

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 the following sections:

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

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 bonds that form. 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 *Ruth in art* presentation

- Slide 2 shows William Blake's painting. 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? What do

you think the people in this painting are saying or thinking? What story do you think it is telling?

- Tell the story of Ruth using **The story of Ruth** or the watch the presentation **The story of Ruth**. To print slides use **The story of Ruth** presentation.
- Why do pupils think William Blake chose that moment in the story for his painting? What is significant about it?
- What is the message of the story of Ruth and this painting for today?
- Why do you think this moment is significant 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? Use the resulting questions to structure discussion and research.
- Slides 3-5: Look at other pictures of Ruth on the presentation and compare Blake's painting with them. Why do they think different moments were chosen? Locate the part of the story that each reflects.

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

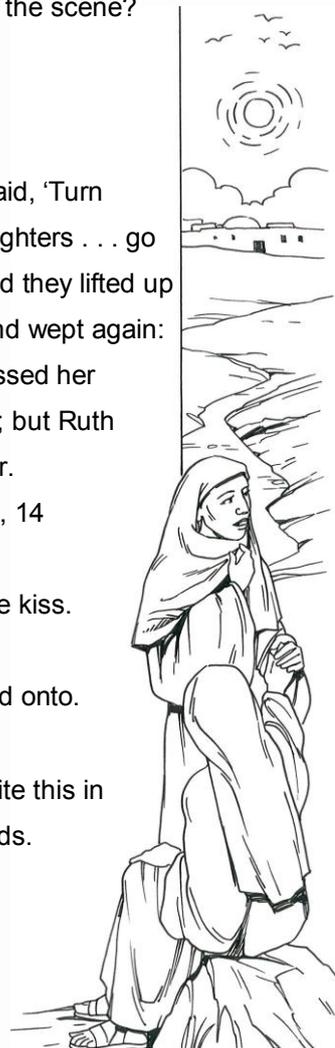
- Slides 6-7: Look at the words from the King James Bible that inspired the painting. Ask pupils to listen for any unusual or old words. Roll over words for an explanation. How well has William Blake captured these words in his painting? How well has he created the mood of the words as well as the description of the scene?

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

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

- Pupils can write this in their own words.



2. Annotate

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

3. Emotional graphs

Create an emotional graph of the story of Ruth. Plot the highs and lows. This can be done for the story as a whole or for individual characters.

4. A different story

Imagine Ruth had made a different decision and had left with Orpah. How would Blake's painting have changed? Create an outline sketch of what the alternative might look like.

5. Ruth's promise (Art and English combined)

Blake may be painting the moment when Ruth refuses to leave and when she promises to stay with Naomi.

- 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. The presentation *Ruth's oath of friendship* shows one possibility. Pupils can explore different ways of doing this. Practice delivering this promise. Annotate it for speaking as a poem.
- 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 (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 3:1-8

Use the presentation *A time for everything*
 This saying comes from the Bible and is based on the following verses. Slide 3 can be projected or a paper download can be used.

**Ecclesiastes 3:1-8 King James Version
(two lines omitted)**

To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven:
A time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck up that which is planted;
. . . a time to break down, and a time to build up;
A time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance;
A time to cast away stones, and a time to gather stones together; a time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing;
A time to get, and a time to lose; a time to keep, and a time to cast away;
A time to rend, and a time to sew; a time to keep silence, and a time to speak;
A time to love, and a time to hate . . .

Some scholars see this passage as a description of the varied nature of life. The

passage is saying life is made up of different types of 'times'; life is varied. It is not advocating any particular behaviour. It is saying 'That's life!'

Note: This passage is not telling people to hate in general. It may be saying there are times when it is right to hate, for example to hate injustice. Two lines have been omitted.

In modern English:

There is a time for everything;
A time for birth and a time for death; a time to plant and a time to dig up;
. . . A time to break and a time to build;
A time to cry and a time to laugh; a time to be sad and a time to dance;
A time to scatter and a time to gather; a time to hug, and a time not to;
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;
A time to love, and a time to hate . . .



2. PSHE

Explore these different times with pupils. Many can be the basis for PSHE discussions. Ask pupils to think of examples of these 'times'. For example, 'A time to sew' can be a time to mend friendships. There are other times when it is not right to mend a friendship. We have to wait for the right time. A person might have to change or say sorry before the friendship can be mended. Are there things it is right to 'hate', for example, injustice, cruelty?

Note: select appropriately. Not all may be appropriate for discussion.



3. Drama/dance/signing

Pupils can interpret the text in drama or dance. Signing for key words can be created or use BSL. These can be extended and used in dance. Sign dancing just extends signing into whole body movements.

• Imaging the text

Look at the example of this text in art.

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

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

• Sayings and sentences

Give pupils other phrases that have come into English from the Bible. Use **Biblical sayings**. Demonstrate their meanings by using them in sentences or role play. Make a deliberate attempt to use them as much as possible during the day. Have them displayed around the classroom and offer small prizes for the pupils who can find ways of using them in speech during the day. www.crossref-it.info/repository/sayings/?q=&submit=Go This site gives you hundreds of sayings

Reflection

If possible pupils can sign a section of Ecclesiastes 3:1 – 8 as others watch and think about the words.