

PAINTING THE CHRISTMAS STORY

Teachers' Notes

Festive workshop for Key Stages 1 and 2
at the Wallace Collection

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This workshop supports Art & Design, English and Religious Education.

Painting the Christmas Story focuses on four Seventeenth Century Old Master paintings in the Great Gallery, which depict the story of the Nativity of Christ as told in the Gospel of St Luke chapter 1, verses 26-38 for the Annunciation and chapter 2, verses 4-14 for the Adoration of the Shepherds. The paintings studied are by two different European artists, Bartolomé Esteban Murillo and Philippe de Champaigne. The session supports the National Curriculum at Key Stage Two in Art & Design, English and Religious Education. The session lasts for 1 1/2 hours and may also be adapted for Key Stage 1 pupils.

Pupils are encouraged to consider how and why the paintings were created and their effect on the spectator. They are introduced to the idea of symbolism in paintings – the Dove representing Peace, the Lily, Purity and the Lamb, Sacrifice. Pupils are helped to read the messages which the paintings convey.

The pupils have the opportunity to do some practical art work with all materials provided – perhaps observing and copying a key element or detail from one of the paintings like an angel, a dove or the Christ Child in the manger.



Bartolomé Esteban Murillo, 1617 – 1682

Bartolomé Esteban Murillo was born and spent most of his life in Seville, in Spain. As well as religious subjects he painted street urchins and beggar boys in a lively, naturalistic style and these paintings achieved great popularity in his lifetime. In the Adoration painting the poverty of the shepherds is brought to life by details like their dirty bare feet and their animated poses while the dog, ox and ass look on.



The Adoration of the Shepherds, 1665 – 1670



The Annunciation, 1665 – 1670

Philippe de Champaigne, 1602 - 1674

Philippe de Champaigne was born in Brussels but spent most of his working life in France, where he was court painter to members of the royal family. Later he worked for the Jansenists, a strict and pious Catholic sect, and his work became very naturalistic, clear with strong colours and appealing to reason rather than emotion. In his Adoration painting angels hold up a banner on which is written in Latin the words 'Peace on Earth, Goodwill to All Men'.



The Annunciation, 1648



The Adoration of the Shepherds, 1645

Gospel of St Luke chapter 1, verses 26-38

26 In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, 27 to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. And the virgin's name was Mary. 28 And he came to her and said, "Greetings, O favored one, the Lord is with you!" 29 But she was greatly troubled at the saying, and tried to discern what sort of greeting this might be. 30 And the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. 31 And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus. 32 He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. And the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David, 33 and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end."

34 And Mary said to the angel, "How will this be, since I am a virgin?"

35 And the angel answered her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born[e] will be called holy—the Son of God. 36 And behold, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son, and this is the sixth month with her who was called barren. 37 For nothing will be impossible with God." 38 And Mary said, "Behold, I am the servant of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word." And the angel departed from her.

Gospel of St Luke chapter 2, verses 4-14

4 And Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the town of Nazareth, to Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage of David, 5 to be registered with Mary, his betrothed, who was with child. 6 And while they were there, the time came for her to give birth. 7 And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in swaddling cloths and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.

8 And in the same region there were shepherds out in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. 9 And an angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were filled with great fear. 10 And the angel said to them, "Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. 11 For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. 12 And this will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger." 13 And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying,

14 "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!"

Follow up Activities:

- The Christmas Story could be narrated by the pupils in their own words either verbally or in writing.
- The drawings made by the children in the Gallery could be redesigned and incorporated into Christmas Cards for their families.