

Creator God

In *Creator God* students focus on God the creator who is present in all of creation. They explore the first creation account in Genesis to learn about God as creator, the goodness of creation, and creation as a reflection of God's love and goodness. At the conclusion of the unit students devise and carry out an action to care for the environment.

DOCTRINAL FOCUS

In planning to teach this unit the following references from the Catechism of the Catholic Church and the Compendium of the Catechism of the Catholic Church are recommended:

#341 The *beauty of the universe*: The order and harmony of the created world results from the diversity of beings and from the relationships which exist among them. Man discovers them progressively as the laws of nature. They call forth the admiration of scholars. The beauty of creation reflects the infinite beauty of the Creator and ought to inspire the respect and submission of man's intellect and will.

(See *Compendium #62 What does Sacred Scripture tell us about the creation of the visible world?*)

#2500 Even before revealing himself to man in words of truth, God reveals himself to him through the universal language of creation, the work of his Word, of his wisdom: the order and harmony of the cosmos – which both the child and the scientist discover – ‘from the greatness and beauty of created things comes a corresponding perception of their Creator’, ‘for the author of beauty created them’.

SPIRITUAL REFLECTION FOR TEACHERS

Australia is renowned for its natural beauty and wonder. Many are struck by miles of white, sandy beaches and blue ocean; by the intricate ecology of the rainforest, wetlands and bush; by the colour, light, silence and vastness of the desert and inland landscape. The experience of Australia's natural environment is one that is sensory, and one that can evoke deep wonder and awe in people. For the believer it may also be an experience that brings closeness to and delight in God the Creator. Some of us intentionally go to particular places for space and peace, for contemplation, for rejuvenation and renewal.

The landscape can also convey to the believer attributes of God. Think of the surf during a storm, the setting and rising of the sun, the silence and sharp light of the outback, the searing heat and bracing cold of the desert. What do we learn about God and about ourselves in the experience of these landscapes?

Think of a landscape that is a favourite of yours. What inspires you about this place? How do you feel when you are there? What sense of God do you have in that place?

LINKS TO STUDENTS' EXPERIENCES

Stories of creation give students an opportunity to learn more about God and deepen their relationship with God.

Through their lived experiences students have some understanding of beauty and goodness. *What places in creation fill them with wonder and delight? Where are the places in creation they feel close to God?*

Most students experience the giving and receiving of gifts. *How can we lead students to understand that gift giving is an important part of relationships, and how can they relate this to God's gift of creation?*

EXPLANATION OF SCRIPTURE

Gen 1: 1–31

Genesis 1 is a majestic, poetic text that is centred on God. God is the subject, the author of all activity. When God speaks creation is brought into being. Creation brings order to what exists. This is reflected in the structure of the poem based on the seven days of the week.

Some commentators suggest that Genesis 1 is a liturgical hymn. The refrain structures of the verses reinforce a hymn-like, chant-like structure. The refrain structure provides a rhythmic, verse formation. 'God said let there be ... and so it was ...' is repeated seven times. The work of creation in this first account is simple and easily accomplished. Another refrain feature of Genesis 1 is noted in the repetition 'evening came and morning came, the first (second, third, fourth, fifth, sixth) day'. Such repeated sections point to an ancient and oral tradition, even though the final editing of this text is relatively late, probably in the sixth century BC. In refrain mode again the statement 'and God called ...' is reiterated to emphasise the relationship with the God of all created things, as well as the nurturing influence of God over what is made. In this account God names everything. A final refrain 'and God saw that it was good' is also repeated seven times (vs. 4, 10, 12, 18, 21, 25, 31). This 'goodness of creation' refrain culminates in the positive 'and indeed it was very good' (Gen 1: 31).

A typically Catholic understanding of the Genesis 1 creation text is the goodness of all creation. It is made by God who effortlessly initiates everything and creates order out of chaos. The creation of the human being (Gen 1: 26) is in the image and likeness of God: '*male and female God created them*' (Gen 1: 27). They are brought into being towards the end of the text, unlike the creation text in Gen 2: 7 in which the man is created before the trees, wild beasts, birds of heaven, etc.

The final act of creation takes place on the seventh day. It is the creation of time for rest, the Sabbath.

POSSIBILITIES FOR PRAYER AND WORSHIP

- During class prayer read the parts of Psalm 148 that are appropriate for the children, perhaps Ps 148: 1–4, 9–12. Explain that the psalms are the very ancient prayers of God's people.
- Display phrases from the psalm to be read together for morning prayer.

- The class constructs a prayer of praise following the structure of Psalm 148. Begin with the largest parts of creation and move through creation to the smallest.
- Lead the children through a guided meditation on the wonders of creation. Adapt and simplify 'My Sun Prayer' (Sr Mary Terese Donze, *In My Heart Room*, Liguori Publications).
- Litany 1: Introduce the litany style of prayer. Students compose a statement about creation and all respond with a refrain. All are invited to participate in the class litany, e.g.:

Child: You made the tiny ants.
All: You are wonderful, O God.
 Child: You made the birds in the sky.
All: You are wonderful, O God.
 Child: You made all the different people in the world.
All: You are wonderful, O God.

- Litany 2: Using the *KWL* 'Creation' posters, the teacher or a child retells the creation story. Children respond with the refrain from the story, e.g.:

Leader: God made the day.
All: And God saw that it was very good.
 Leader: God made the night.
All: And God saw that it was very good.

- Bless individual children at the end of the day, saying: '(Name) _____, God created you and you are very good'.
- Use the reflective prayer suggested in *KWL*, 2nd edition, Book 1, Chapter 17, p. 131.
- Write prayers of praise or thanks to accompany a pencil sketch, painting or charcoal drawing of a 'found' object from nature, e.g. a leaf, shell, feather ... These could be bound into a class prayer book to be used in the daily prayer time.
- Sing a hymn that praises God the Creator and the goodness of God's creation, e.g. 'The Wonders I See' (Bernadette Farrell, *Share the Light*, OCP Publications).

Related Chapters – *KWL*, 2nd edition, Book 1: Chapter 17, In the Beginning.

Faith concepts: gift, beauty, goodness, relationship, wonder, creation, stewardship.

Understandings:

God created the world out of love and kindness.

Life and creation are signs of God’s beauty and goodness.

We are called to give thanks for the gift of creation.

Each person can make a difference to improve the environment.

Unit specific learning:

Students will learn about	Students will learn to	Students will undertake to
<i>Knowledge and Understanding</i>	<i>Reasoning & Responding</i>	<i>Personal & Communal Engagement</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The main elements of the creation story.• The importance of the interrelationship between themselves and the environment.• Ways in which God shows his love for us through creation.• Ways in which they can care for others and the environment.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Express their feelings or ideas about the wonders of creation.• Create a prayer of praise.• Reflect on their experiences of caring for the environment.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Participate in meditation.• Participate in prayer rituals.• Contribute to an action plan.

Part 1: Creator God

Additional Reading for Teachers	Learning & Teaching Sequence	Assessment
<p>In this unit the students are presented with the first creation story in Genesis, where God created the world and all it contains. They hear about all that God made and that it was indeed very good. On the sixth day, God created the human person in the image and likeness of God.</p> <p>The story's purpose is to reveal beliefs about God and creation. It is a faith story, not a scientific theory. The primary message is that God is <i>Creator</i>, and that God's work of creation is good. It is important that this creation story is not confused with the creation story in Genesis 2.</p> <p>Children of this age have an innate sense of the grandeur, diversity and beauty of creation. While the story is told using visual material, the children need to experience the story through direct interaction with creation. It is suggested that many of the activities take place outside the classroom where the children's senses are engaged. This hands-on learning engages the way they naturally play and delight in creation.</p> <p>The whole created world is a reflection of</p>	<p>Telling the Story Tell the story of creation using:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 'In the Beginning', <i>KWL</i>, 2nd edition, Book 1, Chapter 17, pp. 52–54.• the <i>KWL</i> Creation posters• a suitable website such as www.kids4truth.com/eng_creation.htm• feltboard pieces/poster picture or images <p>Wondering Invite students to wonder with you:</p> <p>I wonder why God made all these things? I wonder which part of God's creation you like the best? I wonder what existed before God made the world? I wonder what you know about creation? I wonder what you would have created if you were God?</p> <p>Responding</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Go outside and immerse the students in creation. Lie quietly and listen to all the sounds you can hear in nature. Identify what you can see around you, and what you can feel. Students use chalk to draw a Y-chart on the ground and record all the things they hear, feel and see in creation. Students share their reflections with the group.• Students contemplate different	

Additional Reading for Teachers	Learning & Teaching Sequence	Assessment
<p>God's love, and an important sign of God's desire to be present to all things and to all people. Creation, in its beauty and its complexity, draws us to admiration and praise of its creator. Humanity is called to respect and relate to the created world and its inhabitants with justice, love and compassion.</p> <p>The Book of Genesis contains two descriptions of creation which were written at different times during Israelite history.</p> <p>The Genesis stories do not focus on Israelite origins alone, but reflect on the origins of human existence and the meaning of human history, tracing them both back to the creative will and purpose of God.</p> <p>The children may still have quite a literal understanding of the Genesis creation story which is perfectly appropriate; however, if some ask questions about prehistory, dinosaurs, evolution and so on, it is important to understand that there is no conflict between the religious story of the creation of the world and the efforts of scientists to understand the origins of the world and its laws.</p> <p>The account of creation in Genesis 2 makes it clear that human beings, while they are the crown of creation, also have a responsibility to use creation well, and not deliberately to waste</p>	<p>dimensions of creation.</p> <p>The following stations are set up for the students to explore different aspects of creation. Students choose a couple of stations to explore:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Students sequence the first story of creation. 2. Find images of the night sky, day sky, sunset, rainbow, solar system, posters of seasons, etc. 3. Show snippets from a variety of movies that have images of creation, e.g. <i>Finding Nemo</i> (show the underwater reef), <i>The Lion King</i> (show the desert). 4. Display books about different aspects of creation, e.g. <i>The Rainbow Fish</i>, <i>Where the Forest Meets the Sea</i>, etc. 5. Listening post with sounds from nature. 6. Listening post with a song about creation. 7. Feely box of various items, e.g. leaves, sticks, soil, water, sand, shells, fur, feathers, etc. 8. Feltboards with farm animals, zoo animals, safari animals, etc. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students record their wonderings and discoveries about creation on a graphic organiser. Share responses. 	

Additional Reading for Teachers	Learning & Teaching Sequence			Assessment
<p>and spoil the world and its resources. Pope John Paul II regularly spoke about the Christian responsibility to be careful stewards of God's creation</p>	What I did	What I discovered	What I am wondering about	
				Assessment of Learning This task will indicate how students contemplate and reflect on God, themselves and creation, and their ability to express their ideas and feelings.
	Praying the Word Refer to 'Possibilities for Prayer and Worship' and lead a guided meditation on the wonders of creation. Telling the Story Pass around a mirror and invite students to discover one of the most wonderful gifts of God's creation – myself. Students create a self portrait, labelling the image with what they like about themselves (physical features/personality).			
	Responding <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Take home activity</i> Students take home an outline of a body shape and record the aspects of creation they can see, hear, feel, taste and smell at home with their family. Bring back to school to share with class. • In pairs students identify similarities and 			Assessment of Learning This activity will indicate students' awareness of themselves as part of God's creation

Additional Reading for Teachers	Learning & Teaching Sequence	Assessment
	<p>differences between themselves. Identify what each person admires or likes about the other person. Students record their findings and place on a class mural titled 'God loves all of us'.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brainstorm some of the things that make us unique and special, e.g. our names, fingerprints, talents, etc. • Students trace around one of their hands. They write their names in the middle of the palm of their hands. They stamp their fingerprints in each of their fingertips and record in each finger some of their special gifts and talents that make them unique. Students get into groups and share their reflections. Students contribute their work to a class display titled 'Grade 1 is very handy and unique'. • Students use their unique qualities to create a class Yellow Pages directory. (List the children's talents so that others in the class can go to them if they need help in their area of expertise.) 	<p>Assessment of Learning Through this activity students will indicate their ability to identify the gift of creation in another person.</p>
	<p>Praying the Word Learn the song 'I Am Special' from <i>Great Gifts</i>. Sing it prayerfully as a chant.</p> <p>Telling the Story Retell the story of creation.</p>	

Additional Reading for Teachers	Learning & Teaching Sequence	Assessment
	<p>Wondering I wonder how we can look after the world? I wonder if there are better ways in which we could look after the world?</p> <p>Responding</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read the text <i>Lester and Clyde</i>. Discuss the differences between the two ponds in the story. An alternative could be Jeannie Baker's <i>Where the Forest Meets the Sea</i>. • I wonder how Clyde's pond became so polluted and dirty? I wonder how he could clean it up? I wonder how we can make a difference to our world? I wonder what we do that is not good for creation? • Discuss with the class ways they can make a difference: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – to our school environment – to our homes – to ourselves • Students can plan, create and enact their plan, and then present their results to the class. They could create slogans or posters to go around the school, create mottos to promote their cause, etc. • Students reflect on their experience of caring for creation through recording 	

Additional Reading for Teachers	Learning & Teaching Sequence	Assessment
	<p>their journey in a Learning Journal.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students create a written, painted, sung or danced prayer of praise about creation. • Students are given the opportunity to share some of their experiences of their action plan and their reflections on the process. Students are invited to share results, photos, feedback, etc. 	<p>Assessment of Learning</p> <p>This task will demonstrate students' ability to create a prayer of praise reflecting their own perceptions and insights.</p> <p>This activity will indicate students' ability to identify how they have cared for creation and to reflect on the positive or negative effects of their actions.</p>
	<p>Praying the Word</p> <p>Students participate in a class liturgy on creation, using their prayers of praise.</p>	

RESOURCES

To Know, Worship and Love, 2nd Edition

Book 1: Chapter 17, In the Beginning.

Websites

<www.kids4truth.com/eng_creation.htm>

DVDs

Finding Nemo 2003, animation, Pixar Animation Studios, USA/Canada.

The Lion King 1994, animated feature, Walt Disney Pictures and Buena Vista, USA.

Student Resources

Pfister, M 1992, *The Rainbow Fish*, North South Books.

Baker, J 1988, *Where the Forest Meets the Sea*, Walker Books.

Reece, J 1987, *Lester and Clyde*, Ashton Scholastic.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION STANDARDS

This unit may be used to assess some of the Level 2 standards.

Students interpret biblical stories and stories in Church Tradition by making a response and expressing their own ideas, feelings and perceptions. Students create prayers and responses of praise, thanks, forgiveness and petition with personal expression and insight. Students recognise the Christian messages of love and stewardship by identifying the strengths and shortcomings of both their own and others' ideas, actions and feelings.