

# Facing your giants with David and Goliath

Poetry inspired by the heroics of Israel



In this article, some amazingly good work from Dave Maddison's primary school at East Bridgford in Nottinghamshire uses the David and Goliath story to provoke reflections in poetry on the giants we face today. The published article in RE today included only two poems, but we now offer you 5, all from the primary classroom.

The old story of David and Goliath must be one of the most told from the Jewish scriptures for young children. But how deadly-easy it is to miss the potential of the story for children's spiritual development. In this work Dave Maddison shows how pupils can use the structures and scaffolds of poetry writing from the literacy strategy to express their own insights. The potential for spiritual development in the work and the remarkably good levels of insight expressed show how RE can benefit from carefully structured writing opportunities.

The 'formula' for the work is like this:

- Tell or read the story of David and Goliath (from 1 Samuel chapter 17).
- Work with the class to develop understanding of why this story is in the holy writings of Jews and Christians, and

why it is so often retold today.

- Ask the class to reflect on 'giants' in their own lives, and the 'giants' that the world faces today.
- Give them a poetic structure, or writing scaffold:
  - 5 verses correspond to the 5 smooth stones David took.
  - each verse announces a 'giant' or a problem, then suggests what you might fill your sling with to end the problem.
  - encourage pupils to use varied and rich language – adjectives or descriptions should be well chosen.
  - discuss and develop metaphors for giants in our lives and our world.
  - re-use the lines to achieve pattern. Work up to 'Beware Goliath Comes...', 'Fill your sling with...' and 'see Goliath fall!'
- Allow pupils plenty of time to develop and refine their poetry.
- Reward excellence in the finished product. Hannah and Dominic have their poems published.

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### Beware Goliath Comes!

Blood drips fast,  
Hearts beat slow,  
People die,  
Praying, hoping, pleading,  
For wars to cease.  
Beware Goliath comes!

Fill your sling with colourful rainbows,  
Bring life back to the world  
And see Goliath fall!

Grumbling tummies,  
Weak adults,  
Crying children,  
Wishing, calling, screaming,  
For any food.  
Beware Goliath comes!

Fill your sling with sunshine,  
Bring love  
And see Goliath fall.

Evil spreads far,  
Miserable parents,  
Upset sons, lonely daughters,  
Sad, angry, confused.  
Beware Goliath comes!

Fill your sling with friendship,  
Bring happiness  
And see Goliath fall.

The preying bully,  
Worried mothers,  
Angry fathers,  
Hurt children,  
Cross, uncomfortable, lost.  
Beware Goliath comes!

Fill your sling with laughter,  
Bring forgiveness to the world  
And see Goliath fall!

By Hannah Hardy, age 9, Year 5.

### Beware Goliath Comes!

A wave soars towards the shore,  
As colossal as two elephants on the plain,  
Tourists rooted to the spot,  
Like an iceberg of terror has wrapped itself  
around them.

*Beware Goliath comes!*

Fill your sling with sunshine  
And evaporate their grief.

People sit paralysed,  
Having forgotten how to live,  
The strength of independence faded,  
Their spirits left with the terrible company  
of loneliness.

*Beware Goliath comes!*

Fill your sling with desire, And bring life.

Minutes fly past. Hours go by,  
Starvation glides through the atmosphere,  
Children lie waiting, Patiently,  
Waiting for the taste of death  
That swims across the landscape.

*Beware Goliath comes!*

Fill your sling with the light of hope  
And let the starving see the silver lining.

Mothers grieve for the loss of their babies,  
Children cry over their dead parents,  
People fall into the depths of despair,  
Tramps find the door of life shut,  
Locking them in the room of death.

*Beware Goliath comes!*

Fill your sling with people and loved ones  
And bring them back into the joy of our  
world.

Woodcutters destroying rain forests,  
Insects, animals, birds left homeless,  
Fleeing from the chainsaw of terror and  
death.

Falling down like the trees...

*Dead! Beware Goliath comes!*

Fill your sling with compassion and respect  
And bring laughter.  
See Goliath fall!

By Dominic Halter, age 9, Year 5.

### Beware Goliath Comes!

Beware Goliath comes!  
In this land of crying,  
Wars and sabotaging,  
Is there hope for the world before us?  
Fill your sling with hope for a new world  
And see Goliath fall!

Beware Goliath comes!  
Will the war on peace be won by  
goodness?  
And make the crying stop?  
Will the treachery stop  
And caring take over the world for ever  
and a day?  
Fill your sling with care to bring happiness  
And see Goliath fall!

Beware Goliath comes!  
Will the heart of the world be turned  
pure?  
Will blood be turned into bright sunshine  
And love expand over the land like a  
never ending rainbow?  
Fill your sling with health to make the  
world innocent  
And see Goliath fall!

Beware Goliath comes!  
Can our land be taken out of darkness  
And put in the light?  
Make the world glow when the night  
shows  
And spread joy like strawberry jam.  
Fill your sling with friendship so we all get  
on  
And see Goliath fall!

Beware Goliath comes!  
May hope scatter its seeds  
For people who are long lost  
And fame not survive.  
Let laughter stay forever.  
Let's not wish it, let's do it,  
For there's no such word as can't.  
Let's fill our sling with delight for a jolly  
world

And see Goliath fall.

By Laura Verner, Year 5

### Beware Goliath Comes!

In this world of hunger,  
A man lies starving,  
Forgotten in his place of sadness.  
Beware Goliath comes!

Fill your sling with care  
And bring us love.

In our manic country of war,  
A dead soldier,  
Falls flat in no-man's land.  
Beware Goliath comes.

Fill your sling with happiness  
And bring joy.

Parents crying for their children,  
Children crying for their parents,  
Washed away by a tidal wave of death.  
Beware Goliath comes!

Fill your sling with security  
And bring new confidence.

Love is crushed by evil,  
As it takes over our world,  
People alone because no-one cares.  
Beware Goliath comes!

Fill your sling with strength  
And bring us the power of good.

Stand up for goodness,  
As hatred throws our Earth  
Onto a bonfire of doom.  
Beware Goliath comes!

Fill your sling with hope  
And bring trust.

See Goliath fall!

By Robert Yates, Year 5

### Beware Goliath Comes!

A man stands waiting,  
Soundlessly,  
Waiting for the next violent terrorist,  
His eyes tired of emotionless staring.  
Beware Goliath comes!  
Fill your sling with love  
And bring peace to the world.

Parents grieve for their children,  
As they fight their own battles,  
Clinging onto their own lives,  
Beware Goliath comes!  
Fill your sling with hope  
And bring life to everyone.

A child cries in their bed,  
Feeling voiceless,  
As the bully's face  
Still threatens in her dreams,  
Beware Goliath comes!  
Fill your sling with value  
And bring friendship.

Adults suffering torture,  
The torture the evil people bring,  
The cuts and bruises of fear and sadness  
Slowly revealing through their skin.  
Beware Goliath comes!  
Fill your sling with respect  
And bring happiness to those who suffer.

A murderer creeps through the streets,  
Darkness hunting its helpless victim,  
Waiting till night and seizing what he  
wants,  
Slowly tears appear  
For those who are gone,  
As happiness fades into nothing.  
Beware Goliath comes!  
Fill your sling with security and sympathy  
And bring joy and kindness to those in  
need. . . .

And see Goliath fall!

By Olivia Fox, Year 5

### Why David and Goliath?

The challenge of faith story in RE is often connected to seeking relevance. The defeat of a champion in a battle 5000 miles away and 3000 years ago may look irrelevant. But the theme of conquering your own giants is a shared human experience.

This is why the story is retold so often – it's about how faith and trust, fearlessness and confidence can enable the small to surprise the mighty. In this sense the Goliath story is more about the cheeky confidence of the powerless than about affirming military might.

### Flexible approaches to any faith story or hero story.

In this work, the personal search for meaning in a faith story is obvious. The children have learned from the story for themselves. This approach can be applied to many stories. Rama and Sita are heroes because they shine their light persistently when all around is darkness. Bilal, the first Muezzin of Islam, is a hero because he bravely spoke the truth to people in power. Guru Nanak is admirable because his wisdom about money speaks to the ageless problems of greedy societies.

Using the scaffolds and structures of the best literacy work with pupils is powerful: imagination is unlocked, hard work is brought into RE, remarkable insights are discovered and expressed by young children.

In these examples, 9 and 10 year olds have produced some inspiring RE through the simple and careful application of good strategies from literacy. The challenge is obvious – but the children are up to it. Are the teachers?





**Goliath and David:** Artwork by Sarah Berry

Using this artwork for a lesson for 7-9 year olds.

1. Read the story from 1 Samuel 17 – or another version - with the class.
2. Discuss some of the following questions in pairs or as a class:
  - a. What made Goliath frightening?
  - b. What was it that made David so fearless?
  - c. What did David's brothers think of him? Why?
  - d. Why did David not bother to wear armour? Was this a good idea?
  - e. Was killing Goliath harder than killing the bear or the wolf?
  - f. Why do you think this story is in the Bible?
  - g. Why do you think this story is popular with Jewish and Christian children?
3. Get children to think about how they would picture the story. Show them Sarah's picture, and ask them what they think is good about it.
4. Use the 'thoughts and ideas' sheet to get them to write about the story.
5. Move on to read some of the poems and ask them some questions like these:
  - a. Can you identify some 'giants' in the world today?
  - b. What could we fill the slings with to tackle these giants?
  - c. How can being unafraid help us when 'giants' seem threatening?

There are lots of reasons to be scared of this giant, such as...

When people are scared, then the fear can make things worse, for example...



If I trust in God, then...

**Complete the thinking bubbles for David with lots of ideas of your own.**

'Goliath and David' by Sarah Berry © RE Today. Subscribers may use this picture for classroom work.

There are lots of reasons to be scared of this giant, such as...

When people are scared, then the fear can make things worse, for example...

Make an image of your 'giant' here – something that scares you. Something that threatens people.

My ways of dealing with my fears are...

After you have worked on the sheet about David and Goliath, then think about a 'giant' who threatens today. Complete the thinking bubbles for yourself with lots of ideas of your own.