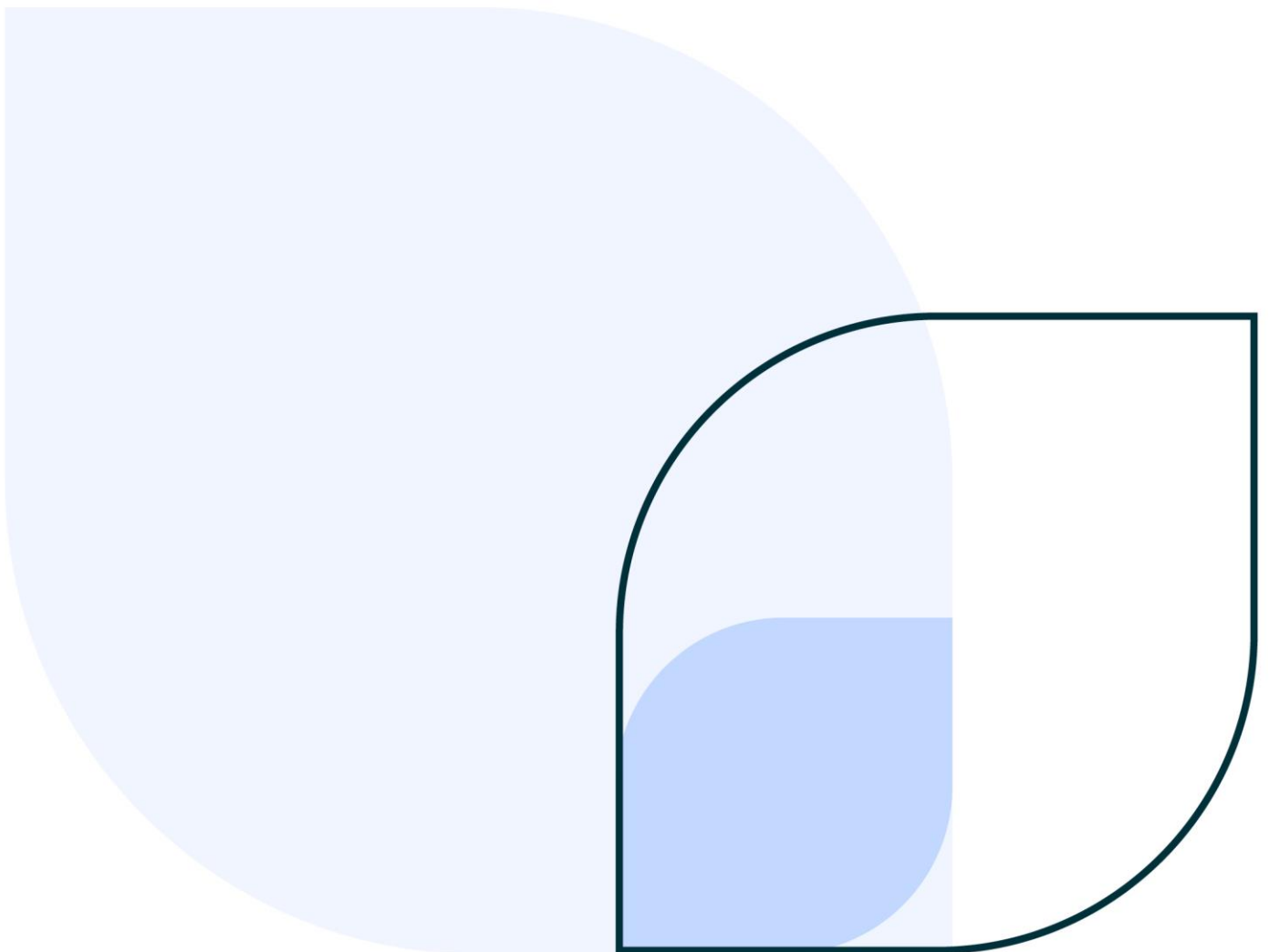


# Collective Worship

Secondary resources: The Danger of a single story.

Retelling our Story





## Key Concept / Message

Black History Month (BHM) is celebrated in October in the UK and February in the United States. BHM began in the US in 1926 and was initiated by historian Carter G. Woodson to honour the contributions of Black individuals who were often overlooked in mainstream history. The UK first celebrated BHM in 1987, inspired by the American tradition but tailored to recognise Black communities' specific histories and achievements in Britain, including the Windrush Generation and other significant contributions. BHM serves as a time to honour the rich cultural heritage, resilience, and accomplishments of Black people and to educate wider society about the diverse histories that shape our world today.

This year's theme, "Reclaiming Narratives," encourages us to take control of our stories, celebrating heritage and amplifying voices that have often been misrepresented or ignored. For Christians, participating in BHM can be deeply connected to their faith's call for justice, truth, and love. Proverbs 31:8-9 urges the reader to "speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves." Similarly, BHM 2024 seeks to highlight and honour marginalised voices. Celebrating BHM is one way of reflecting God's creation of diverse humanity (Genesis 1:27) and Jesus' command to love our neighbour (Mark 12:31). It's an opportunity to learn, reflect, and commit to building a more inclusive and just society that honours all of God's people.

- This act of worship for secondary pupils focuses on the importance of telling the stories of the past in order to inspire us for the future, particularly the stories of those who have overcome injustice. The biblical text used focuses on a time when the Israelite people were encouraged to tell the stories of their past and pass them down to their children, so they would not be forgotten for the future.
- The idea behind Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's "[The Danger of a Single Story](#)" teaches us that when we hear only one side, we miss out on the richness and depth of other perspectives. (This is recommended watching for staff leading this series).
- Learning about Paul Stephenson's story provides an opportunity to reflect on what we might learn from the stories of those who have been the 'first' in their field from a particular background.
- We are reminded of how this applies to Black History Month, where we focus on reclaiming narratives. It's not just about the challenges faced by Black communities but also about celebrating their achievements, creativity, and everyday acts of courage and kindness.
- Schools are encouraged to adapt this material to reflect their own communities, highlighting their own local stories and contributions that are often overlooked. The act of worship aims to teach pupils the value of listening to many different stories and perspectives, encouraging empathy, understanding, and respect for all.



## **Slide 2: Gathering Prayer**

Begin with your usual greeting to gather everyone together. You may like to start with an opening prayer, such as the one below. You could lead the prayer or ask for a student volunteer to lead.

### **Prayer:**

"Dear God,

We thank you that each of us has been fearfully and wonderfully made. We are all your children.

We thank you for the many contributions made by Black people, past and present, to the UK.

Help us to hear, celebrate, and retell their stories.

Bless our eyes to see the journey of others,

Bless our ears to hear the story of our neighbour,

And bless our hearts to be united in love.

Amen.

## **Slide 3 & 4: Biblical Story - Let the Stones Tell the Story (Joshua 4:1-7)**

*The object is to draw a parallel between the importance of remembering and retelling stories in the Bible and today in Black History Month.*

Now, let's reflect on a story from the Bible that emphasises the importance of remembering and retelling stories. This is a passage from the Book of Joshua.

Read the passage from Joshua 4:1-7

*When the whole nation was finally across, God spoke to Joshua: "Select twelve men from the people, a man from each tribe, and tell them, 'From right here, the middle of the Jordan where the feet of the priests are standing firm, take twelve stones. Carry them across with you and set them down in the place where you camp tonight.'" Joshua called out the twelve men whom he selected from the People of Israel, one man from each tribe. Joshua directed them, "Cross to the middle of the Jordan and take your place in front of the Chest of God, your God. Each of you heft a stone to your shoulder, a stone for each of the tribes of the People of Israel, so you'll have something later to mark the occasion. When your children ask you, 'What are these stones to you?' you'll say, 'The flow of the Jordan was stopped in front of the Chest of the Covenant of God as it crossed the Jordan—stopped in its tracks. These stones are a permanent memorial for the People of Israel.'"*

### Summary of Story

In this story, the Israelites set up stones as a memorial to remember how God helped them cross the Jordan River. These stones were meant to remind future generations of their ancestors' journey.



### Discussion Questions:

1. "Why do you think it was important for the Israelite adults to tell their children their story?"
2. "What power do you think there is in telling your own story?"

Engagement

### Slide 5: Video – The danger of a single story

(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LmjKUDo7gSQ&t=181s>)

Watch till 2.59

### Slides 6 & 7: Discussion - Power in Telling Your Own Story

This slide's objective is to help students recognise the empowering aspect of storytelling, especially from marginalised communities. How often do people of different ethnicities see themselves represented in literature? Historically, the story of the marginalised has often been erased, and Black History Month is about centralising those marginalised voices - just as Christ did. Connect the idea of storytelling to historical and modern-day struggles Black people face and how these stories fuel progress and change.

Lead a brief discussion using the following 'I wonder' questions. I wonder what kind of power lies in telling your own story. How might sharing your personal experiences shape the way others see you and inspire change?

*I wonder... what kind of power lies in telling your own story?*

*I wonder... how sharing your personal experiences might shape the way others see you and inspire change?*

### Slides 8, 9 & 10: Introduction to Paul Stephenson

This slide aims to introduce Paul Stephenson, a key figure in British Black History, and his contributions. Share Stephenson's background as a pioneering figure in combating racism. Discuss his experiences with racism and how they shaped his activism (you can learn more about him here: [The Bristol Bus Boycott: A watershed moment for Black Britain - Bristol Museums Collections](#)).

Highlight Stephenson's role as Bristol's first Black social worker and his efforts in improving race relations. Describe Stephenson's contributions and discuss the impact of his work in the local community and nationally.



Ask students: *What kind of actions does Paul Stephenson’s story inspire us to today?* Encourage students to share their thoughts on how personal experiences can drive someone to effect change in society.

Connect this to modern-day activism and community leadership, encouraging students to reflect on how they can be allies in their communities.

### **Slide11**

Read this African proverb:

*“Until the lion learns how to write, every story will glorify the hunter.”*

Chinua Achebe wrote this in his seminal novel, titled *Things Fall Apart*, in 1958 (you will have heard Achebe referenced in Chimamanda’s TED talk as an example of a well-known African writer).

Explain to the students how this proverb reinforces the idea that our stories are powerful and if we do not tell our own stories somebody else may do, and not do out story justice.

Black History Month is about retelling our stories of love, life, light and courage in order to inspire one another today.

### **Slide 12: Closing Prayer**

"Heavenly Father,

We thank you for the opportunity to retell the stories of the past in order to inspire for the present and the future.

Help us to be courageous like Joshua, Paul Stephenson, and many more in standing up for what is right.

We ask this through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen."

### **Call to action**

As we leave today, remember that our stories have the power to create positive change, just like those of the figures we’ve discussed today. Let’s be inspired by their courage and commitment to justice.

After the prayer, briefly review key points from the lesson—such as the power of storytelling, the significance of Black history, and examples of courage from figures like Paul Stephenson.

Encourage students to reflect on how they can apply the messages learned today in their own lives.



## **Spiritual Development: Practical Ways to Further Explore Faith**

### **Exploring Faith Through Stories:**

Encourage students to engage with Bible texts that connect with the theme of reclaiming narratives, like the story of Moses leading his people out of Egypt. Discuss how God guided Moses to help his people reclaim their freedom.

### **Create a 'Gratitude Jar':**

Students can create a jar where they place notes of gratitude daily. They can write about things they are thankful for, moments of kindness they've witnessed, or stories they've heard that inspired them. This activity helps students reflect on the good stories taking place in their community and the world around them, which can enable them to see God's hand in everyday life.

### **Prayer and Reflection Spaces:**

Set up a quiet area where students can go to pray, think, or reflect. Encourage them to use this space to talk to God about their day, ask questions, or simply be still. You can include key prompts and questions for students to engage with, such as some of the questions posed in today's worship.

### **Random Acts of Kindness Chart:**

Create a Random Acts of Kindness chart where students can record kind deeds they have noticed. Highlight how these small actions can change someone's story and make a positive impact in the world, just like Jesus did through his teachings and actions.

### **Use Visual Reminders of Faith:**

Create posters or visual displays around school that feature Bible verses, positive affirmations, or symbols of hope. These can serve as daily reminders of God's presence and the importance of telling our own stories.



## **Conversations which connect communities**

“Do your little bit of good where you are; it’s those little bits of good put together that overwhelm the world.” Desmond Tutu

### **Personal Reflection:**

- How can even small acts of kindness make a difference in your school or community?
- Why is it important to act even when the problems seem too big to solve alone?
- How can you use your voice to support others within your community?
- What values do you hold that align with Archbishop Desmond Tutu’s call to ‘do good’ in the world?

### **Community and Society:**

- How can we encourage others to join us in doing “little bits of good” to create a more inclusive society?
- In what ways can communities come together and show support for each other?
- How can we ensure that our good actions inspire others to do the same and create a ripple effect in society?

### **Global Perspective:**

- How do you think the cumulative effect of many people doing “little bits of good” could help address global issues like racism?
- How can learning about different cultures and histories help people grow in their understanding of each other?
- How do you think young people can lead the way in creating a world that is kinder and free from racism and discrimination?
- What kind of world do you envision for the future, and what small actions can you take today to help make that world a reality?



## **Collective Worship – Our approach**

### **Invitational**

Everyone is welcome to take part in collective worship, as much or as little as they or their parents and carers are comfortable with. This means we use invitational language and consider carefully our choice of words and songs. Children are invited to pray but are not compelled or expected to do so; they always have a choice. We invite them to pray or reflect in whatever way they would usually as a family, if that is part of their home experience.

### **Inclusive**

Acts of worship need to be inclusive of all. Therefore, we choose topics and ideas that are shared by different faiths and worldviews. When we present Christian teaching, we make it clear that this is ‘what Christians believe’, saying things like: ‘I wonder why this story might be important to Christians?’ ‘The story today comes from the Bible (the holy book of Christians), which teaches that ... Our worship should be accessible for children and young people with a range of different backgrounds, and so we take care that activities do not require expensive resources. We also offer a variety of activities, so that children and young people with differing needs can all find something they can engage with.

### **Inspiring**

We aim for our acts of worship to inspire those engaging with them. How might it engage their emotions, enabling a sense of peace, comfort, hope or motivation? How might it inspire them into action, into thinking differently and considering their behaviour or actions? How might it inspire them to reflect on their faith or beliefs, and on the faith or beliefs of others?