

Family Paideia Seminar Plan

Text: “**Trees”** by Harry Behn

Ideas, Values: Nature, Beauty, Sacrifice, Opinion

Pre-Seminar Content

Big Ideas Chat:

What is your favorite kind of tree? What do you think is most special about it?

1st Read:

Read aloud the poem while family and/or friends listen.

Vocabulary:

Check to see if there are any words that need to be talked about before the discussion begins. Listeners or readers can use context clues to help figure out possible definitions or use a dictionary or device to get a formal definition.

2nd Read:

Have another participant in the discussion to read the poem aloud. Talk about what each stanza is focused on.

Find a tree near your house and re-read the poem while looking at it. Which descriptions of trees can you see in your tree? Check off each line where evidence is present. Example: We see “new buds of green” so we would check that line.

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):
	+ Not including people or pets, what is the kindest thing you know? (Have younger kids share first if they feel comfortable and advance by age. Don’t share your why until after everyone has had a chance to answer.)
	+ Why did you pick that thing to be the kindest? (Anyone can share)
* Core (Analyze textual details):
	+ How might this poem have been different if it was written from the perspective of an animal, say, a bird or a squirrel?
	+ Why do you think the author describes the trees at dawn and dusk?
	+ What does the author mean in the second to last line, “Of sleepy children long ago….?”
	+ Of all the gifts that trees give, are there any missing in this poem?

(Do you think the author intentionally left these out?)

* Closing (Personalize and apply the ideas):
	+ Which stanza do you think best describes what trees are to us, or what they represent? Why?

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/Family Activity:

Review and discuss key ideas that you heard, said and thought during the family seminar.

Take an observation walk as a family and inspect the trees in your yard or neighborhood. Make a chart of the similarities and differences as you walk. Take a photo of your favorite tree.

* Writing:

Draw a picture of your favorite tree from the photo that you took. Pick the stanza that you selected in the closing question of the discussion and write it at the bottom. Have a family member take a photo of you and your tree picture and share with a friend or relative along with this Paideia Family Plan.

This Paideia Lesson Plan was created by:

 Name: Jeremy Spielman

 Organization: National Paideia Center

\*Text is attached if open sourced.

Trees

Trees are the kindest things I know,

They do no harm, they simply grow

And spread a shade for sleepy cows,

And gather birds among their bows.

They give us fruit in leaves above,

And wood to make our houses of,

And leaves to burn on Halloween

And in the Spring new buds of green.

They are first when day's begun

To tough the beams of morning sun,

They are the last to hold the light

When evening changes into night.

And when a moon floats on the sky

They hum a drowsy lullaby

Of sleepy children long ago...

Trees are the kindest things I know.

-Harry Behn