

The Backbone



Lesson Message

- ♦ What is a visible backbone?
Our vertebral column, made up of many bones that give us physical support, is the visible backbone.
- ♦ What is the importance of a backbone?
Our backbone helps us to stand erect.
- ♦ What is an invisible backbone?
Our noble character, molded by many virtues and noble thoughts, is the invisible backbone.
- ♦ What is the importance of a strong invisible backbone?
A strong invisible backbone helps us to stand up for what is right and uphold our virtues and beliefs.

OPENING PRAYER

3 MINUTES

ॐ सह नाववतु ।
सह नौ भुनक्तु ।
सह वीर्यं करवावहै ।
तेजस्विनावधीतमस्तु मा विद्विषावहै ॥
ॐ शान्तिः शान्तिः शान्तिः ॥
*om saha nāvavatu,
saha nau bhunaktu,
saha vīryaṁ karavāvahai,
tejasvināvadhitam-astu mā vidviṣāvahai.
om śāntiḥ śāntiḥ śāntiḥ.*

May He protect us both.
May He nourish us.
May we acquire the capacity
(to study and understand the
scriptures).
May our study be brilliant.
May we not cavil at each other.
Om Peace Peace Peace.

ATTENDANCE

5 MINUTES

Take attendance, and let each child respond *Hariḥ Om*, when his or her name is called.

MEMORY TIME

10 MINUTES

- ♦ Read and explain the meaning of the Opening Prayer.

- ◆ Have all the children read the meaning of the Opening Prayer two or three times. The Opening Prayer can be copied and posted in the class.
- ◆ Remind children that while saying our prayers, we must sit erect, close our eyes, and fold our hands and legs.

TOPIC OF THE DAY

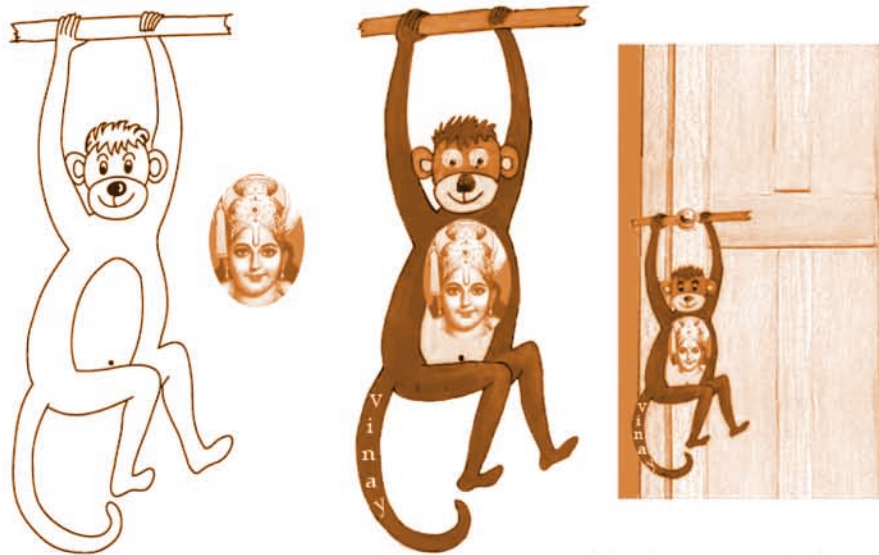
35 MINUTES

The topic of the day consists of:

- ◆ **Activity:** Nametag
- ◆ **Brainstorming:** Vertebrates Versus Invertebrates
- ◆ **Activity:** The Backbone
- ◆ **Tale:** The Empty Pot
- ◆ **Activity:** Strong Mental Backbone

Activity: Nametag

The objective of this activity is to provide an opportunity for children and the teacher to learn each other's name and get acquainted in a fun and creative way.



Materials Required

- ◆ Classroom kit
- ◆ Copy of the picture from the Appendix for each child, preferably on card stock

Directions

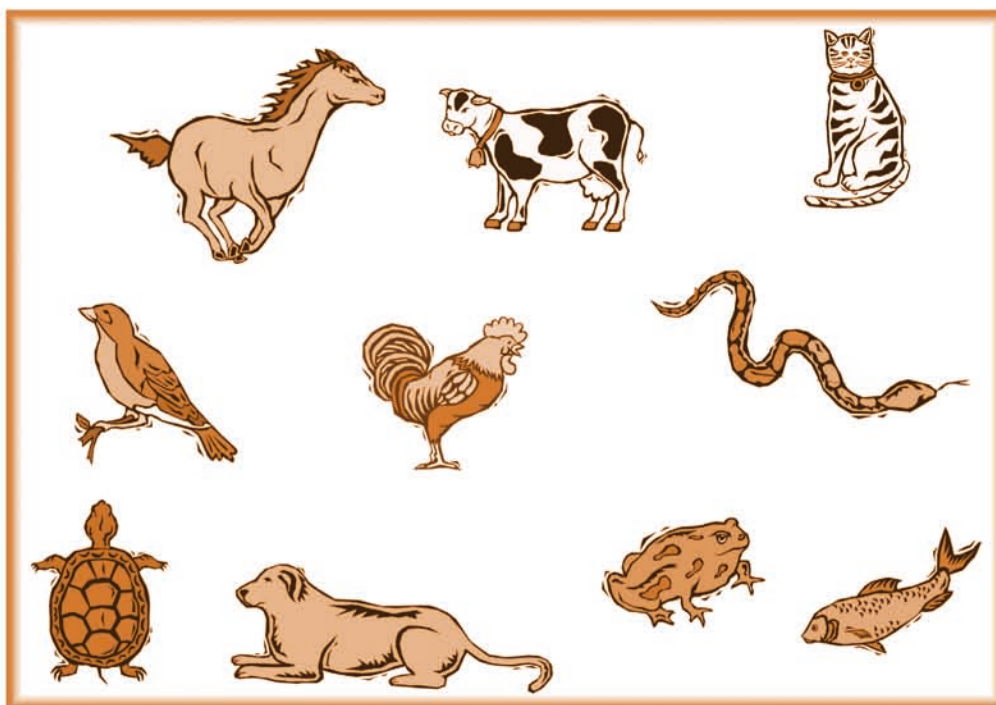
Have children color the monkey nametag figure and cut around the nametag figure of the monkey. Cut out the picture of Rāma's face and glue it as shown in the figure. Children can write their name either on the tail or elsewhere.

Display these nametags either inside the classroom or on the door. Children can take this nametag home at the end of the curriculum year.

Brainstorming: Vertebrates Versus Invertebrates

Show pictures of different animals given in the Appendix to the children, and ask them to identify each one. Ask them, "How many types of animals are there in the world? 1? 100? 1000? 100,000?" Let them give you their answers. Then explain to them that there are over:

- ♦ 4,000 kinds of mammals
- ♦ 21,000 kinds of fishes
- ♦ 800,000 kinds of insects



These animals are divided into two groups: vertebrates and invertebrates. Vertebrates are animals with a backbone or spine that supports the body and is made-up of a column of separate bones. Only five percent of the world's animals are vertebrates, which means they have backbones. These include humans,

monkeys, amphibians, birds and fishes. The remaining 95 percent of the animals are invertebrates. Examples of invertebrates include jellyfish, ants, bees, etc.

Activity: The Backbone

The goal of this activity is to demonstrate that it is the strong backbone that allows us to stand tall and erect.

Choose three children. Ask the first one to act like a small baby lying in a crouched position. The second one should stand tall and erect like a young adult. The third child should hunch and stoop his back like an old person. Ask the rest of the children in the class to look at these three children and discuss what impact each child's posture will have on his/her ability to walk or stand.

A baby cannot stand as the backbone is not yet well developed to support. An old person has lost the ability to walk with a straight-back because his backbone has weakened. A young person, with a strong backbone, can walk, run, or stand upright. Emphasize that if we want to stand tall and erect, we got to have a strong backbone.

But, do you know that we humans also have another backbone, an invisible one? To explain this concept, tell children the story in the following section.

Tale: The Empty Pot

Once, there was a king with no heir to the throne. One day, he devised a clever plan to select the right person as the successor to the throne.

He gave flower seeds to all his subjects in the kingdom and announced, "You have six months to grow the healthiest plant you can. I shall choose the future king based on the growth of your plant."

Six months passed. All the subjects with their healthy plants in their hands proceeded toward the palace.

There was a young boy who also rushed towards the palace, but his pot was empty. Nothing had grown! All the people laughed and made fun of him for his failure to grow anything. The young boy said nothing and only smiled in response.

When the king looked at all the beautiful plants and only one empty pot, he asked the boy with the empty pot what had happened! The boy replied, "Your majesty, I watered. I fertilized. I took care of it, but nothing grew. I am sorry, but I have tried my best."



The king listened as the boy sheepishly narrated his story. The king then shocked the crowd by proclaiming the boy as the future king. “You have all proven unworthy. I gave you roasted seeds that would never sprout. Each of you lied, because of the greed to gain the kingdom, but only this young boy, despite all your jeers and taunts, spoke the truth. Thus, he is the only one among you who is fit to be the future king,” proclaimed the king.



Discussion: Ask the children why they think the boy became the king and was able to speak the truth even though he looked like a fool in front of everyone for his inability to grow the plant.

The boy was sure of his efforts. He knew he had worked very hard and was very careful and yet his seeds just did not sprout. He had a choice. He could have cheated and replaced those seeds just as everyone else in the town had done. Instead, he was able to stand firm and ignore everyone teasing and making fun of him. He refused to lie even if it meant becoming the future king. Why?

Because he had a strong backbone, a strong invisible backbone, that allowed him to stand up for what is right and uphold his virtues and beliefs.

Activity: Strong Mental Backbone

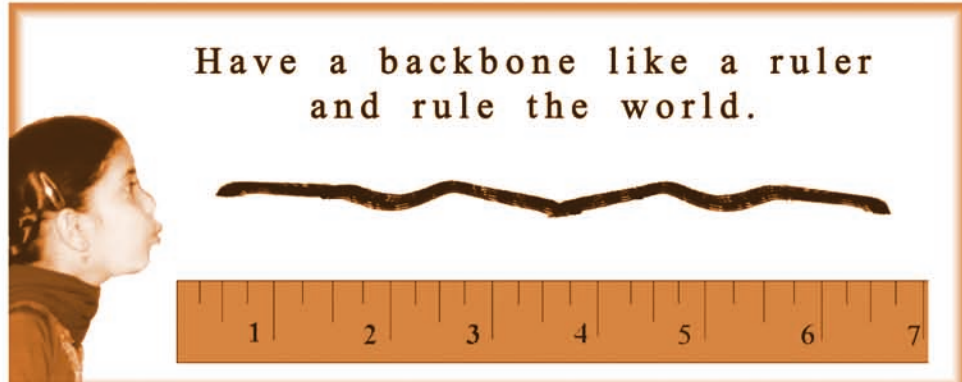
This activity explains the importance of having a strong invisible backbone.

Materials Required

- ◆ One 10-12 inches long string for each child
- ◆ One ruler

Directions

Give a piece of string to each child. Ask children to place it on the floor or desk, and ask them to move the string by blowing on it. Even with a slight blow, the string will fly away.

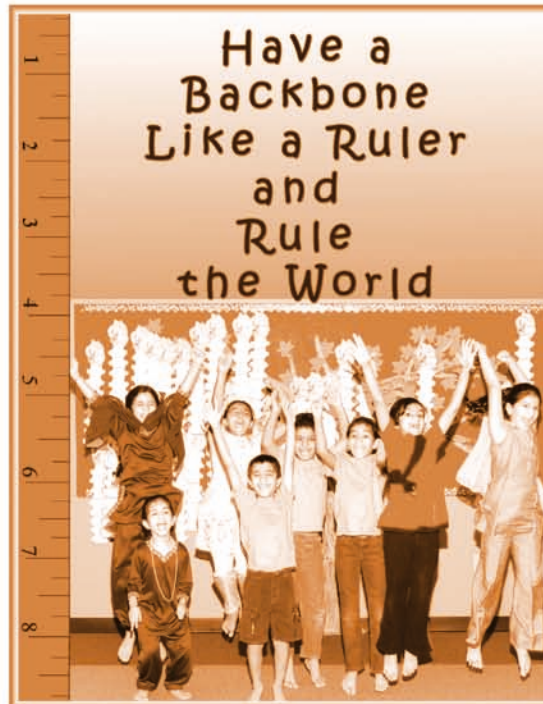


Now, lay the ruler on the floor or desk. Ask all the children to blow as hard as they can. Nothing will happen to the ruler; it will not move.

Inference: When our invisible backbone is weak, we get easily swayed. “Everyone is doing it, so I too will,” become our attitude. A person with a strong backbone is like a ruler that cannot be moved or influenced by temptations.

Let us have a motto for our life: **Have a backbone like a ruler, and rule the world!**

Copy the following picture from the Display section and display it in the classroom.



QUIET TIME

5 MINUTES



Follow the technique of *Likhita Japa* as given in the Introduction section to make the children's mind quiet.

CLOSING PRAYER

2 MINUTES

ॐ सर्वे भवन्तु सुखिनः सर्वे सन्तु निरामयाः ।
सर्वे भद्राणि पश्यन्तु मा कश्चिद् दुःखभाग्भवेत् ॥
ॐ शान्तिः शान्तिः शान्तिः ॥

*om sarve bhavantu sukhinaḥ sarve santu nirāmayāḥ,
sarve bhadrāṇi paśyantu mā kaścīd duḥkhabhāgbhavet.
om śāntiḥ śāntiḥ śāntiḥ.*

May all be happy.
May all be healthy.
May all enjoy prosperity.
May none suffer.
Om Peace Peace Peace.