

Follow the Moon

Begin by playing the song “Follow the Moon” and then ask the students to think about a story to go with it. What do they think the story would be about? Do they imagine the character to be a boy, girl, animal? What type of animal? Next define and discuss the word “instinct,” as this is an important theme in the book—animals have the instinct to migrate, humans have the instinct to befriend and care for each other, etc.

The below activities spin off each other and provide a themed unit that could be used to celebrate Earth Day or any day.

“The Circle of Life”

Discuss the life cycle of the Giant Sea Turtle based on the character in book. Research and find photos of turtles and their habitats, as well as maps of where they live. Have small groups of students create posters that describe the life cycle of the Giant Sea Turtle.

“Forever Young”

Have students interview their parents starting with the question “When did you feel like you were finally a grown-up?” Some ideas for interview questions are: when did they first begin having adult responsibilities? when did you first hold a job? when did you first drive a car? when did you first live away from home? before then, who took care of you? how did they feel about leaving your first home?

As a class, chart each student’s findings about their parent’s life cycle, and compare to the Giant Sea Turtle to see when/how different creatures start fending for themselves.

“The Call of the Wild”

Go to the local library or use the internet to compile recordings of various wild animal sounds (i.e. whales, wolves, lions, bears, seals). Play the recordings and have students guess which animals make which sounds.

“Follow the phases of the moon”

Study the various phases of the moon by charting a full cycle in your classroom. For a month, ask students to pay attention to the moon each evening and to notice how it changes. Using a large classroom calendar or chart paper, mark the different phases each day. Talk about the effects of the moon on the tides and weather. Local papers usually list the moon phases daily or weekly.

“Moon Song”

Compile pieces of music that relate to the moon or have the word moon in their names. Play the different songs, and have the children draw pictures of how these songs make them feel or what they think of when they hear them. Then give students various percussion and/or wind instruments and have them create their own moon songs in small groups. Have a classroom concert to share student compositions. If possible, enlist the help of the music teacher to expand on this and perhaps teach beginning music composition.

“Postcards from the edge...of the world”

Divide the class into two groups, one representing the boy character and one representing the turtle character from *Follow the Moon*. Have the two groups write letters to correspond with each other. As a class, decide different locations for the turtle, and research facts about each place. The boy character will write asking questions about the location. For example, “I hear you are now passing through the equator, what is the weather like? Is there much life in the sea there? What have you seen that is most interesting?” The turtle character will write a response using the researched information.

As an extension of this activity, use a world map and pretend that the turtle gets lost and the boy character must correspond to help redirect him home. For example, if the turtle is heading toward the North Atlantic, guide him where to go next. Student answers can be as simple as North, South, East, West or more elaborate depending on the abilities of the students.

“Thank you From the Bottom of my Shell”

Have students write thank you notes in the voice of the turtle thanking the boy for helping him home. Then have students write thank you notes from the boy explaining what he has learned from the experience of helping the turtle.