

Children's Lessons for Life Groups

All-In-One lessons for kids ages 4-12

from

All-In-One Sunday School, Volumes 2 & 3

Lesson 11



Easter Joy!



LESSON AIM

To help kids understand that ★ Jesus is alive.

OBJECTIVES

Kids will

- ✓ discover how Jesus' disciples felt when Jesus died and came back to life again,
- ✓ hear the Easter story from Mary Magdalene's perspective,
- ✓ make personal reminders of Jesus' resurrection, and
- ✓ enjoy an Easter celebration.

YOU'LL NEED

- a paper bag of various household items
 - a dishpan of water
 - a towel
 - a photocopy of the "Mary, Jesus' Friend" story (pp. 40-41)
 - scissors
 - Bibles (NIV)
- materials for the learning centers of your choice:
- photocopies of the "Pop-Up Critter" handout (p. 46)
 - index cards
 - markers
 - photocopies of the "Easter Lily Pop-Up" handout (p. 47)
 - scissors
 - half-sheets of green construction paper
 - glue sticks
 - paper plates for "Name-in-a-Rainbow"
 - a bowl of water
 - white crayons
 - a spray bottle of water
 - paintbrushes
 - cups of thinned red, yellow, and blue tempera paint
 - newsprint
 - a marker

BIBLE BASIS

John 20:1-18

Jesus' closest friends had spent nearly three years in his company. They thought it nothing to give up homes, careers, and financial resources for the privilege of being close to the Messiah, God's chosen Savior. When Jesus was arrested, mocked, interrogated, and beaten by the Temple guards, the exciting life of these followers crumbled around them. And as an earthquake signaled Jesus' death on the cross, their world spun tragically out of control. How could it be? Why did he allow it? What should they do next? Run. Hide. Lock the doors.

But they couldn't hide forever. So on Sunday morning, Mary Magdalene made her way to the tomb to anoint Jesus' body—the one last service she could perform for her Lord. The unthinkable had happened. Jesus' body was gone! Mary ran to inform the disciples; she then returned to the tomb to weep. When a kind man approached her, Mary, thinking he was a gardener, pleaded with him to tell her where Jesus' body had been taken. "Mary," the man replied. Mary instantly recognized Jesus, her risen Lord. The tragedy and gloom of Friday dissolved in the glory of Easter morning!

Easter gives us hope. Jesus' death and resurrection form the very core of our Christian beliefs. Jesus made the way for us—we only have to follow. Because of Easter, we can erase *impossible* and *hopeless* from our vocabulary. The power that brought Jesus back to life is at work in us. *Anything* is possible. Hallelujah!

Luke 8:1-3

Mary Magdalene was one of a small group of women who followed Jesus out of love and gratitude for the help and healing he'd provided. These women also supported Jesus and the Twelve Apostles with their financial resources. It couldn't have been an easy life following Jesus from city to city. Their faithful, grateful lifestyle sets an example for all Christians.

UNDERSTANDING YOUR KIDS

Do you remember feeling powerless as a child? Feeling that grown-ups would make all the decisions, right or wrong, and that you just had to resign yourself to whatever might happen? Worrying that your parents might divorce or move the family across the country? Fearing a tragic accident? Wondering if a fatal disease would invade the body of someone you loved?

All kids know these feelings. The antidote? An eye-opening, life-changing glimpse of the love and power of our *living* God. God spoke, light shattered the dark void of space, and the universe came to be. That same God put his very essence into the body of a tiny human child. When the child grew to manhood, evil did its best to defeat him. But Jesus broke the chains of death and, with his victory, brought us eternal life. Kids need to know that this living God can be their daily companion and that, because Jesus lives, they have nothing to fear in this life or the next.

ATTENTION GRABBER

Can't Keep Me Down

Before class gather several small, household items in a paper bag. Kids will guess whether each item will sink or float in a dishpan of water. You might include an eraser, a pencil, a grape, a paper clip, a quarter, a pair of scissors, a stone, a cork, a toothpick, a nail, a rubber band, or whatever else you can quickly rummage from your "junk drawer"!

As kids arrive greet them by saying: **Christ is risen.** Teach them to respond, "He is risen indeed," and then exchange high fives. Encourage kids to repeat this greeting with each other as kids arrive.

After everyone has arrived and been greeted, say: **We're here to celebrate the greatest event in history. Death is doomed, and ★ Jesus is alive! Jesus' enemies killed him on a cross, but Jesus had the last word! Nothing could keep him down. Let's do a couple of fun things to remind us of Jesus' resurrection.**

Have kids stand facing a wall with their toes about six inches from the base of the wall. Demonstrate how to hold your arms rigid and press the backs of your wrists hard against the wall. Once everyone is in position, count: 1,001, 1,002, and so on up to 30. Then have kids step back from the wall and relax their arms. Because of the built-up muscle tension, everyone's arms will want to "float" upward. This is a truly strange experience even for those who have done it before! Gather kids in a circle and ask:

◆ **What was it like when your arms floated upward?**

(Weird; cool; I could hardly believe it.)

Say: **Let's have some more fun with things that rise.**

Set out a dishpan of water. Set the bag of household items next to it. Let kids take turns drawing an item from the bag without looking. After a child chooses an item, let him or her predict whether it will sink or float, and then test it by dropping it in the water. Have a towel nearby to dry the items and children's hands.

Ask:

◆ **What could you add to your item to make it sink?**

(Answers will vary.)

Let volunteers try to make their items sink. Then ask:

◆ **Why are some things just determined to float?** (Because of what they're made of; because that's the way God made them.)

Say: **Nothing could keep Jesus down—not even death. That's why we're celebrating today. But when Jesus died, his followers didn't understand that he would come back to life three days later. Let's look at the Easter story from their**

Teacher Tip

If you wish, you can add excitement to the game by letting children keep their items if they correctly predict whether the items will sink or float.



MARY, JESUS' FRIEND

(based on Luke 8:1-3 and John 20:1-18)

1
Do you know what happened when Jesus died?

(Put arms out like a cross.)

Just a few friends stayed at his side.
Afraid of the soldiers, most ran away.

(Pretend to run.)

But Jesus' friend Mary chose to stay.

2
Once Mary's life had been full of sin,
But Jesus had made her all clean within.

(Press hands over heart.)

He took all the sins in her heart away,
And they'd been good friends since that happy day.

(Hug your partner.)

3
When Jesus went preaching from town to town,

The twelve disciples followed him around.

(Make your fingers "walk.")

Mary and her friends would come along, too,

To see the great things that Jesus would do.

(Point and look surprised.)

4
He healed the sick and made the lame walk,

And everyone wanted to hear Jesus talk!

(Cup hands around ears.)

He spoke of his Father in heaven above

(Point up.)

And told about God's great kindness and love.

5
Everywhere Jesus and his followers went,
People would pray to God and repent.

(Fold hands as if praying.)

"Jesus is Lord," they'd all agree.

(Nod your head.)

"He takes away sins and makes the blind see."

6
But one day some bad men took Jesus away.

(Pretend to drag someone away.)

They put him on trial that very sad day.

(Shake your head and look sad.)

"Will they hurt my Lord?" Mary wondered aloud.

"Just look at the angry folks in this crowd!"

7
"They can't take Jesus! Oh, what a loss!"
Mary cried softly at the foot of his cross.

(Rub your eyes as if crying.)

"What shall we do? Where shall we go?"

Look—now he has died! Oh, no! Oh, no!"

(Cover your face and shake your head.)

8
On Sunday Mary went to the tomb.
When she got there, she saw just an empty room.

(Pretend to peek in the tomb.)

"They've taken his body!" Mary said.

But an angel said, "Jesus rose from the dead!"

(Look surprised.)

9

Mary stayed near the tomb, quite close by.
Then a man said, "Woman, why do you cry?"

"They've taken my Lord," she said with a tear.

"Do you know where he is? I can't find him here."

(Shrug shoulders as if asking a question.)

10

"Mary," he said in a voice soft and kind.

"It's Jesus!" she thought, joy filling her mind.

(Put hands to cheeks in surprise.)

"Rabboni! My teacher! Can it be you?"

The news that the angel spoke really is true!"

11

Jesus said, "Now you must go tell my brothers."

So off Mary ran to tell all the others.
(Pretend to run.)

"I have seen Jesus. He spoke my name!
Now nothing will ever again be the same."

12

Mary loved Jesus right to the end.
(Press hands over heart.)

Even at the cross, she was his friend.
Did you know that you can be Jesus' friend, too?

Just as Jesus loved Mary, he also loves you!

(Hug yourself.)

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perspective and see if we can understand what they thought and felt during the events of Good Friday and Easter Sunday.

BIBLE STUDY

Mary, Jesus' Friend (Luke 8:1-3; John 20:1-18)

Before class photocopy the "Mary, Jesus' Friend" story. Cut apart the 12 verses.

Have children form pairs. If there are nonreaders in your class, be sure to pair them with readers. Distribute the verses of the story as evenly as possible among the pairs.

Say: **Decide which partner will be the reader and which partner will lead the motions. I'll give you a couple of minutes to go over your verses together.**

Have all the pairs stand in one circle in the order their verses fall in the story. Explain that everyone should do the motions with the pair that's performing.

When pairs are ready, introduce the story by saying: **Now we're ready to go back in time to the saddest day in all history—the day Jesus died.**

Signal the pair with the first verse to begin.

At the end of the story, lead everyone in a round of applause. Then have the class scatter around the room in their pairs. Ask these questions, pausing after each one to allow partners time for discussion.

◆ **Why did so few of Jesus' friends stand by him when he was on the cross?** (They were afraid; they didn't want to be arrested.)

Say: **The Bible tells us that four women, including Jesus' mother and Mary Magdalene from our story, stayed by the cross. So did the Apostle John.**

Ask:

◆ **Why did these people stay by Jesus when nearly everyone else ran away and hid?** (Because they loved him so much; they wanted to comfort Jesus; they were brave.)

◆ **If you had been alive then, what would you have done?** (I'd have been scared and hidden somewhere; I might have stayed; I'm not sure.)

◆ **Why did Jesus' followers love him so much?** (Because he told them about God's love; because Jesus loved them first; because he healed them and took away their sins.)

Call everyone together and let volunteers report on their discussions. Then say: **Listen to Luke 8:1-3. It tells us how Mary Magdalene came to be Jesus' friend.** Read the passage from an easy-to-understand version of the Bible. Then ask:

◆ **What does this passage tell us about Mary Magdalene?** (That Jesus cast seven demons out of her.)

Say: **Before Mary met Jesus, her life was filled with evil and pain. But Jesus changed all that. Mary was heartbroken when Jesus died. But she also had the honor of being the first person Jesus spoke to after he came back to life. We can know the same joy Mary knew, because ★ Jesus is alive today!**

LIFE APPLICATION

Easter-Joy Learning Centers

Say: **Jesus can change our lives just as he changed Mary's.**

Ask:

◆ **Who can tell me how Jesus can change our lives today?**

(He forgives our sins and makes us clean inside; he can make us part of God's family; he gives us eternal life in heaven.)

Say: **Jesus can take away our sins and fill our hearts with God's love. And when Jesus came back to life, he conquered death for all of us who believe in him. That means we can look forward to living in heaven forever. And that's reason to celebrate!**

Before class review the three learning-center ideas explained below. You may want to set up one, two, or all three centers. Each is fun and easy to prepare and will help children understand and celebrate Jesus' resurrection.

Introduce the learning centers and show kids what they can make at each one. Then allow them to choose where they'll begin. If you have time, kids may enjoy doing all three activities.

◆ **Pop-Up Critter**—Children will be charmed by these irrepressible little pop-up creatures. The harder you push them down, the higher they pop up! Set out index cards, photocopies of the "Pop-Up Critter" handout, markers, and a sample of the finished critter.

Explain that Jesus' enemies tried to keep him down, but even after they killed him, he came back to life. Just like the little pop-up critter, Jesus couldn't be held down!

◆ **Easter Lily Pop-Up**—Kids each make a beautiful card with a pop-up lily inside. Photocopy the "Easter Lily Pop-Up" handout on plain white paper. Set out the photocopies, scissors, half-sheets of dark green construction paper for the background, glue sticks, and a sample of the completed card.

Explain that lilies appear to die after a hard frost, but the next year they pop up again and bloom, serving as a vibrant reminder of Jesus' victory over death.

◆ **Name-in-a-Rainbow**—Children make beautiful rainbows on paper plates with Jesus' name showing through the rainbow. Set out paper plates; a bowl of water; a spray bottle of water; white crayons; paintbrushes; and cups of thinned red, yellow, and blue tempera paint.

Have kids write "Jesus" in white crayon on paper plates. It's important to press hard and go over the name three or four times. Then have kids mist the plates with a light spray of water. The plates should be damp but without puddles. Demonstrate how to swish a generous brush stroke of each color of tempera paint on the damp plate. Then tip the plates so the primary colors run together, forming all the colors of the rainbow. The wax from the crayon will resist the paint, so Jesus' name will shine through the rainbow!

Teacher Tip

This would be a good time to review how your church deals with repentance and accepting Jesus' offer of forgiveness. You may want to invite children who don't understand or have not taken that step to stay and talk with you after class.



Explain that Jesus' friends wrapped his body in a cloth but that Jesus didn't stay hidden. Just as the letters show through the colors, Jesus came back to life and showed himself to hundreds of people!

Circulate among kids as they work. Ask:

- ◆ **What makes Easter special to you?**
- ◆ **Why is it important that Jesus came back to life?**
- ◆ **How does this remind you of Jesus' resurrection?**

As your learning-center time draws to a close, give a five-minute warning, then three minutes, then one. If children seem disappointed by not having time to do all the crafts, you may want to offer them handouts for the crafts they didn't have time to complete.

COMMITMENT

Live It!

Gather everyone in a circle. Have kids set their crafts behind them, outside the circle, so they won't be a distraction. Ask:

◆ **What have you learned today?** (That Jesus is alive; that Jesus' enemies couldn't keep him down.)

Say: ★ **Jesus is alive! And he can make a difference in our lives every day. Even though we can't see him, Jesus can be our closest friend.** Ask:

◆ **Think about your three closest friends—what are some things you do with them?** (Play; talk on the phone; eat together; stay overnight at their houses.)

◆ **Since ★ Jesus is alive and Jesus is our friend, too, what are some things we can do with him each day?** (Talk to him in prayer; remember that he's always with us; ask for his help.)

Say: **It's a wonderful thing to have a friend like Jesus. Let's discover some of the things Jesus promises his followers. Listen for the little phrase that's repeated in each of these Scriptures.**

Write these references on a large sheet of newsprint: John 14:16; John 14:27; and Matthew 28:18-20. Have volunteers look up the passages (in NIV Bibles) and read them aloud. The repeated phrase is "with you." Ask:

◆ **What does it mean to you that Jesus is with you every day?** (It makes me feel good; it makes me want to live so he'll be proud of me; I can be strong and brave.)

Say: **Turn to a partner and share one thing you'll do differently this week because you know that ★ Jesus is alive and he's with you wherever you go.**

Give kids a few moments to share. Then ask volunteers to share their partners' comments.

Teacher Tip

If you don't have access to NIV Bibles, go to biblegateway.com for the NIV passages referenced in this lesson, and write them on paper in advance.



CLOSING

Easter Rap

Say: Let's close our class with a special Easter rap. I'll say a line, and then you repeat it after me and do what I do.

Jesus is alive! *(Point upward; then pull down strong fists.)*

Gimme a high five. *(Give someone a high five.)*

They tried to keep him down *(push down with both hands)*

In a cave in the ground. *(Make an arch like a cave entrance with hands.)*

But could they do it? No way? *(Shake finger.)*

He's alive today! *(Point up and shake arms three times.)*

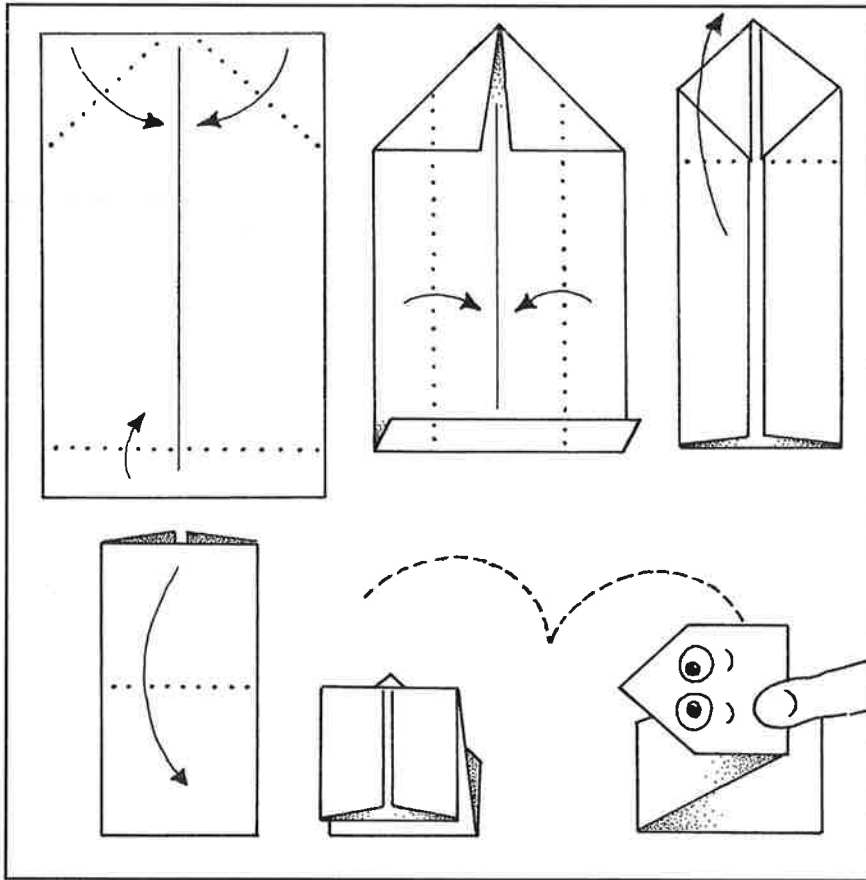
Do the rap several times so kids learn the words and the rhythm. Then form two groups and have them stand in lines facing each other. Let one group lead the rap as the other group echoes each line. Then let the other group lead.

Call everyone together in a tight circle and make a pile of hands. Close with a prayer similar to this one: **Dear Lord Jesus, thank you for giving your life for our sins. Thank you for conquering death for us. Help us live every day for you and remember that you're alive and that you're our friend. Amen.**

Teacher Tip

If you feel uncomfortable leading a rap, ask a volunteer who has a good sense of rhythm to do it for you. You may want to write the words of the rap on a blackboard or a large sheet of newsprint.

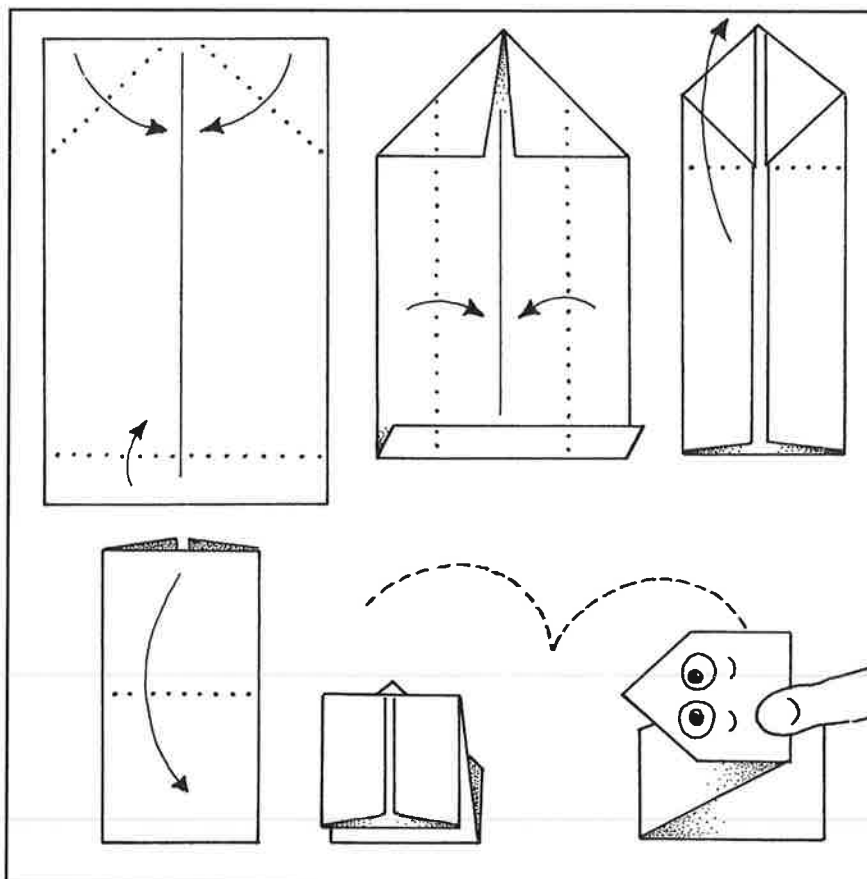




POP-UP CRITTER

1. Fold an index card in half length-wise; then unfold it.
2. Fold the two top corners to the middle as if you were making a paper airplane.
3. Fold the bottom up about $\frac{1}{2}$ inch.
4. Fold both sides into the middle.
5. Fold the bottom over the top at the base of the diamond.
6. Fold the bottom edge back to the middle.
7. Turn your critter over and draw a face on it.
8. Have a poppin' good time and remember: Even death couldn't keep Jesus down!

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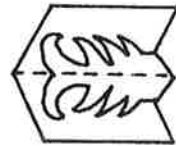
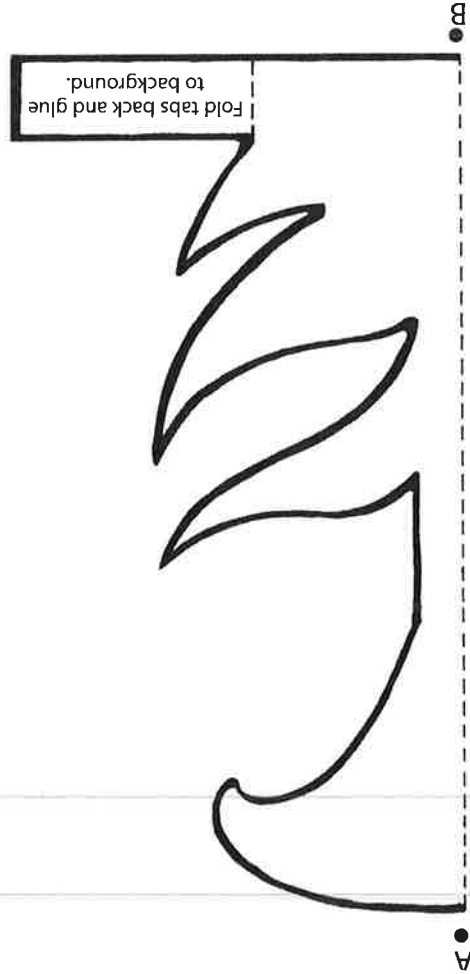
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EASIER LILY POP-UP

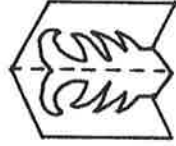
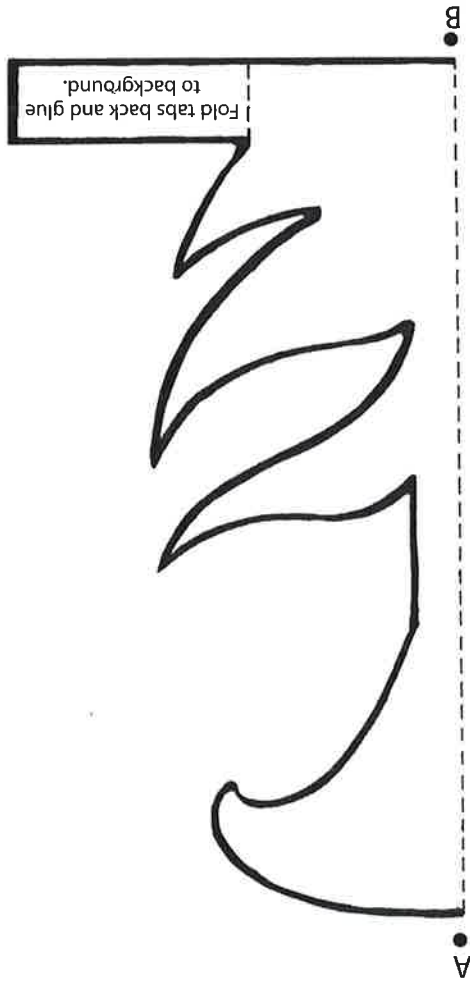
Photocopy this handout on white paper. Fold it in half on the dotted line and cut around the solid line from A to B. Fold a half-sheet of green construction paper, and then open it. Center the fold of the lily over the fold of the green construction paper. Fold back the tabs at the bottom of the lily, rub them with a glue stick, and press them in place on the background paper. Pull the fold of the lily forward. When you fold the card, the lily will disappear inside. When you open the card, the lily will pop up.



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