

Relating with the Goddess of Compassion

Summary: Students generate their own innate love and compassion and imagine it manifesting as an energy ball that they can visualize shaping it into a Green Tara figure. Through this they are introduced to the possibility that Tara is always close by because she is none other than their own loving-kindness energy.

Essential Question: Who is Tara?

Intro: In general, MWE is careful about introducing gods, deities, and other unseen beings to children but the opportunity to talk about Tara, the goddess of compassion, kept arising and we wanted to find a way to talk about Tara that felt authentic and accessible. Rinpoche suggested that these deities are also energies and that Green Tara's energy is kind and compassionate, and protective. This activity could be adapted and applied to other deities, such as orange Manjushri (wisdom energy), or White Tara (healing energy).

Big Idea: Is Tara real? Why do images of deities exist?

Standards

- Demonstrate knowledge of the iconography and symbolism of the Buddhist art
- Develop confidence and tact in asking thoughtful, respectful, and appropriate questions to learn about others and their lineage. (in the case of interviewing someone about Tara)
- Develop the power of visualization

Enduring Understandings

- REFUGE: You are your own refuge
- PERCEPTIONS: Do not rely on your perceptions alone. What can be seen, heard, and felt is limited.

Materials:

- Image of Tara (see page 4)

Vocabulary:

Goddess, deity, visualization, energy, mudra, manifestation

Lesson Plan

Have an image or statue of Green Tara posted or nearby. Guide students in this visualization. You can use this script or improvise:

Think about someone who warms your heart and makes you feel good and safe. Maybe it's a sibling, or a pet, or your parents or grandparents. Really visualize and focus on that loving feeling that comes up when you think of them. Now rub your hands together quickly so that you start to feel energy and warmth between them. You are creating an energy ball to put that loving feeling in. When you open your hands, can you feel that warm energy? Can you see it? What color is it? Now shape that loving energy into a ball. You can hold it close or toss it to someone in the class. You can merge your energy balls into one big ball. Now collect your own persona; energy ball back and turn it green color, re-energize it with that loving feeling. Now mold it and shape it as if it were lightweight clay. Start making the shape and create a Tara figure with it. She holds two flowers and has a crown. What else does she have? This is your Tara! She is made of your own caring, loving energy. She is always there.

Invite students to melt Tara back into their hearts.

Guiding Questions: have an open discussion and invite children to answer a couple of questions

- How did that feel?
- What do you notice about Tara?
- Who do you go to when you are seeking some love and compassion? Do you want to be that person for others?
- Do you understand what embodiment means? Manifestation? Which qualities would you want to embody?

Symbols of Tara

Draw children's attention to how Tara is depicted in a painting. What do they notice?

- She's Green, with 2 eyes, and two arms and wears jewels and ornaments
- She has an utpala (night lotus) flower clasped between her thumb and ring finger of her left hand.

LESSON | Generating Tara Energy

- Her mudra of the three raised fingers symbolizes the three jewels in Buddhism – Buddha, Dharma and Sangha.
- Notice her gestures (she has [many](#))
- She is sitting peacefully in the [posture of royal ease](#) on a lotus and moon with the right arm over the right knee with her palm facing outward (generosity) or downward (fearlessness) or sometimes holding a vase (long life)
- Sometimes she is standing

LESSON OBJECTIVES

Know: At the end of the unit, all students should know

- That Tara is a Buddhist manifestation of love and kindness, the goddess of universal compassion
- There are many Taras but green is the principal Tara
- Not all Buddhists interact with Tara

Understand: At the end of the unit, all students should understand

- They have access to their own Inner Tara through generating loving kindness as a source of refuge at all times

Do: At the end of the unit, all students should be able to

- Access their inner Tara in times of need
- Identify Tara by her marks and symbols
- Say the Tara Mantra *om tare tuttare ture svaha*

RESOURCES FOR TEACHERS:

- [Himalayan Art Resources: Green Tara, Green Main Page](#)
- [Green Tara Mantra](#) on Youtube
- [108 Praises of Tara by Nagarjuna](#)
- [Tara: A Powerful Feminine Force](#) - Scripps

ACROSS THE DOMAINS:

Academics: Write a homage to express your gratitude for someone that makes you feel loved and safe.

Humanities Discuss unseen beings from different cultures; Invite a Tibetan lama to come speak about Tara

Movement/Embodiment Try sitting in the posture of royal ease

LESSON | Generating Tara Energy

Contemplation/Dharma This activity can be taken deeper though extending the study of Tara. In more Buddhist environments students can memorize the Praises 21 Tara

Arts Trace Tara, draw your own Tara, trace the Tara sanskrit syllable, make up your own deity

This lesson was created by Noa Jones with guidance from Dzongsar Khyentse Rinpoche.

Image of Green Tara by Emily Avery Crow

