

The Literature of the Bible

In this section we take an example from each of the types of writing found in the Bible and suggest ways of working with the materials. For KS2 all ten styles have been selected, for KS1 only story, parable and poetry. Introductory notes for the teacher put each piece of writing briefly in context. Where possible two types of literature have been included in one suggested unit.



Myth

If you read the Bible through in the order in which it is collected and printed the first stories that you will encounter in Genesis chapters 1-11 are myths. The myths are very ancient stories which answer some of the huge questions of life such as “How did the world come into being?” or “Why do people die?”. The story of the **Tower of Babel in Genesis chapter 11 verses 1-9** answers the question “Why do we not all speak the same language?” You can imagine how the story came into being if you think of how the nomadic early Israelites must have felt when they first saw some of the huge pyramid towers or ziggurats in Babylon. (See http://www.hope.edu/academic/religion/bandstra/RTOT/CH1/CH1_RS.HTM for a really good selection of ziggurat images to use with this scheme.) What could these be for? Why are these people trying to reach God high in the sky? Why can't I understand what they are saying? Well.....

The storyteller also tells this story to warn his hearers of the dangers of getting above themselves – of thinking that they are so powerful that they are like God, or even equalling Him, whereas in fact God is so powerful that they are as nothing before Him. This is a story about people in rebellion against God, and about human sinfulness.

Of course the story shows the ancient mind set of the time in which it originated. There is a clear belief that the universe is a finite size – in fact the earth was generally described as flat, resting on pillars, with the dome of the sky above it – in such a universe perhaps you could build so high that you could reach the sky! When reading a myth do not be tempted to dismiss the story because of the limited scientific knowledge of four or five centuries ago, instead ask of it “What does this MEAN? What message is it giving to people today?”

Notes: Babel's Hebrew meaning is "Gate of God." The tower was about 300 feet or 90 metres high. Babel was a city on the plain of Shinar between the Tigris and Euphrates rivers.



The Tower of Babel – a myth	KS2	No. of lessons: 2-3
<p>Learning objectives: To be aware that the Bible contains a variety of types of literature and to understand something of their origins. To understand the concept of “myth” and explore a famous Biblical myth using a variety of stimuli.</p>		
<p>Questions for reflection: How do Bible myths help me to think about the big ideas of life? What do I think God is like? How do I react to people who are different from me and who I cannot understand? How do people become important?</p>		
<p>Activities and experiences:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Read together one of Rudyard Kipling's Just So Stories, or a creation myth from e.g. Australia. Discuss together how myths are told to answer important questions of life. ◆ Look together at a depiction of a ziggurat / Tower of Babel. Talk about what a simple country dwelling person might think when he saw something on this scale for the first time (a modern equivalent would be seeing skyscrapers for the first time, or even stepping inside Ely Cathedral for the first time!). He would know the ziggurats had something to do with worship – what story would he tell about them when he returned home? ◆ Display some sayings in different languages but without translation – guess what they might mean, and talk about holiday experiences of visiting countries where you cannot understand the language. ◆ Read Genesis chapter 11 verses 1-9 for the real Biblical version of the myth. Brainstorm the story to discover its hidden messages and the questions it is answering (see above). Consider whether the myth has a message for people today. Record your findings. ◆ Write and share your own myth stories to explain ziggurats. An excellent stimulus is the story “Does God have a big toe” (see below) 		
<p>Websites and Resources: For photographs and paintings of the Tower of Babel see http://www.hope.edu/academic/religion/bandstra/RTOT/CH1/CH1_BAB.HTM Creation stories from around the world can be found on: http://www.painsley.org.uk/re/signposts/y8/1-1creationandenvironment/c-story.htm and http://www.cs.williams.edu/~lindsey/myths/myths.html The delightful book “Does God have a big toe?” by Rabbi Marc Gellman, Harper Collins ISBN 0064404536 is out of print, but still seems to be readily available on Amazon etc.</p>		

Legend & Psalms / Poetry



This unit is based on King David, the second king of Israel who reigned approx. 1000 -960 B.C. David began his career as the youngest of a family of eight brothers and we first meet him as a shepherd. He rose to be God's chosen king of Israel through his military prowess – a story which starts with his being anointed as future king by the prophet Samuel, and the killing of Goliath. He was an accomplished musician and is also known as the author of some of the hymns to God in the book of Psalms. You can trace his story through the books of I and II Samuel. David became an iconic figure for the Jews and his reign was seen as a golden age of history. It became important for the rulers of Judah to be able to trace their lineage back to him, and once the country was over-run by the Babylonians their hope became focussed on a future leader, a Messiah, who would be descended from David's line and come to save the nation. Importantly, "Son of David" is one of the titles of Jesus, who descended from David through his mother. The six pointed star which is now the symbol of Judaism also bears his name – the Star of David.

What about Goliath? Popular versions of the story portray him as a giant – but if you look at I Samuel chapter 17 verse 4 his height is six cubits and a span. Now cubits and spans are variable measurements, because it depends whose forearm (finger tips to elbow) and handspan you are using as the norm, but we can estimate that he would have been about seven to eight feet tall. Archaeological evidence (skeletons!) confirms that there were indeed a few people of this size living in Philistia at this time in history, and one can understand why they

would be recruited into the Philistine army! So why is this story a legend and not history? Because if you look at II Samuel chapter 21 verse 19 you will see that it was most probably Elhanan of Bethlehem who actually killed Goliath, and the story got transferred to the great hero David. The same kind of story transference and embellishment happens in every culture – just think of some of the stories attached to saints, or to figures like Robin Hood and Dick Turpin.



The Book of Psalms is often known as "the Psalms of David", and, whilst it is certain that he did not write all of the psalms in the collection, as you work through the book you will find a significant number do bear his name as author. The collection is basically a hymn book used at the Jerusalem Temple, and you will see references to names of long lost tunes also in the psalm headings. Psalm 23, also known as the Shepherd Psalm because of its opening line, "The Lord is my shepherd," is the best-known psalm, and perhaps the best-known chapter in the Bible. The theme of this poem casts God in the role of protector and provider, and is routinely read and recited by Jews and Christians alike. You can see clearly how the psalm could have been one of David's earliest creations – reflecting the time before he became a king.

Ps 23:1 I shall not want—If God is looking after you as a shepherd cares for his sheep then that is all that matters and all you truly need.

Ps 23:2 He makes me to lie down in green pastures— Sheep are grazing animals that roam. The shepherd seeks out abundant food to satisfy his flock. There is an old saying, also, about human discontent--the grass is always greener on the other side. But it is so often not the case that the grass is, in fact, greener on the other side; we need something or someone to make us "lie down" in the green pasture we are willing to abandon out of misplaced discontent. The still waters are ones that the sheep can drink, not a raging torrent! Both of these images are metaphors for the spiritual sustenance a believer receives from God



Ps 23:4 Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death-- A shift in voice may be noted. Verses 1-3 speak of "the Lord" in third person. From Verse 4 to the end, the psalmist is speaking directly to the Lord. The shepherd leads (leads not herds) his sheep safely through dangerous terrain, he uses his rod and staff to fight off wild animals or rescue sheep which stray. The promise is here that God will be with his followers in the darkest times of their life – supporting and protecting.

Ps 23:5 Though preparest a table before me in the presence of my enemies- The psalmist appears to be saying that not only will the Lord act as one's "shepherd," but He will do so in plain view of all. So, there will be no doubt that He is not only "with us"--it will be obvious that He is acting directly and to our benefit as well. Anointing the head with oil and overflowing cups show that this is a lavish banquet with more than enough for all. Christians link this verse with the Eucharist.

Ps 23:6 Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me—a statement of faith that David believes in a God of goodness and mercy, and if God is your shepherd, this protection will be extended to eternal life after death.

Because of its message of comfort and protection, Psalm 23 is a staple element of funeral services.

Notes: Equipment typically carried by Biblical shepherds included: a bag made of a full goat's skin, with legs tied, in which was carried food or other items; a sling for defending himself and the flock against wild animals; a flute for entertaining himself and the sheep; a cloak that was also used for night-time bedding; a stick (rod) about a yard/metre long with a knob on one end; a staff, or "shepherd's crook."

For KS1 we are simply looking at the idea of the Book of Psalms as a songbook.

Psalms – a very old hymn book still used today	KS1	No. of lessons: 2
<p>Learning objectives: To know that Christians use the Bible for worship and hear and join in some examples of this. To hear some passages of the Bible in an appropriate context. To explore feelings of celebration and praise through music.</p>		
<p>Questions for reflection: Do I like singing? What do I like to sing about? How do I celebrate special events?</p>		
<p>Activities and experiences</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Show the class the Book of Psalms in a Bible. Note how it is laid out like poetry and understand that it is actually a hymn book. Compare with your school hymn book or similar. Note how the modern hymn book has authors and tune names attached to the hymns, and so do some of the Psalms. What would we need to know to sing these psalms? ◆ Listen to snippets of some psalms (use a variety of settings if possible) and find out how they might be used in worship. What do you like / not like about them? ◆ Learn “Praise the Lord in Everything” (Come and Praise 33). This is a version of Psalm 150 and has a wealth of opportunities for actions and musical accompaniment (you might choose not to do all five verses). Share your learning and the hymn with the rest of the school in collective worship. 		
<p>Websites: For clips of Psalms on-line try: (a) a Jewish group from Uganda can be heard at http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/B0000CDL6K/102-8471859-5676109?v=glance&vi=samples&n=5174 (or key Abayudaya into Amazon (b) twentieth century guitar version http://waytogod.org/orrick/ and (c) for continuous Gregorian chant through a radio link http://homepage.oninet.pt/862mch/</p>		

David – poet, warrior and king	KS2	No. of lessons: 3+
<p>Learning objectives: To be aware that the Bible contains a variety of types of literature and to understand something of their origins. To explore a psalm's context and meaning, and to understand something of its importance to believers today. To explore how faith can be expressed through music. To understand the origins of a Jewish hero of faith and his influence on the world.</p>		
<p>Questions for reflection: Who do I depend on in my life? Who are my heroes and why? Are there any stories I have read or films I have seen which have helped me think about important things or sort out problems?</p>		
<p>Activities and experiences</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Listen to or sing a version of Psalm 23 e.g. from Come and Praise. Find out what the psalm means by briefly researching together the life of a Biblical shepherd e.g. using http://www.biblepicturegallery.com/Pictures/Herdsmen.htm remember to consider the question "Why might a believer think of God as being like his shepherd?" ◆ Look at the Book of Psalms in the Bible to find who wrote this psalm and locate other psalms by the same author. Discover who recognises (or even shares!) this name and what is known about him. ◆ Perhaps as a homework challenge, find some things which have been named after Goliath and what they have in common – you should be able to find mention of at least a grouper (fish), big fairground rides, a butterfly, a bird-eating spider, a heron, even a rocket launcher. ◆ Read the story of David and Goliath in I Samuel chapter 17 or a suitable story book. Create a full size outline of Goliath measured in cubits and spans (see http://community.gospelcom.net/Brix?pageID=5057 for details of armour). Talk about how David's experiences as a shepherd and his faith in God helped him when facing Goliath. Consider what Jews and Christians today might learn from reading this story and how it might help them. ◆ Extension work on Psalm 23: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) The psalm is frequently found translated into a modern framework for other professions (see http://buildingchurch.net/ps23.htm or http://www.extremelysmart.com/insight/accurate/Psalm23.php for examples). Create your own modern day version (b) Perform the psalm as a playlet for collective worship – possible script at http://www.dramatix.org/Children/Lampchop.html (c) ICT challenge. There are several powerpoints of the psalm on the net which can be downloaded and used in worship e.g. http://www.ccdb.nl/psalm23.htm – but pupils can produce something better! Powerpoint backgrounds for the whole psalm at http://www.heartlight.org/cgi/powerpoint.cgi might be one place to start. Why not combine (a) and (c)? Alternatively do the same with a meaningful poem of the pupil's own choice. 		
<p>Websites: a version of the Goliath story can be found at http://www.virtualchurch.org/david.htm For pictures and information about life in Bible times a good site to visit is http://www.biblepicturegallery.com/</p>		

History & Letters

Most of the historical books of the Bible are to be found in the Old Testament where they tell the story of the Jewish people as they emerge onto the world stage. There is also one book in the New Testament, the Acts of the Apostles, which tells the story of the Early Church (chiefly of Paul) up until about A.D. 62. Our knowledge of early Christianity is supplemented by the 21 letters from a variety of authors (again chiefly Paul) to fledgling Christian communities and individuals.

A helpful website giving a simple *pictorial* chronology of the Bible supported by Bible passages is at <http://bibleview.org/en/> If you are undertaking more detailed work on the Bible, this will provide you with illustrations for a timeline to place around your walls.

This unit is based on Paul who was a significant figure in the first years of Christianity. Jewish by birth, at first he took a part in persecuting Christians because he believed them to be followers of an heretical Messiah. Following his conversion experience on the road to Damascus, when he heard Jesus speaking to him, Paul became a convinced follower of his. He later embarked on a series of great journeys around the Roman Empire visiting Jewish communities to spread the message of Jesus. Finding that non-Jews (Gentiles) also wished to accept Jesus as their Saviour, he managed to persuade Peter and the rest of the Christians in Palestine that their message was for the entire world, not Jews alone. This significant change in focus launched the Christian Church as we know it. Paul was accompanied on many of his journeys by Luke, the author of the Gospel, and Luke went on to write the Acts of the Apostles using his own diary and information he had gathered.

Paul himself was also clearly a prolific writer, for as he moved around the Roman Empire, or lingered in prison – again - he dashed off letters to the isolated Christian communities he had founded, giving them advice on practical matters and spiritual teaching. Most of Paul's letters are too complex to be used at KS2, but a short personal note to **Philemon** (just 25 verses long) can be appropriate:

Philemon was a wealthy Christian and friend of Paul; the local church met in his house. Philemon's slave **Onesimus** had stolen something and then run away from his master, and later, by sheer chance, he had met up with Paul. On hearing the message of Jesus from Paul, Onesimus also became a Christian. He decided to stay with Paul (who was then under house- arrest) and make himself useful. After a time Paul decided that it was important for Onesimus to go back to his master. As a runaway slave Onesimus could be arrested at any time and be punished cruelly, even crucified, and the situation needed to be regularised. So Paul sent Onesimus back to Philemon carrying this letter. In the letter he asks Philemon to treat Onesimus not as a slave to be punished, but as a fellow Christian to be welcomed as a brother. The underlying message appears to be that Paul hopes Philemon would actually set Onesimus free. Onesimus would be worth about 500 denarii to Onesimus – over a year's wages!

What happened next? We don't know! However, we are probably safe to assume that Philemon did as Paul asked – he would scarcely have let the letter be circulated and copied otherwise!

Note: some of the letter is based on a joke – because the name “Onesimus” actually means “useful” Paul makes some puns on this name which obviously work in Greek, but not in English – verse 11.



The story of Paul and Silas in prison at Philippi comes from an earlier period than the letter, probably A.D. 49-52. Philippi was an important Roman centre in Greece, and here Paul, as usual, started his missionary work amongst the members of the Jewish community. An early convert was Lydia, a Jewish businesswoman who dealt in expensive purple dyed goods. In Philippi Paul and Silas were hounded by a fortune-teller whose gift of divination told her that these two men were servants of God – she followed them through the streets crying this out. Publicity yes, but not really the kind that was wanted! It would have been assumed that anyone with a prophetic gift of this kind was inhabited by a spirit or demon. Paul exorcised the girl, who lost not only her demon, but also her gift of fortune-telling at the same time. Her owners were less than pleased and dragged Paul and Silas off to the law court where they were brutally beaten and then thrown into prison. This was not true Roman justice, as not only had there not been a fair trial, but the two men had rights as Roman citizens which should have prevented this happening.

In prison Paul and Silas continued to sing hymns and praise God, until, at midnight, an earthquake hit the town, as a result of which the prison doors were burst open and the chains fell away. One would have expected the result to have been a mass breakout, and this is why the gaoler was going to kill himself, for he would have been held directly responsible for any escapee and would have taken their place in prison. Instead, thanks to Paul and Silas, all the prisoners remained in the gaol, and as a result of this the gaoler and his family came to put their faith in Christ.

The next morning the magistrates sent instructions to release Paul and Silas, obviously of the opinion they would have no more trouble from them after their rough treatment of the day before. This is the point at which the authorities realise they have themselves broken the law by mistreating Roman citizens, and are forced to apologise. The apology was very necessary, as the small church based on Lydia's house could have suffered further if it was linked with apparent wrongdoers.

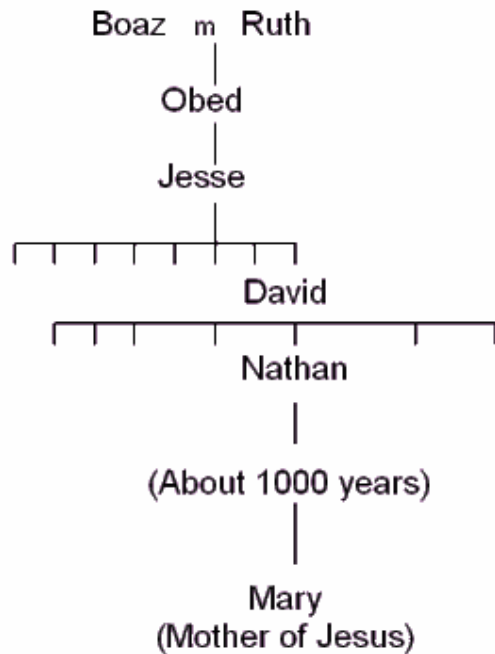
Paul suffered a great deal physically for the sake of preaching the Gospel – see Romans chapter 11 verses 22-29 for his own record of this.

Paul the prisoner – history and letters	KS2	No. of lessons: 2+
<p>Learning objectives: To be aware that the Bible contains a variety of types of literature and to understand something of their origins. To find out about Christians whose lives have influenced others. To explore the concepts of forgiveness and reconciliation.</p>		
<p>Questions for reflection: Do you forgive others when they do something that really hurts you? What are fair punishments for different crimes? What are the most important things in my life that I might be prepared to suffer for?</p>		
<p>Activities and experiences:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Discuss the kind of things people are out in prison for nowadays. Do pupils know of examples where it is said people are imprisoned falsely or treated unfairly? Share the story of Acts chapter 16 verses 12-24 (i.e. to the point of the imprisonment). Divide the class into small groups and have half of each group list reasons they think Paul and Silas were treated appropriately, and the other half why they were not. They should try out their arguments on each other and see who wins the debate. ◆ Read verses 25 -26. What should Paul and Silas do next? Consider the options and then complete the story. Look at Romans chapter 11 verses 22-29 to see what else happened to Paul because he preached the message of Jesus Christ. Consider how important Jesus was in Paul's life – wonder if there is anyone or anything which pupils would describe as equally important to them. ◆ Pick up the story with Paul again in prison ten years later and read the letter of Philemon. You may like to use a more colloquial translation e.g http://www.ccel.org/bible/phillips/CP18Philemon.htm ◆ This letter is like a mystery play – what happened next? This is a good opportunity to discuss topics such as forgiveness and friendship and to come to your own decisions what Philemon should do. Write Philemon's reply to Paul accordingly. 		
<p>Websites and resources: The video series Storykeepers are cartoons set in the Neronian persecutions of A.D. 64 and show a group of Christians meeting in secret to share stories about their teacher, Jesus of Nazareth. Each video has two separate programmes and includes several Bible stories. Each of the individual episodes lasts about twenty-five minutes. The films were originally shown on TV and are now distributed by Shepherd Films Ltd (copies available on loan from the Resources Centre). You could use one of these to set the historical scene for this unit.</p>		

Story & Law

This KS2 unit combines the two elements of story and law. The main Biblical law books are Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy with parts of Exodus, although the first five books of the Old Testament, the Jewish Torah, are commonly together known as "The Books of the Law". There are 613 commandments in the Torah, of which 365 are negative and 248 positive. The Ten Commandments in Exodus chapter 20 verses 1-17 are obviously central teachings with broad application, but most of the laws are connected with the minutiae of everyday life – food, health,

relationships, worship, war and peace etc. Obviously the laws reflect the structures of the nations over several centuries. Some of the laws, particularly those concerned with personal morality, are still very much relevant today – others, such as how to carry out sacrifices at the Temple in Jerusalem (destroyed in A.D. 70) are no longer appropriate. With many of the laws, even although the culture has changed, the *principles* behind them are still important, as with the story we are looking at here.



There are three story books in the Old Testament – Ruth, Esther and Jonah. The Book of Ruth is the record of a woman from Moab who changed her religion to follow Israel's God, married Boaz of Bethlehem, and became an ancestor of Jesus Christ.

The events in this little book (only 4 chapters long) took place in the time of the Judges. It forms a link between the time when "there was no king in Israel" and the time when King David sat "on the throne of the Lord" in Jerusalem.

The story of Ruth is one of love and devotion and it begins in Moab. Naomi and her husband Elimelech had moved there to escape the famine in Judea. Elimelech died in Moab. Their two sons also died, leaving Naomi with her daughters-in-law, Ruth and Orpah. Orpah chose to stay in Moab but, when the famine was over, Ruth accompanied Naomi back to Judea. Ruth the Moabitess learned from Naomi about the God of Israel and she came to love and trust Him.

In Naomi's hometown of Bethlehem a relative of Elimelech, named Boaz, showed kindness to the two women and eventually married Ruth. They had a son whom they called Obed and who

became the grandfather of King David. Some 1000 years later, Mary the mother of Jesus was born of this line.



The book has an important “hidden” message that outsiders could become part of the chosen people of God, and that even King David had one such person in his ancestry.

For KS1 the story selected is Jonah

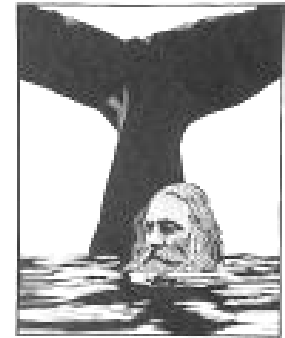
The story of Jonah the prophet who was sent to Nineveh (Babylon – now Iraq) to call people to repent, shows that God is concerned with both Jews and Gentiles. The story is set in a time period when there was animosity between Israel and Babylon, with Babylon definitely the dominant force in the area. Jonah may not have wanted to go to the land of his enemy, but that might not simply have been through fear – he probably enjoyed the idea that his nation’s enemies were about to be punished by God! So instead of heading for Nineveh he went to sea, in the mistaken belief he could get away from God and the task he had been given, if he only went far enough.

But God was not confined to the land of Israel, and when a terrific storm blew up the sailors cast lots to see who on the ship had angered the gods and brought such a punishment upon them all. The lots clearly indicated the guilty one was Jonah. The sailors on the ship had heard of Jonah's God, and they prayed to him before throwing Jonah overboard. Then the sailors worshipped the Lord and made vows to Him.

Jonah was a failure at hiding from God, and it made him so angry he wanted to die, but God kept him alive inside a great fish! So Jonah called to the Lord and prayed, acknowledging God's grace. Then like the sailors, Jonah offered a sacrifice to the Lord by singing a song of thanks and promised to fulfill his vow. So the fish vomited Jonah onto the mainland, and he walked to Nineveh. These Gentiles heard, believed, and responded to God's message through Jonah. The king hears the message and repents. "Let everyone call urgently on God," he commands. "Let them give up their evil ways and their violence. Who knows? God may yet relent and with compassion turn from his fierce anger so that we will not perish." (chapter 3 verses 8b-9)

God *WAS* moved, and told Jonah He wouldn't destroy Nineveh. Irritated, Jonah was sure he had made the trip for nothing at great personal expense, and spoke his mind to God. Jonah found a place to sit overlooking Nineveh, and watched to see what would happen. In a lot of physical and mental discomfort, Jonah really appreciated a vine that grew up and shaded his head. But the next morning the vine was gone, the sun was hot, and Jonah was angry and wanted to die. God pointed out to him that he cared more for the fate of the vine than for the fate of the people of Nineveh with at least 120,000 young children. Jonah didn't like his assignment to wicked Gentiles. Did Jonah have a right to be angry? God teaches him to “love thy enemy”.

Jonah – a fishy story	KS1	No. of lessons: 2-3
Learning objectives: To hear and engage with a passage from the Bible at an appropriate level and in a diversity of ways. To engage with the story of a key Old Testament figure. To explore the concepts of anger and love of neighbour.		
Questions for reflection: What makes me angry? Do I sometimes get angry for the wrong reason? Why do people run away?		
Activities and experiences: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Talk about, or even play, hide and seek. What is good about the game? How do you feel when you get caught? The Bible story is about someone who tried to play hide and seek with God – what would be difficult about doing that? ◆ Read the story of Jonah (use a storybook rather than the Bible – although pupils must know this is a Bible story). Stop at key points to ask the questions “What would you do if you were Jonah?” or “How do you think Jonah feels now?” You may like to use an on-line Jonah comic book for this activity http://www.staircasestudio.com/jonah/index.html ◆ Consider: In this story Jonah kept getting angry with God. What kind of things made him angry? Was he right to be angry? ◆ Together make a storyboard of Jonah’s story. Show with thought bubbles what he is thinking at different stages. ◆ Learn a simple Jonah song such as. http://www.dltk-kids.com/bible/jonah_and_the_whale.htm or http://www.dltk-kids.com/bible/jonah_and_the_whale2.htm You could use the storyboard and song to share the story with another class or in collective worship. 		
Websites and Resources: There’s a child friendly version of the Jonah story at http://www.dltk-bible.com/cv/jonah_and_the_whale.htm There is a Godly Play set of the story of Jonah available on loan – contact Ros at the Resources Centre on 01353 652725. It is sometimes said that the fish in the story should be interpreted as something like serious illness – but can a man actually be swallowed by a fish – to be ready for your pupils’ questions check out http://www.bbc.co.uk/dna/hub/A449345 There’s a whole range of Jonah related craft ideas at http://www.daniellesplace.com/html/rrsamplepreJonah.html There is a Jonah “Veggie Tales” video, but I haven’t seen it – reviews suggest it’s a “preachy”.		



Ruth – story & law	KS2	No. of lessons: 2
Learning objectives: To be aware that the Bible contains a variety of types of literature and to understand something of their origins. To explore the relevance of ancient teachings for today. To explore the concepts of friendship, trust and loyalty. To realise Jewish heroines represent ordinary lives as well as exemplary values.		
Questions for reflection: Is loyalty important? How can you be a good friend? Should we always expect something in return for our kindness to others?		
Activities and experiences: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Talk about moving home – what are the good things, what are the bad things? Now imagine that you are moving to another country – make a list of the kind of things which you would need to find out, or which you might find worrying. ◆ Investigate the story of Ruth (probably easiest to work with a story book). Stop at important points for small group discussions to work out “what should happen next” – using the chart below. ◆ At the appropriate points use the Bible to look up the two relevant laws. The language is tough and will need explaining, but basically they say (a) when you are gathering in your harvest of grain, don’t be greedy and take everything, but leave a margin round the edge of the field so that the poor people can come and get grain to make bread for free, and (b) when a woman is widowed and has no children she needs someone to look after her, so her dead husband’s nearest male relative should marry her (they could have more than one wife at this time). The first child the couple had was considered the dead husband’s heir – even although this was biologically impossible. ◆ When you have finished the story, discuss at an appropriate level why the laws were helpful / important in that culture. Are they laws which should still be followed today? If not, what would you replace them with to have the same effect? ◆ Be creative – make models, displays etc of Ruth as a bride. 		
Websites and Resources: http://www.hope.edu/academic/religion/bandstra/RTOT/CH16/CH16_2.HTM - definitely one for the teacher only – gives the background to the Ruth story. At http://www.umassd.edu/specialprograms/mideastaffairs/palestin.htm there are some photographs of traditional Palestinian bridal dresses. If you like worksheets on Bible stories (wordsearches, crosswords, colouring sheets, fill in the gaps) then try http://www.calvarychapel.org/children/site/curriculum.htm material on Ruth available and much else besides. There’s also a downloadable powerpoint which summarises the story at http://www.sschoo.com/kids/MSAgent/launch.htm#Bible%20Story%20Presentations There is a good video of the story of Ruth in the “ Testament – the Bible in Animation ” series (available from the Resources Centre)		

What should they do next?	We think they should	See the law	What they did
There is a bad famine in			

Israel. What should Elimelech's family do?			
All the men of the family have died. What should Naomi, Ruth and Orpah do?			
Naomi and Ruth are very poor, how are they going to get food to survive?		Leviticus chapter 19 verses 9 -10	
Boaz wants to marry Ruth, but by law there is someone else who should marry her. What should Boaz do?		Deuteronomy chapter 25 verses 5-10	

Prophecy

When you use the word “prophet” you probably think of someone who is foretelling the future, but in the Bible the prophets are also, importantly, “forthtellers” – in other words they are like the conscience of the nation, telling the people what they are doing wrong and what will be the consequences. In this day and age prophets would be the kind of people who are out on demonstrations, marching with placards and shouting their messages through megaphones, and who are often regarded as eccentrics or disturbers of the status quo. They were a lonely breed, because their message was an uncomfortable one which people do not want to hear. This led to many of the prophets in the Bible being persecuted in some way, or simply belittled and ignored, some were even murdered.

The prophets spoke their message rather than writing it, so the collections of prophecies that we have in the Bible were probably made by their followers to pass their message on. The first prophet to have his work collected in this way was Amos. We know that Jeremiah, the prophet who appears in this unit, actually employed a scribe, Baruch, to preserve his teachings.



The prophets whose books are in the Bible were not the only prophets at this time as there were hereditary guilds of prophets employed by temples or the court. These men produced prophecies on demand (usually ones which favoured their employers), and were in direct conflict with the great prophets, who had an inner compulsion to speak the difficult word of God.

Jeremiah lived in the second half of the seventh century B.C. Judah was then a small and weak nation, a client of the mighty empire of Babylon (modern day Iraq). Jeremiah was called to be a prophet while he was still a youth. As a sign that there would be no cause for celebration in Judah, God commanded him not to marry. The people, including the king, had a foolish belief that because they were God’s chosen people they would be able to break free from the Babylonians, regain their independence and become a mighty nation.

Jeremiah was sent by God to give them the unwelcome message that the country was corrupt to the core, and that not only would God *not* save them from Babylon, it was actually God who was *sending* Babylon to punish them for their sin. He was repeatedly arrested and King Jehoiakim had his prophecies burned, but Jeremiah’s scribe Baruch produced a new copy. You have probably guessed that, right to the very last, the leaders of the nation ignored Jeremiah and continued on their headlong course to destruction. The Babylonians smashed little Judah and took away the cream of the population into exile. Jeremiah remained near Jerusalem while the Babylonians captured the city, but later his friends took him to Egypt where he spent the remainder of his life.

Jeremiah – a prophet who suffered	KS2	No. of lessons: 2+
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Learning objectives:

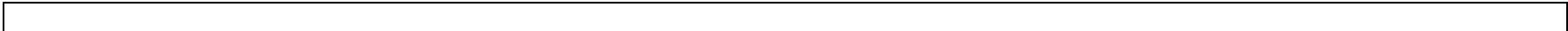
To be aware that the Bible contains a variety of types of literature and to understand something of their origins. To explore the concept of “prophet”. To begin to explore their own ideas about justice and right living.

Questions for reflection: Does God get angry? Does God speak to people? How do we know it is God speaking? What would a present-day Jeremiah have to say?

Activities and experiences:

- ◆ What does your name mean? Use a dictionary of names to find and record what the different names of the class mean. Also look up “Jeremy” (it should say something like “raised up or appointed by God”) Now look up the word Jeremiah in a number of dictionaries and you should find that as well as being a proper name (from which Jeremy is derived) it can also mean *a negative person, somebody with a gloomy attitude toward the present and future*. So we know how people are named after attributes etc – but who was so famous for being miserable that gloomy people were named after him?
- ◆ Briefly fix Jeremiah in Biblical time and explain the word “prophet” (see above). We are going to look first at one of his gloomy messages.
- ◆ Look at Jeremiah chapter 19 – it’s a story where Jeremiah smashes a flask in front of all the important people in the land and then tells them that God is going to smash the country because the people who are so sinful – they will be broken like the pot and not be capable of being put back together again. If you feel it is appropriate you could act this out yourself with a bit of (safe) crockery smashing. Discuss how Jeremiah’s audience must have felt to hear this message.
- ◆ Explain how Jeremiah preached the same message of coming destruction for fifteen years, how the authorities felt that he undermined the confidence of the people and was an enemy of the state, but they dare not kill him because he brought a message from God. In small groups or pairs work on a charge sheet for Jeremiah (see below). You could also design wanted posters.
- ◆ Find out what the authorities did – Jeremiah chapter 38 verses 1-13 – the story of Jeremiah being thrown down a cistern. Was this fair?
- ◆ Debate at an appropriate level what kind of things Jeremiah might be objecting to if he came back today in local, national or global society. Perhaps make a display of newspaper headlines or a protest poster to illustrate this.

Websites: Recommend for a dictionary search online use <http://www.onelook.com/> Downloadable powerpoint presentation on how Jeremiah’s message was recorded at <http://www.sschoo.com/kids/MSAgent/launch.htm#Bible%20Story%20Presentations>



NAME	JEREMIAH THE PROPHET FROM ANATHOTH
CRIME	
EVIDENCE	
VERDICT	
PUNISHMENT	

Gospel



At Tabgha on the shores of the Sea of Galilee are the remains of an ancient church built in the fourth century. When the remains were rediscovered in the 1980s this sixth century mosaic was uncovered showing loaves and fishes – the church was built on the traditional site of the Feeding of the 5000. You can see pictures of it at <http://juc2004.cjszone.com/album16?page=4> and <http://www.bibleplaces.com/tabgha.htm>

The Feeding of the Five Thousand is the only miracle story which appears in all four gospels, indicating its key importance to the Gospel writers and also the effect that it had on those who were there, because it was remembered so keenly. Like all the miracles, this story helps to demonstrate that the Gospels are very special books – they are history with an agenda. The agenda is, of course, to spread the good news (gospel

actually means “good news”) about Jesus of Nazareth who is the Messiah or Christ and the fulfilment of the Jewish scriptures. Miracle stories such as this one show Jesus in control of the elements of nature – as only God can control nature, this story affirms Jesus’ divine origins. John takes the story further and uses the miracle as a lead in to a section of teaching on Jesus as the “bread of life” in John chapter 6.

Colloquially, the expression “feeding the 5000” is frequently used when people are catering for large events – totally out of context!

The earliest Gospel is Mark, written about 60-65 A.D. Mark is traditionally said to have written down the memories of Peter, who was one of the three disciples closest to Jesus. Matthew and Luke both took Mark’s work about twenty years later and added to it stories they had collected from other sources. Matthew was a Jew and Luke was a Gentile, and their Gospels strongly reflect their background. For this reason many Christians today find Luke’s Gospel easiest to read as he omits the passages on Jewish Law. Luke does, however, have a real concern for the poor, women and outcasts, which shines through his work. John’s was the last Gospel to be written and his approach was very different to the other three. He is writing a spiritual gospel, concentrating on teaching theology, and he has less narrative than the others, but picks his stories very carefully to support the teaching. For readers this makes John’s the most difficult gospel to comprehend – usually not the one to use with primary aged children! For brief introductions to all four gospels see: http://www.rejesus.co.uk/the_story/jesus_life/four_gospels.html

Teaching about miracles is often difficult because children are being faced with something they will probably see as scientifically impossible – however this gives you the opportunity to think more fruitfully about what Christians actually believe about Jesus. Science talks the language of what and how – faith talks the language of what and why.

Feeding 5000 – a Gospel Miracle	KS2	No. of lessons: 1-2
<p>Learning objectives: To be aware that the Bible contains a variety of types of literature and to understand something of their origins. To begin to explore some of the beliefs Christians have about Jesus. To become familiar with the Bible in context and look up references. To reach an understanding of the word “miracle”.</p>		
<p>Questions for reflection: How do I feel about being in crowds? Do I have a good memory? Do I believe in the possibility of miracles? How do people use the word “miracle” today? Is there a right version of every story?</p>		
<p>Activities and experiences:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Show a picture of the ancient mosaic at Tabgha (see above) and tell the pupils it is in a church built on the site of one of Jesus’ miracles – can they guess which one? As it is such a famous story, some pupils will probably identify it. (Check pupils understand the word “miracle”) ◆ Think about being in a crowd and the largest crowds people have been in (for reference – schools which have been to the October Cathedral Days will have been in a crowd of about 900). The story is about a crowd of 5000 men plus (as only the men were counted, not the women and children who were less important, how many might have been there altogether?), consider what it would be like to be in the middle or at the back of this crowd – what would you see or hear, how would you feel? ◆ Divide the class into 6 groups with Bibles. Allocate the references: Matthew chapter 14 verses 13-21; Matthew chapter 15 verses 32-39; Mark chapter 6 verses 30-44; Mark chapter 8 verses 1-9; Luke chapter 9 verses 11-17; John chapter 6 verses 1-14. Discuss and fill out the question sheet below – compare results in a plenary. Suggest reasons for differences in the stories. ◆ Have five minutes of quiet while children jot down everything they can remember about an event which happened last week e.g. a visitor’s assembly. Do the differences in these stories help to explain why there are sometimes differences in details between gospel stories? ◆ What would people who were present at the feeding think about Jesus? What do Christians / people think / believe about Jesus today when they hear this story? ◆ Design and create your own “mosaics” of the Feeding of the 5000. 		
<p>Websites and Resources: The Storykeepers Video “Breakout and Raging Waters” includes the Feeding of the 5000 (available from Diocesan Resources Centre). “Bible Make and Do Book Two” Gillian Chapman BRF 184101331 has ideas for a fish mosaic</p>		

Where is the story in the Bible?

How long had the crowd been following Jesus?

How many people were in the crowd?

Who found food for the crowd?

How much food was it?

What did Jesus say and do before the food was given out?

How much was left over at the end?

What do we think happened?

Parable

A **parable** is a story in prose or verse that is told to illustrate a religious, moral or philosophical idea. In particular, the term is applied to the parables of Jesus. It is a probable and realistic story, one taking place in some familiar setting of life. The Parable is the designed use of language purposely intended to convey a hidden and secret meaning other than that contained in the words themselves, and which may or may not bear a special reference to the hearer, or reader. Parables are the simplest of narratives: they sketch a setting, describe an action and its result; they often involve a character facing a particular moral dilemma, or making a questionable decision and then suffering the consequences of that choice. So with each parable you work with the teachers needs to ask herself four different sets of questions:

1. What did Jesus mean when he taught this parable? What is its historical and cultural context?
2. What does the parable mean to Christians today? Does it affect what they believe or the way they act? What is its faith context?
3. Does the parable have anything to say today to myself and my pupils? (AT2) and also
4. How does this affect the learning and teaching?

Parables are strongly linked with other kinds of writing e.g.

- ◆ A parable could be described as an extended metaphor.
- ◆ Fables and fairy stories can have a similar format to parables – they are not parables because they are set in the world of animals or magic rather than everyday real life.
- ◆ Some parables are also allegories. Parables have one central message and the details of the story are irrelevant; in an allegory all the details are open to interpretation and add to the message.

The best known source of parables is the Bible, which contains numerous examples of this genre. Besides the familiar parables of Jesus in the New Testament, such as the Good Samaritan and the Prodigal Son, there are many examples of parable in the Old Testament, for instance the parable of the ewe-lamb told by the prophet Nathan in 2 Samuel 12:1-9.

KS1 – Luke chapter 10 verses 29 -37 – The Good Samaritan

The Good Samaritan is probably the best known parable told by Jesus, so it is a good one with which to start discussing the genre. With younger pupils you probably do not need to share all the cultural background of the story, as long as they understand the parable was answering a significant question “**Who is my neighbour?**” Three main characters in this story are the Samaritan, the Priest and the Levite. The latter two are both heading for Jerusalem to perform their duties at the Temple (there were so many priests and Levites in the country that they were on a rota). If they touched a dead body they would become ritually unclean and unable to take their turn of duty, so they look at the man, and believing him to be dying, if not actually dead, they hurry on. They would probably have said they were putting God before man. The Samaritan would have been seen as impure, even an enemy, by Jews. He was a descendant of Jews who over 500 years before had inter-married with Gentiles. Although Samaritans shared a common heritage with Jews up until that point, they were not allowed to worship at the Temple in Jerusalem, and they would be unwelcome in each others territory. One would be more likely to find a Samaritan throwing stones at a Jew who passed through his village, rather than helping one who was wounded.

KS2 - Luke chapter 13 verses 7-11 - The Lowest Seat

The short parable of the lowest seat at the wedding feast clearly comes from Jesus observing the other guests at the house he was visiting who were jostling to get the best positions at table, just to demonstrate their importance. He encourages them not to concentrate on their own self-importance, but exercise genuine humility.

Bible Rap – courtesy of
<http://www.bcbsr.com/biblerap.html?>

When someone invites you to a wedding
 feast
 Don't take the best seat, but rather the
 least
 For there may be one more honoured
 than you
 Then what do you suppose the host will
 do?
 He'll ask you to give your seat to him
 Then your prospects will be rather grim
 For you'll have to move to the lowest seat
 That's what you'll get for your conceit
 But rather you should at first take the
 lowest place
 When the host comes he will then save
 your face
 He will move you to a place which is best
 And you will be honour before all the
 guests
 Everyone who exalts himself will be
 abased
 But those who humble themselves will be
 raised.

Parable of the Good Samaritan – Luke chapter 10 verses 29-37	KS1	No. of lessons: 2-3
Learning Objectives: To hear and engage with a passage from the Bible at an appropriate level and in a diversity of ways. To know that the Bible contains material about and by Jesus		
Questions for reflection: Who is my neighbour? How should I treat my neighbour?		
Activities and Experiences: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ How do you show you like someone or how can you try to help people? Everyone thinks of something to complete the phrase “I can help.....” Record your ideas as large speech bubbles. ◆ Brainstorm words to describe people the pupils like or dislike. Make a word bank. ◆ Tell or read the story of the Good Samaritan (including the introduction to the story in verse 29), use pictures or visual aids if possible. Make sure you set it in its context as a Bible story and a story told by Jesus. ◆ Use the word bank to review the story by allocating them to the different characters as appropriate. ◆ Create a display / collage telling the story of the Good Samaritan. Add thought bubbles to show what the different characters are thinking. Use your collection of “I can help..” speech bubbles as a border to the display. With reference to the display, talk together about the key question “Who is my neighbour?” ◆ The story can be worked up as a mime (or puppets) with music and percussion to be performed in collective worship. 		
Websites and Resources: there is a powerpoint of this story and several other Biblical stories at http://www.sermons4kids.com/hmartin.htm (scroll to the bottom of the page for list). Putting “Good Samaritan” into Google Images will get you a wealth of illustrations of the moment the Samaritan discovers the injured man.		

Parable of the Lowest Seat – Luke chapter 14 verses 7-11	KS2	No. of lessons: 2
<p>Learning objectives: To be aware that the Bible contains a variety of types of literature and to understand something of their origins. To understand the term “parable” and explore allied forms of literature. To engage with the teaching of Jesus in a variety of ways.</p>		
<p>Questions for reflection: Do I like to be noticed or unnoticed? Why? Who am I in the story? What do I think about people who are always pushing themselves forward? Do I do anything to encourage people who are shy?</p>		
<p>Activities and experiences:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Enjoy one of Aesop’s fables together and think about stories with a moral or a meaning. Make the link to the idea of a parable, but a parable story is based on real life. Understand that Jesus is the most famous teller of parables, but that many other people use the same device for teaching purposes – you may like to use a modern parable here and discuss its message. ◆ What parables of Jesus can people remember? (See the last booklet “Son of God, Son of Man” for comprehensive lists). Probably nobody will recollect this short and simple one as it’s not a very exciting story, but it has a very direct meaning. ◆ Consider how people choose where they like to sit in a room – which are the best / most important seats in class? Which are the most important seats in assembly? If you have a smart board put up some pictures of different rooms and ask these questions (key words like “wedding reception” “conference room” “classroom”, “assembly hall” into Google Images for lots of useable photographs). Perhaps in the hall, set out a Palestinian seating plan which shows three tables arranged as three sides of a square (the fourth side is open so that servants can get in to serve). Which seats do you think people thought were most important here (answer – the central one on each of the three sides, with the central one of the centre table being the top). In role play, invite pupils to enact chatting at a party and show how they might “manoeuvre” their way around the room to end up sitting at the key seats (a grown-up version of musical chairs!) - no physical contact allowed! How do the others feel about the successful ones? (Perhaps take some photographs here for your records?) ◆ Read together the parable of the lowest seat in Luke chapter 14 verses 7-11. Discuss whether Jesus was just talking about seats at parties, or whether there might be a more global application of this message and what that might be. Avoid sounding as if he is encouraging people to emulate Uriah Heap! ◆ Why not finish off you party with some entertainment – try the rap on the previous page. You may like to take this further by writing up another parable or message of the pupils’ devising as a rap. 		
<p>Websites: there’s a complete collection of Aesop’s fables at http://www.aesopfables.com/ collections of modern parables can be found at http://handsofdorcas.com/Articles/modern_parables.htm and http://members.aol.com/pecan61/Parables.htm for the rooms questions under bullet 3, try http://www.renaissancehotelsflorida.com/images.phtml</p>		

