

## Unit 5C Where did the Christian Bible come from?

### ABOUT THE UNIT

This unit is designed to give children some insight into the developments of the Bible, setting it in historical and literary context. It also prompts and develops their questioning capabilities.

### WHERE THE UNIT FITS IN

This unit builds upon unit 2A in year 2 'What is the Torah and why is it important to Jewish people?' and unit 3D in year 3 'What is the Bible and why is it important for Christians?' – deepening the children's insight into the Bible's historical and literary context.

### PRIOR LEARNING

It is helpful if children have:

- some prior knowledge of the Bible
- experience of finding biblical references

### VOCABULARY

In this unit children will have an opportunity to use words and phrases related to:

- the Bible, *eg codex, manuscript, synoptic, Pentateuch, Old Testament, New Testament, Greek, Hebrew*

### RESOURCES

- statistical information about the Bible can be obtained from the Bible Society
- CD-ROMs
- Hebrew and Greek biblical texts
- different translations of the Bible
- taped examples of the Bible being read in Hebrew and Greek
- pictures or slides of early Biblical manuscripts, *eg the Book of Kells*

### EXPECTATIONS

#### At the end of this unit

*most children will:*

know that the Bible is a collection of varied writings compiled over millennia, each with its own distinctive characteristics; know that the Bible is the world's best-selling book; understand the basic chronology of the Bible; reflect on the nature of truth

*some children will not have made so much progress and will:*

know that the Bible is a library of writing; understand how parts of the book relate to each other; reflect on how the Bible's story is known

*some children will have progressed further and will:*

understand the development of the Bible in the context of other major historical developments; carry out an enquiry based on questions

## LEARNING OBJECTIVES

## POSSIBLE TEACHING ACTIVITIES

## LEARNING OUTCOMES

## POINTS TO NOTE

CHILDREN SHOULD LEARN

CHILDREN

### WHAT DO WE KNOW ABOUT THE BIBLE?

- that the Bible is the world's best-selling book and know some basic facts about it
- to ask and reflect on questions still to be answered about the Bible
- Challenge the children to identify the world's best-selling book. Once the Bible has been identified, discuss possible explanations for this description.
- Give them five minutes in pairs to brainstorm all they know about the Bible and then complete a collective class record of the information. If necessary, supplement the list with some statistical information.
- Help children to organise the information into categories and give each category a heading, *eg people of the Bible, sales information*. Give children a selection of resources about the Bible and ask them to find out one new piece of information. Add this to the 'collective knowledge' in appropriate categories. Invite children to identify the gaps in the categories. *Is there any information about the date(s) when the material was written, the languages used or the writers themselves?*
- Ask the children to work in pairs to identify one question about the Bible. Help them to think of productive questions. Relate the questions to the categories and write them down.
- Discuss with children how this should all be recorded, perhaps setting up a display board which shows clearly what the class already knows and what children want to find out about the 'world's best seller'.

- ask questions about the Bible from many perspectives
- realise that the Bible has far-reaching popularity
- make sense of information from a variety of sources to support their enquiry

- It is important to note the difference between the Christian Bible and the Jewish holy writings.
- Refer back to these questions at appropriate points during this unit.

### HOW DID THE BIBLE START?

- that the material of the Bible predates the written text
- how to differentiate dates before and after Jesus
- that the Bible is a collection of writings from many different times
- to reflect on how it might feel to 'discover' an ancient manuscript
- Take children on an imaginary journey as archeologists discovering an ancient manuscript, slowly and painstakingly uncovering a clay jar. Build up the excitement and stress the care with which the find has to be handled.
- Invite children to talk about their manuscript and how it felt to find it. Use this activity to explore children's thinking about the Bible: *How did it start? If this were a Biblical manuscript, how old might it be?*
- Begin a timeline, explaining the difficulty of accurate dating. Identify, with the children, the key people in the Bible and explain the terms 'common era' (CE) and 'before common era' (BCE), and relate the dates to the present day.
- Show children a Bible and explain that it is really a library of writing and like any library was compiled over a long period of time, probably 1500 years. Remind children of the organisation of the Bible and identify the oldest parts. Explain that the first five books of the Old Testament originate from the five books of Moses, found in the Torah. Explain how the earliest material, which began as an oral tradition, was first written down on tablets of clay, and then on papyrus scrolls. Around the fourth century CE it was written on vellum in a bound book form called a codex, but was all handwritten. Show children photographs of a famous manuscript, *eg the Book of Kells*.
- Record new information on the timeline and invite children to ask any questions the information has prompted. Invite them to write about their own 'discovery' in the light of what they now know.

- show understanding of how time is recorded in relation to Jesus, *eg by using technical terms*
- understand the development of the book from its origins in oral traditions
- understand the chronology of the development of the Bible
- evaluate their learning about the origins of the Bible

- Initially, the key people in the Bible might be:  
Abraham – c 1800 BCE  
Moses – c 1200 BCE  
King David – c 1000 BCE  
Jesus – 30 CE
- The word 'byblos' is Greek and means 'book'.
- There is evidence of writing from 2000 BCE but most scholars agree that the Old Testament was written between the eighth and the second century BCE, and was completed by 90 CE.
- The Book of Kells is in Trinity College Library, Dublin.
- The Old Testament was first printed in 1488 CE and the New Testament in 1616 CE.

### WHAT IS IN THE BIBLE?

- that the Bible is a collection of different types of writings, written at different times by different authors
- that the Bible contains many different literary genres
- to identify some extracts from the Bible
- Brainstorm different types of writing found in a library. Draw out categories, *eg adventure stories, historical stories, science fiction, poetry*.
- Discuss why people write in different forms.
- Look at the contents page of the Bible and remind children that it was compiled over a long period of time and is really a collection of books, written by different authors at different times. Identify some of the types of writing, *eg story, history, law, poetry, letters, proverbs*.
- Working in pairs, give children two sheets, one with extracts from the Bible, the other with a box for each literary genre. Ask the children to match the Bible extract with the correct genre and then complete the following sentences:  
Poetry expresses ...  
Parables are stories which ...
- Discuss why authors choose to write in a particular genre and how this relates to the Bible.
- Ask the children to write about the extract they find most interesting and explain why.

- identify some of the literary genres used in the Bible
- reflect upon their own responses to writings from the Bible
- explain why they find a section of the Bible interesting
- understand that writers write in different ways for different purposes and discuss how this relates to an understanding of the Bible

- Extracts should be taken from translations which can be easily accessed by the children. For example, the Good News Bible has a reading age of 8–9 years.
- Possible extracts:  
– Genesis 1<sup>1-4</sup> (narrative)  
– psalm 23<sup>1-2</sup> (poetry)  
– examples of proverbs (wisdom)  
– crucifixion of Jesus – Luke 23 (history)  
– parable of the lost sheep – Luke 15 (parable)  
– A New Testament letter – 1 Corinthians 1<sup>1-3</sup> (letter) or the letter to Philemon  
– Amos – a prophecy (prophecy)
- Pair-up children who will support each other in this activity.

## LEARNING OBJECTIVES

## POSSIBLE TEACHING ACTIVITIES

## LEARNING OUTCOMES

## POINTS TO NOTE

### CHILDREN SHOULD LEARN

#### WHAT KIND OF WRITING IS IN THE BIBLE?

- that the Old Testament was written in Hebrew and the New Testament in Greek
- that Christians believe that the Bible is the word of God and that it is relevant to their lives today
- Show examples of Biblical texts in Hebrew and Greek.
- Listen to extracts being read in the original language. Discuss how this makes the children feel.
- Ask children to explain what the texts are saying, which they probably won't be able to do. Then in pairs, give them the same examples but in a number of English translations, and ask the children to read the texts and think about what the texts are saying. *Which translations do you like best and why? As a class, come together to share their thoughts on the texts.*
- Ask the children to interview a visitor about what these passages mean to them today. With the visitor, discuss the idea of the Bible as 'the word of God' and why Christians continue to read the Bible today. Ask the children to write about why a Christian would read the Bible today and explain what they could learn from it, using examples. *What difference do you think it makes to the lives of people who use the Bible as a guide for living?*
- A research task could be to find out about some of aspects of the history of the translation of the Bible into English using a range of resources including ICT.

#### HOW TRUE IS THE BIBLE?

- that people have different views about the truth of the Bible
- about the story of Adam and Eve
- understand the difference between literal and symbolic truth
- to reflect on their own emotions
- Remind children of the previous discussion about kinds of writing. Talk about the nature of recording actual events and the influence of individual perspective. Refer to the writers of the gospels who wrote about Jesus from different perspectives.
- Challenge the children, in pairs, to define 'truth' and collect the definitions without comment.
- Tell the children the Hebrew creation story of Adam and Eve. Talk about the emotions and ask the children, in pairs, to talk about times when they have experienced such emotions, *eg excitement, temptation, fear, regret, shame, disappointment*. Ask the following questions: *What is the purpose of the story? What 'truths' is the writer trying to convey? How does the writer use emotions in the story in order to convey meaning?*
- Return to the question of truth and explore how 'true' the story remains because giving in to temptation can still result in downfall. Differentiate between what is literally true and material that expresses eternal truths.
- Explain that some people do believe in the literal truth of biblical material but other people believe that it contains truths which go beyond the literal meaning of the story. Invite the children to amend their definitions in the light of the discussions and to record their discussion in some way.
- Return to the list of questions drawn up at the beginning of the unit and consider together how well they have been answered. *Do any questions remain unanswered?* Discuss why this is.
- A further lesson would provide the opportunity for children to record, in a format of their choice, all they have learned.

### CHILDREN

- understand the meaning of some biblical passages
- evaluate how far the Bible influences the lives of Christians today

- If possible, show examples of specific texts in Hebrew/Greek/English translations.
- Possible examples to use include:
  - Psalms 18<sup>2-3</sup>
  - 1 Corinthians 13<sup>4-8</sup>
- Translations could include Authorised, New English, Good News, International and children's versions of the Christian Bible.

- describe different ways of understanding biblical 'truth'
- show how the Hebrew creation story reveals truths beyond the literal
- make links between the story and their personal experience
- analyse the feelings and emotions which underlie the story
- reflect upon their own feelings and emotions in the light of the story

- The writer of Genesis chapter 2 focuses on how things are meant to be and on the relationships between men and women and how they are necessary for each other. Chapter 3 sets out to explain why in a world made by a good God things go wrong, *eg frustration at work, hostile animals, death and breakdowns in relationships*.

## **FUTURE LEARNING**

Children could go on to:

- study the text of the Bible in greater depth
- find examples of songs, poems, stories, music and paintings which are based on passages from the Bible

## **OUT-OF-SCHOOL LEARNING**

Children could:

- visit a museum and look at ancient manuscripts and Biblical texts
- find out about the work of the Bible Society, the Scripture Union and the Gideons

