

The King James Bible

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

Introduction

Introduce the idea of birthdays (younger pupils). Discuss how we celebrate. You may wish to bring in some birthday balloons, cards and related items. Explain that this year is the 400th birthday of a very, very important book called the King James Bible.

Core material

1. Use the presentation *Making Grandad's Bible*

Use as much as is appropriate.

- Show a King James Bible and explain that, 400 years ago, King James asked about 50 of the cleverest people in the country to translate the Bible into English. The Bible is a very important book for the Christians so the translators took a long time over it. The men wrote the Bible in beautiful English and used their best words. Most did not get any money for their work.
- Explain the word 'translation' by doing some instant translation. It does not matter what language is used. There were already some English Bibles, but this was to be a new translation.

- Option – If you have not already used some of the Biblical languages information, presentation or activities you might like to use some of them here. See the section *Alphabets and languages*.
- As the translators finished each part they read it out loud to each other, so that they could hear what it sounded like and check for mistakes. Finally the whole Bible was finished and it was ready to print.
- In those days there were no computers. The old printers used lots of separate letters to make up the sentences. To make a whole Bible they needed millions of letters! They divided up the jobs:



King James I of England/VI of Scotland by Paulus van Somer

One person would put all the letters together to make the words on a page.

Others would cover them with ink.

The blank paper was placed on the printing press.

The letter tray was placed in the press.

The lever was pulled and the page printed.

When the page was printed a 'reading boy' would read the page.

Others would listen and check for any mistakes.

- Pupils can enact this process with some letter printing sticks. Individual letter stamps are available on-line. Alternatively improvise safe ways of using cut out letters to print.

One group put the letters together to make the word 'Jesus'.

The next group dab them with paint.

The next group print the word.

The rest read the word.

The final group check the word.

Imagine printing a whole Bible this way!

Show a King James Bible and how many words there are in it.

2. Exploring the words of Psalm 23 (slides 8 – 9)

Explore what a shepherd does using role play.

The English of the King James Bible sounds a little strange to us as it is the way English was spoken over 400 years ago. For example, instead of saying 'lead' they used to say 'leadeth' and instead of saying 'make' they said 'maketh'.

The LORD is my shepherd; *I shall not want.*

He *maketh* me to lie down in green *pastures*:

he *leadeth* me beside the still waters.

'*I shall not want*' means I will not need anything because I will be looked after.

'*Maketh*' means 'makes'

'*Leadeth*' means 'lead'

'*Pastures*' is the old word for 'green fields'



Caxton showing the First Specimen of His Printing to King Edward IV at the Almonry, Westminster. By Daniel Maclise

- The words liken God to a good shepherd who looks after his sheep.
- Christians often read this part of the Bible because it reminds them that God cares about people and looks after them like a good shepherd looks after his sheep.
- Use an enlarged **Outline of sheep**. Pupils can write words from the psalm on strips of paper. The strips of paper can then be curled and added to the sheep.
- The words of Psalm 23 and other parts of the Bible are very important to Christians for these words tell them something about God and their friendship with God.

Note for teachers

This is known as a 'psalm of David'. This is the same David that fought Goliath. David was a harp player and a shepherd in his early years. The psalms are poems that were probably sung in early Jewish worship. They are still used in worship by Christians and Jews. Many people will know this psalm as the theme music for the Vicar of Dibley. Jewish shepherds led sheep from the front; they did not drive them or use dogs.

Reflection/Celebration

Sometimes we remember helpful or important words for a very long time and think about them. Do pupils have helpful, important words that they think about?

If appropriate, have a Bible birthday party. It could be something that you organise with your local church. See **Designing a celebration** for ideas.

