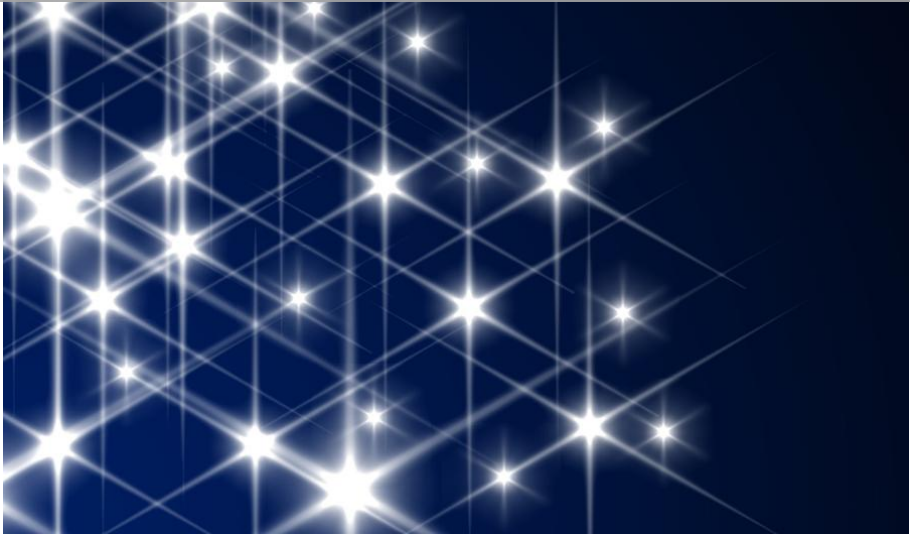




RETHINKING CHRISTMAS



## RETHINKING CHRISTMAS

How much do you really know about the first Christmas? Perhaps we've heard the story so many times we know it well. Or do traditions sometimes overtake the truth? 'Rethinking Christmas' is a chance to explore the Bible narrative with your young people through games and creative activities.

### CHRISTMAS RUN-AROUND

Ideal for younger teenagers. This active 'run-around' quiz will test your group's knowledge of the accounts in Matthew and Luke, providing a platform for further discussion or reflection.

Set up four zones in your room or hall (zone A, B, C and D.) Ask the group to gather in the middle of the hall. Explain that you will ask a question about the Christmas story which has four possible answers (A, B, C or D.)

Then on your signal (a whistle is good) the young people have 10 seconds to run to the zone which they think represents the correct answer. Once everyone is in a zone, the whistle blows again and they have 5 seconds (if they wish to change their mind) to change zones.

For example, with what words did the heavenly host of angels praise God?

- A Joy to the world, the lord is come
- B O little town of Bethlehem
- C Hark the herald angels sing
- D **Glory to God in the highest**

Explain the background where necessary and highlight any traditions not recorded in the original nativity story.

**Who was the mother of Jesus?**

- A Martha
- B Elisabeth
- C **Mary (Matthew 1: 18)**
- D Rebecca

**Mary was told by an angel that she was to give birth to Jesus. What was his name?**

- A Leonardo
- B Raphael
- C Michael
- D **Gabriel (Luke 1: 26)**

**When Mary became pregnant, Mary and Joseph were:**

- A Married
- B **Engaged (Matthew 1: 18)**
- C Just good friends
- D Neighbours

**What did Joseph want to do when he discovered Mary was pregnant?**

- A Run away
- B Quietly divorce her (Matthew 1: 19)**
- C Send her back to her parents
- D Have the child given away

**Which Caesar decreed that all the Roman Empire should take part in a census?**

- A Augustus (Luke 2: 1)**
- B Julius
- C Nero
- D Claudius

**Joseph had to travel to his home town. This was where Jesus was born. Where was it?**

- A Nazareth
- B Bethlehem (Luke 2: 4)**
- C Jerusalem
- D Jericho

**What animal did Mary ride to Bethlehem?**

- A Donkey
- B Small horse
- C Actually, she walked!
- D The Bible does not say (It only says that Mary came with Joseph)**

**Why didn't Mary and Joseph stay at an inn after their long journey to Bethlehem?**

- A It was too expensive
- B They forgot to book in advance
- C There was no more room (Luke 2: 7)**
- D There was no inn

**Where did Jesus sleep after being born?**

- A In a basket
- B In a feeding trough or manger (Luke 2: 7)**
- C In a cot
- D On a pile of hay

**Which animals does the Bible say were housed in the stable?**

- A Cows, donkeys, sheep
- B Cows, goats, sheep
- C Cows, doves, sheep
- D The Bible doesn't say (There's no mention of animals in the nativity story)**

**What sign did the angels give the shepherds, to help them look for Jesus?**

- A Look for a stable with a star shining above it
- B Look for a barn covered in Christmas lights
- C Look for a baby lying in a manger (Luke 2: 12)**
- D look for three wise men

**With what words did the heavenly host of angels praise God?**

- A Joy to the world, the lord is come
- B O little town of Bethlehem
- C Hark the herald angels sing
- D Glory to God in the highest (Luke 2: 14)**

**When the angels had left, what did the shepherds do?**

- A Went quickly to Bethlehem (Luke 2: 15-16)**
- B Went to feed their sheep
- C Went to tell the news to King Herod
- D Went back home to tell their families

**What did the shepherds do after they had visited Jesus?**

- A Went back home to tell their families
- B Went to spread the news about Jesus' birth (Luke 2: 17)**
- C Went back to looking after their sheep
- D Went to buy each other Christmas presents

**What does the name Jesus mean?**

- A God is with us
- B The Lord saves (Matthew 1: 21)**
- C The Lamb of God
- D Chosen by God

# CHRISTMAS WORD SEARCH

People and places from Luke 1: 26 - 2: 20.

|   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| J | O | S | G | L | Y | L | M | E | J | H | E |
| I | R | U | A | T | E | A | M | E | T | A | I |
| M | H | I | L | A | R | I | S | E | U | N | S |
| I | H | N | I | Y | Y | U | R | G | N | H | B |
| P | T | I | L | D | S | A | U | B | E | H | R |
| C | E | R | E | D | Z | S | E | P | A | T | E |
| Y | B | I | E | A | T | H | H | D | O | G | G |
| R | A | U | N | U | O | E | P | E | O | T | N |
| O | Z | Q | S | O | R | S | L | E | G | N | A |
| H | I | J | U | D | E | A | F | P | S | N | M |
| A | L | S | S | T | R | H | D | R | C | O | T |
| B | E | T | H | L | E | H | E | M | I | W | J |

|          |           |           |           |
|----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| God      | Joseph    | Augustus  | Manger    |
| Gabriel  | Mary      | Quirinius | Inn       |
| Nazareth | Jesus     | Judea     | Shepherds |
| Galilee  | Elizabeth | Bethlehem | Angels    |

And, of course, the answers:

|   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| J | O | S | G | L | Y | L | M | E | J | H | E |
| I | R | U | A | T | E | A | M | E | T | A | I |
| M | H | I | L | A | R | I | S | E | U | N | S |
| I | H | N | I | Y | Y | U | R | G | N | H | B |
| P | T | I | L | D | S | A | U | B | E | H | R |
| C | E | R | E | D | Z | S | E | P | A | T | E |
| Y | B | I | E | A | T | H | H | D | O | G | G |
| R | A | U | N | U | O | E | P | E | O | T | N |
| O | Z | Q | S | O | R | S | L | E | G | N | A |
| H | I | J | U | D | E | A | F | P | S | N | M |
| A | L | S | S | T | R | H | D | R | C | O | T |
| B | E | T | H | L | E | H | E | M | I | W | J |



## CHRISTMAS CINQUAIN

A cinquain (pronounced 'sin-CANE') is a five lined poem whose rhythm relies on the number of syllables in each line. First created in 1911, these were short unrhymed poems consisting of twenty-two syllables. They were distributed into 2, 4, 6, 8, 2 syllables in five lines.

Divide the young people into pairs and invite them to create a special advent or Christmas poem illustrating the feelings of one of the people involved or highlighting something of the real meaning of Christmas.

This is a great way to dig deeper into the thoughts and feelings of characters in the story or to reflect on the real meaning of the coming of Christ.

Create an five line poem based on the 'cinquain' method where,

- Line one has only one word, the title of the poem. (Noun).
- Line two has two words, describing the title. (Adjectives).
- Line three has three action words (or a three-word phrase) that tell you something that the title can do (Verbs).
- Line four has four words (or a four word phrase) describing a feeling about your title.
- Line five is one word that refers back to your title (Synonym).

Here is my own five minute attempt on the story of the wise men coming to see Jesus.

MAGI  
GAZING UPWARD  
HOPEFUL JOYFUL SEARCHING  
FOLLOWING THE EASTERN STAR  
WISE

Now have a go yourself. You could begin with words like Mary, Angels Shepherds, Baby, Saviour, Christ, Jesus, Star, Light, Hope. Invite some of the young people to read out their five line 'cinquain' poems.

**REFLECTION**

Prepare some discussion questions on the story to help your young people reflect on what they can learn from it today. For example,

- How do you think the teenager Mary felt when she heard the angel's words? How do you react when you sense God calls you to a new, surprising or challenging task? What can we learn from Mary's response and example?
- Why do you think Jesus was born in such humble circumstances? How does that make you feel about him today?
- The angel announced 'Good News' to the shepherds, who then spread that news to others. How could you share this same 'Good News' in the next few days?

**OR**

Close with a short message or reflection on our own response to the first Christmas.

Is it just an annual celebration? An opportunity to get that games console? The birth of a world religion? God demonstrating his love for mankind? God showing his love for ME? How do we respond to the birth of Jesus?



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