Lesson 1: **Circle of Life**

DVD extra: "Story Origins" (Disk 2)
Scene 1: "Circle of Life" (Disk 1)

Objectives:

(1) To help the kids **get to know one another** by excitedly naming/speaking about their favorite and most inspirational stories and movies

(2) To **foster enthusiasm** in each child so that they will look forward to coming to class every week.

(3) To **foster group bonding**.

Materials:

• ***The Lion King*** **DVD and DVD player/monitor.**

NOTE: **Before any students arrive**, **put Disk 2 into the player and cue it up onscreen so that the segment, "Story Origins" just begins to play, then PAUSE it and put a cloth over the screen so nobody can see it. HIDE THE DVD COVER!**

• **Photocopies of SONG LYRICS for "Circle of Life"** (printed at end of this lesson). Make enough for all the students and extras for future sessions when the lyrics will be used again and again.

• For the entire curriculum, it will be important for the **room** to be arranged in a way that allows both (a) **DVD watching**, and (b) **circular seating** so all the kids are facing one another, if possible, during discussion.

ACTIVITIES: DVD watching; discussions; singing

Lesson 1: **Circle of Life**

DVD extra: "Story Origins" (Disk 2)
Scene 1: "Circle of Life" (Disk 1)

Classroom preparation:

- **Before any students arrive**, put **DVD Disk 2 into the player** and cue it up so that the segment "Story Origins" just begins, then PAUSE it and place cloth over screen so nobody can see it. HIDE THE DVD COVER!
- Have **DVD Disk 1 hidden**, but easily accessible for when you need it.
- Put the stack of **"Circle of Life" Song Lyrics** on a table.

Lesson flow:

1. **Introduction** and youth discuss title, "Remember Who You Are." (Delay name introductions till Activity 2) **(5 mins)**
2. **Discussion:** Youth speak about their favorite stories/movies, and thereby get to know names and one another. **(10-15 mins)**
3. **DVD Disk 2**: Watch "Story Origins" segment **(5 mins)**
4. **Discussion**: Youth discuss the video, mythic themes, and Hero's Journey **(10 mins)**
5. **DVD Disk 1**: Watch "Scene 1: "Circle of Life" **(5 mins)**
6. **Discussion**: Open-ended format **(5-10 mins)**
7. **Hand out song lyrics** to each student: "Circle of Life" **(2 mins)**
8. **Sing-along**: Watch DVD Scene 1 again, and encourage sing-along to the song "Circle of Life" **(5 mins)**

Lesson 1: **Circle of Life**

DVD extra: "Story Origins" (Disk 2)
Scene 1: "Circle of Life" (Disk 1)

Introduction to Mythic Stories **(5 mins)**

GUIDE:

> "The title of the curriculum we will be using this season is called, **'Remember Who You Are.'**
>
> **Q: What are your ideas about what that title, 'Remember Who You Are,' might be referring to, and why might it be an important theme for everyone in middle school?**

Encourage open-ended discussion *for a few minutes or longer, with no goal in mind and no right or wrong answers.*

Discussion **(10 – 15 mins)**

GUIDE:

> "Every culture on Earth, ever since humans began to speak, probably had legends and mythic stories that taught children and youth where their people came from, how the world came to be, and how to live an honorable life even in the face of terrible events and lots of challenges."
>
> **Q: What are some of these stories that you have heard of?** . . . *[discussion]*
>
> **Q: What, if any stories that you heard as children really, really inspired you?**
>
> *[discussion: Ask the kids **to give their names** before they say their favorites.]*

GUIDE: *[**If nobody mentions a movie**, after awhile tell them:]*

"**In today's culture some of our most important stories come to us as MOVIES. . . "**

*[Then let them blurt out their favorite movies excitedly, without having to raise hands. Let the discussion get a little wild, but eventually make sure everyone has had a chance to be heard on what their favorite stories, including movies, are. And keep asking them to **say their names** when they speak.]*

** OPTIONAL: CULTURAL CONTEXT you might want to convey via this dialogue:*

Q: "Why are these visual stories called movies and films?"

[Answer: Originally they were just movies: movement, with live musicians or organists providing the emotional music for audiences. There was no dialogue in the first movies, so the characters had to overact to convey the plot (with text). Then, when it became technologically possible to include the sound of dialogue too, "movies" started being called "talkies." Film was the material that movies were recorded on and played back on before computers came along and made DVDs possible.]

Q: "DVD" is an abbreviation for 3 words. What do you think they are?"

[Answer: Digital Video Disk]

Q: "The first feature film shown in movie theaters that was a 'talkie' came out in 1927. **How far back in the generations in your own family would you have to go to find an ancestor who watched movies before the time of talkies?**

[Let them discuss; it will help them become curious about their ancestors and begin to reflect on the passing of generations.]

DVD Viewing

"Story Origins" (Disk 2) Introduction to Mythic Stories (5 mins)

GUIDE:

"For the next __ weeks, **we are going to watch a movie scene-by-scene**. We will watch 2 or 3 or 4 scenes in each class, until we finish the whole movie.

Most of you have probably already seen this movie, and for

some of you, it may be a very important movie: a **mythic movie** for you.

But **even if you have never seen it before**, you can fully participate in every class because we will first watch some of the movie before we begin the discussion and activities.

To introduce this movie, I am going to play **a special feature on a DVD that talks about how the filmmakers created the story.** It is 5 minutes long. The people involved in writing and making the movie talk about how they came up with the story, and how they intentionally tried to make it a mythic story.

Make sure you are sitting where you can **see the screen**."

[Remover the cloth over the screen and PRESS THE "PLAY" BUTTON TO UN-PAUSE THE DVD. WATCH THE 5 MINUTE SEGMENT, "Story Origins. *It will stop automatically at the end and return to the menu, so you don't have to do anything when it is over.]*

Discussion (5-10 mins)

[Some POSSIBLE QUESTIONS to help guide the discussion:]

Q: "The piece began with a man saying, 'The Lion King is allegory.' **So, what is allegory**?

[An allegory is a story that is told not just because it is interesting but because it can teach us something about the world or how to live honorable, fulfilled lives.]

Q:. "One of the story writers says,

> 'The story has a **religious epic** quality to it: something like Ben Hur, or Moses.'

Another compares The Lion King to "Old Testament tales like Joseph, Moses." . . . Another says,

> "If **Moses saw the burning bush** and got wisdom from it, why can't Simba see the burning bush in the form of Mufasa, his father, and get his spiritual message from that?"

Question: So what is the story of "Moses and the Burning Bush" and how old is that story?

[It is in the book of Exodus of the Hebrew Bible. When Moses saw a bush that seemed on fire but wasn't being consumed, the story says that he felt God telling him that it was his duty to lead the Hebrews out of slavery from

Egypt.]

Q: "Another writer mentions the word **"Hamlet"** and a famous playwright from England, whose name is **Shakespeare**. Has anybody heard of either of those two?

INFORMATION: "The video we just watched mentions a famous line from Shakespeare's play, *Hamlet*, in which the young hero of the story, Prince **Hamlet**, makes a speech just to himself. It is called a **soliloquy**, so-LIL-li-kwee, because Hamlet says it solo, and nobody is there to hear him).

In this solo speech Prince Hamlet agonizes about what he should do: whether to go on or to give up. Hamlet's speech begins: **"To be or not to be: That is the question."**

Q: Have any of you ever heard that line before?

INFORMATION: "The DVD we just played showed the cover of a book by Joseph Campbell. The book is called ***Hero With a Thousand Faces***. Your parents and grandparents might be familiar with Joseph Campbell and his notion of "**The Hero's Journey**," because in 1988 a television special called *The Power of Myth* came out that interviewed Joseph Campbell.

"In those interviews, **Campbell helped modern people to see how ancient mythic stories and legends told by different people around the world can still inspire us to live honorable and mythic lives.**

"The myths that have the theme "The Hero's Journey" all have the **same basic storyline**: that of a regular person, even someone with flaws, who embarks on a heroic **challenge or quest**, and by doing so gains great wisdom that then helps his or her tribe or people.

"Very often in those legends, the mythic quest and the heroic challenges happen to the **hero during adolescence**. **So you might want to mention to your parents that we are looking at *The Lion King* movie from the standpoint of how it is a great myth about "The Hero's Journey."** They might know what you are talking about."

"Now here is the interesting thing: Joseph Campbell, who wrote the book, *The Hero's Journey*, suggests that **everyone embarks on a kind of hero's journey just in the process of leaving childhood and going through the trials of adolescence**. There is then another challenge in life when we pass out of adolescence into adulthood — and then there are life passages even beyond then.

"So **learning heroic tales can inspire us** to handle challenges that come our way and to navigate each of the necessary passages in life.

"They can also inspire **each of us to be all that we can be**."

DVD Viewing: Scene 1: "Circle of Life" (Disk 1) **(5 mins)**

[Eject DISK 2 AND Insert Disk 1. Go to Menu, and click on Scene 1: "Circle of Life." Make sure you PAUSE THE VIDEO exactly when the title, "The Lion King" comes on the screen, as this marks the end of Scene 1. It happens after 4 mins 25 secs.]

Discussion **(5-10 mins)**

[Students will erupt into spontaneous discussion after the movie segment. Let discussion go however the kids want, including excitedly talking over one another. They don't need to be courteous, just excited! Make sure you end that discussion ***to leave sufficient time to watch Scene 1 again*** *before the end the class.]*

Ritual Ending:
Sing-along & DVD Viewing: "Circle of Life" reprise **(7 mins)**

PASS OUT SONG LYRICS:

[Before you play Scene 1 a second time, ask for ***a volunteer*** *to pass out the song lyrics, "Circle of Life*

[Note: Focused discussion of this scene will take place in Session 2, because they will watch it again next week.]

[The kids can take home or leave the SONG LYRICS. Replenish the stack of song lyrics for use in future sessions, in case the song lyrics get left at home.]

Circle of Life

Music by Elton John, lyrics by Tim Rice

From the day we arrive on the planet
And blinking, step into the sun
There's more to see than can ever be seen
More to do than can ever be done
There's far too much to take in here
More to find than can ever be found
But the sun rolling high
Through the sapphire sky
Keeps great and small on the endless round

It's the Circle of Life
And it moves us all
Through despair and hope
Through faith and love
Till we find our place
On the path unwinding
In the Circle
The Circle of Life

It's the Circle of Life
And it moves us all
Through despair and hope
Through faith and love
Till we find our place
On the path unwinding
In the Circle
The Circle of Life