

Spirit Play Lesson

Many Paths to the Mountain

Materials:

One circular black felt underlay

Five 'paths': desert, forest, river, rocks and towns

One mountain

One box or basket to house the story

When the children are ready and attentive, begin with the box near you. Try to tell this story without having to read from the page.

Let's see what we have to begin with here...I wonder what this could be. It doesn't tell much of a story all by itself, but it's a good place to begin with, "Once – long, long ago..."

Lay out the felt underlay.

There were five travelers at the beginning of a long journey. They shared friendly talk while they ate a meal before setting off on their long, long roads.

"Where are you headed?" asked the youngest traveler of the others.

"Why, to the mountain, of course! Where else does an adventuresome traveler want to go?" replied the other travelers.

"You mean that beautiful far-off mountain that one can see on the horizon? The one that seems to touch the sky or is sometimes wrapped up in clouds? Why, that's where I'm headed as well!" said

Place the mountain in the center of the felt circle.

"Yes! That's the one! Doesn't it seem to call to you, saying, "Come see if you can find me! Come try to find the spot where the peak touches the stars at night!"? said one of the oldest travelers.

They all agreed that the mountain seemed to be calling them to try this long, long journey. The travelers' eyes glowed with dreamy thoughts of adventure and success.

“Well,” said another traveler, “we might as well travel together, since we're all headed to the great mountain.”

Point to the mountain.

“That depends,” said the third traveler, “on whether you're taking the best path to get there. I'm sure *I* have the best route mapped out.” Each traveler snorted. They shook their heads at one another.

“Not likely,” said the oldest traveler, wisely. “*My* long years as a traveler have helped *me* to know the best path.

An argument broke out among the five travelers. Finally, after several minutes of yelling and waving of arms, the youngest traveler said:

“Let's each tell of our path to the mountain and we'll decide which is best.”

Hold the forest path up, tracing the trail with a finger.

The first traveler spoke:

“Mine is the forest path. It is the only right path to the mountain. I know this because I've learned that the right way is always the one that asks you to be brave. Along the forest path, I will confront my fears of the shadows and forest animals. The forest path is the one that leads to the mountain. I will arrive, courageous and triumphant, at my destination. You'll see!”

Lay the forest path from the outside of the circle in toward the mountain, like the spoke of a wheel.

Hold the desert path up, tracing the trail with a finger.

The second traveler spoke:

“I know the right way is the path through the desert. On a journey this important, what’s most important is the chance to be alone with your thoughts. The desert path offers solitude. It is the best path to the mountain. I will arrive, wiser and more focused, at my destination. I’ll send word to you all when I get there.”

Lay the desert path from the outside of the circle in toward the mountain, like a second spoke of a wheel.

Hold the river path up, tracing the river’s path with a finger.

The third traveler spoke:

“You’ve both got it wrong. Don’t you know that the best path is along the river? Why, it flows right to the mountain. The most important thing about this path is that it is beautiful and offers plenty of water to soothe the mind and body! It’s the only way to get to the mountain. I will arrive, happy and refreshed, at my destination. You’ll wish you had been there with me.”

Lay the river path from the outside of the circle in toward the mountain, like a third spoke of a wheel.

Hold the rocky path up, tracing the way with a finger.

The oldest traveler spoke:

“Wisdom will teach you the right way, one day. Take it from me, the correct path up the mountain is the steep, rocky way. On a journey of this importance, you can’t take such easy routes. No, you know the right way because it seems to be so difficult that it’s beyond your ability. If you can conquer this path, you will *deserve* to be at the top of the great mountain. I will arrive, stronger and more confident, at my destination. I will think of you all when I am there at the peak.

Lay the rocky path from the outside of the circle in toward the mountain, like a fourth spoke of a wheel.

Hold the town path up, tracing the road with a finger.

The youngest traveler spoke:

“Why should this be such a lonely, difficult journey? I think the best way to the mountain is the one that keeps close to the cities and towns. If you follow this road – see? – you’ll be close to people. You can get directions, even a comfy place to sleep. Maybe you’ll make a friend. This seems like the only way to get to the mountain. I’ll arrive, cheerful and encouraged, at my destination. I’ll send you a postcard.”

Lay the city road from the outside of the circle in toward the mountain, like the last spoke of a wheel.

But no one was convinced. The arguing started up again, each traveler sure that their path was the best way to the mountain. Finally, they agreed that they would have to go their separate ways.

Point to the start of the forest path.

So one traveler set off on the forest path.

Point to the start of the desert path.

And one traveler set off on the desert path.

Point to the start of the river path.

And one traveler set off on the river path.

Point to the start of the rocky path.

And one traveler set off on the rocky path.

Point to the start of the city road.

And one traveler set off on the city road.

Years later, the youngest traveler arrived, exhausted but joyful, at the top of the mountain. The traveler was surprised to see four other heads peeking up over the jagged mountain top.

In a moment, all five travelers' eyes met.

“Friends!” they cried. “Friends, we have made it! How is it that all our separate ways have led us here together!” They hugged and celebrated and shared stories of their amazing journeys.

“How could we *not* have known – why didn't we *see*,” wondered the youngest, “that there are *many* paths to the mountain?”

Wondering Questions:

I wonder what part of the story you liked the best?

I wonder what part is most important?

I wonder where you are in the story?

I wonder if there is any part of the story that we can leave out and still have all the story we need?