

## The King James Bible

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

### Introduction

Introduce the idea of anniversaries. Talk about how these are celebrated. You may wish to bring in some anniversary balloons, cards and related items. Explain that this year is the anniversary of a book called the King James Bible. The Bible is the sacred book of the Christians.

### 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 **Alphabets and Languages** presentation or activities you might like to use some of them here.

- 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, keeping close to the original manuscripts. They wanted their Bible to be accurate and also to read well. 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:

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 some of the words of 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.



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

## 2. Exploring the words of Psalm 23

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 *Making the King James Bible*. Roll over to see explanations of words. Verses 5-6 are not provided; pupils can look these up in a King James Bible or an on-line Bible such as [www.biblegateway.com](http://www.biblegateway.com)

### Psalm 23:1-6

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.  
Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over.  
Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the LORD for ever.

'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 and right relationships. A way of justice.

'Yea' – Yes

'Thou' – you

'Art' – are

'Thy' – your

'Rod and staff' – symbols of protection.

These were carried by shepherds to defend the sheep.



'Prepares a table' – sharing a meal, an image of joy and friendship

'Anoint my head with oil' –

'My cup runneth over' – the cup of life is full to overflowing

- What do pupils notice about this?
- Explain what a shepherd is and any unusual words.
- What is different to the English they use?
- Using an IWB ask pupils to locate words that sound different or unusual.
- Roll over to discover meanings after pupils have made suggestions.
- Annotate with the modern equivalents suggested by the pupils.
- Pupils can annotate the Psalm and write it in their own words.
- What do they think this psalm is saying?
- What does it mean? What is its message for Christians?
- These words are often used by Christians today to echo their own

experiences. Use the 'email a believer' facility to find out how Christians apply this psalm to life at <http://pof.reonline.org.uk/emailproject/index.php>

- The words liken God to a good shepherd who looks after his sheep, walking with them in the saddest of times. The final lines are an image of a feast, a symbol of friendship, and the emphasis is on being with God. 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. 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 him. A Christian might say these words to themselves or together as a group to remind them of what God is like.
- Pupils can create banners or posters of selected verses from the psalm. This can be done on the computer with text and image working together. An explanation of designs can be written

#### 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

Psalm 23 uses the image of a cup for life. The writer says his cup is full and overflowing – he has a lot to be thankful for. Using the **Cup outline** ask pupils to write inside some things they are thankful for.

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

