
BUDDHISM

Activity Based Lessons for Upper Elementary Students

by Rachel Brown, September, 1998

INTRODUCTION

These activities were developed by Rachel Brown and Becky Richardson, members of the First Unitarian Society of Minneapolis, using the various resources available from the FUS Religious Education library as well as local public libraries. Jan Devor, our Director of Religious Education, provided valuable feedback, resources, and support.

The intent of the unit is to use a study of Buddhism to fulfill the following larger goals:

- to help students develop an awareness and sensitivity to other cultures and religions, and
- to expose students to different religious experiences they may later use as they shape their own spiritual path.

Lessons are designed for people new to both Buddhism and the religious education classroom. While teachers should be able to apply the lessons with minimal preparation, those with more experience in classroom teaching and/or with Buddhism will be able to modify and adapt as needed/desired.

Intended class time is an hour. Teachers who choose to include a gathering time such as a chalice lighting ritual will need to adapt the lessons accordingly. We chose to use the weekly meditation session as our gathering and ritual time (see lesson #1). It provided a nice alternative to the candle lighting and related directly with the rest of the curriculum.

This curriculum is activity-based, emphasizing HOW to teach about Buddhism rather than spelling out what Buddhism is. Specific content information about Buddhism and meditation can be found in the resources listed below. Please note that some resources are necessary for the activities while others are simply suggestions for background information. All resources listed are currently in print and available.

An effective way to present the curriculum to teachers is through the use of a three-ring binder. Divide lessons with tabbed dividers and provide photocopies of any additional information and resources related to each lesson from your own RE and public libraries. (Note: teachers may sign up to teach a unit because it is a topic they are interested in. Consider providing teachers with additional information for their own use, covering topics in greater depth than they may address with the students. In addition to getting background information helpful for the lesson then, teachers may have some of their own religious education needs met.)

Also, for each lesson, consider including feedback forms on which teachers may make comments and suggestions for improvement.

Feedback on the curriculum is welcome. Please see the contact information below.

CONTACT INFORMATION

For information about the development of this curriculum, to order additional copies, or to give feedback/critique on the lessons, please contact:

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UNIT GOALS

1. Students will develop an awareness and sensitivity to other cultures and religions.
2. Students will be exposed to different religious experiences they may use as they shape their own spiritual path.

LESSON OBJECTIVES

1. Experience meditation as a tool for personal reflection and spiritual growth.
2. Know the story of the life of Siddhartha, the Buddha.
3. Know the basic teachings of Buddhism, including the following:
 - the middle path
 - the four noble truths
 - the eight-fold path
 - the Jataka stories.
4. Identify the connections and differences between Unitarian Universalism and Buddhism.
5. Get to know church/society/community members who are practicing Buddhists.
6. Know cultural and artistic expressions of Buddhism, including temples, Buddhas, shrines, mandalas, incense, and Zen drawings.

RESOURCES

Necessary for Lessons

All

The Joy of Meditating by Salle Merrill Redfield. New York: Warner Books, Incorporated. 1995.

Basic Meditation -101 Essential Tips. Bown, Deni. D K Publishing, Incorporated. 1997. 888-342-5357

Lesson #1

Roth, Susan. *Buddha*. New York: Doubleday. 1994. 1-800-223-6834. (Note: A colorful picture book focusing on the early life of Siddhartha.)

Lesson #2

Little Buddha, (1993). PG. Film directed by Bernardo Bertolucci. Available through most large video stores and public libraries.

Lesson #7

Ganeri, Anita. *What Do We Know About Buddhism?* NY: Peter Bedrick Books. 1997. 212-206-3738. \$18.95

Lesson #8

The Jataka Tales books: a series for children. Dhamar Publishing, Emeryville, CA. 800-873-4276 Available titles (call for a full catalogue): *The Hunter and the Quail; A Precious Life; The Parrot and the Fig Tree; Golden Foot; The Rabbit in the Moon; The Fish King's Power of Truth; The Value of Friends; The Best of Friends; The Magic of Patience; Heart of Gold.*

or, as an alternative...

Demin. *The Buddha Stories.* New York: Henry Holt and Co. 1997. 212-387-9100. \$16.95. (Note: Well-written, short, traditional Buddhist stories.)

Suggested for Background Information:

Bancroft, Ann. *The Buddhist World.* NY: Silver Burdett MacDonald and Co. 1984. (Note: good glossary. Reference and pictures of mandalas and mudras.)

Landaw, Jonathon and Janet Brook. *Prince Siddhartha..* London: Wisdom Books. 1984. 800-272-4050. (Note: nice, detailed storybook.)

Shearer, Alistair. *Buddha: The Intelligent Heart.* London: Thames and Hudson Ltd. 800-223-2588 (Note: Good for adult readers. Detailed, thorough explanations, many black and white photos and some color photos.)

Snelling, John. *Buddhism.* Boston: Elements Books. 1998. 800-526-0275

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SCHEDULE

LESSON	OBJECTIVE	ACTIVITIES
All	Experience meditation as a tool for personal reflection and spiritual growth.	Meditate at the beginning of each lesson.
#1 Siddhartha: His Life in the Palace	Know the story of the life of Siddhartha, the Buddha.	Create the “Walls of the Palace.” Study the story of Siddhartha’s early life. Discuss the choice Siddhartha faced.
#2 Siddhartha: Leaving the Palace	Know the story of the life of Siddhartha, the Buddha. Know the basic teachings of Buddhism, including the following: the Middle Path.	Review early part of Siddhartha’s life. Discuss whether it is better to have material goods or freedom. Study the story of the prophecy of the four visions. Watch selected scenes from <i>Little Buddha</i> , focusing on Siddhartha leaving the palace, seeing the visions, and finding the Middle Path.
#3 Teachings: The Four Noble Truths	Know the basic teachings of Buddhism, including the following: the Middle Path, the Four Noble Truths.	Learn about the Middle Path and the first three of the Four Noble Truths. Discuss suffering. Create collages of images of suffering.
#4 Teachings: The Eight-fold Path	Know the basic teachings of Buddhism, including the following: the Four Noble Truths, the eight-fold path. Identify the connections and differences between Unitarian Universalism and Buddhism.	List the characteristics of a “good” person as defined in our society. Learn about the eight-fold path and compare with class definitions of a good person. Make mandala-like designs of the eight directions and attach onto the suffering collage.
#5 Buddhists: Visit with a Buddhist	Get to know church, society, or community members who are practicing Buddhists. Identify the connections and differences between Unitarian Universalism and Buddhism.	Visit with a practicing Buddhist(s).
#6 Buddhists: Field trip	Get to know church, society, or community members who are practicing Buddhists.	Visit a Buddhist center or temple.
#7 Buddhist Art and Culture	Know cultural and artistic expressions of Buddhism, including temples, buddhas, shrines, mandalas, incense, and Zen drawings.	Discuss field trip. Create a Buddhist shrine. Dress in monk robes. Complete a variety of art activities.
#8 Teachings: The Jataka Tales	Know the basic teachings of Buddhism, including the following: the Jataka Tales.	In small groups, read a Jataka Tale and present a short skit version of it to the rest of the class. Discuss message/teaching of each tale. Discuss student response to Buddhism and unit.

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LESSON #1
Siddhartha: His life in the Palace

LESSON OBJECTIVE(S)

1. Experience meditation as a tool for personal reflection and spiritual growth.
2. Know the story of the life of Siddhartha, the Buddha.

MATERIALS

- Roth, Susan. *Buddha*. New York: Doubleday. 1994. 1-800-223-6834. (Note: A colorful picture book focusing on the early life of Siddhartha.) or other book/resource that focuses on the early life of Siddhartha
- two long sheets of white roll paper (about 5-8' long)
- tape, crayons, markers
- chairs, tables
- *The Joy of Meditating* by Salle Merrill Redfield, *Basic Meditation -101 Essential Tips* by Deni Bown, or other resources on meditation
- collection of pillows for students to sit on

PREPARATION

Review resources on meditation. Select or prepare the meditation for the day. Preview the story of the Siddhartha, particularly his early years in the palace.

ACTIVITIES

Before you begin: Ask students what they know about Buddhism. Explain that the Buddha was an important teacher and that the Buddhist tradition is a rich and important one with many connections to Unitarian Universalism. Also explain that meditation is an important element of Buddhist practice and that they will get a chance to practice meditating through the course of the unit.

1. **Meditation.** At the beginning of each class period, lead students through a short meditation session. The purpose of this activity is to allow students to be exposed to and to experience meditation as a potential tool for personal reflection and spiritual growth. The sessions should be short and focused, lasting no more than 3-5 minutes. Some tips:
 - Ask if there are any students with previous experiences in meditation and/or visualization. Ask them to describe their experiences.
 - Explain before you begin that it is common to feel awkward or self-conscious when first learning meditation techniques. Also note that for the session to really work well, everyone must follow the directions or, at least sit quietly without disturbing others.
 - Explain that you will be doing a meditation each week and, like many other activities, it may become more comfortable with practice.
 - Have a collection of pillow or cushions for students to sit on. Have students sit on the edge of a cushion with their legs crossed and their hands resting on their thighs.
 - Have students all sit in a line, facing the same direction. (If they can't see each other, there is a better chance students will keep focused.)
 - Stand or sit behind the students so that you are not physically distracting.
 - Speak in a slow, calm and low voice, giving long pauses between directions and/or comments.
 - If there are two teachers, have one teacher participate with the students.

See *The Joy of Meditating* by Salle Merrill Redfield (1995), for simple meditations that could be used or develop your own based on your personal experiences with meditation and/or visualization exercises. Redfield's meditations may be too long, particularly for the first few sessions and so will need to be edited to suit the students' attention span. Also see *Basic Meditation* by Deni Bown, particularly tips #10-17, 42-53, and 56.

After each session, ask students to open their eyes and to return to the table without talking. Discuss with students what they experienced with the session, what they visualized, felt, heard, and thought during the session.

1. **Create the Walls of the Palace.**

- Place the rolls of paper on long tables or the floor.
- Have students think of everything/one in the world that they like and want. This list can include material things, activities and people. Students draw these items and people all over the paper, trying to fill up as much of the space as possible. If students need prompting, consider asking the following questions: If you won the lottery, what would you buy? Or, who are your favorite people? Or, if money were no object, what would you buy or do? It also helps encourage participation when the teachers draw along with the students. (The drawings can be representational, and need not be of high quality.)
- Have everyone briefly describe the items they have selected and drawn.
- Using chairs and/or tables, tape the sheets of paper to create a fort-like structure. Place the table(s) and/or chairs to create an outer frame for the fort then hang the paper on the inside of the structure. Secure with tape. The drawings should face the inside of the fort/structure, creating the inner walls. Gather inside the "palace" for the remainder of the class.

1. **Story of Siddhartha.** Before you begin the story, talk about how religious and political figures often have extraordinary tales or myths told about their birth and childhood. Have students list such people who have mythical tales about them (e.g., Jesus, Abe Lincoln, etc.).

Read *Buddha* by Susan Roth or tell the story yourself. Important elements of the story to include:

- Queen Maya's dream of the white elephant with six tusks
- the prophecy that her son would become either the greatest ruler or the greatest teacher; the prophecy of the four visions
- Siddhartha's extraordinary birth
- the King and Queen's decision to keep their son within the walls of the palace, to protect him from suffering and from visions of illness, old age, death and the life of holy men
- the wealth and splendor of the palace and how Siddhartha lived there with every want fulfilled but was not allowed to leave the palace.

1. **Discuss.** If you lived in a palace like Siddhartha with everything and everyone that you liked, except for people who were ill, old, or dying, how would you feel? What and who would you miss?

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LESSON #2

Siddhartha: Leaving the Palace

LESSON OBJECTIVE(S)

1. Experience meditation as a tool for personal reflection and spiritual growth.
2. Know the story of the life of Siddhartha, the Buddha.
3. Know the basic teachings of Buddhism, including the following:
 - the middle path

MATERIALS

- *Little Buddha*, (1993). PG. Film directed by Bernardo Bertolucci. Available through most large video stores and public libraries.
- TV & VCR

PREPARATION

Preview *Little Buddha* and cue it up to the first scene you will be using. *Little Buddha* is about an American boy who learns about Buddhism from a Tibetan monk. The film cuts back and forth between the contemporary storyline and the story of Siddhartha. It is the scenes about Siddhartha that apply to this lesson. It may be helpful to watch the whole movie in advance so that you can explain the general story line to the students. See the end of the lesson for recommended scenes to watch with the students.

There are many different versions of Siddhartha's early life. It is helpful to read at least a few different stories/myths to be able to talk with students about how there is no one definitive story about Siddhartha's life.

ACTIVITIES

1. **Meditate.** See Lesson #1, Direction 1.
2. **Review:** Ask students what they remember from last week's lesson on the early part of Siddhartha's life. Because of time limitations, this should be a quick review. In addition to reinforcing the information students learned last week, this review will allow students who were absent for the last lesson to get caught up on the story. Main ideas/events to review include:
 - Queen Maya's dream of the white elephant with six tusks
 - the prophecy that her son would become either the greatest ruler or the greatest teacher; the prophecy of the four visions
 - Siddhartha's extraordinary birth
 - the King and Queen's decision to keep their son within the walls of the palace, to protect him from suffering and from visions of illness, old age, death and the life of holy men
 - the wealth and splendor of the palace and how Siddhartha lived there with every want fulfilled but was not allowed to leave the palace.

1. **View movie.** Watch selected scenes from *Little Buddha*. The scenes/events of Siddhartha's life are clearly separated by scenes from the contemporary story of the film. Allow students to summarize and comment on the events of each scene before moving on to the next. While it is best to fast-forward through most of the contemporary scenes in the film, if there is time, consider showing the scene in which the Tibetan monk talks to the father about reincarnation (the tea cup scene).

Scenes to use include:

- Siddhartha going out of the palace for the first time and encountering illness, old age, death and the life of holy men
- Siddhartha confronting his father about keeping him from suffering and freedom in the world
- Siddhartha leaving the palace
- Siddhartha meeting the holy men and joining them in their practice
- Siddhartha recognizing the wisdom of following the middle path.

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LESSON #3

Teaching: The Four Noble Truths; Suffering

LESSON OBJECTIVE(S)

1. Experience meditation as a tool for personal reflection and spiritual growth.
3. Know the basic teachings of Buddhism, including the following:
 - the four noble truths
 - the middle path

MATERIALS

- white paper, cut in circles about 11” in diameter (use a bowl as a pattern)
- magazines from which students may cut pictures/images
- glue, markers

PREPARATION

In the interest of saving time, it is best to have the circles of paper pre-cut for the students.

Make sure that the magazines used have lots of potential images of suffering.

This lesson is directly linked to the next lesson about the eight-fold path. The collage the students make this week that show image of suffering will be added next week with the eight-fold path. The final product, the collage/mandala, is to be one in which the eight-fold path is clearly presented on top but with suffering as the base and always present (see sample).

ACTIVITIES

1. **Meditate.** See Lesson #1, Direction 1.
 2. **Review:** Ask students to recount the events of Siddhartha’s life that they saw through the movie *Little Buddha*. It is important to note that it was images of suffering (illness, age, and death) that supposedly were what drew Siddhartha from his palace and into the world.
 3. **Study the first three of the Four Noble Truths.** Tell students about Siddhartha/Buddha’s first sermon after he had found enlightenment and the first three of the Four Noble truths that he presented in that sermon:
 - Everything and everyone in existence suffers.
 - Suffering is caused by selfishness, greed and desire.
 - Selfishness, greed and desire can be stopped.
1. **Discuss:** List with students specific sufferings in the world that they or others experience. It may be helpful later to have these ideas written on a large sheet of paper that everyone can see. Also, discuss what sufferings are caused by greed and desire.
 2. **Create a collage.** Have students cut out images of suffering from various magazines and, gluing the images onto the white circles, create a collage of suffering. Encourage students to fill all of the white space. If they are having trouble finding images in the magazines, they may also draw images of suffering on their circle.

3. **Discuss.** If there is time, have students share at least one of the images they have selected and describe why it represents suffering. In addition, ask students if the suffering they selected is caused—as the Buddha argued—by selfishness, greed or desire.

SPECIAL NOTES

It is good for teachers to make collages along with the students. During the next lesson when students will be adding the eight-fold path to their collages, you can donate your collages to students who were absent this week.

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LESSON #4
Teachings: The Eight-fold Path

LESSON OBJECTIVE(S)

1. Experience meditation as a tool for personal reflection and spiritual growth.
3. Know the basic teachings of Buddhism, including the following:
 - the four noble truths
 - the eight-fold path
4. Identify the connections and differences between Unitarian Universalism and Buddhism.

MATERIALS

- white paper, cut in circles about 8-9" in diameter (slightly smaller than last week's), then cut into eight equal pieces (like pie pieces)
- note cards, small sheets of paper, or post-it notes (blank)
- note cards on which the eight steps of the eight-fold path are written; in addition to writing the short two-three word name of the path, include a short description or definition of it
- glue
- markers/crayons

PREPARATION

In the interest of saving time, it is best to have the paper pre-cut for the students. Also, prepare eight note cards by writing the eight steps of the eight-fold path on them (one step per card).

ACTIVITIES

1. **Meditate.** See Lesson #1, Direction 1.
2. **Discuss.** Have students list the characteristics of a good person, as defined by our church/society/community. What should we do, how should we live, if we are to be good people? Encourage students to think of what they personally think it means to be good as well as what others expect of them or teach them about being good (e.g., parents, teachers at school, RE teachers, etc.). Have students list these ideas on note cards, small sheets of paper, or post-it notes.
3. **Learn about the eight-fold path.** Tell students about the fourth of the Noble Truths taught by the Buddha, that suffering can be stopped if people follow the eight-fold path.

The Eight-fold Path

- Right seeing or understanding
- Right thought or attitude
- Right speech
- Right action
- Right livelihood or work
- Right effort
- Right mindfulness
- Right contemplation or meditation

As you discuss the first of the eight paths, place the note card listing and describing the path on the table before you. After explaining what the path is about, ask students if any of the characteristics of a good person that they had listed earlier are similar to the path described. If so, have students place their note card by the first path. Continue in this way as you address all eight of the paths, noting similarities and differences between what the Buddha taught and what the students believe or have been taught.

If there is time, consider discussing the relationship of the Ten Commandments and the seven UU principles to the eight-fold path.

1. **Create a mandala.** Give each student eight pieces of a circle on which to write the Buddha's eight-fold paths. Have students glue these pieces onto their collage of suffering (from the last lesson). As the second circle is smaller than the one on which the collage was made, the images of the collage should show in the spaces between the eight-fold path pieces. (See sketch below.) This is to serve as a reminder that according to the Buddha, the eight-fold path is intended to stop the suffering that all creatures endure.

If there is time, have students develop a pattern to decorate the eight-fold path pieces. The pattern should be applied equally to each of the pieces so that a mandala-like image is formed. Point out to students that the Buddha taught that rather than living a life of extremes, one should take the Middle path. In this way, the mandala like pattern shows that each of the steps of the eight-fold path are thought of as equally important; all of the steps are to be acted on together in order for one to be following the eight-fold path.

Images of suffering

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LESSON #5
Buddhists: Visit with a Buddhist

LESSON OBJECTIVE(S)

1. Experience meditation as a tool for personal reflection and spiritual growth.
4. Identify the connections and differences between Unitarian Universalism and Buddhism.
5. Get to know church/society/community members who are practicing Buddhists.

MATERIALS

Encourage your visitor(s) to bring whatever items/materials they use in their Buddhist practice. This may include a statue of a Buddha, a book they use, a cushion for meditation, or incense.

PREPARATION

Find a practicing Buddhist who would be willing to come and talk about their experiences with the class.

Talk with the visitor about what they are willing to share and do with the class. Some people may be comfortable using the whole hour and will be able to structure the hour themselves. Others may feel they can only spend part of the class time and will want more direction from you. Let them know of the routines established in the class and what you have covered so far in the unit.

See the end of this lesson plan for additional activities if your guest will not use the whole hour.

ACTIVITIES

1. **Meditate.** If the visitor(s) meditates as part of their Buddhist practice, ask if they would be willing to lead the students in meditation. If so, they may wish to do so after they have talked with the students for awhile rather than right at the beginning of your time together.
2. **Visit.** If possible, plan to have the visitor(s) meet with the students for the whole hour, addressing in an informal way these questions and others you and the students may have:
 - How did you learn about and become a Buddhist?
 - What does it mean for you to practice Buddhism? What do you do in your practice?
 - What is Buddhism to you? What are the most important parts of the teachings of Buddha? What particular stories or lessons do you think of or refer to in your own understanding of Buddhism?
 - What do you get out of practicing Buddhism? Why do you do it?
 - What is it like being both a Buddhist and a Unitarian Universalist? Are there any conflicts between the two traditions or the different communities? What are the similarities between the traditions and communities?

1. If you have extra time, consider the following additional options:
 - Discuss where practicing Buddhists live. Use a map and almanac and some of the resource books in the RE library. Also, to explore local organizations, have students look in phone books or web sites to see the listings of Buddhist temples and centers.
 - Discuss similarities and differences between Unitarian Universalism and Buddhism.
 - Finish up past week's projects and/or discussions, including viewing additional scenes from *Little Buddha*.
 - Discuss and prepare for future field trip(s).
 - Complete one of the artistic activities listed in Lesson #7.

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LESSON #6
Buddhists: Field Trip

LESSON OBJECTIVE(S)

1. Experience meditation as a tool for personal reflection and spiritual growth.
4. Identify the connections and differences between Unitarian Universalism and Buddhism.
5. Get to know church/society/community members who are practicing Buddhists.

MATERIALS

None

PREPARATION

Arrange with someone to give a tour of the center/temple and discuss with them any details prior to the trip.

Write a letter to the parents of all class members alerting them to the field trip at least a week in advance of the trip(s). Consult with the RE Director regarding permission slip procedures.

If there are any students in the class whose behavior may disrupt the field trip experience, consider asking the student's parents/guardians to be one of the chaperones. See the RE Director for help with such concerns.

It is better to leave at the beginning of the RE time and return back a little past the end of the hour than to try to leave early. With this plan you won't run the risk of having a student miss the trip by arriving at the regular RE time. Also, remember to factor in travel time.

Plan to have a student-adult ratio of about 4:1 or 5:1 with to have an extra adult or two available as a back-up as field trips tend to bring out higher attendance.

ACTIVITIES

1. **Field trip.** Before entering the center/temple and before meeting your guide(s) for the tour, stop the students for a reminder that as guests you need to act respectfully. This little moment is helpful to settle down the students after the trip. This pep talk may include directions to:
 - listen quietly to the guide
 - follow any directions or requests the guide has (such as taking off shoes)
 - touch things only after asking permission
 - ask questions without making judgments.

If appropriate, have the guide or other member of the center/temple lead the students in a short meditation. Encourage students to ask questions and to make connections between what they see and what they have studied.

1. **Follow-up.** The week after the field trip, have students talk about the experience. If there are students who missed the trip, you can frame the review as a chance to tell them what you all saw and experienced. Ask students to talk about anything that surprised or interested them. As a class write a thank you letter to your guide.

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LESSON #7

Buddhist Art and Culture

LESSON OBJECTIVE(S)

1. Experience meditation as a tool for personal reflection and spiritual growth.
6. Know cultural and artistic expressions of Buddhism, including temples, Buddhas, shrines, mandalas, incense, and Zen drawings

MATERIALS

- Ganeri, Anita. *What Do We Know About Buddhism?* NY: Peter Bedrick Books. 1997. 212-206-3738. \$18.95
- specific materials dependent on the activities selected

PREPARATION

Using the RE library resources and the advice of the RE Director, select 2 - 3 activities or projects listed below. Collect and prepare necessary materials.

Ganeri's *What Do We Know About Buddhism?* has brief descriptions and pictures of (mudras) hand positions (p.40), mandalas (p.41), temple worship (23, 26-27), and other cultural and artistic expressions of Buddhism.

ACTIVITIES

1. **Meditate.** See Lesson #1, Direction 1.
2. **Create a Buddhist Temple+.** Use this class period to immerse students in some of the cultural and artistic expressions of Buddhism. This may include the following activities/projects:
 - Have students dress up in robes in the manner of Tibetan monks. (Use sheets, dyed, if possible). Also, consider role playing what life would be like as a monk whose only personal possessions could be the "eight requisites", a robe, a belt, a bowl for collecting alms, a needle and thread, a walking stick, a razor, a toothpick, and a filter for straining water.
 - Create a small shrine to Buddha, including a Buddha figurine, incense, prayer flags, and other items of significance. (See RE Director for items.)
 - Ask someone to give a short slideshow of their travels in Tibet, Hong Kong, China, India, or other places with a high concentration of practicing Buddhists.
 - Make a sand mandala using colored sand poured on cookie sheets or large trays.
 - Do Zen drawings using special paper that erases the drawn images after a short time period.
 - Make prayer flags.
 - Make paper mache' Buddhas, using different hand positions to communicate different meanings.

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LESSON #8
Teachings: The Jataka Tales

LESSON OBJECTIVE(S)

1. Experience meditation as a tool for personal reflection and spiritual growth.
3. Know the basic teachings of Buddhism, including the following: the Jataka stories.
4. Identify the connections and differences between Unitarian Universalism and Buddhism.

MATERIALS

The Jataka Tales books: e.g., *The Value of Friends*, *The Hunter and the Quail*, *The Fish King's Power of Truth*, and *The King and the Mangoes*. Dhamar Publishing, Emeryville, CA.

PREPARATION

Preview the Jataka tales and select the 2 - 3 that you think the students will most enjoy and might relate to specific issues raised in previous class discussions or activities.

This lesson is best done in a larger, more open room. Make necessary room reservations.

ACTIVITIES

1. **Meditate.** See Lesson #1, Direction 1.
2. **Tell about the Jataka Tales.** In the front of *The Fish King's Power of Truth* and *The Value of Friends* there is a brief introduction to the Tales as a whole. Read or summarize this information for the students and explain that you will be exploring 2-3 of these tales.
3. **Read and present the stories.** Have the students break into 2-3 small groups. Each group will read one of the Jataka stories and present it to the rest of the class as a short skit. Emphasize that students should not just read the book to the class but should tell the tale in their own words and with their own actions. In addition, ask each group to determine the main lesson or teaching of the story, without stating it directly in the skit. Give the groups about 15-20 minutes to read the stories and to prepare and practice their skits. After each group performs, have the members of the audience describe their perception of the main lesson of the story. Compare this with the lesson determined by the group who presented the tale. Relate these lessons back to the appropriate steps of the eight-fold path.
4. **Discuss.** Have students discuss their responses to Buddhism and to the curriculum. What have they learned? What of Buddhism do they like and/or agree with? What don't they like or agree with?