

New Beginnings January 2021

Introduction

Tell the children that this assembly is about new beginnings. Of course, everyone knows about the special times for new beginnings like the start of a new year, or a new class or a new term. Each spring is a new beginning as though the whole world is born again. Remind them that new beginnings can happen at any time. Each day, each moment is full of possibilities – the possibilities of being, in some little way, a new person. In this assembly, the children are going to hear about a very wonderful new beginning. A whole new world is about to be created.

Outline

Ask the children if any of them have read or heard of *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* by C.S. Lewis. Tell them that this assembly story is from another of the Narnia books, called *The Magician's Nephew*. The book tells of the adventures of two children, Digory and Polly, who get transported to another world. In the story the children are about to hear, Polly and Digory don't know it, but they are about to find themselves at the very, very beginning of the creation of Narnia, the beginning of everything. This is what happens.



Polly said, 'Oughtn't we to be nearly there now?'

'We do seem to be somewhere,' said Digory. 'At least I'm standing on something solid.'

'Why, so am I, now I that come to think of it,' said Polly. 'But why is it so dark? This is an empty world. This is Nothing.'

And really it was uncommonly like Nothing. There were no stars. It was so dark that they couldn't see one another at all and it made no difference whether you kept your eyes shut or opened. Under their feet there was a cool, flat something, which might have been earth, and was certainly not grass or wood. The air was cold and dry and there was no wind.

In the darkness something was happening at last. A voice had begun to sing. It was very far away and Digory found it hard to decide from what direction it was coming. Sometimes it seemed to be coming from all directions at once. Sometimes he almost thought it was coming out of the earth beneath them. There were no words, there was hardly even a tune, but it was, beyond comparison, the most beautiful noise he had ever heard. It was so beautiful he could hardly bear it.

Then, two wonders happened at the same moment. One was that the Voice was suddenly joined by other voices; more voices than you could possibly count: cold, tingling silvery voices. The second wonder was that the blackness overhead, all at once, was blazing with stars. They didn't come out gently one by one as they do on a summer evening. One moment there had been nothing but darkness; next moment a thousand, thousand points of light leaped out – single stars, constellations, and planets, brighter and bigger than any in our world. The new stars and the new voices began at exactly the same time. If you had seen and heard it, as Digory did, you would have felt quite certain that it was the stars themselves which were singing and that it was the First Voice, the deep one, which had made them appear and made them sing.

The Voice on the earth was now louder and more triumphant; but the voices in the sky, after singing loudly with it for a time, began to get fainter. And now something else was happening. Far away, and down near the horizon, the sky began to turn grey. A light wind, very fresh, began to stir. The sky, in that one place grew slowly and steadily paler. You could see shapes of hills standing up dark against it. All the time the Voice went on singing. It was soon light enough for them to see one another's faces. The two children had open mouths and shining eyes; they were drinking in the sound, and they looked as if it reminded them of something.



The eastern sky changed from white to pink and from pink to gold. The Voice rose and rose, till all the air was shaking with it. And just as it swelled to the mightiest and most glorious sound it had yet produced, the sun arose.

Digory had never seen such a sun. You could imagine that it laughed for joy as it came up. And as its beams shot across the land the travellers could see for the first time what sort of place they were in. It was a valley of mere earth, rock and water; there was not a tree, not a bush, not a blade of grass to be seen. The earth was of many colours: they were fresh, hot and vivid. They made you feel excited; until you saw the Singer himself, and then you forgot everything else.

It was a Lion. Huge, shaggy and bright, it stood facing the risen sun. Its mouth was wide open in song and it was about three hundred yards away. The Lion was pacing to and fro about that empty land and singing his new song. It was softer and more lilting than the song by which he had called up the stars and the sun;



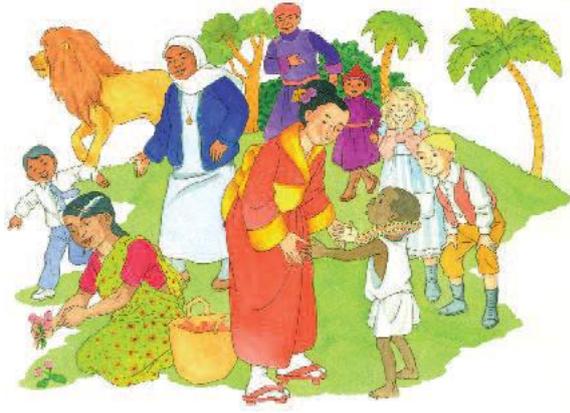
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gentle rippling music. And as he walked and sang the valley grew green with grass. It spread out from the Lion like a pool. It ran up the side of the little hills like a wave. Soon there were other things besides grass. The higher slopes grew dark with heather. Patches of rougher, more bristling green appeared in the valley. Digory did not know what they were until one began coming up quite close to him. It was a little, spiky thing that threw out dozens of arms and covered these arms with green and grew larger at the rate of about an inch every two seconds. There were dozens of these things all around him now. When they were nearly as tall as himself he saw what they were. "Trees!" he exclaimed.

All this time the Lion's song, and his stately prowl, to and fro, backwards and forwards, was going on. What was rather alarming was that at each turn he came a little nearer. Though its soft pads made no noise, you could feel the earth shake beneath their weight. The children could not move. They were not even quite sure that they wanted to. The Lion paid no attention to them. Its huge red mouth was open, but open in song not in a snarl. It passed them by so close that that they were terribly afraid that it would turn and look at them, yet in some queer way they wished it would. But for all the notice it took of them they might just as well have been invisible and unsmellable.

When it had passed them and gone a few paces further, it turned and continued its march eastward.

The Magician's Nephew by C.S. Lewis. Copyright © C.S. Lewis Pte. Ltd. 1955.
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Now you can explore with the children some of their ideas about the possibilities of a new world.

Remind the children that the two children in the story watched a sparkling, brand new world being created. Ask them to imagine that new world full of new people, children and adults, of many different colours.

Then ask them the following questions:

- What sort of things do you think would make that new world a good and happy place for those people to live in?

Encourage the children to think about the things that help them to be happy and safe in their own world and that they would want to see in a new one. Encourage them to think about characteristics such as love, kindness and understanding as well as physical things. A picture of their new world could be drawn at this point.

- What sort of things would you want to keep out of this new world? What things would make the people unhappy?

Encourage the children to think about uncomfortable feelings such as jealousy and loneliness as well as big things like war and poverty.

Conclusion

Ask the children to find a still, quiet place inside themselves. Say that they have remembered things that can make people happy or sad. These things often come from inside us and are the same in our own world as they would be in a new one.

Remind the children about what was said at the beginning of the assembly, that there can be a new beginning at every moment of every day. Ask them to try and make this very moment a new beginning inside each of them. Ask them to focus on something from the list of good, happy things for the new world, and then to think how they could make that thing happen in their classroom, or their home, or in the playground. It might be being kinder, or more helpful; it might be playing with someone, listening to them or just smiling at them. Ask them to think deeply and quietly for a minute or two.

Children could make this their New Years Resolution and make a poster.