

INTRODUCTION
For PARENTS

Teaching the Joy of Imagination and Creativity

The games, the stories, the activities of the lesson plans that follow are designed to help children discover the delightful and amazing world of imagination and to learn to draw on and find joy in their creative abilities.

Concept

Albert Einstein said, “The true sign of intelligence is not knowledge but imagination,” and “It is the supreme art of the teacher to awaken joy in creative expression.” and “Logic will take you from A to B. Imagination will take you everywhere.”

Think with us for a moment about how relevant (and how joyful) the art of imagination and creativity can be in an adult life.

Through their imaginations, children can be anywhere and do anything. Their imaginations are passports to learning and understanding as well as to adventure. It is important to distinguish at the outset, that the joys interest and curiosity are joys to preserve in children, and even though all children are endowed with varying degrees of imagination and creativity it is a joy that can be nurtured and actually taught. .

In Unit 7, as you taught about the Joy of Wonder, the main challenge was to reinforce and encourage and build up the natural curiosity that almost all small children have. This month we are dealing with a joy that children have enormous aptitude for and inclination toward, but that they must learn before it is actually theirs.

The games, the stories, the activities of the lesson plans that follow are designed to help children discover the delightful and amazing world of imagination and to learn to draw on and find joy in their creative abilities. This is an important joy. A child who develops a creative and constructive imagination will become an adult who can solve problems, who enjoys challenges, and who is his own man or woman.

One who can imagine will see the less obvious, find the more unusual, do the less common. A child who imagines will become an adult with less pain and less adjustment. Imagination is the magic “learning tunnel” that sometimes lets people learn without actually experiencing.

Conversely, you have worked during the year with your children to help them learn order and

neatness. This month you must remember that, at times, total order and neatness have to be temporarily sacrificed in the worthy cause of creativity. Children who are painting or sculpting or involved in anything where they are letting themselves go and where they are really creating may make something of a mess. We need to be wise enough to distinguish a creative mess from an unnecessary one.

Enjoy the unit, teachers! Let it be a time to expand your own imagination and creativity. It can make the world a more beautiful place. There is nothing trivial or unimportant about this joy. Remember that a child who imagines will become an adult who creates, who solves problems with lateral thinking and with innovative solutions.

Too many of us think of imagination as impractical or irrelevant. In a world where children grow up to be not only artists, but also engineers, consultants, computer programmers, and perhaps many other things that you and I haven't yet dreamed of, imagination may be the best and most practical training they could have.

Children love to discover that adults have imaginations. This unit is your chance to show them yours. Many years ago, I went up to tuck the two little girls in bed one night after shoveling the snow from the front walk. I still had on my big, white furry coat, so I pulled the hood down over my face and announced myself as "Polar Bear," come from the North Pole to tell a bedtime story. Since then, Polar Bear just has to come back once a month or so – alternating with other characters made up from very slight disguises and very big imaginations. These characters continue to spark our grown children's imaginations and remind me of my own.

Tips and Reminders

1. Be sure you have read the Joy School Introductory Manual.
2. Read the corresponding chapter in *Teaching Your Children Joy* by Richard and Linda Eyre, so you will better understand the joy you are trying to teach. (Free copies can be found at eyresfreebooks.com) The chapter corresponding to this unit is Chapter 5.
3. Remember to read the "Notes to Parents" to the children each day before they go home. Then staple or paper clip them on their art/craft project.
4. A supply of dress-up clothes would be good to have available for imaginative play . . . any or all of the following: Old hats, purses, gloves, skirts, ties, aprons, scarves, shoes, jewelry, wigs, jackets, capes.
5. During this unit, we don't want to confuse any child's conception of the difference between reality and fantasy, but we do want to help children to discover the remarkable things their minds can create (both in terms of things to think about:

imagination, stories, etc., and in terms of things to do: painting, dancing, dramatizing and other actions of creativity).

6. Throughout this unit emphasize “doing your own thing.” Try to get the children to think for themselves and not copy others.
7. Praise each child who is original in his artwork, his dancing, his problem solving, his actions, etc. When you demonstrate an art project or a body movement or anything, say, “This is my way of doing it,” or, “This is the way I want my picture to be, but yours doesn’t need to be like mine, does it? You make yours the way you want it to be. Use your own mind to think of good ways to do things.”
8. There are several cute songs with actions for this unit. A couple of them we hope will become part of the child’s “fiber.” Others are for listening to and imagining with!
9. Some lesson plans purposely have very few visual aids so as to stimulate the child’s own “imaginary” visual aids.
10. There are many ideas in this unit as well as many alternative suggestions. Choose the ones that work best for you. Don’t worry about getting through getting through all the ideas. Just do what works and let it take the time needed to create real imagination and creativity.
11. There are many excellent children’s books about imagination and creativity in addition to the ones suggested below. Ask your local librarian for ideas. Try to have several extra ones on hand for the children to explore, and to read to them if time allows.
12. Like Unit 7, there is often much more material provided than could be used during a Joy School day (or even two). Take some time to carefully plan your lessons and to leave adequate time to let the children really enjoy what they are doing and learning. You can always revisit unused material next year or at home with your family.

Lesson Overviews

Some units of Joy School follow a very organized sequence of instruction . . . one phase leading to the next, etc. Not so with this unit.

The six lessons of this unit are a little like a smorgasbord of widely varied approaches to imagination and creativity. Somehow, highly sequential or meticulously organized format seem to work against the kind of spontaneity called for by a unit on free creativity and unfettered

imagination.

In a general way, however, the first week focuses principally on imagination, the second week on creativity, and the third week on how the two (imagination and creativity) combine to produce joy. The two words (imagination and creativity) need to be defined and understood in the children's minds. Various techniques, particularly songs and stories herein, will help you to teach the meaning of these words.

Joy School parents are usually, by definition, creative. You will be encouraged to use your own ideas in addition to the ones in the lessons.

Lesson 8.1 Your Imagination is a Wonderful Place

An introduction to the unit with some imagination led stories and some dramatization of well known tales.

Lesson 8.2 It's Fun to Pretend

This lesson is a fun range of activities that lead the children to pretend to be something they are not.

Lesson 8.3 You Are Creative

The children will learn about what it means to be creative in artistic, scientific, academic, and everyday pursuits.

Children need to bring a cut up vegetable for Stone Soup.

Lesson 8.4 Creative Creations

Exploring the joy that comes from making, being, or acting in a new and unique way. Also an introduction to the creativity of fine artists.

Bring something to share for Sharing Time next week.

Lesson 8.5 Imagining Leads to Creating

A lesson about using our imaginations to look at things in a new way, do things differently, or make something original. Includes an optional visit to an art gallery or museum.

Lesson 8.6 Creative Storytelling

A summation of the unit as well as further exploration of the way we can craft and display our language through storytelling and drama.



By the End of This Unit...

The children should understand the basic concepts of imagination and curiosity and be willing to try new things using their imagination and building their creative skills.

Parents should also be better tasked to encourage and foster both the imaginative spirit and creative abilities in their children and to recognize that all children have different talents in these areas.

Book List

This unit is especially well suited for your own favorite children's books from your personal library or from the municipal library. Try to use books that explore the wonder of imagination. You can usually find large, beautiful books with reproductions of famous works of art in painting and sculpture, costume and set design, and even fun books about architecture at your library (especially in Unit 8.4). Usually all oversized books are contained in one area of the library, so your own imagination might be stretched by what is available. So, although this book list is short, the amount of books you provide at Joy School should be large.

	Title	Author(s)	Synopsis or Theme
8.1	<i>Christina Katerina And The Box</i>	Patricia Lee Gauch	A fantastic book about playing with a giant refrigerator box.
8.5	<i>The Adventures of Beekle the Unimaginary Friend</i>	Dan Santat	From imaginary to the real world.
8.5	<i>The Horse in Harry's Room</i>	Syd Hoff	Is Harry's horse real or not?
8.5	<i>The Button Box</i>	Margarette Reid	A boy finds fun in a box of buttons.
8.1	<i>Three Bears books</i>	Paul Galdone and Melissa Tyrell or Steven Guamacci or James Marshall	You may need a book to help you retell the story of the Three Bears in lesson 8.1