

## Baby Jesus



### Years 2 and upwards

In Britain and other parts of the English-speaking world there is a **strong tradition** for performing a Christmas play, usually called a nativity play, at the end of the autumn term. So putting on the play in itself links the children in your class to other children in other countries doing just the same thing.

The story is about Mary and Joseph's arrival in Bethlehem, and the birth of Jesus. The children who perform nativity plays in England are usually the youngest pupils – from five to seven years of age. The play is intended for children in Norway from Year 2 upwards, who have English as their second or third language. There are no kings, but a real dancing star instead. A worry that is sometimes raised is whether putting on a nativity play is appropriate in a multicultural society. Will the play be perceived as **evangelical** – trying to convert the children to Christianity? Most teachers seem to agree that this story can be seen as a basic narrative in Christian and Muslim culture rather than as an expression of faith. But you will need to work out your own position on this issue, and be sensitive to the views of the parents.

### Some practical considerations

The play has a **narrator**. She or he will probably be a teacher. The narrator's role is to read a very simple English text that holds the story together. In this way the narrator/teacher can stand on stage and help where necessary (instead of whispering loudly from off-stage, pretending the audience cannot hear her/him!) The play also has '**helpers**'. There can be as

many children in the role of helpers as you wish. They are responsible, with the teacher, for holding the play together. They can perhaps be supported on stage by a second teacher.

There are some roles that involve acting but no speaking – so called **non-speaking parts** – the stars, the angels, the donkey, and the sheep. All the children are involved in singing the songs, even if they don't have a speaking part. It may surprise you that **violins** are suggested. But 'Twinkle, twinkle, little star' is one of the earliest tunes many young violinists learn to play. One can even play a version with just open strings!

If you work in a little school, several small classes can work together to put on the play. Some small changes will no doubt need to be made to fit the play to your particular school. Putting on plays is a lot of fun and a lot of work. Make sure you have a Christmas holiday afterwards!

Let us now look at how to gather and organise ideas for this project. A web shows the learning activities that can be linked to the play, though we will not, of course, use all of them.

### **How to work with 'Baby Jesus' in English and other subjects**

Obviously we have plenty of useful and enjoyable activities here. When we check with *Kunnskapsløftet* it is clear that this project is spot on, not only for English, but for nearly all the other subjects too. By the end of Year 4 pupils should be able to "take part in the performance of [...] short plays" in English. In Norwegian they should "interact with others through play, dramatization, conversations and discussions". In music they should "take part in performances with singing". In mathematics pupils are to "carry out practical tasks involving buying and selling". In art and craft there is a competence aim that learners should "plan and make simple useful objects". In PE pupils are to "interact with others in various activities" and in religious education they are required to "tell the story of central texts from the gospels about Jesus' life".

Even food and health can be involved, when the pupils "use measurements and weight in connection with recipes and cooking". What's more, working together on a nativity play meets some of the ambitions of the Core Curriculum, where "education is to be grounded in Christian and humanist values". "Education" it says, "has a key role to play in the sharing of common frames of reference". Working together on a play that must be ready for performance is a first step towards work experience, which is also something school must prepare even its younger learners for. For work is something "where mutual dependence requires discipline, and where one's own effort affects the result of others".

## Activities

### General

Working together towards a common goal  
Experiencing that everybody is essential for a successful process and result

### Art and craft

Help make stage set  
Help make costumes  
Design invitations  
Make posters  
Look at nativity pictures by great artists

### Domestic science

Make gingerbread biscuits or star and moon biscuits

### Religious education

Retell the Christmas story  
Learn a Norwegian carol  
Who should we donate the ticket money to?

### Norwegian

Retell the Christmas story  
Make one's own Christmas story  
Discuss all aspects of the production  
Write a log/diary of the production process  
Write a report of the performance

### English

Put on an English nativity play, learning text and carols by heart  
Write the text for the invitation  
Some of the instructions for activities in art and craft and PE can be given in English.

### Music

Sing Christmas carols  
Play the melodies on recorders, drums or violins

### PE

Learn a star dance  
Learn to move on stage

## Baby Jesus

### Social studies

Find out how your parents and grandparents prepared for Christmas at school

### Maths

Count down to Christmas and to the performance  
Calculate the number of biscuits needed  
Count chairs needed for the performance  
Sell tickets  
Count up the ticket money

### Learning by heart

Learning to speak loudly and be the centre of attention  
Working closely with parents and school staff  
Solidarity in practice – money to a good cause

## Baby Jesus: a Christmas play

**Characters:** narrator      shepherds      a star  
                         helpers      Angel Gabriel      angels  
                         Mary      3 innkeepers  
                         Joseph      a donkey      (sheep)

### Scene 1

C                      F                      C                      G7                      C                      G7                      C

Twin-kle, twin-kle, lit-tle star, how I won-der what you are.

G7                      C                      G7                      Em                      A7                      Dm7                      G7                      C                      Am                      Dm                      G7

Up a-bove the world so high, like a dia-mond in the sky.

C                      F                      C                      Dm                      G7                      C                      Am                      Dm                      G7                      C

Twin-kle, twin-kle, lit-tle star, how I won-der what you are.

*(All children sing, plus violins or recorders)*

*(After the song, children leave the stage. Narrator and helpers remain on stage, to the side.)*

*The star enters and walks slowly and proudly across the stage.)*

*Helpers:* Look at the star.

*Narrator:* Yes, this is a story about a star and a baby.

And about a very special night.

Listen! Look!

*(Mary and Joseph come in.)*

*Narrator:* Who are you?

*Mary:* I'm Mary.

*Helpers:* Hello Mary.

*Narrator:* And who are you?

*Joseph:* I'm Joseph.

*Helpers:* Hello Joseph.

*Narrator:* Where are you going, Mary and Joseph?

*Mary and Joseph:* We're going to Bethlehem.

*The donkey enters.*

*Mary:* Joseph, I'm tired.

*Narrator:* Yes, Mary is tired. She will have a baby soon.

*Helpers:* Look! A donkey.

*Joseph:* Come, Mary, here is a donkey.

*Mary:* Thank you.

*Narrator:* Now Joseph and Mary will go on to Bethlehem.

They have a long way to go.

*Helpers:* Goodbye Mary and Joseph.

*Mary and Joseph:* Goodbye, goodbye.

*(Mary, Joseph and the helpers wave each other goodbye.)*

## **Scene 2**

*(Three innkeepers stand at three different places on the stage.*

*Mary and Joseph come in slowly. Mary is on the donkey.)*

*Narrator:* Mary and Joseph are in Bethlehem now. Mary is very tired.

They need somewhere to sleep.

But there are many people in Bethlehem.

Mary and Joseph go to a hotel.

*Joseph:* May we sleep here?

*1<sup>st</sup> Innkeeper:* No, sorry, the hotel is full.

*Narrator:* Joseph goes to the next hotel.

*Joseph:* May we sleep here?

*2<sup>nd</sup> Innkeeper:* No, sorry, the hotel is full.

*Narrator:* Poor Joseph and Mary. They are so tired now.

Joseph and Mary go to the last hotel.

*Joseph:* May we sleep here?

*3<sup>rd</sup> Innkeeper:* No, sorry, the hotel is full.

*Mary:* I am very tired.

*3<sup>rd</sup> Innkeeper:* Well, you can sleep over there, with the donkeys.

*Joseph and Mary:* Thank you.

### Scene 3

*Narrator:* Here are the shepherds (and their sheep). It is night. It is cold.

*Helpers:* Hello shepherds.

*Shepherds:* Hello.

*Narrator:* Tonight is a special night. Look! Can you see the star?

*(The star moves across the stage.)*

*Shepherds:* Look! A star!

*(Angel Gabriel comes in and stands next to the star.)*

*Gabriel:* Hello shepherds.

*Shepherds:* An angel!

*Gabriel:* Yes, I am an angel. Listen to me!

*Narrator:* Now the angel – his name is Gabriel – tells the shepherds something special, something very special.

*(Angel Gabriel mimes that he is talking to the shepherds.)*

A baby has been born. He will be king.

He will be the best king ever in the world.

*Helpers and shepherds:* Wow! A king!

*Gabriel:* Go that way! *(He points off stage.)*

*Shepherds:* Let's go! Come on!

*Narrator:* So the shepherds go to see the baby king.

They follow the star.

They are so happy. They sing.

There will be a new world. It begins tonight!

## Cowboy carol

The musical score for 'Cowboy carol' is written in a single system with four staves. The key signature has one flat (Bb) and the time signature is common time (C). The lyrics are: 'There'll be a new world be-ginn-in' from to - night! There'll be a new world be-ginn-in' from to - night! When I climb up to my sad-dle, Gonna take him to my heart! There'll be a new world be-ginn-in' from to - night!'. The score includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, and bar lines. Chord symbols are placed above the staff: F, C7, F, Bb, F, F7, Bb rit., Bbm a tempo, F, C7, F. The piece ends with a double bar line.

## Scene 4

*Narrator:* Look! Here are Mary and Joseph with their new baby.

They are very happy.

The baby is very special. His name is Jesus.

He is sleeping. Can we see your baby, Mary?

*Mary:* Here is the baby. His name is Jesus. (*Mary shows everyone her baby.*)

*Helpers:* Wow. He's tiny!

Look, here come the shepherds.

(*The shepherds come in carrying a sheepskin.*)

*Shepherds:* Can we see your baby, Mary?

*Joseph and Mary:* Here he is.

*Shepherds:* Wow. He's tiny! He's so sweet! *They kneel.*

*The star comes in.*

*Narrator:* Look. There is the star, shining over Baby Jesus.

(*The angels dance happily in.*)

*Narrator:* Look, the angels are here now. They are happy too.

*Angels:* Yes, we are happy. Jesus is king.

*Narrator:* Tiny baby Jesus is sleeping. But it is cold.

Where is the coat of fur?

*Shepherds:* Here is the fur.

*Joseph and Mary:* Thank you. (*They put the fur round Jesus.*)

*Narrator:* Good. Now the fur will keep Jesus warm.

Little Jesus sweetly sleep

The musical score is written in a single system with four staves. The key signature has one flat (B-flat) and the time signature is common time (C). The notes are as follows:  
Staff 1: F (4 measures), G7 (2 measures), C (2 measures), G (2 measures), C (2 measures).  
Staff 2: C7 (2 measures), F (2 measures), C7 (2 measures), F (2 measures).  
Staff 3: C (4 measures).  
Staff 4: F (4 measures), G7 (2 measures), C (2 measures), C7 (2 measures), F (2 measures), C7 (2 measures), F (2 measures).

Lit - tle Je - sus, sweet - ly sleep, do not stir;  
Ma - ry's lit - tle ba - by sleep, sweet - ly sleep,

We will lend a coat of fur, We will rock you,  
Sleep in com - fort, slum - ber deep;

rock you, rock you, We will rock you, rock you, rock you:

See the fur to keep you warm, Snug - ly round your ti - ny form.  
We will serve you all we can, Dar - ling, dar - ling lit - tle man.