

The Christmas Story

Looking for a new way to present the Christmas story to your pupils? Why not take some inspiration from these posters, putting a contemporary twist on the Nativity? Use as a starter activity or as the main focus for your lesson.

These posters were created by The Salvation Army to be used as a Christmas display at its International Headquarters in London. The hope is that as people see the images they reflect on the fact that some of the difficulties faced 2,000 years ago by the people in the Christmas story are still affecting thousands of people today.



Discussion Ideas

- Give each pair of pupils a poster. Record: what surprised you, questions you want to ask, what is your favourite part, what does it tell you about Christmas. Double up with another pair with the same poster and discuss your ideas.
- Display the headline and by-line. Discuss what the article could be about. Display the whole poster and discuss with a talk partner. Feed back their ideas to the whole class.
- Display the illustration first and discuss with the class. Next display the Bible quote and ensure pupils understand the context. Brainstorm as a class what the people in the illustration are thinking/feeling. Predict what this scene might look like in a modern context. Display the headline and give pupils printed copies of the poster to aid the discussion. Then repeat the brainstorm, emphasising that it is now set in a modern context. Compare and contrast the two brainstorms. Discuss the purpose of setting the Nativity in a modern context.

Literacy Ideas

- Write a newspaper report setting a part of the Christmas story in a modern context.
- In talk partners draw two quick outlines to represent Mary and Joseph. With reference to the Christmas story, write things they know about Mary and Joseph around the outlines, and how Mary and Joseph might be thinking and feeling on the inside. Share the Salvation Army posters with the class and ask pupils to be detectives and see if they can find out more about Mary and Joseph. Add new ideas to their sheet using a different colour.
- Work in groups or pairs. Find the Top Three positive words and the Top Three negative words or ideas on a poster. (For some posters pupils will need to identify just the Top Three positive ideas.) Create a piece of performance poetry based around these ideas, balancing the positive and negative together. Will you end with hope or despair?

Drama Ideas

- Read a Bible verse from a poster aloud. In groups, create a still image ('tableau') based on the verse. As pupils are frozen in place, tap some pupils on the shoulder to share with the class how their character is thinking and feeling. Display and discuss the poster. Repeat the still image activity. Has your character's thoughts and feeling changed?
- Discuss the posters. What would a modern version of the Nativity look like? Explore through drama.
- Discuss the poster with a focus on Mary and Joseph. Create a mini-drama which uses the headline as the opening line of the dialogue.

Art Ideas

- Christmas is a time for hope, despite there being lots of bad news all around. Make a beautiful Christmas decoration out of old newspaper and other rubbish.

Challenge Time!

- Discuss each poster. In small groups, pupils choose their favourite poster. Each group identifies one element or phrase that they feel is the most important aspect of the poster. Challenge the class to plan then create a response to the poster within a specified time. Possible responses: create a new poster, create a drama, create a poem, create a song, make a collage, or research and present similar contemporary incidents.