

The influence of the Bible

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

This section looks at the influence of the Bible on Art and English. For more information see:

- **Music**
- **Art**
- **English**
- **History** (influence on society)

General introduction

Show a Bible, a pen, paper and some paints. Ask pupils what they have in common. Explain that the Bible inspired writers to create stories and poems and it inspired painters to create paintings.



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

Art

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 things that are wrong.

Core material

Select from the following activities:

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

1. Use the presentation *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? What 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 this. 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 Blake's *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?

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, 14

- *The kiss is a goodbye kiss.
- *Clave is an old word meaning 'clung or held onto'.

- 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 pupils want to ask William Blake about this painting?
- Look at other pictures of Ruth on the presentation. Why do pupils 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 Scroll down for a range of paintings of Ruth and Naomi. See also www.textweek.com/art/art.htm

2. Creating a picture story

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

3. Annotating

Print the Blake painting and add notes to explain it and its biblical background.

4. The next scene

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 the next scene would be.

5. Creating a tableau and photograph

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

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 presentation **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 King James Bible version of this promise 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 meaning. 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 presentation 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)



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.

From *170 Chinese Poems* published by Constable Ltd, translated by Arthur Waley, © copyright by permission of the Arthur Waley Estate.

- 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.



Reflection (optional)

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.

English

Introduction

Various sayings have come into English from the Bible. Pupils can create dramas around the following saying:

'There is a time and a place for everything.'

The saying must be included somewhere in the drama. For example, a person suddenly getting up and dancing in the middle of a talk in assembly and a teacher explaining that, 'There is a time and a place for everything.'

Core material

Select from the following activities:

1. Explore Ecclesiastes 3: 1, 4, 6, 7

Use the presentation *A time for everything*.

This saying comes from the Bible and is based

on the following verses. It can be projected or a paper download ***A time for everything*** can be used.

To every thing there is a season,
and a time to every purpose under the
heaven:

. . . A time to weep, and a time to laugh; a
time to mourn, and a time to dance;

A time to get, and a time to lose; a time to
keep, and a time to cast away;

A time to rend (tear), and a time to sew; a
time to keep silence, and a time to speak;

In modern English:

There is a time for everything;
a time to cry and a time to laugh; a time to
be sad and a time to dance;
a time to get, and a time to lose; a time to
keep and a time to throw away;
a time to tear and a time to mend; a time to
keep silent and a time to speak;

This passage could be saying there is an
appropriate time for all these things, or it could
be saying, 'Life is varied, it's made up of many
different experiences'.

2. PSHE

Explore some of these different times with
pupils. Many can be the basis for PSHE
discussions. Ask pupils to think of examples of
these 'times'.

Note: Select with care, not all may be
appropriate for discussion.

3. Drama/dance

Pupils can interpret the text in drama or dance.

4. Imaging the text

Look at the example of this text in art.

http://ratnermuseum.com/israelbiblemuseum/virtual/ecclesiastes/ecclesiastes_n.htm

Pupils can take a line and create their own image
that reflects a pair of opposites from the text. This
can be a photograph of a tableau or a drawing.

5. Sayings and sentences

Give pupils one or two other phrases that have
come into English from the Bible. Demonstrate
their meaning by using them in sentences or role
play. Use the download ***Biblical sayings***

www.crossref-

it.info/repository/sayings/?q=&submit=Go This
site also gives you hundreds of sayings

Reflection (optional)

The sayings from the Bible were incorporated
into English because people felt they resonated
with experience. Ask pupils to choose one of the
sayings or part of the text (Ecclesiastes) that
resonates for them.