

Volume 6: The Brightest Star: On "Death and Dying"



Age Group: Elementary (K-5) - *Requires sensitive handling*

Duration: 3-4 weeks

Learning Objectives:

- Address death and loss with compassion
- Develop coping strategies for grief
- Understand life cycles and transitions
- Build emotional resilience

Classroom Activities:

- Memory circles for loved ones
- Create comfort kits for grieving
- Nature walks discussing life cycles
- Art therapy for expressing feelings

Assessment:

Students demonstrate understanding through compassionate responses to scenarios

Volume 6: "The Brightest Star: On Death & Dying"

4-Week Implementation Plan

Important Teacher Preparation Notes:

- **Sensitivity Required:** This volume addresses death and dying with elementary-aged children
 - **Parent Communication:** Send home notification letter before beginning this unit
 - **Support Resources:** Have school counselor available during lessons
 - **Cultural Awareness:** Be mindful of diverse cultural/religious perspectives on death
 - **Trauma-Informed:** Some students may have recent loss experiences
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Week 1: Understanding Life Cycles

Lesson 6.1: The Circle of Life (Day 1)

Objective: Introduce natural life cycles in age-appropriate way

Materials: Book, nature photos, life cycle diagrams, plants/flowers

Preparation: Review student files for recent losses; prepare gentle language

Opening (10 min):

- Read pages 1-8 about Tai learning from his grandmother
- Introduce the concept that all living things have a beginning, middle, and end
- Show examples from nature (flowers, seasons, butterflies)

Activity (15 min):

- "Nature's Cycles" exploration - examine plants, leaves, flowers in different stages
- Create simple life cycle wheels (butterfly, plant, seasons)
- Discuss how endings lead to new beginnings in nature

Practice (10 min):

- Gentle breathing exercise to process new concepts
- "Gratitude for Life" meditation focusing on being alive today

Closing (10 min):

- Circle sharing: "One thing I'm grateful for in my life today"
- Reassurance that we're learning about natural processes

Assessment: Students can identify life cycles in nature

Homework: Notice life cycles in nature at home (optional family discussion)

Lesson 6.2: When Someone We Love Dies (Day 2)

Objective: Address death of loved ones with compassion and understanding

Materials: Memory boxes, photos, soft tissues, comfort items

Preparation: Have counselor on standby; create safe, comfortable environment

Opening (10 min):

- Review nature cycles from yesterday
- Read pages 9-16 about Tai's neighbor who became ill and died
- Acknowledge that sometimes people we love die, and it's very sad

Activity (20 min):

- "Memory Treasures" - discuss how we keep loved ones in our hearts
- Create memory boxes for anyone they've lost (pets, grandparents, etc.)
- Share only if comfortable - no pressure to participate

Practice (10 min):

- "Sending Love" visualization - imagine sending love to someone who died
- Breathing exercise for when we feel sad

Closing (5 min):

- Affirm that it's okay to feel sad, angry, or confused about death
- Remind students of trusted adults they can talk to

Assessment: Students express understanding that death is part of life

Home Connection: Optional letter to parents about memory activities

Lesson 6.3: Feelings About Death (Day 3)

Objective: Normalize and validate emotions related to death and loss

Materials: Emotion cards, art supplies, journals, calming music

Preparation: Review grief stages appropriate for children

Opening (10 min):

- Check in on how students are feeling about yesterday's lesson
- Read pages 17-24 about different feelings when someone dies
- Validate that all feelings are normal and okay

Activity (20 min):

- "Feeling Faces" - identify emotions related to loss (sad, angry, confused, scared)
- Art therapy: draw or color feelings about death/loss
- No judgment - all expressions are valid

Practice (10 min):

- "Comfort Breathing" - special breathing for when we feel overwhelmed
- Practice self-soothing techniques (gentle self-hug, positive self-talk)

Closing (5 min):

- Affirm that talking about feelings helps us heal
- Remind students of support resources

Assessment: Students can identify and express emotions appropriately

Reflection: Private journal entry about feelings (optional)

Week 2: Coping and Healing

Lesson 6.4: Ways to Remember and Honor (Day 4)

Objective: Learn healthy ways to remember and honor those who have died

Materials: Craft supplies, photo frames, memory books, candles (battery-operated)

Preparation: Gather examples of memorial traditions from various cultures

Opening (10 min):

- Share any memory box experiences from home (voluntary)
- Read pages 25-32 about ways Tai's family remembers their neighbor
- Discuss different cultural ways people remember loved ones

Activity (20 min):

- Create memorial crafts: photo frames, memory booklets, or remembrance stones
- "Celebration of Life" concept - remembering happy times
- Share traditions from students' families (if comfortable)

Practice (10 min):

- "Gratitude for Memories" meditation
- Practice saying "thank you" to someone who has died

Closing (5 min):

- Display memorial crafts respectfully
- Emphasize that love continues even after death

Assessment: Students create meaningful memorial project

Home Extension: Share memorial traditions with family

Lesson 6.5: Introduction to Healing Arts (Day 5)

Objective: Introduce gentle healing practices for grief and comfort

Materials: Essential oils (child-safe), soft music, comfort items, flower essence information

Preparation: Review Bach Flower Remedies and aromatherapy basics for children

Opening (10 min):

- Check in on memorial projects and feelings
- Read about grandmother teaching Tai about healing arts
- Introduce concept of natural ways to feel better

Activity (20 min):

- Aromatherapy Introduction: Safe scents for comfort (lavender, vanilla)
- Bach Flower Remedy Concept: Flowers that help with feelings (simplified)
- Gentle Touch: Self-massage for comfort (hands, shoulders)

Practice (10 min):

- "Healing Garden" visualization with calming scents
- Practice comfort techniques they can use at home

Closing (5 min):

- Create personal "comfort kit" list
- Emphasize natural ways to heal emotional pain

Assessment: Students identify comfort techniques that work for them Home

Practice: Try one comfort technique with family

Week 3: Supporting Others and Community

Lesson 6.6: How to Help Someone Who is Grieving (Day 6)

Objective: Learn age-appropriate ways to support others experiencing loss

Materials: Sympathy card supplies, kindness coupons, role-play scenarios

Preparation: Create simple scenarios appropriate for elementary age

Opening (10 min):

- Discuss times when friends or family might be sad about death

- Read about how Tai learns to help others who are grieving
- Emphasize that even children can offer comfort

Activity (20 min):

- "Kindness Helpers" role-play: appropriate ways to help
- Create sympathy cards or "thinking of you" notes

Practice phrases like "I'm sorry for your loss" and "I care about you"

Practice (10 min):

- "Sending Kindness" meditation for someone who is sad
- Practice being a good listener

Closing (5 min):

- Discuss when to get adult help for someone who is very sad
- Celebrate their caring hearts

Assessment: Students demonstrate appropriate supportive behaviors

Community Connection: Plan kindness acts for school community

Lesson 6.7: Death Doula Concept - "Comfort Helpers" (Day 7)

Objective: Introduce the concept of people who help during end-of-life (age-appropriate)

Materials: Community helper pictures, comfort items, gentle stories

Preparation: Adapt death doula concept for elementary understanding

Opening (10 min):

- Review ways they've learned to help others
- Introduce "Comfort Helpers" - special people who help families when someone is dying
- Compare to other community helpers (doctors, teachers, firefighters)

Activity (15 min):

- "Community Helpers for Hard Times" discussion
- Learn about hospice workers, chaplains, counselors (simplified)
- Understand that many people work together to help families

Practice (15 min):

- "Being a Comfort Helper" role-play with peers
- Practice offering comfort through presence, not just words

Closing (5 min):

- Affirm that they can be "junior comfort helpers" in their own families
- Emphasize the importance of caring for others

Assessment: Students understand concept of professional helpers during difficult times

Reflection: Write about how they want to help others

Week 4: Integration and Moving Forward

Lesson 6.8: Living Fully After Loss (Day 8)

Objective: Understand how to continue living joyfully while remembering those who died

Materials: Life celebration supplies, goal-setting materials, hope symbols

Preparation: Focus on resilience and post-traumatic growth concepts for children

Opening (10 min):

- Reflect on journey through this difficult topic
- Read final pages about Tai learning to live fully while remembering
- Discuss how people who die would want us to be happy

Activity (20 min):

- "Living for Two" concept - living fully to honor those who can't
- Create "Life Celebration" plans - things they want to do and experience
- Set goals inspired by loved ones who have died

Practice (10 min):

- "Bright Future" visualization meditation
- Practice gratitude for life and opportunities

Closing (5 min):

- Celebrate their courage in learning about difficult topics
- Affirm their strength and resilience

Assessment: Students express understanding of continuing to live fully

Future Planning: Set personal goals for living meaningfully

Lesson 6.9: Creating a Legacy of Love (Day 9)

Objective: Understand how we can create positive impact that lasts **Materials:** Legacy project supplies, time capsule materials, letter-writing supplies **Preparation:** Prepare examples of positive legacies appropriate for children

Opening (10 min):

- Discuss what "legacy" means in simple terms
- Explore how everyone can leave positive marks on the world

Read about how Tai wants to help others like his grandmother helped him

Activity (20 min):

- "My Legacy Project" - choose one way to make a positive difference
- Options: kindness campaign, helping younger students, environmental project
- Create action plans for their chosen legacy projects

Practice (10 min):

- "Future Impact" visualization - imagine their positive influence
- Commitment ceremony for their legacy projects

Closing (5 min):

- Share legacy project commitments
- Celebrate their desire to make a difference

Assessment: Students create meaningful legacy project plans **Long-term:** Implement legacy projects throughout the year

Final Lesson 6.10: Celebration and Closure (Day 10)

Objective: Celebrate growth and provide closure for difficult topic **Materials:** Certificates, celebration supplies, memory book of their learning **Preparation:** Create celebration that honors their emotional growth

Opening (15 min):

- Reflect on their journey through all six Young Ninja volumes
- Acknowledge their bravery in learning about death and dying
- Share growth observations from teacher perspective

Activity (20 min):

- "Wisdom Circle" - students share what they learned
- Create class memory book of their learning journey
- Celebrate their emotional intelligence and resilience

Practice (10 min):

- "Gratitude for Growth" meditation

- **Final ninja breathing exercise incorporating all techniques learned**

Closing (10 min):

- **Present "Young Ninja Wisdom" certificates**
- **Affirm their readiness to handle life's challenges**
- **Remind them of ongoing support resources**

Final Assessment: Portfolio review of all work from Volume 6

Celebration: Small ceremony honoring their emotional growth