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Introduction

Quick & Easy Thematic Units is an exciting collection of activities that will take you and your students through the year and across the curriculum.

Quick & Easy Thematic Units includes:

- **literature selections**—summaries of children's books with related activities that cross the curriculum
- **planning guides**—suggestions for sequencing lesson plans
- **writing and language experience ideas**—regular suggestions as well as writing activities across the curriculum, including Big Books
- **bulletin board ideas**—suggestions throughout the units for student-created and/or interactive bulletin boards
- **homework suggestions**—extending the units to the child's home
- **curriculum connections**—in language arts, maths, science, social studies, art, music, and life skills
- **group projects**—to foster co-operative learning
- **culminating activities**—which require students to synthesize their learning to produce a product or engage in an activity that can be shared with others
- **bibliographies**—suggesting additional literature and nonfiction books on the themes

Quartering the Story

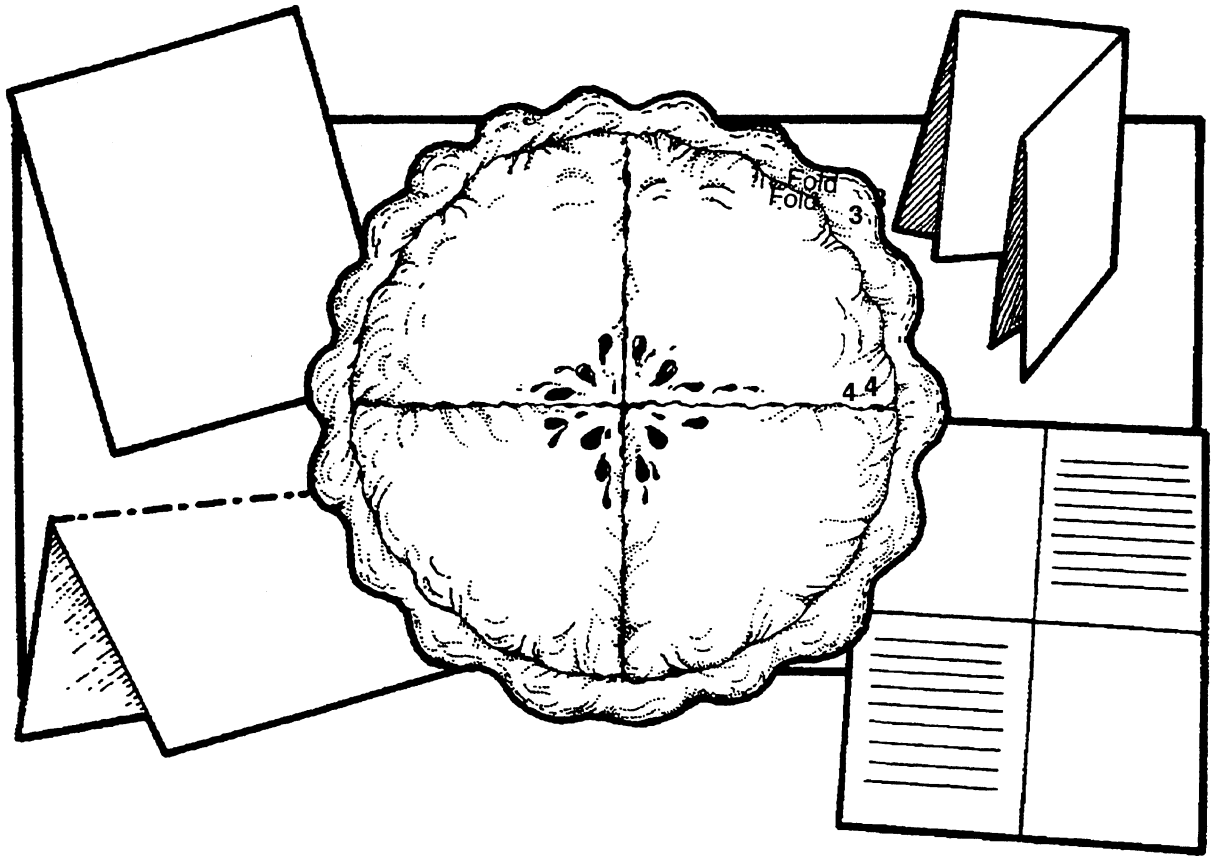
This technique is a way to focus on four specific aspects of a story. This exercise may be done with most stories.

Materials:

copies of the chart on page 15; dictionaries, colored markers or crayons

Directions:

Read a story to your students. Explain each of the four sections on the chart before students begin working on the questions.



Extension:

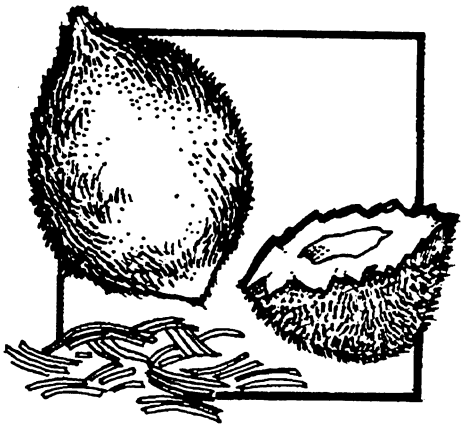
Use four other questions or ideas to quarter the story. For example: "What is the setting of the story?" "What is the most exciting part of the story?" "What is the conflict or problem in the story? How is it solved?" "Would you have acted the same way as your favorite character from the story?"

Save Those Seeds

Many of the foods we eat come from seed-bearing plants. If you haven't already planted seeds as part of a school project, a unit on nutrition is a good place to introduce some of the following seed growing activities. It is important for students to learn about edible plant parts and their nutritional value. So save the seeds from edible fruits and vegetables to grow and study in class. Discuss the role of the seed in plant reproduction, and decide which seeds are edible and healthy food sources.

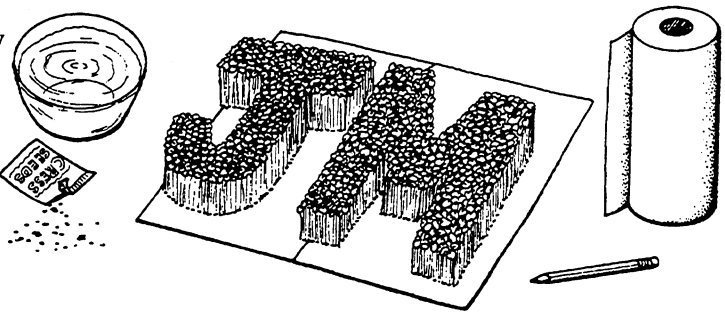
Seed Activities:

- Some seeds are protected by covers (seed coats) that are edible. Tell students they are going to look for seeds inside these fruit and vegetable covers. Reproduce "How Many Seeds?" on page 39. As students predict and actually count the seeds in the following activity, have them record their guesses and actual seed count on the lines provided on the activity sheet. Ask students to predict how many seeds they think each fruit or vegetable will contain.
- Give students plenty of time to discover and experience the seeds and their covers as they dissect them. Ask students to share their sniff and taste experiences with everyone. They should count and compare the number of seeds in fruits that are alike and also with fruits that are different. How do the number of seeds compare with the number of seeds in the orange? in the peach? How did the actual count compare with their original prediction? Have them save the watermelon and cantaloupe seeds for feeding birds later.



- A coconut is one of nature's biggest seeds. Puncture the soft spots and drain the juice before opening the shell. Crack the shell with a hammer and scrape out small pieces of coconut for children to taste. How is this seed like other seeds? How is it different?
- Make Seed Sweets using one cup grated coconut, one cup hulled sunflower seeds, two tablespoons peanut butter, two tablespoons honey or icing sugar or maple syrup. Mix all ingredients and form into a log. Slice thinly and enjoy.
- Remind students that we depend largely on grasses for our daily food. We grow grass plants such as rice, barley, sugar cane, millet, and wheat.

  Make grass seeds grow in the shape of the students' initials on a damp paper towel by arranging cress seeds or alfalfa seeds on the paper in the shape of letters. A stencil will help students to form letters. The seeds need to be kept damp and warm as you watch the initials grow.



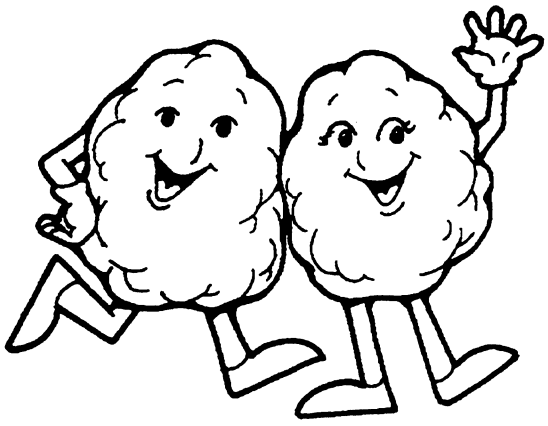
Let's Celebrate Science

Dancing Sultanas

A party doesn't seem complete
Without a tasty snack to eat!

Many of the celebrations you plan during the school year can be topped off with healthy, easy-to-prepare, and delicious treats. Don't forget the sultanas at that up-coming celebration! Did you know that the sultana in not only a sweet and tasty morsel, but that it can also perform magic? Try the following experiment with your class. Once you have performed the "magic," offer the explanation provided.

The Materials



- one clear glass filled with plain water
- white vinegar
- bicarbonate of soda
- a tablespoon
- six sultanas

The Magic (Procedure)

- Place the glass of plain water on a table. Add the sultanas and observe what happens to them. (The sultanas will sink to the bottom of the glass.)
- Take the sultanas out. Tell the students that you will now add a clear liquid and special white powder to the water. (Have the bicarbonate of soda in a small plain container. Pour four tablespoons of vinegar in the water. Add three tablespoons of bicarbonate of soda and stir to dissolve.)
- Tell the students that you will drop sultanas into the water. Add the sultanas and observe what happens. (The sultanas will first sink to the bottom but in a few minutes begin to float to the top and back to the bottom again is if they were dancing.)

The Explanation

Before explaining the reasons why the sultanas sink and float, have students brainstorm what the clear liquid and special white powder could be. Then show them the actual bicarbonate of soda container and vinegar and proceed with the explanation. (It will be necessary to simplify or expand the explanation depending on the age and/or ability levels of the students.)

A chemical reaction takes place between the vinegar and bicarbonate of soda in which one of the products formed is carbon dioxide gas. The bubbles of carbon dioxide begin to cling around one of the sultanas that has dropped into the glass. The bubbles carry the sultanas back toward the surface. When the bubbles reach the surface, they pop due to the release of carbon dioxide, and the sultana sinks again. New carbon dioxide bubbles will collect around the sultana and carry it back to the top. Sultanas will "dance" in this manner until carbon dioxide bubbles are no longer available to lift them to the surface.

