

Why do Christians perform nativity plays at Christmas?

In this unit, the children will learn the key events from the Christian Christmas story. They will find out about the term incarnation (God come to earth as a human and as God) and learn about the Christian belief that this happened in Jesus. The children will learn about who Christians believe first visited Jesus in the stable and why. They will find out about the timeline of the story and that most Christians believe that the wise men/Magi arrived when Jesus was one or two years old. By the end of the unit, children will understand that some stories change over time and that it is important for believers to return to and study the original text. They will find out that some Christians perform nativity plays to retell the story so that others can find out more about the Christian belief of incarnate.

KEY VOCABULARY

- INCARNATION
- JESUS
- CHRISTMAS
- MARY
- JOSEPH
- SHEPHERDS
- ANGEL
- STAR
- MAGI
- MANGER



Lesson 1

STEP 1: Show pupils photographs of some of the adults they know well in school. Ask pupils to identify each member of staff and then ask what pupils think the staff looked like when they were babies.

STEP 2: Show a collection of images of Jesus at different stages of his life (you might wish to use the Picturing Jesus resource from RE Today for some diverse images).

STEP 3: Explain we are going to be hearing the story that Christians find in the Bible about when Jesus was born. Read the nativity story to pupils (a child friendly version that is close to the original text can be found in The Beginners Bible). After the story has finished, show some cut out pictures of the different people from the story. Check whether pupils can name them.

Focus Group:

Pupils draw the character from the story they think is most important. Whilst pupils are drawing, teacher to write down on post it notes what the children say about this character and why they are important. This work can then be stuck in a whole class scrapbook (or other).

Independent Group:

Pupils draw the character from the story they think is most important. Whilst pupils are drawing, the teacher is to write down on post it notes what the children say about this character and why they are important. This work can then be stuck in a whole class scrapbook (or other).

Lesson 2

STEP 1: Remind pupils of the story that they read last time. Help pupils recall what was it about and what happened. Show some pictures of the characters from the story; check pupils remember what role each played. Re-read the story with pupils and discuss the key events.

STEP 2: Ask: Who were the first visitors to Jesus? How did the shepherds know that Jesus had been born? Explain that many Christians believe that the wise men/Magi set off when they saw the star to find the new king, but that they did not arrive straight away, not nearly as quickly as the shepherds. Discuss who Christians believe was the new king.

STEP 3: Show some nativity story Christmas cards and ask for opinions about which ones are correct or incorrect. Point out that any that show the shepherds and Magi together would not reflect the events found in the Bible.

Focus Group:

Have a selection of Christmas cards and ask pupils to decide whether they link to the story or not. Ask them to explain their thinking. Write down their responses on a post it notes to display alongside the card.

Independent Group:

Ask pupils to design their own Christmas cards making clear links to the story.

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Lesson 3

STEP 1: Recap with pupils' nativity story they read last time. Ask: Who is this story important for? Explain that this story is important for Christians because many Christians believe it tells the story of God coming to Earth.

STEP 2: Explain that most Christians believe that Jesus was both God and a human at the same time. Tell pupils that Christians call this 'incarnation'. Practise saying this word with pupils (I'll say it, you say it).

STEP 3: Watch a short video of the story they have studied*. As a class, freeze frame the story by acting it out and taking photos. Explain these photos will be used at the end of the lesson to make a timeline.

Focus Group:

Show pupils a selection of pictures of different events from the Christmas story. Ask them to choose one and draw their own picture. While they are doing this, ask what is happening in their picture and make notes of what they have said.

Independent Group:

Encourage pupils to use props and costumes from earlier in the lesson to act out the story independently.

End of the lesson:

Encourage pupils to use the photographs and their drawings to make a timeline of key events from the Christian Christmas Story.

*You might like to use
<https://youtu.be/hpMX-1WwvqU>

Lesson 4

STEP 1: Ask pupils about the different Christmas celebrations they know of and to give examples. Explain that people celebrate Christmas in lots of different ways. Explain that even the Christian community itself celebrates Christmas in several different ways. Show some photos of Christmas celebrations in churches from around the world (include some nativities play pictures).

STEP 2: Explain that many Christian children and school children perform nativity plays to help retell the story at Christmas time. Watch a nativity with the children*

STEP 3: Show a lit candle and explain Jesus was called the light of the world. Ask why they think this is.

Focus Group:

Making paper candles and explaining why they think Jesus is called the light of the world. Record pupils' responses.

Independent Group:

Pupils to look at pictures of different nativities and share with an adult how they are similar and different.

Lesson 5

STEP 1: Talk with pupils about the Christmas story. Ask: why is this story important for Christians? Explain Christians believe that after Jesus was born, people came to visit him. Can pupils remember who these visitors were? Explain that we are going to read the story again and when we spot a visitor, we are going to shout out 'knock, knock'.

STEP 2: After identifying the visitors to Jesus, remind pupils of when many Christians believe the Wise men/Magi arrived. Ask pupils what the Magi brought with them for baby Jesus.

STEP 3: Show photographs or artefacts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. Explain that gold was for a king, frankincense was the oil used to anoint or mark out the new king and Myrrh was a spice put on the body of someone when they died. Why do pupils think that the Magi brought these gifts for baby Jesus? Link the gifts to what the Magi might have known would happen.

Focus Group:

Give the children a gift box outline and encourage them to draw the gift that they would bring for baby Jesus. Encourage the children to explain what the gift is and why they have chosen it. Write down the children's responses on post it notes and display in a class scrapbook (or other) with the children's pictures.

Independent Group:

Have some frankincense and myrrh for the children to investigate, smell and touch. If additional adult is available, ask them to listen to and record pupils' responses. Adult to ask questions such as 'What does it smell like?' and 'How do you think Mary

	would have felt when she received these gifts for baby Jesus?’
Lesson 6 STEP 1: Recap the story of the first Christmas. Choose a different version of the story and share it with pupils. Compare similarities and differences with the one read last time. STEP 2: Explain that different people tell stories in different ways and sometimes these can change over time. Explain that many Christians believe that it is important to keep going back to the original story found in the Bible so that the meaning is not lost. STEP 3: Ask: What story do many Christians tell about Jesus on Christmas Day? Recap how Christians call this incarnation because of the belief Jesus was God and a human on earth.	Focus Group: Make birthday cards that a Christian might send to Jesus. Independent Group: Have laminated picture cards of key events from the Christmas story. Use their knowledge to sequence the events and make a timeline.
Learning Outcomes	

- Talk about people who are special to them
- Say what makes their family and friends special to them
- Retell religious stories, making connections with personal experiences
- Begin to recognise the word ‘incarnation’ as describing the belief that God came to Earth as Jesus
- Recall simply what happens at a traditional Christian festival (Christmas)