



JOURNEY IN... YEAR TWO ENDINGS MUSIC

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

- One teacher should have this document open to page 5 to share the lyrics for the hymn "The Lone Wild Bird."
- One teacher should have two videos of music ("The Lone Wild Bird" and Mozart's *Requiem Mass* open in a browser, cued up, and ready to share screen and sound with the class.

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*

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.

SINGING TOGETHER

THE LONE WILD BIRD

🕒 10-15 minutes

In our church, when someone dies, we hold a memorial service for that person to celebrate their life and to feel the sadness that comes with their death. One of the songs that is requested most frequently as part of a memorial service is the hymn, “The Lone Wild Bird” (15).

This video shows the lyrics as you hear the hymn being sung (note: the video shows a Presbyterian hymnal, so don’t worry that you see a different number at the top). Play the video and have everyone listen. Then play it again, once or twice, and have everyone sing along. You can decide whether to try having some or all microphones on; the larger the group, the more likely that there will be lag for one or several people and the voices may sound garbled. If it doesn’t work, just turn off mics or have a volunteer join in out loud. If a teacher can play this on the piano, you can display the lyrics on page 5 of this document.

[The Lone Wild Bird](#) (run time 1:34)

Wondering Questions:

- I wonder: why do lots of people ask to sing this at the memorial service for a loved one?
- I wonder: how is the image of “the lone wild bird in lofty flight” related to death and dying?
- In the last few lines, the word “rest” is repeated. I wonder: how is death like rest? I wonder: how is death different from resting?
- Would you pick this song for a memorial service? What are some other songs that feel right to sing when someone has died?

PRIMARY ACTIVITY: MOZART'S REQUIEM MASS

🕒 20 minutes

We will use the emotionally charged movements of Mozart's Requiem to explore Kübler-Ross' five stages of grief, which are often experienced by both people facing their own deaths and those who mourn them.

On Kübler-Ross:

Death makes us feel all kinds of feelings. We know that when people have to face their own deaths, they usually feel the same five feelings in a row, often in the order below but sometimes not, no matter who they are. Dr. Elizabeth Kübler-Ross formulated the most commonly used conceptual framework around the stages of death and dying. These stages are experienced both by the person who is dying and those who witness and grieve the death. Here is a basic overview of the stages. Share this explanation with the class before listening to the music.

First stage: Denial — The person pretends that death is not really going to happen. Instead they act happy and talk of their being cured or saved from dying.

- What instruments sound happy and cheerful? What tempo would cheerful music have?

Second stage: Anger — The person gets very angry—maybe at their illness, and maybe at their doctors. Sometimes they even feel angry at their family, even if they don't know why. Many people feel angry at God.

- What instruments can sound angry? What tempo would angry music have?

Third stage: Bargaining — The person feels scared and they sometimes think that they can make a deal with the universe, God or life to avoid dying. They think about promises or changes they should make as a trade to live rather than die.

- What instruments can sound scared or nervous? What tempo would nervous music have?

Fourth stage: Depression — The person feels very depressed. Sadness, and really grief, is the feeling we think of most when we think of dying. The person may not want to talk or be with people, even people they love.

- What instruments can sound really, really sad, like they are grieving? What tempo would depressed music be?

Fifth stage: Acceptance — After feeling all the other feelings, most people who are very near dying feel calm about death. There comes a point when many people feel a relaxed acceptance and readiness.

- What instruments can sound calm? What tempo would calm music be?

On Mozart's Requiem Mass:

Mozart wrote this long piece of music to be sung in church at funerals—church services for those who have died. Sadly, Mozart died before he even got a chance to finish it. That's how death is sometimes — it comes when we don't expect it and it interrupts our plans for living. Someone else had to write parts of this music to finish it after Mozart died.

The Requiem comes in “movements:” separate sections that have different tempos and moods. Let's listen to some movements and talk about them. You'll hear instruments and voices. Funeral music helps people to experience all the feelings and emotions that come with death.

We'll focus on the movements listed below. You can listen to some of each and then pause to ask questions. The video's progress bar is divided into chunks that will help you navigate from movement to movement. The start time for each section is noted next to its name below. The description of the video contains links to each section, but using them is likely to trigger more ads. You might test this theory or cue up each section in a separate browser tab ahead of time. [Mozart's Requiem Mass](#)

- Dies Irae 8:35
- Tuba Mirum 10:17
- Recordare 16:18
- Confutatis 21:53
- Lacrimosa 24:18
- Sanctus 36:55
- Lux Aeterna 47:43

Wondering Together

- I wonder: which feeling seems to come out in this movement? Can you match the tone and key and mood to one of the five stages of dying? Which feeling is it most like?
- Can you imagine why someone might feel that way about death?
- I wonder: what do you think they are saying?
- I wonder: which movements that we listened to feel most like how you feel when you think about death?

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."

THE LONE WILD BIRD (HYMN #15)

The lone, wild bird in lofty flight
Is still with thee, nor leaves thy sight.
And I am thine! I rest in thee!
Great spirit come and rest in me.

The ends of earth are in thy hand,
The sea's dark deep and far-off land.
And I am thine! I rest in thee!
Great spirit come and rest in me.