

# Whole Class Assembly/Presentation

## Topic

The 7 life processes. Ideal for performance at harvest time.

## For class size

20 to 40. In classes with fewer children some will need to take more than one of the smaller speaking parts.

## Summary

To begin with the seven life processes (movement, reproduction, sensitivity, nutrition, excretion, respiration and growth) are looked at in detail, and we consider what it is to be alive. The processes of nutrition and growth are then featured in more detail and there follows a short drama presentation about Persephone and Demeter, which tells how the ancient Greeks explained the seasons and the growth and harvest of crops. An optional prayer and then a song, 'What Makes A Living Thing', close the assembly.

## Duration

20 – 25 minutes

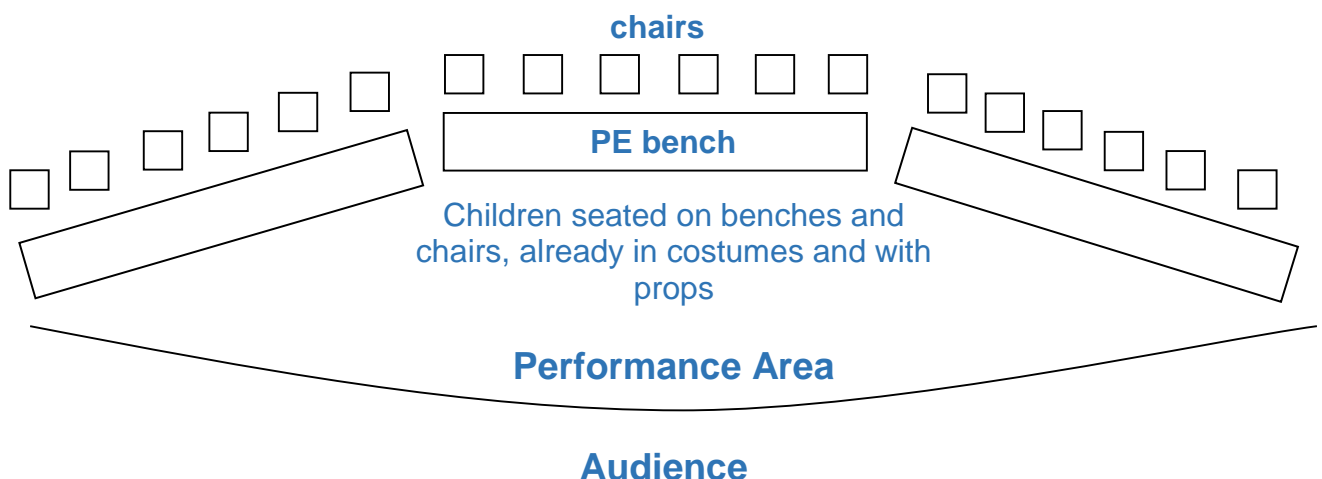
## Props/costumes to make or collect

For the opening section you will need a stand-up sign reading 'Alive & Kicking – Private Party' and 4 party hats. Two bouncers should wear white shirts and black bow ties. You will also need a pot plant, a bicycle, a picked flower, a football, a deodorant spray, a baby doll, a carrier bag and if possible a real hamster/gerbil/mouse etc in a cage (if not a toy one). White lab coats could be worn by the 4 scientists. The ancient tale characters could wear bed sheet togas, or white t-shirts (belted at the waist) and shorts. Hades should wear a black cloak. You will also require a pomegranate or similar looking fruit. All children should have the same A3 picture of a blossoming tree, with a picture of a bare, fruitless tree on the reverse.

## Music required

A current chart hit, played quietly.

## Seating



*(Child 1 stands centre stage.)*

**Child 1** *(taking a deep breath in, then breathing out and stretching)* Aaaaah! It's good to be alive. Good morning everybody, and welcome to our assembly where we will attempt to discover exactly how you qualify for membership of the 'I'm Alive!' gang. What do you have to do get past the bouncers into the 'Alive and Kicking' party? Let's see.

*(As quiet pop music plays two bouncers stand menacingly centre stage. Child 1 moves to one side, next to a sign reading 'Alive and Kicking – Private Party'. A selection of 'characters', to be named, stand expectantly to the other side. In turn, each approaches the bouncers and is either rejected and sits back down, or is let past to join child 1. Accepted guests receive a party hat from child 1 and enjoy a dance.)*

**Bouncer 1** Who are you?

**Boy/girl** Just your average 10 year old human being

**Bouncer 2** *(looking down list on clipboard)* You're fine. Go on in. *(S/he goes past)*  
And who are you?

*(A child pushes a bicycle up to the bouncers)*

**Child 2** This is my bicycle. It's been locked in the shed for six months so I just thought it could do with a night out.

**Bouncer 1** *(looking down list on clipboard)* Sorry. It's not on the list so it can't come in. Next. And who are you.

*(A child holds a plant in a pot.)*

**Child 3** My pot plant needs a change of scene. It's been on the kitchen window sill for ages.

**Bouncer 2** *(looking down list on clipboard)* It's fine. Bring it in. *(S/he goes past)*  
Next. And who are you?

*(A child holds a picked flower.)*

**Child 4** This flower looked bored in the garden, so I picked it and brought it along for a dance.

**Bouncer 1** *(looking down list on clipboard)* Sorry. It's not on the list so it can't come in. Next. And who are you?

*(A child holds a pet hamster/gerbil in its cage.)*

**Child 5** My hamster told me he's been feeling a bit down lately, so I thought a good party would cheer him up.

**Bouncer 2** *(looking down list on clipboard)* He's fine. Bring him in. *(S/he goes past)*  
Next. And who are you?

*(A child holds a football.)*

**Child 6** Seeing as it's the 'Alive and Kicking' party I've brought my football.

**Bouncer 1** *(looking down list on clipboard)* Sorry. It's not on the list so it can't come in. Good well that's everybody. Come on, let's get inside. I reckon that hamster's had too much to drink already. He could be trouble.

*(The bouncers stand near the 3 party goers - the human 10 yr-old, the pot plant and the hamster. Child 1 moves centre stage.)*

**Child 1** So, why do you think this lot were allowed in, but the others weren't? What makes these individuals alive? Let's get scientific.

*(Child 1 and the bouncers sit down and 4 scientists in lab coats enter and stand centre stage. The 3 party goers join the scientists in a line at the front.)*

**Scientist 1** What do the guests at the 'Alive and Kicking' party all have in common? They're alive, yes, but it's the things they do which make them alive. In particular, seven specific things make them different from those turned away at the door.

*(As the human 10 yr-old's 'abilities' are mentioned s/he acts them out. S/he has a carrier bag containing items to help. The pot plant and hamster must be held up as they are mentioned, with the scientists 'gesturing' the abilities they have.)*

**Scientist 2** All living things move. Humans can move from place to place, like this..... as can hamsters and most other animals. A few animals, however, and most plants don't move from place to place. Instead they move body parts whilst rooted to the spot. Sea anemones wave their tentacles, and plants turn on their stems to face the light.

**Scientist 3** All living things reproduce. *(Human takes doll from bag).* Humans and animals, as we know, have babies. How that happens is something we'll save for another day. Plants reproduce by producing seeds, which, when pollinated, become young plants.

**Scientist 4** All living things are sensitive to their surroundings. Humans and animals use their senses to get information about the world around them, and then use this information to decide what to do. *(The Human sniffs an armpit, pulls an 'eurgh' face, takes a deodorant from bag and sprays.)* As we've just mentioned, plants will turn towards the light. This is because they are sensitive to where it is coming from.

**Scientist 1** All living things must have nutrition. *(Human takes a sandwich/fruit etc from bag, and bites).* Humans and animals *(the hamster may be eating)* will hunt, farm or gather their food. In other words they eat things to give them energy. Plants make their own food inside themselves using sunlight.

**Scientist 2** Here's one to make you giggle! All living things must excrete. (*Human clutches him/herself, rushes out through a door and returns a moment later looking relieved.*) For humans and animals this basically means going to the toilet, or getting rid of waste, and doesn't need explaining in great detail! Plants get rid of their waste through their leaves. Fortunately for us this waste is oxygen, and is a lot nicer to breathe in than human waste!

**Scientist 3** All living things respire. (*Human huffs and puffs*). It's a little more complicated than just breathing, though. Animals breathe in oxygen and this turns the food they eat into energy, producing a waste gas, Carbon dioxide. This is breathed out and taken in by plants, which as we've heard produce oxygen as their waste.

**Scientist 4** Finally, all living things grow. Humans and animals grow from babies to adults, and plants grow from seedlings into larger plants. Looking at the weeds in my garden, some grow into enormous plants!

**Scientist 1** But of course, there is one more thing that all living things do at some point, and that is they *stop* living. They die. It can be very sad but it's all part of the cycle of life.

**All** Aaaah!

*(The scientists sit down and the three 'guests' who were refused entry to the party come forward with their objects.)*

**Child 2** Surely my bicycle is alive. The oil it leaves on my socks could be thought of as excretion! It can move too.

**All** ONLY WHEN YOU'RE ON IT!

**Child 2** Oh!

**Child 4** Well my flower does all those things that pot plant does!

**All** NOT NOW YOU'VE PICKED IT! IT'S DEAD!

**Child 4** Oh!

**Child 6** Well my football is made from leather, and leather comes from cows, and cows are alive.

**All** IS YOUR FOOTBALL MOOING?

**Child 6** Err, no.

**All** EXACTLY!

*(The 3 sit down and 5 more children step forward with a large cut-out/picture of a flowering plant with clearly recognisable leaves, roots and stem, and 4 large word cards reading; Light, Oxygen, Water and CO2.)*

**Child 7** Let's have a closer look at 2 of these 7 life processes, growth and nutrition, and how they occur in a flowering plant. As we've heard, plants do not move around to hunt or gather food. They stay in the same place and make it inside themselves. This is called photosynthesis. Photosynthesis literally means 'made using light'.

*(As each stage of photosynthesis is described the word cards are held next to the relevant part of the flower.)*

**Child 8** Let's first look at what the plant needs to take in to make its food. As we all know plants need watering. Water, which is also a source of vital minerals, is taken up from the soil through its roots. The roots also anchor the plant so it can't move.

**Child 9** Carbon dioxide from the air is taken in through the plant's leaves. The plant now has two raw ingredients inside it; water and CO<sub>2</sub>. The green leaves also contain a substance called chlorophyll, which acts a bit like a chef – its job is to turn the raw ingredients into food.

**Child 10** But like any chef, the chlorophyll needs some energy or power to do the job. This power comes from sunlight, which is also taken in by the leaves. The food the chlorophyll then makes is a sugary liquid which travels round the plant through the stem and smaller capillaries.

**Child 11** And as we know, when anything feeds it produces waste. The waste product, oxygen, is then excreted through the leaves back into the air. If plants are nourished in this way they will be able to successfully grow. Deprive a plant of sunlight, water, CO<sub>2</sub>, minerals, or a solid bed to attach its roots to and it will become unhealthy and eventually die.

**Child 7** You've seen a lawn that hasn't been watered properly. It is yellow, and being yellow when you're supposed to be green is not a good sign!

**Child 8** Plants kept in the dark also find it hard to survive, so it's no surprise that they grow better during the spring and summer, when there are more hours of daylight.

**Child 9** Also, during the winter months, when there are less hours of daylight, we see very little greenery in our gardens and countryside.

**Child 10** The ancient Greeks told a tale which explained why plants and crops only grew in spring and summertime, and it had nothing to do with photosynthesis.

**Child 11** We'd like to tell that tale to you now, in our short presentation of the story of Demeter and Persephone.

*(These 5 exit. 5 narrators stand to one side. Demeter stands centre stage.)*

**Narrator 1** Demeter was the goddess of crops and harvest A great favourite of the people, wherever she walked fields and orchards would ripen with the plumpest grain and sweetest fruits.

**Demeter** I provide such bumper crops,  
The quantity's alarming!  
The truth be told, it's fair to say  
I am God's gift to farming.

*(Everyone holds aloft their picture of the blossoming tree. Demeter exits.  
Persephone enters.)*

**Narrator 2** Demeter had a daughter named Persephone, who was a delightful girl.  
It was Demeter's greatest pleasure to let Persephone play freely in the  
fields, knowing she too was spreading warmth and light wherever she  
went.

**Persephone** Life just seems so perfect,  
I'm happy all day long.  
It's just I can't help thinking  
That something might go wrong.

*(Hades enters and watches Persephone longingly.)*

**Narrator 2** And she was right. Hades, the god of the underworld, had been  
watching Persephone. He led a dark and lonely life, and wanted  
nothing more than a beautiful young wife, whose radiant smile would  
bring light to his miserable existence, watching over the souls of the  
dead.

**Hades** My stomach's doing somersaults,  
My senses are a blur,  
She's tugging on my heart strings.  
I know, I'll kidnap her!

**Narrator 5** And that's just what he did! Hades rode by Persephone on his chariot,  
scooped her up and carried the terrified, screaming girl through a  
gaping crack in the ground, down to his kingdom of Tartarus, deep in  
the underworld!

*(Hades drags Persephone away. Demeter enters, bewildered.)*

**Demeter** Where on earth's Persephone?  
I've not seen her for days.  
She's usually a good girl,  
But perhaps she's changed her ways.

**Narrator 5** For a whole year Demeter searched in vain for her daughter. She cried  
so much that her lovely face became wrinkled and her golden hair  
turned grey with worry. Because she was overcome with sadness and  
no longer brought light and warmth to the world, nothing grew. The  
crops failed, fruit no longer grew on the trees, and the world became  
dark and frozen, with ice and snow covering the land.

*(Everyone turns their picture to show the bare trees.)*

**Narrator 1** Zeus was unhappy that men could no longer make sacrifices to the gods, as all the animals had died through lack of food. He sent his messenger, Hermes, to comfort Demeter, in the hope that she would make the earth fertile again.

**Hermes** Please don't worry, Demeter,  
I'll seek your daughter out.  
Then there'll be nothing for you  
To be depressed about!

*(He escorts Demeter off. Hades enters with Persephone, who carries a pomegranate, and they sit on two thrones/chairs. Hermes re-enters and approaches Hades.)*

**Narrator 2** So Hermes visited Hades in Tartarus, to plead for the release of Persephone. Nervously he approached the fearsome god of the underworld.

**Hermes** Greetings Hades, king of souls,  
The mighty Zeus's brother.  
I ask you let Persephone  
Go home to her Mother.

**Narrator 3** Now, it was told that if anybody, god or mortal, should eat any food whilst in the underworld, they could never return to earth. Persephone knew this and hadn't touched a morsel since she'd been there – apart from six pomegranate seeds when she thought her captor wasn't looking.

**Persephone** I think I've got away with it,  
*(aside)* He didn't see me eat.  
Yes! I'm getting outa here!.....*(she stands excitedly)*

**Hades** Oi! Back in your seat! *(she sits again)*  
I'm sorry Hermes, but in this case  
The rules are crystal clear.  
She's eaten pomegranate seeds  
And so she's staying here!

**Narrator 4** Knowing Zeus would not be happy if he returned without Persephone, Hermes tried to bargain with Hades. He pointed out the plight of mortals, and suggested that unless something was done soon, the underworld would be flooded with the souls of those who had died of starvation and cold.

**Hermes** Let every pomegranate seed  
That she's eaten be worth  
A month away from Tartarus,  
Spent with her mum on earth.

**Narrator 5** Hades knew he couldn't argue with this, and fearful of a great number of dead souls descending to his kingdom, he agreed. Persephone could join her mother for six months every year – a month for each of the pomegranate seeds she'd eaten.

*(Hades and Hermes exit. Demeter joins Persephone and they hold hands. All children turn their pictures to show fruitful trees.)*

**Demeter** To have you back has put an end  
To my suffering and pain.  
Let the earth be lush and green,  
Let trees bear fruit again.

**Narrator 1** And so it was that for six months of the year the earth was warm and crops were plentiful. The birds sang and everyone was happy as Demeter shared her happiness with the world.

*(Persephone then waves goodbye to Demeter and exits. Demeter looks forlorn and the children's pictures are turned to show bare trees.)*

**Narrator 2** But for the remaining six months of the year, as agreed, Persephone had to return to be with Hades. During this time Demeter was sad again, and the earth shared in her misery. Icy winds blew, snow fell and the trees and fields were bare.

**Narrator 3** And today we still share in Demeter's sadness. During autumn and winter it gets colder and darker and very little grows. But with Persephone's return we feel the warmth of spring and summer, as the earth blossoms into life again, the days get longer and the sun shines.

(Everyone but narrator 4 sits down.)

**Narrator 4** Let us pray.  
Dear God, thank you for bringing life to our earth and providing such a rich harvest which keeps us well fed. Let us not forget those for whom there will not be such a bountiful harvest this year, and help us to give generously to them in any we can. Amen.

**Song – What Makes A Living Thing**

**The End**

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