

Junior Soldiers

Unit 2 : Lesson 9



‘Whose story is it?’

PURPOSE : To help children understand that many of the things we associate with Christmas are not part of the Bible’s story about the birth of Jesus as well as to consider why these things have been added and whether they help or detract from their understanding of what Christmas is really about.

“My dear friends, you always obeyed when I was with you. Now that I am away, you should obey even more. So work with fear and trembling to discover what it really means to be saved. God is working in you to make you willing and able to obey him.”

Philippians 2:12-13 (CEV)

Consider & Prepare

Read:

Luke 2:8-20

Matthew 1:18-25

Matthew 2:1-12

Christmas is a very busy time full of lots of celebrations, significance, traditions, songs, stories and more. It is easy to become confused about God’s story to us through the birth of Jesus as we read it in the Bible and all of the ‘extras’ that make up our Christmas stories each year as part of our celebrations and traditions. Even the Nativity often has added extras that are never mentioned in the biblical narrative.

Your Junior Soldiers will have heard the Christmas story, for some perhaps many times before, but do they have the real story? How many ‘extras’ do they have in their understanding of God’s gift to us?

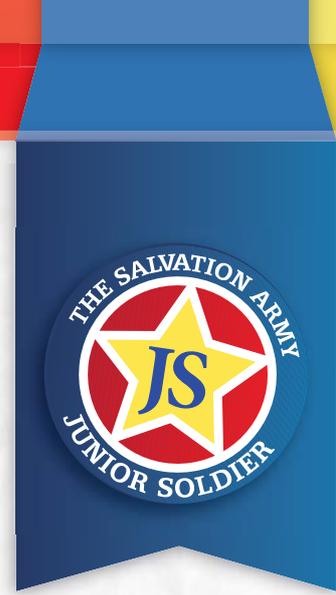
What you will need:

For ‘Connecting In’

- Scattergories game, dice or letters to draw from a bag for ‘Christmattegories’ game
- Print off Christmattegories game cards

For 'The Main Thing'

- Textas
- Post-it notes
- Butchers paper
- Blu tac
- Bibles, in a number of different translations
- Optional: download these videos from Max7
 - Luke 2:8-20 <http://www.max7.org/resource.aspx?id=3d08b802-fbce-467e-9214-0293606a0d3e>
 - Matthew 2:1-12 <http://www.max7.org/resource.aspx?id=87bd3b6e-9a37-4091-8655-384ea25bad63>
 - Three clips of the Christmas story (Matthew 1:18–25, Luke 2:8–16 & Matthew 2:1–12) <http://www.max7.org/resource.aspx?id=1a041264-4fe7-423d-872b-4a91c96f094a>
- Optional: computer and data projector (or alternative) to show video clips.



For 'Home & Beyond'

- Print off the Home & Beyond cards for each child.

Connecting In

Christmattegories Game ...

Played in a similar way to 'Scattergories'

If you can get a dice from a Scattergories game it will give you an easy way to randomly choose letters. Another way to do this would be to put some Scrabble tiles with useful letters (i.e. not letters like X or Q) in a bag and draw them out or simply make your own letters to use in this way.

- A different letter of the alphabet is rolled or drawn out for each round.
- A timer is set so that everyone knows when the round is up. A minute is long enough.
- Players write answers to as many categories as possible in the time allowed.
- Each answer must begin with that letter but the same answer can't be given twice, e.g. angel cannot be a character and a decoration. Also, extra points can be gained for using multiple letters, e.g. letter H - Hark the Herald Angels Sing = 2 points for 2 words beginning with H; letter: R – Rudolph the Red Nose Reindeer = 3 points for 3 words.
- Play as many rounds as time allows but stop before the game becomes boring.
- Depending on the age make up of your group you may like to pair some children together for this activity.
- See example below and template at the end of the lesson.



Letter: 'H'

Christmas Song

Christmas Character

Christmas Food



Letter: 'S'

Hark the Herald Angels Sing

Herod

Ham



Santa Calus is coming to town

Shepherds

Seafood

The Main Thing

Christmas Brainstorm...

You can do this as one group or if you have a larger number of children you could split into smaller groups. This could also be done with Big Buds in groups or adapted to a one-on-one discussion depending on your situation.

- Put three sheets of butchers paper up on the walls.

Brainstorm 1

- Using post-it notes, write down everything you can think of that is associated with Christmas, e.g. Jesus, shepherds, Santa, presents etc.
- Put one idea only per post-it note.
- Stick post-it notes on the sheets of butcher paper as you go.
- When ideas start to come to an end, call a halt.

Sort

- Group common ideas together on butchers paper. If the same thing has been written a number of times just leave one post-it note with that item. (Note, this will make it easier when you have to move the ideas around.)
- Sort the ideas into three categories: Bible Story, Not Bible Story, Not Sure.
- Use one sheet of butcher paper for each category.
- Use a thick texta to label each sheet so there is no confusion about what goes where.
- Decide if the Christmas item comes from the story of Christmas found in the Bible or not. One sheet is for those things they are undecided about.
- Junior Soldiers work together to sort the ideas on the post-it notes and transfer them to the correct sheet of butchers paper.
- If possible split up the group so they can work on sorting all three sheets at once.

Discuss

- Talk about the items on each sheet of butchers paper and why they have been placed there.
- The group may decide at this stage if any items need to be moved.

Brainstorm 2

- Using the post-it notes, write down all the Christmas stories you can think of, e.g. *The Nativity*, *Frosty the Snowman*, *A Christmas Carol*, *The Nightmare Before Christmas* etc.
- One story per post-it.
- Put the stories up on the appropriate sheets of butcher paper.

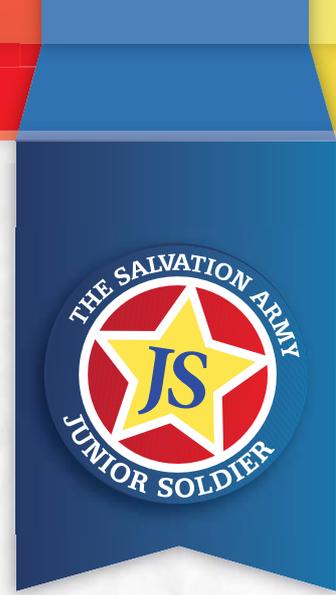
Read

Read the story of Jesus, birth in the Bible: Luke 2:8–20, Matthew 1:18–25, Matthew 2:1–12.

- If you can, use some different translations and see if there are any variations in the story.
- It would be good at this point to use the Max7 video clips in the CEV translation as suggested above.
- You can allocate different passages to groups or individual children (Big Buds if they are involved)

Discuss

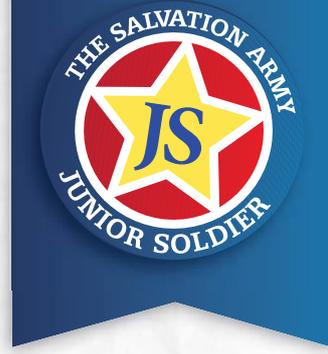
- What is different or the same about the story of Jesus' birth in the different Gospels?
- What is different or the same about the story of Jesus' birth and other Christmas stories?
- Are there any things you have discovered that are or are not part of the Christmas story?
- Do you need to change any items to a different sheet of butchers paper?



Tying In

Debrief...

- What did you discover about the things that are and are not part of the Bible's Christmas story?
- Why do you think there are so many stories about Christmas?
- In what ways do other Christmas stories help or not help us to understand the birth of Jesus?
- Why do you think we have added so many other things to the way we celebrate Christmas?
- In what ways do these extra things (i.e. those things not mentioned in the Bible) help you to understand and celebrate the birth of Jesus and God's gift of salvation?
- In what ways do the extra things confuse, blur or disguise the story of Jesus' birth and God's gift of salvation?
- Pray together that the way you celebrate Christmas this year will be about God's gift to us of salvation through Jesus' birth.



Home & Beyond

Print off the Home & Beyond cards attached. The children might like to keep these in their journal or notebook where they could write or stick the challenges, reflect, answer questions or complete activities each week.

- Choose some things that could help you celebrate the birth of Jesus and talk with your family and/or Big Bud about what you can do to make those things a significant part of your Christmas celebrations.
- Start a new family Christmas tradition.

Christmattegories

Christmas Song	_____	_____
Christmas Character	_____	_____
Christmas Food	_____	_____
Christmas Tradition	_____	_____
Christmas Decoration	_____	_____
Christmas Toy	_____	_____
Christmas Present	_____	_____
Christmas Story	_____	_____
Christmas Movie	_____	_____
Christmas Emotion	_____	_____



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