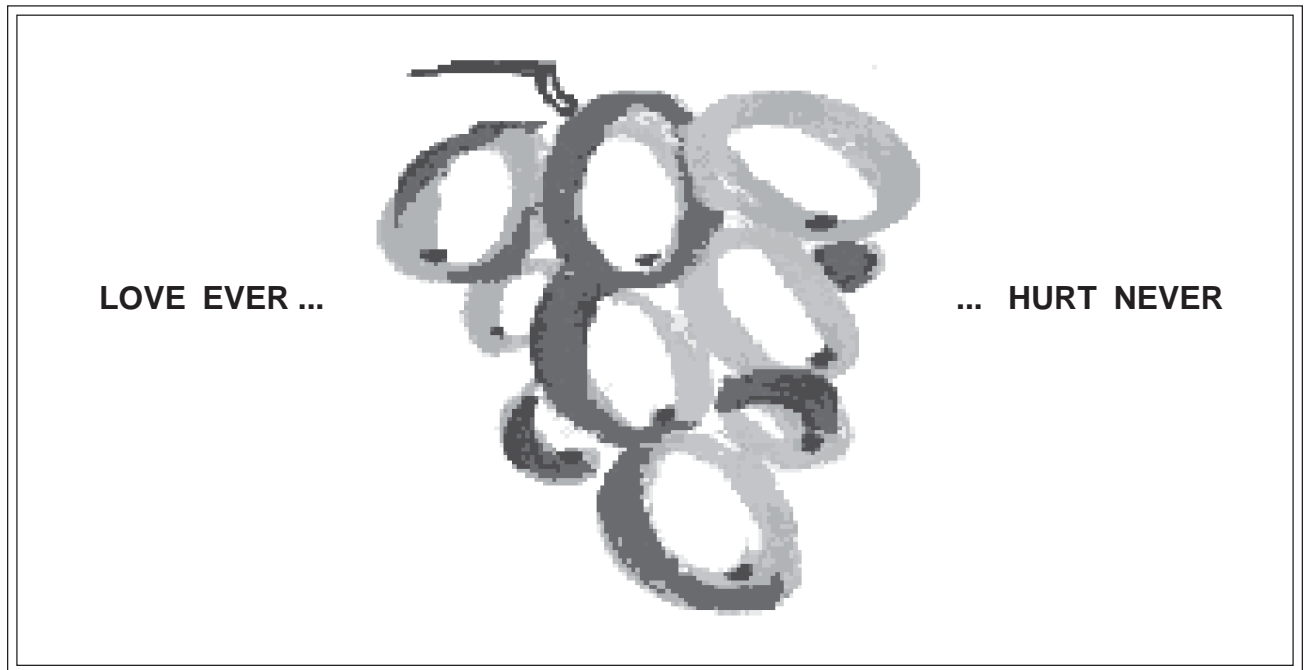


CONSIDERATION FOR WILDLIFE

Objective: *To stimulate thinking about the rights of other creatures to live and our part in caring for them*

Key Words: *wildlife, downy, ledge, owls, trusses, brambles, cottage, free*

QUOTATION/THEME FOR THE WEEK



Discuss what this quotation means. Would it be a good thing to practise?

SILENT SITTING

Steps 1, 2, 3, (See page 40)

Step 5: Imagine you are going for a walk down a country lane ...

The ground is soft under your feet ...

Branches of trees arch across the lane, offering their cool shade ...

The sunlight filters down through their branches making patches of golden light on the path ...

The birds are singing happily.

Listen to their singing ...

Look at them flying from tree to tree ...

See the robin hopping near you at the side of the path ...

They are happy to be alive.

You feel happy too.

Step 6.

STORY

THE OWLS

by Cynthia Bach

Mother Owl had been sitting on her three white eggs for what seemed to her to be a very long time. Today she felt restless, as if something was about to happen. It was early on a Spring morning and Father Owl would be back in a moment with something for breakfast. Yes, here he came with a flutter of white downy wings into the roof of the old cottage that hadn't been lived in by people for years. A few tiles had come off the roof and a piece of rafter had broken, so there was an easy way in, and Mother Owl had made a nest of straw and feathers on a ledge between the roof trusses. A quick mouthful and Mother Owl flew off to stretch her wings. Still feeling that something was in the air, she did not want to be away from the nest too long. Twice round the field and through the wood on the other side, then she decided to return.

Father Owl had been standing by the eggs, looking at them and listening, but when Mother returned he flew onto a nearby rafter and went to sleep. It was a beautiful day outside. In the field and the wood, other birds were busy - singing, nest-building or sitting on eggs. Mother Owl dozed a little. Then - what was that? She awoke with a start! Something was happening. A lot of noise was going on outside the cottage. A car and two vans had arrived. People were doing things in the garden and there was the clatter of machinery that was very alarming.

Father Owl stirred in his sleep and opened his eyes, heard all the racket and flew over to Mother Owl as if to protect her. What was going on? The two owls just sat, very alarmed, but not daring to move, partly out of fear and partly because the eggs were just beginning to hatch. They could hear tap, tap, tap on the inside of the shell of one egg - so a careful watch must be kept for the sake of the little owlet about to emerge.

Still the noise went on outside. The owls had heard nothing like it before and not daring to peep outside, they had no idea what was happening. Gradually they realised that nothing was attacking *them*, so they turned to what was happening in the nest.

Great excitement! One little owlet was out of its egg, all wet and tired. Another egg had tapping noises inside it. Mother Owl cuddled the wet owlet until it was dry and fluffy and waited for the next one to hatch. By the time it had done so and had been cuddled and dried, the awful noises outside had stopped. Everything had gone quiet. It was now early evening and Father Owl peered out of the hole in the roof. It was time to go hunting for supper. Now there were two more mouths to feed, even if they were only little ones, they would be hungry!

Father Owl flew off to find supper and was quickly back with a good meal to share around. Mother Owl was cuddling the owlets and looking at the third egg to see if any sounds were coming from it.

The egg was quiet at the moment. Mother Owl had forgotten that the third egg had been laid after the other two. She had to keep sitting on it, or it would not hatch. Back and forth came Father Owl, each time with a tasty mouthful, babies and mother were really hungry.

At last, early morning came and Father Owl realised that there were changes round the cottage. All the overgrown brambles and nettles had been cleared, the wild hedges had been trimmed and now there was a pathway cleaned to the old front door. There was a porch over it, but no-one would have known, until the garden had been cleared. On his return, Mother Owl left her babies to have a fly around. She saw the changes as well, but it was still quiet, so she had no fears about them. On her return she settled on the nest and listened for any tapping sounds. Nothing yet. The owls dozed as the warm morning sun rose higher in the sky. Then a slight sound awakened them again. What they did not know was that it was a ladder being placed against the wall just below the hole in the roof!

“That will have to be mended before we can move in,” said a man’s voice.

Then a lady’s voice said, “Will it take long? We need to be in before the school term starts.”

“Can we go up the ladder? We’ve never seen inside an old roof,” came a young voice.

“Well, I don’t know. Is it safe, John?” The lady was concerned for the safety of her children.

“They can go up one at a time and I’ll go behind them. That should be all right,” came the reply.

The owls stood altogether, wondering what was going to happen. Human voices were new to them and they did not know if they were something to fear or not. A sound of feet on the rungs of the ladder followed and then a face appeared at the hole in the roof. Just at that moment, Mother Owl heard the tap tapping she had been waiting for. Whatever was going on outside was not important now. She must be ready to cuddle the youngest owlet that was about to come out of its egg. So she sat tight, the two older owlets, one under each wing. Father Owl stood beside her, as if on guard.

“Oh, Dad! There are owls in here. Come and see.” The child was so excited that she nearly fell off the ladder.

“Can I see? Can I see?” came another child’s voice from the garden.

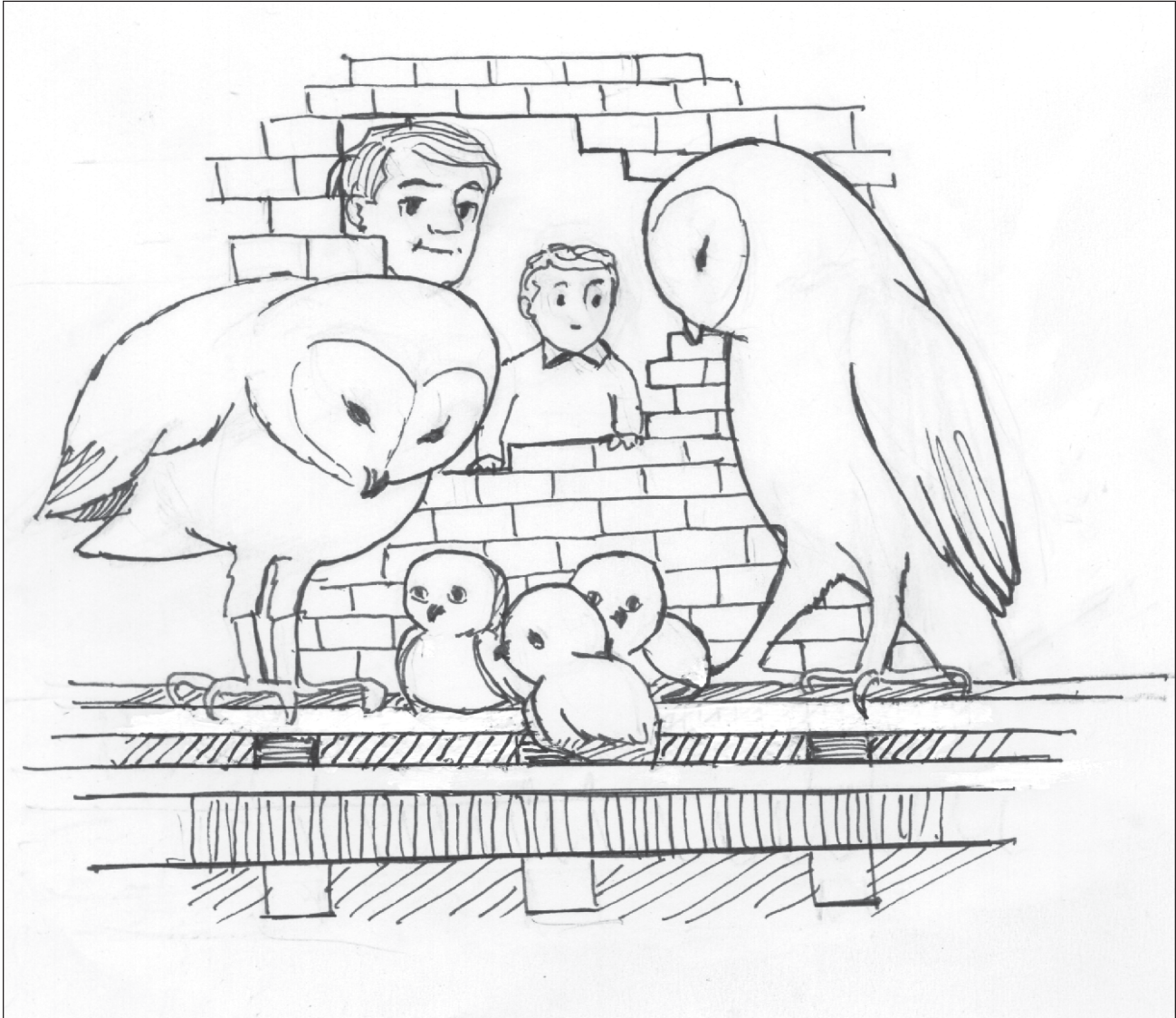
“All right. Now you *must* be quiet and move slowly. Don’t frighten them. They might even have a nest in there. This place has been empty for so long.” The man’s voice came soothingly.

But Mother Owl ignored it all, as she helped her youngest out of its shell. There! Now she had her family complete.

The other family - the human one - was delighted to know that there were owls in the roof.

“Just a quick look,” the man’s voice said. “Go on up and I’ll come behind you.”

Shortly after, a little boy’s face appeared at the hole in the roof. Just in time to see the two older owlets look at the newly hatched baby owl with what appeared to be amazement.



“Oh Dad. There are three babies in a nest. Have a look,” exclaimed the little boy.

“Come down now. We’ll leave them alone. They need some peace and quiet,” said the man.

“What shall we do now? How long before they leave the nest? We have to move in soon.” The woman sounded anxious.

“Don’t worry,” the man’s voice was reassuring. “We’ll leave that end of the cottage alone until they have finished raising the young ones. We can live in the other end. It’s quite sound and the roof is good there. We must let the owls live there for a while. They have as much right to a home as we have. We will need to be quiet for a while.”

“Will we see them again?” asked the children, a bit disappointed at not being able to watch the owls.

“Yes, of course,” said their father. “You will see them in the evenings when they leave the nest and go hunting for themselves. The fields and wood will be kept as they are, so that all the wild creatures can live there, including the owls. That is what is so nice about living in the country. But we must keep the garden tidy, so that everywhere looks good.”

“Do you think we should give the cottage a name that is something to do with owls?” asked their mother.

“I know,” said the children both together. “Let’s call it ‘Two Hoots’ !”

And so they did. The baby owls grew up and left the nest during the summer and the human family renovated the cottage. They left the hole in the roof at one end and boarded up a small section of the roof near to the hole, so that the owls could come back to nest every year.

QUESTIONS:

1. How many eggs were there in the owls’ nest?
2. Which season of the year was it?
3. How did Mother Owl and Father Owl feel when they heard the clatter of machinery in the garden?
4. Do you think the people who moved into the cottage were caring people? What makes you think so?
5. What is the best thing to do when you find a bird’s nest?
6. How did you feel when you heard this story?
7. What did the story mean to you?

GROUP SINGING

WE ARE FREE

(music and lyrics by Sara John)

Softly among us there flows a great power
It's the power of love that's binding us all.
Open our hearts to the love that's inside us
And then we can see what the power can be.

*Chorus: We are free, we are free
Love's power sets us free.
We can live our lives
In peace and harmony. (Repeat)*

Truthfully open, we live our lives freely.
It's a freedom in truth that's binding us all.
Open our hearts to the truth that's inside us
And then we can see what truth's power can be.

*Chorus: We are free, we are free
Truth's power sets us free.
We can live our lives
In peace and harmony. (Repeat)*

Peace is the wonderful gift born forever
When love and truth combine in us all.
Open our hearts to the peace that's inside us
And then we can see what peace power can be.

*Chorus: We are free, we are free
Peace power sets us free.
We can live our lives
In peace and harmony. (Repeat)*

In peace and harmony.

Softly among us there flows
a great power.

GROUP ACTIVITY

1. GAME: MUSICAL VALUES TAG

Children make a large circle and one, the Tagger, stands in the centre.

The Tagger calls out one of the five values and the children skip round him/her to music.

When the music stops the Tagger touches, or tags, anyone who is not linked arm in arm with someone else.

The person who is tagged then has to say a value related to the value the Tagger chose and why that value is important.

That child then becomes the Tagger and chooses another of the five values.

As this game requires an even number of players, the teacher may have to join in.

Once the basic rules are understood the teacher can add an extra dimension by ruling that players cannot link up with the same person twice.

2. *Give each child a photocopy of the picture on the next page.*

- a) Ask them to look at the good quality we can learn from each animal.
- b) Brainstorm what other animals there are that we can learn good behaviour from.
- c) Let the children colour or paint the animal pictures, or design their own similar picture showing an animal and its good quality/qualities.

Now try the following reflective exercise:

One useful thing I have learned today is ...

Close the lesson: If the teacher wishes, the lesson can be closed by asking the children to form a circle and say, “Our world is a special place. I will treat it with consideration and care”.

Extension Exercise / Links to Other Subjects:

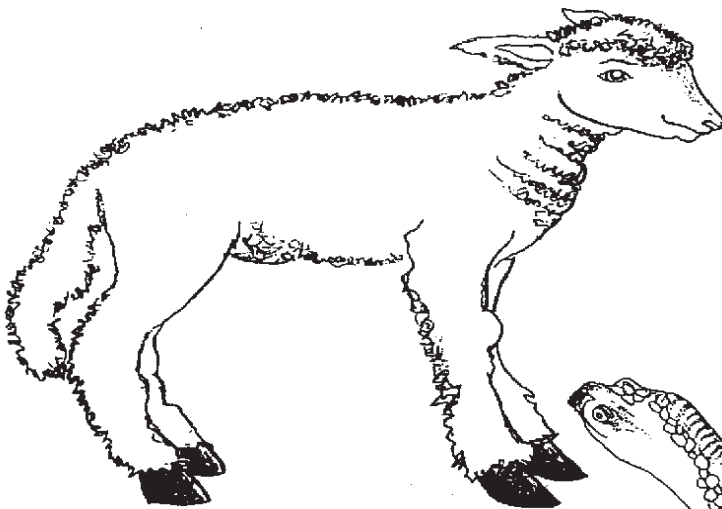
Class project: the children research local wildlife sanctuaries and draw pictures of some of the animals kept there and write about their habits, especially life-cycles.



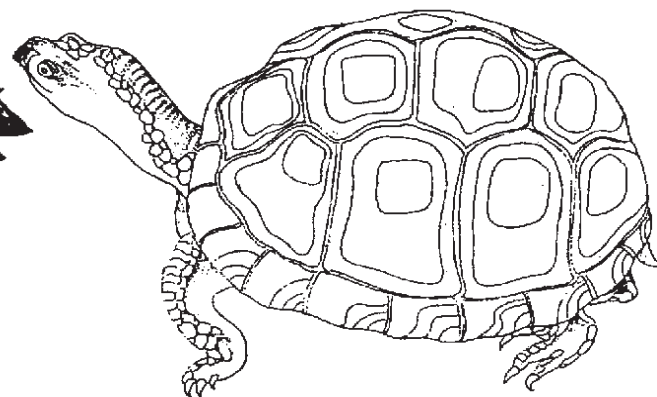
BE JOYFUL AS THE NIGHTINGALE



BE GENTLE LIKE THE FAWN



BE HAPPY AS THE LAMB



BE CALM LIKE THE TORTOISE