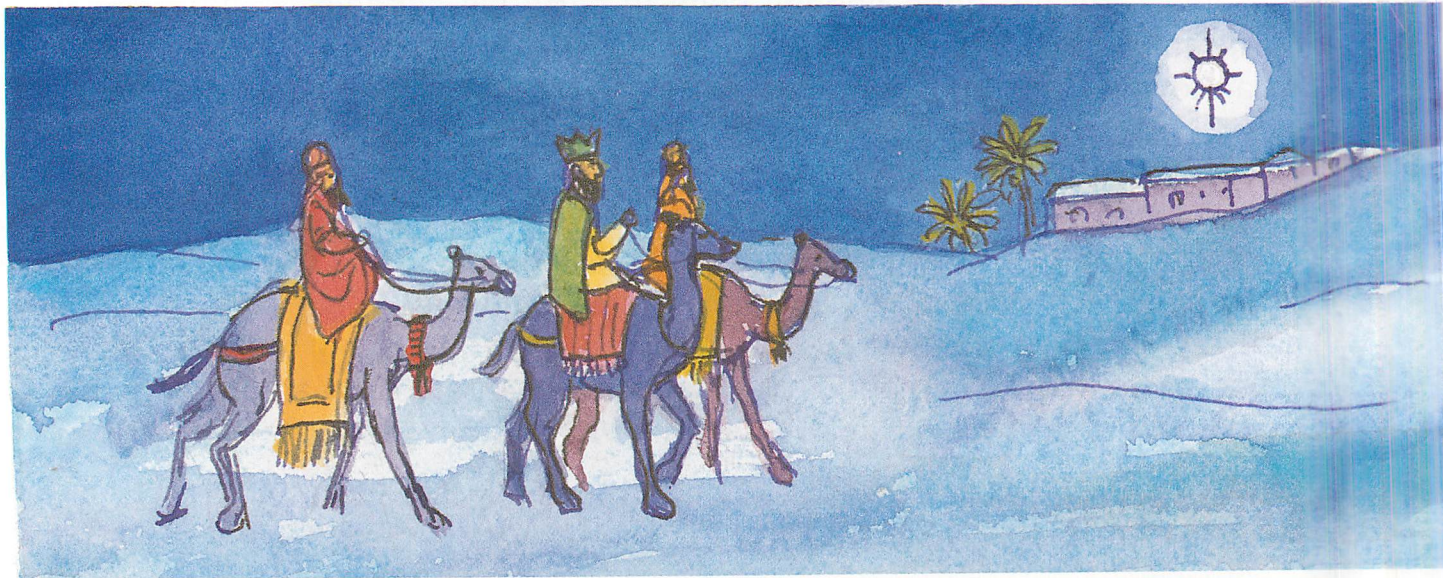


The Birth of Jesus



VISITORS FROM THE EAST

Jesus was born in the town of Bethlehem in Judea during the time when Herod was king. Soon afterward, some men who studied the stars came from the East to Jerusalem and asked, “Where is the baby born to be the king of the Jews? We saw his star when it came up in the east, and we have come to worship him.”

When King Herod heard about this, he was very upset, and so was everyone else in Jerusalem. He called together all the chief priests and the teachers of the Law and asked them, “Where will the Messiah be born?”

“In the town of Bethlehem in Judea,” they answered. “For this is what the prophet wrote:

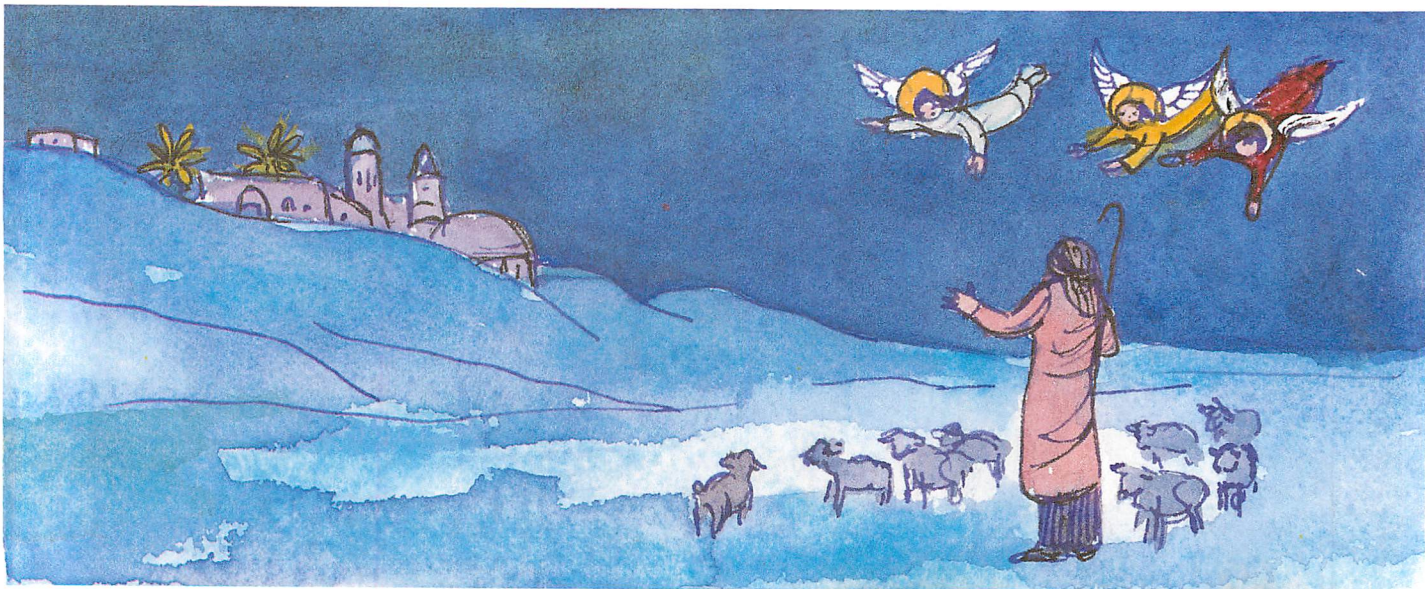
“Bethlehem in the land of Judah, you are by no means the least of the leading cities of Judah; for from you will come a leader who will guide my people Israel.”

So Herod called the visitors from the East to a secret meeting and found out from them the exact time the star had appeared. Then he sent them to Bethlehem with these instructions: “Go and make a careful search for the child; and when you find him, let me know, so that I too may go and worship him.”

And so they left, and on their way they saw the same star they had seen in the East. When they saw it, how happy they were, what joy was theirs! It went ahead of them until it stopped over the place where the child was. They went into the house, and when they saw the child with his mother Mary, they knelt down and worshipped him. They brought out their gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh, and presented them to him.

Then they returned to their country by another road, since God had warned them in a dream not to go back to Herod.

Matthew 2:1-12



THE SHEPHERDS AND THE ANGELS

There were some shepherds in that part of the country who were spending the night in the fields, taking care of their flocks. An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone over them. They were terribly afraid, but the angel said to them, “Don’t be afraid! I am here with good news for you, which will bring great joy to all the people. This very day in David’s town your savior was born — Christ the Lord! And this is what will prove it to you: you will find a baby wrapped in clothes and lying in a manger.”

Suddenly a great army of heaven's angels appeared with the angel, singing praises to God:

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

When the angels went away from them, back into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let's go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us."

So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and saw the baby lying in the manger. When the shepherds saw him, they told them what the angel had said about the child. All who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said. Mary remembered all these things and thought deeply about them. The shepherds went back, singing praises to God for all they had heard and seen; it had been just as the angel had told them.

Luke 2:8-20



Objectives

Students will

1. Make puppets.
2. Re-enact the story of Christmas using their puppets.

Background for Teacher

Matthew 2:1-17; Luke 2:1-20.

Materials Needed

• Pencils, crayons, non-toxic glue, one sock per child, various colored crepe paper and construction paper, scissors. (It might be wise to have a few extra socks on hand in case there are mistakes or not enough students to play all of the necessary roles.) Before class, write on small slips of paper one of the following roles per slip: Jesus, Mary, Joseph, Innkeeper, First King, Second King, Third King, Herod, Angel of the Lord, Shepherd, Donkey, Sheep, Cow. There are thirteen roles listed. If necessary, a student could play more than one role, in which case the student will need more than one sock.

Procedure

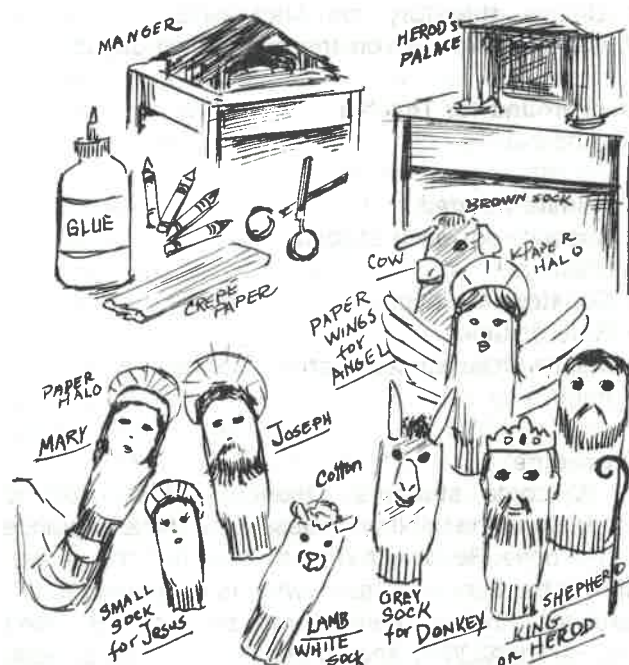
1. Welcome students. Opening prayer. Announce briefly and quickly that today's class is going to be one of the most fun-filled hours the students have had all year, but that this will be true only if the students are very cooperative. Explain that the students are going to tell the story of Christmas, one at a time. Each student has to say one thing about what happened, but has to say it in such a way that the next student still has something left to say. For example, a student can't say: The three kings came and gave gifts to the baby Jesus. Instead, it would be better to say: The three kings came. So that the next student could say: And each king gave the child a gift. The third student could say: The first king's gift was myrrh. And so forth. The idea is to let each of the students tell an element of the story until the story is finished, even if it takes going around the room several times. (5 min.)

2. After the students' version is over, congratulate them for doing such a good job. Tell them to listen very carefully to what you are about to read. Ask them to raise their hands if they notice any detail in what you read that wasn't mentioned in their telling of the story. Then read as if it were one single uninterrupted narrative. (10 min.)

3. Put the slips of paper with the roles on them on the table and have each student draw one. That is the role he or she is going to play in a puppet show. But first they have to make the puppets. (If there are more than thirteen students, add more animals. If there are fewer, pick the most important characters). Distribute a sock to each student and tell them they

are going to make puppets. Here's how:

On construction paper of the student's choosing, have each student draw a pair of ears appropriate to his or her puppet. The student may wish to color in some special details. So along with pencil and paper, you have to make available some crayons. After ears and eyes have been made, they need to be cut out. When that's done, the puppet needs a mouth. Do the same thing. Finally, the puppet needs hair. A small piece of crepe paper with several snips in it can create the effect of hair. The kings need crowns; students can make them with construction paper. After all the necessary cut-outs have been done, they need to be glued to one side of the sock. A face is to be made way down near the toes. The hair goes on the other side. Have the students put their hands into the sock; they now have a puppet. (20 min.)



4. Assign places of action. Make a center desk the stable. Another desk the inn. Another desk can be Herod's palace; another can be the meadows where the shepherds are. Arranging the characters near their places, start the action and let it proceed at its own rhythm and style. All you need to say is: We begin now at the inn. And: We change now to the stable or Herod's palace or to the three kings outside Herod's palace. (15 min.)

5. After clean-up (children can keep their puppets), have the students write their names on a slip of paper. Collect them in a hat or cup and then have each child select a name. Now ask them to fill in on the student activity packet insert, the gift they would like to give to the person whose name they selected. Collect these, read aloud, and distribute them to the appropriate child to keep. (10 min.)

6. Closing prayer and dismissal.