

Christmas Journeys: Talk and Story

Introduction (10 mins)

Today we are going to hear the Christmas story, and we are also going to be thinking about journeys. Today all of you have journeyed to school. How did you get to school today? Hands up who walked? Who cycled? Got the bus? Scooter? Car? Helicopter?! Any other ways? How did you feel when you got here? Tired feet? Worn out, or fresh and ready for the day, energised?

Show different shoes (from a bag/box) - what journey or place would someone be going to wearing these shoes?

Flip flops - beach

Wellies - muddy dog walk

Trainers - a run

Sandals - a party

School shoes - school

Slippers - home to bed

Snow boots - somewhere cold

You can often tell a lot about a person's journey from what shoes they are wearing. Your journey to school is something you do nearly everyday and is very familiar to you. Today we are going to hear the Christmas Story and think about some very special journeys that were made over 2000 years ago.

The Christmas Story (15 mins)

You will need 5 volunteers happy to dress up as MARY & JOSEPH, an ANGEL, a SHEPHERD and a WISE MAN (at least 5 - could have more shepherds/wise men!)

Narrator: 2020 years ago, the Roman Emperor Caesar Augustus made a new law which made every person return to their hometown of birth to be counted. Mary and Joseph had to travel from Nazareth to Bethlehem (point to map) to put their names on the list. It was quite a journey. Mary was heavily pregnant, expecting a baby! Here are Mary and Joseph now, let's find out about their journey.

Mary and Joseph's Journey

Google maps shows the journey from Nazareth to Bethlehem as 97.4 miles and walking it today would take 33 hours non-stop!

Mary & Joseph would have walked the journey over a few days. But it would have been very hot and dusty. (*Get children to mop their brows!*)

Mary was heavily pregnant - how do you think she would've felt? *Tired, weary, sore feet.*

We always think of Mary riding a donkey. However, this isn't mentioned in the bible, although I like to think she did, but even that would've been a very bumpy ride.

When they arrived in Bethlehem, the time came for the baby to be born. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger because there was no room for them in the inn. Mary and Joseph named the baby boy Jesus, the name the angel had given him before he had been conceived.

Narrator: In **Heaven** (point to the map), God had given an Angel called Gabriel an important job to do. Let's find out what he had to do.

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Angel's Journey

Gabriel visited Mary in Nazareth, and then later appeared to Joseph in a dream telling them both that God had found favour with them, that they would give birth to God's son and they were to give him the name Jesus.

Angel Gabriel and a whole host of angels then had the job of appearing to the Shepherds in the fields overlooking Bethlehem.

Gabriel said to them, *"Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. Today in the town of David a Saviour has been born to you: he is Christ the Lord. You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger."*

The angels went away back into heaven. So perhaps they flew? Or maybe they were transported?

Narrator: The shepherds were busy guarding their sheep at night. Can you imagine their surprise? They were the first to hear the good news. Let's hear what they did next and how they got from their **Hillside** (point to map) down to the little town of Bethlehem.

The Shepherds' Journey

The bible says after the angels had left them, the shepherds said to one another, "Let's go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened." They hurried off down from the hill, excited to see what the angels had told them, and found Mary and Joseph and the baby. T

hey told everyone what had been told to them about this child and all who heard were amazed at what the shepherds said to them. The shepherds went back to work singing praises to God for all they had seen.

Narrator: Far away in **The East** (point to map), Wise Men had been looking at the night sky. A bright star shone back at them which they understood to be a message that a new king had been born.

They all agreed that they should go and look for the new king. Let's hear about their journey now.

The Wise Men's Journey

The wise men saw the star in the East and initially they travelled to Jerusalem to see King Herod, because they thought a new king would be born in a palace. This wasn't the case and so after seeing Herod they went on their way.

The star they had seen in the East went ahead of them until it stopped over the place where the child was. The bible says, *"When they saw the child, they bowed down and worshipped him. Then they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts of gold, of frankincense and of myrrh."*

Having been warned in a dream not to go back to Herod, they returned to their country by another route.

Narrator: **Mary** and **Joseph**, **Angel Gabriel**, the **shepherds** and the **Wise Men** all had very different journeys. But they all ended up in Bethlehem, each of them trusting in God's love and care.

Today travel is not quite the same but as we approach Christmas this year, we have an opportunity to think and reflect on our own journey alongside each of these characters, as we too hear the good news of Jesus' birth.

Christmas Journeys: Talk and Story

(75-90 minutes)

Christmas Story Game

You need the Christmas Journeys game board. Answer the questions and do the actions!

For 4 players or teams. What questions or activities would you add to the game?

Christmas Card Sorting

You need a variety of cards, cut in half.

Find the two halves of the Christmas cards and put them together. What does each card show?

Sort the cards into groups and name each group. How have you sorted them and why?

Some cards have Christian pictures/symbols and some have not religious/Christian (secular) ones.

What would you put on a Christmas card to show what Christmas means to you?

Journeys

Draw round your feet on **A4 paper**. In one outline, draw and write about the journey of your favourite person from the Christmas story. Where did they start from and where did they go to? In the other, draw and write about your favourite journey. Where did you go to? How did you feel?

Everyone's journey is different

Postcards

Imagine you are one of the people in the Christmas story: Mary, Joseph, shepherd, wise person, angel. Write a **postcard** about your journey. What was the journey like? What did you see? How did you feel?

Gifts

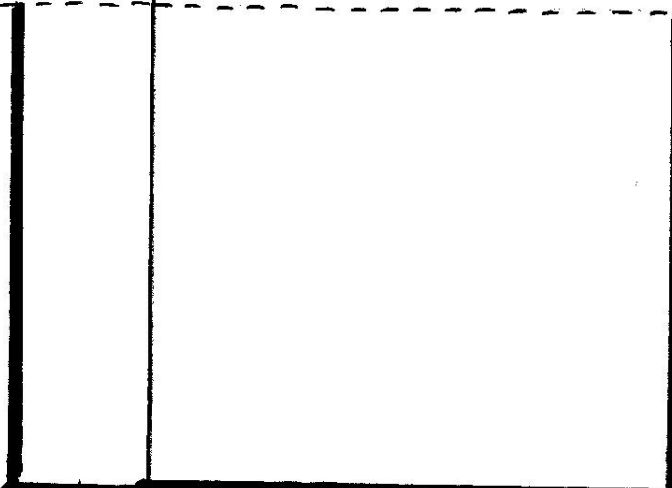
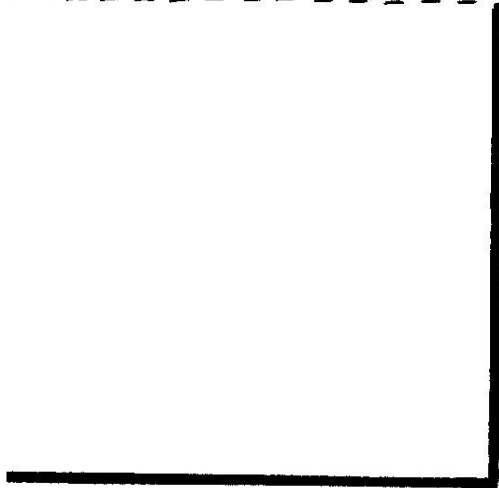
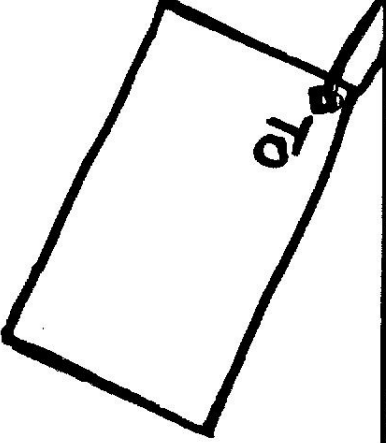
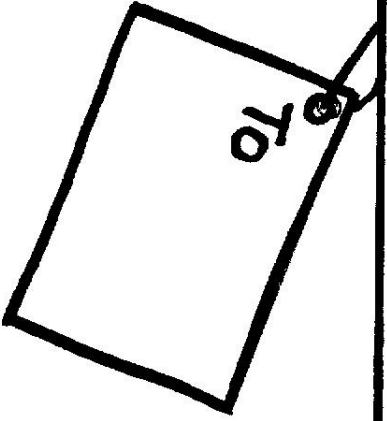
Why do we give gifts at Christmas? Wise Men brought gifts - "They went into the house, and when they saw the child with his mother Mary, they knelt down and worshipped him. They brought out their gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh, and presented them to him."

Also, Christians believe Jesus was God's gift to the world.

What would you give if you could give anything? It doesn't have to be an object, it could be a hug, help, peace, no more hunger, health... Who would you give it to?

Create own 'gift'. (**See template**) Fold in the two edges, along the dotted fold lines. Fill in 'To' on the outside and write on the inside 'My gift is..'

What can you do to give to others at Christmas? There are many charities with Christmas appeals - Salvation Army, Shelter, Crisis, Food Bank



Start

A

The Christmas Story Game

Mary and Joseph must leave Nazareth and travel to Bethlehem

1 Why did Mary and Joseph travel to Bethlehem?

2 and pretend to give Simon a gift

3 a. What were the three gifts?

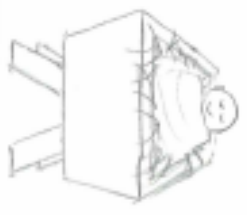
4 Why was Herod angry about Jesus?

5 What were the three gifts?

6 What were the three gifts?

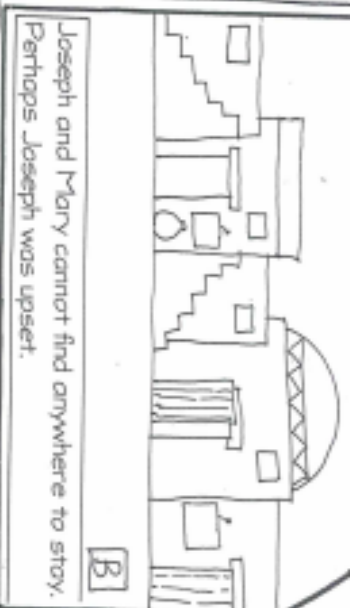
7 Some shepherds arrive at Bethlehem. They say they have seen an angel who told them to look for the baby. The angels told them that this baby was very special.

8 Mary needs to stop for a rest. MISS A GO GO



Mary has her first baby in a place where they feed animals. She puts the baby in a feeding box. It is not a very nice place.

9 NO ROOM GO BACK TO THE STABLE!



Joseph and Mary cannot find anywhere to stay. Perhaps Joseph was upset.

10 Why were the men sad?

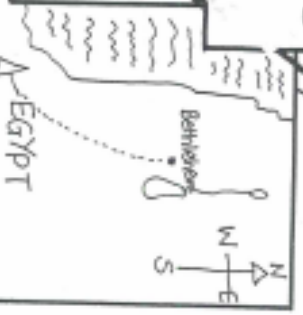
After a while some wise men arrive from a long way away. They have come to look for a special baby. They bring expensive gifts for Jesus.



11 Show your respect to the birth of Jesus!

Finish

Herod is very angry and tries to kill the baby, but Joseph had already taken Mary and Jesus away from Bethlehem.



For correct answers - move forward 2 spaces
For incorrect answers - move back 1 space

Same outcomes for actions

Christmas Journeys: Reflection

Respond and Reflect (20 mins)

Which activity did you enjoy the most and why?

What did you learn that you didn't know before?

Which person did you have the most empathy with? Why?

All the people in the Christmas story went on a journey which changed them, and they were not the same again because of what they saw or what they felt. And what changed them all was that they met with Jesus.

You might have to take a journey this Christmas, maybe just round the corner, maybe on a long car journey, maybe to another country. I wonder how you will feel when you are on that journey and how you will feel afterwards.

We're also on a journey right now, our journeys through life. Our journeys are all different and sometimes they will be easy and sometimes they will be hard. Christians believe that wherever they journey, Jesus will be with them and will be part of that journey. I wonder where your journey will take you? I wonder what you will see and who you will meet along the way?

Prayer

Dear God,

Thank you for the gift of Jesus. Thank you that you will be with us on our journeys, and that however we get there, along many different paths, we will reach where we want to go and are meant to be. We think about those who will have a difficult time this Christmas and thank you for the many people who give their time, effort and money to help make it better.

Amen