

Key Stage Two RE Materials

CREATION

Work on the Biblical Creation Stories in RE will meet elements of the *Cambridgeshire Agreed Syllabus* strands on “Natural World”, “Writings” and “People”. Some of the work could form part of the non-statutory topics “God and Creation”, “Responses to the Natural World” or “People of Faith, Courage and Commitment”. In the *Norfolk Agreed Syllabus* these ideas may be used when exploring “B Religions and Meaning, (i) The world of nature and (ii) the purpose of life”. The materials may also be used with *QCA’s RE units 5C and 3D*.

The Creation Story in the Bible – Background Information for the Teacher

The Creation Story (or, rather, stories) in Genesis was mostly written about 950 BC, in the reign of King Solomon, although its origin is far earlier. It is wrong to attempt to interpret the story as pure science, as some people attempt to do, because it was not told in the first place to explain the mechanics of the universe, but to answer some of the world’s great ultimate questions. This type of story is called a “myth”, and in this context “myth” should be understood as a technical term, meaning a story that is answering fundamental religious questions and offering spiritual insights. Thus the Genesis story should be read as a “poetic” answer to questions such as : “What is the meaning of Human existence?” “Why is life hard like it is?” “What is our relationship to the natural world?” and just “Why?!” The Israelites answered these questions in the light of their experience of God, expressing their convictions in dramatic illustrations and story form, or the poetry of the psalms. As present day readers of the Bible, we can be stimulated by their words to engage again with these big issues of life afresh for our own generation - the questions are as relevant to us as they were in 950 BC!

A key theme of the Creation story is that of stewardship – humankind is made in God’s image and given the responsibility of looking after the world God has created. The world, as created, is good – and it is our job to keep it that way!

There are many beautiful retellings of the Creation story, including ones retold through music or art, a summary version uniting the two Genesis stories is included here:

The Story

At the very beginning of our world there was nothing. Nothing and God. The earth was dark and cold, it had no shape or substance, no plants or trees, no life or

light, it was just a dark endless waste of heaving water. But in the darkness God decided to make something lasting and beautiful. He moved like a spirit across the wild waters, and began his work of creation.

First he called for light, and immediately there was brilliant light, chasing away the gloom and dark. He marked out time, by making a time of light followed by a time of darkness, and he named the light "Day" and the darkness he called "Night". It was a good start to the work.

Then God looked round at the endless wastes of water, just water, too much water. He left some of the water on the earth, but the rest He sent into the sky to make a great, beautiful blue vault above the earth. He called the great vault "Heaven", and that was the work of the second day.

On the third day God drove back the water so that land could appear all over the earth. He called out continents and islands, great rivers and lakes, and set the boundaries of the seashores. But the earth looked very bare, and so God covered the earth with all kinds of vegetation, with tall trees, and low lichens, with fabulous flowers and luscious leaves. He made the plants with a glorious eye-catching mixture of fruit and seeds, so that they would be able to continue growing and spreading and make the earth a beautiful place to be.

On the fourth day God turned his attention to the heavens. He hung there two great globes of light. The strongest one he called the Sun and it controlled the hours of daylight, and the smaller globe he called the Moon and he hung that in the night. Then he made many smaller moons which He called "stars" and He hung them in the sky with the moon. The lights of the sky mark out all that happen on the earth below – the tides and the seasons and the passage of the years. They are God's great signposts of the sky.

It was the fifth day, and God began to fill the seas and the skies. He filled the seas with all kinds of fish, and even with some things which looked like great sea monsters. He filled the air with birds of every shape and size, with intricate feathers and wondrous songs. He created tiny exquisite flying insects and microscopic plankton, and he smiled at them all, and told them to multiply and fill the seas and the earth with their kind. There was still plenty of room.

On the last of the six great days of creation God made the animals. He made splendid beasts of all kinds: cows, tigers, horses and mice. Every animal you can think of He made. And God looked around at everything and He saw that it was very good, it was a wonderful world, so different from the chaos waters with which He had started. Yet still there was something missing.

For six days God had been thinking things into existence – He had spoken a word of power and they had appeared. But for His last, very special, creation God Himself made a man out of the dust of the earth. The man was something very

special, because God was making someone who was like him, someone he could talk with and share things with. When he had made the shape of the man out of the earth, God gave him life by breathing into him, by sharing His spirit with him. It made the man unique. God gave the man the name "Adam" and He made a very special place for him to live, a wonderful garden called Eden where there was everything he needed. God gave Adam some very special tasks to do; to look after the garden and to name the animals. Now Adam was to be left in charge of all that God had made. God also gave Adam one very important instruction - not to eat the fruit of the tree which stood in the centre of Eden; Adam could eat all the other fruit and vegetables, and eat as much as he liked - but that one tree was forbidden to him.

Adam spent a great deal of time thinking about naming the animals God had created - it is a very important task indeed to get someone's name right - but in all the animals he couldn't find one that he wanted as his own special friend. Adam was lonely. So God took pity on Adam; he sent him into a deep sleep and then opened him up to take out a rib. From this rib God made another human being, a woman this time, to be Adam's partner and friend. Adam called his new wife "Eve".

All was wonderful in the garden, and Adam and Eve were happy. God came daily to talk with them and all seemed perfect. But there was one dangerous animal in the garden, an animal that hated Adam and Eve for their friendship with God and wanted to get rid of them. It was a serpent, but a cunning serpent who could talk! The serpent persuaded Eve to take and eat the fruit of the tree of knowledge in the middle of the garden. Eve had been told by Adam that they must not touch this tree because the fruit would kill them, but the serpent told her that they would not die, instead they would become like God Himself and know everything, and that was why God did not want them to touch it. Eve believed the serpent and not only ate the fruit, but also gave it to Adam. The serpent was right, the fruit was not poisoned, and it did give them new knowledge. It gave Adam and Eve the knowledge of what was right and what was wrong, and what they were sure of immediately was that they had done a very great wrong indeed by disobeying the one direct command of God.

When God next came to speak with Adam and Eve they were too ashamed to come out and meet Him. Their stupid disobedience had destroyed the most important friendship that they had. Sadly, God knew that He could not let this pass; Adam and Eve had to be punished for their disobedience, and they could not be left free in the garden in case they ate the fruit of His other special tree, the "Tree of Life", and lived forever. God pronounced His decision. Because of their disobedience, life would now become much harder not only for Adam and Eve, but for all their children who came after them as well. In order to live they would still have to look after the earth and grow food, but this would not be easy work anymore, like in the garden, it would be difficult and tough. When a woman had a baby, it was not going to be simple, but a painful and drawn out process. And people would die,

and when they died their bodies would turn back into the dust, which God had made them from in the first place. God did not forget the serpent who had played such a malicious role in the whole story; He took away his legs so that he became a snake which had to crawl upon the ground and told the snake that his children and Eve's children would hate each other for ever.

There was now just one thing left to do – to turn Adam and Eve out of Eden and bar the entrance so that they could not return. It was a sad moment; the perfect friendship between God and His people was spoilt, maybe forever. Could things ever return to the way they were?

Classroom Follow –up to the Story

Instead of getting into pointless discussions about the scientific accuracy of the Genesis story, which is a sticking point for many people, the most appropriate way of using this story in the classroom is to think with the children about this as a story to answer people's questions. You could ask them to consider what questions the story might be answering, it's almost like a maths problem – “the answer is 47, so what could the question have been?” Alternatively, you could discuss together some of the following questions at an appropriate level:

- Does God care about the world in the story?
- What does the story tell us people's relationship with the world of nature should be like?
- Can people do what they want with nature? Does it matter what they do?
- After listening to this story, and thinking about what the world is like now, do you think people are treating the world in the right way? What is good? What could be better? What really needs to be changed?
- At the beginning of the story people lived in harmony with nature, at the end they were out of step with nature. Which do you think we are now, and why?

All big questions!