

## Ruth

**Note:** any activities involving photographing pupils must have parental permission.

### Introduction

Discuss friendships and the invisible bond that forms. Ask two pupils to volunteer to be two friends. Join them by giving them a piece of string to hold. Ask other pupils to suggest what binds two friends together, for example: playing together, sharing good times and bad. These can be written on pieces of paper and folded over the string. Talk about commitment and loyalty and when it is right to be loyal and committed. There are times when we need to change friendships, for example, if friends start leading people into wrong.

### Core material

Explore the painting *Naomi entreating Ruth and Orpah to return to the land of Moab* by William Blake

Select from the following activities:

1. Use the PowerPoint *Ruth in Art*
  - Show William Blake's painting on slide 2. Ask pupils to tell you what they see.
  - What is the mood of this painting? Which words would they use to

describe it? Look at the body language and the expressions. What do they tell you about how these people feel?

- Tell the story of Ruth using *The story of Ruth* or pupils can read it themselves. Alternatively, listen to and watch the presentation *The story of Ruth*.
- Which moment did William Blake choose to paint? Why do pupils think he chose that moment?
- Look at the words from the King James Bible that inspired the painting. Ask pupils to listen for any unusual or old words. Roll over words for an explanation. How well has William Blake captured these words in his painting?



*Naomi entreating Ruth and Orpah to return to the land of Moab*  
by William Blake

And Naomi said, 'Turn again, my daughters . . . go your way.' And they lifted up their voice, and wept again: and Orpah kissed her mother in law; but Ruth clave unto her.

Ruth 1:11, 12, 14

\*Kiss is a goodbye kiss.

\*Clave is the old word meaning 'clung to', 'held on to'.



*Ruth in Boaz's field* by Julius Schnorr von Carolsfeld

- How has William Blake created the mood of the words as well as the description of the scene?
- Why do you think this story is important for Christians? Invite a Christian from a local church to talk about the significance of this story/painting. Prepare the interview and pupil questions beforehand.
- What questions would they want to ask William Blake about this painting?
- Look at other pictures of Ruth on the PowerPoint. Why do they think different moments were chosen? Which do they like best? Why?
- Other paintings of Ruth can be found on [www.bible-art.info/Ruth.htm](http://www.bible-art.info/Ruth.htm) – scroll down for a range of paintings of Ruth and Naomi.

## 2. Create a picture story

Pupils can create their own picture story of Ruth by downloading the presentation ***The story of Ruth***, printing it as handouts and using the written story to help them create the storyline to go with the pictures.

## 3. Annotation

Print the Blake painting with space around it for pupils to add notes to explain the painting and its biblical background.

## 4. The next scene

Ask pupils to choose a moment from the story to create their own painting or a tableau that they photograph. Write their reasons for choosing that moment.



**5. Create a tableau and photograph**

If Blake had decided to paint the next scene, what do you think it would have been? Create a sketch or tableau and photograph of what you think then next scene would be.

**6. Ruth's promise (Art and English)**

William Blake may be painting the moment when Ruth refused to leave Naomi and when she promised to stay with her.

- Show Ruth's oath of friendship on the PowerPoint *Ruth's oath of friendship*. Use as much background material as is necessary to explore this.
- Explain that Ruth expresses her commitment to Naomi in some of the most beautiful language of the Bible. The version of this promise from the King James Bible is often chosen for weddings. The passage is poetry but it is not laid out as poetry. Hebrew poetry does not rhyme but is full of imagery and rhythm.

And Ruth said, 'Intreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee: for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God: Where thou diest, will I die, and there will I be buried: the LORD do so to me, and more also, if ought but death part thee and me'.

Ruth 1:16-17

**Note:** the phrase 'the LORD do so to me, and more also' is an ancient vow. It would probably have been accompanied by a gesture such as a finger drawn across the throat.

- Explore any old or difficult words and their meanings. As a class construct sentences using these older forms of English. 'Whither goest thou?' Rather than 'Where are you going?' Put some everyday classroom language into the older form of English.
- Lay the promise out as a poem. Pupils can do this together on the white board. The PowerPoint shows one possibility.
- Discuss the promise: What is Ruth promising? What will this mean for Ruth's life? Why do you think this is often chosen at weddings?

- Compare Ruth's oath with this oath of friendship from China (anonymous, translated by Arthur Waley). What is the difference? (Ruth's is underpinned by her religious faith.)
- Ask pupils to write their own oath of friendship drawing on the models they have explored.

**Reflection**

Ask pupils to think about some of the things that bind them in friendship to others. Write one or two things on a paper friendship bracelet and decorate.

**Alternative**

Pass a length of wool around for pupils to hold onto until all pupils are connected. Show how one person pulling on the wool is felt by others. Ruth's decision affected not only her own life, but that of Boaz and Naomi. Our decisions often affect others, not just ourselves. Other people's decisions affect us. We are all connected.

Shang ya!  
I want to be your friend  
For ever and ever without break or decay.  
When the hills are all flat  
And the rivers are all dry,  
When it lightens and thunders in winter,  
When it rains and snows in summer,  
When Heaven and Earth mingle -  
Not till then will I part from you.

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