

The teachFASTly.com resources are not intended as a complete curriculum. The activities are designed to be woven into your existing teaching. This Quick Stop Lesson Plan is therefore not a single lesson plan, but rather a quick way of exploring the themes of an activity map. It includes one Discover activity, one Delve activity, and one Debrief activity. Together, these may take more than a class period, and you may want to add other activities between them. For more information visit [www.teachfastly.com](http://www.teachfastly.com).

### The Drama of Creation and Evolution

The over-simplified debates that rage around the opening chapters in Genesis can cause us to overlook the deep theological riches of the Bible's account of creation. Without attempting to resolve these debates, the various activities in this activity map aim to engage students and move them toward a rich sense of the larger story of Scripture that reveals God's purposes for and in creation.

Is "creation" just a word for how things started long ago, or is the creation an ongoing part of the drama of God's relationship to the world? Does God abandon the creation and move to a fresh plan, or is the beginning of the story related to its end? What if God's goal from the beginning was to enlist his image-bearers as co-creators, developing the already good and beautiful potential in creation into something even better in the end? In what sense is Christ the focal point of a story about the fate of the whole creation? Teaching FASTly opens a way for students and teachers to enter more fully into the richness of God's Word and God's world.

Alongside this exploration, the activities help students see anew that where theology and science seem to be at odds around origins, there are important theological questions to consider as well as more than one way to read the Bible and relate it to science's story about the world's history.

We invite students to grapple with key texts within the original cultural context, to consider what they mean to us now, and to realize that we need Jesus in order to understand both science and theology.

It is recommended that work on this topic be coordinated between science and Bible teachers, and that good communication with parents be practiced.

This Quick Stop Lesson Plan on **The Drama of Creation and Evolution** contains the following activities and attachments from [www.teachfastly.com](http://www.teachfastly.com), which are combined for your ease of use in a downloadable ZIP file:

#### **DISCOVER** Activity: Creation, Fall, and Redemption

Activity Attachment

- *In the Beginning 1 Handout*

#### **DELVE** Activity: Death Before the Fall

Activity Attachments

- *Death Before the Fall PowerPoint*
- *Death Before the Fall Handout*
- *Death Before the Fall Handout 2*
- *In the Beginning 2 Handout*

#### **DEBRIEF** Activity: Why Do I Do Science?

Activity Attachment

- *The Earth will be Filled Handout*
- *In the Beginning 2 Handout*

## DISCOVER

### Activity: Creation, Fall, Redemption

Time: 15 Minutes

#### In Brief

The three-word summary “creation, fall, redemption” is one way among many to capture the overall narrative movement of the Bible. Although limited, it succinctly captures a key trajectory of the biblical drama. But how well is our understanding of these three words grounded in how the Bible itself uses them? Are there other summaries that help us see differently?

#### Goals

Students will understand how brief summaries of the biblical story direct our attention in different ways.

Students will relate debates about creation to the themes of faith, hope, and love.

#### Thinking Ahead

One of the challenges of discussing the Bible in relation to science – or any other area of life – lies in our differing assumptions and convictions about what are the most central, or non-negotiable, ideas in the Bible. This activity looks at two examples of shorthand ways of describing large and complex biblical themes. It invites students to reflect on how our mental summaries can be helpful for navigating, yet can distort our sense of the whole.

The activity concludes by asking them to consider faith, hope, and love as criteria for measuring our use of the Bible. Consider your own favorite emphases and summaries, and discern their limitations. What do your assumptions help you see, and what might they cause you to underestimate?

#### Preparing the Activity

No materials are needed.

#### Teaching the Activity

This activity engages students in considering how best to summarize the story of the Bible.

Ask students:

- How would you summarize the storyline of the Bible in three or four words?

Have students briefly discuss their summary with a partner or in a small group, and then share suggestions with the class. Tell them that while any short summary or model will miss things, some summaries have become widely used because they conveniently capture important big themes. One of these is “creation, fall, redemption.” Write these three words on the board and consider with the class how they relate to their suggestions.

Have students individually brainstorm and then write 1-2 sentences for each word, explaining what they understand “creation,” “fall,” and “redemption” to mean. How would they unpack each concept in their own words? Students should share their explanations in small groups to compare and contrast with each other. Take some time to have students relate their ideas in the larger class discussion. Emphasize the practice of respectful listening and weighing the merits of others’ suggestions. As this discussion progresses, probe for students’ understanding of how the three terms relate to each other by asking:

- Did creation just happen once a long time ago or is God still involved in sustaining the universe?
- Did the fall cause God to abandon creation and make another plan?
- Is redemption about escaping from creation or reconciling and healing it?
- What do you think it means when the Bible talks about a “new creation” being the result of redemption?

As you discuss these questions, it may be helpful to direct students’ attention to Colossians 1:15-20 where Paul concisely speaks of all things created for Christ and all things reconciled by Christ. See **In the Beginning Handout**. Help students notice that the biblical narrative affirms the goodness of the material world, sees the world as affected by evil in broad and complex ways, and views redemption in terms of reconciling and healing the world, making all things new.

Finally, write the words “Faith, hope, love” on the board. The Apostle Paul describes these as the “three things that will remain” in 1 Corinthians 13. St. Augustine describes these virtues as the true way to worship God. Connect back to the initial discussion:

- Did any student groups come up with this as a summary?
- Did any of the summaries the students came up with suggest the importance of telling the biblical story in a way that builds faith, hope, and love?
- Are there ways of using summaries of the Bible that do not build up faith, hope, and love?

- What might we miss if we talked only about creation-fall-redemption?  
Or only about faith-hope-love?
- If we think about faith-hope-love as an important summary, does that affect how we approach debates about creation?

## DELVE

### Activity: Death Before the Fall?

Time: 40 Minutes

#### In Brief

When did death enter the world? How does the theological claim that death is part of the fall relate to the scientific claim that death has been part of how the world works since long before humans appeared? This activity engages students in exploring biblical passages that are important to theological debates around this question.

#### Goals

Students will understand that questions about origins are related to theological questions about death.

Students will understand how specific interpretive questions can lead to different views of death in relation to origins.

#### Thinking Ahead

God tells Adam and Eve “in the day you eat of it you shall surely die” and the apostle Paul states that “the wages of sin is death.” Yet, an evolutionary account of life on this planet suggests millions of years of death and extinction among species before humans ever emerged. The question of death therefore creates a point of tension between theology and science in regard to origins.

Rather than simply pitting science and theology against one another, this activity helps students see that the theological conversation around this issue is itself complex, with more than one position represented among those who take the Bible seriously. It engages students in close reading to compare their assumptions against particular texts.

Think about how it is possible to help students see that there are options to explore and assumptions that can be questioned, while still embracing the authority of Scripture.

Determine whether your students have an accurate working knowledge of the scientific concept of evolution.

As you plan for this lesson, remember that death is not just a theological question; it may be a topic that touches some students closely. Consider how to be sensitive to varying feelings and needs of your students. Check with science colleagues about the possibility of coordinating a review of evolution as a scientific concept in their classes with your work on the theology of creation.

### Preparing the Activity

You will need pictures provided in **Death Before the Fall PowerPoint** or videos of predators and prey to show students, copies of Psalm 104 and related texts. See **Death Before the Fall Handout** and copies of the article “Creation in Labor” by Rev. John Timmer, published in The Banner magazine, November 8, 1999. It is found in the **Death Before the Fall 2 Handout**. Students will also need access to Bibles. Students will use the **In the Beginning 2 Handout** to record key learning. We recommend [www.socrative.com](http://www.socrative.com) as a good online “polling” method to gather student responses anonymously.

### Teaching the Activity

Open by telling students they will engage in examining specific theological resources in order to build an overall sense of what theology brings to discussions of origins. In this activity they will learn why there is theological discussion about the place of death in the world.

First read Genesis 3 together as a class, explaining that this passage describes the fall of a creation described as “good” in Genesis 1. Show a video or two of animals preying on other animals, or use the pictures in the **Death Before the Fall PowerPoint**. Examples could include: a whale toying with a seal before devouring it, a lion stalking, chasing, and killing its prey, etc. (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O0qMT2YBlcg>; <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e9dHGXnOMoc>; <http://www.britannica.com/topic/predation/images-videos>).

Ask students to share their opinions anonymously through an online poll or response cards: Did events like this take place before the fall? Did these animals always have fangs/talons/claws to hunt and kill prey? Use these questions to get a sense of how your students see the relationship between death and the fall.

Next distribute copies of the **Death Before the Fall Handout** and also have students read through Psalm 104. Then ask students to review the creation story from Genesis 1 and work with a partner or in small groups to identify the parallels in Psalm 104 to the Genesis creation story. Point out that looking closely at related texts is an important part of the practice of careful biblical interpretation. What evidence is there that Psalm 104 is modeled on the creation story and describes God as the creator?

Once you have reviewed students’ findings together, draw their attention to Psalm 104:20-22.

- If the section describing animals such as the lion is supposed to echo God’s creative activity on day six, and if lions are described as receiving their prey from God, does it follow that lions eating other animals is a “good” thing?

- Does this imply that predation and animal death has always been part of the unfolding drama of creation, and that therefore the fall is about some thing more specific than death? If not, how are we to understand this text? How can we interpret the psalm if death came only after the fall?
- Is the Psalm simply telling the story of God's world after the fall? If you have time, ask students to similarly consider the passages on the third page of the handout **Death Before the Fall**.
- What might "death" mean in Genesis 3 if it did not refer to the basic presence of physical death in the world? Could one believe one of these alternate explanations and still be a faithful Christian? Why or why not?

Hand out copies of the article by Rev. John Timmer about the groaning of creation in **Death Before the Fall 2**.

Give students a few minutes to read the article. Then discuss:

- Why does the author of this article think that the "groaning" refers to more than the fall? What details is he picking up on in the Romans passage?
- Can something be both "good" and "groaning" for something even better?
- What does this interpretation imply about the bigger storyline of creation, about how the drama of creation unfolds? What is the beginning, middle, and end of the story?
- If you have time, have students read the account of the peaceable kingdom from Isaiah 11 in the handout **Death Before the Fall**. How does it relate to the groaning of Romans 8?

Conclude with discussion of this question:

- Could this reading of creation help us in thinking about how the biblical story of the world's origin and the scientific story about the world's origin relate to one another?

Finally, give students a few minutes to complete one of the sections of the **In the Beginning 2 Handout** to record key things they have learned. Doing this after studying each source will help students focus on how each different source relates to the central theme.

## DEBRIEF

**Activity:** “The earth will be filled...”

**Time:** 20 Minutes

### In Brief

This short concluding exercise engages students in actively reviewing the exploration of creation as a drama. It creates an opportunity to assess students’ understanding and also invites students to imagine their own place in the drama of creation and new creation.

### Goals

Students will review the idea of creation as an unfolding drama and their role within it.

### Thinking Ahead

Though the idea should be familiar by now from previous activities, be aware of the possibility that some students may find it hard to separate the language of “story” and “drama” from “fiction,” making this way of speaking sound as if there is less truth at stake. If this is a concern, remind students that talking about drama implies nothing about whether the story is a true one or not. Dramas can be fairy tales or narrations of true events that help us see them more vividly. Remind students that this is only one image for Scripture among many, but one that helps us see the tension, momentum, and...drama of the biblical story.

### Preparing the Activity

Students will need access to Bibles or copies of **The Earth will be Filled Handout**.

### Teaching the Activity

Have students read aloud together Isaiah 11:6-10, Habakkuk 2:14, and 2 Corinthians 5:7 from **The Earth will be Filled Handout**. Briefly review with students, while drawing on discussion from previous activities, what hope the Bible presents for the future of the world.

Ask students to work in small groups to map out the shape of the drama of Scripture, referring to the completed copies of their sources overview sheets from the **In the Beginning 2 Handout**.

Ask them to summarize:

- Setting: where does the story unfold?
- Characters: who are the key actors who unfold the drama?

- Plot: How does the drama begin? What problems and tensions enter that must be overcome? What are the moments of climax? How are the problems overcome and how does the drama end?

Encourage students to represent their account graphically, using images or diagrams. These can be used for display afterwards.

Circulate the room as students work to informally assess their understanding, intervening to clarify as needed. If you wish to adapt this activity for more formal assessment, require students to indicate where they have used the sources studied in previous activities.

Finally, invite personal responses. Ask students to place themselves within the drama – what is their role? Ask students to discuss with a partner how they can be part of the drama of a fallen world becoming a new creation. Allow time for some students to voluntarily share their reflections with the class.