

Feelings and Identity

PRO TIP
Download other grades for alternate activities!

CONNECTIONS TO THE CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

CCC 335
CCC 364
CCC 369
CCC 371
CCC 377
CCC 1763
CCC 1767-1768

MATERIALS

- ▶ [Munch's *The Scream*](#)
- ▶ [What's In a Name?](#)

SUGGESTED TIME

50 minutes

Teacher Background

We are created in the image and likeness of God, made up of a unity of body and soul, endowed with an intellect and will. Our rational souls are what make us like God, and distinguish us from the rest of creation. The Sacrament of Baptism makes us His adopted sons and daughters, and this is our identity. We are sons and daughters of God, driven by this desire for Him, not to be directed by our feelings.

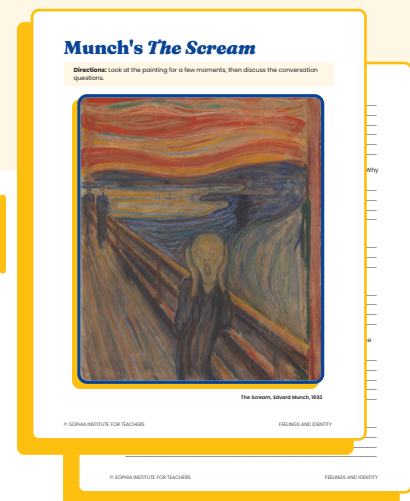


HOW DOES THIS LESSON HELP INOCULATE STUDENTS AGAINST GENDER IDEOLOGY?

Contrary to the claims of gender ideology, our feelings or experiences do not define us. Our passions (emotions/feelings) are in themselves morally neutral; they become morally good when they contribute to a good action, and evil in the opposite case. Because our fallen nature tends to sin, our feelings must be directed by a properly-formed conscience and our will must be conformed to God's will. Our identity is beloved son or daughter of God, and this identity in Christ should guide our feelings.

Activity

- Begin by explaining that we are made in the image and likeness of God, with an intellect and will. Make sure students understand that our intellect is our ability to think and reason, and our will makes decisions and acts on them. We also experience emotions, or feelings. Passions (emotions/feelings) are morally neutral. They incline us to act (or not to act) according to what we perceive as good or evil. In other words, how we feel can move us to do certain things or not do them. Because our fallen nature tends to sin, our feelings must be directed by a properly-formed conscience and our will conformed to God's will. To live as God wants us to love, our will (reason) must be in control of our passions (feelings). Simply following our feelings makes us slaves to them!
- Distribute the [Munch's The Scream](#) and have students look at the painting in silence for a few moments. Then have them discuss the questions in groups.
- After a few moments, reconvene the class and use the Answer Key to guide a large-group discussion.



D. Then distribute the [What's In A Name?](#), and read aloud from Scripture about Adam naming the animals. (from RSV Gen 2:18-23).

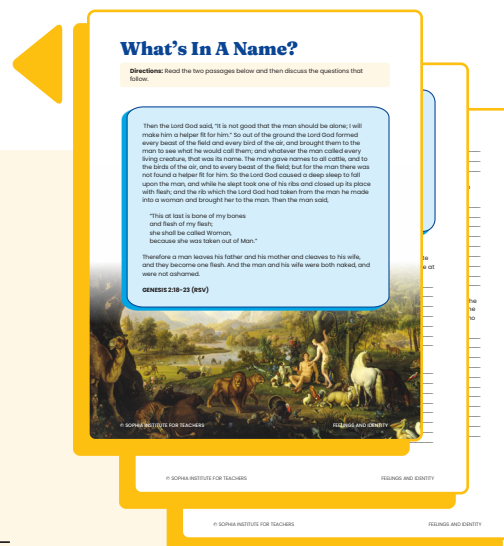
E. Note for the class that the naming of the creatures is tied to discovering who will be a suitable partner for Adam. Adam identifies (i.e. gives names to) all the creatures, but does not find one is fit to be joined to him. There must be something essential about what we are called and what is our nature. God proceeds to create Eve from Adam's rib, and she is "bone of [his] bones, flesh of [his] flesh." Man and woman cleave to each other, become one flesh, and together further cooperate in creation through procreation (having children).

F. Then read aloud the passage from Shakespeare's *Romeo & Juliet* (Act II, Scene ii, ll. 38-49). Before reading, ask the class if they are familiar with this story. If needed, explain that in *Romeo and Juliet*, Juliet laments that her true love Romeo is a member of the family to whom her own family is sworn enemy.

G. Explain that Juliet's personal desires reflect our fallen attempts to break free of bounds, even perhaps by renaming things, because we think it will help us to get what we want (happiness in the world). But changing something's name does not change what it is. We can call an apple an orange, but it's still an apple.

H. Finally, have students discuss the questions and use the Answer Key to guide the conversation.

I. Wrap up by explaining that we are created in the image and likeness of God, made up of a unity of body and soul. Our rational souls are what make us like God, and distinguish us from the rest of creation. Moreover, we are fulfilled, especially since the fall (whereby we lost grace, knowledge, perfected virtues), in our union with God in heaven for eternity. The sacrament of baptism makes us adopted children of God, saves us by grace and makes us capable of achieving our final end. In addition, our nature consists in the union of body and soul; the body is not merely a material, less important attachment to the soul or an invaluable aspect to our life in Christ. We are charged, indeed, to honor our bodies fully as temples of the holy spirit and as integral to our human dignity as male or female. Furthermore, we are sons and daughters of God, driven by this desire for Him, not to be directed by our feelings. Happiness, which God wants for us, is an end of the properly ordered soul drawn to its Maker; false happiness, which God does not want for us, is the end of the improperly ordered soul driven by the world.

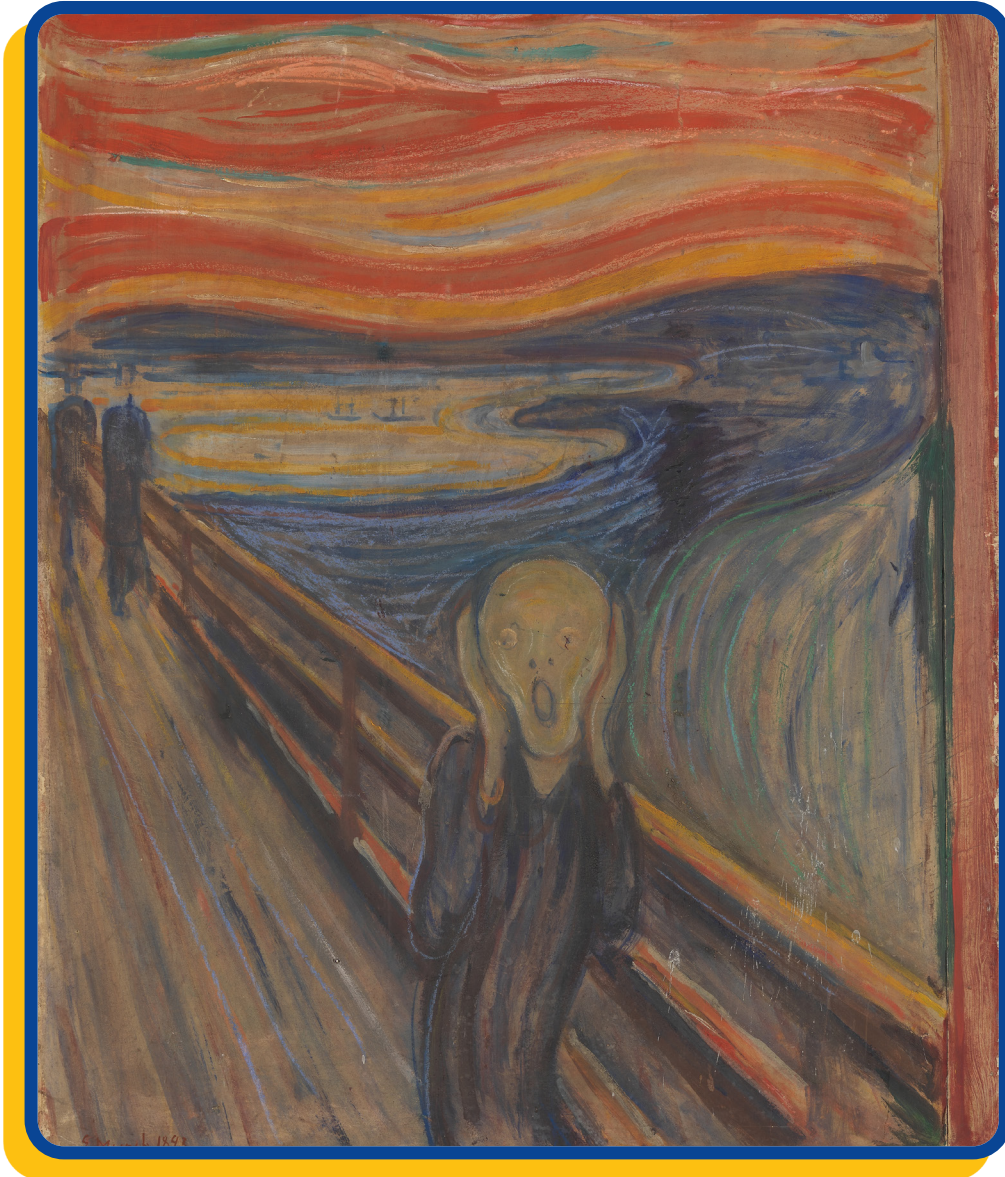


- J. As a final reflection, read aloud (or have students read) this passage from St. Paul, which enforces the fundamental idea that identity in Christ should guide our feelings – our feelings do not define our identity. We draw strength and meaning from God's revelation, from discerning His plan for us, from growth in virtue, from sacramental graces.

I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate. Now if I do what I do not want, I agree that the law is good. So then it is no longer I that do it, but sin which dwells within me. For I know that nothing good dwells within me, that is, in my flesh. I can will what is right, but I cannot do it. For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I do. Now if I do what I do not want, it is no longer I that do it, but sin which dwells within me. So I find it to be a law that when I want to do right, evil lies close at hand. For I delight in the law of God, in my inmost self, but I see in my members another law at war with the law of my mind and making me captive to the law of sin which dwells in my members. Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! (RSV Romans 7:15-25)

Munch's *The Scream*

Directions: Look at the painting for a few moments, then discuss the conversation questions.



The Scream, Edvard Munch, 1893

STUDENT WORKSHEET ANSWER KEY

- 1 How would you describe this art? What emotions does it evoke?

This art could be described as impressionist, as it gives an impression of real things rather than depicts them in realistic detail. The paint strokes are thick and heavy and the hues are natural but both somber and stark, with wintry hues coloring the figures, bridge, and river, contrasted with a fiery sky in the background. The painting evokes a sense and has a theme of despair, loss, extreme sadness, or terror. The central figure is separated from others in a lonely looking scene, hands up against his or her face, with wide-open eyes and an aghast expression, appearing to scream. The figure's spectral appearance also lends a haunted aspect to the art.

- 2 You have probably seen this image before. It has even become a popular emoji. Why might this be a popular piece of art?

The painting may be popular because it is a style that breaks away from classical forms and appeals to modern self-expression.

- 3 What do you think might cause the central figure to scream?

People scream when they are scared or overwhelmed with emotion, unnerved with sadness, fear, or anger.

- 4 Might we describe this painting as provocative? How so or how not?

The painting may be described as provocative since it is meant to excite strong or base emotion in the audience, rather than art with more subtle themes or less disturbing imagery. It seems designed to shock or disturb, rather than edify or enlighten.

- 5 What are the passions? What does this image say about the passions? What is the proper relationship between our feelings and our will, or rational appetite?

The passions (emotions) incline us to act (or not to act) according to what we perceive as good or evil. "The Scream" reflects that passions are sometimes overwhelming and uncontrollable.

- 6 What might the background figures represent?

Allow discussion, and if students do not mention it, suggest to them that the figures in the painting taken together may represent the human soul with intellect, will, and passions. The figures in the background may represent the will, or reason, as they seem calm or in control in contrast with the central figure. A main idea to reflect upon is the relationship between the passions and the will. (See CCC 377; CCC 1763; CCC 1767).

What's In A Name?

Directions: Read the two passages below and then discuss the questions that follow.

Then the Lord God said, "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him." So out of the ground the Lord God formed every beast of the field and every bird of the air, and brought them to the man to see what he would call them; and whatever the man called every living creature, that was its name. The man gave names to all cattle, and to the birds of the air, and to every beast of the field; but for the man there was not found a helper fit for him. So the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and while he slept took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh; and the rib which the Lord God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man. Then the man said,

"This at last is bone of my bones
and flesh of my flesh;
she shall be called Woman,
because she was taken out of Man."

Therefore a man leaves his father and his mother and cleaves to his wife, and they become one flesh. And the man and his wife were both naked, and were not ashamed.

GENESIS 2:18-23 (RSV)



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FEELINGS AND IDENTITY

STUDENT WORKSHEET ANSWER KEY



Juliet: 'Tis but thy name that is my enemy.
Thou art thyself, though not a Montague.
What's Montague? It is nor hand, nor foot,
Nor arm, nor face. O, be some other name
Belonging to a man.
What's in a name? That which we call a rose
By any other word would smell as sweet.
So Romeo would, were he not Romeo called,
Retain that dear perfection which he owes
Without that title. Romeo, doff thy name;
And for thy name, which is no part of thee,
Take all myself.

SHAKESPEARE'S ROMEO & JULIET
(Act II, Scene ii, ll. 38-49)

- 1 What is the significance of a name? Are the names of things supposed to correlate to what or who they are? What would happen if the names of things could change at any time?

A name is what we call something or someone for identification. A name is more significant and helpful if it reflects essence or character, lends meaning and identity. Naming things is a way humanity stays rooted, and allows us to grasp, even if only implicitly, the idea of objective truth. Arbitrary names and changeable definitions cause confusion.

- 2 Why does God have Adam give names to His creatures?

God directs Adam to name the animals of His creation and to subdue all things in the garden (participate in the good of creation as steward). Note that the naming of the creatures is inherently tied to who will be a suitable partner for Adam; he identifies all the creatures but not one is fit to be joined to him. There must be something essential about what we are called and what is our nature. God proceeds to create Eve from Adam's rib, and she is "bone of [his] bones, flesh of [his] flesh." Man and woman cleave to each other, become one flesh, and together further cooperate in creation through procreation (having children).

STUDENT WORKSHEET ANSWER KEY

- 3 Does changing the name of a thing change what it is?

No.

- 4 What do you know about Romeo and Juliet? How would you put Juliet's lament in your own words? Why is what she wants impossible?

Juliet wonders, what is the importance of a name? Can't he be called something else, and still be as good, and then their problems would be solved? But names are not, or are not meant to be, so superficial, and Romeo cannot rightly forfeit his family identity, even though in his own passion he says to Juliet: "Call me but love, and I'll be new baptized" ... (II, ii, 50). Moreover, even if we can appreciate Juliet's feelings, we can see how her motives are not entirely rational. Adam's naming of the animals reflects the positive and essential purpose of the name (to identify creatures in the proper order, with mankind intimately linked to God's image, reflecting the proper relationship between creation and Creator); Juliet's personal desires reflect our fallen attempts to break free of bounds, even perhaps by renaming things, to get what we want (happiness in the world).

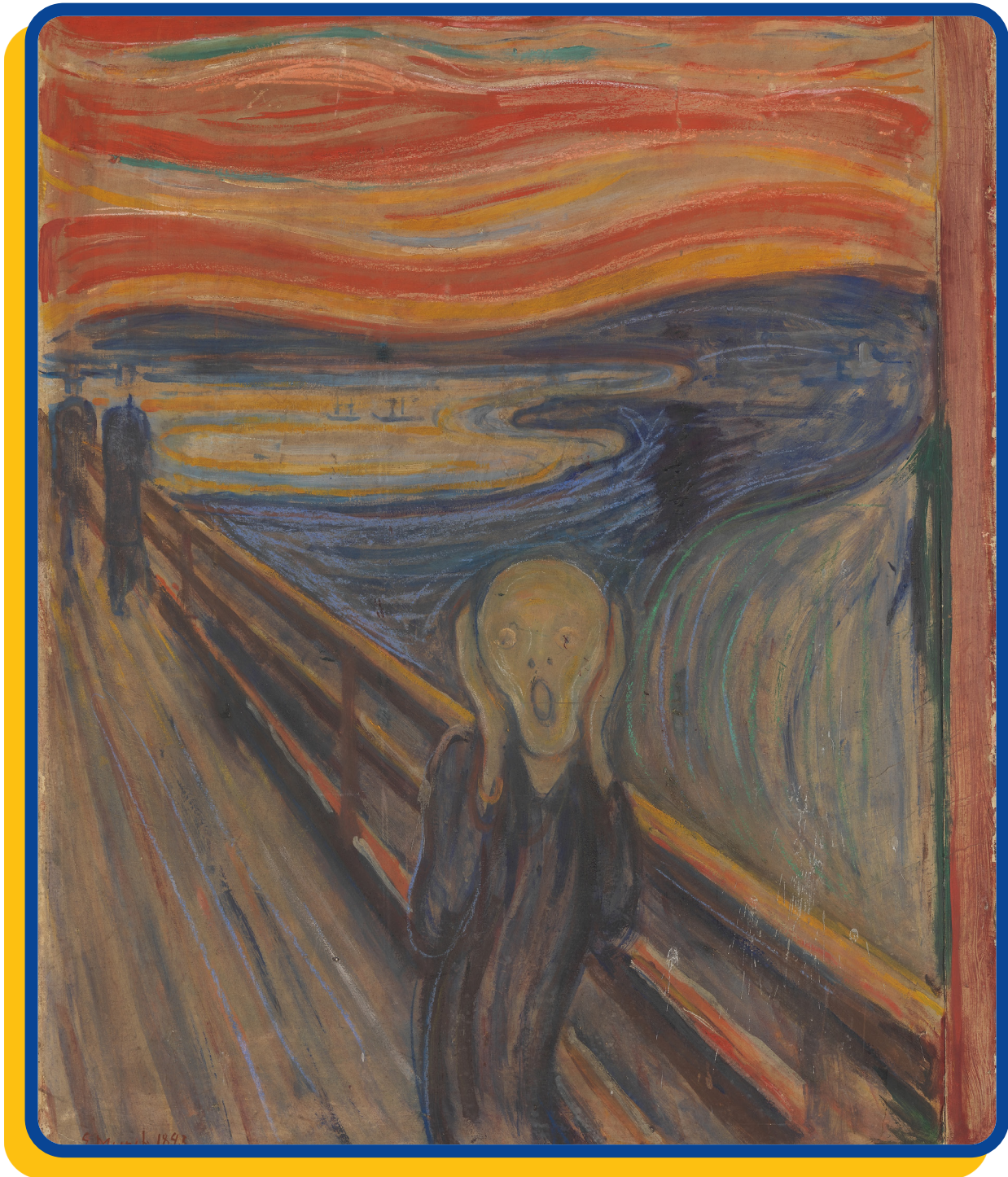
- 5 Are books always justly judged by their covers? As Catholics, do we believe that the past, or one's background, defines us or sets our fate? How so and how not? On the other hand, should our feelings dictate our actions? Should we let them define who we are?

We are taught not to be superficial, not to "judge a book by its cover," however names are not merely superficial, changeable "covers." It is certain that the appearance of a person or thing does not tell all, however it is also certain that outward appearance, the signs and symbols of things, do matter and can (and should) carry great weight. As Catholics, we know the Sacraments of Baptism and Penance wash away sins and allow us to be free to be good (thus we are not bound or doomed by sin, neither Original Sin nor personal sin, granted we receive grace through the Sacraments). That said, feelings, though they can inspire, reflect, and flesh out the motivations and ends of our actions, should be reigned in by reason, bound by law, and directed according to God's will, so that what we do and how we are is not simply a manifestation of how we feel.

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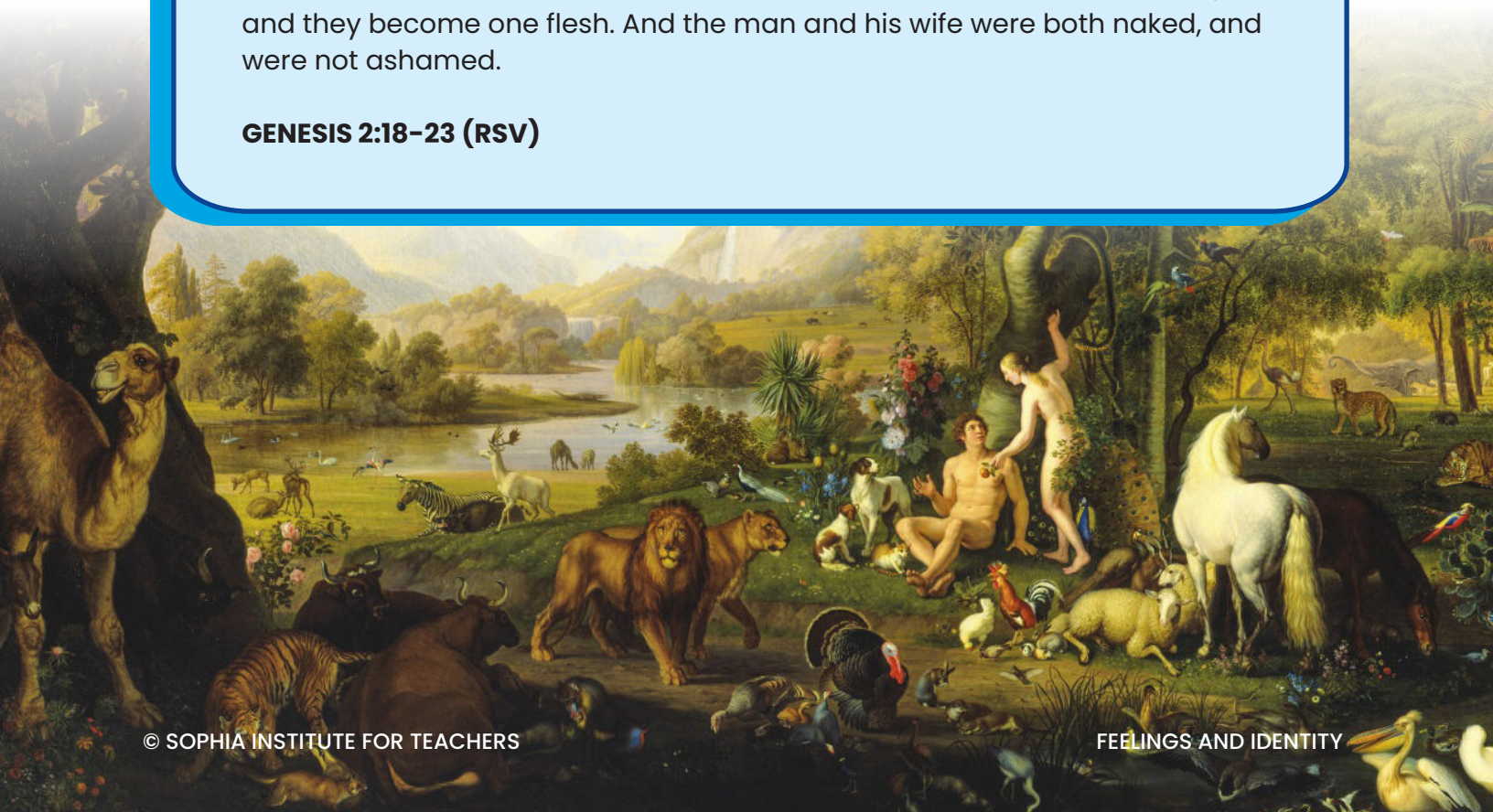
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GENESIS 2:18-23 (RSV)





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