

TITLE: Bubble Contemplation



Children are fascinated by bubbles. They seemingly appear out of nowhere, lofting into the air unpredictably, yet completely contained as transparent spheres with a reflective rainbow sheen. Suddenly, they disappear in a almost imperceptible splash. Where did they go? What remains? The following activity provides a springboard for children to investigate the experience of viewing conditioned phenomena as both interdependent and impermanent.

TOPIC: Interdependence and Impermanence

BIG IDEA: Comes from the Diamond Sutra

*Taraka timiram dipo
Maya-avasyaya budbudam
Supinam vidyud abhram ca
Evam drastavyam samskrtam.*

As stars, a fault of vision, as a lamp,
A mock show, dew drops, or a bubble,
A dream, a lightning flash, or cloud,
So should one view what is conditioned.

Above is a frequently quoted verse spoken by the Buddha. It is found in the Diamond Sutra, one of the most important texts of Mahayana Buddhism. There are many speculations on what this *gatha* means but the general consensus is that it is a teaching on the impermanent nature of all things. In our exploration here, we will contemplate a bubble as suggested in the verse.

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS: What is the nature of phenomena? What is interdependence? What is impermanence? Is impermanence a bad thing?

AGE GROUP: All ages

<p>Know: At the end of the unit, all students should know....</p>	<p>Understand: At the end of the unit, all students should understand that.....</p>	<p>Do: During this lesson, students will..</p>
<p>This is actual knowledge they come away with. E.g. Know that bubbles arise from conditions coming together. They vanish from our sight under certain conditions.</p>	<p>This is the deeper take away The interdependent nature of conditioned phenomena as both interdependent and impermanent.</p>	<p>This is the actual activity that can be explained more below Blow bubbles, hear the passage from the Diamond Sutra , Thich Nhat Hanh and discuss.</p>

Materials: Bubbles

Activity description:

Step one: Have the students sit in a circle.

Step two: Reads the *gatha* from the Diamond sutra above. Ask the children what they think the Buddha means by “conditioned” things. For reference and also to support the children’s understanding, here is a quote from [The Diamond That Cuts Through Illusion: Commentaries on the Prajnaparamita Diamond Sutra](#) by [Thich Nhat Hanh](#):

“Composed things are all objects of mind that are conditioned to arise, exist for awhile, and then disappear, according to the principle of dependent co-arising. Everything in life seems to follow this pattern, and, although things look real, they are actually more like the things a magician conjures up. We can see and hear them clearly, but they are not really what they appear to be.”

Step three: Blow a bubble into the center of the circle and ask, “Did that bubble magically appear on its own?” Ask the children to call out the interdependent conditions that lead to the bubble: 1) the presence of soap in the bottle and the particular consistency of the solution; 2) the wand that captured just enough solution; 3) The person to blow air through the wand 4) the space free of popping elements that allows the bubble to abide in the air. Read this great [article about the science behind bubbles](#) to support the lesson.

Step four: Pass the bubbles around and allow each child to have a turn. Contemplate that each one is different etc.

Step five: As the children continue to have their turns, introduce the contemplation of where the bubble goes when it pops. Ask if the air inside and outside the bubble are the same or different. Ask what they feel when they are forming the bubble, when they see it aloft and when it pops.

Which of the 7 intelligences are being activated?

- Verbal/Linguistic – yes
- Visual/Spatial - yes
- Bodily/Kinesthetic - yes
- Intrapersonal - no
- Interpersonal – no
- Musical/Rhythmic -no
- Logical/Mathematical/Scientific (environmental) -yes

Closing contemplation and meditation: Asks the children for their thoughts and reflections with, “What are other things that seemingly appearing and disappearing before our eyes almost like a magic trick?” Follow the children into further investigations such as cloud watching, star gazing, or the dream process. After all the children’s thoughts are heard, conclude with a short meditation session. ([Mind Jars](#) can be used at this time to support the meditation.) Dedicate the

merit of this activity for the benefit of all beings connected to each other in this magically fleeting world.