

EDUCATIONAL GUIDE

Milo

and the Cycle of Life

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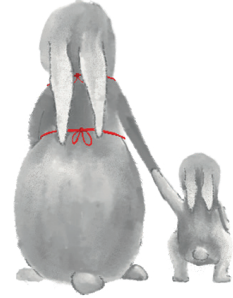
Let's get to know Milo.

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This guide includes instruction and activity ideas for teachers and families to do with children. The activities are designed for children ages four to six. However, the story allows many possibilities, and the ideas can be adapted depending on the age and the group.

The activities are divided into four parts:

Before Reading: Introduce the topic and provoke reflection in the group, but also aim to awaken the group's interest and curiosity.

During Reading: Generate expectations and ideas about the content of the story and encourage active listening through questions.

After Reading: Check that the children have understood the main idea of the story through questions. Start a conversation in which children can communicate what they think and what they have lived and experienced. They should also be encouraged to express their emotions, through written, oral, or artistic means.

Beyond the Story: Present an activity about family background so that children are aware of the passage of time, play a game to promote empathy, or have them watch a plant grow over time.

Before Reading

Do we live forever?

OBJECTIVES

- Generate reflection.
- Connect with previous ideas and experiences.
- Discover their concerns.

It is useful to introduce the theme of the cycle of life and death as naturally as possible. An ideal formula is to ask a question directed to the group: “Do you think that we live forever?”

This question helps the children reflect and will hopefully begin a conversation prompted by their previous ideas and experiences.

It is ideal to present this theme when children are curious to know more about it and have questions. There are many situations in which the appropriate moment could arise: a broken toy, a fallen baby bird, a stepped-on snail, and so on. If we pay attention, they will communicate exactly what they need to know and guide us on what we need to tell them.

This question aims to see how they respond. The children will have a lot to say, and from everything they say, more topics will emerge that we should address. We must let them express themselves freely but also set limits to the conversation. That is, if they stray too far from the initial topic, intervene to redirect the conversation.

During Reading

Let's get to know Milo.

OBJECTIVES

- Feel interested and curious about the content of the story.
- Formulate hypotheses about the reading.
- Observe and actively listen to the story.

After introducing the topic and preparing the group, begin reading the story. The goal is to awaken their interest and curiosity and to help them recall previous ideas and experiences.

Read the title and ask: “Who do you think Milo is?” Let them focus on the cover illustration so they can formulate their responses. You can also ask: “What do you think the ‘cycle of life’ means?” and see how they relate it to the topics discussed in the previous activity or their previous knowledge. You could also see how they understand this concept during the reading of the story: “Let's see who is paying close attention and can discover what the ‘cycle of life’ is and what happens to Milo...”

To reinforce the explanations, ask the following questions:

- Where did the leaf come from?
- During what season of the year do the leaves fall from a tree?
- Why do you think Milo brings the leaf back to the forest?
- How do you think Milo felt when he brought the leaf back?

After Reading

1) Sharing experiences and thoughts:

OBJECTIVES

- Confirm or refute previous ideas.
- Understand the main idea of the story.
- Construct meaning and promote understanding from joint reflection.
- Express thoughts, feelings, personal experiences, reflections...
- Identify one's own emotions, as well as those of others.

After reading the story, evaluate the group's level of comprehension. Discuss the content of the story to check how well they have understood the message, and confirm or refute their initial ideas, and so on. They can also share thoughts and experiences related to life and death, trying to identify the emotions that these situations provoke in them.

You can check to see if the children have understood the story and gauge their responses by asking questions that will help clarify the main idea:

- What did Milo discover?
- What does Milo bring to the burrow and show his mother? Why?
- What does Milo's mother explain to him?
- How did Milo feel when his grandfather died?
- Do you think he is still sad now?

Another idea is for them to draw what they liked the most about the story. When they have finished, invite them to describe their drawings to their classmates and explain why they drew what they did. The teacher can start by sharing an experience as an example to guide the conversation. Then the children will raise their hands and take turns sharing their ideas.

2) Leaves filled with love:

OBJECTIVES

- Express oneself artistically.
- Give another use to the leaves.
- Express and value expressions of love.

At the end of the story, Milo returns the leaf that he had picked from the forest with the message: "I love you, Grandpa." Using this as an example, take a dry leaf or draw one on paper and cut it out, and write or draw on it a message addressed to the person that each child chooses, saying, "I love you."

Once they have finished, they will all drop them, like Milo does, at the same time. Finally, you could construct a mobile for the classroom with all the leaves hanging from it.

3) Images show emotions:

OBJECTIVES

- Identify emotions that each of the illustrations conveys.
- Name the emotions and try to describe them.
- Relate emotions to everyday situations.

This activity is developed from the illustrations in the story—their colors and style. Suggest that the children pay special attention to those illustrations that show the seasons and say what they feel when looking at each one.

Before doing this activity, talk about emotions, so they are familiar with the most basic ones, such as joy, sadness, anger, fear, peace, and love.

Once the children communicate what emotions each illustration conveys to them, suggest that they explain situations in which they have felt these emotions. For example, if the one that shows spring conveys love to them, someone might explain that they feel love when they hug or kiss someone. Or with the image of winter, if someone identifies it with sadness, they might explain to the group that they became sad when they found out that their grandmother was sick.

Beyond the Story

1) Feeling empathy:

OBJECTIVES

- Put oneself in another person's shoes by imagining how they feel.
- Develop strategies to help others feel better.
- Understand and follow the dynamics of the game.

This activity builds upon some situations that arose in the previous activity. Ask for a volunteer from the group to explain a situation in which he or she felt bad and to specify which emotion they felt—sadness, anger, fear, and so on.

Then ask another child to explain what they would do to help their classmate feel better and to represent it. The group will need to listen and observe attentively, as they will evaluate the proposed solution by holding up a green or red card, depending on whether they think the action would help or not.

The answers will be varied. Therefore, ask why they raised that card and not another one and have them explain what they think. By doing this, we can observe who is acting consistently and who is not. If the latter is the case, we will explain the game again to give them the opportunity to enter the dynamic of the game in the next round.

2) Recognizing that time passes for everyone:

OBJECTIVES

- Realize the passage of time.
- Reinforce the understanding of the concept of the “cycle of life.”
- Order the photographs by age groups.

Often, children think that adults have always been adults. This activity aims to raise awareness in the group about the passage of time, so they can see that time passes equally for everyone. Ask them to bring photographs of adults from their homes (parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles, legal guardians, and so on) at different stages of their lives: as babies, as teenagers, and up to the present day. They can explain who appears in each photograph and when it was taken.

Suggest that they organize the people by age groups and continue discussing the concept of the “cycle of life.”

To introduce this activity, it may be interesting for the teacher to bring his/her own photographs and share them first, so that the children can see how adults were also babies, children, and adolescents before becoming adults. After this, invite the children to bring their photographs and share them in the same way.

3) *Creating life:*

OBJECTIVES

- Visualize the process of the life cycle of a plant.
- Learn to recognize the passage of time.
- Take responsibility for and care for a plant.
- Be patient.

In the previous activity, we saw how a person evolves over time. We asked a question to relate it to the following activity: “Do only people go through this cycle of life?”

The intention is for the children to realize that plants also have their own cycle, as discussed earlier in the story.

Ask: “Do you think the cycle of life is the same for people and plants? Do people and plants take the same time to grow?” We suggest the following activity to test this:

Each child will plant a bean and will be responsible for taking care of it. Measure the height of each child on the day the beans are planted and on the last day of the experiment. After a few days, most of the plants will have grown, but there will be no significant changes in the children. Therefore, we conclude that plants grow faster than people, since their life cycle is shorter. However, we propose that they continue measuring their height throughout the course so they can appreciate some of the small changes that their bodies experience.

By planting so many beans at once, they will observe the differences between them: some will grow a lot, while others not so much; some will grow very quickly, while others more slowly; some will wither quickly, while others will not even sprout....This experiment will help each child understand that, although we all go through the same stages, everyone progresses in their own way and at their own pace.

