

Margaret Cooling's 'Story and Drama Toolkit' has some fantastic ideas for teachers to use when exploring Biblical Drama in the classroom. Here are some of Wintershall Education's favourite pages below.

The book is published by the Bible Society and can be purchased online.

TWENTY DRAMA ACTIVITIES

1. Radio phone-in Use the format of a radio phone in to prove a story. E.g. in the story of the cleansing of the Temple, how would people have reacted? Pupils can take the roles of people phoning in or of the presenter or member of the panel.

2. Gossip Pairs of pupils can take on the roles of two characters from a story who talk over what happened in the form of gossip and speculation.

3. Dossiers Meeting can be enacted in which people get together with information they have gathered on a biblical character and create a dossier.

4. Using visitors Invite a Christian actor into school to perform or talk about their work. How do their beliefs affect their work? What role has the Bible to play in their work? Invite a Christian into school to ask how they use drama part of worship.

5. Hot seating After the pupils have performed a piece of biblical drama, one or more characters allow themselves, in character, to be questioned by the group concerning their behaviour.

6. The editor's office Enact a scene in an editor's office in which the reporters come back with various stories. The stories can all be biblical or they can be a mixture of secular and biblical. The editor has to decide what is newsworthy. Each reporter has to make a case for their own story to be included.

7. Colour dance Look at a story and decide on some of the emotions in it. What colours do we associate with those emotions? Pupils might create a colour dance using fabric to express some of the emotions in a story. These can be

done in sequence as a form of storytelling, the dance being performed while the story is read.

8. Pictures and photographs Look at a picture of a biblical story and ask the pupils what is happening what has just happened and what will happen next. Explore the story behind the picture. What is the main issue of the story? Ask pupils to arrange themselves in the same pose as the picture. On a given signal, the pupils can improvise what they think happened next. Compare the pupil's ending with the original.

9. Act of worship or assembly Encourage the pupils to design a series of assemblies each using a piece of drama based on a bible passage. One might include a dramatic reading. Another might involve a short sketch. Add music, bible reading, prayers.

10. Work rhythms Spend time in drama building up work rhythms to become part of a larger drama. It could be slaves making bricks in Egypt or building of the ark.

11. In the circle A short drama can be created on a biblical story (it does not have to be polished) but at a certain point it is halted by the leader or teacher. One of the major characters steps out of the drama and into a circle of people (members of the class not in the drama). The people represent various thoughts and pressures on that character. The people suggest different courses of action, various feelings that need dealing with, and so on. The people around the character speak one at a time. It is up to the character whether to heed their advice or not. After all those who wish to have spoken, the character steps back into the drama and completes it using any advice, ideas they may have gained from the circle.

12. Tapes In class, create a recording of a dramatic reading so that can be played to another class or used in an assembly.

13. Story theatre Divide a story up into different narrative parts. A series of people then become the narrator, but it is very active narration with movement and expression. The narrators change as the main focus of the story changes. The narration of "The prodigal son" (Luke 15:11-31) could be created with three narrators as the scene focuses first on the son, then on the father and finally on the elder brother. It is read as a story not a script.

14. Discussion A small group perform a sketch, then the class is divided into groups to discuss its meaning. Results of these discussions can be recorded and reported back.

15. A day in the life of..... Tell the story of an important biblical character. Ask the pupils to work backwards from a biblical event and forwards after it to create a complete day. The day can then be enacted.

16. Music Select pieces of music to go with a dramatic reading.

17. The coming one Here the whole drama revolves around someone who is about to come but never arrives. It could be the crowd lining the road to Calvary, discussing Jesus, who you never actually see. It could be the crowd on Palm Sunday, or Adam and Eve before God returns to the garden.

18. Sound effects Sound effects can be added to a drama. Pupils can write down appropriate sounds to communicate the mood of a piece of drama.

19. Brainstorming After performing a short piece of biblical drama, brainstorm all the emotions and reactions which occur in the drama. These can be classified into positive and negative reactions.

20. Drama critic Pupils can write an appreciation or critique of a piece of commercial drama. Pupils will need to see examples of reviews first.

THIRTY STORY ACTIVITIES

These activities can be used **once a story has been told**. All the activities below can be used on biblical based stories, but are also applicable to stories in general.

1. Story swapping Two classes are each told a different biblical story. Pupils are then placed in pairs, one from each class, and they retell the story to their partner. Pupils need to know before they hear the story that they will be required to tell it to someone else. This is a good means of remembering the content. It can be combined with other techniques to explore meaning.

2. Retelling Create a display of biblical story books and ask pupils to select one, read a story, and retell it to a partner. Pupils can also retell stories in groups after hearing the teacher tell the story. One person retells the story, the others act as prompt.

3. Visual aids Give pupils a selection of items, or pictures from magazines, which relate to a story, and ask them to retell the story using these. Alternatively, after hearing a Bible story, pupils should decide what the significant points are and select their own visual aids to illustrate these.

4. Incomplete stories Tell the pupils a story from the Bible but miss out a significant part, though the story should still make sense. Give the pupils a written version of the story and ask them to supply the missing part. The pupils have to decide what difference the missing part makes to the story.

5. Focus on the main issue in a story Pupils can then research that issue and set up a debate on it.

For example, pupils might listen to a story about Jesus healing on the Sabbath. Work could then be done about the role of the 'sabbath' today.

6. Taped stories Listen to a recorded telling of a bible story. Ask the pupils to listen to tone, volume, characterisation and so on. How does the reader make the story interesting? Many biblical stories can be turned into audio books. Pupils can take the parts of different characters and use sound effects and music with their story. Attention should be paid to expression and meaning, as well as to getting the details correct

7. Using visitors Invite a Christian writer or storyteller into school to read or tell their own stories, or invite a Christian into school to read a biblical story which is important to them. Pupils can question the visitor on what they like particular stories.

8. Mask work Ask pupils to listen very carefully to a story and to write down the range of emotions involved. Pupils can then create masks reflecting those emotions, which can be used in dance or the retelling of the story.

9. Beginning, middle and end Divide the class into three. Tell one group the beginning of the story, one group the end and one group the middle. Pupils then get together in threes, one from each group, to create the whole story in the correct sequence.

10. Pictures from stories Pupils can draw pictures from stories. Many stories are visual and create images in the mind: these can be translated into pictures, or pupils can focus on one image or on a character. It is best to focus on one moment in a story: Jesus praying in the Garden of Gethsemane, the stone being rolled away from the tomb. These pictures can be used to illustrate a biblical story, but should be far more than drawing a picture; they should try to capture the mood, meaning and images.

11. The story circle In a circle, the pupils have to retell a story they have just heard, each person taking up where the other left off. The story can proceed in a given direction, or an object can be

passed around, and anyone who has the object such as a knitted toy or foam ball is used, this can be thrown across the circle to the person who has to carry on the story. As with many storytelling techniques, this helps pupils recall the events and sequence of the story. Once pupils are familiar with the story, other techniques can be used to explore meaning.

12. Pause Button Tell a story and when it is finished ask the pupils to imagine the story as a film clip. Ask them to press the pause button at a suitable point. They should try and see with their minds eye the scene they have frozen, noting the details. The details can then be described verbally to a partner who is allowed to question them about details from the scene. This technique can be used on many stories. It helps pupils to explore a story in detail, looking for people's expressions and reactions as well as the external events. Do not use this technique on stories about death.

13. Dramatic readings Stories can be read dramatically, in costume if desired.

14. One or two-minute stories Once pupils have heard a story, they should decide what the meaning and main elements are. They have to be able to retell it covering all the main elements and summing up the meaning in one or two minutes, depending on the story. The restrictions of this technique mean that pupils concentrate on the heart of a story, rather than being side-tracked on details.

15. Role play Pupils can role play certain characters in the story. A few props may help them get into role. Other pupils can then question them. Questions should be answered in role.

16. Discussion Read a story and then divide the class into groups to discuss it. Results of these discussions can be reordered and reported back. Teachers should give the pupils specific points to discuss to focus the activity.

17. Mime Pupils can develop mime to go alongside stories which can be used in an assembly. The story can be told 'off stage' using a microphone.

18. Why this story? Pupils can listen to a story and try to work out why that particular story was passed on. What were the intentions of the original writer or teller? Jesus must have told many stories which are not in the New Testament: why was this one selected?

19. Film score Imagine the story is about to be made into a film. Select some music to act as them music. This can be played as the story is read or before the story starts. Give pupils time to listne to film music first, or play an extract of a video clip and ask the pupils to concentrate on the music. How does the music help with the understanding of the story?

20. Sound effects Sound effects can be added to a story. Pupils can write down appropriate sounds to communicate the mood of a story, which can be used while the story is being read.

21. Tableaux Pupils can create a tableau on the subject of the story. The tableau can come alive at a particular moment and the pupils can improvide what the characters have said.

22. Creating a play Pupils can translate narrative stories into a play or play script (Examples of scripts are available on the Wintershall website).

23. Brainstorm Using large sheets of paper, brainstorm all the emotions and reactions which occur in the story. These can be classified into positive, negative and other reactions. Pupils can then explore why these reactions occurred.

24. Word choice Ask pupils to choose five significant or important words from the story and be prepared to justify their choices. Pupils can do this in pairs, and the pairs can then swap and compare words.

25. Memorizing a story Learn a short bible story by heart. This allows pupils to concentrate on the delivery in oral work.

26. Story fair This idea was developed by June Peters. A number of birght, coloured booths are created round the hall, and pupils can then tell stories to small groups of younger pupils. They will need practice to do this. One of the booths sholud be for biblical stories.

27. Dancing a story Read a story to the pupils and ask them to interpret it in dance.

28. Poster work and collage Turn the story into an illustrated poster, or, using magazines, create a collage of the story.

29. Body sculpture Using body sculpture, the pupils can sculpt each other into a chracter from the story, reflecting what is happening to them, their feelins and role. This does not have to involve touch: verbal directions can be given.

30. Interview If you could interview one of the main characters in a story, what would you ask them? What questions would you put to people such as Paul, Joseph, Sarah or Esther?

