

An interrogation of the witnesses to the resurrection



Y5&6 Easter Pause Day: Witnesses

Overall Aim:

- Provide an opportunity for children to investigate the Easter story in greater depth, examining a range of perspectives on it.
- Allow children the space and time to critique the Easter story for themselves.

Outline of the day:

In the morning pupils will revisit the Easter story (see powerpoint presentation with script). Then they will have time to prepare their part for the TV interview work in the afternoon. This will encourage them to examine different perspectives and opinions of the Easter story, focussing in particular on the resurrection. Then there will be time for the children to create their news broadcast piece and finally to feedback and to review each other's work.

In writing this material, the aim was to enable pupils to look at the crucifixion and resurrection 'evidence' in the same manner in which they would approach any other historical 'evidence' and to independently form their own conclusions and opinions.

Please be aware that you may find that there is far too much material, so please select what you need and not worry about items that cannot be fitted in.

Preparations beforehand:

- Preparing the resource sheets.
- You may wish to allow the class to dress up in role for their afternoon parts, in which case they will need to know their roles beforehand so that they can prepare a costume. Having a costume or a prop may allow children to enter into the role play more fully and with less self-consciousness and might help build excitement and anticipation about the day. The class might find it very motivating to have access to video cameras and be able to actually film their TV piece.
- Access to digital cameras (although if this is not possible, children could act out their piece in front of their classmates).

Overview of the Day:

NB: For details on all activities through out the day, please read notes below this overview.

Session Aim	Activity
1 To revise the main characters who were involved in the Easter story and who will be interviewed in the afternoon TV piece.	Revise the Easter story, highlighting each witness as they appear and discussing what they would have seen and what factors would have been influencing them. Use powerpoint provided (and accompanying script) if desired.
2 To examine the various witnesses to the events of the Easter week and attempt to see things through their eyes.	Children to work in small groups to prepare their witnesses and journalistic script for their afternoon 'shoot'. There are supporting notes and worksheets for this, available to download separately.
3 To critique the Easter story through presentation of a balanced TV news report from Jerusalem.	Children to work in small groups to practise and then 'shoot' their TV piece, making use of 'witnesses' in an attempt to unpick different perspectives of the Easter story.
4 To reflect and respond to the day by watching the TV reports and reviewing them.	Ask the children to think about whether anything surprised them during the day. Which witnesses were the most compelling? What information was new to them? How does it leave them viewing Jesus?

NB: The purpose of this day is to enable the children to engage for themselves with the debate over who Jesus was. The focus of their report will be who people claimed Jesus was and what they make of the opinion that he rose from the dead.

A discussion of whether or not Jesus was/is God is a very large debate. Since it is Easter time, the day is deliberately focussed around 'evidence' from the Easter Story: Discussion of Jesus' teachings and miracles is not included. Instead, the focus has been kept tightly on the Easter story: You might wish after this day to do some subsequent work on other aspects of Jesus' life.

Revising the Easter story:

Use the script and powerpoint slides to re-familiarise the class with the Easter story. After the witnesses have featured (see notes in bold on script), pause in the story and consider:

- a. What they would have witnessed?
- b. What factors would have been influencing/biasing them?

(It might be worth allowing children to share their ideas with friends and then feedback to the class. For the later work, it will help if you use a flipchart/whiteboard to record the children's thoughts about each of the witnesses. Some of the witnesses will occur several times, at various points in the account so you will need room to expand on the initial notes).

Divide class into preparation groups:

Split the class into 6 groups (members of which will then be split up and distributed amongst the afternoon TV reporters so that they all have 'experts' as their witnesses – children who have gone more deeply into this angle in the morning):

- Roman Soldiers
- Female Followers
- Thomas
- Other Disciples
- Two on the road to Emmaus
- Jewish Leaders

Questions pointing to Jesus as God, that he did rise from the dead:

Explain that their task is to prepare for the afternoon. They will all be given a sheet of paper with a picture of their witness and some prompt questions. Their task is to use their own thinking, their knowledge of the story and the prompt questions to prepare some questions for the TV reporter to ask the witness. This will be done first from the standpoint of reasons why that witness might have considered Jesus to have been someone more significant than simply a good teacher.

Focus the children on these questions (leave on the board as a prompt):

- *How did these people respond to his death?*
- *Did he rise to life (as his disciples claimed)? If not, what happened to his body? Can we be sure that he died?*
- *If it is possible that he rose to life, what are the implications of this for whether he is God?*

How does each witness add information to these questions?

Questions to cast doubt on the view that Jesus was God, considering that something else happened to his body – he didn't rise from the dead:

Explain that their task is still to prepare for the afternoon debate. They will all be given a new sheet of paper with a picture of their witness and some more prompt questions. Their task is to use their own thinking, their knowledge of the story and the prompt questions to prepare some questions for the reporter to help them cast doubt that Jesus was anything other than a clear-sighted teacher.

Again these prompt questions may help?

- *How did these people respond to his death?*
- *Did he rise to life (as his disciples claimed)? If not, what happened to his body? Can we be sure that he died?*
- *If it is possible that he rose to life, what are the implications of this for whether he is God?*

How does each witness add information to these questions?

Preparing the witnesses:

Give the children their roles for the afternoon:

- Director/cameraman
- TV reporter (you might have up to 2 in each group)
- Witnesses (Thomas, Roman Soldiers, Other Disciples, Female Followers, Jewish Leaders, Followers on the Road to Emmaus).

Give the children time to prepare themselves for the afternoon. Give the witnesses access to both sets of questions that have been written so that they can ready their answers. Give the reporter and director access to all material. They might want to write notes and prepare a short introduction and conclusion to sit before and after the interviews of the witnesses.

The report itself:

Children to work in small groups to plan and film (or be ready to re-enact in front of the class) their TV news piece. Each report should focus on the news that Jesus' body is missing and should contain the following elements:

- an introduction explaining the recent events in Jerusalem (Jesus' death, who he was and why it was controversial, and the most recent news that his body is missing)
- interviews with witnesses – what they witnessed and how they understand that
- conclusion – what are the implications of Jesus' body being missing?

Each film crew can decide where they would like to set their piece... “Here I am outside the empty tomb...” or “...joining me here outside the temple is Caiaphas, the chief priest and

Jewish leader...” etc. Some children might find it helpful to watch some TV/ newsround/ newsnight reports beforehand to glean ideas for how to approach theirs.

Feedback time:

This is time in the day for the children to view and critique each other’s work. Have they got the main facts correct? Do their interviewees offer plausible opinions and views? Are the conclusions that the journalist draws reasonable? What are/were the implications of Jesus’ body not being in the tomb? It might be that your class wish to discuss further what they personally think happened and why they think this.

Afterwards, provide space for the children to engage personally with what they have learnt during the day. Allow them space to think without having to articulate their thoughts to others. Maybe put on some quiet music to set a calm environment in the classroom (see tracks from ‘Out of the Ark’ accompanying music resource).

- Ask them to think about whether anything surprised them during the day?
- Which witnesses were the most compelling? Why?
- What information was new to them?
- How does it leave them viewing Jesus?
- Does it matter whether Jesus rose from the dead?
- Do they think that he did rise from the dead?

Taking it further:

Some ideas on how this Pause Day might continue the pupils’ thinking...

- Provide opportunity in a few days/week/after the break to return to the questions raised in the feedback. Has their thinking changed? Have they talked to other people? What further questions would they like to ask each other?
- Consider how any TV interviews could be used either with the whole school, sharing between year groups/other classes or to be shown to governors and parents.