

Learning with the Artefacts

Christmas Around the World Nativity Set (RS49510)

A religious artefact represents a part of a faith tradition. The artefact is a window, a way of looking at a faith, helping pupils to engage with and understand about religion and learn from others about beliefs and values.

Artefacts can provide a sensory, active and memorable way of learning about and from religions. They can help to develop RE skills such as:

Observation
Questioning
Investigation
Experience
Reflection
Response

Before introducing the artefacts to the class use the background information to ensure that you are familiar with the contents and what each artefact represents.

Consider how you want to use the artefacts, for example:

1. **For decoration/visual stimuli** - Demonstrate and explain each artefact before creating the display using the background notes provided and consider displaying images on the wall to create visual impact. Refer to the images and artefacts at different times during the study and encourage pupils to create labels and additional information as they develop understanding.
2. **As an educational tool to support learning** - Individual artefacts can be linked to concepts or themes such as Festivals & Celebrations/Rituals & Ceremonies. They can then be investigated at different points during the learning journey and used as a research focus helping pupils to ask and answer questions about the religions. There are many ways to use artefacts. We have included some activity ideas here as a free download, along with example exploring artefacts sheets to encourage close observations of the items. We hope you enjoy using them.

Introducing the artefacts

- Teach the children how to handle the artefacts carefully and store them safely and securely.
- Some artefacts you use will be replicas. The first time that children encounter a replica, ensure that you explain that these are replicas rather than originals and discuss why this is so.

In RE children learn about and from religion. Learners should be encouraged to enquire, investigate and evaluate. Questions can be asked about the artefact's origins, uses and importance.

Religious artefacts generate empathy and respect helping us to learn about one another and begin to understand beliefs and faiths.

Ideas and suggestions

Artefacts can be used in a variety of ways. They are perfect for discussions, creative writing, art, drama and questioning. Here are some examples of ways you could use them.

1. Share the Christmas Story

Read different versions of the Christmas story and become familiar with the characters and events in the story.

Artefacts can be helpful in storytelling. Through hearing and telling stories the pupils will learn more about the objects and gain a deeper understanding.

2. Watch the nativity story

Watch the story of the nativity being told. For example, BBC CBeebies has a beautiful version of it using sand drawings.

Use the artefacts as a focal point for the story, a way of helping bring the story to life.

3. Role-Play and Retelling

Use small world play or dressing up clothes to reenact the nativity story and talk about the characters. Retell the story in different ways, through pictures, writing, acting.

Investigate ideas about the nativity story and compare the different nativity sets.

4. Pictures and Images

Look at pictures of the nativity and scenes from old Christmas cards and draw or paint your own nativity scenes.

Use art to show the nativity scenes from the collection.

5. Getting Close Up

Observe and make drawings of the artefact. Look closely, thinking about what makes this object special to someone. What details can you spot? What is the artefact made from? Which country do you think this comes from? Design and make a replica of it.

6. Geography Mapping

Use a world map to locate the countries the nativity sets are from (e.g. Peru, Kenya). Connect ribbons from the country back to Bethlehem to show how the story has spread and evolved across the globe. Find out more about the countries and the climate.

7. Science Materials

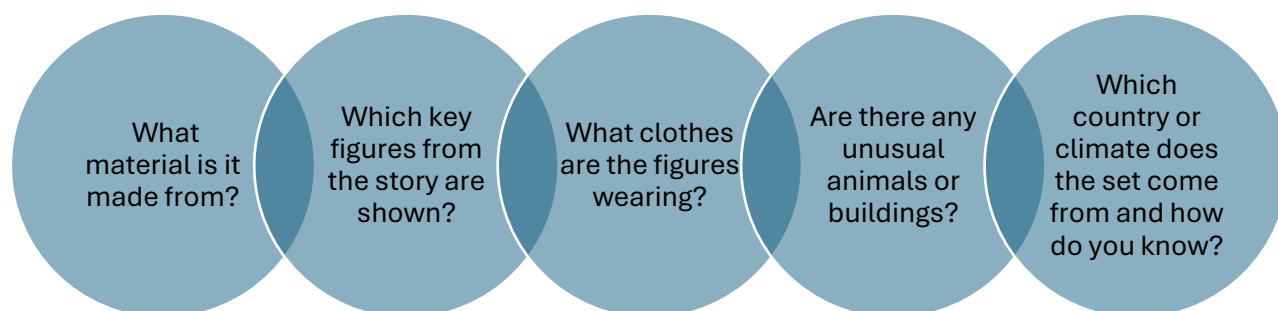
Research the local climate and resources used to make the nativity scenes. Discuss the materials such as olive wood, clay, soapstone, felt and find out how these reflect the regions environment.

8. Reflection

Artefacts can be used as a focal point for thinking and reflecting. They can help to create a sense of awe and wonder. Allow opportunity for reflection. How does the artefact make them feel? Create a special reflection area in the classroom to focus on the artefacts and to think about the meaning of Christmas.

9. Comparing

Compare the artefacts noting similarities and differences. Use questions to investigate ideas. For example:



10. Design Challenge

Design and create a 2D or 3D nativity scene that reflects a time or place of your choice. Examples could be:

The Shoebox Challenge

Design and build your own nativity scene inside a shoebox and use recycled materials to create the nativity figures.

Modern Nativity Set Challenge

The challenge could be to create a modern nativity set, replacing the traditional animals, stable setting and gifts with modern equivalents and discussing the relevance of the story today.

Cultural Nativity Set Challenge

Create a cultural set thinking about your own local community or another country of choice. Make choices about what to use that reflect this place and the climate.

The pupils will need to consider:

- *What would the stable look like? Would it be a stable?*
- *What animals would be in the scene?*
- *What might the wise men bring as gifts instead of gold, frankincense and myrrh?*
- *What might the figures be wearing?*

11. Learning about Christmas using the Artefacts as a starting point

Read how people celebrate Christmas in different parts of the world and get some interesting insights about Christmas traditions and celebrations. Get everyone to share their own experiences of Christmas time.

12. Artefact Investigation

You may want to explore the artefacts in more detail by carrying out a deeper case study investigation into one of the artefacts your class find particularly interesting. Use the 'Observe and Investigate' sheets below as an idea for this.

Observe & Investigate

Image or drawing of artefact:

Describe using your senses:

- What does it look and feel like?
- Does it make a noise?
- What is it made from?
- How big is it?
- Has it got any detail on it? Markings? Writing? What do they mean?
- Which characters does the nativity set show?

Explore & Discover

Which country do you think this nativity set comes from and why?

What do you think it is called (can you find out the name)?

How do you think the object is used and by whom?

What does this object represent?

How might this object make someone feel?

Are there any symbols on the artefact, what do these symbols mean?

What can this object tell us about this faith? _____

Reflect & Evaluate

Why might this object be important to someone who follows that religion?

How does this object make you feel about your own beliefs?

What questions does this object make you want to ask?

Other things to consider

How does this object connect to other things you have learnt about the religion?

What other religious artefacts are similar or different?

How might this object be used in a place of worship?

How does this object help people connect with their faith or beliefs?

Learn more about the stories and the festival connected to this object?

Express what learnt from the artefact in different ways. These might include creative expression with drama or dance, visual expression with paintings or collage, oral expression with a presentation or quiz and written expression using poetry or a story.