



Remember Who You Are Living a Mythic Life

from Explorers in the Garden to Thespians at the Oasis
and beyond

**MIDDLE SCHOOL curriculum written by Connie Barlow
for religiously liberal church programs & private schools**

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downloadable for free at: <http://www.thegreatstory.org/lion-king/intro.html>

This **12 – 14 week** curriculum draws from three **SOURCES**:

- *The Lion King* (1994 Disney movie)
- *Nature and the Human Soul* (by Bill Plotkin, 2008)
- “We Are Made of Stardust” (elementary) curriculum by Connie Barlow

SPIRITUAL GOALS: to assist our children in making the life passage from childhood to early adolescence and to spiritually prepare them to navigate the challenges and opportunities of their teen years and beyond.

SUMMARY: This “Remember Who You Are” curriculum uses the understandings (and some terminology) presented in Bill Plotkin’s 2008 book, *Nature and the Human Soul*, in order to further the above spiritual goals. The full life cycle from birth to death (“The Circle of Life,” as it is sung in *The Lion King* movie) is the backdrop for focusing on the life passage from childhood to early adolescence that middle schoolers must navigate, and to also look ahead into a time of life that unavoidably will include frustrations, confusions, mistakes, and troubles, as well as delights and growth. **Lessons 4 through 7 entail sensitive issues** (resentment, guilt, death) and thus require two trusted adults in the classroom at all times.

Lesson by lesson, this curriculum uses scenes from *The Lion King* movie to help our middle school youth (1) **to reflect on and value their childhood experiences and fascinations**, then (2) **to prepare for a life passage** that bids farewell to the wonder and explorations of childhood (“Explorer in the Garden”) and welcomes the self-focus and peer concerns (and confusions!) of young adolescence (“Thespians at the Oasis”), and (3) **to**

acquire a life-sustaining, mythic framework for facing challenges and finding significance in their lives as the years unfold.

SOURCE OF TITLE: "Remember Who You Are" takes its title from the climactic (rite of passage) scene in *The Lion King*, when the errant (nearly adult) hero, Simba the Lion, mystically experiences his dead father admonishing him to, "Look inside. You are more than who you have become. . . . Remember who you are."

3 PROJECTS: In addition to encouraging ample group discussion, singing, journaling, and personal reflection, this curriculum entails 3 inter-related projects: (1) "Time Capsule," (2) "Circle of Life Recycling," (3) "Remember Who You Are" Memory Pouch

Project 1: "Time Capsule" – Beginning in **Lesson 8** the youth will gradually prepare their own personal time capsules into which they will put (real or symbolic) treasures of their childhood, memorabilia, and cryptic notes they now write to themselves that will help them remember (in the years after adolescence, when they reopen the time capsule) key events of their earliest years, and what they most valued about themselves as "Explorers in the Garden."

The youth will ponder and discuss how, like Simba, they are likely to try on a variety of new ways of being during adolescence, all in quest of (a) discovering their authentic selves, and (b) finding fulfilling and honorable ways to fit in socially with their peers. They will ponder and discuss, too, that after adolescence they will come out the other side as adults, able to once again cherish and value in whole new ways core parts of who they were as children — parts that are often soundly turned aside by their adolescent selves. **Sealing up the time capsule will be a rite of passage** in the final session, along with determining whether they themselves will keep their Time Capsule safe or entrust it to an adult of their choice.

Project 2: "Circle of Life Recycling" – Beginning in **Lesson 8** the students will also be encouraged to overhaul their closets and stored boxes, looking for items that they will no longer need or want to use as adolescents, and determining how best to ensure that those objects do not just sit unused but continue on in the Circle of Life. After all, important artifacts deserve to be kept in use! That might mean passing some objects on to younger siblings or friends, or having the church donate them to the needy.

For the **broken and the frayed** objects that are too big to go into the time capsule or that don't seem emotionally important enough to put there, that probably means saying a heartfelt goodbye, perhaps writing a little note to oneself about a best-memory with the object and putting that note in the Time Capsule. Then the object goes into the **"Circle of Life Recycling Bin"** in the classroom, or into the trash, as appropriate. Note: Bill Plotkin, in his *Nature and the Human Soul*, suggests that worn-out objects made of natural materials could be ritually buried or burned, perhaps at a special group session outdoors.

Project 3: "Remember Who You Are" Memory Pouch - By Lesson 11, Projects 1 and 2 should be well underway or completed, and it is time to turn

the focus to putting into a small pouch **memorable objects that inspire**: favorite small objects or slips of paper with inspirational sayings, poems, or song lyrics, and any small memorabilia already placed in the child's "Time Capsule" which, on second thought, he or she would prefer to keep in the pouch for support during the adolescent journey, rather than sealing away.

In addition, **before or during the Finale**, the teacher/guide might choose to encourage each child to **find a new symbolic object** that will serve as a reminder of strength, so that in times of stress or confusion the youth can go to their pouch and hold this object. Preferably the "strength object" (or "**power stone**," "power feather," etc.) will be discovered by each child out in nature — perhaps during a casual solo walk in their neighborhood, or during a group excursion onto the church grounds or a nearby park, or as a special gift from Nature acquired during a more rigorous day in the wild or camping experience. (See Plotkin's book and website for more ideas.)

RITUAL "Remembering the Dead": Lesson 6, "Childhood's End," begins with a serious ritual in which youth who wish go to an 'altar' one at a time and light a candle in silence or speak about someone (including pets) important to them who have died. This ritual is done immediately prior to the death-of-the-father scene in *The Lion King* movie (Scene 10).

STARDUST REVISITED: This "Remember Who You Are" curriculum revisits in Lesson 9 key components of **Connie Barlow's elementary-age "We Are Made of Stardust" curriculum** (<http://thegreatstory.org/stardust-kids-lessons.pdf>). The Stardust theme works perfectly with the "Under the Stars" scene in *The Lion King*. The "We Are Made of Stardust" elementary curriculum invites children to begin to know and feel themselves as **Children of the Universe** — as natural beings evolved from all that came before, and whose very atoms were created inside stars who lived and died before our own star, the Sun, was born. All of us can gain strength and assurance from the understanding that we hail from a majestic lineage, and that **stars are our most ancient ancestors**. Reflecting that our own stardust bodies are possible only because stars died and recycled themselves after death is a solid spiritual foundation for understanding that **death is natural and that it plays a necessary and creative role** throughout the universe.

REQUIRED MATERIAL:

1. ***The Lion King* DVD: 2 Disk Platinum Edition.** (Lessons here are keyed to the "Scene" break timings in the platinum issue, and several special features on that DVD set).
2. **DVD player/monitor**
3. ***The Lion King on Broadway* songs on audio CD**
4. **CD player/speakers**
5. **Chime or bell**

6. A **GRAB-BAG** (a big sock will do) for volunteers to reach into and pull out a Question Card or Reading that they will read to the group, to lead discussion. A Grab-bag is used in Lessons 2, 3, 5, 8, 10, 11.
7. **Materials for constructing TIME CAPSULES** (but recognize that the kids may have their own ideas about what best to use, and that each child may want to acquire different building materials). First use is **Lesson 8**.
8. Purchase or recruit a craftsperson to make "**Remember Who You Are**" **MEMORY POUCHES**. (First use is **Lesson 11**.)
9. Purchase small, beautiful **NOTEBOOKS or journals – enough for each student to have one**. The journals should be the same size and kind, but it is okay to have different colors or patterns. If the covers cannot be written on, then purchase stickers for the students to write their names on, so that the journals can be distributed in each session to their owner without having to be opened to see whose it is.
10. **Borrow or purchase a LOCK BOX big enough to hold the journals** (to store the journals between classes and thus to ensure that they are kept secret).
11. **Download onto a laptop (and possibly burn onto a DVD) the YOUTUBE VIDEO clips** listed below of the stage performance or video collages of several Lion King songs. Suggestion: **Recruit the YOUTH GROUP** to make this DVD (or to figure out how to set up a laptop computer in this way) for you. They will be delighted to do it, to watch these videos themselves, and perhaps to venture into your class to symbolically present it as a gift to their younger peers. Or you can easily download the videos yourself onto your own laptop computer. The software to download YouTube videos is free. Just do a google search for Free Software YouTube Downloader. (Note: the first time any of these videos will be watched is for **Lesson 5**, so there is plenty of time for the Youth Group to take this on.) Below is the list of You-Tube short videos, keyed to Lesson number.

LESSONS 5 & 9: 4 minute You-Tube clip of the stage performance of the Lion King cast singing the song "He Lives in You". This can be found at:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ryhsIEPIUHQ> The You-Tube title is "The Lion King on Broadway - They Live in You (Jason Raize)"

LESSON 7: 4 minute You-Tube video of teens singing additional lyrics to "Circle of Life Sing-Along". This can be found at:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gdP79HLBUjQ>
(Hilary Duff "Circle of Life" Disney's Circle of Stars)

LESSON 9 (optional): 10 minute You-Tube video of Neil de Grasse Tyson (a top astrophysicist) emotionally extolling on

“We are made of stardust” theme. (Note: Neil deGrasse Tyson is the director of Hayden Planetarium in New York City and has been the host of many television science shows.) The You-Tube video is titled, “Neil deGrasse Tyson – The Best Sermon Ever”
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0Ai-VvboPnA>

LESSON 10: 5-minute You-Tube clip of the stage performance of Nala singing “Shadowland.” This can be found at:
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w6OnzytMzL4>
The You-Tube title is “Shadowland”

LESSON 11: 4 minute You-Tube clip – Jason Raize (original Broadway adult Simba) singing “Endless Night”
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f7AeTFYsBgc&NR=1>

LESSON 11: 4 minute You-Tube clip – Broadway Rafiki and adult Simba singing “He Lives in You.” Title: “He Lives in Your (reprise) the view”
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7ZRfjKD8Dck&NR=1>

LESSON 12: 4 minute You-Tube clip of Tony Awards ceremony of the Lion King cast singing a “medley” of Lion King songs.
This can be found at:
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JKAHx2v1ANE&feature=related>
The You-Tube title is “52nd TONY AWARDS THE LION KING”

LESSON 12: 5 minute You-Tube music and video collage set to the song, “He Lives in You.” At “The Lion King—He Lives in You”:
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EDEyMNm6omo>

LESSON 12: 3 minute You-Tube clip “Harry & James Potter [He Lives in You]” song This can be found at:
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NDj3R4bHPVE>

FINALE: 5-minute You-Tube clip of the stage performance of the Lion King cast singing the song “Circle of Life”. This can be found at:
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RXSyJ4CeUXo&feature=related>
The You-Tube title is “Lion King in London @ The BBC”

BACKGROUND READING: *Nature and the Human Soul* (Bill Plotkin, 2008) for the R.E. director, minister, and as gifts to the classroom teachers and volunteers. The book is also highly recommended for parents/guardians of the children. Visit his extensive website on this theme:
<http://www.natureandthehumansoul.com/newbook/default.htm>

SESSIONS: As printed, there are **12 regular hour-long sessions**, plus a **longer Finale**. (Or, Lesson 12 can be split into 2 sessions, thus yielding **13** regular sessions plus a Finale.) The Finale can be a 13th Sunday, with lunch, and into the afternoon. Or it can be a special afternoon/evening program. Or it can be an evening Sleepover. Or it can be two separate programs on

two different Saturdays (or Sunday afternoons) to ensure that all students have a chance to participate in at least part of the Finale. ***If only 10 Sundays are available:*** Combine sessions 11, 12, and the Finale into a Saturday or Sunday or sleep-over event.

COORDINATING WITH THE HIGH SCHOOL YOUTH GROUP:

1. As already mentioned, you can **recruit the Youth Group to burn a DVD for you of the YouTube videos** suggested (plus any others they find themselves of *The Lion King* and that they really like).
2. Because the oldest middle schoolers will be transitting into the Youth Group the following year, it would be great to have **the Youth Group create in advance a welcoming ritual** that they would surprise the Middle Schoolers with during their Finale. Symbolically, it could take the form of their wearing costumes and face paint (like Rafiki?) and crashing the party while actually physically stealing the old middle schoolers away from the rest of the group. Then doing some ceremony with the stolen children and giving each something to symbolize their being welcomed into the Youth Group the following year (possibly something that could go into the "Remember Who You Are" pouches as a memory of this **rite of passage**).
3. The Youth Group might also be the ones to **make the "Remember Who You Are" pouches**, if an adult craftsperson can be recruited to teach them how and to supply the materials and tools.
4. To assist the Youth Group in doing all the above and engage them in their own learnings and reflections, you could have them watch and discuss each Sunday the **Joseph Campbell Power of Myth** series. (Ultimately, a curriculum for Youth should be written that uses that series and that revisits *The Lion King* with a focus on their issues).

DOWNLOAD THE **FREE TEACHER'S GUIDE** AND MATERIALS at:
<http://www.thegreatstory.org/lion-king/intro.html>

Lesson 1: **Circle of Life**

Lesson 2: **Ceremonial Naming & Family Dynamics**

Lesson 3: **Guided Adventures & Learning New Skills**

Lesson 4: **Curiosity, Scary Adventures, & Mistakes**

Lesson 5: **Thinking about Death**

Lesson 6: **Childhood's End**

Lesson 7: **Passage to the Oasis**

Lesson 8: **Thespian at the Oasis**

Lesson 9: **We Are Stardust!**

Lesson 10: **Wanderer in the Cocoon**

Lesson 11: **Remember Who You Are**

Lesson 12: **Out of Adolescence into Visionary Action**

Finale: **Rite of Passage**

8 Mythic Stages of the Human Circle of Life

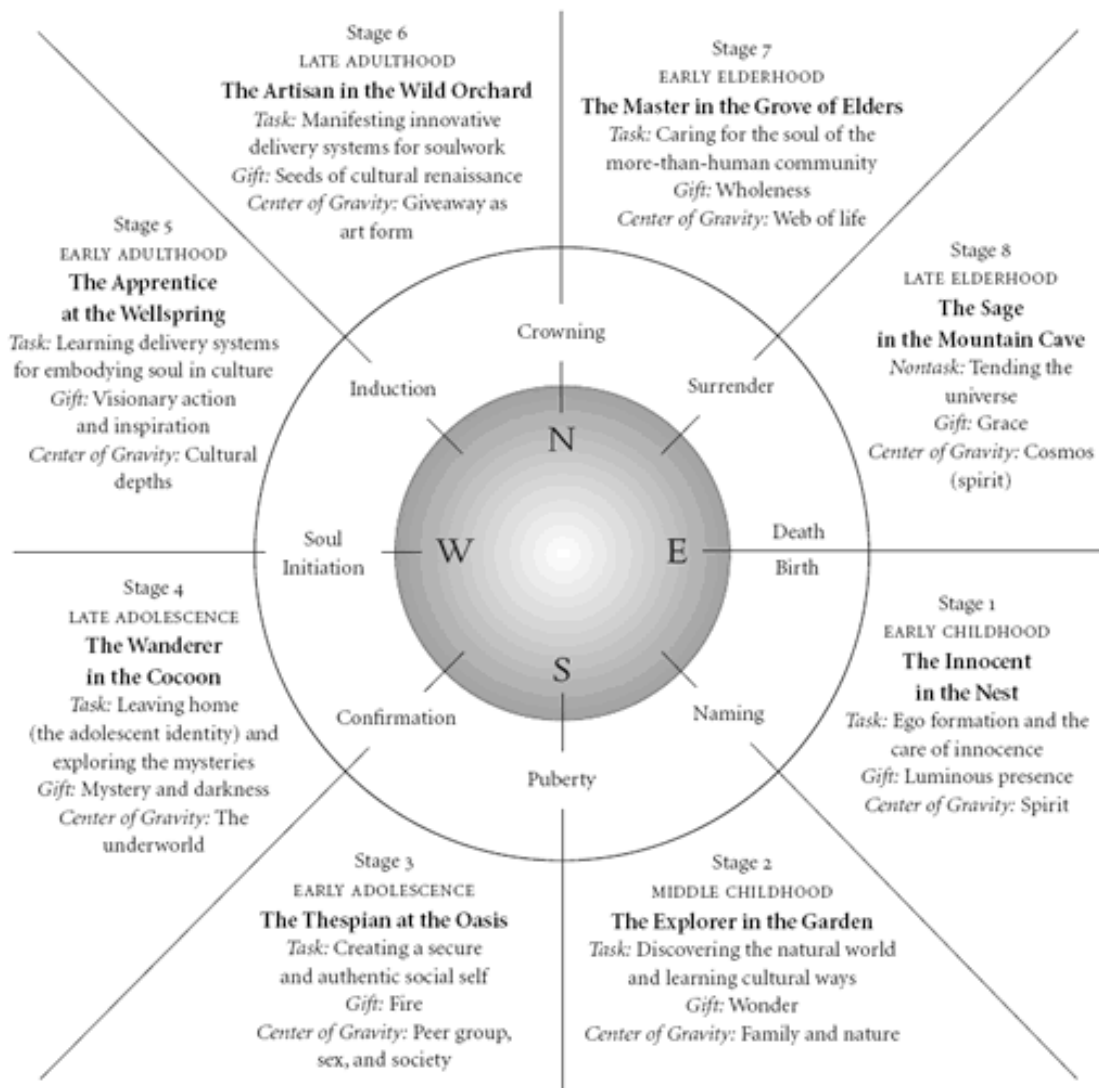


DIAGRAM 3-3: THE EIGHT SOULCENTRIC OR ECOCENTRIC STAGES OF HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

Diagram from p. 61 of *Nature and the Human Soul* (Bill Plotkin, 2008). It is also available at <http://www.natureandthehumansoul.com/newbook/diagrams.htm>

Online materials (and free audio listening of interviews with Bill Plotkin) are also available through his website.

Note: The "Remember Who You Are" curriculum centers on grateful remembrance of Stage 2: "**Explorer in the Garden**" and preparation for entry into Stage 3: "**Thespian at the Oasis**," along with a glimpse of Stages 4 and 5, too.

Note: * signifies sensitive issues; requires 2 trusted adults in class



Lesson 1: **Circle of Life**

DVD extra: "Story Origins" (Disk 2)
Scene 1: "Circle of Life" (Disk 1)



Lesson 2: **Ceremonial Naming & Family Dynamics**

Scene 1: "Circle of Life" (repeat)
Scene 2: "Scar"

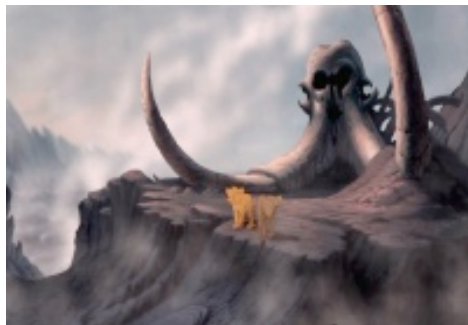
Introduction to Journaling



Lesson 3: **Guided Adventures & Learning New Skills**

Scene 3a: "Father and Son"
Scene 3b: "Morning Report"

Guided Meditation: "Explorer in the Garden"



Lesson 4: **Curiosity, Scary Adventures, & Mistakes** *

Scene 4: "Uncle Scar"
Scene 5: "I Just Can't Wait to be King"
Scene 6: "Elephant Graveyard"

Guided Meditation: "Thespian at the Oasis"
8-Stage Human Circle of Life Diagram



Lesson 5: **Thinking about Death** *

Scene 6: "Elephant Graveyard" (repeat)
Scene 7: "Under the Stars"
YouTube Video: "He Lives in You" Song



Lesson 6: **Childhood's End** *

Ritual: "Remembering the Dead"

Scene 8: "Be Prepared"

Scene 9: "Stampede"

Scene 10: "The King Is Dead"



Lesson 7: **Passage to the Oasis** *

Scene 9: "Stampede" (repeat)

Scene 10: "The King Is Dead" (repeat)

Scene 11: "Scar Takes Over"

Scene 12: "Timon and Pumbaa"

YouTube Video: "Circle of Life" Disney teens



Lesson 8: **Thespian at the Oasis**

Scene 13: "Hakuna Matata"

Scene 14: "Scar in Command"

Project 1: "Time Capsule" (begin)

Project 2: "Circle of Life Recycling" (begin)



Lesson 9: **We Are Stardust!**

Scene 15: "Pumbaa and Timon Wax Philosophical"

YouTube Video: "They Live in You"

YouTube Video (optional): Neil de Grasse Tyson

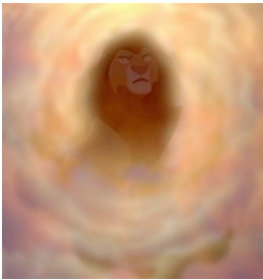
Script-reading: "Lion King"

Script-reading: "Startull" Parable



Lesson 10: **Wanderer in the Cocoon**

Scene 16: "Nala and Simba Reunite"
Scene 17: "Can You Feel the Love Tonight"
Scene 18: "Trouble in Paradise"
YouTube: Nala sings "Shadowland"



Lesson 11: **Remember Who You Are**

Scene 18: "Trouble in Paradise" (repeat)
Scene 19: "He Lives in You"
YouTube Video: Simba sings "Endless Night"
YouTube Video: "He Lives in You" Stage Performance

Project 3: "Remember Who You Are" Pouch (begin)



Lesson 12: **Out of Adolescence into Visionary Action**

Scene 20: "Simba Returns"
Scene 21: "Simba Confronts Scar"
Scene 22: "The Fight"
Scene 23: "Simba Ascends"
Background DVD: Disk 2: "Timeless Themes"
You-Tube Video: "They Live in You" video collage
You-Tube Video: "They Live in You: Harry Potter"
You-Tube Video: "Lion King Song Medley"

Note: **If you have an extra session time available, you can break Lesson 12 into two parts.** End the shortened version of Lesson 12 after "Open Discussion and Journaling." Move the remainder of the lesson into the next week, Lesson 13, and title that session "**Living a Mythic Life.**" Begin that lesson by repeating "Disk 2: Timeless Themes," then moving right into watching the first two You-Tube videos.



Finale: **Rite of Passage**

Video: "Music: African Influence"

Video: Joseph Campbell "Hero's Journey"
(in *Power of Myth* video series)

Finish all Projects

Seal Time Capsules

Other elements of Group Rite of Passage

Weekend event: all afternoon/eve or Sleep-Over