

Family Paideia Seminar Plan

Text: No Man is an Island by John Donne

Ideas, Values: **Community, Life & Death, One & Many, Relation** Click or tap here to enter text.

Pre-Seminar Content

Big Ideas Chat:

Discuss together what each individual in the family contributes to the family (what would be missing if that individual were gone on a long trip?). Then, discuss what each individual in the family contributes to larger groups (friends, colleagues, church, sports teams, etc.).

1st Read:

Read the poem aloud while family and/or friends listen. Check for any words that are unknown; talk about them after you finish reading the poem (be sure to include *main, promontory, thy, thine, tolls*).

In addition, consider playing one of the many excellent recordings of this poem: for example-- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VB2HQiRlriE&list=TLPQMDIwNDIwMjCe8VXBpLUQ_Q&index=2>

Vocabulary:

Discuss the unfamiliar words in the poem. Explain what they mean, figure them out from the sentence, or look them up in a dictionary.

2nd Read:

Divide the poem up into as many sections as there are participants (natural breaks are at the semi-colons and periods). Assign each section to one participant and have that person translate his or her part into clear, modern English (i.e. “in their own words”). Share the translations that each person has drafted.

Pre-Seminar Process:

* Share why you are having the discussion.

(Sample script from our classroom Paideia Seminars: Modify to fit your household.)

*“A Paideia seminar is a collaborative, intellectual dialogue about a text, facilitated with open ended questions.”*

*“The main purpose of seminar is to arrive at a fuller understanding of the textual ideas and values, of ourselves, and of each other.”*

* Describe what you want to accomplish.
* Set a Family Goal.
* To balance the talk time
* To refer to the text
* To ask a question
* To speak out of uncertainty
* To build on others’ comments

Seminar Questions:

* Opening (Identify main ideas from the text):
* What do you think is the most important word in this poem? (Don’t share why until everyone has had a chance to answer.)
* What makes that word so important? (anyone can share)
* Core (Analyze textual details):
* Why does Donne begin this meditation with the phrase “no man is an island”?
* Why does Donne write that everyone “is a piece of the continent”?
* What does Donne mean when he writes that anyone’s “death diminishes me”? Do you agree?
* Why do you think Donne ended this meditation with “the bell … tolls for thee”? What do you think that phrase means?
* If we are all profoundly connected—as Donne argues—what are the implications of that insight?
* Closing (Personalize and apply the ideas):
* What connections do you see between the poem and your current life—both inside the family and outside the family?

Post-Seminar Process:

*“Ask each person what they liked most about the discussion.”*

* Have the family do a quick check of the discussion goal.

Post Seminar Content:

* Transition to Writing:

Discuss as a group the kinds of things you’ve learned—during your recent isolation—that you need from other people, both inside and outside your family.

* Writing:

After reading and discussing “No Man is an Island,” write a paragraph describing how your relationships with others could change once you are able to again interact with the larger human community.

Use the list of things family members need (generated during the Transition to Writing) and have each individual plan his or her paragraph using elements from the list.

Have all participants write their paragraphs and read them aloud to the group. Then have each individual place his or her paragraph in an envelope, seal it, and save to it read once family members are again allowed to circulate through the larger community.

This Paideia Lesson Plan was created by:

 Name: Terry Roberts and Lynn Roberts

 Organization: National Paideia Center

\*Text is attached if open sourced.

\*Text is cited if it needs to be procured.

## 'No Man is an Island'

## By John Donne

No man is an island entire of itself; every man

is a piece of the continent, a part of the main;

if a clod be washed away by the sea, Europe

is the less, as well as if a promontory were, as

well as any manner of thy friends or of thine

own were; any man's death diminishes me,

because I am involved in mankind.

And therefore never send to know for whom

the bell tolls; it tolls for thee.

MEDITATION XVII

Devotions upon Emergent Occasions