

About the Sidegate Reflective Story Project

Originating from the idea of Godly Play introduced by the Reverend Jerome Berryman in the US, the practice of Christian reflective storytelling has grown in the UK. The method involves sharing a Christian story in a quiet, calm and wondering way, encouraging the observer to look beyond the simple objects and words used in the story. The technique develops language skills, spiritual awareness and cements the story in an observer's mind.

The St Edmundsbury and Ipswich Diocese have produced a number of Christian reflective story collections which are available from their website, including the 2014 Centenary publication of the Pilgrim's Progress scripts. These are a fantastic resource and, as part of the writing team on the Pilgrim's Progress scripts, I became interested in developing reflective scripts for stories and concepts from other faiths. Why shouldn't this great teaching method be used to inspire the same quality and depth of thinking for stories from other faiths?

With support from Helen Matter (St Edmundsbury and Ipswich Diocese Schools' and RE advisor), Sidegate Primary School applied for, and gained funding support for the project from the Elizabeth Walter's Charity in Autumn 2014. This funding provided release time in school for me to work on this project with other teachers, HLTAs, members of faith groups and (most importantly) with children.

This has been an exciting and challenging project, and I hope that the the finished scripts will provide teachers of KS2 Religious Education with a useful, accessible resource to engage our children with a fascination, questioning and respect for their own choices as well as the lives and faiths of others.

Happy Storytelling,

Katie Gooch

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Each of these scripts has been carefully crafted with the invaluable support of members of faith groups. If you have any comments, questions or suggestions regarding these resources, please contact me by email.

How to use these scripts:

Props and figures:

In an ideal world, the figures for the stories would be sturdy, wooden, childproof cutouts. To make the resource for these stories cheap and accessible to all, these scripts come with simple printable figures, designed to be photocopied onto plain card and cut out. The card tabs can be stuck together in a loop to make a stand or held in place by pegs to make them easily maneuverable.

Tip: Always move the figures holding on to the stand or peg, never grasp hold of the head of a figure to move it!

Some stories require other easily obtainable items eg sand, wooden blocks. I've tried to keep these to a minimum and hopefully there is nothing needed that will put you off having a go. If a story says a circle of felt then any fabric/ paper will do, be practical.

Setting up the classroom:

Where possible, arrange your audience in a semicircle around you on the floor, this allows the children to get the best view of the figures. In practice, if your class is 30 children, you'll need a semicircle of chairs with a row of children on the floor in front of them. If you can, have another adult to act as "door keeper" to sort any behaviour issues in the audience so you can focus entirely on the story and props.

Set up your props and figures so they are easily accessible beside you. You might like to keep them in a box or basket so the figures not in use don't distract the audience.

Preparing your audience:

Explain to the children that this is a special way of telling a story, it is NOT like a normal story; it is for watching and listening and thinking in silence and you'll give them a chance to ask questions at the end. With experience, the children will soon know what to expect.

Delivering the story:

Purists would learn the script, this isn't so hard when you've got the figures in front of you. However, you could have the script beside you for emergencies or ask a colleague to read the script while you move the figures.

When delivering the story, use no inflection or animation, move really slowly with plenty of pauses, giving the children time to consider your words and actions. Do not look at the audience, they will become as engrossed in the story as you are. At the end of the story you might choose one or two of the wondering questions to invite discussion. Some groups need lots of prodding, others will keep you talking and asking really BIG questions, don't worry if you can't answer them - that's where you allow the children to lead the enquiry.

Tip: Have a pen and paper on hand to record discussion. This is a rare chance for low-ability students to wow you with the depth of their theological thinking.