

The King James Bible

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

Introduction

Introduce the idea of birthdays and anniversaries. Talk about how we celebrate. You may wish to bring in some birthday/anniversary balloons, cards and related items. Explain that this year is the birthday/anniversary of the King James Bible, an early and important Bible in English. The Bible is a very important book for the Christians.



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

Core material

1. Use the presentation *Making the King James Bible*

Use as much as is appropriate.

- Explain that in 1611, King James I of England (James VI of Scotland) asked a group of the best translators in the country to translate the Bible into English. 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**.
- About 50 men divided into six teams to translate the Bible. Each team took a part of the Bible to translate from Hebrew and Greek into English. The Bible is the sacred book of the Christians, so the translators worked with great care. The translators cared about getting the right words and it sounding good when read aloud. 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.

To translate the whole Bible took over five years. Most translators were not paid and many are not remembered. They viewed the Bible as the most important book in the world, and to be asked to work on it was a privilege. Their behaviour tells us something about how Christians view the Bible. The King James Bible stands as a memorial to their hard work.

- Eventually the translation was finished and it was ready to print. In those days there were no computers with printers. The old printers used lots of separate letters to make up the sentences. To make a whole Bible they needed millions of letters! There were different stages in the process:



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

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.

- In groups, pupils can enact this process with some letter printing sticks. Individual letter stamps are available on-line. Alternatively pupils can improvise safe ways of using cut out letters to print. Print just a little from the psalm in the following activity.

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

Use verses 1-4 of the Psalm from the presentation ***Making the King James Bible*** slide 6. 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'. Explore what the words mean using the presentation. Where you can roll over to see explanations of words.

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.

He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake.

Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.



- What do pupils notice about this?
- What questions would they want to ask?
- What is different to the English they use?
- Explain what a shepherd is and any unusual words
- Using an IWB ask pupils to locate words that sound different or unusual
- Annotate with the modern equivalents.

'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'

'Restoreth my soul' – fixing things deep down

'Righteousness' – right behaviour and right relationships. Justice.

'Valley of the shadow of death' – sad or difficult times

'Yea' – Yes

'Thou' – you

'Art' – are

'Thy' – your

'Rod and staff' – symbols of protection.

These are carried by shepherds to protect 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 relationship with God. A Christian might say these words to themselves or together as a group to remind them of what God is like: he is like a shepherd who cares for his sheep and he walks with them in the saddest of times.
- Pupils can annotate the Psalm using the **Psalm 23**
- The psalm can be re-written in the pupils' own words to bring out the meaning.
- Pupils can use the **Outline of a sheep**. Words or phrases from the Psalm can be written on strips of paper. On the reverse of the strips pupils write what those words mean. The strips are curled and added to the sheep.

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

Play some thoughtful music and ask pupils to think about how they would behave with people in difficult times.

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

