



JOURNEY IN... YEAR TWO ENDINGS BODY

This lesson's Big Ideas:

- Death is an inevitable reality in our lives. We will all die someday. Everyone we love will die someday.
- If we face this knowledge with courage and grace, death can become a teacher. Death's inevitability has the potential to make our lives more meaningful.

Lesson Materials:

- Mandala coloring pages, mailed to children, and something to color with.
- One teacher should have the video of monks making a sand mandala open in a browser tab and ready to share.
- One teacher should have this document open and ready to share pages 4-5.
- Optional: one teacher can open the link to a PocketYoga.com pose on their screen to share, perhaps choosing another pose or two.

TEACHER REFLECTION AND PREPARATION

🕒 Ahead of time

The reality of death has become a definite part of my life; my life has, so to speak, been extended by death, by my looking death in the eye and accepting it, by accepting destruction as a part of life and no longer wasting my energies on fear of death or the refusal to acknowledge its inevitability. It sounds paradoxical: by excluding death from our life, we cannot live a full life, and by admitting death into our life we enlarge and enrich it.
-Etty Hillesum

"Trisha's grandma used to say that the stars were holes in the sky. They were the light of heaven coming from the other side. And she used to say that someday she would be on the other side, where the light comes from. One evening they lay on the grass together and counted the lights from heaven. 'You know,' her grandma said, 'all of us will go there someday. Hang on to the grass, or you'll lift right off the ground, and there you'll be!' They laughed, and both hung on to the grass. But it was not long after that night that her grandma must have let go of the grass, because she went to where the lights were, on the other side. And not long after that, Trisha's grandpa let go of the grass, too."
- Patricia Polacco, from *Thank You, Mr. Falker*

And I will show that there is no imperfection in the present, and
can be none in the future,
And I will show that whatever happens to anybody, it may be turn'd
to beautiful results,
And I will show that nothing can happen more beautiful than death,
And I will thread a thread through my poems that time and events
are compact,
And that all the things of the universe are perfect miracles, each
as profound as any.
- Walt Whitman, *Starting from Paumanok*

BEFORE CLASS BEGINS

As children come into the breakout group, ask if they have supplies for class. Parents were asked to set aside printed mandala coloring sheets that were mailed to kids a couple of months ago. They also need something to color with (markers, crayons, or colored pencils). If the kids don't have these things, ask them to get them.

CHECK-IN

🕒 5-10 minutes

Allow one of the teachers to lead the group in a name game, an icebreaker, a get-to-know-you questions, or a simple 'How are things?' moment. Spend more time if the group seems eager to connect with each other. Light the chalice and say:

“We light this chalice as a symbol of our faith, the light of truth, and the warmth of love.”

COVENANT

🕒 3 minutes

Review the discussion of how the group wants to be together. Update the notes, if necessary. Save the covenant for future classes.

- Share this document on your screen, if you can.

PRIMARY ACTIVITY ONE IN THE BUDDHIST TRADITION: SAND MANDALAS

🕒 15-20 minutes

Creating sand mandalas is a Tibetan Buddhist tradition and a very complicated and beautiful art form. In the Tibetan language, this art is called *dul-tson-kyil-khor*, literally “mandala of colored powders.” Show the children the photos of mandalas (on page 4-5 of this document) and ask about the colors, patterns and images.

Does sand seem like a permanent medium to create art? It isn't; that's what makes mandalas sacred creations. In fact, Buddhist monks use mandalas to help them think about death and impermanence. Monks spend many hours creating beautiful patterns in sand and then, with chants and prayers that remind them that nothing lasts forever, they destroy it very purposefully. The monks sweep the sand together and it turns grey. They usually put some of the sand into tiny pouches or bottles for people to take with them; the rest is poured into a nearby river or lake to go out to the world.

Do any children in Yellow and Green group remember making these in the Body room three years ago? Our medium then was colored sand and we used funnels and sticks as tools to place the sand where we wanted it. Today will be different, but we're talking about the same ideas. We're going to watch a video (or two) of monks creating sand mandalas. At the end of the first video you see the destruction and packing into pouches in detail. The second video has more detail of close up design work and is longer, also has music with singing and shows part of a ceremony between the creation and destruction.

[Monks from the Drepung Loseling Monestary at the University of Massachusetts in April, 2018](#) (runs 1:37)

[Monks closer up in detail](#) (scroll to the middle of page for video and make it full screen; runs 3:05)

PRIMARY ACTIVITY TWO

COLORING MANDALAS TOGETHER

🕒 10-15 minutes

Now the children can turn to their mandala coloring sheets. Do they see the patterns differently now that they know what they refer to? Tell the children that they can begin coloring their own mandalas. Ask questions and encourage discussion as they work.

Questions for discussion:

- What did you think about as you watched the monks create their mandala?
- Does it seem like a waste of time doing for the monks to work so hard, knowing that they're just going to destroy it?
- How is life like a sand mandala?
- How is death like a sand mandala?
- Do you feel sad or happy right now? A different feeling?
- Buddhist monks don't feel sad or scared about death. Why do you think that is?
- How does the idea that death is something that's coming and we can't avoid it make you feel?
- Could we destroy our own mandalas after we color them to see how that feels?

If we were doing this together, as the monks in the video did, we would have to move very slowly and breathe very carefully. Our bodies might get stiff from crouching and holding our arms in one position for a long time. We would pause and take a moment every few minutes to invite careful standing up and stretching. Here is a link to [PocketYoga.com](https://pocketyoga.com) that shows a very simple pose that kids can try. Scroll down to see many links to “previous” and “next” poses. You can intermittently choose one and ask the kids to try the pose, sharing the image on your screen, if you'd like. [Pocket Yoga mountain pose](https://pocketyoga.com)

CLOSING AND LEAVE-TAKING

🕒 3 minutes

Share this page on one teacher's screen. Join hands in a circle (by having everyone hold their hands up at the edge of the view of their camera) or ask everyone to assume a comfortable, meditative position. Read these words from Mary Oliver to the children. Teach or remind them that “mortal” means “going to die.”

To live in this world
 you must be able
 to do three things:
 to love what is mortal;
 to hold it
 against your bones knowing
 your own life depends on it;
 and when it comes time to let it go,
 to let it go.

Unlight the chalice, saying: “though we extinguish the light of the chalice here, we know that the light of truth and the warmth of love go with us in our hearts.”



