

Growing Up

Suggestion: You might like to have the students dress up before sitting down to hear the story. The story also lends itself to being performed with hand or finger puppets. One puppet for each of the main characters (Sarah, David and Lisa).

Dogs grow up fast. I heard that one dog year is the same as seven human years. One year to a dog feels like 7 years to us. Gigi, my dog, was born on March 7th, and every year we give him a special birthday treat to mark that date. But if our year is like seven years to him, maybe we should be giving him special treats more often. Imagine having seven birthdays every year! Today I was thinking – if he is growing up faster, then maybe one day feels to him like a full week feels to us? No wonder he sleeps so much during the day! But all this thinking makes me curious – how old is he really? Is age about the speed we grow up or about the how many years we have been alive?

“Sarah, what are you thinking about?” David is sitting with me on the step. “I’ve been thinking about growing up.” I tell him. “It’s about time!” he replies. I laugh. “No not like that - I’ve been thinking about what growing up feels like and its connection to time.” David looks interested.

“Sometimes I wonder why some people grow up more slowly, and whether growing up is something we do or whether it just happens to us,” he said. “You mean like Sam?” I ask him. Sam is in our class but he doesn’t do the same work as the rest of us. We take turns to help him. “Yes, I wonder what growing up feels like for him.” “Good question” I say, “we should ask him.”

Lisa comes and joins us on the step. “Why do we say “growing up” anyway? “, she asks. “Maybe some things *grow down* – like mountains, or pebbles in a stream, or even problems. The older they are the smaller they get “. “You mean they start out big and rough and end up smaller and more refined.” David says, finishing off her thought. Meanwhile, I’m thinking to myself that maybe it isn’t so clear with problems – sometimes they grow bigger over time, not smaller.

“Trees are in between – they grow up and grow down at the same time”, Lisa continues, “I wonder if the roots start growing down every spring at the same time new shoots are growing upwards?” “Imagine celebrating Tu’ Bishvat each year not as the time trees send out new shoots and blossom, but as the time they send out new *roots*?” I add. Instead of coming to school wearing white and putting flowers in our hair to celebrate spring, we’d all be told to come to school dressed in brown clothes with tree roots in our hair.” David would really like that!

David and Lisa go inside but I stay sitting on the step. I’m still thinking.

I’m thinking that growing up is also like walking backwards. Walking backwards in sand you can see where you’ve come from by looking at your footprints, but you don’t know exactly where your feet will be next. That is how I feel in life – all the things that have happened to me up until now and all my memories tell me who I am *now* - but I am not exactly sure who I will be tomorrow. An almond tree will grow up to be an almond tree, but I could grow up to be anything.