

RESOURCES FOR TEACHERS

Teaching the Christmas Story

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RESOURCES FOR TEACHERS TITLES

Teaching the Christmas Story

Teaching Jesus of Nazareth

Teaching the Easter Story



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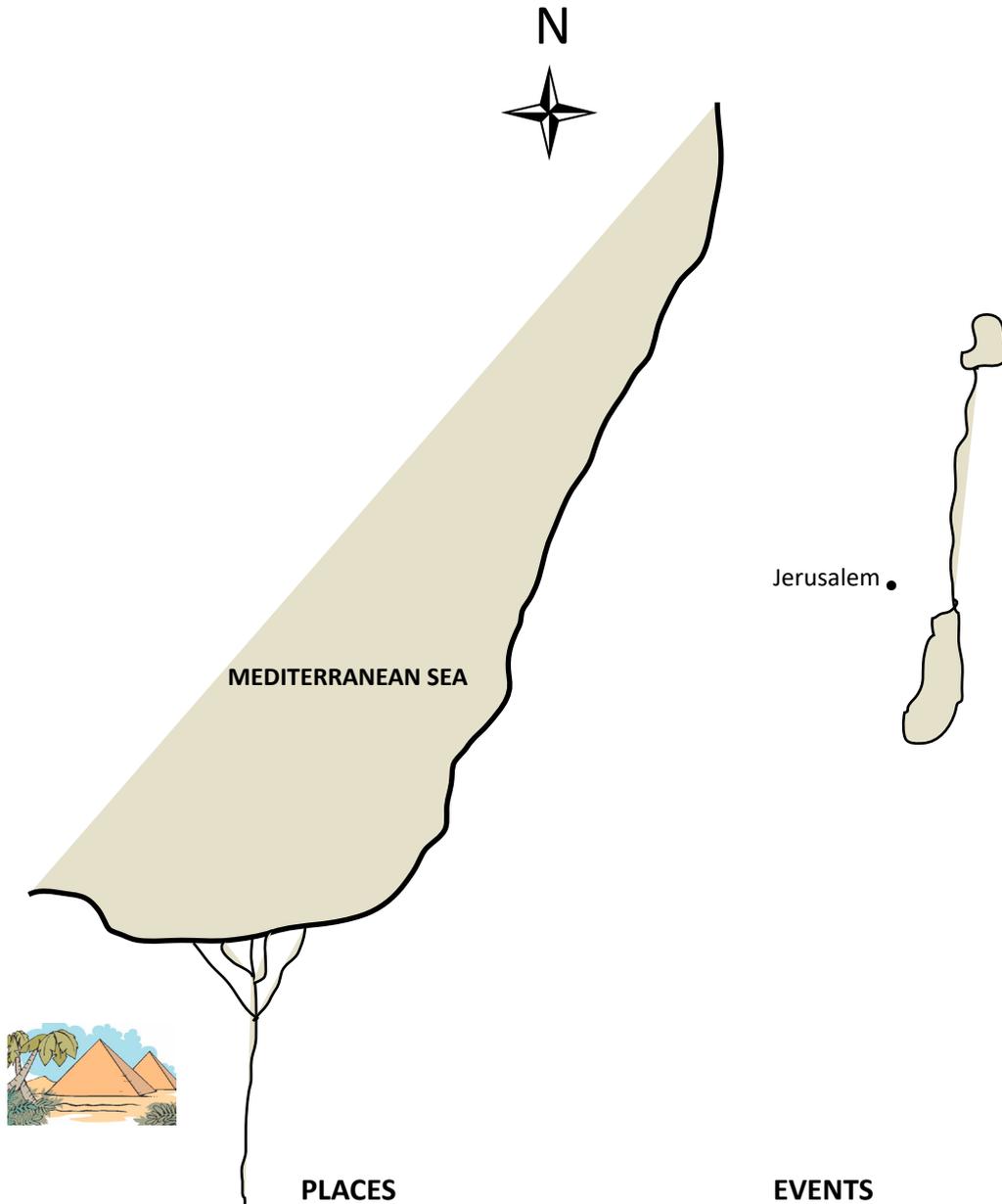
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Story Map: Matthew's Infancy Story

Make a map of the people, places and events mentioned in Matthew's story of the birth and infancy of Jesus. Consult Matthew 1-2 and Google Maps to help make your story map. Begin this activity by making a list of the people, places and events in Matthew's story. Mark these on the map. Draw the route of the family's journey.



PEOPLE

PLACES

EVENTS

Activities Using Word Cards

Word cards can be used to develop and build students' vocabulary concerning the stories of the birth and infancy of Jesus as recorded in the first two chapters of the gospels of Matthew and Luke. Teachers can display the word cards in the classroom. Students can search the gospel stories, identify words, design and illustrate individual word cards to add to the list. Students can use the word cards to sequence and/or recount the nativity stories in Matthew and Luke.

DRAW FROM A HAT

Draw a word card from a hat. Use the word in a sentence.

SPELLING BEE

Place word cards in a hat. Draw out cards one at a time and ask the class to spell the word. The traditional spelling bee format can be conducted in a range of formats. Students can write down their words on paper; they can be invited to stand in their place and spell the word out loud.

CONCENTRATION

Make two sets of topic words. Write the words onto separate cards, so that there are two cards for every word. Shuffle the cards and lay them out face down on the table. In turn, students turn over two cards in order to find matching pairs of words. If they find a successful match, they remove the matching pair from the table. The game continues until all cards are successfully matched. The winner is the one with the most matching pairs of word cards.

CHARADES

Students can mime people, themes and events using the popular parlour game format.

JUMBLE WORDS

Students create word jumbles associated with clues that can be used to unscramble the words. For example: hmltbeehe (Village near Jerusalem); rdpsheshe (They came to visit the baby Jesus).

SCRAMBLE

Work in groups of four or five. Choose and display three or four topic words. Against the clock, (one or two minutes) students must write down as many new words from the letters contained in these words. Words are worth two points each, but only one point if someone else has the same word. The winner is the one with the most points after the appointed number of rounds.

TONGUE TWISTERS

Create tongue-twisters. For guidance go to: www.poetry4kids.com/news/how-to-write-a-tongue-twister/ Students can invite their classmates to say their tongue twisters out loud. Students vote on the most creative tongue twister.

Ten Activities to Teach the Infancy Narratives

MAGI IN ART

Research images of the magi in artworks across the centuries. Analyse and evaluate these artworks in relation to the account of the magi in chapter 2 of Matthew's gospel. What details are included in the artwork that are not mentioned in Matthew? What role has the artist assigned to the magi in the story of Jesus?

GOLD, FRANKINCENSE AND MYRRH

Research the significance of these elements in the ancient world. What does Matthew say about them? For whom were they intended? Why? What form did they take? Was the gold in the form of jewellery, coins, bars? What was myrrh and why might it be an appropriate gift for a new mother?

COMPARE AND CONTRAST

Compare and contrast the story of Jesus' birth and infancy in Matthew with the account in Luke. Identify and state common elements and those particular to either gospel. Invite students to give reasons for the differences and the implications of those differences for celebrations of Christmas.

FINDING JOSEPH

Joseph appears in the gospels of Matthew and Luke only in the infancy narratives and does not appear beyond this in any other gospels. While he is mentioned in other places, he does not appear personally in the story of Jesus and his public ministry. Find out more about Joseph - what does the gospel tradition tell us about him? What elements of his story have been added by the Christian tradition? What might have happened to Joseph after Jesus' birth?

CHRISTMAS GREETINGS

Imagine you have been invited to write a brief passage on "the true meaning of Christmas" for their local community: school newsletter, butcher shop window, Neighbourhood Watch newsletter, Parish bulletin or other organisation.

GENEALOGIES

Students can review the genealogy of Jesus in Matthew's gospel. Which of these characters can be found in the Hebrew bible? What qualities and characteristics do they introduce into the family story of Jesus? Students can research the role and significance of genealogies today. What value is there in a family tree?

ALTERNATIVE ENDINGS

Write alternative endings for events: the magi do not return to their home country.... The shepherds ignore reports of Jesus' birth and instead..... Joseph ignores the angel and, instead of Egypt, takes his family to.....

BIRTH NOTICE

Write a birth notice for Jesus to be placed in the *Jerusalem Times*. Imagine that other people in the infancy narratives had placed birth notices. Write their notices: King Herod, Joseph, magi, shepherds...

RESEARCH CHRISTMAS TRADITIONS

Research the way the birth and infancy of Jesus of Nazareth has been celebrated in different cultures.

COMPOSE A CAROL

Compose a Christmas carol focusing on one element of the gospel account of the birth and infancy of Jesus. For example, the *Carol of the Magi*, or the *Carol of the Bright Star*.

Pick the Odd One Out

Create several packs of four cards each, similar to those below. Write one sentence on each card. Three sentences should be about the topic and based on facts in the stories students have been studying. One sentence should be off the topic.

Divide students into groups of four. Players select a pack of four cards. One card is dealt to each student. Each player reads their card to the others. The player who believes their card is the odd one out, announces this to the group. If everyone agrees, the player with that card gets all the other cards. The game progresses with the next set of cards. The winner at the end of the rounds is the one with the most cards.

Use a different colour card for each set of cards to make it easy to sort cards at the end of the game. Invite students to create their own set of four cards to play with their classmates.

Magi from the east visited Jesus.
King Herod visited Jesus. ☆
Shepherds visited Jesus.
An angel appeared to Joseph.

Mary wrapped Jesus in bands of cloth.
Mary laid Jesus in a manger.
There was no room for the family at the inn.
☆ Jesus was born in Jerusalem.

Mary and Joseph took Jesus to Egypt.
Mary and Joseph took Jesus to Nazareth.
Mary and Joseph took Jesus to Rome. ☆
Mary and Joseph took Jesus to the Temple.

Mary visited Elizabeth.
☆ Joseph visited the shepherds in the fields.
The magi from the east visited Jesus.
An angel visited the shepherds.

Draw and Write

Draw a picture of the story of Jesus' birth and childhood that you have read about. Give your picture a label. Write about it on the lines below.



TITLE: _____

CrissCross: Infancy Narratives

inn
magi
Mary
Mary
gold
star
Luke
Herod
myrrh
Jesus
flock
birth
manger
census
temple
Joseph
Matthew
shepherd

The crossword puzzle grid consists of the following words and their positions:

- inn (10 letters, horizontal)
- magi (4 letters, horizontal)
- Mary (5 letters, vertical)
- Mary (5 letters, vertical)
- gold (4 letters, horizontal)
- star (4 letters, horizontal)
- Luke (4 letters, horizontal)
- Herod (5 letters, horizontal)
- myrrh (6 letters, horizontal)
- Jesus (5 letters, horizontal)
- flock (5 letters, horizontal)
- birth (5 letters, horizontal)
- manger (7 letters, horizontal)
- census (7 letters, horizontal)
- temple (7 letters, horizontal)
- Joseph (8 letters, horizontal)
- Matthew (8 letters, horizontal)
- shepherd (9 letters, horizontal)

The letter 'A' is located in the 5th row, 10th column of the grid.



Folding List Chart - The Baby Jesus



on the reverse side of the flap, draw a picture or create an icon that identifies an idea or element in the story of the birth and infancy of Jesus.

1. Cut out the folding list chart around the outside.
2. Next, make six flaps by cutting along the line as far as the dotted, folding line.
3. Fold the flaps over left to right along the dotted line to cover the boxes.
4. On the reverse side of the flap draw or create an icon for an aspect of your topic.
5. In the box, write the name of the idea, theme or aspect of the topic.
6. To the right of each box, write a description or definition of the element or idea.

Analysing Christmas Carols

Review Christmas carols using the questions below. What do carols say about the gospel stories of Jesus' birth?

Hark the herald angels sing
 "Glory to the newborn King!
 Peace on earth and mercy mild
 God and sinners reconciled"
 Joyful, all ye nations rise
 Join the triumph of the skies
 With the angelic host proclaim:
 "Christ is born in Bethlehem"
 Hark! The herald angels sing
 "Glory to the newborn King!"

Christ by highest heav'n adored
 Christ the everlasting Lord!
 Late in time behold Him come
 Offspring of a Virgin's womb
 Veiled in flesh the Godhead see
 Hail the incarnate Deity
 Pleas'd as man with man to dwell
 Jesus, our Emmanuel

Hail the heav'n-born Prince of Peace!
 Hail the Son of Righteousness!
 Light and life to all He brings
 Ris'n with healing in His wings
 Mild He lays His glory by
 Born that man no more may die
 Born to raise the sons of earth
 Born to give them second birth

Away in a manger,
 No crib for His bed
 The little Lord Jesus
 Laid down His sweet head

The stars in the bright sky
 Looked down where He lay
 The little Lord Jesus
 Asleep on the hay

The cattle are lowing
 The poor Baby wakes
 But little Lord Jesus
 No crying He makes

I love Thee, Lord Jesus
 Look down from the sky
 And stay by my side,
 'Til morning is nigh.

Be near me, Lord Jesus,
 I ask Thee to stay
 Close by me forever
 And love me I pray

Bless all the dear children
 In Thy tender care
 And take us to heaven
 To live with Thee there

Silent night, holy night
 All is calm, all is bright
 Round yon Virgin Mother and Child
 Holy Infant so tender and mild
 Sleep in heavenly peace
 Sleep in heavenly peace

Silent night, holy night!
 Shepherds quake at the sight
 Glories stream from heaven afar
 Heavenly hosts sing Alleluia!
 Christ, the Saviour is born
 Christ, the Saviour is born

Silent night, holy night
 Son of God, love's pure light
 Radiant beams from Thy holy face
 With the dawn of redeeming grace
 Jesus, Lord, at Thy birth
 Jesus, Lord, at Thy birth "

	HARK THE HERALD ANGELS	AWAY IN A MANGER	SILENT NIGHT
What image/s of Jesus is conveyed?			
Which gospel is the carol based on: Matthew or Luke, or neither?			
What does the author want to tell us about Jesus?			
Are there any elements in the carol not in the gospels?			
What is the main theme of the carol?			

Using Christmas Cards to Teach the Infancy Narratives

The giving and receiving of Christmas cards began in England in the 1840s, prompted by the invention of the “penny post”. The first cards were produced by commercial publishers and usually pictured biblical nativity scenes. Soon, general winter themes were common. By the 1920s, hand-made cards became popular that included the use of materials such as ribbon and silver foil. In Denmark in the 1900s, a postal worker thought the sending of cards could assist charities to raise money. Now, millions of dollars are raised each year by charities selling cards. Today, cards come in all shapes and sizes, including printed and digital. They present pictures of Santa Claus, snowmen and reindeer, Christmas decorations, holly and candles, jokes, religious scenes, romantic images from bygone times and abstract graphic images.

CHRISTMAS CARDS ANALYSIS

Collect a range of Christmas cards that feature nativity scenes. Ask students to compare the scene on each card with the story in Matthew and Luke. What features of the card have been added to the biblical accounts? Which scene is more fully represented on the card, Matthew or Luke? What meanings do the cards convey? How appropriately has the artist represented the gospel account?

CHRISTMAS CARD SORT

Assign students in small groups a collection of Christmas cards. They must decide which group each card will be placed:

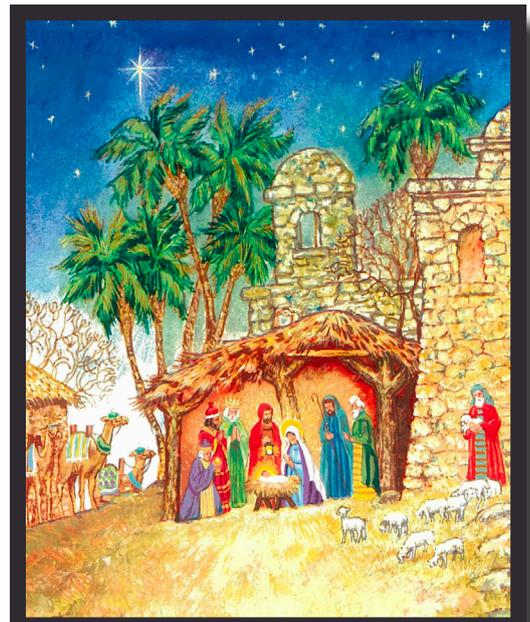
- Group 1 - Matthew’s gospel;
- Group 2 - Luke’s gospel;
- Group 3 - A mixture of elements from Luke and Matthew;
- Group 4 - Not based on the gospels.

DESIGN A CHRISTMAS CARD

Assign students the task of creating their own Christmas card, based on either the gospel of Matthew or the gospel of Luke. Include a selection of an appropriate gospel text in the design.

DEBATE

Conduct a class debate on the topic: “That Christmas cards have lost their meaning.” Students will require some time to research the development of the tradition of giving and receiving cards. They may also need to present images on a PowerPoint to support their arguments.



Spot the Difference

In the first box, draw what you imagine the scene was like at the birth of Jesus. After reading Matthew or Luke's account, draw your new understanding of this scene in the second box. List the differences between the drawings or ask a partner to spot the differences.

Drawing 1: Before Reading the Gospel of _____	Drawing 2: After Reading the Gospel

What are the differences?

THE BOOK

Teaching the Christmas Story has been written to support teachers in planning and teaching their classroom programs focused on the gospel Infancy Narratives.

This book combines practical, classroom-ready resources with comprehensive background information for teachers on all aspects of the gospel stories of the birth and infancy of Jesus of Nazareth.

A wide range of resources is included in this collection for immediate use in classrooms. In addition, copious teaching and learning activities are described that assist teachers to create engaging presentations for their students.

All teacher background discussions, guidance for students, and teaching and learning materials are expressed in clear, uncomplicated language.

The aim of this book is to provide teachers across all year levels with resources they can select, adapt and readily implement in their classroom programs.

THE AUTHORS

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