

The Difference Between the Two Blocks

There is a good deal of difference between these two main lesson blocks. The first block focuses directly on the human being and how he can be seen as a composite of the animal kingdom. The animals chosen to illustrate this are described primarily in how they embody the characteristics of the metabolic/limb, thinking/sense and rhythmic centers of the threefold human being, as well as more general characteristics.

This first block is the one which many of you might find quite challenging. The trick is to give yourself enough time for preparation so that you can really penetrate the purpose of the block and make it your own. Then, in a warm-hearted and imaginative way, you'll be able to bring the descriptions and images to your child.

Try not to use animal books or photos with your child in this block. Describe the animals yourself. The descriptions of the cow, lion and mouse are provided to get you going – to inspire your own relationship to these animals and not for you to merely read to your child (though some of you may feel that this is what you need to do). Try to see each animal before your eyes and imagine how each looks and behaves. Try to make sense of its relationship to the human being in terms of the threefold organization.

Don't be afraid to repeat yourself often during this block or during both main lessons: the idea in Waldorf education is to always go deep. Repetition can serve to help your child have a more profound relationship to the animals and to her relationship as a human being to them. There could be a temptation with this first block to go too fast or not give enough depth to the material, especially if one is feeling a bit unsure about it all. Approach the animals from different angles: compare and contrast; look again at the human being; work artistically to extend one's experience of these animals.

Block II is much more like a straight zoology block. However, it remains vital that the human being always be present, that the human and animal kingdoms always be seen as fully entwined. Note, as well, our frequent reminders to present the animals in the totality of their identity. This includes both their relationship to their physical environment and their intimate connection with other animals, both prey and predators.

Main Lesson Books

Here are ideas for your child's main lesson book (MLB).

- As with other MLBs this year, do have your child skip the first page and come back later, when the book is complete, to do a Contents page.
- Include a number of different kinds of written work in an MLB – summaries, dictations, notes, lists, descriptions and reports are all possibilities. Check the language arts section of the *Fourth Grade Syllabus* or *Living Language* (volume 1) for how to do such work with your child.
- We suggest that, for the most part, you do drawings for your child to copy but, as a fourth grader, it is quite acceptable for a child to copy from a book as well. Do help your child with this, though – it is far, far easier to copy a line drawing than a photograph and even