

A Journey through Christmas

Story

Resources:

white cloth, nativity set - figures of Mary, Joseph, donkey, baby, cow, shepherd, sheep, angel, and wise men, stable, manger, plus gold box for baby, battery candle, star, King Herod figure, scroll, sword, pyramid

Lay out a white story cloth. Present the Mary and Joseph figures and place them on a cloth near you to your left.

Here are the mother Mary and the father Joseph. Mary was about to have a baby, but they had to set off on a journey; they had no choice. They had to go to Bethlehem to be counted by the Roman soldiers. It would take them a week to travel there from their home in Nazareth. It wasn't an easy journey, but it was a journey that changed everything.

Present the donkey. Move it with the Mary and Joseph figures down the side to the front

Here is the donkey. It is difficult to walk far when you are about to have a baby, so Mary rode on the donkey. But it is also quite uncomfortable to ride on a donkey. So sometimes Mary rode, and sometimes she walked.

Move the figures to the centre. Place the stable behind/over them, and the manger in front of them.

When they arrived in Bethlehem Joseph was very worried. He knew that Mary's baby could be born at any moment, and there was no room for them to stay. Joseph feared that they might have to sleep out on the streets, homeless. But finally they were able to take shelter with the animals.

Reveal the small gold box

I have got a Christmas present here.

Christians believe that what is in here is the most important present ever.

Who would like to look inside? What is it? A baby. During the night Mary's baby was born. Here he is - the Christ Child. God's Son - God's present to the world. Look - he is holding out his arms to give everyone a hug.

Christians believe that when Jesus was born, everything changed. Nothing would ever be the same again. It all starts with this one tiny new-born baby.

Shall we put him in the stable?

Place the baby in the manger

How can anything so small be so important?

Everything changed for those who came to see the baby Jesus.

Switch on a battery candle and place it beside the stable

The people who walked in darkness saw a great light.

Present the ox and place it by the manger

Here is the cow that slept in the stable. She was so amazed that morning!

When she came to the feed box to eat, she found a baby lying in the manger. Someone had put a soft cover over the hay. The manger had become a bed for a baby. The old cow looked at the baby with her big brown eyes. She didn't mind missing her breakfast!



A Journey through Christmas

Present the shepherds and sheep and place them on the side of the cloth to your left

Here is one of the shepherds, and some of the sheep. In those days shepherds were the lowest of the low. They lived with the sheep and there wasn't much chance to wash on the hillside. Who wants to go near someone who is dirty and smelly? Most people kept away from them. But they were chosen to be the first ones to hear the good news.

Present the angel and place it by the shepherds

The shepherds were out in the darkness guarding the sheep from the wolves when an angel appeared in a blinding light. The shepherds were terrified! Their hearts were pounding in their chests! But the angel said: "Don't be afraid," (Angels often say that, because it is pretty scary to meet an angel) "I bring good news of great joy". And his message was just for them: "Today your Saviour has been born in Bethlehem; he is Christ the Lord. You will find the baby wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger." Then the sky was filled with angels singing: "Glory to God in the highest. Peace on earth, good will to all people". Imagine what it sounded like to hear the angels singing! What was it like to hear the message that wasn't for the rich or important people, but especially for them?

So the shepherds were chosen by God to be the first ones to visit the Son of God, the Saviour of the world.

Move the shepherds to the centre and place them by the manger

They hurried on their journey to Bethlehem and found the baby lying in the manger – the animals' feed tray – just as the angel had said.

And on their way home they told the good news to everyone they met.

I wonder how many listened to them?

Present the wise men and place them on the side of the cloth to your right near you

Here are the wise men, the three kings, the Magi. They were so wise that they knew where all the stars in the sky should be at each time of year. They saw a star that wasn't on their maps. It moved. They realised it was a sign, so they followed it. They had great wealth and knowledge and power, but they felt empty inside. They knew that there must be something more.

Hold the star over the wise men, then move them together down the edge of the cloth towards the children

They followed the star to foreign lands, where they were strangers. When they arrived in the city of Jerusalem they asked everyone they met where the new-born king was to be found: "We have seen his star in far-off eastern lands and we have come to worship him."

Present King Herod and place him by the wise men

They went to see King Herod in his palace. When they asked about the baby king, King Herod was worried. He wanted to be the only king in the land. "Come and tell me when you find this king," he said. "I would like to go and worship him." But he was not telling the truth!

Move the wise men to the stable

The wise men journeyed on and found the baby king – not in a royal palace, but in a stable with the animals.

They knelt down and worshipped him. As they gazed on him and adored him, they were transformed. They were given a new start.



A Journey through Christmas

Present the three gifts and place them by the manger

They opened up their treasure chests and gave him gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh.

Move the wise men away to the your right

Now, the wise men really were wise. They did not tell Herod about the baby. They went home another way. They were ready for a new kind of life.

'Jump' the Herod figure up and down

But Herod did not forget. He was furious when the wise men did not return. He jumped up and down in rage.

Present the scroll

He asked his scholars to look in the scriptures and find where the king would be born. They told him it was a place called Bethlehem.

Hold up the sword

And Herod sent his soldiers to Bethlehem. The people were powerless to stop them. The soldiers rounded up every baby boy they could find there. It was a terrible thing.

Hold up the angel

But an angel came to Joseph in a dream before the soldiers arrived and told him to take his family to another country, so they fled far away to the land of Egypt.

Place pyramid to your right and move Mary, Joseph, Jesus and donkey over to it.

They were refugees. Who would make them welcome?

Hold up the baby

Here is the baby, the Christ Child, holding out his arms to give everyone a hug. God so loved the world that he sent his only Son, as a gift of love to his people. Who will make him welcome?

Who will welcome the homeless and the outcast, the foreigner and the stranger, the refugee, the powerless?

A Journey through Christmas

Wondering and Activities

Wondering Questions

I wonder which is your favourite part of this story?

I wonder which is the most important part?

I wonder if there is anything you would change?

I wonder which part of this story is just for you today? If you could go back in time, which part would you like to be there for?

Creative Response

- Decorating card cut-outs of symbols from the story (angel, dove, star, crown, heart etc.) with stickers, sparkles and collage bits or with easy-painters.
- Making models out of air dough to represent parts of the story, using Sharpies, beads and gems to decorate them.

Play Response

Using nativity sets and puppets and puzzles to respond to the story.

Prayer Response

Praying for outcasts: wrap a stick in sparkly red wool and think about making rough things soft and gentle, and providing warmth and hope.

Praying for strangers and foreigners: write a message of welcome on a piece of paper, wrap it up with ribbon as a scroll.

Praying for the Homeless: write a prayer on a house template or place a person figure inside a model house.

Praying for the Powerless and those who abuse their power: lay a white stone beside a crown, think how things could change if the powerful used their power to protect others.

Praying for Refugees and the friendless: make a friendship bracelet by threading beads on elastic, think about someone who needs a friend.

Peace: tie a piece of white wool onto a length of chain chicken wire and think about the places where there is fighting, and people are trapped.

Love: make a pattern out of hearts of different sizes, colours and textures and think about love spreading and pushing out hatred.

Joy: sprinkle some angel confetti, give thanks for something joyful in your life and pray that those who are sad and depressed may experience joy.

Hope: place a battery candle on a world map and pray for the places where people feel there is no hope for them.

Multisensory Response

Tasting Christmas: invitation to eat gold chocolate coins (or free-from chocolate wrapped in gold foil) – a gift from the wise men.

Smelling Christmas: bowls of frankincense and myrrh resin.

Seeing the light in the darkness: a dark cloth with torches and LED toys.

Hearing the song of the angels: musical instruments to create a song of peace and joy.

Touching Christmas: a basket of textures from the story (e.g. sandpaper, hessian, fur, wool, satin, cotton, jewelled organza).



A Journey through Christmas

Setting Up A Christmas Story Trail

At each 'stop' on the trail the children will find a story scene to look at, a story label to read, and a basket containing the symbol to collect in a bag, to represent that part of the story. At the end of the trail they will have 20 symbols in their bag, to use to re-tell the story. They could collect a story sheet, or write their own version of the story using the symbols.

1. Scene: Mary and Joseph figures on a strip of felt 'road'

Label: The mother Mary and the father Joseph travelled to Bethlehem to be counted by the Roman soldiers.

The journey was long and hard. There were rough stones underfoot.

To collect: a stone

2. Scene: donkey figure on a strip of felt 'road'

Label: It was nearly time for Mary's baby to be born, so she rode on a donkey when she was too tired to walk.

To collect: a piece of fur

3. Scene: a stable

Label: Joseph was worried when they arrived because there was nowhere to stay. Finally, they were able to take shelter in a stable with the animals.

To collect: an animal sticker or picture

4. Scene: a small gold box wrapped as a present and a baby Jesus figure on some shiny cloth

Label: During the night, Mary's baby was born. Christians believe that at that God gave a present to the world. It was the Christ Child – God's only son.

To collect: a picture of a baby in a manger

5. Scene: a battery candle on dark cloth

Label: God gave light to the dark world and everything changed. Nothing would ever be the same.

To collect: a candle

6. Scene: a cow on some beige cloth

Label: When the old cow came to have her breakfast in the morning she was very surprised!

To collect: a piece of straw

7. Scene: a baby in a manger

Label: the manger, the cow's feeding tray, had become a bed for a new born baby wrapped in swaddling clothes.

To collect: a strip of white cloth

8. Scene: sheep on some green cloth

Label: There were flocks of sheep on the hillside outside Bethlehem.

To collect: some wool

9. Scene: some shepherds on some green cloth

Label: The shepherds lived with the sheep. They were the outcasts - people no one else wanted to know. But they were the first to hear the good news.

To collect: some rough cloth

10. Scene: an angel on some dark cloth

Label: The angel told the shepherds to hurry to Bethlehem to see the baby who would change everything.

To collect: a confetti angel

11. Scene: a flock of angels on some sparkly cloth

Label: Suddenly the sky was filled with heavenly singing, praising God.

To collect: a bell

A Journey through Christmas

12. **Scene:** a globe ball and a dove on some blue cloth

Label: The angels sang of peace on earth for all people, not just the rich and the important.

To collect: a confetti dove

13. **Scene:** a star on some dark cloth

Label: The wise men saw a star that wasn't on their maps. They realised it was a sign, so they followed it to far-off foreign lands.

To collect: a star

14. **Scene:** a crown on some red cloth

Label: The wise men were strangers in Jerusalem. They visited King Herod in his palace, searching for a baby king. Herod asked them to let him know when they found the new king.

To collect: a crown

15. **Scene:** three gifts on some purple cloth

Label: Finally, the star led the wise men to a stable in Bethlehem. They brought gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh.

To collect: a bow

16. **Scene:** wise men and baby on some gold cloth

Label: Their lives were transformed, and they were given a new start.

To collect: a shiny glass stone

17. **Scene:** a scroll

Label: King Herod was angry when the wise men did not return to Jerusalem. He asked his scholars to find where the new king would be born.

To collect: a scroll

18. **Scene:** soldier figures on some dark cloth or toy sword

Label: Herod sent his soldiers to Bethlehem to round up all the baby boys.

To collect: some camouflage cloth

19. **Scene:** a pyramid or a picture on some beige cloth

Label: An angel came to Joseph in a dream, and he and Mary escaped with Jesus to become refugees in Egypt.

To collect: a footprint

20. **Scene:** a heart on some red cloth

Label: God so loved the world that He sent His only Son to be born as a baby in Bethlehem - a gift of love to his people.

To collect: a heart



A Journey through Christmas

The mother Mary and the father Joseph travelled to Bethlehem to be counted by the Roman soldiers. The journey was long and hard. *(stone)*

It was nearly time for Mary's baby to be born, so she rode on the donkey when she was too tired to walk. *(fur)* Joseph was worried when they arrived because there was nowhere to stay. Finally, they were able to take shelter in a stable with the animals. *(animal)*

During the night, Mary's baby was born. Christians believe that at that time God gave a present to the world. It was the Christ Child; God's only son. *(picture of baby)* God gave light to the dark world and everything changed. Nothing would ever be the same. *(candle)*

When the old cow came to have his breakfast in the morning he was very surprised! *(straw)* The manger, the feeding tray, had become a bed for a new born baby wrapped in swaddling clothes. *(white cloth)*

There were flocks of sheep on the hillside outside Bethlehem. *(wool)* The shepherds lived with the sheep. They were the outcasts - people no one else wanted to know. But they were the first to hear the good news. *(rough cloth)* The angel told them to hurry to Bethlehem to see the baby who would change everything. *(angel)* The sky was filled with heavenly singing, praising God. *(bell)*

The angels sang of peace on earth for all people, not just the rich and the important ones. *(dove)*

The wise men saw a star that wasn't on their maps. They realised it was a sign, so they followed it to far-off foreign lands. *(star)* The wise men were strangers when they arrived in Jerusalem. They visited King Herod in his palace, searching for a baby king. Herod asked them to let him know when they found the new king. *(crown)* Finally, the star led the wise men to a stable in Bethlehem. They brought gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh. *(bow)* They knelt down and worshipped the baby. They were transformed, and given a new start. *(shiny stone)*

King Herod was angry when the wise men did not return to Jerusalem. He asked his scholars to find where the new king would be born. *(scroll)* Herod sent his soldiers to Bethlehem to round up all the baby boys. *(camouflage cloth)* An angel came to Joseph in a dream, and he and Mary escaped with Jesus to become refugees in Egypt. *(footprint)*

Christians believe that God so loved the world that he sent his only Son, as a gift of love to his people. Who will make Him welcome? Who will welcome the homeless, the outcasts, the strangers and the refugees? *(heart)*