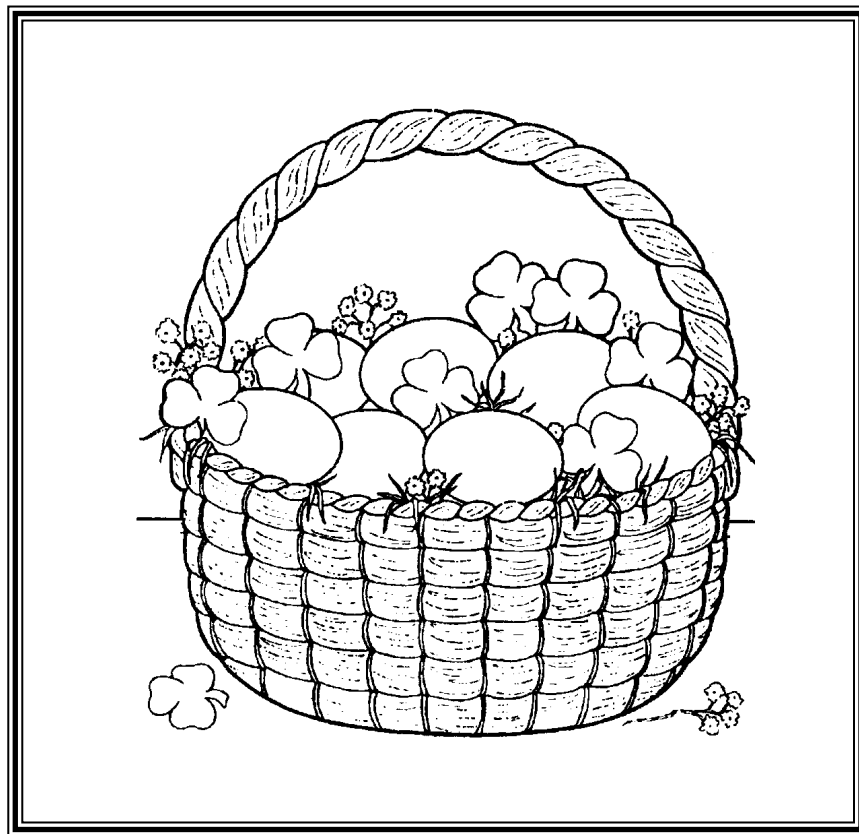


THEMATIC UNIT

Easter and St. Patrick's Day

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6421 Industry Way

Westminster, CA 92683

www.teachercreated.com

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Reprinted, 2000

Made in U.S.A.

ISBN-1-55734-261-X

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Introduction

Easter and St. Patrick's Day is a complete whole language, thematic unit celebrating spring holidays. Its 80 exciting, reproducible pages are filled with a wide variety of lesson ideas designed for use with primary children. At its core are two high-quality literature selections: *The Tale of Peter Rabbit* and *Leprechauns Never Lie*. Activities are included which set the stage for reading, encourage the enjoyment of the book, and extend the concepts gained. In addition, the theme is connected to the curriculum with activities in language arts, math, science, social studies, art, music, and life skills. Many of these activities encourage cooperative learning. Suggestions and patterns for a bulletin board and unit management tools are additional time savers for the busy teacher. Furthermore, directions for student-created Big Books and a culminating activity, which allows students to synthesize their knowledge in order to produce products that can be shared beyond the classroom, highlight this very complete teacher resource.

This thematic unit includes:

- literature selections**—summaries of two children's books with related lessons (complete with reproducible pages) that cross the curriculum
- writing and language experience ideas**—daily suggestions as well as writing activities across the curriculum, including Big Books
- poetry**—suggested selections and lessons enabling students to write and publish their own works
- curriculum connections**—in language arts, math, science, social studies, art, music, and life skills
- group projects**—to foster cooperative learning
- bulletin board ideas**—suggestions for student-created and/or interactive bulletin boards
- a culminating activity**—which requires students to synthesize their learning to produce a product or engage in an activity that can be shared with others
- a bibliography**—suggesting additional literature and nonfiction books on the theme

To keep this valuable resource intact so that it can be used year after year, you may wish to punch holes in the pages and store them in a three-ring binder.

Introduction *(cont.)*

Why Whole Language?

A whole language approach involves children in using all modes of communication: reading, writing, listening, observing, illustrating, experiencing, and doing. Communication skills are interconnected and integrated into lessons that emphasize the whole of language rather than isolating its parts. The lessons revolve around selected literature. Reading is not taught as a separate subject from writing and spelling, for example. A child reads, writes (spelling appropriately for his/her level), speaks, listens, etc. in response to a literature experience introduced by the teacher. In this way, language skills grow naturally, stimulated by involvement and interest in the topic at hand.

Why Thematic Planning?

One very useful tool for implementing an integrated whole language program is thematic planning. By choosing a theme with correlating literature selections for a unit of study, a teacher can plan activities throughout the day that lead to a cohesive, in-depth study of the topic. Students will be practicing and applying their skills in meaningful contexts. Consequently, they tend to learn and retain more. Both teachers and students will be freed from a day that is broken into unrelated segments of isolated drill and practice.

Why Cooperative Learning?

Besides academic skills and content, students need to learn social skills. No longer can this area of development be taken for granted. Students must learn to work cooperatively in groups in order to function well in modern society. Group activities should be a regular part of school life and teachers should consciously include social objectives as well as academic objectives in their planning. For example, a group working together to write a report may need to select a leader. The teacher should make clear to the students and monitor the qualities of good leader-follower group interaction just as he/she would state and monitor the academic goals of the projects.

Why Big Books?

Big Books serve as excellent cooperative learning projects for children. They allow children to gain experience in reading, writing, spelling, and illustrating. Because of their size, Big Books are easily shared with groups of children or the entire class. There are several suggestions for Big Books throughout this thematic unit.

Why Journals?

Each day your students should have the opportunity to write in a journal. They may respond to a book, write about a personal experience or answer a general “question of the day” posed by the teacher. Students should be encouraged to refer to the posted vocabulary list to check their spelling. Teachers may read journals every day or choose to alternate days for boys and girls. This cumulative journal provides an excellent means of documenting writing progress.

Leprechauns Never Lie

by Lorna Balian

Summary

A lazy girl and her ailing grandmother live in a poor hut and have little to eat. Ninny Nanny (the girl) determines to catch a leprechaun, believing that he would lead her to a pot of gold. She traps a leprechaun who tricks her into doing chores that improve their living conditions. Though her search for gold is unsuccessful, the girl and her Gramm once again are warm and have food to eat. The crafty leprechaun is released to dig up his pot of gold and run away.

The plan below suggests a schedule for using the activities in this unit. You may adapt it to your situation.

Sample Plan

Day 1

- Read *Leprechauns Never Lie* to page 3 where Gramm says “What am I to do with such a lazy child?”
- Predict Ninny Nanny’s responses to that question.
- Write a journal entry about Ninny Nanny and her idea for getting money.
- Continue reading to page 15 where the wee man says “Leprechauns never lie.”
- Discuss the problems of lying. Is it ever alright to lie?

Day 2

- Finish reading the story. Discuss the outcome.
- Write a journal entry about how Ninny Nanny was tricked.
- Make a wee little green book describing the leprechaun.
- Make the leprechaun marionette. (pages 13–15)
- Prepare shamrock jigglers. (page 65)

Day 3

- Share nonfiction books about Ireland.
- Color the flag and map of Ireland. List facts about Ireland. (pages 54-55)

- Read examples of limericks. (page 33)
- Prepare potato soup. (page 65)
- Write a language experience story about ways to prepare potatoes.
- Make a graph showing favorite ways to eat potatoes. (page 8)

Day 4

- Reread the entire story. If desired, pass out foil covered chocolate coins.
- Rewrite the ending to tell what would have been different if Ninny Nanny had found the gold. How would their lives have changed?
- Have groups of children work together to make a diorama of the hut.
- Brainstorm a list of things that are naturally green.
- Make St. Patrick’s Day pop-up cards. (page 56–57)

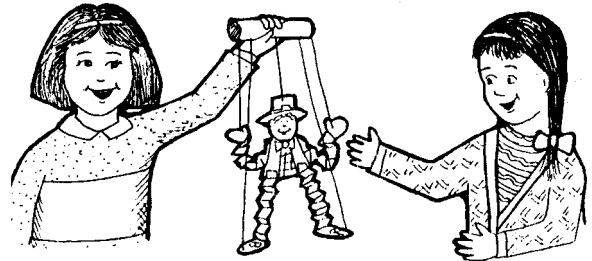
Day 5

- Act out the story with creative dramatics. Use a marionette for the leprechaun.
- Rewrite the story in a Big Book with the cat as narrator.
- Do the Vocabulary matching worksheet. (page 37)

Overview of Activities

SETTING THE STAGE

1. Explain some of the history associated with leprechauns. Point out that some of the language in this book is unusual because the story takes place in Ireland.
2. Locate Ireland on a world map and show its proximity to where you live. Compare the size of the two countries and emphasize that Ireland is very small.



ENJOYING THE BOOK

1. Read the book up to page 3 where Gramm says “What am I going to do with such a lazy child?” Ask the children to predict Ninny Nanny’s response. Ask what they think Gramm should do.
2. Have children keep a journal. Several sheets of paper stapled together with a cover on it will serve. Let each student write an entry about Ninny Nanny and her plan to get money. Is it a reasonable plan? Would you think as she did?
3. Discuss the title *Leprechauns Never Lie*. Do you know anyone who never lies? Is it ever alright to lie? Do you like children who lie? Why do people lie?
4. Finish reading the story. Write a journal entry about Ninny Nanny. What do you think of her? Would you want her for a friend? Is she intelligent? How do you know? Pass out foil covered chocolate coins to represent the leprechaun’s treasure.
5. Make the leprechaun marionettes (pages 13-15).
6. Rewrite the story assuming that Ninny Nanny found the gold. How would Gramm react? How would their lives change?
7. Make a shoe box diorama of the hut. Include as many details as possible from the story. Each group of children should show their dioramas to the class and explain what they made.
8. Find two girls who would like to act out the story with a marionette as the leprechaun. For variety select two boys, rename them and have them recreate the story.

