

# Ethics and Religious Culture

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Learning and Evaluation Situation

## Welcoming a Unique Being

Elementary Cycle One

Competency 2

**Demonstrates an understanding of the phenomenon of religion**

Competency 3

**Engages in dialogue**

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**Mai 2012**

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Note:

The teacher is invited to view the video clip (in French only) illustrating this LES by going to [www.mels.gouv.qc.ca/ecr](http://www.mels.gouv.qc.ca/ecr) and clicking on “English” tab followed by “Reserved space registration.” A username and password are required.

## PRESENTATION OF THE SITUATION

During this Learning and Evaluation Situation (LES), the students will become aware that there are different ways of marking an important event like the arrival of a newborn. They discover various religious and cultural rites of passage that can take place at birth or in early childhood, both in their families and in those of other children their age.

### WHAT IS EXPECTED OF STUDENTS

A group album illustrating welcoming rituals

### EVALUATION

RELIGIOUS CULTURE AND DIALOGUE	CORRESPONDING TASKS
<p><b>Criterion 1 — Appropriate treatment of forms of religious expression</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Accurate identification of forms of religious expression (relating to birth rituals)</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Description of forms of religious expression (procedure of the various rituals explored)</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Associating forms of religious expression with their traditions of origin</li> </ul>	<p>Worksheet 2 (Questions 1 to 7)</p> <p>Worksheet 5 (all the questions)</p> <p>The student's contribution to the group album</p>
<p><b>Criterion 2 — Appropriate consideration of diversity</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Presentation of various ways of acting in society</li> </ul>	<p>Worksheet 2 (Question 8)</p> <p>Worksheet 3 (all the questions)</p> <p>The student's contribution to the group album</p>
<p><b>Criterion 3 — Appropriate practice of dialogue</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Establishment of connections between what is known and the focus of dialogue</li> </ul>	<p>Worksheet 4 (all the questions)</p>

Note:

These indicators can be found in the rubric on page 8. They are the most easily observable indicators for making a judgment on student success in the required task. Teachers may target other criteria and indicators, depending on their use of the LES.

## CONNECTIONS WITH THE QUÉBEC EDUCATION PROGRAM

<b>Broad area of learning covered</b>	Citizenship and Community Life
<b>Cross-curricular competency possibly targeted</b>	Communicates appropriately *The teacher could target another cross-curricular competency – see the <i>Québec Education Program</i> , ch. 3.
<b>Subject-specific competencies evaluated</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Demonstrates an understanding of the phenomenon of religion <input type="checkbox"/> Engages in dialogue
<b>Targeted subject-specific program content</b>	
<p><b>Theme and related content in religious culture:</b>            Family celebrations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Birth rituals</li> </ul> <p><b>Essential knowledge used in religious culture:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rituals</li> <li>• Forms of religious expression</li> </ul> <p><small>*The teacher could target other knowledge to be mobilized, based on the <i>Progression of Learning in Elementary School</i>:  <a href="http://www.mels.gouv.qc.ca/progression/ethiqueCultureReligieuse/index_en.asp">[http://www.mels.gouv.qc.ca/progression/ethiqueCultureReligieuse/index_en.asp]</a></small></p>	
<p><b>Content related to the practice of dialogue:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Forms of dialogue: conversation, narration</li> <li>• Means for developing a point of view: description</li> <li>• Means for questioning a point of view: recognizing and questioning judgments that make it possible to develop a point of view; recognizing and questioning procedures likely to hinder dialogue</li> </ul>	

### SUGGESTED LEARNING SITUATION

The arrival of a child in a family is an extraordinary event that is celebrated in a wide variety of ways. Each family decides to welcome a newborn in keeping with its beliefs, culture and preferences. This important moment is sometimes marked by festivities, a family meal, a religious celebration, the recitation of a poem or prayer, the giving of gifts or by the creation of a souvenir photo album. Do you think that all the children in your class or neighbourhood have experienced the same welcoming rituals as you? Are you familiar with different ways of welcoming a child into the world?

# OVERVIEW OF TASKS

Length: About 4 hours

PREPARATION – about 1 hour 15 minutes	PERFORMANCE – about 2 hours 30 minutes
<p><b>Whole class</b> Become familiar with the aim of the LES and the tasks to be carried out.</p> <p>Become familiar with the learning situation and discuss it with the students.</p> <p>Ask the students to say what they already know with regard to the different ways of welcoming a newborn into a family or religious community.</p> <p><b>Individually (at home)</b></p> <p>Learn about the events of their birth and the stories of their arrival, or that of a friend, in their respective families or communities. Engage a member of their family or community in discussion in order to learn what happened at events held to mark this arrival in their family or community. <i>(Worksheet 1 – Welcoming a child)</i></p> <p><b>Whole class</b></p> <p>Learn what is required to carry out the LES, particularly with respect to the concept of <b>ritual</b>.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>TASK 1</b></p> <p><b>Whole class</b> Ask the students to present, using a narrative, their personal story and the rituals either their family or religious community carried out to welcome them.</p> <p>Present to the students various rituals associated with birth: Christian baptism, the walking-out ceremony and the ritual of whispering the call to prayer. <i>(See the section Information on Religious Culture)</i> <i>(Worksheet 2 – A religious birth ritual)</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>TASK 2</b></p> <p><b>In teams</b> Discuss the different birth rituals that were explored in class. Highlight a similarity and a difference between these different rituals. <i>(Worksheet 3 – A discussion of rituals)</i> <i>(Worksheet 4 – Self-evaluation of the practice of dialogue)</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>TASK 3</b></p> <p><b>Individually</b> Make a page of the group album dealing with birth rituals (each student’s own birth ritual or that of another)</p>
INTEGRATION – about 30 minutes	
<p><b>Individually</b> Review the elements of a birth ritual: meaningful objects, words and actions, key people. Review what was learned. <i>(Worksheet 5 – What I know about birth rituals)</i></p> <p><b>Whole class</b> Share other things that were learned and any remaining questions.</p>	

## SUGGESTED PROCEDURE PREPARATION

**Become familiar with the learning situation and learn about the elements of a birth ritual. Learn about the events surrounding one's own birth.**

*About 45 minutes*

### Whole class

- Give the students an overview of the learning and evaluation situation: the competencies targeted and evaluated, the theme, the work procedures.
- Help the students become aware of the fact that the birth of a child is an important event.
- Ask the students to explain what they already know about the different ways of welcoming a newborn into a family or religious community.
- Supplement the students' explanations with information from the text **Welcoming Rituals**, on p. 10 of this document.
- Ask the students to pick out key words or expressions from the discussion, along with specific actions that have been taken to welcome a newborn child.
- Ask the students to explain the events surrounding their own births and suggest that they explore the subject.
- Present **Worksheet 1 – Welcoming a child**, on page 19, and explain to the students that they will have to question a family member regarding their birth or that of a member of their circle.

### Individually (at home)

- Learn about his/her arrival into the family or about the birth of a member of his/her entourage. Talk to his/her family in order to learn how the birth rituals conducted to welcome him/her were carried out.
- Take notes using **Worksheet 1**.

→Using **Worksheet 1**, the students should ask family members or members of their entourage to recount the events surrounding their arrival in their family or the birth of a member of their entourage. The term "events" must be understood in a broad sense: the events that took place on the day of the birth or adoption, a welcoming celebration, a family meal, a religious celebration, the planting of a tree, the giving of a gift, the recitation of a prayer or poem, the creation of a souvenir album, etc. **Students need not have experienced a religious birth ritual in order to carry out this task. Nor is it necessary for the ritual presented to be one that the student experienced personally.** If some students come back with less information, they can still perform all the other tasks of the LES without being penalized.

### Learn more about the concept of ritual

*About 30 minutes*

### Whole class

- Ask the students to explain what they already know about the concept of ritual.
- Introduce the concept of ritual using a simple comparison.

→For example, ask the students if they have a ritual (routine) before going to sleep at night. Here are examples of the kind of questions you may want to ask: Are there things you do each evening before going to sleep? Do you always do these things in the same sequence? Do you have rules that you follow? Is there anything specific your parents do before you go to bed? These questions invariably elicit a variety of answers, such as: my parents read me a story; after putting on my pyjamas I have a small snack and then I brush my teeth; I stop watching television about an hour before I go to sleep. I sleep with my teddy bear.

→The concept of ritual may be constructed by associating words and images. One can also determine, along with the students, which elements they would consider part of a ritual: symbolic actions, words, objects that are important to the family, rules to be followed, special guests, etc.

- Ask the students how they would now define the concept of ritual and write their answers on the blackboard or on a sheet of Bristol board.

→The aim here is to have students arrive at a broad understanding of the concept of ritual. The important thing is that students know that a ritual can be understood as a set of actions, rules and customs established by a religious, cultural or family tradition. The expression "birth ritual" could be defined as follows: the complete set of gestures, words and objects used to welcome a child as a new member of a family or of a cultural or religious community. It is a festive event, a celebration and a symbolic moment in the life of the group.

## PERFORMANCE

**Recount an event related to their arrival in their family, or associated with the birth of a member of their entourage. Assimilate what has been learned with respect to a wide range of religious and secular birth rituals.**

### **TASK 1**

*About 60 minutes*

#### **In small teams**

- Group the students into teams of three or four members.
- Ask them to take turns presenting an event related to their birth or a ritual that their family or cultural or religious community performed to welcome them.
- Point out to the students that narration is the form of dialogue used.
- Remind the students of several conditions conducive to dialogue.

#### **Whole class**

- Review the information that was exchanged in teams.
- Ask two or three students to repeat the statements of their team members.
- Show the students that the goal of some rituals is to welcome a child into a family while other rituals welcome children into a cultural or religious community.
- Inform the students that they are now going to discover three religious birth rituals: Catholic baptism, the walking-out ceremony and the ritual of whispering the call to prayer.
- Use the texts and drawings presented in the section **Information on Religious Culture**, on pages 10 to 18.
- Read the texts to the students or give them copies, depending on their reading levels. It is possible to have the students work exclusively from the drawings. (See the **Suggestions for differentiated instruction**, on page 7.)
- Present **Worksheet 2 – A religious birth ritual**, on page 21.
- To answer the questions on **Worksheet 2**, ask the students to select one of the three rituals that were explored in class. Ideally, each of these three rituals will be chosen by a third of the students since they will be asked to form teams of three that include an expert on each ritual. These teams will engage in a task involving discussion of the Catholic baptism, the walking-out ceremony and the whispering of the call to prayer.

#### **Individually**

- Answer the questions on **Worksheet 2** in writing or with the help of images provided in the section **Information on Religious Culture**, on pages 10 to 18.

## PERFORMANCE (cont.)

**Take part in a discussion dealing with the various birth rituals.  
Identify key elements of each ritual. Point out the similarities and the differences.**

### **TASK 2**

*About 60 minutes*

#### **Whole class**

- Give the students the instructions on **Worksheet 3 – A discussion of rituals**, on page 22.
- Organize the work teams and, if possible, divide the students into three-member teams comprising a student “expert” for each ritual: baptism, the whispering of the call to prayer, the walking-out ceremony.
- Mention to the students that they are expected to engage in discussion with their team members in order to identify the similarities and differences between the birth rituals. (If necessary, explain to them what a discussion is.)
- Suggest a procedure for the discussion: the team members take turns answering Question 1 pertaining to similarities and then begin the same process over again in answering Question 2 on differences.
- If necessary, pass around a talking stick (or some other object indicating the acquisition of the right to speak) in each team.
- To ensure that each student plays an active role in the discussion, invite them to refer to the answers they gave on **Worksheet 2 – A religious birth ritual**. The questions on **Worksheet 2** should also make it possible to clearly target the points of comparison.
- Give the students **Worksheet 4 – Self-evaluation of the practice of dialogue**, on page 23, before they engage in team discussion.
- Let the students know you will be observing the following points:
  - ✓ *Respect for the subject of discussion*
  - ✓ *Respect for each person’s right to speak (raising one’s hand, waiting one’s turn)*
  - ✓ *The clarity of the ideas expressed (Example of a similarity: the walking-out ceremony, like baptism, is attended by many guests. Example of a difference: the ritual of whispering the call to prayer takes place on the day the child is born whereas baptism occurs a little later in the baby’s life.)*

*The teacher can make note of these observations using the **Observation checklist for the practice of dialogue**, on page 9. He or she could also select other elements to observe.*

#### **In teams**

- Discuss the subject of birth rituals.

#### **Individually**

- Ask the students to consider the answers they gave on **Worksheet 3 – A discussion of rituals**, on page 22.
- Ask the students to fill out **Worksheet 4 – Self-evaluation of the practice of dialogue**, on page 23.



## PERFORMANCE (cont.)

**Do a page of the group album dealing with a birth ritual (one's own birth ritual or that of another).**

### TASK 3

*About 30 minutes*

#### Whole class

- Ask the students to illustrate events surrounding their birth or to illustrate another birth ritual they discovered in class.
- Point out that this album is being created in order to bring together all of the knowledge the students have acquired with regard to the different ways of welcoming a newborn into a family or a cultural or religious community.
- Plan the format of the album. This could be simply a small spiral notebook or a binder in which the students' work (drawings, collages, photographs or brief texts) is inserted.
- Put the required materials at the students' disposal and ask them to use, if necessary, images from the section **Information on Religious Culture**, on pages 10 to 18.
- Allow the students to illustrate the ritual of their choice while ensuring that the group album presents a range of rituals.
- Help the students to make their album.
- Assemble all the students' work.

#### SUGGESTIONS FOR DIFFERENTIATED INSTRUCTION

For students who find it easier to perform the task:

- Ask them to read only the texts in the section **Information on Religious Culture**.
- Ask them to do some research (at the library or on the Internet) in order to find information on birth rituals other than those that were presented to the whole class: the welcome afforded newborns among Protestants, Buddhists, Hindus or in Aboriginal nations other than the Cree
- Ask the students to complete **Worksheet 2** for two or three rituals rather than one.
- Ask the students to identify several differences and similarities between the rituals.
- Ask the students to explain the meaning of certain actions, words or objects that are part of the rituals explored, placing the required materials at their disposal.

For students who find it harder to perform the task:

- Ask them to cut out all the images in the section **Information on religious culture** and read to them the texts accompanying the images. Ask the students to raise their hands during the reading and to indicate the correct drawing at the point in the text where the subject of the drawing is mentioned.
- Ask them to name the rituals and the gestures, words and objects that are part of them, instead of asking them to describe what happens during the rituals.
- Ask them to explore fewer rituals: omit the walking-out ceremony or the ritual of whispering the call to prayer.
- As a whole class, carry out the discussion required to complete **Worksheet 3**.
- Ask the students to form teams to complete **Worksheet 4**.

## INTEGRATION

**Review what was learned. Look at the group album together.**

*About 30 minutes*

#### Whole class

- Enable the students to discuss the extent to which they understand the focus of the dialogue (the various ways of welcoming a newborn) and what they have learned.
- Present the group album to the group and read a few pages of it. You could make a few copies of it and distribute it to the other classes in the cycle or to the school library.

#### Individually

- Encourage the students to record what they have learned by using the questions on **Worksheet 5 – What I know about birth rituals**, on page 24. Read the questions with them.
- Allow the students to refer to previous Worksheets if necessary, particularly to the illustrations on pages 10 to 18.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_



Title of the task: **Welcoming a Unique Being**

Meets the requirements to an outstanding degree.  
Meets the requirements in a satisfactory manner.  
Meets a minimum number of requirements.  
Meets few of the requirements.  
Meets none of the requirements.

Criteria	The elements evaluated in this task are checked off below.	Observable Elements	Performance Requirement					
				5	4	3	2	1
Appropriate treatment of forms of religious expression	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	The student <b>accurately identifies</b> forms of religious expression.	<i>Accurate identification includes:</i> - the use of accurate vocabulary - appropriate association with the images that represent the forms of religious expression	5	4	3	2	1
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	The student <b>provides an appropriate description</b> of forms of religious expression.	<i>An appropriate description includes:</i> - the use of accurate vocabulary - the main characteristics of the form of religious expression studied (who, what, when, how, where, why)	5	4	3	2	1
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	The student <b>makes appropriate connections</b> between forms of religious expression and their tradition of origin.	<i>Appropriate connections include:</i> - the association of the forms of religious expression studied with their tradition of origin	5	4	3	2	1
	<input type="checkbox"/>	The student <b>makes appropriate connections</b> between forms of religious expression and an element of the immediate environment.	<i>Appropriate connections include:</i> - the association of the form of religious expression studied with an element in the student's environment <b>or</b> - the association of an element in the student's environment with the form of religious expression studied	5	4	3	2	1
Appropriate consideration of diversity	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	The student <b>presents</b> various secular and religious ways of acting in society.	<i>An appropriate presentation features:</i> - a variety of religious and secular ways of thinking (concepts, ideas) and acting (actions, behaviours) that are found in society <i>e.g. presenting various ways of welcoming a newborn into the same religious tradition</i> <i>e.g. presenting various ways of experiencing religious or secular celebrations in a family setting</i> - the influence of culture on various forms of religious expression	5	4	3	2	1
Appropriate practice of dialogue	<input type="checkbox"/>	The student <b>interacts in a way that fosters</b> dialogue.	<i>Appropriate interaction, orally or in writing, can be observed in one or more of the following actions:</i> - correctly using means for developing a point of view (p. 350) - correctly using forms of dialogue (p. 349) - complying with conditions that foster dialogue (p. 349)	5	4	3	2	1
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	The student <b>makes relevant links</b> between what he/she knows and the subject of dialogue.	<i>A relevant link is:</i> - established in terms of the subject of dialogue - expressed clearly orally or in writing - established on the basis of information at the student's disposal	5	4	3	2	1

Teacher's comments: \_\_\_\_\_

**Result:** \_\_\_\_\_

 I succeeded at this: \_\_\_\_\_ **Student's reflection** \_\_\_\_\_  I would like to improve this: \_\_\_\_\_



# Information on Religious Culture

## Welcoming Rituals

**NOTE:** The following information may be used to enrich classroom discussion throughout the LES. Furthermore, the rituals described below may be incorporated into the group album that will be created in class.

**Welcoming Rituals—General:** The arrival of a new baby is a cause for celebration in many societies. The traditions and rituals that accompany the birth of a child are often a way to protect against evil spirits or sickness. The time before the birth is also sometimes marked by special prayers and ceremonies to ensure a safe and healthy delivery. The following are examples of some of these customs and traditions from around the world.

**China:** When a baby is born, a name is chosen very quickly after birth. The Chinese believe that a person's name is linked to his or her destiny. A welcoming ceremony is held when a baby is one month old; gifts, such as clothes, are given to the baby and guests receive eggs dyed red.

**Korea:** When a baby is born, the mother is given white rice and seaweed to eat to ensure that she stays healthy. A bowl of water and a bowl of rice may be placed in the room where the baby was born. Before birth, women often pray for a boy at designated sacred sites, since having a son is very important in Korean culture, as in many others. After the birth of a child, a rope is hung at the door of a house to announce the birth and ward off evil.

**Thailand:** The people of the Hmong tribe in Thailand sacrifice two chickens three days after the baby's birth to thank the goddess of fertility. On the third day the baby is given a name since the Hmong also believe that this is the time that the baby's soul enters his or her body. The Akha tribe does not pick up a newborn until he or she has cried three times, since they believe that this is the way the baby asks the Great Spirit for a blessing, a soul and a long life. The midwife gives the baby a temporary name until the proper ceremony takes place; this is to keep the spirits from reclaiming the child. The naming ceremony is celebrated only when it is known for certain that the baby is healthy.

**Hinduism:** In Hinduism, samskaras or purifying ceremonies often mark the birth of a child. Before the birth, women read and recite the sacred texts to help guarantee a safe and healthy delivery. The husband may part the pregnant woman's hair and make a red mark to help protect against evil spirits. When the baby is born the sacred word "om" is written on his or her tongue with honey.

**Sikhism:** The birth of a child is marked by his or her presentation at the gurdwara, or place of worship. The Mool Mantra, a prayer, is whispered in the baby's ear and a drop of honey is placed on the tongue. The naming ceremony takes place following regular services at the gurdwara in the presence of the community. The grathi (reader) opens a random page in the holy book and a name is chosen by the parents based on the first letter of the first word of the first verse on the left-hand page. They announce the name to the congregation, which voices its approval by saying, "Eternal is the great timeless Lord."

**Judaism:** Even before a woman gives birth, Sephardic Jews celebrate with a cloth-cutting ceremony. Women gather at the house of the expectant mother and share sweets and other treats. The pregnant woman makes a cut in the table cloth and everyone throws sugar-covered almonds onto it in order to ensure that the baby will have a bright future. Amulets are often worn by pregnant women to ward off evil. They may also carry out volunteer work and say special prayers to help them grow spiritually and prepare for motherhood. Reform and Progressive Jews hold naming ceremonies at a synagogue. A baby is sometimes carried to the naming ceremony in a special velvet covenant bag. Berit Milah (circumcision) is a ceremony carried out when a baby boy is eight days old; it is a symbol of the covenant between God and the Jewish people.

Source: *World Book's Celebrations and Rituals around the World: Birth and Growing Up Celebrations* (Chicago: World Book Inc., 2003).

## Catholic Baptism

Following the birth of their baby, Catholic parents generally arrange for a baptism ceremony to welcome their child into God's great family. This is the first of seven rites that are also called "sacraments." The parents have to make extensive preparations. For example, they choose a name for the baby and buy fine white clothing for him or her to wear at the ceremony. They also select passages from the Bible that will be read at the Baptism and, most importantly, they select a godfather and godmother. Their role is to make a profession of faith during the baptismal ceremony for the one to be baptized, when necessary. Afterwards, they assume guardianship over the baptized and instruct them in the obligations of the Christian life, to ensure that the baptismal vows are kept.

Baptism takes place at the church. The family is greeted by the priest, who initially makes an important gesture by tracing a small cross on the baby's forehead with his thumb. He then invites the godfather, godmother and the other guests to do likewise.

The priest then invites those assembled to be seated and asks one of the guests to light a large candle known as the Paschal candle. The Paschal candle remains lit for all liturgical celebrations from the Easter Vigil until Evening Prayer II of Pentecost. The priest then reads and comments on biblical texts dealing with baptism. The people attending the baptism are then asked to pray or sing a hymn for the newly baptized child.

During the celebration, the priest blesses the water that will be used to baptize the baby, or prepares water that was blessed during the Easter Vigil. Believers consider this water to be special, a source of life. It recalls bible stories in which water played a key role (Noah's Ark, the crossing of the Red Sea). And it also brings to mind Jesus' own baptism by John the Baptist. In other words, water signifies a double birth: after being born human, the child becomes a Catholic.

After everyone in attendance has approached the baptismal font, the priest pours water over the baby's head three times, saying, "I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit."

## Catholic Baptism (cont.)

The priest then draws a small cross on the baby's forehead with perfumed oil called **Holy Chrism**. This gesture is called anointing and symbolizes the idea that the Holy Spirit henceforth accompanies the baptized child throughout his or her life. The priest then performs another gesture known as the laying on of hands: this involves placing his hands on the baby's head while reciting a brief prayer.

The parents, the godmother or godfather are asked to light the Baptism candle from the Paschal candle. This is intended to show that the child, by being from then on part of the great Catholic family, receives the light of Jesus.

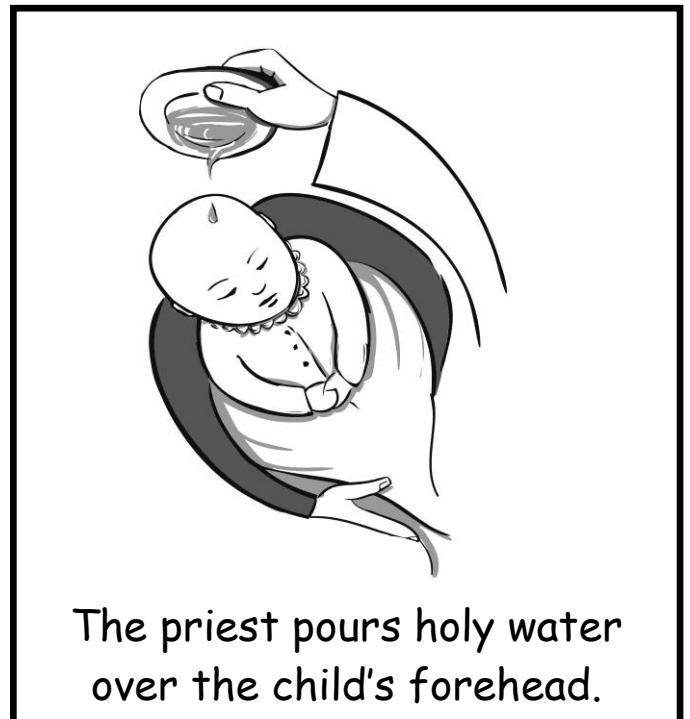
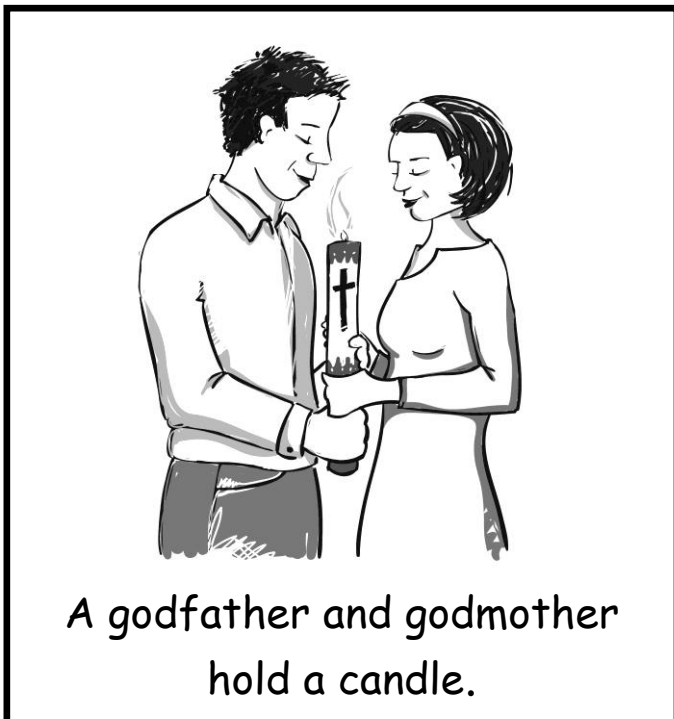
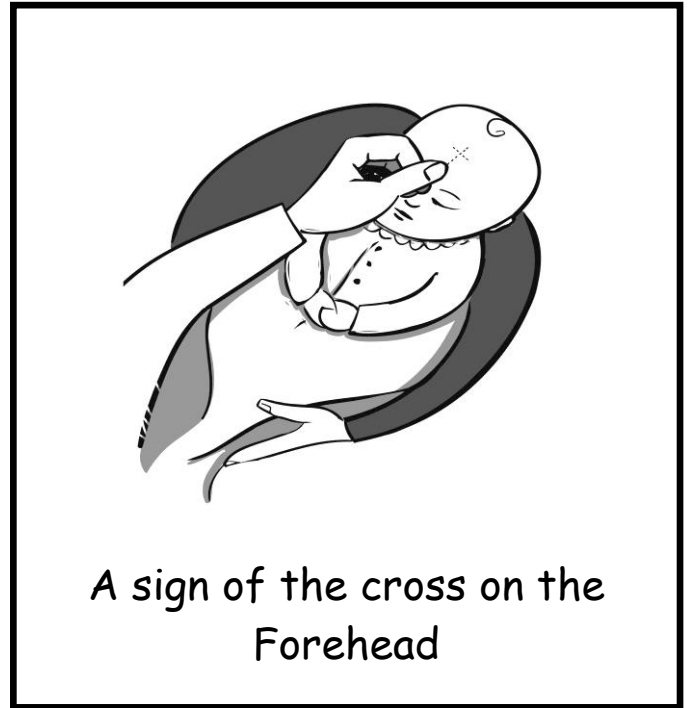
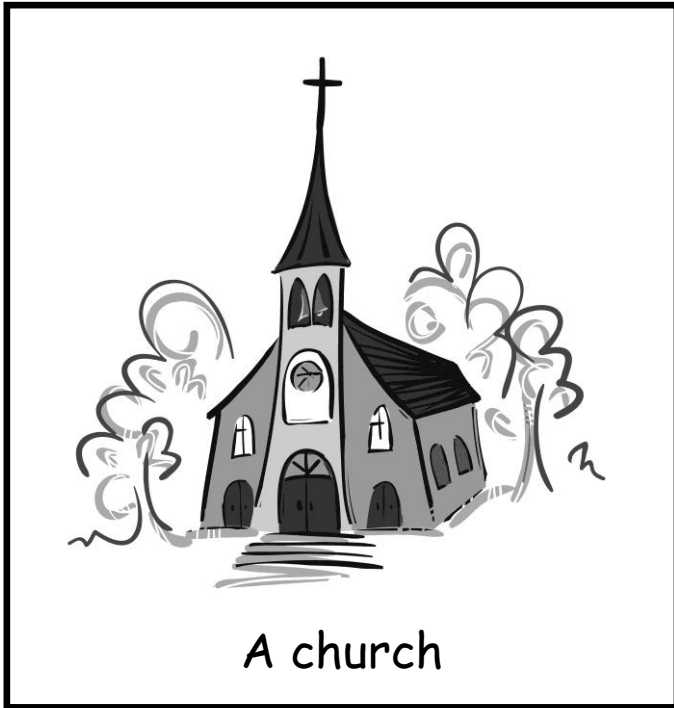
Before leaving the church, the priest, parents, godfather and godmother are invited to sign a book called the Baptismal register. This action is intended to produce a written record of the moment when the child was accepted into God's great family.

### Sources:

- Trigilio Jr., John, PhD, ThD, and Kenneth Brighenti, PhD. *Catholicism for Dummies*. Hoboken, New Jersey: Wiley Publishing Inc. 2003.
- Sot, Véronique. *Lexiques des religions: rites et pratiques*. Paris: Ellipses Éditions Marketing, 2010.

## Catholic Baptism (cont.)

These illustrations represent some of the important aspects of Catholic baptism.



## The walking-out ceremony among the Cree

Performed when infants are old enough to walk, the walking-out ceremony welcomes children into Cree society. Traditionally, it was conducted in the morning from a ceremonial tent whose "doorway" faced east towards the rising sun, a symbol of optimism and hope for the future.

For the ceremony, infants are dressed in traditional outfits and given toy versions of tools used by Cree hunters: guns and knives for boys, scraping instruments for the girls. Once dressed, the children are brought into the ceremonial tent where elders of the community sit in anticipation of their arrival. The elders, then, send the infants—accompanied by a parent or close relative—out of the tent, the children pulling behind them animals that have been hunted and decorated: sometimes beaver, sometimes geese or small game. The children complete a circle around a tree, which has also been decorated. When the boys have completed half the circle, they are assisted in firing their "rifle" into the air. Then they complete the circle, re-enter the tent and give the animals they have been pulling to the elders.

This ceremony emphasizes the worth of each individual within the Cree community and pays tribute to the work of the boys and girls, to encourage them to develop their abilities and talents.

The ceremony concludes with a community celebration in the ceremonial tent. The ritual takes place in springtime.

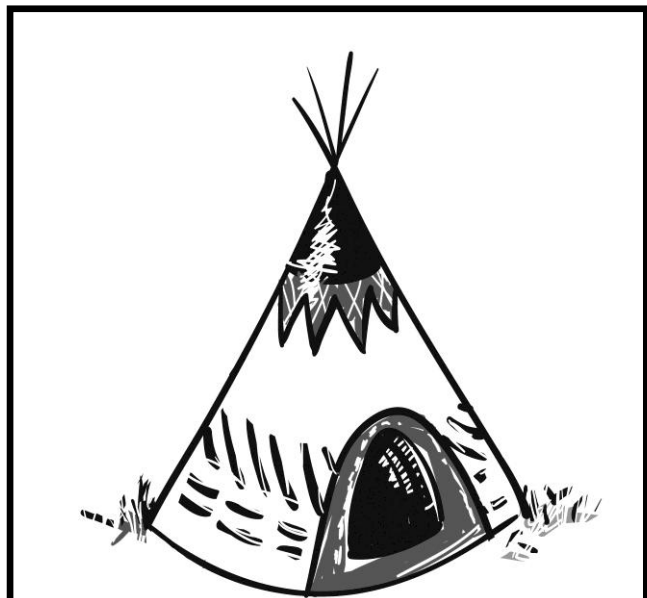
### Source:

AANISCHAAUKAMIKW CULTURAL INSTITUTE  
[<http://www.creeculture.ca/content/index.php?q=node/66>]

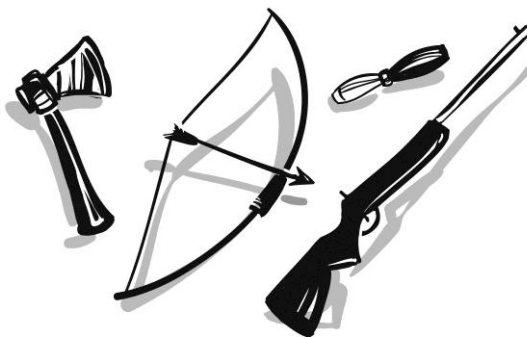


## The walking-out ceremony among the Cree (cont.)

These illustrations represent some of the important aspects of the walking-out ceremony among the Cree.



A ceremonial tent  
(a tepee)



Hunting implements



The child walks around a  
decorated tree.



This ceremony takes  
place in springtime.

## The whispering call to prayer

As soon as Muslim children are born, a prayer is whispered in their right ear to welcome them into the world. This is usually done by the father. This call to prayer is known as the *adhân*. The words used are as follows: "God is great, there is no God but Allah. Muhammad is the messenger of Allah. Come to prayer."

As soon as the *adhân* is finished, some Muslims also whisper another call to prayer, called the *Iqamah*, into the baby's left ear. This prayer has almost the same words as the *adhân*, with the addition of the words, "The prayer is starting."

This ritual is a symbolic way of introducing the child into the space of prayer, which occupies such an important place in Muslims' daily lives. But the call to prayer is mainly a way of affirming that one believes in God and in his prophet, Muhammad. Since newborns cannot yet speak, fathers, by whispering the prayers in their ears, make it possible for them to become Muslims and hence part of the great family of Islam. Muslims believe that this ritual protects the newborn child. Moreover, it is said that the prophet Muhammad performed these same actions when his own grandson was born.

After the whispering of the prayer, other families perform the *tahnîk*. They ask a strong believer to chew a date and then place a tiny portion of it in the newborn's mouth. While placing the sweet fruit in the newborn's mouth, the designated person recites a prayer. This action is intended to create an association in the child's mind between prayer and the sweetness of the date.

## The whispering call to prayer (cont.)

Other welcoming rituals take place seven days after the baby's birth. Often festivities take place that involve eating the meat of a lamb or another animal. Newborns are frequently given a name at this time. They may also have their head shaved. The shaved hair is weighed and an equivalent weight in silver is given to charity.

### Sources:

- Clark, Malcolm. *Islam for Dummies*. New York: Wiley Publishing Inc., 2003.
- Lepic, Paul. *Naître: christianisme, islam, judaïsme*, collection Rituels. Paris: Éditions Bréal, 2006.

## The whispering call to prayer (cont.)

These illustrations represent some of the important aspects of the ceremony of the call to prayer among Muslims.



A prayer is whispered in the child's ear.



There is no God but Allah.



A date

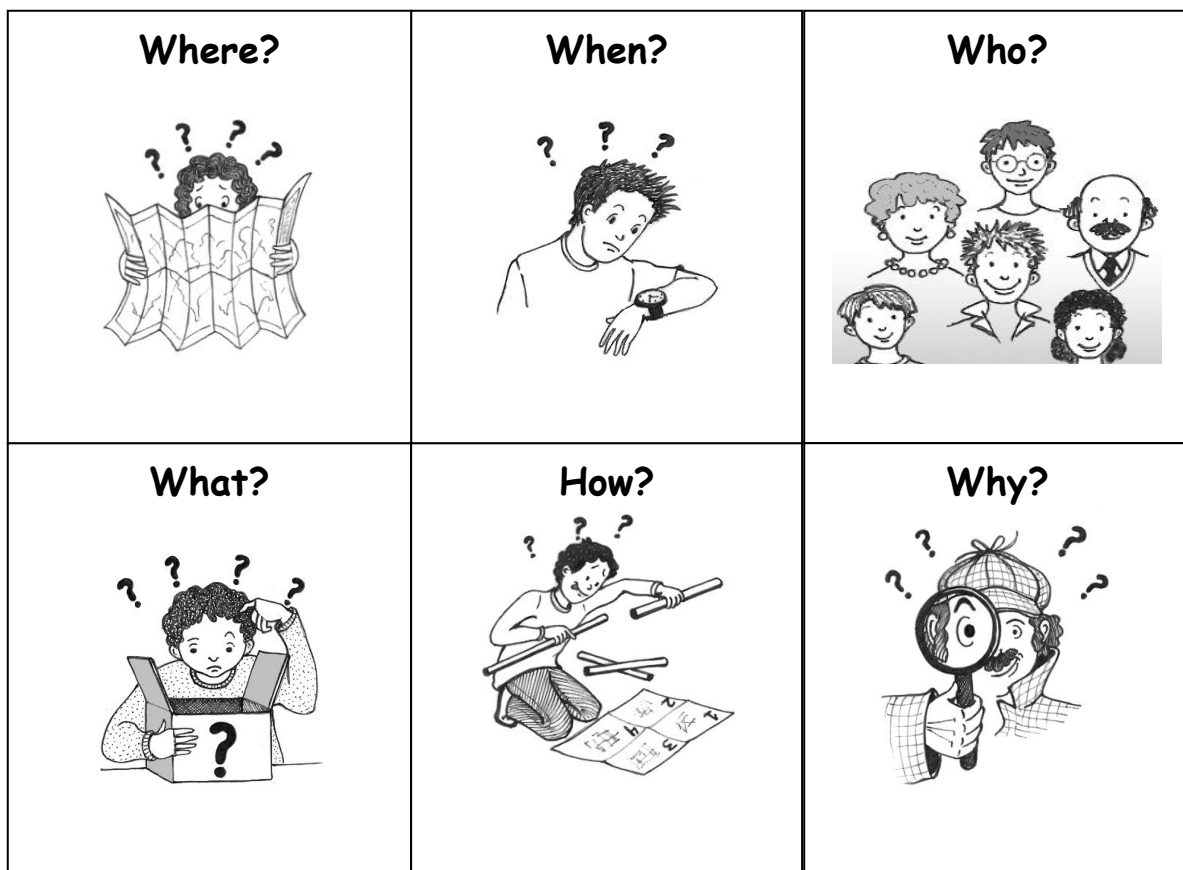


The head is shaved.

## Worksheet 1 - Welcoming a child

- ↪ Ask a member of your family to tell you about events surrounding a birth, either your own or that of someone close to you.
- ↪ Ask if any specific ritual was organized, for example, festivities, a family meal, a religious celebration, the planting of a tree, gift-giving, the recitation of a prayer or poem, the creation of a photo album, etc.
- ↪ With the help of an adult, take notes (using words or drawings, or both) that you can use to tell the story to your classmates.

Here are some questions to steer you in the right direction:



# Worksheet 1 - Welcoming a child (cont.)

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

A large rounded rectangular frame with a dotted border. Inside the frame, there are ten horizontal lines for writing. At the bottom of the frame, there are two 3D rectangular boxes, each with a shaded bottom and right side, intended for drawing or additional notes.

## Worksheet 2 - A religious birth ritual

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

- ↪ Get information about various religious birth rituals.
- ↪ Identify important aspects of one of these rituals.
- ↪ Use the words or drawings given to you by your teacher.

1. The name of the ritual:

2. The religious tradition:

3. When?

4. Where?

5. An action:

6. An object:

7. A word:

8. A **difference** and a **similarity** in relation to my own birth ritual:

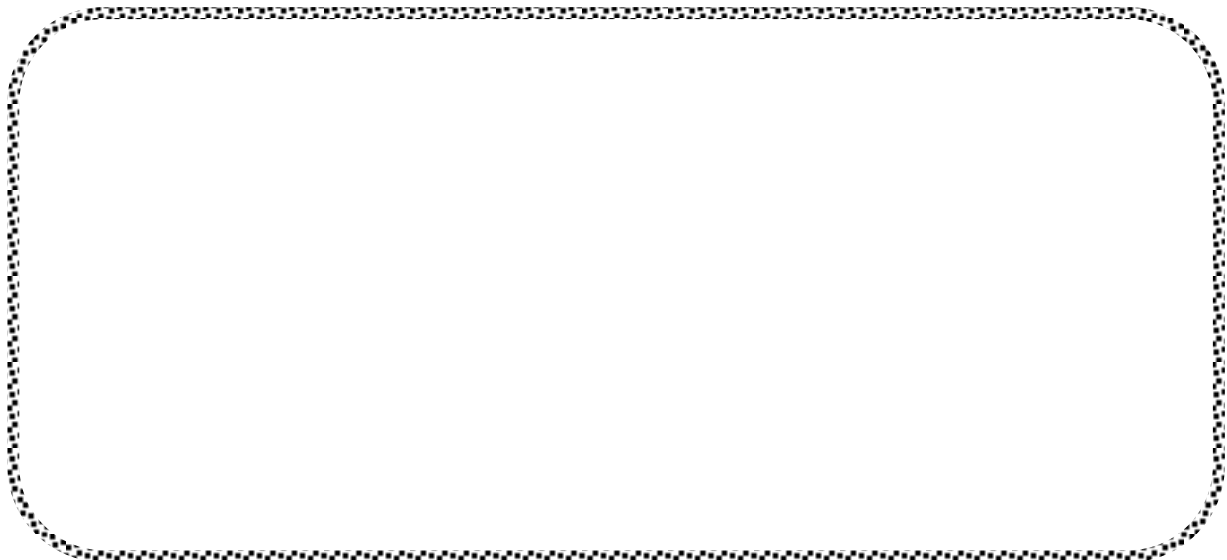
## Worksheet 3 - A discussion of rituals

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

↪ **Illustrate or describe a similarity** between two birth rituals you learned about in class.



↪ **Illustrate or describe a difference** between two birth rituals you learned about in class.





## Worksheet 4 - Self-evaluation of the practice of dialogue

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Take the time to reflect on your practice of dialogue.

Write **yes (+)**, **no (-)** or **more or less ( $\pm$ )** alongside each of the following statements.

**1. I expressed my ideas clearly.**

Example: The ritual of whispering the call to prayer takes place on the day the child is born and baptism takes place a little later.

**2. I kept to the topic of discussion.**

I spoke about birth rituals throughout the discussion.

**3. I let each person have his or her turn to speak.**

Example: I raised my hand when I wanted to speak and I waited my turn.

I would like to make the following improvements the next time I engage in dialogue with others:

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## Worksheet 5 - What I know about birth rituals

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

↪ Name a birth ritual associated with:

✚ Catholics: \_\_\_\_\_

☉ Amerindians: \_\_\_\_\_

☾★ Muslims: \_\_\_\_\_

↪ Correctly match the elements in the table with the birth rituals listed below.

↪ Give your answer by writing A, B or C in the right-hand column.

**Catholic Baptism = A**

**The whispering call to prayer = B**

**The walking-out ceremony = C**

Elements to be matched	Answer
1. A ceremonial tent (a tepee)	
2. Shaving the baby's head on the seventh day	
3. This ritual takes place in springtime.	
4. Holy water	
5. A date	
6. The words: "There is no God but Allah."	
7. The sign of the cross: "I baptize you in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit."	
8. A church	
9. Whispering into the baby's ear	
10. A godfather and godmother	
11. Walking around a decorated tree	
12. Hunting implements	

# SUGGESTED READING LIST

## For the students:

Brown, Alan, and Andrew Langley. *What I Believe: A Young Person's Guide to the Religions of the World*. Brookfield, CT: Millbrook Press, 2001. (ISBN-10: 0761314482)  
A presentation of welcoming ceremonies, as well as other celebrations, beliefs and practices, for the major religious traditions.

Frasier, Debra. *On the Day You Were Born*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 1999. (ISBN-10: 0153021608)  
An account of how the universe welcomes each child into the world.

Ganeri, Anita. *New Beginnings: Celebrating Birth. Life Times Collection*. London: Evans Publishing Group, 2004. (ISBN-10: 0872262863)  
A discussion of the ceremonies and celebrations that surround birth in the major religious traditions.

Harris, Robbie H. *Happy Birth Day!* Cambridge, Mass.: Candlewick Press, 1996. (ISBN-1-56402-424-5)  
A mother tells a child about the day he or she was born.

Knight, Margy Burns. *Welcoming Babies*. Gardiner, Maine: Tilbury House Publishers, 1998. (ISBN-13: 978-0884481249)  
Birth celebrations in adoptive families as well as in Christian, Muslim and Jewish families.

Martin Jr., Bill and Archambault, John. *Knots on a Counting Rope*. New York: Henry Holt, 1997. (ISBN 0805054790, 9780805054798)  
A Navaho tale of birth.

Tillman, Nancy. *On the Night You Were Born*. New York: Feiwel and Friends, 2006. (ISBN 0312346069)  
A celebration of birth.

### The World Religions Series

The series focuses on six major religious traditions. Each book addresses the main celebrations and gives interesting and informative facts.

Barrow, Joy. *Sikhism*. Vancouver: Whitecap Books, 2005. (ISBN-13: 978-1-55285-652-9)

Brown, Alan. *Christianity*. Vancouver: Whitecap Books, 2005. (ISBN-13: 978-1-55285-651-2)

Graham, Ian. *Judaism*. Vancouver: Whitecap Books, 2005. (ISBN-13: 978-1-55285-656-7)

Prime, Ranchor. *Hinduism*. Vancouver: Whitecap Books, 2005. (ISBN-13: 978-1-55285-655-0)

Thompson, Jan. *Islam*. Vancouver: Whitecap Books, 2005. (ISBN-13: 978-1-55285-654-3)

Thompson, Mel. *Buddhism*. Vancouver: Whitecap Books, 2005. (ISBN-13: 978-1-55285-653-6)

### A Year of Festivals Series

An introduction to the major festivals of each religious tradition.

Ganeri, Anita. *A Year of Festivals*. Series, including 6 titles: Buddhist, Christian, Hindu, Jewish, Muslim and Sikh Festivals Through the Year. London, UK: Franklin Watts, 2007.

### Atlas of World Faiths Series

Each volume gives information on the history of a religious tradition and includes a calendar of the main festivals.

Bingham, Jane. *Buddhism Around the World*. Atlas of World Faiths. London, UK: Franklin Watts, 2007.  
(ISBN-13: 978-0749669799)

Ganeri, Anita. *Christianity Around the World*. Atlas of World Faiths. London, UK: Franklin Watts, 2007.  
(ISBN-13: 978-0749669751)

Rasamandala Das. *Hinduism Around the World*. Atlas of World Faiths. London, UK: Franklin Watts, 2007.  
(ISBN-13: 978-0749669782)

Senker, Cath. *Islam Around the World*. Atlas of World Faiths. London, UK: Franklin Watts, 2007.  
(ISBN-13: 978-0749669768)

Senker, Cath. *Judaism Around the World*. Atlas of World Faiths. London, UK: Franklin Watts, 2007.  
(ISBN-13: 978-0749669775)

Bingham, Jane. *Sikhism Around the World*. Atlas of World Faiths. London, UK: Franklin Watts, 2007.  
(ISBN-13: 978-0749669805)

### **For the teacher:**

Mosher, Lucinda. *Belonging*. New York: Seabury Books, 2005. (ISBN-13: 9781596270107)

Includes welcoming ceremonies for many different faiths.

Hirsh, Richard. *A Guide to Jewish Practice: Welcoming Children*. Detroit, MI: Wayne State University Press, 2008.  
(ISBN-13: 978-0938945130)

Focuses on welcoming rituals in the Jewish faith.

*Sound & Spirit: Welcoming Children into the World*

Various Artists, Children's Music

Release Date: August 3, 1999, from Rydodisc Records

Available in CD and audiocassette formats

A collection of songs that celebrate birth.

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[<http://www.creeculture.ca/content/index.php?q=node/66>] (Consulted on May 27, 2011).