



Malvina Reynolds

WE HELP MAKE THE WORLD BETTER FOR EVERYONE.



UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST ALPHABET:
Please read the Overview before using this Plan.

R Letter R introduces Malvina Reynolds and her music.

MATERIALS: Construction paper Letter with hole punched in top, yarn for necklace
Music/Lyrics for "Magic Penny," "Turn Around"
Snacks—Raisins, rice cakes

GETTING STARTED:

Welcome. After each person says his or her name, the group responds, "Welcome, (name)." For a child who is attending for the first time this year, add name to the letters that have been posted and to the attendance sheet, and make a nametag during or after the session. Leave an empty chair for someone who is not present or for someone who has not joined the group yet.

The *Letter of the Day*:

- Talk about the Letter.
- Give the Letter Necklace to a person with that initial.
- Talk about the things that the children have brought for the Letter, and/or Letter Bag.
- Put the things related to the letter in the Special Place

SPECIAL PERSON: Malvina Reynolds (August 12, 1900-March 17, 1978)

It looked like there were a lot of things against her! Her parents were Jewish immigrants in San Francisco, and she was refused a diploma from high school because her parents were against the United States fighting in World War I. Can you imagine being punished for something that your parents did or believed? But she went to university anyway. But then she could not find a teaching job at a college because of her views and because she was a woman.

Do you know what happened when she was about fifty years old? She met some singers and songwriters who were singing about things that needed to be changed. She took

some courses on songwriting, and became famous. She wrote songs for women for peace, to protest against some things that she did not feel were right. These songs got her message to people when famous singers sang them.

One of her songs, "Little Boxes," talks about how things around us try to make all of us alike, from the things that we learn, to the kinds of houses that we live in, to what we do with our lives. This was quite different from what she believed. In her booklet, "The Soul Book" in 1967, she says that living means love and work and effort. She says that we grow by living together in community. We are always changing and who we are is a function of community. We live by creating.

Malvina Reynolds was a member of the Unitarian Universalist Church of Berkley, California.

AFFIRMATION: *We help make the world better for everyone.*

Lessons from her songs.

"Magic Penny" and talk about how we give love away, and how it feels to love someone.
Suggested activity: Have a penny drive in the church for a special cause. Have a display of the pennies collected, and ask older children/youth to assist in counting.

"Turn Around" talks about how fast children grow up and how we change. Have children talk about things that they do with their families. Possibly arrange a "Turn Around" time for adults and children to play together, possibly after a pot luck meal. This is part of creating an intentional caring community within the church.

(Note: For words to the songs, see <http://www.wku.edu/~smithch/MALVINA/songmenu.htm>)

THE LETTER **R** IN THE CHURCH

A-B-C

Animals: rabbit, raccoon, raven, reptiles, rhinoceros, rooster, rat

Body (add to the Body Picture): Ribs—these are not readily visible. If a skeleton was used under B for bones, refer to the location of ribs.

Calendar:

- Note the date of the session and any special events for the day, including birthdays.
- Note items beginning with that letter
- Note events between today and the next session.

CLOSING: Gather around the Special Place where the things related to the letter have been placed. "We give thanks for the Letter R. We have shared and learned about special people and animals and ourselves and our church. May we leave in love and peace. Next week we will meet again. Our letter will be ____ and our leader(s) will be _____." Make sure that people take home things that need to go.

VARIATIONS FOR OLDER CHILDREN

Collect as many of the songs and recordings of Malvina Reynolds as possible, including requesting these from the congregation. Have a Malvina Reynolds Festival or Coffee House. Encourage people to read the words as poems or to sing the songs, as well as having recordings. Allow some time for people to talk about what her songs mean. The children can plan, organize and publicize the event, with assistance from adults. This could be an intergenerational event and/or a fundraiser.