

Introduction:

This learning journey assists learners to explore the Christmas story to allow for progression across CfE levels. This sequence of learning experiences aims to develop the following learning intentions:

1. To explore the range of messages in the Nativity story exploring their similarities and differences.
2. To consider a variety of interpretations of the Christmas story.
3. To consider how the Christmas story may be linked to issues people face today.
4. To consider learners' own responses to the variety of messages or meanings in the Christmas story and the implications of this for beliefs and actions.
5. To consider the implications of these messages in relation to contemporary issues today. To offer an increasingly deep analysis of the story and what it means for Christians today
6. To consider how key features of the story relate to Christian belief and how Christians practise in Scotland today
7. To use more complex and more fully developed literacy skills to engage with the story
8. To offer a developed and reasoned explanation about the cultural value of the Christmas story as well as its religious and spiritual value.

Prior Learning

Learners will have an understanding around aspects of Christian belief and practice. They should have an awareness of the different types of stories and genres present within Christianity and world religions. Learners will have some understanding of ways in which Christians interpret these stories and they should now be able to build upon this knowledge and understanding. Learners will be able to consider further how Christians apply these stories to their lives and how the stories assist Christians in developing their own beliefs and values. Learners will have developed an awareness that religion is an important factor for many people when faced with moral decisions. Learners will build upon previous knowledge and understanding of the Nativity story and will now consider more complex ways in which the story might impact upon their own beliefs, values and actions. Learners will now be able to build upon prior learning to make links from the Nativity story to contemporary social, political, religious and cultural issues.

Skills

- Identifying
- Listening
- Discussing
- Reflecting
- Evaluating
- Writing
- Performing
- Pre

Learning Experience

Introduction:

Across Scottish schools, Christmas is a topic regularly revisited at different stages of learning. This series of learning journeys is designed to offer varied approaches to Christmas which support progression and depth of analysis in relation to this topic area. Specifically, it supports learners in considering the key religious aspects of Christmas and so supports the development of their own emerging beliefs and values. Many aspects of Christmas are explored in our education system through art, music, drama and other approaches drawing upon a range of curricular areas. While these learning journeys draw upon such curricular areas and their approaches, the key focus is exploring the beliefs, values and practices and traditions associated with Christmas in relation to Religious and Moral Education in Curriculum for Excellence.

Possible learning opportunities/tasks:

1. ANALYSIS OF DIFFERENT VERSIONS AND PRESENTATIONS OF THE STORY

Learners can consider three different presentations of the Nativity story and compare any similarities or differences. What are the messages? Does the method of presentation affect the meanings which are drawn from the story? Learners can consider how these interpretations challenge modern society. For example learners could consider a scriptural source, an animation or a play. Alternatively, learners could analyse three different versions of the Bible story (e.g. King James, Good News etc.). Different ways of presenting the story can be found here:

- [Bible Society>Versions>Matthew 1+2](#)
- [Bible Society>Versions>Luke 2](#) - extracts from the 'Good News' Bible
- Bethlehem Bureaucrat on [TrueTube website](#) - modern day play which retells the Nativity story
- A Gift to the World>The Birth of Jesus Christ on [YouTube website](#) - a Nativity film created by the church of the latter day saints
- Jesus is Born on [the Brick Testament website](#) - The Nativity scene illustrated by Lego figures
- Christmas Story Animation Video on [YouTube website](#) - a detailed cartoon describing the Nativity and the lead up to this story.

2 RETELLING THE STORY

Learners can select their own method of retelling the story. For example learners can create a play, a poem, a story or a song which retells the Nativity story which can be shared with other learners. This may be used to express the significance of the Nativity to Christians as well as its place for contemporary Christians. Learners can work in pairs or groups to produce their own poem, story or song.

3 EXPLORING HOW THE STORY HAS BEEN REPRESENTED THROUGH VARIOUS MEDIA

Learners can examine three different hymns/carols/songs linked to the Nativity story. They can consider if the words/music detracts from or adds to the 'message' of the Nativity story. For example learners can compare and contrast 'Away in a manger', 'Holy night' and 'Joy to the world'. Individual groups can take one of the hymns/carols/songs and report back to the class explaining what they consider the message in the hymn/carol/song is; what words/phrases convey this message; whether this increases their understanding of the Nativity or detracts from it; how far the hymn/carol/song portrays their own understanding of Christian belief etc. Learners could also discuss how far the traditional Christmas carols are still relevant for today's society – are these comforting in their familiarity or distanced from 21st century experience?

4 CONSIDERING THE CONCEPT OF 'MESSIAH' AND PARALLELS WITH CONTEMPORARY SITUATIONS

Learners can explore the messianic nature of the Nativity story and its function within Christian culture today. For example, they can consider possible meanings of 'adoration' and 'glorify' and of Jesus being a 'saviour'. 'Then after her baby is born, name him Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins'. (Matthew 1:21) 'And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them'. (Luke 2:21) Learners can make links with objects or people that learners may 'adore' or 'glorify'. Links may be made to modern day 'saviours'. Through discussion, learners can draw parallels with prophets and saviours from other religions. Learners can create and share a presentation on this which may involve a simple matching exercise between the concepts and the modern-day equivalents. Learners should be prepared to explain and justify their decisions.

5 RELATING THE NATIVITY STORY TO CURRENT ISSUES SUCH AS MIGRATION AND THOSE CONSIDERED AS 'OUTSIDERS' IN SOCIETY

Learners can draw parallels between the migration of Mary, Jesus and Joseph in the Nativity story and modern day examples of migration. Learners can specifically consider the moment in the Bible when Jesus, Mary and Joseph were forced to flee: 'After the wise men had gone, an angel from the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, 'Get up! Hurry and take the child and his mother to Egypt! Stay there until I tell you to return, because Herod is looking for the child and wants to kill him'. That night, Joseph got up and took his wife and the child to Egypt, where they stayed until Herod died'. (Matthew 1:13-15). From this, learners this could create a 'mood board' demonstrating parallels between the migration of Jesus to current day migration and immigration issues. A mood board is a design that consists of images and text. People use mood boards to communicate their feelings or findings about a topic to others. Learners can communicate feelings, findings or 'moods' surrounding the themes of migration and Nativity that have been addressed in class. To create their mood board, practitioners should provide learners with a variety of magazines and newspapers. Learners can explore and collect clippings, images and writing typically associated with Christmas, and also look for images and words associated with migration. Learners should then carefully plan how their mood board is going to look or 'feel' and what message the board is going to give. Learners should give their mood board a title, for example 'Jesus the refugee'. At this stage learners may want to add their own words or images. These images, words, magazine and newspaper cuttings can then be compiled and added to an A4 sheet of card. Advice on creating a mood board can be found here: [BBC>Blast website](#)

Learners may develop the mood board activity to create a 'mood wall' which links issues of migration and immigration raised from the Nativity story and worldwide issues today. A mood wall is a collaborative activity which can be used to display a theme on a larger scale than the 'mood board'. The mood wall may be used to express an amalgamation of ideas or reactions explored in the mood board task.

6. APPROACHING THE STORY THROUGH METHODS OF HISTORICAL ANALYSIS

Learners can consider and discuss the historical "accuracy" of the story and what it could mean to Christians today. What does "accuracy" mean in this case? For example, learners could create a diagram where they express their views about aspects of the story which seem likely/probably, unlikely/improbable. This then becomes the basis for class discussion. This might present a good opportunity for learners to engage with a representative of the Christian faith who could elaborate upon a variety of interpretations of the story from literal to symbolic. Learners could develop this aspect of learning through discussion with history teachers. How do historians investigate the accuracy of historical accounts of events? What issues are raised by the nativity story as history? How central is belief in the historical accuracy of the story for Christians and others?

7. USING THE STORY TO CONSIDER THE CENTRAL MESSAGE OF PEACE ON EARTH

Learners can focus on the concept of 'peace on earth' during the Nativity and consider the bible extract 'Glory to God in the highest heaven, and peace on earth to those with whom he is pleased!' (Luke 2:14) Learners could then discuss and/or debate the following statement from a variety of Christian perspectives: 'On Christmas day, all Christians should refuse to take part in war' providing a link to stories from the WW1 trenches around the cessation of hostilities at Christmas.. Learners could consider beliefs about war and peace within Christianity and how the person of Jesus presents Christians and others with a challenge around peace in today's world. Learners could design an exhibition around this theme which could be a physical exhibition or an online suite of resources.

8. USING THE STORY TO CONSIDER THE IMPORTANCE OF CHARITY AT CHRISTMAS TIME

Learners can consider the ways in which Christians put their faith into action, particularly at Christmas time. They could use ICT to research the work of Christian charities at Christmas and present their findings. They could link texts from the biblical Christmas story with specific actions which Christians might carry out as a result. Learners could then plan and run charity events linked to Christmas themes, showing clearly how their charity event links to key Christian beliefs and values.

Possible Assessment / Evidence:

Learners can demonstrate their depth of understanding of the different 'messages' or 'meanings' of the Nativity story through a variety of responses they create in relation to the nativity story.

Learners can show their understanding of the 'messianic' nature of the Nativity story through the delivery of a presentation to be used as evidence. This presentation could link Jesus to modern day "saviours". Links to saviours can also be made with other world religions, and the similarities and differences between the different 'saviour figures' could be presented in a range of ways. The completed activities of learners could be annotated by practitioners and through peer assessment.

Learners can demonstrate their depth of thinking and effective analysis of the Nativity story in the form of a 'mood board' to be used as evidence of learning. Individual learner reflections – written, oral etc. - on the mood board could be used for assessment purposes.

Learners can consider and discuss the accuracy of the Nativity story with a specific focus on the meaning of 'accuracy'. Discussion with a member of the Christian community can be recorded or annotated by the practitioner and used as evidence.

Learners can make links with the Nativity and the way in which Christians can put their beliefs in to practice. Learners will consider this within their local context and on a more global scale, and will demonstrate this knowledge through discussion. This discussion and debate may be recorded by the practitioner and used as evidence. The actions which learners take in response to Christmas themes in any charity event can also be a useful source of evidence of their understanding.