

In this unit pupils will start to think about the term's secular and religious. Drawing from their knowledge from Foundation Stage, they will talk about the key events from the Christmas story in more detail. Pupils will find out about how Christmas is celebrated today and begin to consider which traditions are secular and which are religious. They will focus on religious artwork, saying how and why it helps Christians today to celebrate the key events from the story.

## Key Vocabulary

- Incarnation
- Jesus
- Mary
- Joseph
- Shepherds
- Advent
- Secular
- Religious
- Birth
- Celebration



## Lesson 1: Who was Jesus?

**STEP 1:** Explain that in RE the pupils are going to be finding out about what Christians believe Christmas is all about. Talk together about the word incarnation-explain that this means God come to Earth as a human and as God.

Ask pupils: do you know the place that the Bible it says this happens?

**STEP 2:** Show a picture of Beauty and the Beast. Ask: Is the beast really a beast? What are the clues as to who he is?

Explain that for Christians, there are lots of clues throughout the Bible that tell them that Jesus wasn't just a tiny baby born in a stable; as well as being a human baby, he was also God on earth. Most Christians say he was really God's own son. Show a variety of images of baby Jesus (use images from around the world-traditional and modern). An internet search will allow you to find these. Some examples that you might like to use are:

*P Solomon Raj - Nativity (1980s – Batik) – India*

*He Qi – Nativity (1998) – Infant and gouache on rice paper (China)*

*Woonbo Kim Ki-Chang – The Birth of Jesus Christ (1952-53) Ink and Colour on silk (Korea)*

*Hanna Varghese – God is with us (2006) Acrylic on canvas (Malaysia)*

*Sandro Botticelli – Mystic Nativity (1500 -1501) Italy*

With pupils, discuss what the artists are showing about Jesus in each image.

**STEP 3:** Give small groups one large picture of baby Jesus from the selection earlier in the lesson and ask them to write some adjectives to describe what they see around the picture (they should draw on the discussion in STEP 2 to help).

**STEP 4:** Read the story of the first Christmas (a high-quality children's version can be found in the Beginner's Bible published by the Good Book company). Explain that many Christians believe that God came to Earth to spend time with people and show them how to live.

## Lesson 2: What happened in the story of the birth of Jesus?

**STEP 1:** Recap the last lesson with pupils. Help them to recall the key events from the Christian Christmas story. Ask pupils to explain why this story is so important to Christians. Explain that this time, we are going to be getting to know the text and the story a little better. Use the same text as last time to read the story as a class.

As you read through discuss how the different characters in the story might have been feeling during the different key events. Remind the pupils of the word 'incarnation'; can they remember what this means? Where in the story does incarnation happen?

**STEP 2:** Show pupils a selection of pictures from the story, encourage them to sequence these to make a timeline of key events. Walk down the timeline and briefly retell the story.

**STEP 3:** Split the class into groups and give each a picture from the timeline that you have created in STEP 2. Explain that they will be going out into the playground with chalks (you could also do this on large pieces of paper in the classroom if the weather is bad) and drawing the part of the story that they have been given. Tell pupils that at the end of the lesson, we will walk down the timeline in the playground as a class and they will retell their part of the story.

**STEP 4:** Walk down the timeline that pupils have created, encouraging each group to tell their part of the story in as much detail as possible. Take photographs and videos of the timeline and retelling. Photos can be shared in a class book or the pupils RE books.

### Lesson 3: Was Jesus born where people would have expected?

**STEP 1:** Ask pupils how they would get ready for a new baby and create a list of all the things that new parents might need. Show them a picture of a member of the royal family. Do they think that the same or different preparations would need to be made for a royal baby?

Explain to pupils that most Christians believe that Jesus was and is the king. Ask: How do you think Mary prepared for the birth?

Recap the Christmas story with pupils. Show them key images from the text (or use their own timeline from lesson two) and encourage them to share the key events. Can they spot how Mary prepared for Jesus' birth? Show pupils a picture of the place where animals were kept in the time of Jesus; popularly known as a 'stable'. Remind pupils that Jesus was laid in a manger and not born in a grand location. Do they think that these were the living conditions people would have expected a baby who was both human, and God to be born into? Do they think that these were the living conditions people would have expected a baby who was a king to be born into?

**STEP 2:** Show some pictures of different mangers (stone and wood), explain that a manger was used for putting animal food in. Show pupils some pictures of what the stable would have looked like in Jesus' time (ensure that these are images and not artists interpretations from Christmas cards, perhaps a cave or a room with animals in as part of the house). Discuss with pupils why this was probably an unusual place to lay baby Jesus down for a sleep and an unusual place for a baby to be born.

**STEP 3:** Send pupils to their tables and ask them to investigate what they think is happening in the images that they find there. Ask them to write words to describe the images. Use the images from the ppt of mangers and 'stables' Give the pupils slips of paper and encourage them to write their favourite adjective to describe the stable on it. Create a class word bank of words to describe the stable.

**STEP 4:** Explain that in the nativity story, the shepherds were the first people to visit Jesus, they were poor and spent most of their time in the fields caring for their sheep. Tell pupils that the shepherds being the first to be told about Jesus' birth and to visit tells many Christians that Jesus came for everyone, poor and rich alike. Talk together about how the shepherds might have felt when they met Jesus for the first time.

**STEP 5:** Give pupils a picture of the shepherds visiting Jesus with a speech bubble.

Encourage pupils to think about how the shepherds felt when visited by angels and when they visited Jesus, before using their thoughts to write what the shepherds might have said when they met baby Jesus in the speech bubble.

### Lesson 4: Why is waiting and preparing for Christmas important for many Christians?

**STEP 1:** Remind the pupils of the text that they have been studying for the last few sessions.

Bring the class back together and show them a range of Christmas card images of baby Jesus in the stable, are these accurate? Do they show the stable and the manger how it would have been at the time? If not, why not?

remind the children that when they were in Foundation Stage, they sorted these cards into accurate (links to the story) and inaccurate (does not link to the story).

**STEP 2:** With pupils, focus on the cards linking to the story. Ask: Which characters in the story waited for something to happen? Talk about Mary waiting for baby Jesus to arrive, Mary and Joseph waiting for somewhere to stay, the wise men waiting to get to Bethlehem and see the baby etc. Explain that before Christmas, Christians have a time of waiting called advent, show advent calendars, candles and wreaths.

Remind pupils that for many Christians, Christmas is the time to remember how Jesus came to earth as both God and human. So, for many Christians, Christmas is not about eating yummy food and receiving gifts. Based on this, ask why pupils think, pair, share why many Christians wait for Christmas. What are they really waiting for?

**STEP 3:** Talk with pupils about the significance of the advent wreath for Christians and what each of the candles represents. Whilst there are several symbolisms ascribed to the candles, simple ones to share with pupils at this age are:

Hope. (Representing God's people)

Peace. (The Old Testament prophets who foretold the birth of the Messiah)

Love. (John the Baptist)

Joy. (Mary, the Mother of Jesus)

Jesus the light of the world (central candle).

Explain that the 4 candles on the outside are lit on the Sundays throughout advent, and the central one on Christmas day itself. Reinforce learning by asking: what are Christians waiting for during advent? Focus on the candle symbolising Jesus the light of the world and explain that Christians believe that he came to bring light to the darkness.

**STEP 4:** Make a class wreath or decorate one and discuss the meanings of the candles.

## Lesson 5: What do some people like to say thank you for at Christmas?

**STEP 1:** Re read the story with pupils. Ask what they think the characters in the story would be thankful for at the very first Christmas and what each might have said thank you for? Hot seating: encourage pupils to take on roles of characters from the story and explain what they were thankful for at the first Christmas.

Give pupils pictures of the characters and speech bubbles. Encourage them to write a thank you or praise you comment that the character might say.

**STEP 2:** Explain that at Christmas time, many Christians are thankful for Jesus, who they see as the greatest gift of all. Remind pupils that most Christians believe that Jesus was both human and God, explain that most Christians also believe that Jesus is God's son and that he came to help them, teach them how to live and rescue them. Encourage pupils to think about what they are thankful for at Christmas time (try not to focus on gifts but more time with family, a warm place to live etc – responses may or may not focus on Christian ideas, depending on pupils' own choices).

**STEP 3:** Give pupils strips of paper and encourage them to draw or write what they are thankful for and then make into a class paperchain.

Photograph for RE books and stick in with a context strip.

## Lesson 6: How do people use the story of the nativity to guide their beliefs at Christmas?

**STEP 1:** Recap with pupils what Christians are waiting for during advent. Ask: why is Jesus so special for many Christians? Pupils may draw upon prior knowledge and answers from this unit including, many Christians believe Jesus was God come to earth/brought light into a dark world (as light of the world)/came to teach them how to live/come to rescue them.

**STEP 2:** Recap pupils' knowledge by using the sticky knowledge quiz slides.

**STEP 3:** Pupils to complete the assessment sheet.

### Learning Outcomes

- Give a clear, simple account of the story of Jesus' birth and why Jesus is important for Christians.
- Recognise that stories of Jesus' life come from the Gospels.

- Give examples of ways in which Christians use the story of the nativity to guide their beliefs and actions at Christmas.

- Decide what they personally have to be thankful for, giving a reason for their ideas
- Think, talk and ask questions about Christmas for people who are Christians and for people who are not.