



WHALE CLASS

Circle Time Guide

Everything you need, one page per day.

Week 6 · Autumn (2)

October 12–16, 2026 · 13 minutes a day · ages 2.5–6, English learners

The one big idea: autumn is the season that gives things away — the tree gives up its leaves, and the field gives us food.

重阳节 / the Double Ninth falls on Sunday 18 October, the day after we finish — so Friday is our 重阳 day: we 登高 climb high, look at the 菊花, and take the 重阳糕 to the grandparents. 霜降 / Frost's Descent follows on 23 October.

🌳 Hold this all week

Print · laminate · ring-bind. One page per day, in order, from Monday.

Five words they'll own by Friday

tree

fall

cold

harvest

climb

Littles (2.5–3)

One word + a gesture is a win: **“Fall!”** (one hand drops from high to the floor) · **“Cold!”** (hug yourself and shiver, brrr) · **“Climb!”** (both hands pulling up a ladder).

Bigs (4–6)

Sentence frames: **“The leaves fall from the tree.”** · **“It is cold in autumn.”** · **“We climb up high.”** · **“I can ____!”**

The 13-minute flow, every day

2 min Magic Box hook — chant, shake, sniff, dramatic peek · **4 min** Teach the day's word with the real thing (get it wrong once on purpose) · **3 min** Song: chorus → today's verse → chorus · **3 min** Game · **1 min** Close: whisper → normal → SHOUT.

The close, every single day

“Fall... cold... CLIMB! Happy AUTUMN!” (*flutter down · shiver · hands pull up a ladder · both arms fly open*)

Theme shelf · four trays

1 · Four-season tree sequencing, laid in a circle (*control: numbers on the backs*) · 2 · 古诗对应汉字 — 王维's poem with loose 汉字 tiles 九 · 月 · 山 · 兄 · 花 (*control: the poem card underneath*) · 3 · Harvest tonging, chestnuts into a five-hollow tray (*control: five hollows, five chestnuts*) · 4 · Leaf-vein pinning + the 秋天/夏天 dressing sort (*control: it only lifts clean if every punch touched the line; a leaf or a sun on the card backs*).

汉字, **one a day**: 树 (Mon) · 秋 (Tue) · 冷 (Wed) · 菊 (Thu) · 高 (Fri). Lay each card beside that day's object and leave it there. No drilling.

Dark Phonics this week: d — “dirty dog, dig dig dig!” Every dry leaf this week goes **d**own.

Tree · One by One

Today's words: **tree**

Grab: two twigs for the Magic Box — one completely **bare**, one still **leafy**; the 树 character card; a space to stand up in.

2 MIN · MAGIC BOX HOOK

The box is light today, and it rattles like dry sticks. Whole class chants:

EVERYONE

"What's in the box? What's in the box?"

Shake it — *tick, tick, tick*. Sniff it. Peek in and frown, puzzled.

TEACHER

"Two sticks. Just... two sticks?" (*lift both twigs out together, one in each hand, and hold them high*)

Wait. Let them see it themselves: one hand is **full**, one hand is **empty**. Arms up like branches.

"Tree!"

4 MIN · TEACH · TREE

Both twigs go round the circle, one child at a time — hold the leafy one in one hand and the bare one in the other, and feel the difference.

A tall, tall **tree**... (*stand up, arms wide and high*)

Leaves on every branch! (*wiggle all ten fingers up high*)

One... lets go. (*one finger flutters down*) And one... and one...

Now the tree is **BARE**. (*arms up, every finger still*)

Littles: **"Tree!"** with arms up. Bigs: **"The leaves fall from the tree."** Then to the window: which tree outside is **finished**? Which is still going?

Teacher fails: hold up the **bare** twig and admire it. "Ohhh... look at ALL these beautiful leaves." Start counting them, seriously. Wait for the roar.

3 MIN · GAME · TREE, TREE, BARE TREE

Everybody stands and becomes a tree: arms up as branches, ten fingers spread as leaves. On every clap, **one finger folds away** — count down out loud together, ten, nine, eight... The last clap drops both arms. **"Bare!"** Play it twice: once slow and sad, once fast and silly. Then let a child be the wind.

Going down from ten is a real counting exercise hiding inside a game. Say the numbers **with** them, never at them.

1 MIN · CLOSE

Arms up like branches, then everything drops on the shout. Whisper → normal → shout: **"Fall... cold... CLIMB! Happy AUTUMN!"**

3 spare minutes? *Leaf Man* (Lois Ehlert). 汉字: lay the 树 card beside the twigs.

Today's song moment (3 min): chorus → **Monday's verse** — "A tall, tall tree with a hundred leaves, one by one the autumn takes!" — → chorus.

Fall · Down They Come

Today's words: **fall** (*tree comes back every day*)

Grab: a basket of **fallen leaves** in the Magic Box — as many as you can gather on the way in, dry ones; the 秋 card; floor space for twenty children to spin and land.

2 MIN · MAGIC BOX HOOK

The box is fat today, and it **rustles**. Chant it, then hold it up over your head.

EVERYONE

"What's in the box? What's in the box?"

Shake it — a huge dry rustle. Sniff it — it smells of outside.

TEACHER

"Ready? Look UP..." (*tip the whole basket out from as high as you can reach*)

Leaves land on every head. Let the shrieking run for five whole seconds before you say anything. One hand drops from high to the floor. **"Fall!"**

4 MIN · TEACH · FALL

Everyone picks up **one** leaf and holds it up as high as their arm goes.

Up on the branch... (*arm high, hand still*) Hold on... hold on...

Let... **go**. (*fingers open*)

Fall, fall, fall... (*watch it all the way down, nobody moves*)

DOWN! (*flat hand on the floor when it lands*)

Do it three times. The waiting is the lesson — twenty children watching one leaf come down is the quietest the room will be all week. Littles: **"Fall!"** Bigs: **"The leaf falls from the tree."**

Teacher fails: throw your leaf **up** and announce brightly, "Look! It's **falling!**" while it is clearly going up. Nod, satisfied.

3 MIN · GAME · LEAF CATCH

Everyone gathers a small handful and stands well spread out. "Throw them UP... and catch ONE before it lands!" Almost nobody catches one the first time — that is the joke. Three rounds. Then the quiet version: throw them up and **don't** catch. Freeze and watch every one land; count how long the last one takes.

Finish by sweeping them all back into the basket together, everybody. Announce the tidy-up as part of the game and it stays fun.

1 MIN · CLOSE

Both hands high, fluttering down as the voice comes up: **"Fall... cold... CLIMB! Happy AUTUMN!"**

3 spare minutes? *Fletcher and the Falling Leaves* (Julia Rawlinson). 汉字: the 秋 card joins 树.

Today's song moment (3 min): chorus (huge slow flutter-down) → **Tuesday's verse** — "Fall, leaf, fall — spin and sway, down to the ground you go today!" — → chorus. Sing it **standing**; the last word puts them on the floor.

Cold · Brrr! Dress Warm

Today's words: **cold** (*tree · fall come back*)

Grab: a scarf, a woolly hat and one glove in the Magic Box (leave the box by an open window for ten minutes first so it is genuinely cold to touch); a sun hat and sandals for the sort; the two sorting signs (pack pages 12–13); the 冷 card.

2 MIN · MAGIC BOX HOOK

Before the chant, the box goes round the circle and **everybody puts one hand flat on it**. Say nothing. Watch the faces.

EVERYONE

"What's in the box? What's in the box?"

TEACHER

"Ooh... the box is **cold**." (*shiver from head to toe, hug yourself, teeth chattering*)

Peek in, then pull the scarf out slowly and wind it round your neck, twice, with a huge sigh of relief. Everyone hugs themselves and shivers. **"Cold!"**

4 MIN · TEACH · COLD

Cold on my nose! (*touch your nose, shiver*) **Cold** on my toes! (*touch your toes*)

Hat... scarf... glove... (*mime each one going on*)

Now I am **WARM!** (*big hug of yourself, whole body relaxes*)

Littles shiver and say the word: **"Cold!"** Bigs: **"It is cold in autumn."** and **"I wear a hat."**

Then out to the window or door: everybody touches the railing or the glass with one finger. 凉不凉? Come back in and touch a friend's warm hand. Cold, warm, cold, warm.

Teacher fails: put the woolly hat carefully on your **foot**. Sit back, pleased. "Ahh. That's better now, isn't it?"

3 MIN · GAME · DRESS FOR THE COLD RELAY

Scarf, hat and glove go on a mat at the far end. Each child runs, puts on **one** item, runs back, hands it over. Bigs, as they hand it on: **"It is cold. Put your hat on!"** Then the sort: the two signs (秋天 **Autumn** · 夏天 **Summer**) at either end of the circle, cards out one at a time. Sandals — which end? Woolly hat — which end?

The sorting cards (pack page 14) go straight onto the shelf after this, still warm from the game.

1 MIN · CLOSE

Everybody hugging themselves and shivering: **"Fall... cold... CLIMB! Happy AUTUMN!"**

3 spare minutes? *The Mitten* (Jan Brett). 汉字: the 冷 card joins 树 and 秋.

Harvest · The Autumn Basket

Today's words: **harvest** (tree · fall · cold come back)

Grab: the harvest basket in the Magic Box — corn 玉米, a sweet potato 红薯, chestnuts 栗子 and a persimmon 柿子; a cloth to cover the basket for the game; a chrysanthemum 菊花 and the 菊 card.

2 MIN · MAGIC BOX HOOK

The box is **heavy** today. Ask two children to lift it together, and let them fail once.

EVERYONE

"What's in the box? What's in the box?"

Shake it — a solid, dull thud, nothing rattles. Sniff it — sweet and earthy.

TEACHER

"Something **heavy**. Something you can **eat**..." (*lift the whole basket out with both arms, slowly, like it weighs a ton*)

Both arms out as if carrying a full basket. **"Harvest!"**

4 MIN · TEACH · HARVEST

One thing at a time, right round the circle. Everybody holds it, feels the weight, says the word.

Corn — bumpy rows! (*run a thumb down the cob*)

Sweet potato — heavy and dusty. **Chestnut** — hard and shiny! (*tap it, tock tock*)

Persimmon — soft... careful. (*cup it in both palms, very gently*)

Littles name the food or the week word: **"Harvest!"** Bigs: **"The field gives us food."** Then count the chestnuts: lay them in a line and count up, put them back one at a time and count down.

Teacher fails: take an enormous bite out of the **raw sweet potato**. Chew. Beam. "Mmm! Delicious!" Offer it round.

3 MIN · GAME · FEEL THE HARVEST

The cloth goes over the basket. Nobody looks in again. "Hand in... no peeking... **name it before you pull it out!**" Narrate your own turn first: "Ooh... it's **bumpy**... it's got little rows... it's CORN!" Every child gets a turn, about eight seconds each. Right or wrong, everybody claps: the basket is its own **control of error**.

Put the persimmon in last, and warn them it is soft before the first hand goes in.

1 MIN · CLOSE

Arms out as if carrying a heavy basket: **"Fall... cold... CLIMB! Happy AUTUMN!"**

3 spare minutes? *The Little Red Hen*. 汉字: the 菊 card and the real 菊花 — the flower that opens as everything else finishes, waiting for tomorrow's 重阳节.

Today's song moment (3 min): chorus → **Thursday's verse**, the only one that opens on **Am** — "Corn and chestnuts, sweet and gold, the autumn field gives all it holds!" — → chorus. Arms open **outward** on the last line.

Climb 登高 + Big Review

Today's words: **tree** · **fall** · **cold** · **harvest** · **climb** — the whole week

Grab: 重阳糕 (or any steamed cake) wrapped up, a chrysanthemum 菊花 and a walking stick; every prop from the week back in the box; 王维's poem printed big; the awards (pack page 17); the 高 card; coats on — we are going outside.

2 MIN · MAGIC BOX HOOK

The box comes out full, heavy, rustling, and smelling faintly of cake. "Today the box has the **WHOLE WEEK** in it." Pull the props out one at a time in silence — they supply the word before you can open your mouth.

Bare twig → **"Tree!"** Leaves, dropped → **"Fall!"** Scarf → **"Cold!"** Corn → **"Harvest!"**
Last, the stick and the cake → **"CLIMB!"**

4 MIN · TEACH · CLIMB, THEN THE WHOLE WEEK

A tall, tall **TREE!** (*arms up wide and high*) The leaves **FALL** down! (*flutter to the floor*)

Brrr — it's **COLD!** (*hug and shiver*) The **HARVEST** is in! (*arms out, carrying*)

Up we **CLIMB!** (*both hands pulling up a ladder, higher and higher*)

Twice — slow, then fast. Then coats on, and out: climb the steps, the little hill, or the slope by the gate. At the top everybody stops and **looks out**. Out of breath is the right way to arrive. Read 《九月九日忆山东兄弟》王维 up there: “独在异乡为异客，每逢佳节倍思亲。遥知兄弟登高处，遍插茱萸少一人。” Then ask, quietly: 你想谁?

Teacher fails: set off **down** the steps announcing “Up we go! Up, up, UP!” Keep going down, cheerfully.

3 MIN · GAME · 登高

The climb **is** the game. Up together, look out together, down together holding the rail. At the bottom, unwrap the 重阳糕 — and then **don't** eat it. Every child carries a piece to the grandparents at the gate.

"For you!" Bigs: **"Happy 重阳节! This is for you."** Bad weather? The top landing and the highest window still counts. The cake still goes to the gate.

重阳节 is also 老人节, Elders' Day. Giving the cake away is the whole festival in one thirty-second act — don't explain it, just do it.

1 MIN · CLOSE + AWARDS

Every child gets a “You are a STAR!” award to take home with a leaf from the basket. Then, standing, all five gestures: **"Fall... cold... CLIMB! Happy AUTUMN!"**

3 spare minutes? *We're Going on a Bear Hunt* (Michael Rosen). 汉字: the 高 card completes the row — 树 · 秋 · 冷 · 菊 · 高.

Today's song moment (3 min): Friday's verse — “Up we go, up so high, look at the world — and wave goodbye!” — then the **WHOLE SONG**, chorus → Mon, Tue, Wed, Thu, Fri → chorus, at the top of the climb. That run-through **is** the week's review.

★ Down, Down, Down the Leaves Come

The one song of the week · ukulele · strum: Down · Down · Down-Up

C C (0003) · **F** F (2010) · **G7** G7 (0212) · **Am** Am (2000)

CHORUS — EVERY DAY

C Down, down, down the **F** leaves come **C** down,

F The tree is bare and the **C** field is **G7** brown! **C**

Am Cold on my nose and **F** cold on my **C** toes,

F That's how the **C** autumn **G7** goes! **C**

MONDAY · TREE

C A tall, tall tree with a hundred leaves, **G7** one by one — **C** the autumn takes!

TUESDAY · FALL

C Fall, leaf, fall — spin and sway, **G7** down to the ground **C** you go today!

WEDNESDAY · COLD

C Hat on my head and a scarf round me, **G7** brrr, it's cold — **C** as cold can be!

THURSDAY · HARVEST

Am Corn and chestnuts, sweet and gold, **G7** the autumn field **C** gives all it holds!

FRIDAY · CLIMB

C Up we go, up so high, **G7** look at the world — **C** and wave goodbye!

Each day: **chorus** → **today's verse** → **chorus**. Friday: sing the whole thing top to bottom, at the top of the climb. Slow and swaying, like something drifting down — not a marching song. Let the **Am** sit a beat longer than feels comfortable, then lift into “That's how the autumn goes!” Chant it without the uke first; add chords once they know the actions. If your fingers get stuck, put the uke down and do the finger-play — the class will not notice.