



Lesson 7: **Passage to the Oasis** *

Scene 9: "Stampede" (repeat)
 Scene 10: "The King Is Dead" (repeat)
 Scene 11: "Scar Takes Over"
 Scene 12: "Timon and Pumbaa"
 YouTube Video: "Circle of Life" Disney teens

8-Stage Human Circle of Life Diagram

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

Objectives:

1. To encourage the youth to reflect on their own lives and **consider what psychological changes in themselves may indicate the beginning or even fulfillment of this necessary life passage** — including the ways in which we, quite naturally, **sometimes resist** this "death" of our Explorer in the Garden psychological self.
2. To briefly introduce the **major identifying themes of the "Thespian at the Oasis" stage of life** (which will be more fully developed in Lesson 8).
3. To begin to look at *The Lion King* symbolically and to consider how various **art forms that use symbolism** add a whole new layer of richness to the experience of movies, books, poetry, and our own lives, and how we can interpret our own lives as a kind of mythic **"Hero's Journey."**
4. To help the youth **recognize our natural tendency to blame ourselves** when a traumatic event occurs in our family that, in reality, is not our fault; e.g., death, divorce, alcoholism. Thus, to help "free" any among them who may still be carrying such judgments.

Materials:

- **chime** or **bell**
- *The Lion King* DVD and DVD player. Before class, **put Disk 1** into the player and cue it up to **Scene 9**, "Stampede," then pause it.

- **Photocopies of Human Circle of Life Diagram** (one for each child)
Note: This diagram was first used in Lesson 4, but make sure you have fresh copies.
- **YouTube of "Circle of Life New Version"** performed by Teen Stars:
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qdP79HLBUjQ>
(Hilary Duff "Circle of Life" Disney's Circle of Stars)
- **The lock box with the journals**, plus extras for any newcomers.
- **Lots of pens, colored markers and colored pencils.**

ACTIVITIES: DVD watching; open discussion; guided meditation; journal-writing; stretching; singing



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Classroom preparation:

- Before class, cue up **Disk 1** of the DVD to **Scene 9**: "Stampede." Cover monitor with cloth.
- Set out extra copies of the "**Human Circle of Life Diagram**" that was handed out three weeks ago.
- Put the **Lock Box** of **journals** onto a table; have **extra journals** available for newcomers, and lots of pens and colorful markers
- Have the **chime** or **bell** accessible.
- Have accessible the **You-Tube (disk or computer online)** of "(Hilary Duff "Circle of Life" Disney's Circle of Stars)
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qdP79HLBUjQ>

Lesson flow:

1. Recollections from previous week **(5 mins)**
2. **DVD**: Rewatch **Scenes 9 and 10** from last week and continue on through **Scenes 11 and 12 (14 mins)**
3. **Discussion: Oasis (5 mins)**
5. **Guided meditation** with **journaling** (in 3 parts) **(30 mins)**
6. **YouTube** video of the "**New Circle of Life Song**" **(5 mins)**



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GUIDE:

*[Recruit someone who has not been very active in class to pass out **the journals to everyone.**]*

Recollections from prior week (5 mins)

GUIDE:

"Last week, we watched the part of *The Lion King* movie where **Simba's father, Mufasa, dies**. Right before that we participated in (or witnessed) a solemn **ritual** in which we **honored by SYMBOL and by our SILENCE or our WORDS any people or pets who were important to us, but who died**—or who in some way were significantly lost to us. We also had a chance to acknowledge that **moving out of childhood into early adolescence is a kind of death** too, because our interests and a lot of what goes on inside our minds changes significantly around this time.

Q: "In light of all that, **would any of you like to share** how what we did last Sunday had an effect on what you thought or felt or did during the week — including any **new insights** you may have had that you want to share with the rest of us."

[Let the discussion continue, so long as it is lively and on point.]

Date and Title a New Journal Page

[Invite the Youth to select a fresh page in their journal to date, and title it "Passage to the Oasis." . . . You might also want to write down the titles of the new scenes we will watch today: "Hakuna Matata" and "Scar in Command"]

DVD Viewing: Scenes 9, 10, 11, 12 (14 mins)

Scene 9, "Stampede," starts at 30:56 into the movie. Continue on through the end of Scene 12, "Timon and Pumbaa." Press the PAUSE to end the DVD viewing right after Timon says "Hakuna matata" for the first time. (Timon is responding to Simba, who says, "That's not what I was taught." This dialogue ends at 44:45 into the movie.) If the song starts, you have gone too far, so stop the movie right away.

Brief discussion: The Oasis (5 mins)

GUIDE:

"Let's take another look again at the **DIAGRAM** we passed out a few weeks ago that shows one model of the **psychological stages of life**.

[Recruit a volunteer to pass out the copies of the diagram.]

"This time, feel free to write on it, and at the end of class, please fold it and put it into your journal, so that you can refer to it again.

"According to this diagram, all of you long ago passed through Stage 1, which the diagram calls "**Innocent in the Nest.**" The **psychological** stage that many of you are probably still in right now, at least to some degree, is, as we learned before, "**Explorer in the Garden.**" Explorer in the Garden is the stage that **Simba** passed out of when his father died and he ran away from home. Again, although this life passage happens around the time of puberty, it is an entirely separate event, happening on its own time. *It is a **psychological** life passage, not a physical one.* And it can be a gradual process, or you yourself might recognize it as happening to you rather abruptly.

"For Simba, of course, the life passage happens very **abruptly**. And he certainly didn't choose it. The death of his father forced this passage on him.

Q: The stage you are passing into is called, on the **diagram**, what?

["Thespian at the Oasis."]

Q: Do any of you remember our discussion a few weeks ago, as to **why this stage is called Thespian at the Oasis?** What is a thespian? What is an oasis?

[Background: "Thespian" is an actor, and "oasis" is a gathering spot, especially in the desert, where one finds sustenance and community.]

Q: Do any of you see a connection between the NAME for this new life stage and the movie segment we just watched?

*[Encourage the kids to arrive at these insights on their own: In the movie, Simba ran away from home and is in a desert dying. Pumbaa and Timon rescue Simba by carrying him to an actual desert oasis and splashing water onto him. The dictionary **defines oasis** as:*

- 1. fertile ground in a desert where the level of underground **water** rises to or near ground level, where plants grow and travelers can replenish water supplies*
- 2. a place or period **that gives relief from a troubling** or chaotic situation*

NOTE TO GUIDE: Where the diagram shows, "Peer group, sex, and society" the word "sex" doesn't mean the youth start having sex. It means that it is natural for them to start having a fascination with learning and thinking about the sexual and romantic aspects of life.

GUIDE: "We'll spend **more time with the diagram next week**, as Simba creates a new personality for himself and a new way of life as a Thespian at the Oasis. Now, let's move into the journaling phase of our time together."

[Make sure everyone has their journal, and whatever pens or markers they want to use for writing or drawing.]

Guided Meditation and Journaling 1: Death of the Father as Mythic Symbol (10 mins)

GUIDE:

"Let's begin, as always, with **a minute of silence**. Then I'll continue with a **Guided Meditation** that offers some background information. After that, I'll offer **some questions about your own life** for you to think about and possibly for you to write or draw about in your journals. As always, some of

my questions might spark memories and feelings in you; some of them might not. **Ignore the ones that aren't helpful to you** and just write or draw about what feels compelling for you, without effort or forcing yourself to do anything. Be **gentle with yourself**, and just see what ideas and images come."

So settle into a comfortable position . . . close your eyes . . . and start to breathe slowly and deeply. Just focus on your breathing. . . in . . . and out

[Ring chime and wait in silence for 1 minute, then say, softly:]

"One of the psychological changes that happens during the passage into the Oasis stage of life is that you will begin to **grow toward an adult capacity to understand the world of symbol and myth**. In childhood, everything is pretty much as it is — straightforward. But as a Thespian, you can begin to look at art forms like **movies** and **poetry** and **literature** and **music** and begin to see them in new ways: as containing symbols that help us think and feel **mythically** about life in general and particularly about our own lives.

"Relating to significant movies and music and other art forms in this way, symbolically, can help you **reflect on your own life — past and future — as a kind of Hero's Journey**. You, too, just by being human and going through life passages, will lead a mythic life. And the central character, **the hero of your own life adventure** is, of course, you. Whether you are a girl or a boy, you are Simba and you are Nala.

"Making an effort to **interpret your own life mythically** and in **empowering** ways is one path for leading a **spiritual** life. Thinking mythically about our lives connects us with something greater than ourselves. It encourages us to **look for role models** — role models who are alive today, or role models we've learned about from the past, or role models in **books** and **movies**. These role models can help us envision **the kind of people** we ourselves want to become and how to **participate** in the world in ways that we ourselves desire and that seem **authentic** to who we uniquely are. Role models from movies and books, like **Simba** and like **Harry Potter** and **Luke Skywalker**, can also help us find the **strength** and **resolve** to move through the **dark and confusing** times of our lives, as we watch their own struggles, confusion, and fears. We thus learn that **dark times** happen to all of us — must happen to all of us — if we are to pass from one stage of life to the next.

"Thinking mythically can thereby help us to come through very **difficult circumstances** that might otherwise plunge us into darkness and hopelessness.

No life is without challenges — sometimes very intense challenges, tragedies, and setbacks. By thinking mythically when a difficulty comes our way, we can **remember that this challenge does not mean the end of the world**. In fact, we will have faith — even if we cannot envision it in the moment — that somehow or other we will emerge from that difficulty **stronger, more compassionate, wiser, more determined**, or in some other way **better prepared** to shape our futures in ways that will make our lives **meaningful, fulfilling, and helpful** to the world around us.

“So let’s now consider how a **key mythic element in *The Lion King*** movie might help us reflect on our own lives.

“Remember that we’ve already begun to deal with one mythic symbol *In the Lion King*. The symbol is that of **Puumba carrying Simba to a real oasis** to revive him. Now we can also interpret that action as symbolic of Simba making the difficult Life Passage from his “Explorer in the Garden” childhood to his “Thespian at the Oasis” adolescence — and that it was his peer group, not his family, who “saved” him from disaster.

“Another strong mythic element in the movie pertains to the theme of **“Death of the Father.”**

“Thankfully, **very few of us have to suffer** the actual death of a parent during our childhood. It does happen, of course. But the “death of the father” scene in the movie also **applies to all of us** because it symbolizes a **shift** from a **primary concern** with our parents and other family members to a primary concern with our **peer group**. This shift doesn’t mean we **entirely ignore** our families while we are at the Oasis. Nevertheless our relationship with family members does shift.

“Similarly, when **Simba** is lying in the **desert dying**, with **vultures** swooping down on him, this **symbolizes “the death of childhood.”** And, again, that is something we all experience.

“So, I invite you now to **think about your own lives and to ponder** these questions about the ways in which you are making the shift from childhood to adolescence. If something comes to mind, feel free to open your eyes and begin **journaling**. Or else you can just keep your eyes closed and relax and let the ideas and memories and other images come to your mind.

Q: First, Can you think of examples of how you may already be pulling away from having your family be your primary focus,

your “center of gravity”? For example, did you enjoy particular family activities in the past, but you don’t enjoy them quite so much any longer? Maybe you’ve even stopped doing them? . . .

Q: Have you **set aside any playthings or toys** from childhood that used to be important to you? Or have those toys already been passed on to someone younger? Or are they sitting unused in your closet or on your shelf?

Q: Are you starting to **think or say harsh things** to or about your parents sometimes? . . .

Q: Do you like to **close the door of your room** more often than you used to and just keep your family out? . . .

Q: Do you have **less to say** at mealtimes with your family?

“Those are plenty of questions to think about. So go ahead **and journal in silence for another few minutes**, or just sit quietly and continue to reflect on how this particular life passage is showing up in your life — and that it is all right on schedule!”

[Pause long enough to give the youth a chance to journal. When several start fidgeting, continue with the next Journaling guidance. Make sure you leave no less than 15 minutes for the rest of this lesson.]

*[**Ring chime** to conclude this Journaling 1:]*

Guided Meditation and Journaling 2: Resistance to Leaving Childhood (10 mins)

GUIDE:

“You can continue journaling on that first topic after class if you wish, or by taking your journal home with you. But for now, please sit back once again and listen, as here is another topic for journaling I’d like to introduce this morning. So I invite you to **close your eyes and take some deep breaths**, as we explore another aspect of this very important and, sometimes challenging, life passage . . .

*[**Ring chime** and pause]*

“**Simba had no choice.** His father died and so his life shifted for him — whether he had run away from home or not. **Nala’s life** certainly shifted at

that time too: She didn't leave home, but home changed drastically because she lost not only Mufasa but also her best friend.

"For the rest of us, **this shift out of childhood and into the Thespian at the Oasis stage of life usually is not forced upon us from the outside.** Rather, it happens because of changes going on **inside** of us.

"And so, for many of us, there is an extended time in which we have one foot in the **Explorer in the Garden** stage and one foot in the **Thespian at the Oasis** stage. This can be a very **confusing** time — both to ourselves and to our families.

"Not surprisingly, some of us may **RESIST leaving the wonders and relative calm** of our childhood phase of life. We may resist becoming adolescents. This resistance is **perfectly normal**. For example, here is how the **woman who created this curriculum** writes about her own resistance to making this life passage. She writes:

When I was 13 years old I was still very much resisting leaving behind my childhood self. I loved my role in the family and my relationship with my parents, especially my dad. I was my dad's outdoor helper. I would help him mow the lawn throughout the summer. I would help him by pushing on one handle of the mower while he pushed on the other, the two of us walking together for the three hours it took to mow the huge yard. In the late autumn, I would climb up on the roof and sit up there, using a gloved hand to remove leaves from the gutter, while my dad stood below with the ladder. I really liked doing all that work with my dad. It made me feel important, and I knew he was proud of me. Overall, I was not at all looking forward to becoming like my older sister, who was already a teenager and was beginning to cause problems at home.

I had recently changed however in one way. On my own, I had decided to give away my stuffed animals. When I was much younger I would line them all up around the edge of my bed at night to guard against monsters from the floor who might otherwise get to me while I slept. But now, at age 13, I decided to give away all of them — all except one. The one I planned to keep was the very first stuffed animal that I remember I was given as a kid. It was a soft bunny rabbit, and it was rather ragged now that I was 13. But it was still my favorite.

I made a secret vow to myself that so long as I held onto that one favorite stuffed animal and kept it in bed with me, I wouldn't have to grow up."

That's the **end** of the woman's story. So, here are questions for you all to consider. As always, when a thought or image comes to mind that you want to write about or draw, go ahead and open your eyes and begin journaling. Here are the questions:

Q: In what ways did you (or are you still) **resisting** this life passage? Again, it is perfectly normal for some of us to resist it. So see if any experiences or images come to mind that demonstrate some resistance on your part. . . .

Q: In what ways might you have **a foot in both worlds**, so to speak. That is, in what ways are you still living in your **Explorer in the Garden** stage of life? And in what ways have you already made the psychological shift to **Thespian at the Oasis**? Again, the shift happens because your "Center of Gravity" moves away from a primary focus on your **family** and the **natural world**. Instead your primary concern becomes your **peer group** and sometimes your social life. For example, adolescents tend to become really concerned about how they look to others at school — including **clothes** and **hair style**. . . .

Q: This shift to the Oasis stage of life may also generate the **first stirrings of romantic interest** in you. You might develop a crush on someone for the first time. You may also have a growing interest in learning what romance is all about, and you may have begun to get really curious about the physical aspects of sex. . . .

"I'll stop talking now. Go ahead and **journal** for another few minutes, or just sit quietly and continue to reflect on these questions, or on the larger issue of how to look at your life experiences as part of a mythic journey.

*[Pause long enough to give the youth a chance to journal. When several start fidgeting, continue with the next Journaling guidance. **If the kids are really into journaling on this, let it continue until 5 minutes is left in the class, then SKIP the Journaling 3 section and move right to the closing music video.**]*

*[**Ring chime** to conclude this Journaling 2:]*

Guided Meditation and Journaling 3: The Naturalness of Self-Blame (10 mins)

GUIDE:

"Keep journaling, if you wish, while I present one more aspect of *The Lion King* for you to think about symbolically. For those who aren't journaling,

please close your eyes again, take a deep breath, and just listen and reflect
...

"Part of the reason that so many adults and teens, as well as kids, love watching *The Lion King* is that this movie **really does help us understand our own lives**, and even to look ahead to the full span of our lives as an amazing mythic journey.

In the scenes we watched today, for example, think about **how Simba blamed himself** for his father's death. He really did think that his father's death was his fault. He felt so **ashamed** about it that he ran away from home — and he never wanted to tell his new friends what had actually happened and why he had made himself into an outcast.

"As children, we naturally feel we are **at the center of the universe**. And that has a good side and a bad side to it. On the **good side**, it means we can have **special experiences in nature**, sometimes mystical. For example, we may feel like a **sudden breeze** is the Earth or God trying to talk to us, or that a **butterfly** who lands on a flower right next to us is landing there in order to have some shared experience with us. That's all **wonderful**, and some of those experiences we will happily **remember** for the rest of our lives. They become part of our **mythic story**.

"On the other hand, if you feel like you are the center of the universe, then **when something bad happens**, you may think it happened **because of you**, too. For example, if somebody you love gets very ill, or has an accident, or if your parents divorce, then it is really easy for any of us, when we are children, to start believing that **we are in some way responsible** for that bad event.

"When we watch *The Lion King* movie, we, of course, know that **Simba was not responsible** for his father's death. But we have a difficult time seeing reality that way **when something bad happens in our own lives**. Some of us will **naturally blame ourselves**.

"For example, listen to how the woman who created this curriculum blamed herself for a **tragedy** in her family when she was 13. She writes:

Less than a year after I vowed that so long as I kept my bunny rabbit I could remain a child, I ended up **voluntarily giving it up**. One Sunday morning while my sister and I were at church, **our father died suddenly of a heart attack** while he was working in the yard. It was the most horrible

experience for me. And his **funeral** was actually on my 14th birthday. I decided that in order to remain close to my dad, I needed to give him something important. So I put my **bunny rabbit into the coffin**, resting on his chest. I did that even though I knew that action meant that I would have to grow up.

Weeks after his death I was still thinking about it all the time, and I came up with the idea that **maybe God made him die** in order to force me to grow up. **That made me feel even worse.** Fortunately, even though I still believed that, I also started to think that maybe **by suffering** like this, I would end up doing something really important in my life because of it. I had read about **famous people who had difficult lives in childhood** in one way or another, but who overcame those problems and did something important in the world. I thought that **maybe now I could become like them.** And then my father would be very proud of me again.

[Pause before you continue speaking.]

"You know, reading that story, I start to think how the woman who created this curriculum might not have been motivated to do it had she not so completely identified with Simba's predicament in the movie. She was born almost 30 years before *The Lion King* movie was made, but I bet that watching the movie helped her understand her own life better — and in a mythic way.

"So as we finish off this last section of reflection time and journaling, see if anything comes to your own mind with these questions:

Q: Can you remember **an experience in your own life** when you **blamed yourself** for something bad that happened, but which you now can see **really wasn't your fault**? And even if you did, in some way, contribute to something bad happening, can you see that **you were only a kid** back then? Just like Simba, you could not have anticipated that your innocent actions could have caused something really harmful. . . .

[Pause for a minute.]

Q: Everyone makes **mistakes** and **suffers** in some way during childhood. Times of suffering will continue to pop up on occasion during the rest of your life. That is simply the way life is. So here is the question: **Can you imagine how the ways you have already suffered in your life might prepare you to bring forth something important**, something that could be a real service to the world? Let

your imagination run on this. Nobody can predict the future, of course. But by imagining something good to come from suffering, you can also build a **mythic relationship** to your life.

"I'll stop talking now. Go ahead and continue to journal for a few more minutes, if you are inspired to do so. The rest of you, either continue to sit and reflect or **get up quietly and stretch**, being respectful of those who prefer to keep thinking or writing. We will close with a 5-minute MUSIC VIDEO of a new version of the "Circle of Life" song — so you've got ____ more minutes to journal or just walk around and stretch.

*[Leave enough time (5 minutes) for the final MUSIC VIDEO. **Ring the chime to end the journaling time.**]*

Closing Song: new version of the "Circle of Life" song performed on YouTube by teens (5 mins)

Play YouTube Music Video: "Circle of Life" song: Teen Stars

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gdP79HLBUjQ>

(Hilary Duff "Circle of Life" Disney's Circle of Stars)