

Year 5&6 Key Stage 2



# RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Resource File

**Optional** units of work - Christianity - The Christmas story





# Lesson 1 The Christmas story

## The big picture

This lesson introduces the unit on Christianity by looking at the Christmas story. For Christians, the birth of Jesus also sees the birth of their faith and so it is important to begin this unit with an exploration of the origins of their belief.

This lesson gives the class a chance to investigate the original elements of the Christmas story, alongside the traditions that have grown and become a part of the festival. In so doing, the lesson draws attention to the way in which perceptions about what religions are about often grow out of observed traditions rather than core beliefs.

## Learning objective

- To know the key elements of the biblical Christmas story.

## Success Criteria

### Learning about:

- Pupils will have learnt the original elements of the biblical Christmas story.

### Learning from:

- Pupils will have reflected on how traditions that grow up over time can overshadow the origins of festivals and religions.

## Religious Education Council Requirements

A1, A2, A3, B3

## Resources

- **Resource sheet 1:** 'The Christmas story'
- A4 paper or RE books
- Writing and drawing materials

## Vocabulary

Bible, Christian, Christmas, Jesus, Magi, original, tradition, Wise Men

## Key questions ?

*How much of Christmas today is linked with the original stories?*

*What might be the most important 'Christmassy' words for a Christian?*

## Introduction

Ask everyone to talk with their neighbour for a minute on everything to do with Christmas. Tell them you are going to ask everyone for two 'Christmassy' words. What will they say? Allow them to talk and then scribe the words they say on the board. If progress in the discussion is slow, you may wish to challenge them to think of everything you might see during Christmas in the following settings:

- at school;
- on the high street;
- at home;
- in a nativity play.

Introduce the learning objective: 'In this lesson we are going to find out how much of the Christmas celebrated today is part of the original Christmas story.'

## Activities

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### Stimulus

Explain to the class that since the first Christmas over 2000 years ago, lots of traditions have built up. These are things that people do to celebrate Christmas, but that were not anything to do with the original event.

In order for people to understand what Christians believe is really important about Christmas, this lesson is going to give them a chance to find out which of the words that are on the board now could have been brainstormed after the first Christmas. Give them a chance in pairs to have a quick discussion about this. Which elements do they think were a part of the original Christmas, and which ones do they think were not?

Look together at the Christmas story on **Resource sheet 1**. Ask people to look very carefully at it, and afterwards draw out all the original 'ingredients' of Christmas. Encourage them to look carefully. How many Wise Men were there? The Bible does not specify three. This has been implied by the number of gifts. And what about the donkey? There is no mention of Mary and Joseph travelling on a donkey. Is there anything else that surprises them or they think is missing?

### Response

Ask people to divide a piece of landscape A4 paper in half. On one side ask them to draw a star, on the other a Christmas tree. Explain that you would like them to classify the words brainstormed at the beginning of the lesson as either original (part of the first Christmas) or traditional (having grown out of celebration over a number of years). They can then surround the tree with all the traditional elements of Christmas and the star with original ones. You can give them the option of doing this through writing, drawing or a mixture of the two.

## Plenary

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Ask the class to look at their work. Which side of their paper has the most on it? It will be the traditional. Can they think why this makes some Christians uncomfortable at Christmas?

If Christians could pick one word that was important at Christmas it would be 'Jesus'. Explain how the word 'Christmas' means a celebration of 'Christ' and that 'Jesus' is at the centre of all the Christian beliefs that they will be learning about and learning from in these lessons.

To end the session, people could copy and complete the following sentence:

- Looking at the origins of Christmas today, I have been thinking about...

## Differentiation

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(By task) everyone except those with very specific needs would be able to participate in this lesson. Those with specific needs should be supported following the requirements of their Individual Education Plan (IEP).

## Extension

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The open-ended nature of the task should lead to more sophisticated outcomes from more able people. The origins of various Christmas traditions such as the Christmas tree or Santa Claus could be researched.



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## The Christmas story

Luke 2: 1–20

(From the New International Version of the Bible)

‘In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world. (This was the first census that took place while Quirinius was governor of Syria.) And everyone went to his own town to register.

So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David, because he belonged to the house and line of David. He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child. While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.

And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them:

“Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. Today in the town of David a Saviour has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord. This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.”

Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying,

“Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men on whom his favour rests.”

When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another,

“Let’s go to Bethlehem and see



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this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about.”

So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger. When they had seen him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child, and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them. But Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart. The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen, which were just as they had been told.’

Matthew 2: 1–15

(From the New International Version of the Bible)

‘After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the time of King Herod, Magi from the east came to Jerusalem and asked, “Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw his star in the east and have

come to worship him.”

When King Herod heard this he was disturbed, and all Jerusalem with him. When he had called together all the people’s chief priests and teachers of the law, he asked them where the Christ was to be born.

“In Bethlehem in Judea,” they replied, “for this is what the prophet has written: ‘But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for out of you will come a ruler who will be the shepherd of my people Israel.’”

Then Herod called the Magi secretly and found out from them the exact time the star had appeared. He sent them to Bethlehem and said,

“Go and make a careful search for the child. As soon as you find him, report to me, so that I too may go and worship him.”

After they had heard the king, they went on their way, and the star they had seen in the



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east went ahead of them until it stopped over the place where the child was. When they saw the star, they were overjoyed. On coming to the house, they saw the child with his mother Mary, and they bowed down and worshipped him. Then they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts of gold and of incense and of myrrh. And having been warned in a dream not to go back to Herod, they returned to their country by another route.

When they had gone, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream.

“Get up,” he said, “take the child and his mother and escape to Egypt. Stay there until I tell you, for Herod is going to search for the child to kill him.”

So he got up, took the child and his mother during the night and left for Egypt, where he stayed until the death of Herod. And so was fulfilled what the Lord had said through the prophet: “Out of Egypt I called my son.”

