

REYNOLDA

DISCOVERY LESSON (AGE 3-5)

Animals



Edward Hicks, *Peaceable Kingdom of the Branch*, 1826-30. Oil on canvas. Reynolda House Museum of American Art, Gift of Barbara B. Millhouse, 1969.2.3

REYNOLDA

WHAT YOU NEED

- **Discovery Lesson:** Edward Hick's *Peaceable Kingdom of the Branch* on this card or on your computer screen. To zoom in and learn more about the artwork, visit reynoldahouse.org.
- **Literature Connection:** "Aesop for Children: The Lion and the Mouse" at read.gov/aesop/007.html
- **Hands-on Activity:** Plastic play animals, copier paper, marker, crayon, or pencil
Alternatives: Sidewalk chalk and pavement; container of water and a paintbrush and pavement
Cloudy or Rainy day alternative: use a lamp indoors to create shadows

DISCOVERY ACTIVITY

Introduce these two keywords to the child:

Peace - quiet and relaxed

Kindness - being gentle and considerate (helping)

Begin by asking if the child knows what the word means, or what he or she thinks it means. Help build on the child's understanding as needed and try together to find an example of something in the child's life that is peaceful or an example of kindness.

Next, look together at the painting *Peaceable Kingdom of the Branch* painted by Edward Hicks in the early 1800s.

Start by inviting the child to name all the things they see in the painting.

- Ask "what is happening in this picture?"
- Ask, "What are the animals doing?"
- Follow with questions like: How many animals do you see? What kinds of animals are in this painting? What do you know about these animals?

REYNOLDA

After spending several minutes exploring together, ask the child how the ideas of “peace” and “kindness” might relate to this painting. For example, you might consider the way the animals are behaving with one another. Are there any other symbols of connection or peace?

As appropriate, share information about the painter Edward Hicks, found on Reynolda website and in the box below.

Edward Hicks, sign painter and Quaker minister

- Edward Hicks was born in his grandfather’s home in Pennsylvania in 1780.
- After his mother died, one of her friends raised Hicks and he grew up Quaker (a denomination of Christianity).
- When Hicks was young, he apprenticed to a Pennsylvania coach maker and learned how to paint signs with careful lettering and stock images for decorations (kind of like using clip art today).
- Later in life, Hicks became a Quaker minister and used his paintings as a way to share his beliefs.
- Hicks so wished for peace and unity among people that he painted the scene of Peaceable Kingdom more than sixty times in his lifetime!

LITERATURE CONNECTION

Continue this discovery by reading [Aesop for Children: The Lion and the Mouse](#). While reading, pause and ask questions to extend on the ideas you have been discussing.

After reading the story, invite the child to click on the orange mouse in the illustration to watch how even a small mouse can help a large lion. Review the story together by asking:

- What did the mouse do in the beginning?
- What did the lion do? How did the story end? Discuss how the lion’s kindness was later returned.
- What does it mean that “kindness is never wasted?”

REYNOLDA

After reading, compare and contrast the story to the painting:

- How does the story in the painting seem similar to the story of the lion and the mouse?
- What message do they communicate to us?
- What are examples of kindness/peace in this painting and fable?"

Now that you've connected the painting and the reading, make your own animal-inspired art with markers and cast shadows.

HANDS-ON ACTIVITY

1. Place a plastic play animal in the sunlight and explore how the light hits it and how it casts its shadow.
2. Then place a piece of copy paper to "catch" the shadow, then trace the shadow with your chosen writing utensil. You can also use sidewalk chalk on pavement or brick directly for greater contrast or a paintbrush with water.

To continue this activity further, look for other shadows nearby and trace them with sidewalk chalk or onto paper.

Additional activities

- Continued conversation: After you explore shadows, invite the child to think about how the ideas from the painting and story might relate to their lives. Brainstorm ways that you can be kind or invite peace.
- Sensory/Discovery play: See if you can build a bridge (with rocks or blocks) that imitates the Natural Bridge in Virginia that Edward Hicks included in his painting *Peaceable Kingdom of the Branch*.
- Sensory/Discovery play: Create a sensory bin with animals (perhaps those shown in the painting) and natural elements (moss, bark leaves, etc.)