

Bible background

Luke 2:1-7

Aim of lesson

To show that Jesus is the Son of God and the son of Mary.

Preparation required

Make your donkey hand-puppet by folding and taping down the sides of the donkey on your activity sheet. You will need colouring materials and tape during this lesson.

Suggested outline of lesson

1. Using the rhyme and your puppet, describe Mary and Joseph coming to Bethlehem and the birth of baby Jesus. Introduce the donkey living in Nazareth and belonging to a man called Joseph etc. Explain that a long way away there was a very powerful king called Caesar Augustus, and everyone had to do what he said. He wanted to collect money from everybody, and so each family had to go to be registered (have their name put on a list a bit like a school register). If the older children know about king David they may be able to understand that Joseph was (as was Mary) descended from him, and that therefore they had to go to Bethlehem, where David came from. Describe the sort of journey Joseph and Mary would have had. Mary was soon to have her baby, and Joseph would have wanted to make the journey as easy for her as possible - perhaps by providing a donkey for her to ride on.

It would have taken several days to cover the 60-odd miles between Nazareth and Bethlehem. Describe the terrain and the sort of track they would have had to follow. It would have been much harder going than any walk in the hills the children may have done with their parents.

Don't confuse the children about what an 'inn' was - the word just means 'somewhere to stay'. It is not clear why there was no room for them: it may have been that all the rooms were taken, but it seems more likely from the account in Luke that while they were staying in the inn the time came for Jesus to be born, and there was nowhere suitable for the birth or for him to be kept. The inn may have had a courtyard outside, in which visitors kept their animals. The donkey will no doubt have been there. Describe what the manger would have been like, and try to convey some of the wonder that the most important person ever to have lived on the earth was born in such humble circumstances.

2. Help the children colour and form their own donkey puppets.
3. Re-tell the rhyme whilst the children hold their puppets. Say each verse twice, encouraging the class to join in the second time. (Make sure the children realise that we do not really know what the donkey thought - or even that there was a donkey!)
4. See also the song 'That Amazing Boy' in Lesson 120. You may like to build it up over the three weeks.

Alternative activities

1. Have some role play and dressing up. Don't forget a doll to be the baby and some strips of cloth for swaddling. A box or basket makes a good manger. You could use a hobby horse as a donkey or make a simple cardboard donkey head on a card stick for one of the children to hold.
2. Make collage pictures of a scene from the story.

Relevance to the children's lives

Ask the children whether they would have been pleased to see the Son of God lying in the manger. Ask what the children would like to have given Jesus if they had been present.

Prayer

Ask the children what they think Mary might have prayed when she had this Son of God to look after.

Verse

'The holy one to be born will be called the Son of God.' Luke 1:35.

Rhyme

I am a donkey, hairy and brown
I carried Mary up the hill and down.
I carried her all the way to Bethlehem town.
There in a stable we closed the door
And her baby was born and laid in my straw
And I was so pleased I said, 'Hee Haw'.
No ordinary baby was born that day
He was a special baby, they say.
T'was the Son of God that slept in my hay.