

CREATIVE Worship Ideas

Sample lessons for each theme are briefly described below.

Student-Chosen Themes

My classes have featured a rich variety of student-led worship events. Two of these are described below:

“Yellow”

After the students choose a theme for the quarter, I make the first presentation, after which they take turns giving worships on the same theme. This simple-sounding topic lends itself well to many early literacy experiences. For example, on some days there are gloriously gleaming golden leaves on the ground around campus, just begging to be brought into the classroom to glow for Jesus. We discuss the patterns, variations in color, and textures of the leaves, comparing these to the variations we will find among the preschool children where we do service learning as a class laboratory. During their worships, some of my students have used the yellow rays of the sun to focus our thoughts and prayer requests; others have used butter-yellow dandelions, yellow crayons with clever pictures to color and discuss, yellow apples, etc.

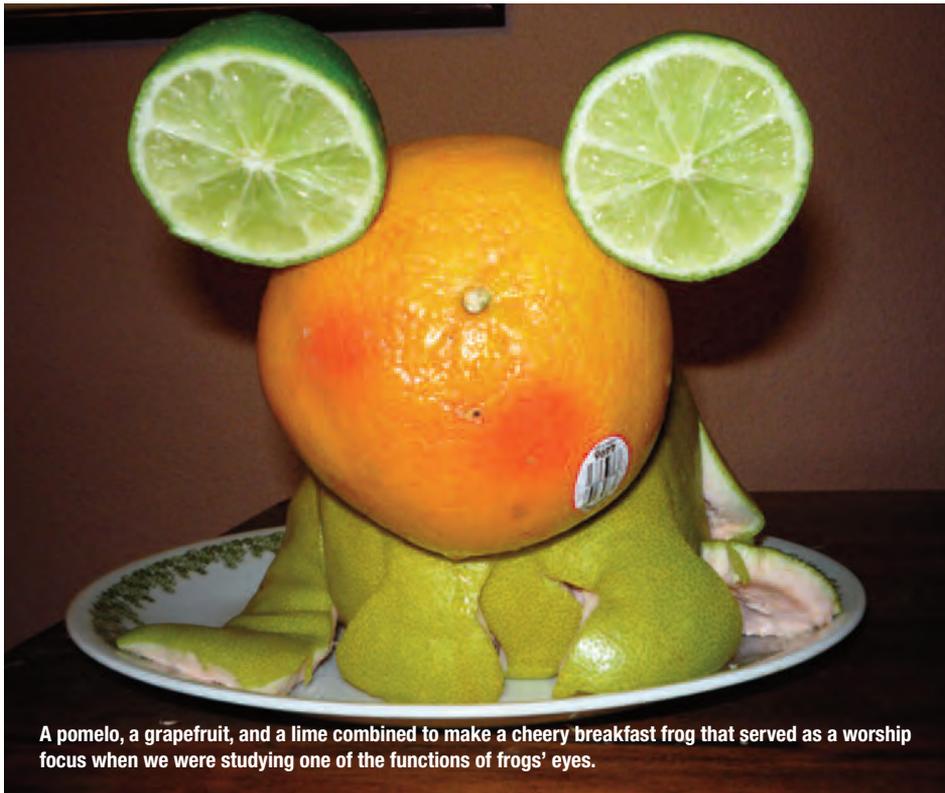
“Tacos: Layers of Language Learning”

This student-chosen theme highlighted the expressive and receptive early-language skills emphasized in our preschool lab. The student presenters introduced the theme by giving the teacher and each of the class members a balloon with a mysterious rolled-up

piece of paper inside. Following her instructions, we took turns popping our balloons and reading the word on each paper inside. She instructed us to tape the papers to her creatively designed cardboard backdrop (see photo below), which then revealed a list of the fruits of the Spirit. The presenter compared each of us to the taco shell, with the fruits of the Spirit layered inside. After she read Galatians 5:22 and 23 aloud, we prayed together to start the class, as is our custom.



BY TAMARA RANDOLPH



A pomelo, a grapefruit, and a lime combined to make a cheery breakfast frog that served as a worship focus when we were studying one of the functions of frogs' eyes.

Nature-Related Themes

"Frogs and Other Amphibians"

Sometimes I bring vividly colored slices or whole fruits to an early morning class, and, with the aid of toothpicks, knives, and my sample "frog," ask each student to create his or her own breakfast frog (I make sure they avoid using toxic items such as permanent markers), after which we praise Jesus not only for frogs but also for fantastic food, which we then proceed to eat.

"Sustainability"

For this topic, which is rightfully assuming increasing importance in the field of education in many places (and will likely become the fifth learning goal for Washington State students), my teachers-in-training and I have gone outside and run around the building, picking up any detritus as we go, after which we return to the classroom, where we dis-



This 20-foot-long anaconda was made from several discarded tripod boxes, plastic bubble wrap, and a lot of duct tape. His head was an old piñata armature made of cardboard. I covered him with fabric from Walmart and used him as a learning incentive at the local Farm Labor Home when they were studying the country of Colombia.

play our treasures and discuss ways to teach young students about picking up after themselves and encouraging the rest of the world to do the same. A useful Bible verse I've used in this context is Mark 8:8.

“Apples”

To introduce my early-morning literacy class, I tell this simple story: A little boy wants to find a red house with a brown chimney, no doors and no windows, and a star inside. Where should he look? When I bring a shiny red apple from behind my back and cut it crosswise with my special red knife to show the star-shaped seed arrangement inside, my students and I are awed anew at the wonderful mind of our Creator. Everyone in the class gets to admire the apple, and the hungriest one gets to eat it.



The author's bowl of rocks and fossils for the “Rocks” worship theme.

“Pomegranates”

For my Philosophy of Christian Education course, I purchase a beautiful red pomegranate for each student and one for myself. At the conclusion of the class period when we discuss a 10-foot tabernacle visual and what insights it gives us into the philosophy of education of the ancient Hebrews, I ask the students to bring aprons or other protective clothing to the next class. At the beginning of that class, I hand out the pomegranates and ask: “What does a pomegranate help us learn about Jesus?” Meanwhile, I make a big deal of putting on a coverall to protect my clothes from the glorious ruby-red spatters that will result as I cut open my pomegranate (and asking my students to cover up also). With a flourish, I reveal the treasures inside my pomegranate to the students, many of whom have not explored this fruit before, and give them the opportunity to produce thoughtful responses as we go around the room, leaving no one out. As we slurp and suck on the arils, we search for serious, saving understanding. For this worship exercise, we pray after we eat.

“Rocks”

I frequently use this theme, along with its conceptual cousin, “The God of the Rocks,” for my Philosophy of Christian Education class. I pass around a large, rough wooden bowl filled with minerals of various shapes and textures. Included are samples of fossils embedded in various matrices from a variety of locales, many of which were discovered great distances from modern major bodies of water. I invite each student to take a rock/fossil out of the bowl and to think of ways that it could illustrate an aspect of God. My students always come up with exceptional connections that I would not have made myself. We rejoice together and pray, and then I begin the short lecture and long discussion of Neo-Darwinism, a philosophy that has impacted Western education.

“Webs of Understanding”

Every winter for the past three years, a splendid specimen of *phidippus audax* (Bold Jumping Spider) has leaped into my office. Each time, I've scrambled to find a transparent container, gently catching the wandering arachnid, exclaiming over its glowing green fang covers. I use it as an object lesson the next day, then release it near my home, a mile from the university. I like to believe that the same spider hikes back to find me every year when the cold winds blow. My experience has prompted a variety of activities and writing tasks that can be incorporated into worships. The students like to write poems and jump rope to their rhymes, sometimes inviting young students to join in the activity. The children also enjoy the fact-filled science rhymes, which have the additional benefit of teaching literacy.

I incorporate another poem, based on the same spider-guest, into my Philosophy of Christian Education class discussions on Neo-Darwinism during the discussion of discuss Coffin, Brown, and Gibson's *Origin by Design*¹ citation of Shear, et al.'s description of a fossil spider with its silk-producing factory already in place found within Devonian rock. This poem has even been used by a multigrade teacher as a jump-rope rhyme during recess.

“I Used to Raise Butterflies and Moths”

This curious but useful title is based on an anecdote from my months of tutoring a young Spanish-speaking girl in English. When I learned how much she enjoyed natural science, I made the above statement. She thought a moment and then asked, without a trace of irony, “Who won?” One of my many worship thoughts based on this theme is reproduced in Appendix A on page 40 of the December 2012/January 2013 issue of

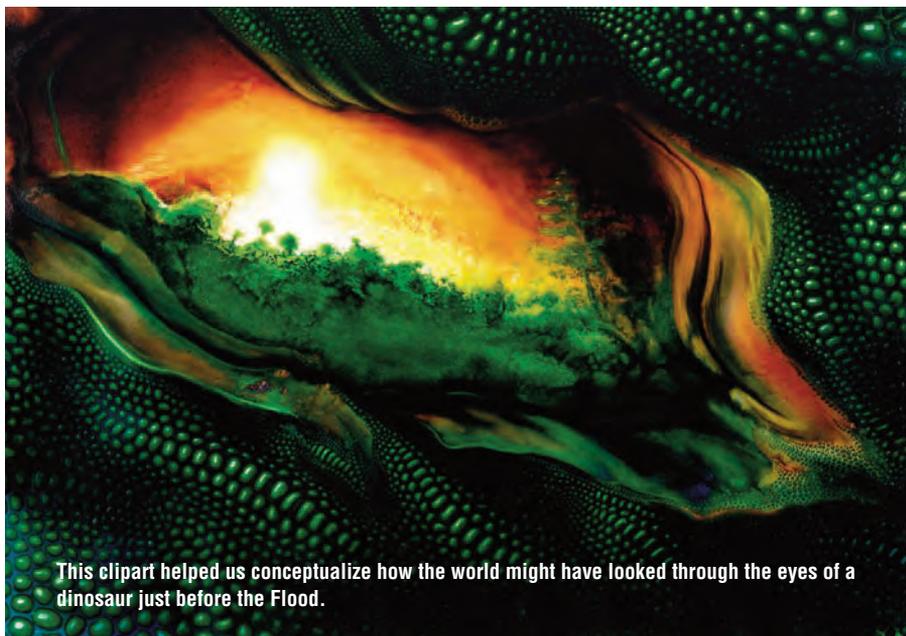
the JOURNAL Another, entitled *Of Wings and Things*, is posted on my e-portfolio at <http://www.teachertammy4ever.wordpress.com>.

Dinosaur-Related Worships

My students usually discuss a range of themes to guide our worship foci and sometimes our end-of-quarter event combines food and literacy activities. One quarter, they voted to use a dinosaur theme, so we brainstormed about what food to feed our guests at the end of the quarter.

“Do Dinos Taste Sour or Sweet—and Who Would Know?”

The visual for this theme was the clip art below. Initially our worship talks focused on what the world would have looked like through the eye of the dinosaur itself. This led to a discussion of whether dinosaurs were created by God during Creation week, and if so, what they might have eaten before sin led to a predation-based world. This gradually evolved into worship



This clipart helped us conceptualize how the world might have looked through the eyes of a dinosaur just before the Flood.

talks about what dinosaurs saw and ate after the Fall and if anybody ate the dinosaurs.

To accompany this theme, the students and I created a dinosaur authors' chair to be donated to a one-room school when we took our annual field trip for a reading/language-arts curriculum-and-instruction class. The chair may be viewed in a construction stage at <http://www.wallawalla.edu/academics/libraries/curriculum-library/crafts/authors-chair/>. This site was created by Walla Walla University Curriculum Librarian Franice Stirling, who liberally shares the wonderful ideas with which Jesus has blessed her.

More Dinosaur-Themed Worships

The theme of dinosaurs has proved to be a rich source of cross-disciplinary activities. We have used our document camera to read each a section each day from creationist texts such as Dr. Elaine Kennedy's *Dinosaurs, Where Did They Come From?*

*And Where Did They Go?*² and to zoom in on actual dinosaur bones.³ We have practiced voice choirs such as the one in Appendix B on page 41 of the December/January issue; and built trifold 3-D “stations” containing various dinosaur facts to use for learning centers.

An important caveat: This subject has to be approached prayerfully and from a solid biblical macro view of history, science, and theology, as well as an understanding of the power of narrative to clarify or distort thinking processes.

Other Themes

“Green”

This one works well for my social studies curriculum class because there are so many connotations for the word *green*. For a few worship-focus times, I have brought a U.S. \$20 bill to class (which is still more-or-less green), hidden it in one hand behind my back, and held a piece of plain green paper in the other. I then ask a student to choose which hand holds the most valuable piece of green paper. We get a lot of mileage out of that object lesson in terms of heavenly economics—how it is that a piece of paper has come to have so much value in our eyes, what will happen to it when Jesus comes, and where we are putting our real treasure.

“God Is Love”

This voice choir selection combines recitation with action, as it chillingly traces the hypnotic effect of the snake in the tree on the world's first woman. For the recitation, see <http://teachertammy4ever.files.wordpress.com/2012/10/god-is-love-poem-by-tamarandolph/february-20082.pdf>.

Tamara Randolph, Ph.D., is a Professor in the School of Education and Psychology at Walla Walla University in College Place, Washington. 99324. E-mail: tamara.randolph@wallawalla.edu.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. Harold G. Coffin, Robert H. Brown, and R. James Gibson, *Origin by Design* (Hagerstown, Md.: Review and Herald Publ. Assn., 2005), p. 269.
2. Nampa, Idaho: Pacific Press Publ. Assn., 2006.
3. For 3-D representations of dinosaur bones from the Seventh-day Adventist Dino Dig in Wyoming and current information on the project, visit <http://dinosaurproject.swau.edu>, and see Chloe Northrop and Arthur V. Chadwick, “Discovering Dinosaurs,” *The Journal of Adventist Education* 72:2 (December 2009/January 2010):10-16: <http://circle.adventist.org/files/jae/en/jae200972021007.pdf>. For an article on dinosaurs' reproductive habits and eggs, as well as helpful classroom activities, see James L. Hayward, “A Closer Look at Dinosaurs,” *ibid.* 67:3 (February/March 2005):29-36: <http://circle.adventist.org/files/jae/en/jae200567032909.pdf>.

Photo credits: Page 42-A, Franice Sterling; pp. 41-B and 41-C, courtesy of the author; p. 41-D, Word for Windows clipart.