

# *Snow!*

*Waldorf Curriculum  
Preschool Newsletter*

*December 14, 2005*

# ACTIVITIES

As you well know, spending time with children is always rewarding. It can help you to see the world around you in a whole new way and to value things that you may take for granted or consider perfectly ordinary. On the other hand, when you are entirely responsible for their care, even small children can be intimidating. Just what do you do with them all day? This newsletter is here to help – whether you're a parent, grandparent, babysitter, caregiver, neighbor, or anyone acting as a substitute teacher and spending the day with a preschool-aged child.

The following sections will give some suggested activities for this week's theme as well as methodology and ideas for preparation.

## **Opening Verse**

The Waldorf method places a strong emphasis on establishing rhythms throughout the day which give a comfortable sense of order and security to a child's life. One of these is to start your day (or your time together) with a short meditation called an opening verse. Choose a place which is clean and orderly; children are deeply sensitive to their environments and are unable to feel calm in the midst of chaos. Lighting a candle while you say the verse is customary, as this helps to establish a reflective atmosphere. Even if you choose not to do light a candle, the opening verse will be a transition for the child into your care. After you declare yourselves to be "ready now for work and learning", you can blow out the candle and begin your day!

Opening Verse:  
In the morning at the sunrise  
When the light of day doth break,  
Children's souls, by angels guided,  
Sleep from rested body shake,  
Ready now for work and learning,  
Happy, steady, and awake.

## **A Wintry Walk**

The first thing to do when it snows is to put on your boots, hat, mittens, scarf, and coat and go for a walk outdoors with your children. Let them play freely with the snow and enjoy it. Observe what it is that they seem to like best about the snow, and then plan your activities around that. Of course, you'll want to have some snow books on hand in advance. Here are some we recommend:

## Stories

Choose from among the stories for this week

Is That You, Winter?

Stephen Gammell

The Snow Tree

Caroline Repchuk

Snow on Snow on Snow

Cheryl Chapman

White Snow, Bright Snow

Alvin R. Tresselt

Snow

Uri Shulevitz

## Helping

The simplest activities are often the best. My daughter loves taking a soft broom and brushing the pile of snow off the bumpers of the car. She helped my mother with this when she was two years old; it hasn't lost its appeal now. Beautiful handmade Amish whisk brooms last for years:

<http://lehmans.com/shopping/product/detailmain.jsp?itemID=8&itemType=PRODUCT&RS=1&keyword=whisk>

Just for fun, read some broom lore at [http://www.victortradingco.com/broom\\_lore.htm](http://www.victortradingco.com/broom_lore.htm)

## Crunching

The activities of this newsletter are inspired by watching my three ½ year old daughter playing in the snow this morning. Of course your own children may come up with new and wonderful ideas; feel free to share them by writing to the Group at [waldorfcriculum@yahoo.com](mailto:waldorfcriculum@yahoo.com).

More than any other thing, my daughter seemed to love the sounds of snow. Crunching through the snow piled on top of layers of Autumn leaves was her absolute favorite activity. Try this, first walking as quietly as you can, then as loudly as you can. Stomp, stomp!

She was also thrilled to discover the footprints left by her sister and loved to walk carefully placing her foot in each impression, following along the same path. You can also leave a trail of footprints for her to follow and walk in silly ways – forwards, backwards, around in circles, and imitate each other.

After this you may enjoy reading the story of Winnie the Pooh going round and round the spinney with Piglet and discovering the mysterious tracks of the animals which seem to be in front of them. This is in the first volume of Pooh stories and is called "In Which Pooh and Piglet Go Hunting and Nearly Catch a Woozle". This story is also available online at <http://winnie-the-pooh.ru/stories/english/woozle/>

## **Tasting**

We went walking with our dachshund who was eating the snow as he went. Natalie was very curious about this and finally got on all fours and took a bite. She ended up with snow on her nose, just as the dog did!

When snow is falling it is also traditional to try to catch snowflakes on your tongue.

## **Touching**

Although you may want to pack mittens for later, when your children's hands get cold, let them walk with bare hands for a while. They will gain a lot more by the experience of touching snow if they can actually feel it, the temperature, the texture. Snow is an amazing substance.

With mittens on you can roll the snow up into balls and have a snowball fight or build a snowman.

## **Melting**

If your children are too young to stay outside in the snow for long, bring a container of snow indoors for them to play with. Not only is this fun, but it is amazing for children to watch the snow melt back into water.

You can also take a Nature walk later in the day (or on another day) as the sun begins to melt the snow. Touch the trickles of water running down the roadway, listen to the sound of melting snow dripping from the gutters, watch the big chunks of snow crash down from the trees overhead as it slowly gets warmer.

## **Hitting**

One of my favorite activities as a child was to hit a snow-laden branch with a stick and try to jump back before any of the snow fell on me. I don't know what was so satisfying about watching it fall. Try shaking the snow off pine branches and watch it shower down all around you. Although this is simple, your child will find it a lot of fun!

## **Cooking**

Who can forget the scene in Little House in the Big Woods where they make maple syrup candy? Read this chapter with your child, then try it yourselves.

## Storybook Art

I highly recommend the purchase of Storybook Art: Hands-On Art for Children in the Styles of 100 Great Picture Book Illustrators by MaryAnn Kohl for any homeschooling family. All of the featured stories this week have corresponding Art activities which you can do with your child:

### **Is That You, Winter?**

Winter Mist activity, page 21

### **The Snow Tree**

Embossed Drawing activity, page 54

### **Snow on Snow on Snow**

Cut & Paste Scene activity, page 86

### **White Snow, Bright Snow**

Crystal Snowflake activity, page 96

### **Snow**

Snowy Layers activity, page 112

This book also contains activities for other winter/snow picture books, including:

<u>The Polar Express</u>	by Chris Van Allsburg	p.34
<u>Grandmother Winter</u>	by Phyllis Root	p.52
<u>The Snowy Day</u>	by Ezra Jack Keats	p.75
<u>The Mitten</u>	by Alvin R. Tresselt	p.80
<u>'Twas the Night Before Christmas</u>	illus. by Robert Sabuda	p.109

## The Nature Table

With the first snowfall of the season, changes are in order for the Nature table. You can either gently tease some natural colored wool into a thin layer and drape it over your existing wintry scene, or set up a new display entirely.

We like to lay down a white silk embroidered with silver stars and then set our Winter tree on top. This is an iron tree from Smith & Hawken

<http://www.smithandhawken.com/jhtml/site/catalog/Product.jhtml?PROID=20565&CATID=24356&PARENTCATID=#n1>

which we decorate with glass icicles and wool. Laying some wool around the base of the tree, we like to nestle pine cones and small wood figures (deer) in the "snow".

Magic Cabin has a new item of seasonal silks, which come in a set of 4 and work well for the Nature table.

[http://www.magiccabin.com/magiccabin/product.do?section\\_id=0&bc=1004&pgc=698&cmvalue=MCD|0|Normal%20Search%20Result|P1](http://www.magiccabin.com/magiccabin/product.do?section_id=0&bc=1004&pgc=698&cmvalue=MCD|0|Normal%20Search%20Result|P1)

As always, your table should include items which you have picked up on your Nature walks and should reflect what the season means for you and your family.

As an aside, the iron tree has been a wonderful solution to the question of a live tree vs. a plastic one: <http://www.bayweekly.com/year05/issuexiii48/earthtalkxiii48.html>

and is easy to take apart and store. It can also be used to hang ornaments at other times of the year, such as at Easter.



One Room Schoolhouse:

An older child may wish to whittle some figures for the Nature table, such as deer or other Winter animals, or to carve a Winter landscape to hang upon the wall.

### **Closing Verse**

Use this verse to end your time together on a high note, striving to go forth and made the rest of the day a good one. Like the opening verse, lighting a candle is customary and provides a sense of closure. When the candle is blown out, you will go forward feeling positive about the next thing to come your way.

The golden sun so great and bright  
Warms the world with all its might.  
It makes the dark earth green and fair,  
Attends each thing with ceaseless care.  
It shines on blossom, stone, and tree,  
On bird and beast, on you and me.  
So may each deed throughout the day,  
May everything we do and say  
Be bright and strong and true,  
Oh, golden sun, like you!

# OTHER IDEAS

## **Cooking**

In general, we do not recommend specific cooking activities because many children and families have restricted diets such as vegan or vegetarian, gluten-free, kosher, etc. However, cooking is always a wonderful activity for a child to participate in. Bearing in mind any food allergies, and common-sense kitchen safety, consider preparing a simple recipe with the child. Children love to wash vegetables, measure and mix ingredients, and set the table for a meal. Preparing and eating a snack is always popular!

## **Play**

Don't forget the many benefits of unguided imaginative play. You need to stay nearby for safety's sake, if the child is in an unfamiliar environment or you aren't certain what should or should not be childproofed. All children need daily time to play. In the preschool years, play is the WORK of the young child. Prepare an appropriate play space and then stay out of it as much as you can; give the child the simplest and highest quality toys you can find such as large pieces of cloth, blocks, dolls, and materials from nature (such as pinecones, feathers, or shells). Avoid plastic toys. Consider a basin of water and some measuring cups or add some dish detergent and give the child a whisk. The more open-ended a material, the more of the child will be brought forth in playing with it. The more structured a material, the less will be required of the child – and the less he will grow and develop when playing with it. As a simple test, try playing with the toys yourself. If you find you tire of a thing quickly, so will a child!

## **Helping**

Helping around the home is an essential part of any Waldorf curriculum. It is not necessary to put a child in front of the television while you do the dishes or sort the laundry into lights and darks; let the child help you. Even if you have an automatic dishwasher, a child can help by rinsing the dishes before they are loaded. Children love to do work that they know is truly helpful and all young children thrive in situations where they are allowed to imitate an adult. Washing the dog, washing the car, sweeping or dusting, repotting houseplants, feeding the cats, setting and clearing the table... all of these are wonderful activities to do with a preschool-aged child.

# PLANNER

**Activities:** highlight the activities you would like to do

Opening Verse

A Wintry Walk

Stories

- Is That You, Winter? by Stephen Gammell
- The Snow Tree by Caroline Repchuk
- Snow on Snow on Snow by Cheryl Chapman
- White Snow, Bright Snow by Alvin R. Tresselt
- Snow by Uri Shulevitz

Helping

Crunching

Tasting

Touching

Melting

Hitting

Cooking

- Little House in the Big Woods by Laura Ingalls Wilder

Art

- Storybook Art by MaryAnn F. Kohl

The Nature Table

Other Ideas

Closing Verse



# PLANNER

**Book List:**

list the books you will be reading  
feel free to substitute other books you may have on hand  
which relate to this theme

**Materials:**

list all materials required for your chosen activities

# RESOURCES

If your child enjoyed the Snow! newsletter topic, visit our website at [www.waldorfcriculum.com](http://www.waldorfcriculum.com) to download Water in the World, a six-week Preschool unit designed to be taught during the Winter.

Learn about

- water in the world,
- the power of steam,
- water and the weather, and
- water as a life giving force.

This unit also features

- collage, as the Art focus
- quilting, as the Handwork focus, and
- container gardening, as the Nature focus.

All of our preschool curriculum materials are available for download free through our website. Thank you for your support of Waldorf Curriculum!

Please feel free to contact me at any time at [waldorf\\_curric@yahoo.com](mailto:waldorf_curric@yahoo.com).