even say a name or something beyond that to honor the dead.

If you yourself have **not yet experienced death of a loved one in your life**, you can still fully participate in the ritual, by silently witnessing others who have.

As well, everyone in class will soon be experiencing a death of another kind: **the death of your "Explorer in the Garden" psychological self**, as you move into your "Thespian at the Oasis" stage of Life. That life passage happens to everybody. So you may wish to honor the loss of that childhood self by bringing to class **cherished reminders of your own most important childhood experiences**. (Small, symbolic objects might be better for this purpose than photographs.)

Also, because we will be using an **altar** for our ritual, if you have **any Lion King memorabilia** that you'd like to bring to decorate the altar or the whole room with before we begin the ritual, please do so.

So, to sum up: **Two things to remember** to bring with you next week if you wish:

- First, **small objects** to place on the altar to honor the loved ones in your life who have died and also other small objects to honor the aspects of your childhood life that were really important to you then but that you will probably be leaving behind (or have already left behind) in this life passage.
- Second, **Lion King mementos**, if you have any.

Classroom preparation:

- Have the **chime** or **bell** accessible.
- Prepare the **room and altar** for the Commemorating the Dead ritual. Choose either a center-front altar position, or (probably better) an altar in the center of the circle of chairs. The “altar” could include a small table for the candles, with a larger cloth spread on the floor around it to hold all the ritual objects and Lion King memorabilia.
- Cue up the soft, instrumental **audio music** you want to use during the death ritual, and have accessible the CD of music you will play during the journaling time.
- Cue up **Disk 1** of the DVD to **Scene 8**: “Be Prepared.” Cover monitor with cloth.
- Put the **Question Cards** into the **Grab-Bag**.
- Set out extra copies of the “**Human Circle of Life Diagram**” that was handed out last week.
- Put the **Lock Box** of **journals** onto a table; have **extra journals** available for newcomers.

Lesson flow:

1. Students introduce/place **their Lion King memorabilia (5 mins)**

2. **Ritual: "Remembering the Dead" (15 - 30 mins)**

Note: Let the ritual take as long as it needs to. You can eliminate the grab-bag discussion and the journal writing, without any loss. You can also eliminate Item number 6 below, where a "They Live in You" music video is suggested.

3. **DVD: Watch Scenes 8, 9, 10 (11 mins)**

4. **FAKE Grab-bag discussion**, with journaling **(5 - 15 mins)**

5. Silent, unguided **journal writing (use whatever time remains)**

Ritual Preparation Instructions for the Guide:

Choose a simple ritual format, along the lines of how Joys and Sorrows are handled in a church service. There might be a **chalice** and definitely an **altar table and cloth**. Candles are important, if you are allowed to have them in the classroom. If candles are to be lit by the children, or if stones are to be dropped into a bowl of water, make sure you have that all ready.

See if you can darken the room.

Basically, you need to have something symbolic for the children **to do** when they individually come to the altar to place a symbolic object or to speak about a death that they would like to commemorate.



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Introducing Lion King Memorabilia (5 mins)

GUIDE:

[After the kids are seated in circle, facing one another and the altar is entirely prepared, have them one-by-one speak about their Lion King memorabilia, while they are finding a place on or around the altar to put it.]

Ritual: Remembering the Dead (15 -30 mins)

Introducing the Ritual:

*[It will be important for the Guide to **extemporaneously** introduce what this Ritual is about, and how it will happen. The Guide however might want to make **use of the list of the key phrases** (in bold, below), in order to ensure nothing is forgotten.]*

- The ritual is entirely **voluntary**: **You can stay seated the whole time** during this ritual and never say anything, or you can place an object on the altar in **silence**, or you can also **speak a name** or say more about the death you are commemorating while you are up at the altar.
- You are invited to **come up to the altar in any order**: whenever you feel motivated and nobody else is already up there. There is no set sequence.
- The ritual will **continue** until I see that nobody else is going up to the altar, so everyone seems to be finished.
- Because all of you are making the **psychological transition** out of your childhood stage, all of you, potentially, have a death to commemorate: the death of your "**Explorer in the Garden**" self. If you want to **say anything**

about whether that “death” has already happened, or whether it hasn’t happened yet, feel free to say that too.

- **When you are standing at the altar**, it is **your turn to speak**, and all the rest of us will be **quiet**.
- Of course, **the big reason** why we are doing this ritual now is because today we will watch the **Death of Mufasa** scene — and for some here, that scene may call up some very **sad memories**. We want to honor those memories and that sadness and be sensitive to those situations. So, **anyone who has already in childhood experienced the great sadness of the death of someone in your family or of a pet** you loved very much is encouraged to commemorate the death of that loved one during this ritual.
- If you brought an **object** to signify that person or pet, you may place it on the altar during your turn. And, of course, you may **talk** about that loss if you wish, briefly, solemnly, while you are at the altar.
- **If you didn’t bring an object** at all, you are still invited to go up to the altar, where you can **light a candle** (or drop a stone), and either do that in silence or say something about who you are honoring.
- There are also probably some of you in this room who have experienced the loss of a parent or caregiver in a different way: maybe there was a **divorce** and one of your parents moved so far away that you rarely see them anymore. That, too, is a kind of loss, and you can acknowledge that loss if you wish.
- Or maybe your parent or caregiver has gotten very **ill, or disabled, or depressed, or busy** and simply can’t do the kinds of things with you that they used to do — and that, too, feels like a kind of death. Or maybe **alcohol or drugs** have gotten hold of them and they are no longer the person they used to be for you. So, **for whatever reason** any of you might be feeling the loss of an important adult in your life, you may wish to participate in this ritual to acknowledge that loss. Again, you don’t have to say anything about that person or loss if you don’t want to. You can just **bring to mind the memory of how your loved one used to be** and light a candle in silence.
- If after you already went up to the altar, you realize that you **forgot** to say something really, really important, **you can go up again, very briefly**.
- Because this is a **serious ritual**, please, **no laughing** and **no talking** from your seats at any time at all. That kind of response may be hurtful to others in the room.
- The **only time to talk** in this ritual is when you are at the altar — and even then, only if you wish to say something important to you there.

- There will be **soft music** playing during the ritual, and I will begin and end it with the sound of a **chime**.

- **After the ritual is over, please stay silent.** We will immediately begin to **watch The Lion King DVD**, so no talking. Just **move** to where you can see the screen.

- Okay, I think that's all I need to say. But **are there any questions or concerns or confusion** about these instructions or anything else about what will be happening next?

- Finally, MOST IMPORTANT: Know that there is **no exact right way** to do this ritual. It will be whatever it will be. So long as you are **respectful of yourself and others, you can't get it wrong!** And as a group together, we can't get it wrong!

Conduct the Ritual: begin with asking them to close eyes, follow their breath, then after a minute chime, and turn on music.

Date and Title a New Journal Page

[Invite the Youth to select a fresh page in their journal to date, and title it "Childhood's End." . . . The titles of the new scenes we will watch today: "Be Prepared", "Stampede", and "The King is Dead. . . . Also write down the title of what we just completed: "Ritual: Remembering the Dead"]

DVD Viewing: Scenes 8, 9, and 10 (11 mins)

[Scenes 8, 9, 10: Scene 8 begins at 26:07 and Scene 10 ends at 40:43. Press the Pause button at the end of Scene 10 which happens after Simba escapes the Hyenas and the Red color scene shifts to Blue with Scar in it.]

Fake Grab-Bag Discussion (only if there is time left)

(5 - 15 mins)

[Ask someone to **pass out the journals.**]

[**Secret note to guide:** This is a FAKE grab-bag discussion because the question cards are all WILDCARDS. By the second or third draw the kids will figure out that something is weird here. . . . Then you say:]

GUIDE:

"Well, things have changed, haven't they?! . . . We're living the Lion King a little bit right now. . . **Just like Simba, you are suddenly on your own** without any adult to guide your discussion.

"Here you are, all sitting in this room together, all on a kind of **Hero's Journey** yourselves. Yet each of you knows that you will ultimately **make this passage by yourself** — into a world in which YOU will demand a lot more independence — and the world will, in turn, demand a lot more RESPONSIBILITY of you. The two go together: freedom and responsibility.

"**So right now continue as a group, generating discussion on your own** and bringing up any questions or topics that **you** want to talk about.

"Besides our usual agreements for how we treat one another, **I request** just two things for your discussion:

"First, that whatever you discuss be somehow **related to what you have seen and done today.**

"Second, I request that you **stay in conversation as a group.** Little **side conversations** may erupt from time to time, but try to all come back into a single group discussion in a minute or so when that happens. I'll **ring a chime** if a side conversation seems to be going on too long.

"Finally, depending on how your discussion goes, **you'll either keep discussing right up to the closing song — or you'll suggest that discussion ends and the group moves into a time of silent journaling.** It's up to you."

Journaling (optional; if there is time) (remaining time)

GUIDE:

"Let us begin, as always, with **a minute of silence**. This time, I'm not going to make any suggestions. There will be complete silence, except for some background music I will put on now. . . . Remember to start by closing your eyes and breathing before you begin to write anything. . . . And if you run out of ideas or feelings or sketches to write down, simply close your eyes again and breathe — and see what comes up.

"And before you start, it's important for me to tell you that **for this one occasion only, I suggest that there be no closing song**. Simba is in a time of transition, after all, and next time we meet, there will be a new version of "The Circle of Life" song made and sung by youth who have recently made the passage to the Oasis themselves.

"So just **keep journaling** or resting or snoozing or stretching through the end of our time here. You might want to begin by **recording your experience at the "Remembering the Dead" Ritual**, including any objects you brought with you, and whether you chose to honor anyone in particular. Also anything that anyone else here did or said during the death ritual that really had an impact on you.

"You won't be hearing from me anymore today. You, like Simba, are on your own!"

[Start the background music, then end it when the time is up]



WILD CARD!



WILD CARD!



WILD CARD!



WILD CARD!